

Workshop #4: Workplace Job Skills (hard skills or job specific skills)

You need to discover, define and learn how to effectively communicate your job technical or hard skills to get the job you want. It's like developing and selling any new product destined to be sold in the market place. That's being able to convince a potential employer (customer) that you have the specific technical job requirements or duties they need. While you're not a product, you are selling your labor in the competitive market place. And, you're competing with other similar products (other job seekers) to get the sale (job). As a result, you must further prepare yourself to be able to explain why your labor is something the employer should buy (hire) over other job candidates. Let's learn how to identify, understand and communicate effectively what exactly you can do for an employer.

Workshop Topics

1. Knowledge, Skills and Abilities – Your KSA's
2. The Deeper Skills
3. Let's Put Both Lists Together
4. Keep a Diary or Record of Your Job Related Skills
5. How to Improve Your Job Specific Skills

In addition to the discussion notes listed below, more content on each these topics can be found in "Part II: Workplace Job Skills" of the *Make It Work: Disability & Competitive Employment* book available at <https://wid.org/wid-e3/employment-empowerment/>.

Discussion Notes

1.) Knowledge, Skills and Abilities – Your KSA's

There are several ways to approach the subject of documenting your skills for a specific occupational area. The method suggested here is using the knowledge, skills and abilities method or KSA's.

KSA's are:

- K = Knowledge is being informed about how to perform a function, act or task or "I know how to do it"
- S = Skill is being able to perform a specific act or task or "I've done it a before"
- A = Ability is having significant experience or a proven ability to routinely do a task or "I'm good at it".

Here are some examples of each level of competency for particular type of job.

Knowledge:

- ✓ Know graphic design techniques
- ✓ Know how machinery works
- ✓ Know principles of book keeping or accounting

Skills:

- ✓ Have done writing, editing and composition
- ✓ Have done research
- ✓ Have done public speaking

Abilities:

- ✓ Actual experience managing projects
- ✓ Actual experience managing budgets
- ✓ Actual experience with work teams

The KSA categories above gives you a framework to build your listing of employment related proficiencies or hard skills. This approach gives you a broader range of ways to describe your workplace skills which helps when you might not have a long work history.

You must begin by reading either or both the job's vacancy announcement and/or the job's written job description. When you read these job specific documents, try to match each job duty with your listing of KSA's which best matches them. This exercise can both determine if you might be qualified for the job, as well as begin to generate the content you need in order to create a competitive resume or application.

Furthermore, the process of preparing your KSA's will help you with your job interview preparation. Be sure to refine your general listing of content in each document so as to match the specific vacancy announcement or job description you might want. Again, having general KSA statements prepared in advance will assist you greatly.

2.) The Deeper Skills

The truth of the matter is employers aren't only looking for those hard job specific skills or KSA's when they interviewing job candidates. Research has shown that while the job specific "hard" skills are the obvious skills being questioned and evaluated during a job interview, employers are subtly measuring the applicant's "soft" and "medium" skills even more. While employers do want to hire people who can do the job, they are even more interested in people who have the right "soft" and "medium" skills for the job. Employers value these additional skills even more because they can't teach them. You either have them or you don't. Here's what research tells us about the relative value of these deeper "soft" and "medium" skills. The National Business Education Association surveyed 500 employers interviewing

college students for jobs and found that among the top 10 things these interviewers were scoring job applicants on during an interview the “can you do the job” question was way back in 7th place!

Here are the top 10 things they were scoring job applicants on during the application and interviewing process. And, keep in mind that you get more points for the #1 item listed below than for the #2 item, and so forth. This listing suggest the #7 item (“can you do the job”) gets less points than all of the higher ranked skills (1-6).

1. Ability to work in a team structure
2. Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization
3. Ability to make decisions and solve problems
4. Ability to obtain and process information
5. Ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work
6. Ability to analyze quantitative data
7. **Technical knowledge related to the job (“can you do the job”)**
8. Proficiency with computer software programs
9. Ability to create and/or edit written reports
10. Ability to sell or influence others

3.) Let’s Put Both Lists Together

In order to be able to mount a successful employment campaign, you must take the time to reflect and prepare your listing of what you have to offer an employer (KSA’s as well as the deeper skills). The table below brings these two key skill areas together in one place. You can follow any format for your “KSA” diary, just as long as you include the key elements which are listed in the headings of the **columns** and **rows** in the table below. Sample entries are also included in the table below as examples which might further help you understand how this can help you create an effective marketing campaign around your job search.

SAMPLE BELOW

"KSA Table"

	Knowledge: I know how to...	Skills: I've done it...	Abilities: I'm good at it ...
1) Team Work	<i>Studied team work strategies in management class</i>	<i>Serve on a science team in school Played wheelchair basketball</i>	<i>Worker with a group of volunteers to organize and produce a fundraising event</i>
2) Verbal Communications	<i>Learned public speaking skills in a "Speech" class</i>	<i>Made class presentations</i>	<i>Am a regular speaker for our area's UCP organization</i>
3) Make Decisions and Solve Problems	<i>Studied various customer survey techniques</i>	<i>In school science club, organized membership, wrote by-laws and got group moving again</i>	<i>During my internship I was given assignment to fix accounting problems</i>
4) Get and Use Information	<i>Learn about various research methods</i>	<i>Developed research models for two project</i>	<i>Worked for research group and led effort to collect financial data</i>
5) Plan, Organize and Prioritize	<i>Studies strategic planning concepts</i>	<i>Did a class project which created a strategic plan for a sample organization</i>	<i>Worked on an action plan for a company which helped to establish their work priorities for the next quarter</i>
6) Analyze Data	<i>Studies statistics</i>	<i>Did statistical analysis project for science project</i>	<i>Did accounting projects for company guiding them on productivity and results</i>

7) Specific Job Skills (to a specific job you're applying for)	<i>Majored in Social Work at UC Berkeley with a 3.0 GPA Concentrated on family and children services</i>	<i>Had two social work internships with 1) family services; and, 2) child protective services</i>	<i>Worked with a 50 family case load; and, with abused and neglected youth</i>
8) Proficiency with Computers	<i>Learned new software programs</i>	<i>Used software programs</i>	<i>Integrated various software programs into a system for a company</i>
9) Create/Edit Written Reports	<i>Studied report writing in school</i>	<i>Wrote and had published a letter to the editor on community issue</i>	<i>Wrote annual report for company</i>
10) Convince or Influence Others	<i>Practice debate technique on school debate team</i>	<i>Ran for and won class officer position in college</i>	<i>Convinced my company's leadership to adopted new social media strategies</i>

4.) Keep a diary or record of your job related skills

Your "KSA Table" listing should be maintained like a diary and added to and updating as you gain new experiences. For example, under "team work", new examples might happen with sports teams, study groups, project teams, etc. And, regarding sports, you don't have to actually play on a team to get to use this qualification. You could be a sports team manager, cheerleader or announcer. As another example, under "verbal communications" list any and all presentations you may have made (even in school) important conversations, etc., and what you learned through these experiences on how to be an effective communicator. In each section list examples and, as always, be specific. Your "KSA" diary will help you to better understand the value of these various experiences and give you some direction about seeking other opportunities in these areas. Plus, as they begin to grow, you will become increasingly ready to mount a successful job search effort. And please remember, if you are a student and have never worked before, all is not lost. Think about your educational related work experiences and seek to identify those school or community projects activities and assignments that developed your KSA's in these top ten employment skills. Also, know that getting a job is a precise or surgical process. Using the same statement about your KSA's for every job you apply for is a mistake. Each job is different. Thus, each KSA statement should be fine-tuned for each specific job.

5.) How to improve your job specific skills

If you feel you don't have many KSA's to document what should you do? What if your KSA's are less than what might be needed for the job you want? If after analyzing your situation you feel that's true, do something about it. Identify which KSA's you need to become a more proficient with or experienced in for the job or jobs you are seeking. Develop a plan to improve. Use the "KSA Table" and process above to clearly outline what's missing or needed and, in turn, make a plan to increase your skills in these areas. For example, if you need more KSA's examples or "brag bites" regarding teamwork, get busy looking for volunteer situations, internships or activities that can give you the opportunity to grown your teamwork experiences.