

# The 'Soft Skills' Employers Are Looking For



**Communication, teamwork, punctuality and critical thinking are in high demand, an analysis of 2.3 million LinkedIn profiles shows**



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An employee of a Seattle nonprofit that helps homeless women and their families works the front desk in May. A shift in the U.S. toward service jobs has helped drive demand for so-called soft skills such as communication and friendliness. Photo: Jason Redmond/Agence France-Presse/Getty Images



By

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Want to craft a standout resume? Try adding skills like communication, organization and punctuality.

Nearly 58% of employees who touted stellar communication skills were hired over the course of a year, according to [an analysis of 2.3 million LinkedIn profiles](#) for The Wall Street Journal.

Employers are increasingly [looking for workers with strong soft skills](#)—those traits that don't show up in a job posting but are essential for succeeding in the workplace, like working well with others and taking initiative. But many employers say it has gotten harder to find those applicants as the labor market tightens.

It's a topic with surprisingly limited data, said **Guy Berger**, the chief economist at LinkedIn.

Mr. Berger and LinkedIn's team of economic researchers, who conducted the analysis, focused on LinkedIn members who had changed jobs over the course of a year, between June 2014 and June 2015. The team developed a list of more than four dozen soft skills, and examined which of the skills those members had listed on their profiles to help determine which ones were most sought-after among employers.

Communication, at the top of the list, was followed by organization, teamwork, punctuality, critical thinking, social skills, creativity, interpersonal communication, adaptability and having a friendly personality.

Workers who have those skills but aren't advertising them should, Mr. Berger said, because it could help separate them from the pack of job candidates.

"People that have the right soft skills have a leg up in finding a job relative to their peers," he said.

Which ones won't necessarily give you a boost? LinkedIn found the least in-demand "skill" listed on member profiles was business planning. Other skills that didn't grab employers: emotional intelligence, team building, coaching, management, analysis, team management, resume writing and business.

"For all the talk about how leadership skills are important, how management is in short supply, it's really the more fundamental skills like teamwork and communication that seem to matter the most, that employers demand the most," Mr. Berger said. "And those are probably the skills most of us really need to know."

Job-training and apprentice programs are increasingly factoring soft skills into their technical training curricula. LinkedIn has [used its data to develop an online course](#) on mastering those 10 most in-demand soft skills through Lynda.com, the online-learning website it acquired in 2015.

Changes in the economy—including automation and [a shift of jobs from manufacturing](#) to services—have boosted the demand for soft skills.

LinkedIn's analysis confirmed those skills are most prevalent among its members who work in service industries, especially restaurants, consumer services, professional training, retail sports, facilities services and human resources.

"Even within services, you're seeing jobs you think of as very routine that might have less interaction with people [shifting] into jobs that are less routine, whether it's ranging from a sales person to a yoga instructor to economist or reporter," Mr. Berger said.

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