



This article is an excerpt from *21st Century Jobs*

The Most Valuable Jobs Skills in the Coming Decade

Even though the job market in the U.S. doesn't look so promising right now, signs are emerging to indicate that soon enough there will be a turnaround. Businesses and organizations will begin to thrive again, and will need to hire people. What skills will employers be looking for as they hire people for jobs in the 21st century?

The Most Valuable Job Skills

Recent interviews with business executives, government officials and entrepreneurs reveal some new and exciting job growth ideas.

In all of these areas of employment, regardless of the particular industry or job description, there are behaviors, skills and traits that all employers need from those they hire:

1. Asking good questions. Every teacher knows that a good question is one that reveals the thinking of the student.

Good questions probe into uncertainties and ambiguities; they anticipate potential conflicts or problems; they follow a thought to its logical outcome and question the results. As an employer in an engineering company said, "We can teach them the technical stuff they need to do their jobs, but we can't teach them to think."

2. Engaging in good discussion. To work with anyone requires conversational give-and-take. Good potential employees are not afraid to state their opinions, and don't take criticism of their opinions

personally. They know how to engage people's attention and earn their respect in a discussion.

3. Thinking critically and solving problems. To compete in the global economy, employees must constantly try to improve their product and their workplace. Just following orders and going through the motions of a job are not enough.

Good employees imagine new ways of conceptualizing and performing the tasks of their job, knowing that yesterday's solutions will not solve today's problems.

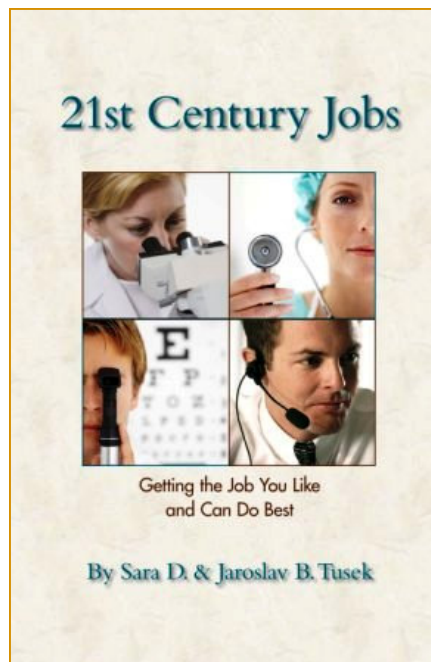
4. Collaborating, teamwork, and leading. With new technology, teams are not just people

in the same room. Virtual teams consisting of members from all over the globe are the new norm: web casts, net meetings and conference calls are the tools of the new teams.

Successful collaboration and team leadership call for people who can influence others by the force of their ideas and the proficiency of the presentation, not by the authority of their age or job category (as there may be younger or less experienced than others on the team).

Leaders of any age are those who demonstrate thorough knowledge of the challenges and pitfalls of the situation, and who also demonstrate sensitivity to the concerns of the people involved and affected by their decisions. The skills of creative problem-solving, communicating with people of vastly different backgrounds and experiences, and inspiring others to persevere are the key skills of 21st century leaders.

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5. Demonstrating adaptability and agility.

According to an executive in a firm making chemicals for microelectronic technology, "We change what we do all the time. I can guarantee the job I hire someone to do will change or not exist in the future, so this is why adaptability and well-developed learning skills are more important than technical skills."

6. Showing initiative and entrepreneurship.

People can become "risk averse" in their jobs, fearing to fail or be reprimanded. The person who succeeds in the new job market will take risks when they are needed and when the prospect of success is strong. Demonstrating this type of innovative behavior (even on a small scale) is crucial for the job candidate.

7. Using effective written and oral communications skills.

These are the classic job skills that are essential in every field. Writing clearly and concisely; creating focus, energy and passion around the ideas they wish to stress; speaking directly and plainly to convey a message—these skills are crucial. People have little time to listen to long, rambling stories; stick to the key points and ask for feedback to clarify and modify, if necessary.

8. Accessing and analyzing information. Information overload has become "drowning in data." The quantity of information we receive and the speed at which we receive it are only part of the challenge; separating correct and necessary information from what's wrong or useless is also only part of the challenge.

The real challenge is the speed at which the information is changing. When we have "real time access" to events, the information is changing as we receive it. "Facts" that once seemed immutable (the number of planets in our solar system, the age of Earth as observed in the geological record, the rate of death from cancer or AIDS) are not facts at all—they are merely snapshots of what we see, taken at a particular moment.

9. Curiosity and imagination. The new economy is personalized. "One size fits all" is not attractive to customers who've become accustomed to choosing the exact color, shape, size, and so forth in every item, no matter how mundane.

A person who is imaginative and empathetic can get into the customer's mind and design exciting and unique products that will appeal to people who want their lives to be full of

beauty, purpose and meaning, as well as being unique and one-of-a-kind.

Who will benefit from these new, 21st century jobs? Those who are resourceful, practical, creative, flexible, imaginative, responsible, energetic, open to new ideas and tolerant of differences. These are the people who are sensitive to emerging trends. They are optimistic enough to see needs as "opportunities in disguise."

These people have confidence in their own ability to "find a need and fill it," creating jobs for themselves and helping others in the process of doing so. All of these behaviors, traits and skills are learned and developed over a lifetime.

No one expects you to have it all together before they will hire you, but they do expect you to be able to show your potential in these vital areas.

To get jobs in the 21st century calls for a well-developed, holistic approach to life, seeing beyond the particulars in any situation, identifying the opportunities that are there for those who are ready to take them, and acting on this knowledge in a responsible and conscientious way.

Careers

Sara Tusek, Editor
830-13 A1A North, #317
Ponte Vedra Beach FL 32082
www.ili.cc

The next "21st Century Jobs" seminar will be in January 2010 in Lake Mary, Florida.

Please email Jarda at jbt@ili.cc for more details.

"21st Century Jobs Seminar"

The "21st Century Jobs Seminar" gives you access to the practical advice of Institute President Jarda Tusek, who has more than 27 years of experience in helping people get jobs that correctly match their skills, abilities, interests and goals with the right business or organization.

This seminar uses our newest book, 21st Century Jobs, as its workbook. We aim to help you, the job seeker or career changer, to identify your unique set of gifts, talents, skills, interests, accomplishments, values and dreams—and then to find ways to make those dreams into reality, bringing all of your potential to the job which will use this potential to the fullest:

the job that you will love, and can do best.

21st Century Jobs



By Sara D. & Jaroslav B. Tusek