



Develop a New Skillset and Make Yourself More Attractive to Employers

When someone is out of a job for a while, or is in the midst of an extended search for a new position, one of the best ways to become more hireable is to develop new skillsets. A new skill, ability, or certification can make a job applicant more desirable and can even open doors into new industries and fields.

Hound spoke with a few experts about the best methods for a job-seeker to develop new skills.

I think there are very important skillsets people need, including the ability to network, to listen and to identify mentors that can assist them in honing their skills as well as expanding their networks. When people are out of work, volunteering is a wonderful opportunity to develop transferable skills that can help. Sit on a board of directors to gain valuable experience while assisting an organization in its growth is meaningful on so many levels.

Froswa' Booker-Drew
CEO/Founder
Soulstice Consultancy

Immersion and continued education are two highly beneficial ways to gain skills and enhance your career. Whether you're currently holding a position or in search of a new one, there are many ways to educate yourself and gain new skills in the process.

For example, you may not be willing to head back to school entirely, but taking an online class to develop a new skill might be right up your alley. A simple Web search for educational experiences related to a certain skillset is likely to bring up a variety of online classes, webinars, and interactive reading material to help you learn at your own pace.

As for immersion, gaining hands-on experience while developing a new skill is essential to development. Internships and job shadowing are a great way to develop new skills through an immersive, hands-on learning experience within a field of your interest.

What are the best skills to develop?



While specific skills vary from field to field, there are a few key 'soft skills' every professional needs: public speaking, problem-solving abilities, communication, teamwork and leadership. These fundamental skills are required at every job, and without them you're unlikely to get far in your career. Spend time focusing on basic professional skills before advancing to more technical skillsets.

How can a person develop their skills and experience while maintaining a full-time position?

Time management is key to developing a skillset when you're holding a full-time job. If there aren't specific training opportunities available at your current job, consider seeking out your own on the side. Use evenings and weekends to spend time learning.

Nathan Parcels

Co-founder and CMO of InternMatch

<http://www.internmatch.com>

We see tens of thousands of online learners each month who are attempting to gain new skills with web-based tools or desktop software. There are three primary issues we've seen: Lack of discipline, lack of project work, and lack of feedback and support. "If you don't have the discipline to carve out a few hours each day to spend time on the course work, then it's unlikely you'll develop a real skill using self-paced online courses. This route is really best for those that have the commitment to get it done.

"Project work is by far the most effective way to utilize online courses to learn a skill. You can choose projects yourself, but the most successful route we have seen is to find a mentor -- someone you know or someone connected to you -- to give you assignments and grade them for you. This feedback loop will ensure that you can measure progress and get a true third party assessment of your skill level, and where you fall short.

Getting feedback is critical in developing your skills. Early on, peer support and feedback is adequate, but as you move into intermediate territory, getting time from a true expert in your field to evaluate your work is absolutely critical. Many in-person classes carry high prices -- the reason for this is that they include this component, which is both the hardest to get, but the most important to achieving a meaningful skill."

Nick Gidwani

SkilledUp



skilledup.com

Mentoring - Find a mentor that has the skills and talent that you want to emulate, is accomplished, wise and successful.

Experiential learning opportunities - Job shadow to try on new roles. Take a community class or webinar. Pursue a higher education degree and take advantage of a wealth of hands-on opportunities. At Northwood University we assist students to obtain internships in addition to placing our MBA students with actual businesses to obtain extensive real-world marketing and strategic planning experience as part of their course work.

Community volunteering - Find an organization you are passionate about in your local community. For a few hours a month give your time while making key connections and expanding your skills. Non-profits have limited budgets and would welcome assistance in many areas including social media marketing, fundraising, and event planning just for example. You don't have to be an expert to help and gain experience.

Above all employers are looking to hire candidates with outstanding communication skills, who are team players, and have the ability to make decisions and solve problems, according to results of NACE's Job Outlook 2013 survey.

Other skills include: Organizational skills, analyzing information and quantitative data, technical knowledge related to the job, computer software programs, report writing, and persuasion.

How can a person develop their skills and experience while maintaining a full-time position?

Go back to school - Advance your career or navigate a career transition by returning to school to get an advanced degree or dual degree. Many times during our career we start out in one field and want to switch into another. You can obtain a second degree in a shorter period than you think and obtain the skills to break into a new field.

Joining professional membership organizations - Become a member of local groups through your Chamber of Commerce, industry groups, alumni network, leadership or minority groups to expand your network and obtain mentoring and professional development for little cost.

Serve on a Non-profit board - For a few hours a month give back to the community with your time,



talent and leadership while making key connections and expanding your skills to include governing non-profits, understanding legal roles and fiduciary responsibility, strategic planning, and revenue development."

Beth Bryce

MS, CMCC, Director of Career Services at Northwood University

Founder of Girls2Women Coaching