

## Skills Employers Expect

Every employer is looking for a specific set of skills from job-seekers that match the skills necessary to perform a particular job. But beyond the job-specific technical skills, certain skills are nearly universally sought by employers. You can develop or improve these skills through practice, training, professional development, or obtaining coaching / mentoring from someone who understands these skills.

Numerous studies have identified these critical employability skills, sometimes referred to as "soft skills. The skills that follow have been distilled from many studies into this list of skills most frequently mentioned. We've also included sample verbiage describing each skill; job-seekers can adapt this verbiage to their own resumes, cover letters, and interview talking points.

### Skills Most Sought After by Employers

#### Communications Skills (listening, verbal, written)

By far, the one skill mentioned most often by employers is the ability to listen, write, and speak effectively. Successful communication is critical in business.

#### Analytical/Research Skills

Deals with your ability to assess a situation, seek multiple perspectives, gather more information if necessary, and identify key issues that need to be addressed.

#### Computer/Technical Literacy

Almost all jobs now require some understanding of computer hardware and software, especially word processing, spreadsheets, and email.

#### Flexibility/Adaptability/Managing Multiple Priorities

Deals with the ability to manage multiple assignments and tasks, set priorities, and adapt to changing conditions and work assignments.

#### Interpersonal Abilities

The ability to relate to your co-workers, inspire others to participate, and mitigate conflict with co-workers is essential given the amount of time spent at work each day.

#### Leadership/Management Skills

While there is some debate about whether leadership is something people are born with, these skills deal with your ability to take charge and lead or manage others.

### **Multicultural Sensitivity/Awareness**

There is possibly no bigger issue in the workplace than diversity, and people must demonstrate a sensitivity and awareness to other people and cultures.

### **Planning/Organizing**

Deals with your ability to design, plan, organize, and implement projects and tasks within an allotted timeframe. Also involves goal-setting.

### **Problem-Solving/Reasoning/Creativity**

Involves the ability to find solutions to problems using your creativity, reasoning, and past experiences along with the available information and resources.

### **Teamwork**

Because so many jobs involve working in one or more work-groups, you must have the ability to work with others in a professional manner while attempting to achieve a common goal.

## **Personal Values Employers Seek in Employees**

Of equal importance to skills are the values, personality traits, and personal characteristics that employers seek. Look for ways to weave examples of these characteristics into your resume, cover letters, and answers to interview questions.

Here is our list of the 10 most important categories of values.

### **Honesty/Integrity/Morality**

Employers probably respect personal integrity more than any other value, especially in light of the many challenges and issues that may occur in the workplace.

### **Adaptability/Flexibility**

Deals with openness to new ideas and concepts, to working independently or as part of a team, and to carrying out multiple tasks or projects. Being able to adapt to changes in one's work environment.

### **Dedication/Hard-Working/Work Ethic/Tenacity**

Employers seek those individuals who love what they do and will keep at it until they solve the problem and get the job done.

### **Dependability/Reliability/Responsibility**

There's no question that all employers desire employees who will arrive to work every day – on time – and ready to work, and who will take responsibility for their actions.

### **Loyalty**

Employers want employees who will have a strong devotion to the business – even at times when the business may be experiencing uncertainty or unpredictability.

### **Positive Attitude/Motivation/Energy/Passion**

The people who get hired and the employees who get promoted are the ones with drive and passion – and who demonstrate this enthusiasm through their words and actions.

### **Professionalism**

Deals with acting in a responsible and fair manner in all your personal and work activities, which is seen as a sign of maturity and self-confidence; avoid being petty.

### **Self-Confidence**

Look at it this way: if you don't believe in yourself, in your unique mix of skills, education, and abilities, why should a prospective employer? Be confident in yourself and what you can offer employers.

### **Self-Motivated/Ability to Work with Little or No Supervision**

While teamwork is always mentioned as an important skill, so is the ability to work independently, with minimal supervision.

### **Willingness to Learn**

No matter what your age, no matter how much experience you have, you should always be willing to learn a new skill or technique. Jobs are constantly changing and evolving, and you must show an openness to grow and learn with that change.

## **Final Thoughts on Employability Skills and Values**

Employability skills and personal values are the critical tools and traits you need to succeed in the workplace – and they are all elements that you can learn, cultivate, develop, and maintain over your lifetime. Once you have identified the sought-after skills and values and completed a self-review, remember to document them and market them (in your resume, cover letter, and interview answers) for job-search purposes and overall career success.

Source: Randall S. Hansen, Ph.D., and Katharine Hansen, Ph.D.