

# HR Insights

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## Employee Skills for the Post-pandemic Workplace

As the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly changed workplaces, workers' skills have changed as well. Job skills were evolving before the pandemic, but it has prompted more change in a much quicker manner.

In fact, the number of skills required for a single job is increasing by 10% per year, according to Gartner data. In response, organizations should embrace a dynamic approach to reskilling talent in order to shift vital employee skills and help develop skills as they become relevant and necessary. Consider skills necessary to thrive in an organization, especially in relation to company modifications like remote work or operations changes.

As organizations move from their initial pandemic response plans to more sustainable operations, this article provides critical worker skills for companies to foster with both candidates and current employees.

### The Skills

The skills mentioned in this section were important before the pandemic, but may not have been prioritized by many organizations. Consider pursuing and supporting the following proficiencies for potential and current employees:

- **Adaptability**—Just as an organization may have quickly adapted to new ways of working and communicating, the willingness and capability to adapt will rise to the top of desired employee skills. The goal for employees is to remain functioning even when forced out of their comfort zone. If employees can excel in those environments, even better. Encourage

current employees to take on stretch roles to build this skill.

- **Communication**—Communication is not a new in-demand skill, but now needs to extend across platforms. Many organizations have deployed videoconferencing or collaboration tools to facilitate communication inside and outside the company. With employees working remotely, communication skills are critical for emails and virtual meetings. The goal remains to be effective and efficient, and valuable employees will be able to communicate clearly and concisely with all stakeholders. Communication is still happening, just through different channels.
- **Digital capabilities**—As the world and workplace rely more on digital assets, digital skills—including programming, design, writing and coding—will be even more vital to success. The workforce should evolve as well and be comfortable with digital platforms. Tying into the communication aspect above, an employee should be open to using digital communication platforms at work and know when to use certain platforms. Organizations may invest in a variety of digital platforms to facilitate communication among employees, clients,



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vendors and other stakeholders. Find what's relevant based on the company's industry, and focus on new digital tools and skills that best support the company, clients and co-workers best.

- **Emotional intelligence**—Emotional intelligence (EI) is central to both personal and professional life. It's the capacity to differentiate, evaluate and respond while recognizing both one's emotions and the emotions of others. EI is often a sought-after skill for leadership roles, but it is relevant in today's workplace for all roles. Employees with higher EI typically navigate the workplace more effectively and are more resilient. The following components of EI can have a positive impact on a post-pandemic workplace:
  - **Empathy** is the ability to understand and feel for others, and therefore relate to them better.
  - **Motivation** is the ability to use internal resources to perform and strive toward goals.
  - **Self-awareness** is the ability to recognize and understand one's behaviors and emotions.
  - **Self-regulation** is the ability to be in control of one's emotions, and therefore responses.
  - **Social skills** are the ability to build and maintain relationships, manage conflict and work with others.

Organizations can seek out and hire candidates who strongly demonstrate these skills, but what can they do with their current workforce? Consider pushing current employees to convey or demonstrate these skills in order to leverage more work opportunities within the company. Depending on the role, that may be done through accomplishments or data. Just as organizational leadership can stay relevant by shifting to support market needs, the same flexible mindset should be present and practiced among the workforce.

For additional talent management resources or more information about reskilling, contact Wallace Welch & Willingham today.