

Top Personal Skills Employers Seek

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In addition to the knowledge and specialist skills required for specific jobs, the following personal skills and qualities are some of the most commonly sought-after by employers across all employment sectors.

Communication Skills (including speaking, writing, listening).

Communication is the main skill which you will see when you peruse the job advertisements across all sectors. Whether it is being able to make presentations, negotiate, produce reports, interact effectively with others both within and outside of an organisation, communication is at the heart of most roles.

Flexibility/Adaptability.

In these days of global change and new innovations it is essential that organisations are flexible and adaptable and this is reflected in their workforce, which also needs to be open to new ideas and concepts. Employees also need to be able to change projects, multitask and be able to work effectively in a team and independently as demands require.

Analytical/Research Skills.

An ability to assess a situation, seek multiple perspectives, gather more information if necessary, and identify key issues that need to be addressed is a key skill which you will be able to demonstrate through your research experience.

Self-Motivation.

You sometimes see advertisements asking for 'self-starters', i.e. self-motivated people who do not need constant supervision. Most professional posts will require self-motivated, energised people who will care and take responsibility for the success of projects.

Teamworking.

More important in industry, but becoming increasingly so in academia, the ability to operate effectively with other people in a professional manner, within one or more work-groups, is usually fundamental towards achieving a common goal.

Planning/Organising.

This relates to your ability to design, plan, organise and implement projects and tasks within an allotted timeframe, including goal-setting.

Financial/Entrepreneurship.

This skill is one of those mentioned by industry as being weakest amongst academic researchers. Your limited experience may still be able to demonstrate an understanding of funding and enterprise through grants you may have applied for (e.g. travel), budgeting for resources, and links with industrial partners. Intreprenurship, i.e. finding enterprising solutions to situations within your own research project, can demonstrate an enterprising and intuitive mind.

Leadership/Management Skills.

These skills relate to an ability to take charge and manage your co-workers effectively. Again, you may have limited experience of leadership but you will most certainly have been managing your research project, possibly supervising students or instructing technical staff.

Self-Confidence/self-belief.

If you don't believe in yourself, in your unique mix of skills, education and abilities, why should an employer? Even more important if you are attempting to move to a new career path, it's important to instil confidence in your abilities. If you have faith in yourself and what you can offer employers they will have faith in you.