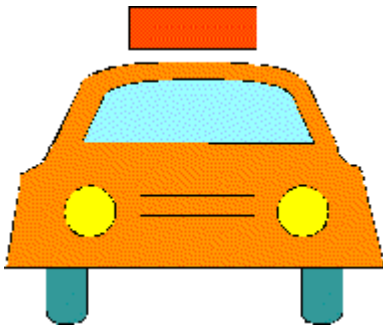


Ten Career Skills To Keep You Employable In The 21st Century

By Karla Brandau, CSP



Most people drive through life looking in their rearview mirror and judging the future by the past. They have a really good view of where they have been and mistakenly think the future will be similar to the past as they make decisions based on their previous experiences. Even though past experience gives a base for the future, there are many employability factors to take into account as you plan to grab one of the best jobs in 2010 and beyond.

The future work world will be even more global. If your job is not one that requires you to physically be in one place, i.e. serving food, washing windows and stocking grocery shelves, you will be competing with bright and hungry workers in India, China, Korea and other developing nations around the globe.

Competing in the new environment will require higher levels of competence and necessitate looking straight ahead, not constantly glancing in the rearview mirror for warm fuzzy feelings about what you have achieved in the past.

Here are 10 skills to acquire and refine that will increase your professional confidence level and make you more employable in the 21st Century:

- 1. Constantly adapt to technology.** Dependency on technology in the future will increase, not decrease. Spend time learning new computer programs but more importantly, make applications to your daily routine and strive to use technology as an enabler of productivity, not as a neat new toy with tons of cute features that you don't use. To decide if the new gadget is worth the time, ask yourself, "Does this make time or waste time?"
- 2. Embrace diversity.** Get comfortable with other ethnic cultures, religions and customs. Be curious about what makes people from other cultures tick. Learn a little about the customs and attitudes that belong to workers from other countries. The time will be well spent as you begin to relate human to human, not human to inhabitant of another country.
- 3. Be a life-long learner.** When you finished your last college course did you utter a sigh of relief and mumble something like, "Whew, glad I'm finished with my education!" Surprise...the new century will require you to be a continuous learner. Be prepared to reinvent yourself, the pool of information in your brain and your work-related skills every 4-5 years.
- 4. Practice impeccable integrity.** Employers need to feel your spirit and have the quiet assurance that you are honest. Even one person in an organization who takes advantage of company assets for personal gain causes untold rules and regulations. Taking integrity beyond just simple honesty,

however, means that when you commit to a deadline, you are fully committed to producing results, not excuses.

5. Be a self-starter. Fire yourself up or look forward to being the first to go when bottom lines dip into the red, a recession lurks around the corner or the next merger takes place. Those who learn to work on the optimistic side of life instead of the pessimistic side of life, are more valuable to the organization as they create a positive work environment that produces higher productivity.

6. Demonstrate personal discipline. Employers want to hire people who have disciplined work habits and disciplined thinking. The more disciplined the worker, the less time managers must spend rethinking, retracing and reworking...basically worrying if you will be reliable. When you demonstrate personal discipline, you and your manager can spend more time on solving problems and moving the company forward.

7. Prioritize and evaluate daily. Two of the biggest time wasters in the world are not knowing where to start when you get to work in the morning and working on low priority items. To compete in the global work environment takes meticulous prioritization of tasks and the ability to identify the highest priority item that you tackle first every morning.

8. Be adaptable. To stave off obsolescence, organizations must constantly change and regularly introduce change initiatives. Often employee resistance derails plans for updating processes and procedures and stalls company progress. To increase employability in 2010, learn to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Ask tough questions that define the future and actively look for ways to support the new change initiatives.

9. Think creatively and innovatively. Contributing to your organization in 2010 demands thinking outside of the box and looking for creative ways to solve nagging problems, increase productivity or produce a new product or service. When a challenge presents itself, be the first to offer a new viewpoint, discover an alternative or recommend another course of action. Your ideas combined with the creative ideas from other employees will help your organization renew itself as necessary to be competitive in the 21st Century.

10. Have the Can-Do attitude. Immerse yourself in all the available positive mental attitude material you can find. Negatives are thrown at you the entire day from the news, next door neighbors and the nerd in the next cubicle. Teams face hurdles to productivity which causes dissension among members. Management faces stockholder dissatisfaction and product deadlines. To compound the problem, your mind naturally generates negative thoughts before positive thoughts. You have to train your mind to see the positive, to find the positive and to see the opportunity lurking in the obstacle. If you can master the positive can-do attitude, you will add value to everything you touch and be more employable in an increasing negative world.

Some of these skills will be relatively simple and others may be difficult for you to implement. As you improve in each area mentioned above, however, you will increase in confidence and competence and create an environment where you add value to the organization and a need for your personal services. You will have greater job stability.

About the author: Karla Brandau, CSP, is an expert in change, leadership and team building in the flat world. She offers keynotes and workshops to move organizations forward. You can sign up for a monthly newsletter, download free articles and learn more about Karla by going to www.KarlaBrandau.com.