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CSC 424

Skills Paper

4/23/21

A skill is defined as the ability to do something well, or to do it with expertise. Throughout our lives we will all be skilled at some things and fail at others. However, not all skills are created equal; some will give you nothing and take everything while others will give you access to the world. The most important skills are those that you must use in your day-to-day life, especially at work. When it comes to the field of computing, reality is no different. Some of the major skills that one must develop before heading into a career are working well with a team of other people, working on your own, and also having the ability to present and improve upon your work later on. Working with a team is important because we live in a society of people working together, without that fundamental teamwork the world would collapse. Working on your own should not be excluded though, as it is your individual work that will end up being the building block upon which the team's work is founded.

Team skills include things such as working directly with teammates, communicating between people on separate teams, and also recognizing the importance of emotional intelligence. When you are able to work directly with your teammates it allows you to join with them to create a larger project than what you would be able to do on your own. Often, this larger project also takes a fraction of the time as the workload is divided between multiple members of the team and team members can choose to work on aspects of the project that they are suited for. This allows for one of the fundamental qualities of humankind to shine, specialization. When your team is able to specialize its members to specific types of tasks then each member is able to bring their full intellectual capacity to bear on the problem, which in turn makes the solution much easier and faster to discover. A good example of this is if your team is assigned the task of creating a website, yet you know almost nothing of how the backend works. If you have a specialized team, that matters little as you most likely have a team member who is an expert at backend coding. This will ensure that the project is not stopped in its tracks by most trivial matters, such as lack of knowledge. Not only must you work with people on your own team, but you must also work with other teams as well. There is more than just 10 people on the planet, and in order to create some truly mind-boggling projects cross-team coordination is required. The ability to communicate with separate teams also applies to anyone outside of your own team, regardless of if they are in the same company as you. They may still be able to provide assistance to you, if you are able to communicate your need for the information from them. For example, if you are designing that website and somehow no one on your team knows backend code, you could ask someone from a different department, a friend, or even a random stranger on the internet might have the answer. It is not impossible to continue without that assistance, yet the help makes the work take significantly shorter while also lowering the workload placed on your own shoulders. Finally, when working with other people at all, an absolutely critical skill is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is defined as the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically. When we apply that to a team environment, you can see why it would be important to be conscious of your teammates' state of mind and be able to act accordingly. If you responded the wrong way to an already offended teammate, you could imagine the lack of productivity that would ensue; communication would suffer and so would the end result of the

project. Working with people is something that we do on an everyday basis and cannot be ignored, as such the skills required to work efficiently with others can be considered some of the most vital to your success.

While a lot of the work that we do is accomplished in a team setting, most of our work is completed on our own. What this means is that individual skills are just as important as team based. Some of the more obvious include critical thinking, decision making, organization, and self-management. Critical thinking is important for the reasons you would assume and is tied to decision making. When critical thinking is involved in a thought process, that usually leads to a better decision. Having the ability to think critically allows you to tackle more complex problems and to solve them faster as well. For example, if you work at a warehouse and you have to decide which items to order, you have to think critically about what you will need in the future, what kind of events could happen to disrupt that need, and also what you do not need. Lack of critically thinking could result in a situation where the same things are ordered regardless of changes to the demand or supply, resulting in wasted merchandise and unhappy customers. Critical thinking aside, the matter of quickly coming to a good decision is another valuable skill on its own. Being able to solve a problem quicker is always a good thing, especially when it is mixed with critical thinking to get the solution right. Organization is an incredibly important skill and plays into improving the effectiveness of most of the other actions you do. If you are organized and can keep track of what you are doing, what you have to do, and what you have already done then you will not have to worry about forgetting to finish an assignment or section of one. This will save you a lot of headache and stress, by allowing you to know quickly and confidently what you are supposed to be doing, so no time is wasted. Speaking of wasted time, self-management is incredibly useful for increasing your productivity by reducing the time that ends up getting wasted during the day. Through effective self-management, you can more efficiently finish tasks and accomplish more throughout the day. An example of this would be if you worked at a fast-food restaurant and you were responsible for cleaning up at the end of the day. If you had done little bits throughout your shift then at the end of the night closing should be a fairly straightforward task, however, if you had not, then you would be left with the full job just as you want to go home. The other side of self-management is impulse control. Impulse control can be just as important as time management in that it can stop you from damaging yourself by committing actions you should not. For example, if you are at work and get into a small argument with a coworker your impulse control should stop you from escalating to a full-blown fight, as that would end up getting you fired. This all goes to show that these skills can be incredibly impactful to your life, and if you cannot work alone then you will never be able to work as a functioning part of a team.

Once your work is complete, the story is not over. You may, and should, wish to improve upon that work, but you must also share your work with the world. Whether it be a presentation to your boss, publishing to the general public, or some variation of the two, you will need to have the skills to get the information about the project out or your head and into the heads of others.

The main ways of doing this are speaking and writing skills. Speaking allows you to present your work in one of the most efficient ways possible. It takes far less time to explain something to someone effectively than to do the same thing with text or pictures alone. Not only that, but improvements in speaking skills would most likely translate back to an improvement in other communication-related skills. Writing is less efficient than speaking, but it has the advantage that you just need to write it down once, and then others would be able to read your text and gain the knowledge from that. This means that you do not have to be anywhere near the other people, and they could be in a different time than you as well. For example, you designed a new protocol for internet communications that is incredibly secure, and you wrote beautiful documentation for it. Then you sold the rights and moved to a remote island in the Caribbean. The new users of your protocol would not have to track you down for each and every question, they could simply review the document you created to go along with it.

Even after your work is complete and presented, you are not finished. The world is ever changing, and your next assignment will most likely be somewhat harder than your last. In order to cope with this power creep, you must continually improve yourself through research and analysis of emerging concepts and technologies. By keeping track and analyzing your work, you can avoid repeating errors made in previous projects, and continually improving yourself gives you the ability to act with the confidence that even if you may not be able to solve a given problem at the moment, you will be able to solve it eventually. This creates a great coping mechanism for when things inevitably do not work, as you know that eventually you will get it right.