



## What Do Employers Want?

.....

“When hiring for any position, I look for people who have a grasp of computers and good communication skills. I also look for people who can work well with others, adapt easily to change, and be creative when looking for new ways to do things.”

*Debbie Bornholdt  
Human Resource Project Manager  
QVC, Electronic Retailer  
West Chester, PA*

### *In this chapter you will:*

- ◆ Assess your skills and work attitudes from an employer’s perspective.
-  Use the Internet to enhance your self-assessment and career planning activities.
-  Use the Internet to research current trends in developing a career portfolio; begin listing appropriate items for your own.
- ◆ Set a career target.

**C**hapter 3 identifies the skills, work attitudes, and other qualifications that employers focus on in making hiring decisions. The chapter guides you through a self-assessment from the employer’s perspective. The assessment will help you identify your most important qualifications that you will need to present to an employer during your job search. This chapter also identifies excellent career and job-planning resources to help confirm appropriate goals. Finally, Chapter 3 explains the importance of developing a career portfolio and provides Internet resources for additional information on this topic.

## WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT

Employers want to hire employees who have the specific and transferable work skills required for a job, who have work values compatible with their organizations, and who have the personal qualities necessary to be successful in the organizations. The more clearly you convey your skills that relate to your job target, the greater your chance of landing your ideal job.

### Job-Specific Skills

Employers seek job-specific skills (skills and technical abilities that relate *specifically* to a particular job). Two examples of job-specific skills are (a) using specialized tools and equipment and (b) using a custom-designed software program for a specific field of work.

#### SUCCESS TIP

Identify your job-specific skills and transferable competencies to convince employers you fit the job.

### Transferable Skills and Attitudes

In addition to job-specific skills, employers need workers who have transferable competencies: basic skills and attitudes that are required for all types of work. These

skills and attitudes required for workplace success can be transferred or applied from one job or work environment to another, making employees responsive to change. Examples include using a computer, communicating effectively, and performing basic math. Other examples include traits such as responsibility, self-control, and honesty.

Both a construction supervisor and an accountant must work well with others, manage time, solve problems, read, and communicate effectively—all transferable competencies. They both must be competent in these areas even though framing a house and balancing a set of books (the job-specific skills for each field) are not related. In every occupation, transferable competencies are as important as technical expertise and job-specific skills.

The way specific jobs are performed changes frequently as continual improvements are made in tools, technology, and quality procedures. As a result, some job-specific skills and even entire jobs become obsolete. Electronics, for example, has revolutionized the field of vehicle engine mechanics. Transferable work competencies are not tied to a specific job but can be transferred from one job to another and even from one career field to another.

#### Complete Career Action 3-1

## CAREER ACTION 3-1

### Skills and Competencies Profile

**DIRECTIONS:** Turn to page 47, and complete **Career Action 3-1** now.



Career Database Appropriate

## Skills for the Future—SCANS

Many educational, business and government organizations are identifying the workplace competencies they think are essential to keep the United States competitive in the 21st Century. One of the most important reports on this topic is known as SCANS (the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills). SCANS was published by the U.S. Department of Labor and identified the transferable competencies essential for career and business success in the 21st Century.

Because technology and other factors rapidly change the way work is processed,

employers need adaptable employees with foundational work competencies who are creative thinkers and problem solvers. This is the only way employers can continue to operate and compete successfully. They also want employees who are responsible, comfortable with technology and complex systems, able to learn and work in teams, and who have a passion for continuous learning.

**"Choose a job you love,  
and you will never have to  
work a day in your life."**

—Confucius

Figure 3-2 on page 40 is a summary of the SCANS study results identifying the skills and competencies that employers nationwide are seeking when hiring and promoting employees at all levels. Notice that the SCANS study addresses transferable competencies rather than job-specific skills.

## THE ROLE OF TRANSFERABLE COMPETENCIES



Employees with strong transferable competencies and basic skills are most successful in managing change because they have the basic skills and attitudes necessary to adapt. Two of the most influential transferable competencies are demonstrating enthusiasm and working well with others. During your job search, you will need to provide clear examples of both the job-specific skills and the transferable competencies most relevant to your job target.

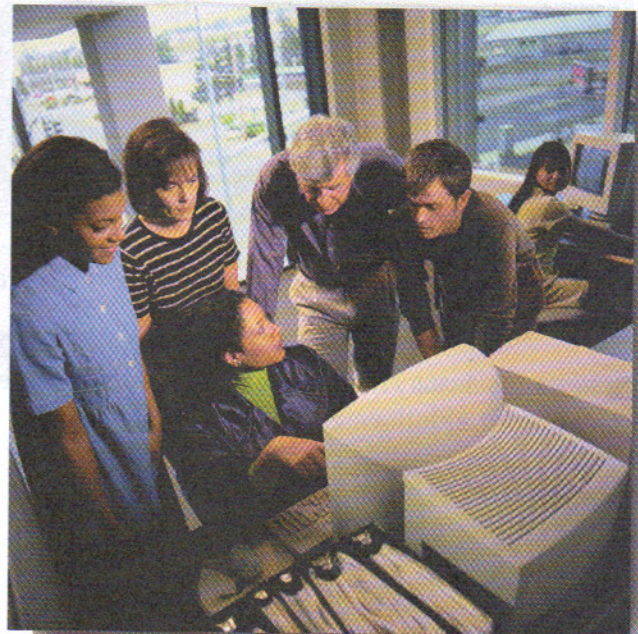


Figure • 3-1: Employers want employees who are responsible, comfortable with technology, and able to work in teams.

## The Five Workplace Competencies Employers Want Most

1. **RESOURCES:** Identifies, organizes, plans, allocates, and manages resources.
2. **INTERPERSONAL:** Works well with others.
3. **INFORMATION:** Acquires, organizes, interprets, and uses information.
4. **SYSTEMS:** Understands complex social, organizational, and technological systems and interrelationships.
5. **TECHNOLOGY:** Works with a variety of technologies (tools, equipment, computers).

## The Foundation Skills and Personal Qualities Employers Want Most

1. **BASIC SKILLS:** Reads, writes, performs arithmetic and mathematical operations, listens, and speaks.
2. **THINKING SKILLS:** Thinks creatively, makes decisions, solves problems, visualizes, knows how to learn, reasons.
3. **PERSONAL QUALITIES:** Displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity, and honesty.

**NOTES:** The ability to work well with others (interpersonal competence) is considered the most important of these components. It is essential so that work teams can solve problems and make the most effective decisions.

Most tasks require employees to use several of these eight components simultaneously.

Figure • 3-2: Summary of SCANS Skills and Competencies

## ASSESSING YOURSELF FROM AN EMPLOYER'S PERSPECTIVE

In Chapter 2, you identified specific skills that you had developed in school and work environments. This chapter has provided

you with insights on how employers view skills and competencies. Now it is time to review your inventory and self-assessment from an employer's perspective. How would an employer categorize your skills and personal qualities?

**Complete Career Action 3-2**

## CAREER ACTION 3-2

### SCANS Inventory

**DIRECTIONS:** Turn to page 51, and complete **Career Action 3-2** now. As you read the summary of competencies, foundation skills, and personal qualities listed, think about and check each one you've developed.



Career Database Appropriate

## CAREER PLANNING RESOURCES

By using several career planning resources, you can speed the process of making and confirming your career choice and greatly improve your chance of making a successful decision. Review the following resources, and place a check mark next to those you could use to improve your career planning.

**NOTE:** Comprehensive sources of job information are provided in Chapter 6, and you may want to review those briefly now because some of them can also be career planning resources.

### SUCCESS TIP

Use a variety of career planning resources to help choose and validate appropriate career and job goals.

- Your school career services staff and counselors.** These counselors specialize in assisting students and alumni with career planning. They provide aptitude and interest tests, as well as current information about the job market and occupational fields.



Figure • 3-3: Use resources at your school or public library to access information about careers and jobs.

- The Internet.** A wealth of career planning and job information is available through the Internet. Many sites offer online tools to assess your career interests and values and to help match the results with appropriate careers and jobs.

See your school career services staff and counselors for recommendations for productive Web sites. Also check out the career center or career services Web sites of your local colleges or universities; many of these are excellent.

## SUCCESSFUL CAREER PLANNING REQUIRES FLEXIBILITY



Changing technologies and a global economy cause some careers to become obsolete or vastly changed. Broaden your options in today's rapidly changing technological environment by preparing to qualify for two closely related career goals requiring similar education, training, and general capabilities. Ask a knowledgeable career counselor to help you identify multicareer goals appropriate for your interests and abilities. Continually work at developing your career flexibility.

- Computerized career information systems.** To use this service, users complete a computerized questionnaire regarding their personal interests and abilities. The program then provides a list of occupations consistent with the user's answers. Other information provided may include job descriptions, hiring requirements, employment prospects, and education and training requirements. Check with your school career counselor

or state department of education to locate the nearest computerized system.

- City, county, state, and federal employment or human resources departments.** For information about government occupations, contact the employment or human resources department that manages employment in your target field.
- Career planning publications.** Ask your school career services counselor and librarian for help in locating books, magazines, and articles about your field and current job target.
- People you know.** Contact people whom you have observed or known, admire, and have jobs just like the one you dream of. Ask them to help you explore your readiness for a similar job or career.
- Volunteer work.** Volunteering can be a big asset when you apply for the job you want; it demonstrates exceptional initiative; it also helps you get a feel for a job and career. You can volunteer on a part-time or temporary basis or arrange an internship through your school.

### Complete Career Action 3-3

**"Formulate and stamp indelibly on your mind a mental picture of yourself succeeding. Hold this picture tenaciously. Never permit it to fade. Your mind will seek to develop this picture!"**

—Norman Vincent Peale

## CAREER ACTION 3-3

### Internet Career Planning Resources



**NOTE:** Because the content of Web sites is subject to change without notice, be aware that the links listed below may not match the current content of the Web sites referenced in this assignment.

1. Select "Your Career Search" from the main menu of *WebGuide: Your Online Career Search*. Then complete item 1, Jobs of tomorrow; and item 8, Link your education and your career.
2. Surf the following Web sites for information on career selection. Then prepare a summary of your findings or print useful information.

**Bureau of Labor Statistics** <http://stats.bls.gov/>

**America's Career InfoNet** <http://www.acinet.org/>

**The Catapult** <http://www.jobweb.org/catapult/>  
Under "Help Guides and Career Library Resources," click on [Career Choices](#).

**JobSmart** <http://www.jobsmart.org/>  
Click on [Career Guides](#).

## SET YOUR CAREER TARGET

The work you have completed in this chapter has prepared you for this next step in your career. You now have all the information you need to set your career target. You may want to use the visualization skills from Chapter 1 to help you in defining your personal career objectives. Together with friends and associates, brainstorm careers that are appropriate. Think about work,

hobbies, and volunteer experiences you have enjoyed in the past. What kind of work do you want to do? Where would you like to do this work? How much do you want to get paid for your work? What is the best career match for your unique skills, experiences, values, and interests? The form for **Career Action 3-4** will help you organize your thoughts.

**Complete Career Action 3-4**

## CAREER ACTION 3-4

### My Career Target

**DIRECTIONS:** Turn to page 54, and complete **Career Action 3-4** now.

## YOUR CAREER PORTFOLIO

The *portfolio* is a collection of documents and other items that demonstrate your skills, abilities, achievements, experience, and training. The purpose of the career portfolio is to organize examples of your skills and achievements that you can present during interviews as proof of your qualifications. Developing and using a career portfolio provides tangible proof of your qualifications. It also demonstrates important skills that employers are seeking: critical thinking, analyzing, planning, and preparation.

Examples of appropriate portfolio items include an official copy of your transcript(s); your resume; exemplary samples of your work, such as business writing, graphic artwork, and printed samples from software presentations. Other appropriate items include evidence of specialized computer usage, such as desktop publishing and Web site creation; awards; work performance evaluations; and letters of reference.

Portfolio samples can be from paid or volunteer work, internships, cooperative education, clubs, community activities, and more. A more comprehensive list of appropriate items and ideas for building your portfolio is contained in the "Career Portfolio" section of Appendix C, "Career Management Tools." Additional activities are presented later in this text to help you in developing an effective portfolio.

Begin considering what you have done or accomplished

that best demonstrates your qualifications for the job you want. For example, to demonstrate your computer skills, you could include your transcript listing related coursework or a diskette containing examples of documents you developed using specific computer skills. To demonstrate a strong background in foreign languages, you could include in your portfolio your transcripts listing appropriate coursework and a letter of



Figure • 3-4: Assemble a portfolio of items that demonstrate your abilities and accomplishments.

recommendation from a teacher or employer who is familiar with your language skills.

For now, you can use a folder to store items that you identify for use later in your career portfolio. Begin listing appropriate items in **Career Action 3-5**.

**Complete Career Action 3-5**

**SUCCESS TIP**

Begin listing items that will be appropriate for your career portfolio that demonstrate your job qualifications, such as school transcripts, hard copy or electronic samples of exemplary work, and letters of recommendation.

## CAREER ACTION 3-5

### List Appropriate Portfolio Items

**DIRECTIONS:** Take a moment now to list items that seem appropriate to include in your Career Portfolio. As you progress through the upcoming chapters, add other items to your list. Later, you will be instructed to begin assembling your actual portfolio.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

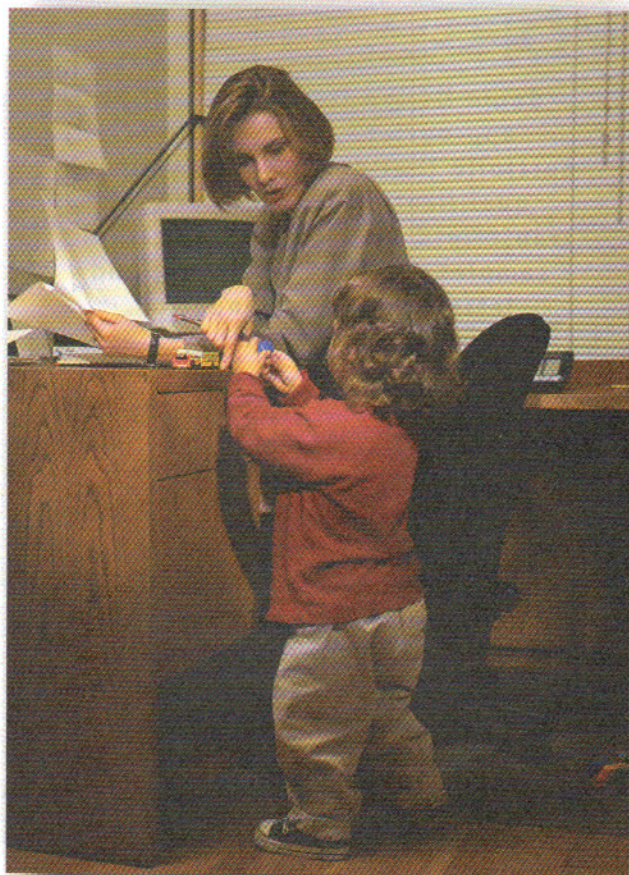


Figure • 3-5: Collect portfolio items that will demonstrate your qualifications for prospective employers.



## CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSING YOURSELF FROM AN EMPLOYER'S PERSPECTIVE

Check each of the following actions that you are currently taking to increase your career success:

- Identify your job-specific skills and transferable competencies to convince employers you fit the job.
- Use a variety of career planning resources to help in choosing and validating appropriate career and job goals.
- Develop a career portfolio of items to demonstrate your job qualifications for prospective employers.
- Start collecting items that will demonstrate your job qualifications for prospective employers.

## CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS



1. Why is it important to develop a broad career base that is flexible enough to encompass at least two fields?
2. Which career planning resources will be most helpful in your job search and career planning activities, and why?
3. Why do employers value employees who have the workplace competencies and foundation skills identified in the SCANS report?