



Skills Employers Seek

When applying for jobs it is important to provide evidence of your skills and this can come from work experience, academic work, your social life and any interests you pursue. Below is a selection of the skills that employers are looking for in graduates.

Analytical ability

The ability to assess a situation or issue and identify key elements that need to be addressed to move on. You will have used this skill in your academic work to solve problems, in your choice of university course and where you decided to live.

Commercial awareness

Being aware of the business issues affecting the sector to which you are applying. Having an understanding of external factors and internal structures. You will build on this skill as you begin to apply for jobs, as you gather details about companies and follow up information sources.

Computer literacy

Virtually all employers will expect a basic level of familiarity with a range of computer packages for word-processing and spreadsheets, and of course email and web use. Take any opportunity you can to widen your knowledge while you are studying.

Decision-making

Choosing the best option by looking at the various paths open to you, identifying the pros and cons and making a balanced judgement. Examples include choosing your career or your university course where you need to gather information before you can begin to reach a conclusion.

Influencing

Working to gain the agreement of others to a particular course of action, for example setting up a rota for dealing with household tasks, acting as a course representative, working on a group project.

Initiative

The ability to find a new way of doing something, not waiting to see if the problem is solved by someone else, very close to problem-solving, but more pro-active. You may have taken the initiative in a bar job when you saw that certain basic processes could be managed more effectively, or played an effective part on a hall committee to instigate recycling of waste paper for example.

Leadership

Leadership centres on encouraging others to move towards a specific goal. It determines an agenda for action, ideally in consultation. It is the ability to inspire and motivate without 'owning'. You may have demonstrated leadership in a team sport, organising and chairing a committee or co-ordinating activities within a group project.

Negotiating

Negotiating usually involves discussing a situation face-to-face or on the phone. The purpose is

to reach a mutually satisfactory conclusion which often involves some compromise which is acceptable to all parties. You may have negotiated with your landlord over your rent or repairs you needed fixing, or the bank for an increased overdraft for example.

Networking

This is an awareness of the need to develop a good network of contacts throughout your working life and indeed beforehand if you are attempting to enter a highly competitive field such as advertising. You need to be able to develop and maintain this sort of network in your professional life for advice and information. Effective networking depends on good oral communication and negotiation skills.

Oral Communication

Communicating with others through speech in a clear manner avoiding unnecessary jargon. It is the ability to explain processes simply and at a relevant level. You demonstrate this skill in seminars and tutorials, when you give a presentation or explain a work process in any job you may have held.

Planning

The ability to organise resources, time and events that will enable you to meet your goal. You could well have used your planning skills in project work, writing your dissertation, or organising an event. Think about the process you went through and try and identify various occasions when you used these skills.

Presentation

The ability to choose an appropriate method to give information or facts, to present yourself to your employers in a positive manner, linked very closely to self-awareness and oral communication.

Problem-solving

The ability to find an appropriate solution to a problem using whatever information, experience and resources are available. Think about problems you have solved in your academic work, where a logical approach is frequently required. Other examples might be found in any outside activities you enjoy such as the planning of events. Linked closely with analytical skills.

Self-awareness

The ability to identify clearly your skills, values, interests and core strengths - what makes you different. You welcome and act upon feedback constructively. This is a vital skill for your career management and one which takes time to develop. Resources such as Prospects Planner will help, together with discussions with your careers adviser.

Self-confidence

The ability to feel confident of your position and your views in a variety of situations - some of which will feel unfamiliar to you. You develop this skill through vacation activities such as travel which you have organised yourself and where you have had to depend upon your own initiative. Giving presentations adds to confidence too; in fact any work that brings you into contact with the general public will enhance your self-confidence.

Self-management

Self-management requires self-awareness but it is about setting your own targets and working out a plan to achieve them. You may have demonstrated good self-management in your successes to date, in sporting achievements, in excellent project reports for example.

Team-working

The ability to work with others in an organised manner to achieve a goal. This is a key skill and you will have demonstrated it in any group project work, through team sports, committee activities, vacation work, Duke of Edinburgh activities among others.

Tenacity

This is all about not giving up when the going gets tough! It is about sorting out the problems that occur at the last minute and believing in getting the job done. You will have demonstrated this skill in your determination to achieve against the odds. Maybe you had to retake an examination or face some other disappointment such as not getting a vacation job until you had applied for about 20. As long as you found a way to resolve the situation and move on you have demonstrated tenacity.

Time-management

Time-management is demonstrated through juggling the many aspects of your working, academic and social life. Employers like to see well-rounded individuals who have busy lives, but who are in control. Some people plan their time graphically, others carry deadlines around in their head. Make sure you know what is effective for you.

Willingness to learn

This includes the ability to deal with change, both in the work place and in your personal life, and to learn from the experience. Working structures are not static and it is essential that you show you are able to cope with new challenges and take calculated and informed risks. Your academic experience and any work you have undertaken outside university should give you examples of when you have demonstrated this skill.

Written communication

The ability to produce well expressed and easily understood text whether in emails or reports. You will have developed this skill through your course work, in project reports or dissertations, and you demonstrate it in covering letters and application forms too!