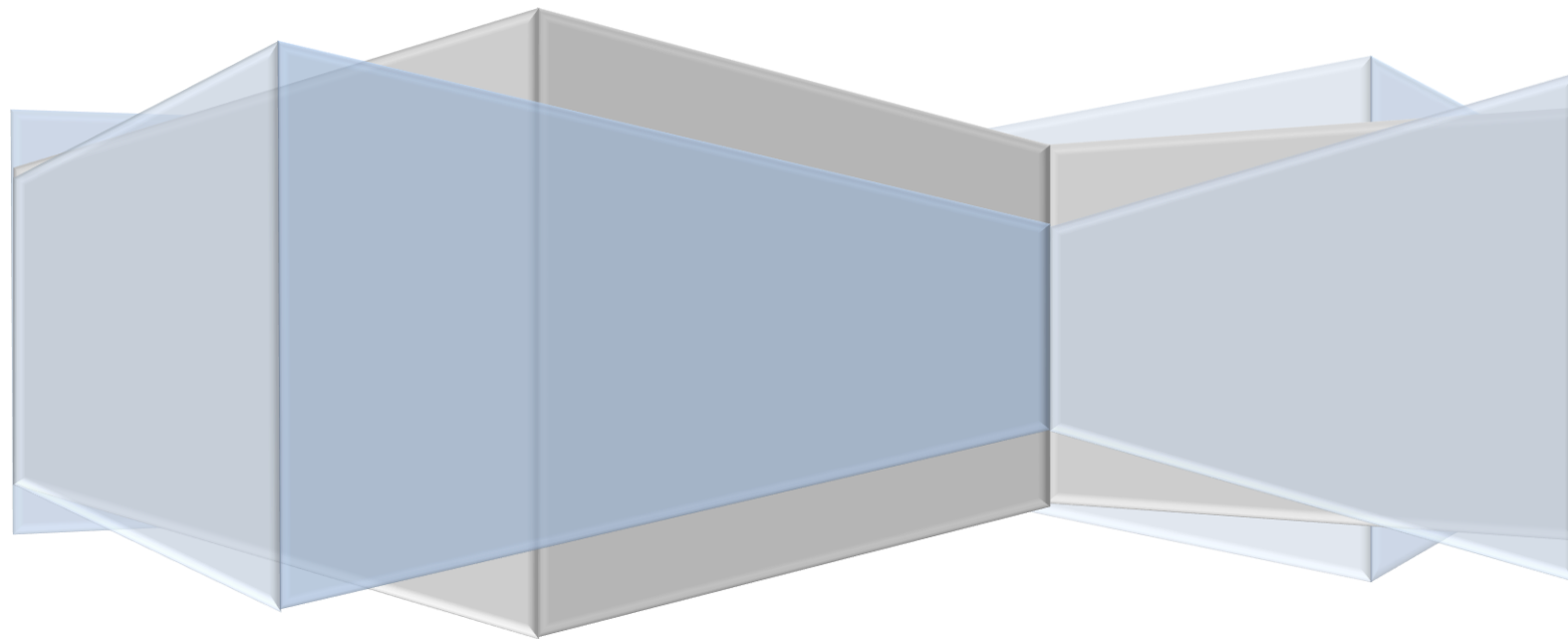


Employability

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Employability

In definition, employability refers to the attributes of one individual that allow him or her to gain employment. Lee Harvey further defines it as “the ability of a graduate to get a satisfying job, stating that job acquisition should not be prioritized over preparedness for employment to avoid pseudo measure of individual employability.” He also sustains that employability is not a set of skills but a variety of attributes which have been developed through higher level learning, therefore employability is not a product, it is in fact a process of learning.

In my own understanding employability is much more than just skills, and it is not something we should not ignore. Employability enables us to be successful throughout our working life. There are multiple ways to enhance your employability and yourself as an individual, for example studying at a university will give you an advantage in your career, it will open up the opportunity of applying for jobs with different skill set requirement, the subject you studied will be relevant for some employers.

“Employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment. For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess, the way they use these assets and present them to employers and the context (personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which they seek work.” (Hillage and Pollard, 1998)

You will probably find yourself having more than one job or even having to transfer from one job to another, and even if you do stay in the same job for a longer period the nature of it is likely to change, as you get older into one workplace your knowledge builds up and you end up being promoted which opens up the door for even more skill sets to be learned. It is good to always accept new information and push yourself for that extra mile, even if you end up leaving your current job your employability skills are transferable, you can easily adapt them to different situations and different workplaces, employability is not something to be ignored. Thinking about it from an early stage is likely to increase the chance that you will be successful in your career later on. It is all about achieving your goals.

We have talked about how higher education can jump start your employability and get you a job suitable for your skills, but sometimes a degree is just not enough to secure a job. These days employers are looking for people that can prove they have strong team working abilities, communication skills and of course relevant work experience. You have to remember, there is a big chance that there are more than one competitor for the role you are applying for, which all of them have the same level of education as you do, so you have to make sure you stand out from the crowd, you have to show confidence and present your set of skills better than the rest to make sure you land that job.

They say employability has four main elements:

- **Employability assets** – the knowledge, skills and attitudes you have earned throughout your life
- **Deployment** – your career management skills

- **Presentation** – which in my opinion is one of the most important one, as it includes your CV, interview technique, job getting skills, etc.
- **Personal circumstances** – this is related to you as a person, who you are, where do you come from, how have you been raised, what is your responsibility to the people around you, etc.

Employability is a lifelong process and it applies to all students, no matter their situation, course, university, degree or mode of study, it is complex and involves different areas that interact. It is certainly not just about preparing students for employment or adding additional modules into the curriculum, it is about supporting students to enhance their range of skills, attributes, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes which allows them to be successful in life, not just in their employment.

Let us talk a bit about the top ten skills that recruiters look in a potential employee:

1. Commercial Awareness (or business acumen)

Generally speaking, to be commercially aware means to have a basic understanding of the business you intend to apply for, that includes their products and activities, the money it makes, the way it is managed and the role you are applying for. If you are aiming for a private sector business you also need a basic understanding of the marketplace you are getting yourself into, you have to be aware of the major competitors of this said business and what are the differences between the two of them. It is all about being prepared, in order to develop this commercial awareness you have to research

the employer, and everything else related to the industry, before you even apply for the role. Be one step ahead!

2. Communication

You need to be able to express yourself concisely to impress your employer, but you also need to be a good listener and good at asking questions. Just look at communication as a whole package instead of an individual skill, it is all about the way you present what you have to say, or even how much you say because saying too much can be really bad in certain situation. Being able to phrase the right questions and come up with the right answers is vital in any job field so it is something that you have to master with practice. How do you practice? Well that is really up to you, there are so many ways of getting better at communication with others, pretty much any customer service related job. Whether is a telephone job or customer service part-time job, volunteer: for example, befriending elderly people or helping children learn will significantly help your communication skills, even writing your own blog and making your own videos will help.

3. Teamwork

It goes without saying that teamwork is one of the most important skills you can acquire in your life. Most of the jobs you will ever be employed in you will have to part of a team and learning how to cooperate with one another is crucial. We have already established how communication is a must, well here you can put your skills up to test. Life is better when you got friends surrounding you right? Same goes for your workplace, befriend your workmates, respect them

and gain their trust and you will do just fine. You need to prove you are a team player and sometimes you might have to take the initiative and take on responsibility, but it is a lot better to do that when you know you can count on your team.

4. Negotiation and persuasion

This is about being able to set out what you want to achieve and how, but also being able to understand where the other person is coming from so that you can both get what you want or need and feel positive about it. You will find yourself in situations where you are in disagreement with someone but you must always remember to be polite and diplomatic while doing so.

5. Problem solving

Problem solving includes all there is about using your logic as well as your imagination to make sense of the situation you are in and come up with an intelligent way to solve it. In fact the best way to solve a problem is to always be prepared, to anticipate all the potential future problems and act accordingly to prevent them or at least mitigate their effects. You have to have a clear mind and a lateral mindset,

6. Leadership

You may not get a manager position straight away, but as an individual you need to always show your potential to motivate teams and other colleagues that may work for you. It is all about assigning

the right tasks to the right people, leading by good example. When employers talk about leadership potential in relation to graduates, they are referring to how a variety of skills and qualities come together to ensure that an objective is achieved: whether that objective is the accomplishment of a task or the creation of a cohesive team.

7. Organisation

This is about proving you can prioritise , work efficiently and productively but also manage your time well. Generally speaking being organised is a good trait but when it comes to working you have to take it up to the next level. It is good to be able to show your employers how well organised you are, how you can manage your deadlines and decide what is most important and what needs to be focused on in order to get it all done in the fastest and most effective way possible.

8. Perseverance and motivation

Employers want people to have a bit of get-up-and-go. In your working life you will face a lot of challenges and you need to show employers that you're the kind of person who will find a way through no matter how hard the situation is, always keep a positive attitude! In order to do so you have to be resilient, which means you have to be able to face setback, unforeseen events, obstacles and failure without allowing them to affect you in any way, mentally or physically. To state the obvious, the more resilient you are the better for your overall emotional and mental welfare. It is not about avoiding stress

or pressure, but recognising when you are affected by it and having coping strategies to manage them.

9. Ability to work under pressure

This is about keeping calm in a crisis and not becoming too overwhelmed or stressed. No job will be entirely free of stress and, depending on the career you have chosen, stressful situations could be a regular occurrence of working life. Interviewers want to see that you will be able to handle the stresses of work, that you are aware of what you find stressful and that you are able to remain productive and professional in challenging situations. Recruiters don't want to hear that you never feel stress, or that you've never been in a stressful situation. This is unlikely to the extent that, even if you were being entirely honest, recruiters may assume you're being untruthful, which is never a good look in interviews.

10. Confidence

There is a fine balance between being confident in yourself and being arrogant, you have to find that balance. But it is not just the confidence in yourself we're talking about, but also the confidence you have to have in your colleagues and the company you work for. *Alexandra Watson* likes to use the term 'superconfidence' to describe genuine self-confidence that can't be faked. "If you are superconfident, people can't help but notice you"- she states, clearly a big advantage in any recruitment process.

Importantly, she stresses that it's possible to develop superconfidence. "Know what you want and how to get it", she advises. *Alexandra* is a big believer in understanding what makes you happy. "Then challenge yourself regularly and be the proactive one. A series of small breakthroughs makes a massive difference to how you feel about yourself."

There are, inevitably, a wide range of skills that could be useful to employers. Each of us also has our own personal range of skills, and we therefore can each make a unique contribution to any organisation. Learning to recognise and use your skills appropriately is essential. An open mind, and a willingness to embrace new ideas, is probably one of the most useful attributes that you can bring to any organisation.

In conclusion employability is not something you are born with, nor can you acquire it overnight, it's a set of skills and knowledge that you have to develop throughout your life, either by using higher education or different workplaces or even life changing experiences, in the end it all comes down to you, it all depends on how much you want to succeed in life and how hard are you willing to work for it.

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