

## What skills do employers need?

Conference Board of Canada lists skills, attitudes needed by workers

Planning a career or getting a job depends a great deal on making the right match between the skills sought by employers and those provided by the job candidates.

To help Canadians develop skills that will set them on the way to success, the Corporate Council on Education, part of the Conference Board of Canada, has developed a set of basic skills that are important to every employer. It is called an employability profile.

The council is made up of senior executives of corporations across Canada. Part of its goal is to promote business and education partnerships for the encouragement of continuous learning.

In its *Report on Employability Skills*, the council explains the reasons for the profile, how the skills are developed and how they fit into education. While the emphasis of the study was on young people preparing for careers, the skills provide an excellent checklist for any job-seeker.



The Conference Board of Canada works with Canadians to develop job skills.

The chart is an easy reference that can be kept for self-evaluation and as a guide for personal development.

Well-educated people who are committed to excellence and lifelong learning are the key to the social and economic well-

being of our country. They are critical to the survival and growth of Canadian businesses.

There is growing concern that many young people do not see the direct relevance of what they are learning in school to their needs in later life. In particular, there is concern that many do not see how the skills and attitudes they develop when they solve a mathematical problem, write an essay, learn to use a computer or work on a group project are directly related to their later ability to get, keep and progress on a job.

The Corporate Council on Education has identified the critical skills, qualities and abilities all elementary and secondary school students should develop. They need to:

- ▲ work to the best of their ability;
- ▲ participate;
- ▲ pay attention to what gives them personal satisfaction in their work, and
- ▲ meet the needs of employers for skilled entry-level employees.

### WHAT ARE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS?

The employability skills profile is a generic list of skills, qualities, abilities, attitudes and behavior that forms the foundation of a high-quality Canadian workforce.

Employers look for these skills in new recruits and develop and enhance them through education and training programs for current employees. For simplicity, the term "skills" is used as shorthand for the whole set of characteristics that make a person employable.

For clarity, the skills have been grouped into three categories: academic, personal management and teamwork skills. Employers place equal emphasis on each category, both in the profile and in hiring decisions. The skills in each category are not listed in priority. In the workplace, as in school, skills are integrated and used in varying combinations, depending on the nature of the particular job activity.

In summary, the profile says all companies need:

- ▲ people who can communicate, think and continue to learn throughout their lives;
- ▲ people who can demonstrate positive attitudes and behavior, responsibility and adaptability, and
- ▲ people who can work with others.

In principle and in practice, the Council recognizes the need for employers to accommodate individual differences and to provide equal opportunities for women, native people, visible minorities and people with disabilities.

### HOW ARE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEVELOPED?

The focus for this study was on identifying skills. These skills are developed through a variety of life experiences provided by parents; by integrated educational approaches in schools and post-secondary institutions; by actions that support skill development on the job; and by formal and informal opportunities for updating skills throughout life.

## Critical skills required in the Canadian workforce

### ACADEMIC SKILLS

Skills which provide the basic foundation to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results.

### PERSONAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS

The combination of skills, attitudes and behaviors required to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results.

### TEAMWORK SKILLS

Those skills needed to work with others on a job and to achieve the best results

### CANADIAN EMPLOYERS NEED A PERSON WHO CAN:

#### COMMUNICATE

- ▼ Understand and speak the languages in which business is conducted.
- ▼ Listen, understand and learn.
- ▼ Read, comprehend and use written materials, including graphs, charts and displays.
- ▼ Write effectively in the languages in which business is conducted.

#### THINK

- ▼ Think critically and act logically to evaluate situations, solve problems and make decisions.
- ▼ Understand and solve problems involving mathematics and use the results.
- ▼ Use technology, instruments, tools and information systems effectively.
- ▼ Access and apply specialized knowledge from various fields (i.e., arts, skilled trades, technology, physical and social sciences).

#### LEARN

- ▼ Continue to learn for life.

#### POSITIVE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

- ▼ Self-esteem and confidence.
- ▼ Honesty, integrity and personal ethics.
- ▼ A positive attitude toward learning, growth and personal health.
- ▼ Initiative, energy and persistence to get the job done.

#### RESPONSIBILITY

- ▼ The ability to set goals and priorities in work and personal life.
- ▼ The ability to plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals.
- ▼ Accountability for actions taken.

#### ADAPTABILITY

- ▼ A positive attitude toward change.
- ▼ Recognition of and respect for people's diversity and individual differences.
- ▼ The ability to identify and suggest new ideas to get the job done—creativity.

#### WORK WITH OTHERS

- ▼ Understand and contribute to the organization's goals.
- ▼ Understand and work within the culture of the group.
- ▼ Plan and make decisions with others and support the outcomes.
- ▼ Respect the thoughts and opinions of others in the group.
- ▼ Exercise "give and take" to achieve group results.
- ▼ Seek a team approach as appropriate.
- ▼ Lead when appropriate, mobilizing the group for high performance.