



Skills Employers Seek

Skills For The Job Search
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CAREER CORNER

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Whether you are a new graduate conducting a job search or an experienced worker pursuing a career change, there are important competencies that you will need to possess to be considered for employment.

In addition to the expectation that you will be academically prepared and proficient in the specific job duties, employers want more. Regardless of the type industry or size, employers are seeking some basic foundation skills and qualities when hiring new employees. Sometimes referred to as "soft skills," they include traits such as exceptional communication and interpersonal skills, adaptability, and teamwork. These types of skills are also known as "transferable skills" because they are easily applied to any job or work setting and are valuable to all employers. To increase your chances of being hired, it's a good idea to become familiar with these highly sought after skills and master them.

What Are The Most Important Skills To Hone?

In 2007, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) conducted a Job Outlook Survey of employer expectations of the ideal candidate.* Below are the top ten attributes identified in rank order, as well as some points to consider when assessing your own skills.

1. Communication Skills

Can you speak and write clearly and effectively? Do you have good listening skills?

2. Honesty/Integrity

Do you exhibit respectful and trustworthy behavior? Are you straightforward and truthful?

3. Interpersonal Skills

Are you able to relate well to your co-workers? Can you respect and understand other points of view?

4. Motivation/Initiative

Do you demonstrate enthusiasm for your work? Do you complete tasks without being asked?

5. Strong Work Ethic

Are you hardworking and reliable? Do you stay with a project or problem until it is accomplished?

6. Teamwork Skills

Can you work cooperatively with others to achieve common goals? Do you inspire confidence in others? Can you share responsibility?

7. Computer Skills

Are you computer savvy? Do you have an understanding of word processing, spreadsheets, the Internet, and email? No longer optional, these are now core skills.

8. Analytical Skills

Are you able to gather information and assess a situation? Can you seek various perspectives and identify key issues?

9. Flexibility/Adaptability

Do you get along with diverse groups of people? Can you manage multiple assignments and set priorities? Are you adaptable to change in the workplace? Are you open to new ideas and concepts?

10. Detail Oriented

Are you organized, methodical, and logical when completing a task? Can you differentiate between major and minor details?

Other important attributes deemed desirable by employers include organizational and leadership skills, multicultural awareness, confidence, dependability, creativity and a sense of humor. Each of these characteristics will play a key role in your future employability.

Employers Want The Complete Package

Employees must approach any new position armed with an array of these soft skills. It's expected that a new hire may need to be trained on specific job duties, but employers often do not have the time or the luxury to train an academically qualified candidate on these basic coveted characteristics. Considering the current economic conditions, employers want to focus on the business at hand, yet also want well-rounded, versatile workers who exude a positive professional demeanor. An employer can easily train you on the finer points of how to use the computer software that processes customer and product information, but it is much more difficult to instruct you on how to appropriately resolve a dissatisfied consumer's concern. You need a good command of the soft/transferable skills for the latter situation, such as effective communication, problem solving, decision making, and interpersonal skills.

Know What You Have To Offer

In-depth knowledge of your soft skills is vital so take some time to review and evaluate them. If you think you could be stronger or more effective in some areas, find ways to further develop these attributes through coursework, seminars, professional development training, volunteer work, or assistance from a mentor or career counselor who can provide related resources. For example, you can broaden your computer skills via local community based resources. Check your local library; they often have

*Source: National Association of Colleges and Employers: Job Outlook 2007, Student Version

computer courses offered at low or no cost. Also, view the career resources available on the Excelsior College Web site at excelsior.edu/career. These pages provide links to online resources that can help in assessing and strengthening your skills (see Related Resources).

Once you have identified, assessed, and sharpened your transferable skills, be sure to document and market them on your resume, in your cover letters, and of course, in job interviews. The ability to clearly articulate your unique set of skills will make you a more competitive candidate. Be sure to address how you have used these skills in previous ways and illustrate how you will put them to use in the future.

Essential Employability Skills

During your job hunt, it's important to showcase your educational expertise, work experience, and other career-related accomplishments. However, soft skills will also continue to be critical components ranked high on the employer's checklist of required qualifications. Effectively demonstrating these skills will prove that you are the right candidate for the job and pave the way for future success in the workplace.

Related Resources

Transferable Skills Survey,

The University of Minnesota Duluth:
www.d.umn.edu/kmc/career_transfer_survey.html

Skills Employers Seek,

Loughborough University:
<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/service/careers/section/applications/skills.html>

Skills Employers Seek,

Lloyd, M.A., & Kennedy, J.H.
<http://www.psywww.com/careers/skills.htm>

Suggested Courses to Develop Skills that Prospective Employers Want,

Lloyd, M.A., Kennedy, J.H., & Dewey, R.A.:
www.psywww.com/careers/suggest.htm

Identifying and Selling Your Soft Skills,

NES UK:
www.nes.co.uk/Careers-Identifying-Your-Soft-Skills

Transferable Skills For Job Seekers,

Quintcareers:
www.quintcareers.com/transferable_skills.html

Enrolled students can go to www.excelsior.edu/career, and graduates can visit excelsior.edu/alumniresources for the most current version of the links for this article, as well as many additional career-related links.

Questions or comments about this article? Contact Maribeth Gunner Pulliam, Career Resources Coordinator/Senior Academic Advisor in the School of Liberal Arts.

LOOKING FOR Career Information?

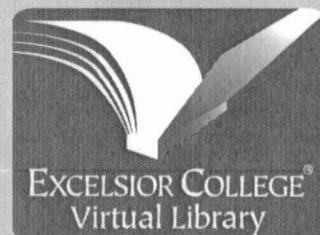
WE CAN HELP!

The Excelsior College Virtual Library can help enrolled students find resources on a wide variety of career information.

Look for the Jobs and Career Information resource page in the Virtual Library Reference Room box, linked from the right side of the ECVL home page. There are many resources on the Jobs and Career Information page including a resume workshop, salary information, and job postings to name a few. And there's even more information about your specific field of study available on the Career Resources page at www.excelsior.edu/career. Here you'll find degree-specific resources for liberal arts, nursing, health sciences, business, and technology.

For alumni of Excelsior College, don't forget there's a career counselor available to help you. Email alumnicareer@excelsior.edu with questions or requests for assistance. And, you can also review the questions and answers that others have submitted on the Ask the Career Counselor Web page linked from the Alumni Career Resources and Services area at www.excelsior.edu/alumniresources.

Another College service available to both enrolled students and alumni is the Resume Critique Service. For a nominal fee, you can submit your resume and receive a critique by a professional career counselor.



www.excelsior.edu/library

See the following ECVL-recommended Web sites for career information:

Monster.com

<http://www.monster.com>

An enormous site with many employer profiles as well as an online service that allows you to build and post your resume at their site for free.

The Handbook describes what workers do on the job, working conditions, the training and education needed, earnings, and expected job prospects in a wide range of occupations.

Occupational Outlook Handbook

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics:
<http://www.bls.gov/oco>

The Bureau's Occupational Outlook Handbook has been a nationally recognized source of career information.

Resume Workshop

The Purdue University Writing Lab:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/564/01>

This tutorial helps you construct the appropriate form and offers examples of cover sheets and letters of application.