

ACE: Academic and Employability Skills

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Introduction

Employability and Academic Skills are very important in order to define someone career and make them more valuable as an employee or entrepreneur. This becomes increasingly significant as the labour markets become more competitive and employers are looking for people that have better developed employability skills and are taking initiative to develop themselves academically and in terms of market research, as well as from an employability perspective.

What is a skill?

A skill is a particular knowledge and abilities that are necessary in order to perform a job. Very often you can job hunt by matching your skills to the market and also get new skills in order to progress your career. There are different types of skills and ways of using them. Soft skills are usually interpersonal skills and they are often referred as people skills. They are often different to measure and can be related to a person natural personality. The measurement is usually by establishing the ability to work with a team or in direct contact with others. This skill set includes communication, empathy, critical thinking and even conflict resolution among other skills that are mentioned.

Hard skills are usually the ones that are more easy to measure and they are specific and knowledge base in order to do a job. For example, a computing job will require hard skills in computing, whilst an accounting job would require hard skills in finance. Some skills are learned during the job, but others might be first learned theoretically in classroom and put in application later on.

Hybrid skills refer to a combination of technical and non-technical skills. Many companies would like their employees to have hybrid skills and incorporate both in their skill set in order to succeed in their role and balance out their workload.

Transferable skills are usually the skills that can apply to different career fields and can be transferred when changing the job. Transferable skills can be both soft or hard skills, such as good communication skills or performant data analysis.

The last time of skills are the ones that are job-specific and need to be met in order to complete the job. For example in the engineering field you will need to have specific technical skills in order to effectively complete the work.

(Karoly and Panis, 2004)

What are employability skills?

Employability skills can be defined as traits that are needed in almost every job in the market. These are general skills that make a person desirable in an organisation. On a regular basis hiring managers tend to recruit and look after these criteria.

Employability skills usually include professional skills that allows you to be successful in the workplace. The employability skills would generally look at the communication style, which includes the interpersonal traits, active listening and attention to the other respondent. Teamwork is also a valuable employability skills that is often considered by managers when hiring. This usually includes the ability to collaborate with colleagues, as well as higher management, reliability and professional attitude, as well as managing expectation and managing conflicts in the workplace. Critical skills are also seen as employability skills, looking at analytical and problem solving but also creativity and the ability to produce new work and bring innovative ideas to the table. With the raise of technology, being tech savy is also a skillset that is considered to be belonging to having employability skills. Other aspects are time management, pro-activism, but as well enthusiasm and willing to work.

(Hind and Moss, 2011)

My own skills analysis

SWOT Analysis allows a comparison and reflection of the following: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. When looking at strengths, it is important to consider some questions such as what skills am I best at that perhaps my other colleagues are not that confident in, as well as what did the other people believe are my strengths and achievements. I believe that one of my strengths are my communications skills. This is often proven by the fact that I receive employee of the month based on guest nominations. I believe that I communicate very well with both my team and the clients that I am serving. One of my other strengths is following directions well. I believe that I am a good listener that is always trying to learn new things and be connected with the supervisor team. This allows me to follow directions very well and ensure tasks are being done in a timely manner especially when I am responsible for the breakfast buffet. I also believe that I have good problem-solving skills which allows me to get out of difficult situation and always find a reasonable solution that will help my team as well. This often means dealing with complaints that are coming from the guests, often about the quality of the food or if the cutlery has been left dirty. Even though I am under pressure, I tend to find solutions to the problem quickly and offer a resolution to the client in a short period of time. I develop this

skill by talking to other people on their strategy of dealing with issues and concerns as well as trying to become more confident and assertive myself. I also believe that I am good with my time management, which include planning and organising. I usually keep an agenda for my workplace, to make sure that I attend every shift at the correct time as well as managing my study time around work. I am also arranging my own travel overseas which gives me the opportunity to become more organised.

When looking at my weaknesses, I try to look at the tasks that I usually avoid on a regular basis, as well as what the others feel that my weak spots are. I also look at the negative work habits and whether my personality can be a drawback at work. One weakness is that I sometimes try to do things very quickly in order to remove them as soon as possible from my to-do list and that sometimes can affect the quality of my work and I suffer as a result. I tend to get stressed when I have too many tasks and find it hard to manage if my other teammates feel stressed, because I am empathetic of their mood. I am also very weak in public speaking and that is because I feel that I have an accent in English that I do not want to be noticed in large crowds.

When looking at my opportunities, I start by looking at the industry I am in (Hospitality Industry) and its growth rate, as well as what new technology is coming up together with trends and if I have the right network to support me. An opportunity for me is the ability to take this course and develop my skills whilst pursue further education. Another opportunity is the chance to get promoted at work to reception, where the pay and working hours are more suitable.

When looking at threats I usually look at the obstacles that I might be facing at work, as well as the demand of the job and changing needs. One threat is that due to staff shortages and sick calls, I very often get exhausted from covering which can lead to the quality of my work decreasing. I am also afraid of the current political-economic format and what will be my future after Brexit.

Personal Development Plan

When looking at my personal development plan I start with establishing the purpose/direction of my career. I have pursued higher education, as I would like to progress in my job and become part of the administration and reception team. My development need was to improve my writing and critical skills and I have considered the most suitable way to take this path is by joining a programme at a college. The development opportunities have come from both college and work side. At work I have been offered different trainings where I can develop myself and learn new things about the changes in hospitality industry, as well as training transferable skills that I could potentially use in another career path. My action plan is to perform very well during my academic studies, improve myself and start to have trial shifts in reception where I can learn new things and become more useful to the needs of the hotel. At the end of the process I will review and evaluate in order to ensure that I record my outcomes and always undertake development in my plan.

Academic Skills

Academic skills are essential in ensuring success in the academic life and proficiency in the studies. One important academic skill is referencing. Understanding referencing and referencing styles is essential to ensure that you are not plagiarising work and that you are giving credit to the persons that have written the content and the ideas belong to. Another important academic skill is revision, as exam and assignment period can be very stressful and being prepared and confident in revision can help with the stress and improve quality and performance. The first step to improve your revision is to plan it in advance, decide what needs to be studied from class and make sure appropriate note keeping is taken. Also ensure the revision is effective and done efficiently. Sometimes it is better to take more breaks in order to allow the brain to concentrate and focus on revision again. Note making is also an essential skill in order to gain academic success and gain and learn as much information as possible from your classes. It is important to make effective notes during lectures and classes and is not just about writing down everything that you hear or read. Note making is a process of reviewing, connecting and formulating ideas that you get from attending a lecture or from reading published literature. Making notes also help you to stay engaged during lectures and clarify your thinking. It will also allow you to realise if you have any questions for the teaching and be selective with the identifying key ideas. Note keeping will also help with revision and remembering the main points and materials. All good notes should contain a source for the information in order to validate it, that usually includes the title of the publication, author, date and place of publication. Good notes should also help to identify the main topics and key idea, as well as making them easier to understand. They should always contain examples and case studies that can validate the theoretical theory in practicality. Good notes often need to look attractive as well in order to trigger the attention from the brain, therefore it is best to use coloured pen for the titles or use different drawings as reference. Good notes should also contain recommendations for further reading and any unaddressed issues. Sometimes poor note taking can lead to unintentional plagiarism, so it is always best to avoid that and keep the notes tidy. Writing is also an essential skill to have for the academic pathway. Writing assignments are usually used in order to assess the knowledge, as well as the ability to explain a theory and your understanding of its implications. When writing a main body it is always important to summarise, as well as connecting the paragraphs. Writing in paragraphs will also help to make the writing less descriptive and more focused on critical thinking. Evidence should be included in each paragraph such as facts, quotations, arguments or research from primary or secondary research. Presentations are also very important for the academic journey and usually successful presentations depend on a good preparation. It is very important to decide beforehand what evidence to include and what visual aids to use. Presentation skills are also very important and can be developed by practice and confidence. A good idea is to practise in front of a smaller group that can offer constructive feedback. In this way next time you will feel more confident.

(Philpott et al, 2013)

Conclusion

In every aspect of life, development of skills can help and find ways of new thinking and problem solving, making yourself a more valuable individual for the society and yourself. I believe that it is important to develop new skills every year in order to ensure you are always developing and not stagnating at the same point.

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