

Career Links

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Soft Skills: What they are and why you need them

Every job requires a different mix of skills, knowledge, and experience depending on the employer's needs. Skills are sometimes categorized as "hard" and "soft" types. The "hard skills" involve the use of technology (computers, equipment, machinery, etc.) and the application of principles (math/ finance, administrative procedures, sales/ marketing etc.). While these core competencies are critical for job performance an additional must have for successful job seekers in today's service based economy are people and relationship-building skills or "soft skills".

"Soft skills" refer to a cluster of personal and interpersonal attitudes qualities that make an applicant a good employee and compatible to work with. Companies value soft skills because research suggests and experience shows that they can be just as important an indicator of job performance as hard skills. The following "soft skills" are those sought by virtually every company looking for potential employees:

- **Strong Work Ethic** - motivated and dedicated to be at work when scheduled and getting the job done, no matter what.
- **Positive Attitude** - generate good energy and good will.
- **Communication** - verbally articulate a point of view and be a good listener. Create good working relations with colleagues, customers and vendors. This includes being able to train/ coach co-workers and convey ideas in writing.
- **Time Management** - effectively prioritize multiple tasks to meet goals for both the organization and personally.
- **Critical Thinking/ Problem-Solving** - resourcefulness to successfully assess and resolve workplace issues and challenges
- **Team Player /Cooperation** - contribute to the success of a group in your assigned role while also getting along with people of different cultures and viewpoints.
- **Self-Esteem** - belief you can do the job and conveying that confidence both during the interviewing process and after being hired.
- **Ability/ Willingness to Learn** - coachability and openness to learning and growing as a person and as a professional.
- **Flexibility/ Adaptability** - appropriate responses to new situations and challenges in a changing workplace.
- **Leadership/ Motivation** - take personal responsibility for an outcome when situations arise while inspiring others to perform in a manner consistent with an organization's goals.
- **Working Well Under Pressure** - coping skills to handle the stress of deadlines and crises with job performance.



"You can think best when you are the happiest"

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When responding to an employment ad, note which soft skills are requested. If none are listed then which of the above would likely be a good match for the position for which you are applying? Make sure you include the soft skills relevant to the position and avoid using a laundry list approach on a resume or in a cover letter. Don't make the mistake of claiming soft skills competency without specific examples. Demonstrating soft skills is far more effective than making empty promises, such as: I possess solid people and communication skills. Be specific! Try to recall a time when a supervisor or colleague complimented you on how well you demonstrated one of the above soft skills. The previous statement could be restated in the following manner: Develop/ maintain positive customer relations using verbal and listening skills that resolve problems. Keep in mind the hard truth is that if you want that job then soft skills are a necessity now.

Some of the Best Jobs for the 21st Century

When evaluating a career move it is important to pick a career that will be in high demand in the future and afford a good standard of living without creating excessive personal debt problems. An important consideration is the potential for losing a job to off-shoring like so many of the jobs in and related to manufacturing. Competition for the remaining jobs will be fierce and wages can be expected to be stagnant. The future will belong to the people with the vision to select and train for the right career.

The list below highlights jobs that pay better than average and are expected to grow faster or much faster than average in the U.S over the next several years. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list of good paying, high growth jobs. For example, it is expected the environmental industry will emerge as a high growth jobs producer in the future. However, the “green” revolution is still in its infancy so most of these jobs have yet to be developed and it is still an unknown. Biotechnology has been around for a quarter century but it may just now be entering a significant growth phase fueled by genetic research with far ranging impact on all aspects of healthcare.

Many of these jobs require a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree. There is little argument to be found that future jobs with the best pay and prospects will not continue to require a bachelor’s degree or at least technical training, such as a two year degree. On-going training will be required to upgrade job skills and maintain personal productivity. The common factor among these jobs is a core competency in math and/ or science. The math and/ or science core competency trend will undoubtedly continue and strongly favor job seekers with that education/ training.

Job Title	Projected Need	Projected Growth	Median Wages*
Registered Nurse	1,001,000	18 – 26%	\$28/ hr
Accountants and Auditors	450,000	18 – 26%	\$24 - \$33/ hr
Computer Software Engineers (Applications)	300,000	27%+	\$38/ hr
Computer Systems Analysts	280,000	27%+	34/ hr
Management Analysts	264,000	18 – 26%	\$33/ hr
Computer Software Engineers (Systems Software)	150,000	27%+	\$41/ hr
Securities, Commodities, and	161,000	18 – 26%	\$33/ hr
Financial Services Sales Agents	161,000	18-26%	\$33/hr
Securities, Commodities, and Financial	161,000	18 – 26%	\$33/ hr
Network/ Computer Systems Administrators	154,000	27%+	\$30/ hr
Pharmacists	95,000	18 – 26%	\$45/ hr
Civil Engineers	114,000	18 – 26%	\$33/ hr
Industrial Engineers (non-sales)	89,000	18 – 26%	\$33 - \$38/ hr
Personal Financial Advisors	88,000	27%+	\$32/ hr
Financial Analysts	87,000	27%+	\$32/ hr
Dental Hygienists	82,000	27%+	\$30/ hr
Physical Therapists	68,000	27%+	\$32/ hr

*To calculate an approximate annual salary multiple the hourly rate by 2. For example 2 x \$28/ hr = \$56,000 annually. Source: <http://www.careerwoyages.gov/index.cfm>

High Growth Industries (Currently)			
Advanced Manufacturing	Aerospace	Automotive	Construction
Education Energy	Healthcare	Homeland Security	Hospitality
Information Technology	Retail	Transportation	
Emerging Industries (Future)			
	Biotechnology	Geospatial Technology	Nanotechnology

(Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics 2006 wages and 2006-2016 projection series.)

Five Tips to Boost Your Interviewing Skills:

Knowing what it takes to successfully complete an interview in the business world today is very important. Good non-verbal communication, attire, preparation, answering questions, as well as asking the right questions are a few areas one should be prepared for.

1. **Practice Good Non-verbal Communication** — By sitting up straight, making eye contact, and giving a firm handshake in an interview not only gives the employer a good first impression but it builds your confidence and professionalism during an interview.
2. **Dress for the Job** – It's important to look professional and well groomed for an interview. Know your company's dress code or call ahead to find out.

3. **Do your Research** — Be prepared before an interview by doing your homework. Learn your company's mission statement, core values, or any other important information about them by searching on their website to help in your preparation. Know your resume and cover letter and be ready to explain each item if asked to elaborate.

4. **Be Careful in Answering Questions-** If an employer asks for an example of a past work experience be sure to answer the whole question completely. Be sure to exemplify your good qualities. This is the time to relate your experiences with their needs.

5. **Ask Questions** — It is extremely important to have questions prepared before you go into the interview. By asking questions not only demonstrates to an employer that you have done your research and you're interested, but it also gives you the chance to learn more about the company.



Finding Work in Difficult Times:

Looking for work in difficult economic times can be stressful. But don't quit looking before you've even started. Ironically, many people have decided to look outside the box when it comes to job hunting. Here are a few tips:

Open Up Your Search -

Determine what marketable skills you have to offer and research other careers that have similar skill requirements. Expand your search by transferring work experience you have to another area.

Pick five companies that you've heard good things about or have a general interest in and research

them. Look to find a tie between what they are searching for and what skills you have to offer. If there's a match, contact the hiring manager for more information about their potential job openings.

Become Familiar with Trends in the Business World -

Start expanding your information sources. Pick up your local newspaper and check out any job listings. Utilize popular websites online such as: racinerecruit.com, cityofracine.org, or wisc.jobs.com to check out open jobs or to post your resume.

Increase Your Networking Skills by Volunteering -

Have you always been meaning to volunteer but never had enough time? Well now is the best time! Volunteering for your local hospital, animal shelter, or museum opens many doors to networking for a potential job. People who know people can get you the job you've been hunting for. And who knows? Maybe a position will open up at the organization you are volunteering for.

No matter what job approach you take it's important to remember to be creative and look outside the box when searching for a job.

WDC - Featured Workshops

Sign-Up for a Career Assessment!

Evaluate your abilities and interests with the CAPS aptitude test and Harrington O'Shea career inventory. Test results will be provided and occupational options will be discussed. This test is held on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month.

Thursday	11/6/08	9 am - 12 pm	Racine, Classroom B
Thursday	11/20/08	9 am - 12 pm	Racine, Classroom B
Thursday	12/4/08	9 am - 12 pm	Racine, Classroom B
Thursday	12/18/08	9 am - 12 pm	Racine, Classroom B

***Because space is limited, registration is required, please call 638-6429 to reserve your seat.**



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Preparation for Resume Writing

Learn what it takes to create a professional resume that gets results. In order to receive the best possible assistance, **please bring your work history** complete with the name of your past employers, dates of employment, and the city & state in which you worked for each job you have held. Next available workshops are:

Wednesday	11/19/08	9am-11am	Racine, Classroom C
Tuesday	12/16/08	2pm-4pm	Racine, Classroom C

*Register online at: wdc.racineco.com or call (262) 638-6551 or (262) 638-6550

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



"whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve"

-Napoleon Hill-

The Workforce Development Center will be closed in observance of the Holidays on the following dates:

Thursday, November 27th

Friday, November 28th

Wednesday, December 24th

Thursday, December 25th

Wednesday, December 31st