

Career Skills

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Name: _____



You might be surprised to know that you already have many of the skills which are essential for employment in the modern workplace. These are not the specific knowledge based skills you would learn during an apprenticeship, in college or at work, but the '**transferable skills**' which we all need to use when we work with other people, on projects or even by ourselves. You develop these skills simply

from being involved in everyday activities. They are not formally 'taught' in school, but they may develop there, at home, or through your hobbies, activities, and friendships.

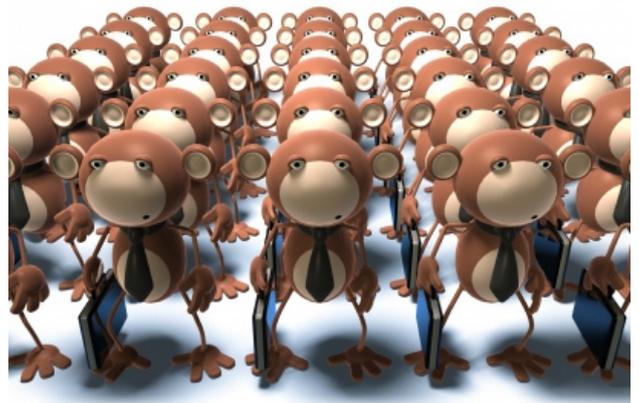
The skills we are talking about are quite ordinary, that's why we don't usually notice them. These 'ordinary' skills are so taken for granted that we seldom make any effort to improve or develop them. Terms such as 'communication skills', 'people skills' and 'organisation skills' are just some of the many skills which most people develop without even knowing about it.



Why are they important?

Lets put it this way. Two equally qualified people have applied for a job as a scientist. At the job interview, each is asked if they think that they would be good at the job. The first person answers with a simple "yes", the second one also answers "yes", and continues to discuss why they think they would be good. Both are well qualified for the job, but the second candidate has better 'communication skills', i.e. is simply better able to communicate when asked for information. Both may have honours degrees; but the better developed 'ordinary' skill of communication gives the edge to the second candidate.

Chances are, the first candidate thought that having the right qualification was all that was needed to get the job. Big mistake! It's safe to assume that for every job you apply for, there will also be several others who will have the same or better qualifications. So it is not necessarily the qualifications that win the job contract! More often, it is the 'ordinary' skills, and the evidence that you have developed them that counts.



Where do I start?

You can use the exercise on this worksheet to discover the most sought after skills needed to get jobs in the modern workplace. By rating yourself on these skills, you can see where your strengths and weaknesses may lie. Then, you can look for opportunities to develop and practice your underdeveloped skills so that regardless of your academic achievements, you will be able to show others just how skillful you are.

Career Skills Self-Assessment Exercise

While doing this exercise, consider all of your experience to date. Take note of the activities and responsibilities that are a normal part of your school, college, or work life; your hobbies, involvement in sports, and even your family life. Involvement in any of these activities offers the opportunity to develop many of the skills detailed below, even if only in a small way. After completing this self-assessment exercise, complete the Summary and Action Plan on the last page of this worksheet.



Well Developed

I show this skill often, and others know I can be relied upon to use this skill effectively when needed.

Some Experience

I have had opportunity to develop this skill and have used it in a work, home, or school/college environment in a small way.

Undeveloped

I have not had the opportunity to develop this, or have not taken opportunities to develop this.

PEOPLE SKILLS

Sensitivity to others:

Ability to maintain a deep interest in the concerns and feeling of others. Inclined to find ways to help people.

Insight into others:

Has developed an understanding of what makes people do what they do, and is tolerant of the actions of others. Good at reading the moods of others.

Openness:

Is open to, and encourages communication with all people at all levels. Inclined to share personal experiences and trust people.

Respect:

Takes the feelings, needs, thoughts, wishes and preferences of others (including other cultures and races) into consideration, and gives them worth and value.

Speaking:

Can present information clearly and confidently to other individuals and groups. Maintains good eye contact and can keep the attention of an audience or individual.

Active listening:

Gives full attention to what other people are saying, takes time to understand the points being made, asks questions as needed, and does not interrupt inappropriately.

Conversation:

Speaks clearly and listens attentively. Attends to the other person, not to oneself. Seeks clarification where necessary and attends to body language appropriately.

Persuasion:

Shows ability to influence peoples beliefs and actions. Easily wins people's co-operation and support for ideas or activities.

Team membership:

Works easily with groups of people and shows loyalty and commitment to the teams' objectives. Attends to each member's views equally.

Team participation:

Openly expresses views and opinions within a group. Shows willingness to take on tasks and responsibilities as appropriate to one's experience.

Leadership:

Has the ability to communicate a vision or goal to others and lead them towards achieving it. Pushes for action and results, and wins the support and help of others.



Undeveloped
Some Experience
Well Developed

TASK SKILLS

Planning

Creates clear goals, identifies and finds the resources (e.g. time, people, materials) needed to achieve them, and schedules tasks so that work is completed on time.

Time management

Takes the time to organise events and tasks carefully so as to use time efficiently. Uses a diary/planner to ensure tasks are undertaken.

Practical

Uses equipment, tools or technology effectively. Easily follows instructions and shows willingness to use whatever tools or technology is required.

Computing

Confidently uses a computer to write documents, browse the internet and use email programs. Can save files, locate them efficiently and print them.

Problem solving

Seeks to find the cause of problems, find and choose effective solutions and take the necessary action to resolve them.

Business awareness

Understands the main business activities of a company/organisation. Has a good sense of the business opportunities available, and the primary competitors.

Customer focus

Shows understanding and concern for customers needs, is helpful and friendly to them, and deals with any questions or complaints they may have.

PERSONAL SKILLS

Learning

Seeks and willingly takes opportunities to learn. Shows interest in personal learning and development. Looks for feedback to improve understanding.

Adaptability

Adapts easily to new challenges and is open to new ways of doing things. Effective at changing plans or actions to deal with changing situations.

Goal setting

Ability to make a decision about what is wanted, and determine when it is to be achieved. Stays committed to the goal, and deals with setbacks realistically.

Initiative

Takes the initiative to improve a situation. Seeks opportunities to influence events, or make decisions.

Independence

Able to perform tasks effectively with minimum help or approval, or without direct supervision.

Achievement motivation

Has the drive to succeed and excel at tasks. Strives to exceed expectations. Shows confidence in abilities and expects to succeed at all tasks agreed on.

Dependability

Is reliable, responsible and dependable in fulfilling duties. Carefully checks work to ensure all details have been considered.

Professionalism

Remains calm and self-controlled under stressful situations. Works to deliver the best interests of the organisation at all times, and maintains appropriate dress code.

Career Skills - Summary and Action Plan

Now that you are familiar with some of the most important transferable skills desired by employers, it is a good idea to take note of those you have developed the most. These will be some of the things you would mention when writing your CV, along with some examples of how they were developed or used. You can also use this information when preparing for a job interview. An employer will be looking to see what skills you have, and for evidence of how you have actually applied them. They won't accept that you have them just because you say so. Fill in the section below to summarise your most developed skills.



MOST DEVELOPED SKILLS: **Comments:** *(e.g. how I developed this, where I used it)*

1.

2.

3.



What about those skills you have not yet been able to develop? These could be the very things that could go against you when looking for a job. Remember, most employers want just about all of the skills mentioned in this exercise, and they may well ask you if you have had any experience of using such skills. So why not set targets for developing some of your weaker skills? Start by listing three of the skills you would like to get more experience with, and then note some of the activities you could become involved in to help develop them. Ask for suggestions from friends and advisors if you can't think of activities yourself.

SKILLS TO DEVELOP

Comments: *(e.g. what activities can I get involved in to develop this)*

1.

2.

3.