Identifying Skills & Building Competencies

WHY ARE SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES IMPORTANT?

Whether you apply for graduate school, professional school or enter the labour force upon graduation, what you offer to employers as far as your knowledge, transferable and personal skills act as your leverage to secure the positions and career you want. Understanding what skills and competencies are enhances your ability to identify your own, take pride in what you have learned and accomplished and make it easier when you speak to others about your skills. The second part of understanding skills and competencies is to recognize where you need to develop and enhance your skills. This active and continuous goal setting is a key to career success and lifelong learning.

TYPES OF SKILLS

There are three main categories of skills and they are: transferable, knowledge and personal skills. The skills you enjoy using and the ones you would like to spend most of your time with relate to your motivated skills.

Transferable Skills (transfers with you)

These skills are portable and can be applied to various roles. Transferable skills are keys for success in any stage of career development, and particularly so during a transition. Examples of transferable skills include: networking, writing, organizing, delegating, presenting, planning, analyzing, scheduling, creativity, leadership, teaching and setting priorities.

Knowledge Skills (learnt)

These skills include special knowledge that is discipline or industry specific. These skills can be taught and trained. Examples of these skills include: literature reviews, discipline specific terminology, research skills, interviewing and survey skills, C+ Language, Auto Cad, environmental regulations, ANOVA, SAGD, Lean Management, and laboratory skills.

Personal Skills (who you naturally are)

These skills are known as “Self-Management Skills” according to Richard Bolles. These are personal qualities or traits that are unique to you. They connect with your transferable skills as these skills travel with you wherever you go, as they are part of who you are as a person. Examples of these skills include: humor, initiative, taking risks, enthusiasm, ethics, maturity, inner strength, physical fitness, determination, adaptable, industrious, passionate, creative, logical and calm.
Motivated Skills

Motivated skills connect to how you experience the use of your skills. These are skills you are competent at and enjoy using. These skills are connected with passion and excellence because not only are they something you can do, they are also something you enjoy doing. They are skills you can build on and integrate throughout your career and may suggest satisfying career options.

Identifying and Understanding Your Skills

Understanding your skills and abilities is a key component to career success. It is important to take an honest look at your strengths, but also at areas needing improvement. Keep in mind that just because you are good at something, it does not necessarily mean you like it enough to pursue as a career. For example, cooking or sports - you might just enjoy these for fun! You have many skills and talents. It is important to be able to identify not only those skills employers seek, but also to clearly understand your unique skills so that you find a career that is a fit for those talents. This will result in increased career satisfaction and fulfillment.

Here are a few sample questions to get you thinking about your abilities and talents.

What are your strengths?

1. 
2. 
3. 

What are your weaknesses?

1. 
2. 
3. 

What would others say you are good at?

1. 
2. 
3. 

What things come naturally to you or you are knowledgeable in?

1. 
2. 
3. ____________________________________________

What do you know a lot about?

1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________

What are you proud of about yourself?

1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________

What awards have you won in the past?

1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________

What were your best subjects in high school? Is there a pattern there?

1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________

Complete the skills inventory on the next two pages. Take note of your motivated skills – those skills you are strongest at and enjoy using.
### COMMUNICATION
- **Listening** carefully to what others are saying
- **Presenting** effectively to groups
- **Editing** documents for grammar and punctuation
- **Negotiating** with others to reach agreement
- **Conveying ideas** verbally and articulately
- **Writing technical/business documents**
- **Writing creatively**

### INTERPERSONAL & TEAM WORK
- **Building rapport** easily
- **Relating** to diverse people
- **Understanding others** - social perceptiveness
- **Giving feedback** - in a helpful and constructive manner
- **Mediating** - resolving differences / building consensus
- **Collaborating** with others to reach a common goal
- **Networking** - building/maintaining relationships

### TEACHING AND COUNSELLING
- **Advising or coaching** individuals or groups
- **Interviewing** others to gather information
- **Counselling** and supporting individuals in distress
- **Facilitating** or guiding a group
- **Teaching or training** others

### LEADERSHIP
- **Initiating** new tasks or projects
- **Motivating or inspiring** others
- **Persuading others** to one’s point of view
- **Leading, directing** others
- **Taking risks** when necessary
- **Making decisions** or recommendations

### CREATIVITY & INNOVATION
- **Adapting** - putting ideas or processes together in new ways
- **Creating, inventing** - developing new ideas, products or processes
- **Designing, developing** - curriculum, events, spaces, websites
- **Communicating visually** - through pictures and graphics
- **Imagining** - figuring out new ways or approaches to problems
- **Expressing self artistically** through music, painting, acting

### TECHNICAL REASONING
- **Diagnosing** - tracing problems to their sources
- **Spatial reasoning** - manipulating objects, mentally analyze effects
- **Understanding physical systems**, physical sciences or technology
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSFERABLE SKILLS INVENTORY: PAGE 2</th>
<th>1. Level of Skill 1 (Low) to 5 (High)</th>
<th>2. Do You Enjoy Using? Yes/No</th>
<th>3. Is this a Motivated Skill? Yes/No</th>
<th>4. Do You Want to Develop? Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining positive attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting and achieving learning goals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting feedback and learning from mistakes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of strengths and challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RESEARCH &amp; ANALYSIS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize or identify problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing a problem by breaking it down into relevant parts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching - gathering information or data in an organized manner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting patterns and connections in data or information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating solutions - figuring out solutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing or evaluating processes or solutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROJECT AND TASK MANAGEMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting goals that are achievable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizing or coordinating people, information, projects, resources or events</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning or developing projects or ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling or prioritizing tasks or events</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing and using insight to improve</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing foresight by anticipating future needs / problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>QUANTITATIVE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a budget</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numerical reasoning - Applying equations and methods to data to solve problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing - manipulating numbers rapidly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perform accounting functions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical analysis to explore and analyse data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INFORMATION MANAGEMENT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classifying, recording, retrieving as with data or ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending to detail - in data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing information or data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using technology to manage the flow of information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Social Media (LinkedIn, Twitter, and so on)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using productivity software (word processing, spreadsheets)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PHYSICAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual, fine motor dexterity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing or surveying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspecting, examining</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating instruments or tools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflection

What are you strongest skill areas?

What are your weakest skill areas?

What are some skills you are strong in but do not enjoy using?

What are your top 10 motivated skills (skills that you are strong in and enjoy using)?

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10.
Think of one or more accomplishments or examples where you have demonstrated these skills.

What are employers looking for?

The National Association of Career Educators (NACE) completed a survey in 2011 and identified their findings in an article called *Job Outlook: The Candidate Skills/Qualities Employers Want*. These skills include:

- Teamwork
- Verbal communication
- Obtain & process info
- Make decisions and solve problems
- Plan, organize and prioritize work
- Influence others
- Analyze quantitative data
- Technical knowledge related to job
- Edit or write technical documents

The Conference Board of Canada’s *Employability Skills 2000+* provide a list of skills you need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world of work - whether you work on your own or as a part of a team. These skills can also be applied and used beyond the workplace in a range of daily activities. They include:

- Fundamental Skills: The skills needed as a base for further development.
- Personal Management Skills: The personal skills, attitudes and behaviours that drive one’s potential for growth.
- Teamwork Skills: The skills and attributes needed to contribute productively.

Identifying Areas of Development

Compare what employers are looking for with your self-assessment. Identify any gaps?
Review your gaps and skills that you identified as being weak. Choose two to three skills that you would like to develop over the next year or two in order to enhance your marketability.

**Building Competencies**

What are possible activities for developing competencies?

**REVIEW YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS – CREATE A PRIDE LIST**

**What is a Pride List?**

By focusing on experiences in your life in which you felt a sense of pride, satisfaction and accomplishment, you will create good feelings about yourself that you can harness to fuel your career exploration. By identifying activities and experiences that have created feelings of pride, you are also identifying aspects of those experiences that you find to be particularly meaningful. Your feelings of pride, satisfaction and accomplishment along with meaningful experiences are important to consider in light of the career you would like to have.

**Develop your Pride List**

Develop a list experiences that have been positive for you. These are success stories or things that you are proud of, or things that energize you. Include your earliest memories. They can be anything from building a house to drawing a picture or running a race. It only matters how you feel about it. The standard to use in choosing items for this list is your own pride in feeling “I did that myself!” It is important to consider things you did in a variety of life roles (such as parenting, cooking, volunteering, learning as a student, etc.).

1. 
2. 
3. 
Reality Check

It is common that students may overestimate or more commonly underestimate the skills that they have to offer. A strategy to identify what others observe can be part of your skills identification. Ask people you know, trust and work with:

What are my major strengths?

What would do others say about me? (Ensure that this is someone who you know and trust, who can speak to your skills and who understand why you are asking).

Where can I grow?
RESOURCES

- Transferable Job Skills for Job-Seekers
- Self-Assessment: Skills Assessment Introduction
- Job Outlook: The Candidate Skills/Qualities Employers Want from NACE
- Skills Employers Seek, from Psych Web
- What Do Employers Really Want? Top Skills and Values Employers Seek from Job-Seekers

“What Color Is Your Parachute” book by Richard N. Bolles
- Has an excellent discussion on transferable skills and provides practical exercises for identifying