Seven skills You Need to Have Before Leaving University

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Figuring out what degree or any other academic qualification you need to attain, and acquiring it, is only about half of what you need in order to get a job. There are other skills you need to have in order to survive in the work environment.

Employers want particular skills in their employees no matter what job they do. This article will outline a few important skills that graduate employers other than your academic qualification.

Time Management

Time management speaks to the way you organise and plan how long you spend on your set tasks. It involves setting the goals that you want to achieve then planning what methods you will use to attain those goals. Additionally, you need to prioritise your goals in order to start with the most urgent and time-sensitive one. For instance, as an accountant, you'd need to prioritise collecting information such as invoices and trip sheets, as it is your number one priority before processing the invoices and balancing the accounts. This shows setting goals, planning how to go about them and prioritising.

Good time management leads to accomplishing more in a short space of time and helps with maintaining focus. Work on your time management before jumping into the workplace. It will help you work more efficiently.

Critical thinking

Critical thinking refers to the objective analysis and consideration of an issue in order to form a judgment. Critical thinking encourages logical reasoning as well as enhances the ability to solve problems. It also promotes a sense of independence in the acquisition of knowledge and the desire to think for yourself.

Some high schools in Zimbabwe have Thinking Skills as a subject which gives some students the opportunity to learn critical thinking skills before entering the tertiary education stage. Critical thinking can be learnt before leaving university by not taking all information at face value, for example, asking questions and doing your research on different topics.

Software Skills

The world is going through rapid technological changes, with some parts of the world experiencing the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR). With the 4IR underway, many jobs will be irrelevant in the next decade. Having some computing skills will help you to fit into the workplace better.

Software skills refer to efficiently using computer programs and applications. Companies are becoming more dependent on computers, and so before leaving university have at least a basic understanding of how computer programs and applications work, for instance, Microsoft Office.

Public Speaking

In the workplace, you may be put as a team leader or have to interact with customers either over the phone or face to face. For you to work well with others you need public speaking skills. This means clearly communicating your messages and having good body language which will help in conveying your messages. Confidence well is a key skill needed before leaving university for the workplace because it helps you express what you want or expect from your co-workers.

To help improve your public speaking you could join Toastmasters International or a debate society to help build your confidence. Such extra-curricular activities can be used as a platform to practice your public speaking before leaving university and entering an organisation as a graduate employee.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognise and manage your own emotions as well as those of others. It entails being self-aware, being able to motivate yourself and others, and leadership. Emotional intelligence is valuable because it helps to make and maintain relationships in the workplace and creates effective communication.

Before leaving university, take the time to work on your emotional intelligence because it will help you create and maintain purposeful and productive relationships both in the work environment and in your personal life.

Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills somewhat go hand-in-hand with emotional intelligence. These skills include the behaviours and tactics you use to interact with others. Some examples of interpersonal skills are verbal communication, non-verbal communication, listening, and teamwork. In the work environment, these skills are important because they help to create strong working relationships with co-workers and clients. Good interpersonal skills help with expressing oneself to others. Develop your interpersonal skills before leaving university for they will help you become more employable.

Many careers involve proceedings with others. Being the smartest person in the room will not help you if you are inconsiderate in terms of sharing work and helping others out. This will make it difficult to succeed. Good interpersonal skills do not need for you to be extroverted. Introverted people can have good interpersonal skills as well. Take the time and effort to work on your interpersonal skills and entering the work environment for the first time will be easier.

Adaptability

This is the ability to change your actions, course or approach to doing tasks or activities so as to suit a new situation. The world is always changing and so you will need to adapt to the changes. This can be linked to the software skills mentioned above, in the sense that being computer literate will help you adapt better when there is technological change. Being aware of the environment of your desired industry, economically and politically, will also help you foresee any changes and prepare yourself on how you will become adjusted to the new conditions.

Mastering the above-mentioned practical skills before leaving university, will help you as a new graduate to fit into the work environment. University is the time to have fun and the time to acquire meaningful knowledge in and out of the academic setting in order to help you build yourself for your dream career. However, there are other skills required from graduates. Work on more than just your academics. Prepare yourself for your new world in the workplace by working on these seven skills to give yourself a head start when you leave university.

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