

Career Skills

v071216

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 or college, 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 to, 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.



Much Experience

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:

Thinks and cares about the feelings of other people and instinctively looks for ways to help them.

Insight into others:

The ability to understand what makes people do what they do and think what they think.

Openness:

This includes the ability to share and trust people that may be quite different to you (e.g. race, values) and a willingness to interact with them fully.

Respect:

Shows equal consideration for the feelings, needs, thoughts, wishes and preferences of others, including those who are quite different to you, e.g. other cultures and races.

Speaking / Presenting:

Your ability to present information clearly and confidently to other individuals or groups.

Active listening:

Takes the time to really hear and understand what is being said, with the ability to ask questions as needed, and does not interrupt at the wrong time.

Conversation:

The ability to talk, listen and interact with others in a friendly and social way.

Persuasion:

The ability to influence what other people think and do and win support for your own ideas.

Team membership:

The ability to work well within a group, respect each persons views, overcome difficulties and remain committed to achieving the groups goals.

Team participation:

Gets involved and is willing to share your views and play an active role with others in a group situation.

Leadership:

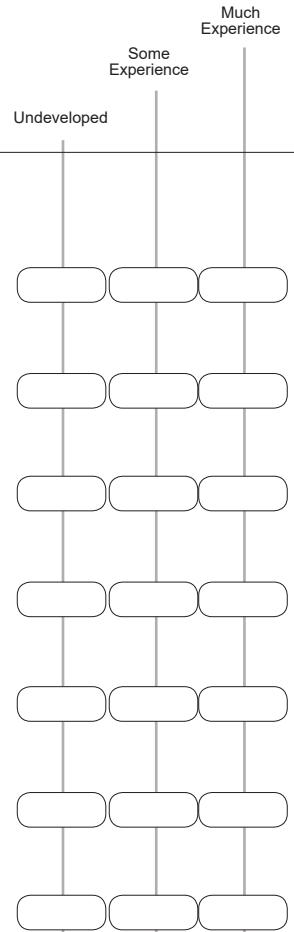
The ability to win support from others in achieving a goal or outcome and being able to push for action and results.



TASK SKILLS

Planning

The ability to create clear goals and plan what has to be done to achieve them on time. This includes finding and managing the resources needed to achieve them.



Time management

The ability to organise yourself and your work so that you can complete your tasks well with the least amount of effort.

Practical

The ability to use equipment, tools or technology confidently and effectively.

Computing

The ability to use computer programmes to produce excellent work. Score yourself high only if you use advanced features of programmes often.

Problem solving

This includes being able to spot problems, find what causes them, find the best solutions and then doing what it takes to solve them.

Business awareness

Shows understanding of the main business activities of a company or organisation and have a good sense of the business pressures and opportunities present.

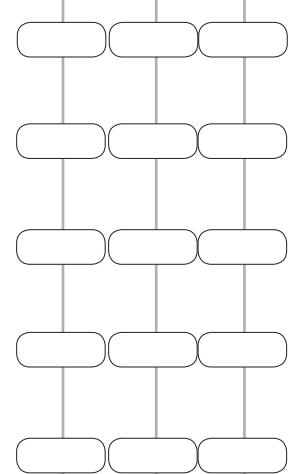
Customer focus

Is helpful and friendly to customers and shows concern for their needs. Comfortable handling any questions or complaints they may have.

PERSONAL SKILLS

Learning

Continuously looks for chances to learn new things develop your knowledge and experience.

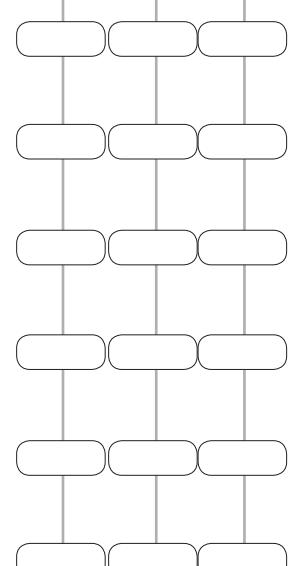


Adaptability

Can easily change to new ways of doing things in different situations.

Goal setting

The ability to decide clearly what is wanted, make plans on how to achieve it, and overcome setbacks when necessary.



Initiative

The ability and willingness to do something that might benefit your company or organisation without having to be asked to do it.

Independence

Your ability to do things well without help from others or without direct supervision.

Motivation

Has the drive to succeed and do well, and works to achieve success at all tasks. Aims to exceed the expectations of others.

Dependability

You can be relied upon to do your work well and do what you are required to do on time.

Professionalism

Stays calm under pressure, presents themselves very well and works hard to deliver the best for the company at all times.

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, or preparing for a job interview. On your CV, we recommend mentioning some of your most developed skills along with some examples of how they were developed or used. An employer will be looking for evidence that you have actually applied your skills, they won't accept that you have them just because you say so.



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.