CareerCenter
The Maine Employment Resource

# Today's Work Competencies in Maine

**How has the world of work changed?**

**Why are work competencies important?**

**How do I measure up?**

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## How Has the World of Work Changed?

Even if our job requires us to make a product, we now perform a variety of tasks at work. We work as team members. We are responsible for the quality of the product we make. We are responsible for giving good customer service. We need a variety of skills to be successful on the job.

*Jobs today are more likely to be in services or retail trade than in manufacturing industries.*

Maine recognizes how work is changing. A Task Force on Essential Work Competencies was formed to help guide workers through these changes. People in work-force development and leaders of Maine businesses worked together to establish a list of essential work competencies. These are the skills and abilities that employers seek when they hire new employees or promote successful workers.

As you are job hunting in Maine, it will be helpful to think about how you have demonstrated these competencies in prior work experience and in volunteer or civic work. To learn how you can improve your work competencies, visit a CareerCenter.

# Today's Work Competencies

1. **Self-Esteem**
   Belief in your own self-worth and abilities
2. **Motivation to Achieve**
   The desire to improve performance by competing against increasingly higher standards of excellence
3. **Basic Skills**
   Reading, writing, computation, listening, speaking and computer literacy that are essential for successful performance as lifelong learners in the workplace
4. **Technical Knowledge and Skills for Specific Occupation**
   Knowledge, skills & abilities that are necessary to perform a job
5. **Thinking Skills:**
   - *Problem-Posing*-Choosing how to view a problem
   - *Problem-Solving*-Ability to resolve known problems
   - *Decision-Making*-Ability to choose a best response
   - *Analytical Thinking*-Analysis and logical reasoning
   - *Creative Thinking*-Ability to create novel ideas or products
6. **Learning Skills**
   Assessing your learning needs, understanding your learning styles, using appropriate techniques for learning
7. **Interpersonal Skills:**
   - *Interpersonal Understanding*-Hearing and understanding others' spoken, unspoken or partly expressed thoughts, feelings or concerns
   - *Teamwork*-Working cooperatively with others to achieve a common goal
   - *Negotiating*-Overcoming disagreements by compromising, accommodating, or collaborating with others
8. **Organizational Awareness Skills:**
   - *Assessment of Organizational Cultures*-Recognizing and assessing the characteristics of an organization's culture, including formal and informal power structures
   - *Presentation of Appropriate Self*-Developing and presenting an image of yourself which is consistent with the organization's requirements for success, including personal appearance and use of appropriate language for the corporate culture
   - *Networking*-Developing and maintaining a network of contacts with people who may be able to provide information, assistance, or support for work-related goals.

## Let's look at each of Today's Work Competencies to see why they are so important.

1. **Self-Esteem** is important because workers with low self-esteem are not willing to change on the job. If we do not have appropriate self-esteem, we are not willing to try new things. We are afraid we will fail. We are afraid we can't learn new things as quickly or as well as others can. This is especially true of learning new computer skills. Therefore, we stick to the "tried and true" old ways of doing things. The world of work is changing too fast for reluctant employees to block progress. Employers who do not keep up with the changing times often go out of business. They seek employees who will help them keep ahead of the field.
2. **Motivation to Achieve** means working hard every day. Employers are seeking employees who will "give a good day's work for a good day's pay." It means being punctual to work and to meetings. It means asking for additional duties if your time at work is not filled. Workers who are motivated to achieve stay late when necessary. They are good team players. Even if your current position is not your dream job, doing your best every day lets others see what a motivated worker you are.
3. **Basic Skills** (including **reading, computation, writing, speaking, listening and computer skills**) are essential to get a job and keep a job. As you look at your basic skills, do you find skills gaps that need to be closed? There are many opportunities to continue lifelong learning. Visit the CareerCenter's Information Center and check out the Education and Training section.
4. **Technical Knowledge & Skills** necessary to perform the duties of the job are certainly important. We have to document that we have the knowledge, skills and abilities to compete successfully for a job. Most of us feel confident using the technical knowledge and skills we have mastered in previous jobs. We know how to do those things very well. Sometimes when we change jobs, these skills are still in demand. However, sometimes we find ourselves in a position where our skills are no longer competitive or we need additional technical knowledge and skills. There are many employers who will train someone in the technical knowledge and skills for their occupation if they find a job candidate who has appropriate self-esteem, motivation to achieve and good basic skills. Some people can gain new technical knowledge and skills through on-the-job training or apprenticeship opportunities. Visit the CareerCenter's Information Center to learn more about training programs and other opportunities to increase your technical knowledge and skills.

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## How do I measure up?

Rate yourself from 1 (low) to 10 (high) on each of these competency statements. While you are job hunting in Maine, you may want to put these competencies on your résumé or use them at interviews.

_____ I am honest in discussions about myself and my career plans.

_____ I am able to cope with people and problems on the job.

_____ I am dependable and punctual.

_____ I have demonstrated self-confidence by showing initiative and using problem-solving skills.

_____ I am a highly motivated self-starter.

_____ I cooperate well in a work situation.

_____ I take direction from supervisors well.

_____ I ask questions when I don't understand something at work.

_____ I try to be a valuable employee by learning all I can about my job.

_____ I try to learn more about the company I work for so I can contribute more at work.

_____ I have a plan to accomplish my career goals and ambitions.

_____ When I start a task at work I usually complete it.

_____ I know how to handle several things at work at the same time and can set priorities.

_____ I have good time-management skills.

_____ I am organized at work.

_____ My organizational skills at home allow me to be at work on time each day.

_____ I work well in groups.

_____ I work well alone.

_____ I am creative at work by thinking of ways to save time or money or make other improvements in my work performance.

_____ I do my job well without direct supervision.

_____ I can express what I think at work.

_____ I can teach others what I know at work.

_____ I know several ways to make good decisions and use the most appropriate way for each situation at work.

_____ I can negotiate and work out compromises on the job.

_____ I am a good listener at work.

_____ I can communicate well with people verbally.

_____ I communicate well in writing.

_____ I have the academic and technical skills I need to be successful on the job.

_____ I have the computer skills necessary to get and keep a job.

_____ I know how to "fit in" with others at work.

_____ I know how to represent my place of work well when dealing with customers or the public.

_____ I always give excellent customer service.

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5. **Thinking Skills** are very important in today's workplace. We need to be able to figure out what a problem is (problem-posing) and to know how to solve problems right the first time. We also need to learn from our mistakes and from what doesn't work. Skilled workers make good decisions using a variety of decision-making styles. They also are creative on the job. Creative thinking includes how to do something faster, make something better or save the company money without compromising quality.
6. **Learning Skills** are important because the world of work is changing very rapidly. Many of us are in jobs that did not exist when we began working. We are using equipment and techniques that did not exist a few years ago. If we do not know how we learn best, then we are not as efficient at work as we could be. We have to be ***Lifelong Learners*** to be successful at work today.
7. **Interpersonal Skills** include understanding and getting along with others at work. We need to work well with co-workers, supervisors and customers. We have to know how to negotiate and compromise on the job so that the customer and the work come first.
8. **Organizational Awareness** means fitting into the corporate culture at work. That means understanding and following the written and unwritten policies of a workplace. It means that our work clothes, appearance and language are appropriate to the position we are seeking. It is also staying in touch with others to keep learning about your field or employment. Staying in touch with colleagues is called networking.

**For more information on work competencies and other services and training sponsored by the Maine Department of Labor, or for directions to your nearest CareerCenter, call 1-888-457-8883 or visit their Web site at http://www.mainecareercenter.com**

*The Maine Department of Labor provides equal opportunity in employment and programs. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.*

February 2004