

COMMON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS: TOOLS TO SUPPORT CAREER SUCCESS FROM DAY ONE



The 20th century economy was tailor-made for entry-level workers who could develop the skills they needed while on the job, and technology moved slowly enough for them to keep pace. But in today's economy, unskilled jobs are becoming obsolete – jobs in all sectors throughout the economy require more skills, and those skills are changing more rapidly every day.

On top of this, students and new workers lack the basic skills needed to learn and train for the jobs of today. From advanced manufacturing to the service industry, transferable employability skills are now an entry-level requirement. As a result, students joining the workforce require significant remediation or on-the-job training. To address this need, business and industry groups have joined forces to create a new foundation for workforce preparation.

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

Employers in every sector value foundational employability skills just as much as specific, advanced technical skills, even for junior level positions. Of particular concern are “people and workplace skills” that cannot be easily measured via testing. Yet, these are the very skills that are becoming increasingly critical to job success. A recent CareerBuilder survey found that 72 percent of employers considered these “soft” skills just as, if not more, important than job-specific ones.

Today's jobs are cross-discipline and integrated, for example, requiring more applied math and science skills than ever before. With shrinking staffs, the demand for higher productivity and the increased need for coordination across teams and job functions, employers are demanding skills such as teamwork, problem solving and verbal and written communication.

DEFINING SUCCESS

The National Network of Business and Industry Associations, an initiative co-founded by Business Roundtable and ACT Foundation, has created a framework that identifies the core set of fundamental skills that employees need, no matter the industry or job, along with a common vocabulary to explain them. Using this industry-defined skills roadmap, employers and educators can focus on preparing students and workers to learn, work and advance in the jobs of today and tomorrow.

The Common Employability Skills (CES) framework defines the full scope of foundational skills needed to succeed in any career or industry. The framework includes core competencies in four categories – personal skills, people skills, applied knowledge and workplace skills – and the knowledge, skills and abilities that make up each of those competencies.

COMMON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

PERSONAL SKILLS

The engaged employee is a striver and a role model.

APPLIED KNOWLEDGE

The engaged employee can logically analyze information in order to inform conclusions.



PEOPLE SKILLS

The engaged employee is a team player.

WORKPLACE SKILLS

The engaged employee is a problem solver and a decision maker.

POWERING THE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

The need for industry groups and employers to coordinate and develop a unified message for employees has never been more urgent. By having an independent source of skills to use as a guide, workers and employers can chart career paths that are durable and deliver results.

Many of the skills included in the CES framework are acquired through experiences and programs that students and workers are already pursuing, including work-and-learn models, military service, prior employment, community service and traditional education. By adopting the framework, employers deliver for their workforce – and for their bottom line.

The National Network has identified the Common Employability Skills for all jobs, which benefit:

- Employers, who can now identify the common skills that all their employees should exhibit.
- Potential employees, who know which basic skills employers expect them to have for any job in the workplace, and can better communicate their skill levels to employers.
- Educators and other learning providers, who know which foundational skills to emphasize.

To learn more about the National Network's CES efforts, visit nationalnetwork.org or contact Jacey Cavanagh at jcavanagh@nationalnetwork.org.