WHAT SKILLS DO EMPLOYERS WANT FROM AUSTRALIAN YOUNG PEOPLE?

Rather than guessing what employers want from their entry-level and early-career hires, or relying on anecdotal or survey data, we can learn from job advertisements. Job advertisements provide a window into the types of skills that employers value most. Each advertisement lists skills that an employer finds essential or desirable.

Jobs of the future demand more enterprise skills

For a young person today in school, VET or university, a relevant question is whether the jobs of the future will demand more or less enterprise skills. Jobs of the future, or those jobs that are least likely to be automated, demand enterprise skills 70% more frequently than jobs of the past, on average. In each specific skill area (e.g. problem solving, communications), jobs of the future demand enterprise skills from 30-680% more than jobs of the past.

Employers now ask for enterprise skills as often as technical skills

A comparison of the different types of skills in job advertisements can help us understand the relative priorities of employers.

Employers ask for enterprise skills as often as technical skills. In fact, employers now request 20% more enterprise skills than technical skills. In an average job advertisement for a young person in 2015, employers requested 3.2 enterprise skills and 2.7 technical skills.

Exhibit 2: Recent growth in demand for select enterprise skills

Growth in proportion of jobs requesting each skill, %, early-career jobs, 2012-2015[1,2]

Many enterprise skills are demanded across all occupations and industries

Enterprise skills comprise at least one-third of skills demanded by employers in every industry. For most industries, enterprise skills are more than half of the skills requested by employers of young candidates.

Some enterprise skills are demanded in jobs across all types of occupations, rather than just the occupations that we stereotypically associate with a skill area. For example, while we typically associate digital literacy with science, technology and engineering roles, digital literacy is demanded in many other types of jobs that are available to young people. In fact, the most common job advertisements that request digital skills from young candidates sit outside the science and technology fields, such as marketing, HR and recruiting. Digital literacy is also demanded in roles as diverse as art director, veterinarian and dentist. Communication skills are another example. These skills are so important that they are routinely listed in advertisements across every occupation, industry and education level.

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What are enterprise skills?

Enterprise skills are transferable skills that enable young people to engage with a complex world and navigate the challenges they will encounter. Enterprise skills are required in many jobs. They have been found to be a powerful predictor of long-term job success. Skills classified as enterprise skills include:

- Problem Solving
- Communication skills
- Digital literacy
- Teamwork

- Presentation skills
- Critical Thinking
- Creativity
- Financial Literacy

The terms used to describe these skills vary across different contexts: sometimes called generic, soft, or 21st century skills. However, the meaning is clear: a set of skills and characteristics that enable young people to confront the challenges of change and navigate a complex future.

Adapted from the "The New Basics" Report with permission from the Foundation for Young Australians.

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