

Press release
10th January 2017

What do hiring managers value more: technical skills or soft skills?

- 56% of HR managers place greater emphasis on technical skills for management-level roles, a figure that dips slightly to 52% for staff-level roles.
- 42% say they place equal importance on both technical and soft skill capabilities for staff-level roles, lowering to 28% for management-level staff.
- 36% think leadership acumen is the top skill that needs development among their management-level staff.

Sydney, 10th January 2017 – In today’s highly collaborative workplace, jobseekers can – and should – take steps to hone not only their technical skills but also their soft skills. Independent research by specialised recruitment company [Robert Half](#) confirms strong technical skills continue to be a fundamental requirement for a successful career. However, soft skills have gained in importance during the hiring process and allow professionals to add significant value to an organisation.

When evaluating candidates for management-level positions, the majority (56%) of Australian HR managers place more emphasis on the candidate’s technical skills, with less than one in three (28%) saying it’s an even split between their technical capabilities and soft skillset. For staff-level (or non-management) roles, 52% place more weight on technical skillsets, yet interestingly, more than two in five (42%) place an equal amount of importance on the candidate’s technical and soft skillsets.

David Jones, Senior Managing Director at Robert Half Asia Pacific said: *“In an increasingly competitive market, organisations need professionals who have the technical capabilities to succeed in their role, and candidates with solid technical skills will always have an advantage during the recruitment process. Employers need to know if an individual can do the job required and do it well.”*

“However, a strong technical skill set is no longer enough. Though harder to quantify, soft skills can be what sets a jobseeker apart from the competition. Soft skills have evolved in recent years from ‘nice-to-have’ to ‘need-to-have’ competencies.”

“As our workplaces become more collaborative, employers need an employee who can not only perform the job well, but who also demonstrates sound communication, leadership and team-building qualities. Businesses not only pay attention to the soft skills during the selection process but also to their further development with company training programmes.”

The soft skills in highest demand

When asked what the top soft skills are they’d like to see their employees improve, companies are quick to specify leadership as the top required skill, particularly for their management-level staff. More than one in three (36%) HR managers rate leadership skills most highly for senior roles compared to 28% when considering staff-level employees.

It is apparent the functional based skills required to perform the role is paramount to half of employers (50%) as job-related skillsets were cited as the top area for development among their staff-level employees.

“It is crucial for professionals at all levels to continually develop and refine their soft skills throughout their career, which clearly shows an employer their willingness to go above and beyond the job description and add measurable value to their role and the company.”

“Jobseekers who possess a wide variety of soft skills, such as interpersonal communication, leadership abilities and strategic planning, will be able to gain a strong foothold during the interview process and climb the corporate ladder more quickly. Candidates need to not only demonstrate their technical capabilities, but also show how they will be a good cultural fit within an organisation,” concluded **David Jones**.

Top three skills HR Managers would like to see improved among employees:

	Management-level positions	Staff-level positions
Leadership skills	36%	28%
Functional, job-related skills	33%	50%
Communication skills	17%	22%
Strategic planning skills	11%	0%
Project management skills	3%	0%

Source: Independent survey commissioned by Robert Half among 100 HR Managers – multiple answers allowed.

3 soft skills and tips on how to develop them to advance your career

1. Leadership aptitude

Climbing the ranks throughout your career will be next to impossible if you can’t prove your ability to manage a team, which inevitably requires mastering the so-called “soft” skill of leadership. If your employer doesn’t offer any leadership workshops, look into leadership courses outside of work.

If you can’t afford the course or can’t spare the time, ask your boss for extra responsibilities or new projects at work, both within your department and in other areas of the company. Spearheading new initiatives shows employers that you’re proactive and a natural team leader.

2. Communication

As you rise in your career, it will become increasingly important to express your ideas clearly and succinctly. To develop sound communication skills, practice active listening with both your supervisors and direct reports, and use writing skills to produce flawless reports.

To boost your communication talent, try to be self-aware during every interaction. If you can’t get your point across when speaking, try saying it another way rather than repeating yourself. A good tip for speaking more clearly is to skip jargon and buzzwords, and always maintain a professional tone. Do the same with your writing, and be sure to proofread everything twice.

3. Adaptability

Technology and other resources are transforming the modern workplace at breakneck speed, and to demonstrate your relevance, you need to stay on top of current trends and embrace change. For example, if your company is heavily invested in its online presence, you should fine-tune your social media skills to contribute to the business in more meaningful ways. Another good way to demonstrate

adaptability is to become more proficient in the latest updates relating to your specific industry and business.

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Notes to editors

About the research

The annual study is developed by Robert Half and conducted in April 2016 by an independent research firm, surveying 100 Australian HR managers. This survey is part of the international workplace survey, a questionnaire about job trends, talent management and trends in the workplace.

About Robert Half

Robert Half is the world's first and largest specialised recruitment consultancy and member of the S&P 500. Founded in 1948, the company has over 325 offices worldwide providing temporary, interim and permanent recruitment solutions for accounting and finance, financial services, technology, and administrative professionals. Robert Half Australia has offices in Brisbane, Melbourne, Mount Waverley, Perth and Sydney. More information on roberthalf.com.au.

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From client training to management meetings, the ability to speak publicly comes up in all walks of business – and yet a huge proportion of workers are scared to stand up and take to the stage. If you're scared of speaking in public, you certainly aren't alone. Read here for tips on how to squash your fears of public speaking.



[How to set your New Year resolutions \(and stick to them!\)](#)

We all head into 2017 with New Year resolutions to get fit, lose weight or earn a promotion. But by February, most of our goals will be forgotten in a haze of despondency. So how do you turn the tide to make sure you stay committed? Read here to find out how to stick to your New Year resolutions and make them a reality.

For more information

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