

Most Valuable Career Skills by 2020

Per the annual World Economic Forum report, the most valuable career skills by 2020 will be the following 10 skills:

1. **Complex problem solving:** To solve complex problems requires being able to identify the problem, evaluate all pertinent information and factors, consider a range of possible solutions, think critically through different solution options and their potential outcomes, and then make a judgment as to which solution to select. A series of skills go into complex problem solving, including observation skills, analysis, creativity, innovative thinking, evaluation, perseverance, and resilience, to name some.
2. **Critical thinking:** To think critically is to think deeply. Critical thinking requires that you first suspend judgment to evaluate all related factors and perspectives as objectively as possible. It entails taking time to think through what you might not be considering or yet seeing. Reason, logic, and judgment are all used to analyze and evaluate information to, ultimately, probe far beyond the surface of the matter at hand.
3. **Creativity:** To be creative is to imagine something new from the information and data available. Creativity emerges from a capacity to view the world differently, connect seemingly disconnected dots, and unearth unseen patterns to conceive something new. To be creative is to apply critical thinking and empathy to imagine experiences, ideas, and things from other perspectives.
4. **People management:** To manage people effectively is to see their strengths and weaknesses, guide them to develop their skills, help them grow, and motivate them through setting and reaching goals. Successful people management rests heavily on emotional intelligence, particularly empathy; to manage each individual effectively requires imagining her circumstances from her point of view and making decisions and recommendations accordingly.
5. **Coordinating with others:** To coordinate with others well requires strong collaboration skills. Productive coordination can only happen when you can empathize with those with whom you are coordinating to discern their needs, assess how they can and cannot contribute, and understand their values. From there, you must adapt your thinking, responses, and behaviors accordingly if coordination is to be productive.



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6. **Emotional intelligence:** In most distilled terms, emotional intelligence is empathy; it is your capacity to stand in the shoes of another person and imagine her experience. The application of emotional intelligence is taking this imagined experience and using it to adjust decisions, behaviors, and actions appropriately. To be emotionally intelligent is to adapt your actions for each person based on your empathetic analysis of their perspectives and needs. Emotional intelligence also includes your ability to recognize, understand, and manage your own emotions.
7. **Judgment and decision making:** Sound decision-making skills rest first on sound judgment skills. To judge smartly is first to analyze and evaluate information or a circumstance as objectively as possible. Then you analyze and evaluate it from a perspective of emotional intelligence to consider all human components at play. Taking this full appraisal, you make the most reasonable and justifiable decision. The final factor of effective judgment and decision-making skills is knowing how to get buy-in and from whom.
8. **Service orientation:** To have a service orientation is to proactively seek ways to help others and be of value to them. It is to become known as someone who is available to assist others, think together, and grow together. It is also to become known as someone who adjusts her contribution and deliverables based on the needs and preferences of others. However, a service orientation requires a boundary of not sacrificing one's own values and principles.
9. **Negotiation:** Strong negotiation skills require a range of skills, including creativity, to see new potential ideas and possibilities; emotional intelligence, to imagine the needs, values, and priorities of all those at play and anticipate their actions; and judgment and decision making to keep negotiations moving forward. It also takes strong communication skills and the ability to listen actively to those involved. Negotiations require emotional control and interpersonal skills so that they can remain respectful and productive. Ultimately, to negotiate is to problem solve; it is to find a way for all involved parties to be included and advantaged in a reasonable solution.
10. **Cognitive flexibility:** To show cognitive flexibility is to be able, swiftly, to switch thinking between and among multiple concepts, topics, or ideas, such that you ultimately can process all factors simultaneously. Those with strong cognitive flexibility can quickly adapt their thinking and comprehension as circumstances and information change around them.