



CAREER ADVICE

How to Develop a More Diverse Skill Set in the Workplace

By Pamela Fay, Demand Media



The more diverse your skill set, the more employable you are.

It's hard to be all things to all people. A barista is not a bartender, though both deal in shots and shakers. Still, if the world's supply of coffee suddenly dried up, it wouldn't hurt to know how to mix an extra-dry martini. Indeed, in most occupations, it pays to develop a diverse set of skills. For one, diverse skills help ensure that you can do more than surf the Internet during the slow times. More importantly, diverse skills enable you to build your relevancy in the workplace and position you as a serious contender -- maybe even for the corner office.

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3 Big Interview Mistakes

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Step 1

Take stock of where you are now. Before you expand into other areas, make sure you have a solid understanding of your own job. If there are areas where you could improve, get coaching -- it doesn't have to be your boss; a co-worker or other experienced employee can help. Ask for feedback. Just be willing to put your ego aside and take a few hard knocks. Take criticism seriously. Listen and learn; although not everything you hear may be valid, anything you hear more than once probably is. If you feel that you can do your current job with your eyes closed, yet you're getting criticism about your performance, open your eyes and put forth a bit more effort.

Step 2

Identify areas where you can cross-train. List your understanding of other jobs and the skills they require on a daily basis. Talk to an advisor to confirm that you have made the best choices for job expansion. Remember that the point is not to learn every minute detail of every other job. Ultimately, your goal is to increase your understanding of the big picture. Select areas that help complete a macro view, then put a plan in place and go for it. Rare is the boss who doesn't love initiative.

Step 3

Get schooled. Evaluate your ability to handle certain situations in your current job or in your targeted cross-training areas. For example, your job may require you to deal with customer service issues. If you are ill-equipped to handle the stresses of adult temper tantrums, this could stymie your ability to move ahead at work. Ask your mentors, as well as your boss, which skills you need to develop. Revisit previous evaluations to see where you should focus your development efforts. Speak to your training department to see which assessments they recommend, courses they offer or suggestions they have to help you meet your career goals. The good news is that E.Q., or emotional intelligence skills, unlike I.Q., which you are basically stuck with, can be improved through education and practice.

Step 4

Look around for opportunity. Focus on your long-term career goals. Even if you're unable to move from your current position, be on the lookout for opportunities to grow and stretch from where you are today. There may be opportunities within your company that can help you learn critical new