

What Employers Want: Candidate Skills and Qualities

Each year, NACE asks employers to rate the importance of certain skills/qualities when hiring possible job candidates.¹ Each year, without fail, strong communication skills come out on top. (See Figure 38.)

Figure 38: Employers rate the importance of candidate skills/qualities

Skill/Quality	Weighted average rating*
Communication skills (verbal)	4.65
Strong work ethic	4.61
Teamwork skills (works well with others)	4.59
Analytical skills	4.56
Initiative	4.50
Problem-solving skills	4.48
Communication skills (written)	4.48
Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)	4.40
Computer skills	4.38
Flexibility/adaptability	4.37
Detail-oriented	4.18
Technical skills	4.16
Organizational skills	4.05
Leadership skills	4.04
Self-confidence	3.96
Tactfulness	3.84
Friendly/outgoing personality	3.72
Creativity	3.70
Strategic planning skills	3.35
Entrepreneurial skills/risk-taker	3.19
Sense of humor	2.99

*5-point scale, where 1=Not important; 2=Not very important; 3=Somewhat important; 4=Very important; and 5=Extremely important

In this year's survey, employers were asked to distinguish between verbal and written communication skills, and results indicate that employers place far more emphasis on verbal communication skills than on written communication abilities and all other skills. (Interestingly, NACE's *2010 Student Survey* found that, overall, students who used the career center's practice interviewing program—where the focus is on verbal communication—fared better in the job market than their peers who didn't bother to polish their skills this way.)

Using a weighted average calculation this year, a strong work ethic, teamwork skills and analytical skills also topped the list, having ratings above 4.5, indicating they are highly prized in candidates by employers.

¹ Although employers are provided with a list, they also have the opportunity to add other skills/qualities. NACE reviews the "others" each year and adds them to the list as warranted.