

Introduction

Society has a tendency to develop and change quickly making competition high between companies within all industries trying to survive against each other. Employers are now not only looking for individuals with degree's but rather for them to have certain employability skills which can be used within their profession. This will help them get ahead of their competitors as the employees which they acquire have a wide range of skills to bring to the table along side with all the relevant academic information they have acquired during their degree.

As the key focus for businesses is getting ahead of your competitors, we must first look at what employability skills these employers are looking for in graduates which will help them stand out from the rest.

What skills do employers want?

Employability skills can be defined as "A set of achievements, understandings and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and to be successful in their chosen occupations" – Peter Knight & Mantz Yorke (HEFCE/DfES ESECT group)

Within this day and age, despite having a degree, you cannot rely on it alone to automatically open doors for you after you graduate. Companies are paying much more attention to employability skills rather than academic achievements of the graduates as there is a vast amount of potential employees who are equally as well qualified as each other academically; making employability skills the only separable factor.

Through a wide range of research, I believe that I have narrowed down the employability skills which companies seek which can be divided into eight basic skills which are: **Communication, Teamwork, Problem Solving, Initiative & Enterprise, Planning & Organising, Self-Management, Learning** and finally **Technology**.

Why do companies want these skills?

Communication skills

Employers look for people who have the ability to communicate both verbally and in writing with their peers which consist of such things as maintaining good eye contact or being able to write clearly and succinctly. These essential skills give you the power to be able to get your message across with less chance of being misunderstood.

Similarly, active listening skills involve not only hearing but gaining and understanding information from others. As listening is a basic requirement, leading to fewer mistakes and greater understanding of your employer. Communication becomes even more important as you progress as people skills and an aptitude for teamwork is essential for managerial positions.

The modern age has a way of dispensing information rapidly as everyone has a communication device within reach of their fingertips. People can now work from anywhere at anytime without having to sit behind a desk all day. This means that information is moving at an accelerated rate making employers more focused on hiring individuals with good communication skills.

A **2014 Gallup survey** asked 1,015 people how frequently they had used a variety of communication methods the previous day. Seventy-three percent of respondents said they had read or sent a text every day. Eighty-two percent had made a phone call on a cell phone. Seventy percent had sent or received an email, and 55 percent had used social media to communicate.

To summarise communication skills will give you the tools to build a good relationship with colleagues and superiors, creating a good work environment where work can be completed more efficiently.

Teamwork skills

Teamwork is an important part of an effective workplace. An efficient team can be trained as a group to be able to help each other maximize their job performance within the workplace. “Poorly managed work groups are on average 50% less productive and 44% less profitable than well managed groups.” – Gallup

These statistics highlight the importance of teamwork in the workplace as there are multiple benefits for working well together. For example:

Increased efficiency – When you are working as a team you are collectively working towards one certain goal or a set of objectives. Therefore, the whole process of your work becomes more efficient as for example if you run into any problems you will have multiple people to help you solve the issue. From a management standpoint it allows you to take on additional work without having to hire more staff which will generate extra revenue.

Inspiration – One of the greatest benefits of working in a team can be the inspiration and ideas which you gain from team discussions. As running ideas through one another can really broaden your perspective on the project which you are working on. “Productivity improves by 20-25% in organizations with connected employees.” – McKinsey Global Institute

Sharing the workload – When working towards a common goal workload is shared equally with all team members. In a perfect scenario work is equally distributed according to strengths and weaknesses of the individuals. This will also allow you to help other’s once you have finished your workload, as you are all working for the same goal you should offer assistance to complete the project. “Work overload decreases productivity by 68% in employees who feel they don’t have enough hours in the day to complete their tasks.” – Cornerstone

Problem solving skills

Problem solving can be used to develop practical and creative solutions within your workplace. Effective problem solving skills enable the employee to analyse, identify and solve the problem which they are faced with. In order to achieve this, you must first determine the steps which need to be taken to fix the issue that you are faced. If you are unable to do so, you must ask the appropriate people for help- which is where your “Communication Skills” come into practice.

Self-management skills

Companies require graduates to possess self-management skills to complete the work which they receive alone or at least with minimal supervision. This will maximise efficiency within the company as everyone will be able to focus on their own individual tasks without having to stand over other employees constantly and having to tell them what to do. Which in foresight maximise the workload which they can take on.

These self-management skills range from things like:

Stress Resistance – Having the ability to resist any stressful situations which may occur during your work time. As these situations have a tendency to block your ability to think and make rational decisions which is not ideal. Thus, you must develop a way to deal with situations like these so that you become a more productive employee.

Problem Solving – Even the hardest tasks which you run into can be handled as long as you have the right mental process in your head which will allow you to deal with the situation. It requires you to operate facts and make correct assumptions to analyse the situation which you are in; keeping your mind just right will allow you to make correct decisions even in the toughest situations.

Time Management – Producing results which are expected by your peers can be done effortlessly as long as you plan your decisions in a timely manner. As time management is a crucial self-management skill which can help you to meet even the toughest of deadlines.

In a 2008 NAPO survey of 400 consumers nationwide:

27% said they feel disorganized at work, and of those, 91 percent said they would be more effective and efficient if their workspace was better organized

28% said they would save over an hour per day

27% said they would save 31 to 60 minutes each day

Planning and organizing skills

Employers require graduates to make plans and organize them so that they are able to achieve both short and long term-goals for the company which they are working for. If you start out by working within a small company, they will not be able to succeed if appointments or deadlines are missed or time is wasted as every second matters.

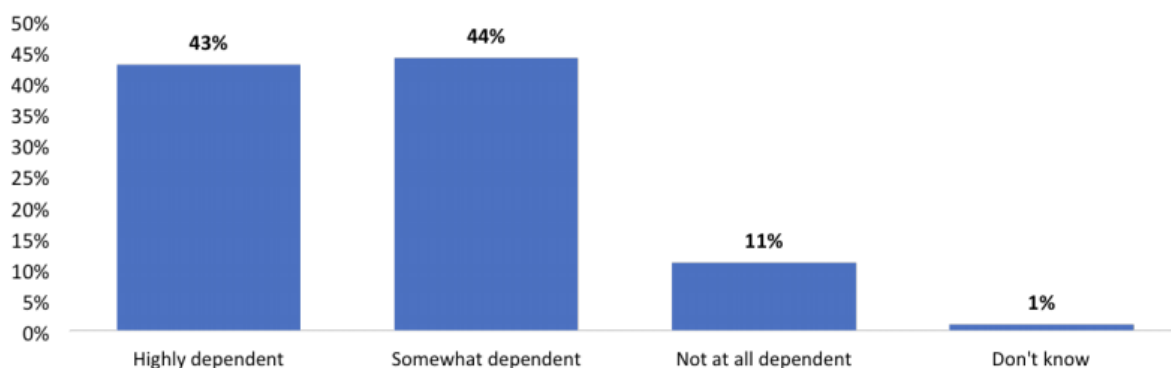
Planning can be used to achieve both short-term and long term goals for your business as an employee. Effective planning starts with knowing where you want to be and also which steps you have to take in order to get there. This can be achieved by creating concrete objectives which you must follow in order to reach your end goal.

Technology skills

As the dawn of the technological age has come upon us, technology is a vital part for businesses. Company's are now maximising proficiency by using computers and telecommunication devices within the workplace to maximise workload. Employees must now possess the skills to be able to benefit from this advantage.

This will also help employees understand current trends within your industry through the information which they can acquire by using both computers and your telecommunication devices within the workplace.

2016 Syntonic assessment of the use of personal smartphones for work found that 87% of companies expect their employees to use their personal devices for work purposes, as shown in Figure 1. Of those respondents, 77% anticipated that number would increase within a year's time.



Life-long learning skills

Within all industries whether it be medical, law or culinary people recognise that the best way to develop expertise is learning through practice in the workplace. Making the company development sustainable, the graduate or employee must undergo continuous learning which will allow the company to keep pace with the rapid-developing society in which we have today. These skills will also allow the employees or graduates to gain life-long learning skills which can be transferable in all fields of work or even life.

Initiative and enterprise skills

These skills can help graduates develop new and better opportunities within the workplace. Being able to recognise that improvement can be made in a certain area goes a long way for an employer as companies and businesses are always trying to improve themselves and go above and beyond for the customer. Thus, being enterprising goes beyond normal effort; it means that you can demonstrate your enthusiasm for the idea for it to be put into reality.

Recognising the need for new opportunity can lead to successful changes within your workplace which will better both the employee and the company. With initiative you can find improvements for day to day tasks which will lower workflow and increase efficiency. Having initiative and enterprising ability is an imperative as you can make improvements on how a business operates.

Conclusion

There is not a shadow of a doubt that graduates who possess a good degree will gain an excellent starting point for their desired career, however employers within this day and age are looking for something more within graduates. Companies desire employees who can bring benefits to the company through their employability skills which they possess which will allow them to get ahead of their fierce competition. Through my research I believe that I have summed up all the employability skills which a graduate would need to be employed for a top position opportunity within any industry.