

For years, managers have said they hire workers because they have the hard skills needed to do the job, but promote, or fire, them for their soft skills. That may be changing as more and more managers say they are trying to account for both hard skills AND soft skills in making their staffing decisions.

However, no matter whether you call them soft skills, workplace essentials, basic professional skills or some variation, putting the concept into practice remains difficult as people often think of them in different ways and have differing opinions as to which are important to their particular job.

So in 2014-15, the Texas Workforce Commission funded research by the Center for Employability Outcomes at Texas State Technical College. Researchers surveyed hundreds of hiring managers and recruiters to define and rank the workplace essential skills most in demand. The survey asked these decision makers to consider the jobs they fill and then pick and rank their top skills from a menu of thirty-one, shown below.

Oral Communications	Organization	Technology & Tool Usage
Written Communications	Attention to Detail	Perseverance
Leadership	Stress Management	Pride in Work
Teamwork	Multi-Tasking	Following Directions
Appreciation of Diversity	Problem-Solving	Information Gathering
Conflict Management	Decision Making	Resource Allocation
Customer Service	Intellectual Risk-Taking	Time Management
Work Ethic	Thoughtful Reflection	Integrity and Honesty
Professionalism	Initiative	Application of Math and
Critical Thinking	Creativity	Numbers
Adaptability	Dedication	

The survey found that five “workplace essential” skills rose to the top across all jobs:

- Information Gathering
- Attention to Detail (including Ability to Focus)
- Following Directions
- Critical Thinking
- Oral Communications

Texas Workforce Commission economists categorized the top workplace essential skills for more than 800 occupations as well as the 16 Achieve Texas career clusters defined by the Texas Education Agency. For more information, visit the TWC web site at <http://www.lmci.state.tx.us/shared/DWA.asp>.

For organizations, job seekers, students and others in the employment marketplace, this information on workplace essential skills can provide a common language for communicating the requirements of a job and the qualifications of the person that fills it. Employers can better refine job requirements and posting. Job seekers and students can more easily determine how their particular skills and interests fit a prospective job.

For more information about workplace essential skills and how they can benefit your or your organization, contact the TWC Labor Market and Career Information staff at 866-938-4444 or email lmci@twc.state.tx.us.