

Skills Everyone Needs



Regardless of Your Career Objectives – Learn These

Donald Kerper



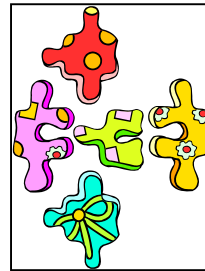
Misty River Consulting

Skills Everyone Needs

As students consider “what to be” before their entry into the job market, many are unaware that a vast number of job holders or career employees are in roles that have little to do with their major or technical expertise.

However, successful employees, managers, executives, etc. do have something in common regardless of major. They all share in some part the ability or competency to demonstrate excellent proficiency in one of the following. Many recruiters, as they search for new employees for the organizations, look for these top 10 characteristics in those that they interview. They include the following:

- Communication skills
- Honesty/Integrity
- Teamwork skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Motivation/initiative
- Strong work ethic
- Analytical skills
- Flexibility/adaptability
- Computer skills
- Self-confidence



Communication Skills

Students who have excellent communication skills have the basis or foundation for evolving into strong leaders later in their careers. Leaders create clarity to their respective organizations about the vision, expectations, plan, and cultural norms. Only those who are articulate, who have the ability to present their ideas clearly and concisely, will be able to lead.



Honesty/Integrity

Honesty and integrity are important for leaders to be successful as well. Those who don't speak the truth are not able to influence those around them. Thus they are constrained from acts of influence, which is the heart of leadership. It is also the heart of sales – one cannot sell if the customer does not trust them.

Teamwork Skills

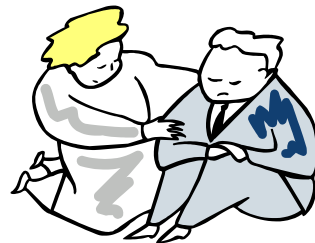
Students who learn to work cooperatively and collaboratively with others have a distinct advantage over those can't. Organizations are made up of people. The days of having fractionalized, island like jobs, are still present. However, what is also expected is that employees who are part of a common process, department, division, etc. can work together in an efficient and effective fashion to achieve organization improvement goals that would not be possible for a single individual to achieve on their own.



Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills are the communicative methods that individuals can use as they cooperate and collaborate with one another in team settings. Those who don't listen well, those who are defensive, those who run on and on as they speak, etc. will not function well or contribute well in team or group settings.

People like and are influenced by those who listen and who have demonstrated that they have listened. They are also influenced by those who are courteous, clear, and concise in their communications.



Motivation/Initiative

One of the interesting things about organizational life is that those near the top or at the top are often self-motivated people. They do not wait to be told. They initialize action. Many employers are just "dying" for people that are self-starters and are self-motivated. They want people who get after the opportunities and stay focused until the objective is accomplished with a minimal amount of pressure to keep the ball rolling.

It is very expensive to create management structures that keep pressure on people to perform. It is much more cost effective to hire highly motivated, self-starters who need only to know what the plan is and who only need the resources provided for them to move forward.

Strong Work Ethic

Daily we can hear or read about the increased need for employees who have a strong work ethic. Unfortunately, when asked what work ethic refers to, many are at a loss as to how to define it, let alone measure it. Some studies summarize work ethic in terms of the following:

Interpersonal skills

Initiative

Dependability



Since we have discussed the first two in the above, let's talk about dependability. Employers do look for people who say what they mean, who walk the talk, who stay focused until the task is complete, who don't waste resources that have been provided, who demonstrate that they stick to their commitments. Anything different from these items would be troublesome to any of us.

Analytical Skills

Students, no matter what major, need good analytical skills. One simplistic way to describe a set of analytical skills is basic reading, writing, and mathematical skills. However, it goes much farther than those basic competencies. Students who learn and can demonstrate competence in the following are much more valuable to an organization:

Creative thinking

Making decisions

Solving problems

Visualization of future states or scenarios

Learning to learn

Synthesize and reason



Flexibility/Adaptability

One of the more common phrases you might find in organizations today is “The only constant is continuous change”. The reason flexibility and adaptability are so important now is due to the need that organizations have to be competitive. Maintaining a competitive position in the market place is difficult today for many reasons that include the use of new and improved technology that improves productivity, the increasing number of potential competitors due to the emerging global economy, and due to the difficulty in “changing organizations” and in keeping employees skills “relevant” for the times.

Organizational change efforts are very common and focus on an effort to maintain or improve their competitive position. However, one of the biggest constraints to change is the resistance that people display as the change initiative moves forward. Having employees who are both flexible and adaptable reduces the amount of resistance that some change efforts experience.



Organization change often requires that employees and managers learn new skills and apply those at the work place. Knowing how to learn is an important skill and aids in the creation of a workforce and managerial staff that is both flexible and adaptable.

Computer Skills

One of the skills that employees need now that they didn't learn in school is computer skills. Learning how to use computers is important for almost every level of the organization nowadays.

For managers, word processing, presentation development, and spreadsheet skills assist in their normal functions. In addition, being able to communicate using email is also important and the need for cooperation and collaboration increases.



For workers in factory situations, knowing how to use graphical user interfaces, knowing how to collect and display data using spreadsheets or specific process control systems is essential.

Computers offer huge increases in productivity and their use will continue to expand.

Self Confidence

Finally, as we come near the end of discussing what competencies potential employees would be wise to develop, consider self-confidence as one of the most important. One of the most critical attributes of executive managers and CEO's is self-confidence. Many researchers would say that self-confidence accounts for 50% of the reasons why CEO's are successful.



Self-confidence is an attitude which allows individuals to have positive yet realistic views of themselves and their situations. Self-confident people trust their own abilities, have a general sense of control in their lives, and believe that, within reason, they will be able to do what they wish, plan, and expect. Even if they are unable to meet their expectations, self-confident people continue to be positive and to accept themselves.



People who are not self-confident depend excessively on the approval of others in order to feel good about themselves. They tend to avoid taking risks because they fear failure. They generally do not expect to be successful. They often put themselves down and tend to discount or ignore compliments paid to them.

Conclusion

As you consider what to focus on in your educational endeavors, what might be more important than your major are the items that we have just discussed. Focus on the development of these competencies as much or even more than a specific major. They will be useful no matter what career path you follow.

Skills To Learn - Checklist

Skill	Self Rating	Development Plan
Communication skills		
Presentation		
Writing		
Honesty/Integrity		
Teamwork skills		
Interpersonal skills		
Courtesy		
Active Listening		
Paraphrasing		
Conflict Resolution		
Motivation/initiative		
Strong work ethic		
Dependability		
Analytical skills		
Creative thinking		
Making decisions		
Solving problems		
Visualization of future scenarios		
Learning to learn		
Synthesize and reason		
Flexibility/adaptability		
Open mindedness		
Learning how to learn		
Computer skills		
Work processing		
Spreadsheet		
Presentation software		
Email		
Internet		
Self-confidence		
Know competencies		
Know weaknesses		

Skills Everyone Needs



Regardless of Your Career Objectives – Learn These



Misty River Consulting
Donald A. Kerper
Marshfield, WI 54449
Email: misty@mistyriver.net
Web: <http://www.mistyriver.net>