Articles on Top Skills desired by Employers

# The Top 5 Job Skills that Employers are Looking for in 2017

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Make 2017 just a little better than 2016 by improving the skills that employers are looking for.

As the giant ball drops on a crazy and tumultuous year and we look ahead to 2017, not everything is bad. The unemployment rate is hovering around 5 percent, which is considerably better than it was five or six years ago. What does that mean? That means there are jobs out there for the taking, but the competition is still fierce.

If you’re looking for a way to set yourself apart from the rest of the [resumes](https://www.topresume.com/career-advice/category/Resume_and_CV%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) out there, you need to think beyond your degree and your certifications. Start thinking about the top skills employers want. Most people who apply to a position have the nuts-and-bolts training required to do the job. According to a Linkedin [survey](https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/trends-and-research/2016/most-indemand-soft-skills%22%20%5Cl%20%22%21%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) of nearly 300 hiring managers in the U.S. conducted in 2016, it’s your soft skills that can put you at the top of the list.

Here are six real-life job skills that employers are looking for in 2017.

## 1. Communication skills.

Regardless of your profession, communication skills are a must. Communication skills are one of the top skills employers want. Big ideas, creative solutions, and awesome technique may not do you much good if you can’t get your ideas across to others. Even if you work remotely and do the majority of your work on a computer, you need to be able to communicate effectively with co-workers, bosses and clients.

[Paul J. Meyer](http://pauljmeyer.com/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), a wildly successful motivational speaker and author said, “Communication - the human connection - is the key to personal and career success.”

If you know, or can learn to, effectively convey your ideas to those around you, you’ll be more successful. It’s really that simple. From the words you choose to the subject lines of your emails, how effectively you communicate can be a benefit or roadblock to your career. Keep in mind, sometimes [non-verbal communication](https://development.experteer.topresume.com/career-advice/6-easy-ways-to-improve-nonverbal-communication-skills%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) is just as important.

If you think you need help in this area, check out some of the many [courses you can take](http://study.com/articles/List_of_Free_Online_Communications_Courses_and_Classes.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) online to boost your skills.

## 2. Organization.

Simply put, organization is a skill employers are looking for because it leads to efficiency and transparency. If you are a person who respects and follows some method of organization, it makes it easier for your company to understand your work process. On top of that, it allows both you and your company to see where you might be able to improve that process.

Organizational skills can mean anything from how you write up a report, to how you arrange your desk and supplies, to how frequently you have team meetings. Even though some people thrive in a haphazard methodology, or think they do, an organized approach is much more company-friendly. If you think you need to [step up your organization](https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/242359%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), there’s no better time than at the beginning of the new year.

## 3. Teamwork.

It’s not too hard to figure out why companies and hiring managers value teamwork as highly as they do. No matter what your job is, you most likely have to work with others frequently. That means more than just talking to them. You’ll have to share ideas, collaborate on projects and work together to find solutions to problems.

People who struggle to accept others’ input and cooperate on a regular basis can cause a number of problems, which can lead to an air of resentment in the office. Others may become frustrated and the company could even lose good employees.

If you aren’t great dealing with people face-to-face, there is some good news. In today’s high-tech world, [cloud-based collaboration](http://www.computerweekly.com/feature/Being-able-to-collaborate-in-the-cloud-is-vital-for-business%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) is becoming more and more prevalent. It’s teamwork from wherever you are through the internet. However, don’t fool yourself, the basic elements of teamwork still apply.

Playing nice with others isn’t just for the grade-school playground, it’s for your work life as well.

## 4. Punctuality.

You may be inclined to swipe this into the category of time management, but it’s actually simpler than that.

Time management implies that you efficiently manage your time throughout the day, week, month from project to project. It’s a way of measuring your efficiency.

Punctuality means you do what you say you were going to do at, or before, the pre-established time. It means you show up to the office on time, regardless of your commute. It means you’re in your seat and ready when the meeting is supposed to start. It means you are on the conference call by the time it’s supposed to begin.

Why is it [such a big deal](http://www.businessinsider.com/why-punctuality-matters-and-how-to-be-on-time-2011-3%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)? Think about the others who are in that meeting or on that phone call. Did they have to waste some of their precious day waiting for you? Or, if they proceeded without you, are you going to have to ask questions later because you missed some information?

If time is money, a person who does not take punctuality seriously is like a slow leak in the company’s finances. It’s not a skill that employers are looking for. Punctuality is a choice. Choose it.

## 5. Critical thinking.

“It's sort of a mental attitude about critical thinking and curiosity. It's about mindset of looking at the world in a playful and curious and creative way.” - Adam Savage

One of the most detrimental phrases one can hear in the business world – any business – is “that’s how we’ve always done it!”

If you hear it, cringe. Why? Because it means there is a deep-seeded lack of critical thinking in the company. The way it has been done in the past is the way they will continue to do it, regardless of innovations and changes in the world.

Critical thinkers look beyond the basic information in front of them at all times. They look at things from different angles. Why? Because there may be a better way that they just haven’t seen yet. They don’t assume that the information provided to them is complete.

Why is this a skill that employers are looking for? Critical thinkers deal with analysis, not emotion. They don’t simply adhere to tradition or gut feelings, they do research and are able to present solutions along with data to back up their ideas. In short, you don’t present information unless you’ve thoroughly vetted it yourself. It’s a form of taking responsibility for your work.

Doesn’t that hamper creativity? On the contrary. [Critical thinking skills](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/what-importance-benefits-critical-thinking-skills-islam%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) allow you to see solutions to problems that you’d possibly miss if you didn’t do the research. That’s a valuable commodity for any company.

As you count down the final days, minutes, and seconds of 2016, start to look ahead to 2017. Take a quick inventory of how well you fare in these five soft skills and make a resolution to improve those areas that are a little weak. It will help you get a new or better job or simply be better at your current job in the new year.

[Home](https://www.pongoresume.com/) > [Blog: Job Seeker Tips](https://www.pongoresume.com/blogTopics/31/job_seeker_tips.cfm) > Are Your Skills on Employers' Most-Wanted List?

## Are Your Skills on Employers' Most-Wanted List?

If you’ve ever wondered what skills employers value the most, a blog post last week on the job search engine [Indeed.com](http://blog.indeed.com/2010/09/23/standing-out-from-the-competition/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) will help. Indeed analyzed millions of [job postings](https://www.pongoresume.com/features/job-search.cfm) in its index from January through June, and extracted the top 15 professional attributes. Here are the top five, along with my take on why each is important today:

1. **Leadership.**  You need this if you're an executive or manager. But even if you're not, many organizations are becoming "flatter" and empowering non-managers to lead company initiatives, notably projects. It may not necessarily lead you into a management role, but that feeling of empowerment can act as a jolt of energy and boost your enthusiasm about your role and your employer.
2. **Interpersonal.** As in "interpersonal communications." Most jobs require people who can communicate effectively with their co-workers, customers, and suppliers. Today, that means mastering both written (as in, email and instant messaging) and oral communications. You can also extend this to casual conversations with co-workers, because hiring managers want employees who can get along with everyone.
3. **Problem solving.** Employers like to hire people who can find problems and fix them. That's part of the reason why most schools today incorporate analytical thinking into their curricula, even at the elementary school level. It hasn't always been that way.
4. **Motivated.** A paycheck can motivate you, but employers want to hire people who want to do good work, not just for themselves but for the company. If you believe in the corporate mission, and if it meshes with what you want to get out of the job, you have a good foundation to be motivated.
5. **Efficient.** How much work can you do in a given block of time? Do you organize yourself well? Employers want people who are not only productive, but who can manage their time so well that they can get more done, and done well.

What does this mean for you? Look at these five attributes and the other 10 on the Indeed list, then give [your resume](https://www.pongoresume.com/features/resume-builder.cfm) a thorough, painstaking review. Which of these words or phrases jump out from the accomplishments and responsibilities you've listed in your work history? ***Match up what you have with what the employer wants***, and use your cover letter to reinforce that connection.

# What are the top ten skills that employers want?

Based on a number of surveys on the skills required by graduates undertaken by Microsoft, Target Jobs, the BBC, Prospects, NACE and AGR and other organisations, here is our summary of the skills which were most often deemed important.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| [**VERBAL COMMUNICATION**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/communicating.htm) | **1** | Able to express your ideas clearly and confidently in speech |
| [**TEAMWORK**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/teamwork.htm)  | **2** | Work confidently within a group  |
| [**COMMERCIAL AWARENESS**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/commercialawareness.htm) | **3** | Understand the commercial realities affecting the organisation. |
| **ANALYSING & INVESTIGATING**  | **4** | Gather information systematically to establish facts & principles. Problem solving. |
| [**INITIATIVE/SELF MOTIVATION**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/excellence.htm)  | **5** | Able to act on initiative, identify opportunities & proactive in putting forward ideas & solutions |
| **DRIVE** | **6** | Determination to get things done. Make things happen & constantly looking for better ways of doing things. |
| [**WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/written-communication.htm) | **7** | Able to express yourself clearly in writing |
| [**PLANNING & ORGANISING**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/skillsactionplanning.htm) | **8** | Able to plan activities & carry them through effectively |
| [**FLEXIBILITY**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/adaptability.htm) | **9** | Adapt successfully to changing situations & environments |
| [**TIME MANAGEMENT**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/time.htm) | **10** | Manage time effectively, prioritising tasks and able to work to deadlines. |
| Other skills that were also seen as important |
| [**GLOBAL SKILLS**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/LanguageSkills.htm) |   | Able to speak and understand other languages. Appreciation of other cultures. See * [Study and work placements outside the UK](http://www.kent.ac.uk/goabroad/)
* [Working Abroad](http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sitesint.htm)
 |
| [**NEGOTIATING & PERSUADING**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/persuading.htm)  |   | Able to influence and convince others, to discuss and reach agreement. |
| [**LEADERSHIP**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/leadership.htm) |   | Able to motivate and direct others |
| [**NUMERACY**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/tests/mathstest.htm) |   | Multiply & divide accurately, calculate percentages, use statistics & a calculator, interpret graphs & tables. |
| [**COMPUTING SKILLS**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/computing-skills.htm) |   | Word-processing, using databases, spreadsheets, the Internet & email, designing web pages etc. |
| [**SELF AWARENESS**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/skillsinventory.html) |   | Awareness of achievements, abilities, values & weaknesses & what you want out of life.  |
| [**PERSONAL IMPACT/CONFIDENCE**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/interviews/nvc.htm) |   | Presents a strong, professional, positive image to others which inspires confidence & commands respect. |
| **LIFELONG LEARNING** |   | Continues to learn throughout life. Develops the competencies needed for current & future roles |
| **STRESS TOLERANCE** |   | Maintains effective performance under pressure |
| **INTEGRITY** |   | Adheres to standards & procedures, maintains confidentiality and questions inappropriate behaviour. |
| **INDEPENDENCE** |   | Accepts responsibility for views & actions and able to work under their own direction & initiative. |
| [**DEVELOPING PROFESSIONALISM**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/excellence.htm) |   | Pays care & attention to quality in all their work. Supports & empowers others. |
| [**ACTION PLANNING**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/skillsactionplanning.htm) |   | Able to decide what steps are needed to achieve particular goals and then implement these. |
| [**DECISION-MAKING**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/decisionmaking.htm) |   | Determines the best course of action. Evaluates options based on logic & fact & presents solutions |
| **INTERPERSONAL SENSITIVITY** |   | Recognises & respects different perspectives. Open to the ideas & views of others |
| [**CREATIVITY**](https://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/sk/lateral.htm) |   | Generates & applying new ideas & solutions |

**The 5 soft skills that will get you hired — and how to learn them**

[Marguerite Ward](https://www.cnbc.com/marguerite-ward/) | [@forwardist](https://twitter.com/forwardist)

1:35 PM ET Wed, 26 April 2017

Landing a great job isn't just about having the technical abilities a role requires. If it did, there'd be little reason for employers to interview job candidates.

Research shows that so-called "soft skills" — your ability to work well with others, communicate clearly and solve problems — matter much more than many may think.

A study published by the American Psychological Association suggests that [bosses prefer candidates](https://www.cnbc.com/2016/11/23/the-scientific-reason-being-likable-will-get-you-hired-and-self-promotion-wont.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_self) who they find likable and friendly over those who are self-promotional, though they note that a combination of the two is probably best. Research published in the Journal of Education for Business shows that [managers pay special attention](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08832323.2016.1153998?src=recsys&journalCode=vjeb20" \t "_self) to communication skills and analytical skills when reviewing an employee.

So how can you improve your soft skills? And which ones matter the most to employers today?

Jobs platform [Monster](https://www.monster.com/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_self) aggregated 943,008 market-wide job postings from a variety of sources and found that certain skills appeared thousands of times in jobs listings across several industries.

Here are five soft skills to consider investing more time developing:

**5. Problem solving**

Employers want professionals who know how and when to solve issues on their own, and when to ask for help. According to Vicki Salemi, career expert at Monster, there's a simple strategy you can practice to improve in this area.

"Take a step back," she suggests, "evaluate the situation and devise solutions that make the most sense."

If you're preparing for a job interview, jot down a time you helped solved a problem at work. Then you'll be better prepared to discuss it.

"You can gain problem-solving skills by thinking clearly, methodically and pausing," Salemi says, "then researching viable solutions and, if need be, running it by your current boss."

**4. Attention to detail**

More than 40 percent of hiring managers spend [less than 60 seconds](https://www.cnbc.com/2016/10/13/6-of-the-most-creative-resumes-weve-ever-seen.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_self) looking at a resume, according to a 2016 CareerBuilder [survey](http://www.careerbuilder.com/share/aboutus/pressreleasesdetail.aspx?sd=9/22/2016&id=pr967&ed=12/31/2016" \t "_self) of 2,100 HR professionals.

So if you have a typo on your resume, it may mean that you've just disqualified yourself.

"Instead of rushing it," Salemi says, "take time to review every word, punctuation mark, run spell-check, the works. Breathe. Pause."

While you may have tight deadlines, give yourself time to make sure your work is the best it can be. If you're having trouble with this, have a conversation with your boss about what is expected of you. Or give yourself more breathing room by arriving to work earlier.

"Get into the habit of slowing down to notice more details in the long run," she adds.

"Get into the habit of slowing down." -Vicki Salemi, career expert at Monster

**3. Proficiency in Microsoft Office**

"You don't really need to include this on your resume," Salemi says, "because it's assumed that everyone has developed this skill set."

However, if you're not totally comfortable with Microsoft Office, take a course at your local library or watch a tutorial on YouTube. In addition to Microsoft Office, familiarize yourself with other programs many employers use such as Google Drive, Slack and Skype.

**2. Marketing**

In today's job market, more employers expect their employees to know how to promote ideas, services and products. To develop your marketing skills, get into the habit of promoting your work on social media and sharing interesting articles about your industry, Salemi suggests.

Doing this regularly shows that you know how to use social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, which many companies now use widely. It also shows that you are actively interested in an industry, which will help you stand out to recruiters and employers.

"Follow marketing and branding influencers, individuals and companies, on social media," the expert says. "Learn more about the industry as well as from their voice, their style and how they present themselves to the world."

In an interview, give a few examples of industry leaders you follow on social media and what you've learned or gained as a result.

**1. Oral and written communication**

Success in business, as tech-focused as it's become, can still come down to people's interactions with each other. And according to the data Monster compiled, being able to communicate well is the most common soft skill employers are looking for.

In your interactions, both in-person and online, you want to be clear, kind and professional. When speaking, be sure to make eye contact, speak up and use [body language that conveys confidence](https://www.cnbc.com/2016/09/14/7-body-language-tricks-to-exude-confidence.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_self).

"Go on mock interviews," Salemi says. "Many colleges and universities offer career counseling services to alumni, or attend Toastmaster's International meetings to practice speaking in public."

In emails, you want to pay attention to how clearly and concisely you present an idea. The CEO of a $16 billion company, Julie Sweet of Accenture North America, says that how you [write emails](https://www.cnbc.com/2016/11/30/ceo-of-a-16-billion-business-says-the-way-you-write-emails-can-break-your-career.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_self) can help you get ahead or hold you back professionally.

"Practice," she says, "makes perfect."

Assignment for Tuesday, 4/10/18 Name:

1. What are three take-aways that you think have value from the above information?
2. What information from these articles came as a surprise to you?
3. Do these articles help you see the value in doing group work? If not, click on “Teamwork” link in the yellow table – what do you think of that website?!
4. Any other thoughts or comments about this topic or group work in general?