

As You Read

As you read, think about this question:

- ▶ What do U.S. employers want from their employees?

An individual's self-concept is the core of . . . personality. It affects every aspect of human behavior: the ability to learn, the capacity to grow and change . . . A strong, positive self-image is the best possible preparation for success in life. 🧠

—Joyce Brothers (American psychologist and author; b. 1928)

🎧 What U.S. Employers Want

To get a great job, you need to show employers that you have what they are looking for. In the early 1990s, the United States Secretary of Commerce created a commission to look at what employers want from employees. This, along with other research, shows that all employers want the same things from employees. They want basic skills, thinking skills, and personal qualities, such as honesty and self-esteem. Employers want these skills and qualities in all employees regardless of profession—from accountants to baseball players, computer workers to salespeople, and chefs to teachers. Think about your strengths in these three areas when you look for a job. Be ready to talk about your strengths during a job interview. You want to be specific, so let's look closely at what employers want.

Basic Skills

10 Employers want people who know the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. They also want employees who listen and speak well.

To employers, reading means understanding written information. This information may be in sentences, paragraphs, charts, graphs, or schedules. Employees must be able to write messages, letters, directions, and reports. Sometimes, they must also be prepared to make
15 graphs and charts. For arithmetic, employers are looking for people who can add, subtract, multiply, and divide. Employees must know how to do percentages. They must be able to give estimates without a calculator.

Employers also want employees who can listen and respond to what someone says. In speaking, employers are looking for people who give information in an organized way. They
20 want employees to participate in discussions, and they especially like people who ask questions and can understand and use body language. Researchers say that 80 percent of the information in any face-to-face communication comes from body language, such as eye contact, posture, and facial expression. Employees must use body language to show speakers that
25 they are listening and that they understand the speaker.

Thinking Skills

There are six types of thinking skills that are important to employers: creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, seeing things in your mind's eye, knowing how to learn, and reasoning.



30 Creative thinking means coming up with new ideas. Decision-making means thinking
about risks, evaluating alternatives, and choosing the best alternative. The first step in
problem-solving is recognizing that there is a problem. Then an employee has to find the
reasons for the problem and think of a plan to solve it. In problem-solving, the employee
must also be willing to revise the solution if necessary. Employees who can see things in their
35 mind's eye are able to picture a diagram and imagine the real object that it represents. They
can also imagine going through several steps in completing a job, even when reading about
it or listening to someone explain it. Knowing how to learn means knowing how to find and
learn new information. Reasoning means seeing the relationship between things; it means
using logic to form conclusions. In addition, it means using old knowledge in new situations.

Personal Qualities

40 There are five personal qualities employers are looking for: responsibility, self-esteem,
sociability, self-management, and honesty.

To employers, responsibility means that an employee works hard to do an excellent job.
The employee pays attention to details. The employee also does unpleasant tasks well. Of
course, the employee comes on time and lets the employer know if there is a problem.
Employers want people with self-esteem, people who like themselves. They want employees
45 with a positive self-image. Employees who are insecure make others uncomfortable.
Friendliness and politeness are two aspects of sociability. Everyone likes to be around friend-
ly and polite people. Employers don't want to tell employees what to do all the time, so they
are looking for people with self-management skills. These people can set their own goals and
meet those goals. People with good self-management skills don't show anger when someone
50 criticizes them. Honesty is also important. Everyone likes to be around people they trust.

Basic skills, thinking skills, and personality skills are the abilities needed in the 21st century
workplace. Think of examples that you can use during a job interview to show that you have
these skills.

Word Count: 686

Source: "What U.S. Employers Want—The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS)"
(U.S. Department of Labor).



Timed Reading

Read "What U.S. Employers Want" again.
Read at a comfortable speed. Time your reading.

Start time: _____

End time: _____

My reading time: _____