

Now Hiring: The All-Inclusive Employee

by (ARA)

What makes a potential candidate stand out from the others in the room? Is it how they're dressed, the technical skills they have to offer, the advanced degree they've earned or how they carry themselves in a group setting? In the business environment, a new skill set is emerging. These skills can ultimately determine how successful a candidate will be in the workplace. Even the most qualified candidate in the bunch may not get the job if these skills are not mastered.

Compared with the traditional "hard" skills, or the technical requirements of a job, the interpersonal "soft" skills a potential employee can offer are quickly gaining the attention of employers. These career-boosting soft touches are meant to complement the standard candidate qualifications and can include polished communication skills, a professional demeanor, enthusiasm and a beyond-the-call commitment to exceed customer expectations. While technical know-how is a necessity for most jobs, soft skills are becoming increasingly important to employers because they often can predict whether or not a prospective employee will be a good fit for a company's particular work environment and culture. For candidates, effective communication and interpersonal skills are vital to promote marketability to potential employers and to be competitive in the workplace. Combine both technical and personal skill sets and you have the characteristics of a strong, well-rounded leader - "one that is highly sought after by the business community."

Kelly Services places a great deal of value on job candidates who demonstrate soft skills, which can be just as important as tangible qualifications," says Jocelyn Lincoln, senior director, recruiting and retention for Kelly Services, a global provider of staffing solutions. "These skills can be a clear differentiator. Equipped with these skills, candidates are able to quickly become acclimated to a new work environment, thus increasing their success rate with a potential employer." In a study conducted by two University of Massachusetts economists, 86 percent of the employers surveyed considered soft skills to be among their most important hiring criteria. Companies also recognize the importance of providing training to employees in order to gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace. According to John Hennessy, senior vice president, staffing at Monster, equipping employees with the necessary skills to excel in their jobs is an essential factor when trying to differentiate your company from the competition. "Soft skills are incredibly important and often make the difference whether or not a business is successful," says Hennessy. "Everything from simple listening skills to developing a sense of business ethics are some of the less tangible skills that are making a notable difference within companies. Providing occupation-specific training is a great way to help cultivate these skills to benefit employees and the company." "Soft skills training is an essential tool because it can improve employee performance, foster leadership potential, reinforce the value of customer service and ultimately drive a company's bottom-line," says Lincoln of Kelly Services. "I can't imagine a better way to invest in your employees."