Ascend + futureworks
STRATEGIES FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hiring the Right Talent

Understanding Where Employability Skills Fit

January 2018

Introduction

Employability skills, soft skills, and work readiness skills all describe skill sets that enable people to work together on the job and make workplaces more functional. A clear majority of employers nationwide want their new hires and employees to possess these skills in addition to technical skills required to complete job tasks.[1] According to organizational leaders, employability skills are essential to their business success and to the success of individual employees in their everyday performance and lifelong careers.

This report – through a review of research and in-depth interviews with Indiana employers – explores employability skills in the hiring processes of Indiana organizations. We identify employability skills important to our sample of sixteen Indiana employers and then describe assessment methods used in the hiring process. We seek to make observations that will be useful to employers looking to attract talent with the 'right' sets of employability skills, and to educators who are preparing students for careers.

Three broad observations shape the themes of this report.

> **First,** Indiana employers, across industries and of various sizes, spend a great deal of time and resources on employability skills in the hiring process; a human resources director told us these skills are really what most of their hiring process is about.

> **Second,** while many published employability skills frameworks identify certain skills, employers apply these skills to recruitment and hiring in ways that are job, occupation, and organizationally specific. These applications are much more intricate and nuanced than the frameworks by themselves imply.

> **Third,** employers want more reliable ways to assess for and validate the employability skills they've deemed important. Most base their confidence on anecdotal evidence of successful hires and their intuition. Validity, the confidence that assessments accurately measure what we want them to measure, is a core challenge in the assessment of employability skills in hiring.

Employability Skills in Publications

Although many people agree employability skills are important, no standard framework exists to define and describe them. Instead, government agencies, employers, educators, and more have created their own frameworks as tools to understand what is necessary to be successful at work. Although the skills, attributes, and behaviors identified are generally consistent, the frameworks vary considerably in how the skills are organized, as seen in Figure 1, as well as in more depth in Appendix A. While they can be helpful, there are some limits in how useful frameworks are in the hiring process. None of the Indiana employers interviewed reported using a published framework to identify important employability skills or inform steps in their hiring processes.

In order to confidently use a framework in hiring, an employer must first choose which one to use, despite having no clear way to understand differences between the many available options. In addition, it can be difficult to make connections between the skills identified and indicators of how to recognize them. The frameworks seldom provide linkage to specific methods or tools to help employers, educators, or students determine how employability skills can be observed. This creates a gap between the frameworks and the ability to assess for employability skills in practice.

This gap has considerable significance for employers and for success in hiring outcomes; it is hard to know how to reliably assess candidates for employability skills. While an assessment industry with competing models and tools has long existed, many assessment strategies used by employers in hiring are subjective at their core. This, coupled with the lack of research

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1   See Appendix A for the literature review completed by FutureWorks.
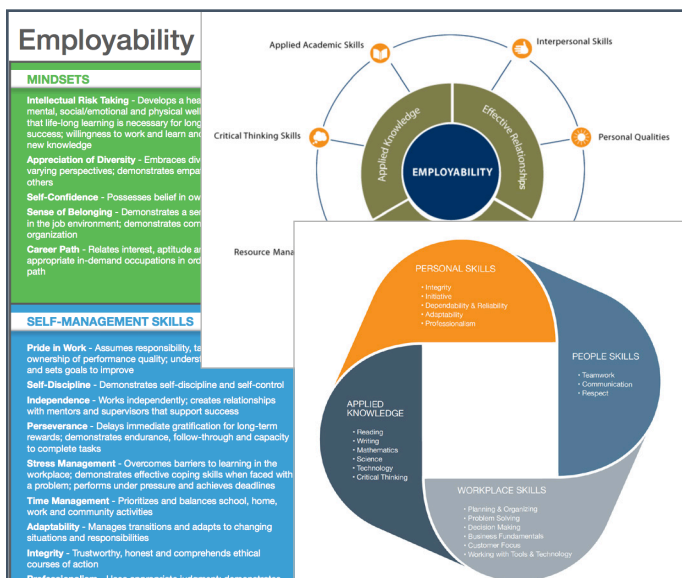
Figure 1 - Employability skills frameworks from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, US Department of Education, and the Business Roundtable (back to front).

comparing or validating different assessments for employability skills, creates ambiguity; what is solid evidence of an employability skill? Many companies tout their methods' quantitative approach, but developing confidence in their assessments and tools can still be difficult, in addition to being expensive. Despite this, accurate assessments are often critical to success or failure in hiring.

National Context for Employability Skills

Indiana employers are not alone in raising the importance of employability skills. Across the U.S., reports from business and trade organizations place employability skills central to building a skilled and qualified workforce. Some research places employability skills among the top needs employers report for workforce skills, and often equal to or more important than technical skills alone.[2] Other research suggests that once an employer determines

that a candidate possesses the basic technical skills for a position – typically indicated by credentials and resumes – employability skills then assume central importance in the hiring process.[3]

Why is this? A quick answer is that more employers now believe that employability skills are critical to their success. As such, these skills have become part of the currency of human resource functions. However, there are other reasons for their importance more deeply rooted in how workplaces now function. In hospitals, manufacturing firms, tech startups, and across virtually the entire business landscape, the operating characteristics of business have fundamentally changed over the last generation, and with them has changed the organization of work.

Three trends of a changing workplace raise the importance of employability skills for incoming employees and the existing workforce: more focused and leaner organizational structures; the increasingly central role of knowledge-economy competencies; and greater focus on work values and cultures. Hierarchy and repetition have, in many firms, been replaced by flexibility, multitasking, responsibility, and innovation. In this new landscape, success for the organization and its individual employees entails not only having the technical skills required for the operations, but also having employability skills such as agility, resilience, initiative, communication, or teamwork. Indiana employers repeatedly identified skills like these as necessary to their competitiveness and organizational success.

Research on employability skills in the U.S. and resulting frameworks are often subtly aimed at entry-level workers in lower to mid-levels of the skill spectrum. Typically, the focus is on skills entry-level workers need in order to get hired and enter the

2   National Association of Colleges and Employers, *Job Outlook 2017,* December 2016.

Hart Research Associates, *Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success*, January 2015, American Association of Colleges and Universities, https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/2015employerstudentsurvey.pdf.

World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs Report: Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, January 2016, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs.pdf.

3   John Sullivan, "12 Effective Ways to Assess Candidates' Soft Skills", LinkedIn Talent Blog, July 25, 2017.

The Society for Human Resource Management, "The New Talent Landscape: Recruiting Difficulty and Skills Shortages," 2016.

labor force. This perspective flows from the focus of workforce development programs who are often the authors of employability skills frameworks, and reflects their intent to help people build skills and find jobs. In contrast, many employers view employability skills as important across work in an entire organization, including mid- and high-level positions requiring postsecondary credentials. This orientation is reflected in our interviews, where the greatest effort in identifying and assessing employability skills was devoted to skilled entry level, mid-level technical workers, and senior management positions.

Another difference in how employers and frameworks use employability skills is of particular significance to job and internship seekers. While the employability skills frameworks identify discrete skills, in hiring contexts, employability skills are often clustered into competencies in relation to job requirements, desired behavioral attributes, and organizational expectations. Many of our interviewees articulated a gap in what they were looking for in applicants and how recent graduates presented their technical and employability skills. Many employers reported students' (and educators') inability to express their knowledge relative to the requirements of work performance. Questions to identify this knowledge in hiring processes are often expressed in behavioral or situational terms.

Interview Results

Outlined below is a summary of key elements from our in-depth interviews with sixteen Indiana employers (listed in Appendix B). Size of the firms' employment in Indiana ranged from about five employees to over ten thousand. Industry sectors included were healthcare, manufacturing, technology, financial services, and others. Interviewees included executive, human resource, and recruitment leadership.

Identifying Relevant Employability Skills

We began our interviews by asking employers if they had identified employability skills important to their organization, and if so, what skills were most desired. Not surprisingly, almost all had defined – either formally or at least with intentionality – employability skills they sought in potential employees. Nomenclature and priority varied somewhat by organization and role, but in general our Indiana employers were looking for the same employability skills. Our interviewees' desired skills were also consistent with most employability skills described in national literature.

One observation of note was that our interviewees did not cite basic skills of math, reading comprehension, or writing skills that are generally included in frameworks. For our group of employers, many were focused on hiring for positions that required a postsecondary credential, and so they seemed to assume that applicants already had those skills. The most frequently mentioned skills deemed important were relational in nature, and focused on how a person interacted with or was perceived by others. Important skills included integrity, collaboration, and communication. Typical descriptors of these skills are listed in Figure 2. For a full list of important employability skills and the frequency with which they were mentioned, see Appendix C.

Unlike most employability skills frameworks that identify separate skills within categories, companies invariably identify important employability skills based on job characteristics, job profiles and, in some cases where they are formally defined, the cultural principles and core values of the organization. In other words, a list of employability skills by itself was not particularly useful in the hiring process until it was applied to specific positions within the organization and informed by the organization's cultural context.
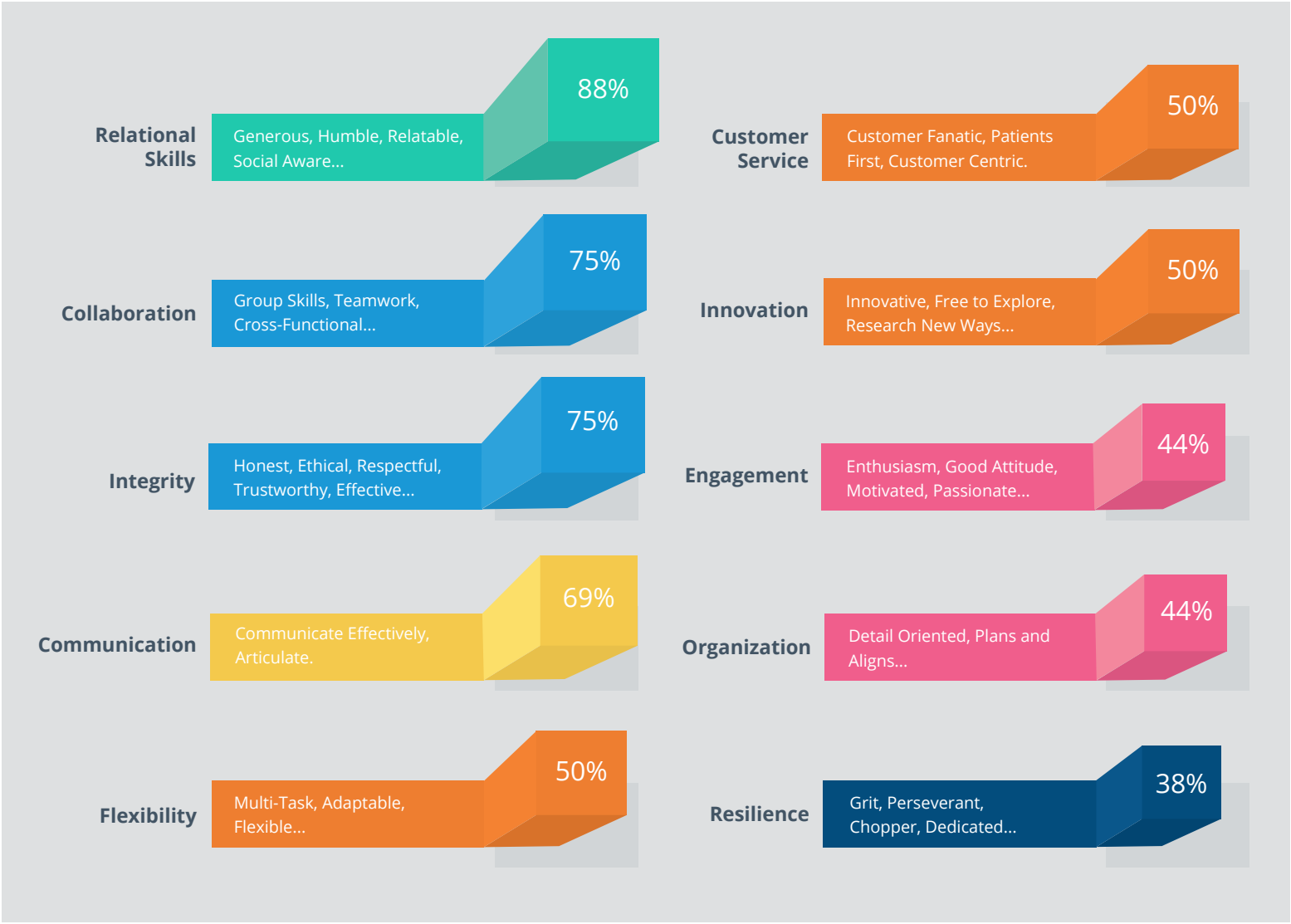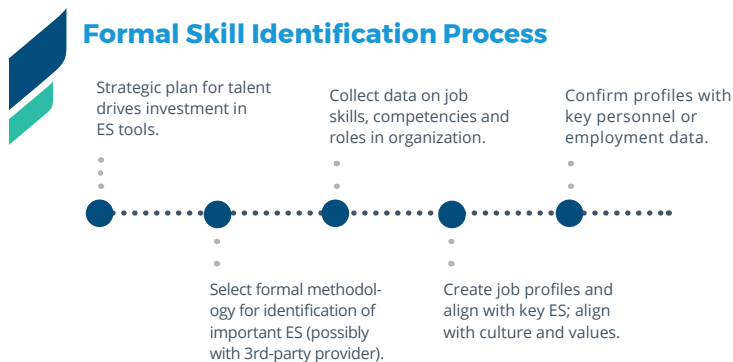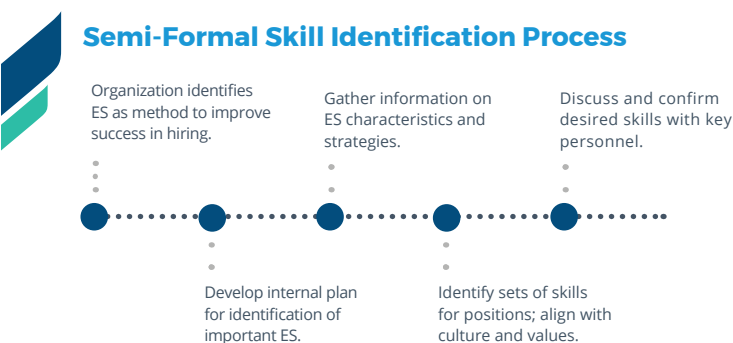
Frequently Mentioned Employability Skill Groups

Relational Skills — 88%
Generous, Humble, Relatable, Social Aware...

Customer Service — 50%
Customer Fanatic, Patients First, Customer Centric.

Collaboration — 75%
Group Skills, Teamwork, Cross-Functional...

Innovation — 50%
Innovative, Free to Explore, Research New Ways...

Integrity — 75%
Honest, Ethical, Respectful, Trustworthy, Effective...

Engagement — 44%
Enthusiasm, Good Attitude, Motivated, Passionate...

Communication — 69%
Communicate Effectively, Articulate.

Organization — 44%
Detail Oriented, Plans and Aligns...

Flexibility — 50%
Multi-Task, Adaptable, Flexible...

Resilience — 38%
Grit, Perseverant, Chopper, Dedicated...

Figure 2 - The above graphic shows the 10 most frequently mentioned employability skill groups. Each group includes the terms our interviewees used.

Employers, through their human resource and talent development personnel, identified important employability skills in three basic ways:
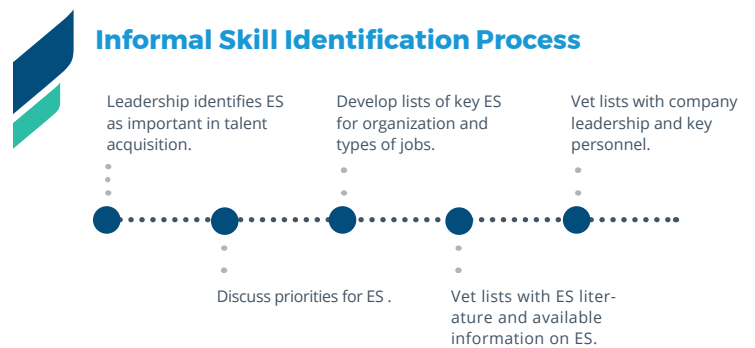
Over half of the interviewees employed a **formalized method** of determining employability skills through job profiling and a structured information gathering process, including use of metrics. The result is a defined set of employability skills candidates should possess, including those necessary for a specific role.

Formal Skill Identification Process

Strategic plan for talent drives investment in ES tools.

Collect data on job skills, competencies and roles in organization.

Confirm profiles with key personnel or employment data.

Select formal methodology for identification of important ES (possibly with 3rd-party provider).

Create job profiles and align with key ES; align with culture and values.

Several others assembled what could be called **semi-formal methods** that are a combination of structured information-driven processes and more intuitive strategies. These often involve considerable discussion with peers and management. The result is generally a list of skills that hiring managers can then use to decide what each role needs.

Semi-Formal Skill Identification Process

Organization identifies ES as method to improve success in hiring.

Gather information on ES characteristics and strategies.

Discuss and confirm desired skills with key personnel.

Develop internal plan for identification of important ES.

Identify sets of skills for positions; align with culture and values.

Finally, only two firms (of varying size) relied entirely on **informal methods** to develop a set of employability skills. Important skills were discussed briefly and based on experience in successful and unsuccessful hiring. Generally, the names of the desired skills themselves varied depending on the hiring manager or recruiter.

Informal Skill Identification Process

Leadership identifies ES as important in talent acquisition.

Develop lists of key ES for organization and types of jobs.

Vet lists with company leadership and key personnel.

Discuss priorities for ES .

Vet lists with ES literature and available information on ES.

Whether through formal or informal processes, firms of all sizes spend considerable time and effort to identify their desired employability skills. Their investment ranges from formalized strategic planning to simply discussing and selecting relevant employability skills. All interviewees reported these investments as critical to business and organizational success.

Assessing Candidates

After identifying the relevant employability skills, employers generally followed the same basic progression to assess candidates. They determined the indicators of the desired skills (often with help from a third party), and then evaluated candidates based on those criteria (again, often with help from a third party). The third-party service providers used by our employers were typically long established in the field of workforce assessments, and also specialized in data analysis and employee and occupational profiling. A list of assessments and resources is provided in Figure 3. For further explanation of assessments, see Appendix D.

Of the 16 employers interviewed, seven used third-party service providers either to conduct an assessment or as a source of assessment tools they themselves then administered and scored. All but two of the employers we interviewed used a consistent methodology of assessment. All of the assessments and tools, whether internally or externally developed, used behavioral questions to determine how a candidate would act in certain situations.

Third-Party Providers Used by Our Interviewees

Type	Method
Predictive Index	• Offers methods of identifying required job competencies as well as assessments for individual skills. • Our interviewees mainly used the Skills and Job Assessments, but others also used the Behavioral Assessment and Learning Indicator. • Claims high levels of scientific validity and can be customized for different industries and occupations.
Gallup	• Works with that organization to define excellence in a role and pinpoint the relevant data. • Calibrated to look at a candidate's motivations, influences, relationships, workstyle, and thought process. • Customized assessments based on predictive analytics and validated by their extensive data.
Korn-Ferry	• Offers a total of 7 different assessments. • Analytics can be customized for positions, functions, and industries. • Comprehensive dataset used to validate predictive insights.
Topgrading, Inc.	• Developed the Topgrading software which can be integrated with an applicant tracking system. • Custom interview and screening guides help organizations assess 50 core competencies. • Consistent validation through candidate data.
WHO	• Developed by Dr. Geoff Smart to improve the accuracy of hiring decisions. • 4-step method for hiring the right people by understanding the mission, outcomes, and competencies required. • Expanded upon in the book Who: A Method for Hiring by Geoff Smart and Randy Street.

Figure 3 - For further explanation of the third party providers and their resources, as well as how many interviewees used these resources, see Appendix D.

The WHO method instructs employers in how to interview candidates for certain skills and recognize evidence of those skills. Other providers recommend formal questionnaires that use a unique algorithm to determine a candidate's fit for a role or the organization more broadly. Across all methods of assessment, employers still had some difficulty measuring certain employability skills. Employers found initiative, dedication, and leadership particularly hard to find sufficient evidence of in candidates. Even those who relied on behavioral interviews felt that it was difficult to reliably assess how people would actually behave in complex work environments.

While many employers expressed interest in third party assessments, our discussions revealed some ambiguity in their actual value.

First, we saw no clear distinctions between companies that relied on third parties and those that developed internal assessments.

Second, we could not identify any substantive indicators of how employers selected among third-party assessment methods. Most mentioned choosing a provider or assessment due to personal prior experience, or because of a national corporate decision.

Third, it is not clear whether employers who use third-party assessments are any more confident of their hiring outcomes than employers who had developed their own assessment methodologies. Most of our interviewees felt reasonably confident that the process they use generally produces good results. However, nearly all interviewees said they want to ensure even better fits between candidates, job characteristics, and organizational culture.

Employability Skills and the Hiring Process

Hiring practices, from recruitment to final hiring decisions, are highly varied even among the small sample of firms we interviewed. This variation includes distinct steps in the process, the number of contacts between a candidate and the employer, the number of personnel involved in the process, and the overall time it takes to reach a decision about a candidate. For example, in our group of firms, the range of time from first contact to a decision is two days to three months.

Based on the kinds of recruitment strategies the employer uses to generate an applicant pool, initial screening of candidates may take place through a quick review of resumes or phone conversations. Two employers also used online questionnaires to filter candidates. By the time a candidate reaches final stages of the process, the steps largely involve one-on-one or group interviews with key personnel at the company. In some cases, these interviews are relatively informal in their standardization. In others, training is provided for employees part of the interview process to ensure a consistent set of questions is asked and structured results are captured. These results provide data to inform decision-making.

On the following page, Figure 4 summarizes the general organization of the hiring process among the employers interviewed, and shows the increasing centrality of employability skills as the process moves toward a hiring decision. For almost all of the employers we interviewed, employability skills are considered from almost the very beginning of the hiring process. While it is hard to capture all the ways firms carry out hiring, one element is consistent within the processes described: as they move forward, employability skills take on more and more prominence until, during the final steps, the process becomes entirely about employability skills in relation to job-specific competencies and cultural fit.

Initial Screen: Skills Checklist

When conducting an initial screen, hiring managers generally attempt to quickly identify a fit with a job profile (constructed internally or through a third party) that includes both technical and employability skills. The depth of the scan depends on the volume of candidates and the nature of the position (level, criticality, etc.). The employability skills screening in this early part of the hiring process typically looks most like the skill lists identified in frameworks; it is a check-off of distinct skills demonstrated by a candidate's written and/or verbal presentation.

Competencies: Employability + Technical Skills

The second application of employability skills in hiring involves the construction of competencies, or groups of technical and employability skills needed to successfully function in the work environment. Competencies are highly related to job profiles and job-specific requirements, and look markedly different from the lists and categorizations of employability skills in frameworks. When employers look for competencies, they look for how a candidate's experience, knowledge, and attributes are aligned with the job and organization. To accomplish this, employers rely on answers from targeted behavioral questions.

While most employers interviewed looked for competencies towards the middle of the hiring process, there were two employers who used a different approach. Rather than look through resumes and cover letters for an initial skills screen, they asked candidates to first fill out an online questionnaire. These questionnaires were developed by third parties and focused on basic personality traits and work style preferences. Candidates then moved forward if they met the benchmarks the organization had set for those attributes and behaviors.

Cultural Fit: Organizational + Core Values

The final steps of the hiring process are almost exclusively focused on cultural fit. Many interviewees focused on the employability skills required in relation to the culture or the core values of the organization. This was especially true among those employers who had a formal description of their culture or key values. For example, one firm in our sample built a culture around four key principles of fairness, kindness, effectiveness and significance. In that company, the key principles informed the identification of important employability skills, shaped

The Use of Employability Skills throughout the Hiring Process

Importance (y-axis)

Initial Screen:
Skills Checklist

Competencies:
Employability + Technical Skills

Cultural Fit:
Organizational Culture + Core Values

Recruitment and Candidate Pool — Screening for Qualifications — Interviews/ Skills Assessments — Interviews: Leadership — Hiring Decision

Hiring Process (x-axis)

Figure 4 - As the hiring process proceeds, employability skills become more important, especially as they relate to job-specific competencies and organizational culture.

job profiles, and provided a competency framework for assessing how a candidate would align with the mission of the organization.

It is important to note here that ownership and responsibility for employability skills do not lie within the province of human resource departments or talent acquisition personnel alone. In almost all of our interviews, concerns with identifying and assessing employability skills permeate managerial focus and are a component of overall business strategy. In addition, many of our interviewees extended the use of employability skills in recruitment and hiring into professional development and training for current employees. In order to do this, they taught leaders to recognize and manage for relevant employability skills.

Validation and Employability Skills

Some of the ambiguity mentioned earlier around employability skills assessments appears related to issues of validation. In the absence of strong validation of methods and their outcomes, it is difficult to identify convincing reasons to use one assessment over another and to have high confidence that the assessment works accurately.

Only two of the employers in our group collected outcomes data and conducted in-house validation of their assessment methods in relation to job performance or business success measures. The most extensive

validation was from an employer who correlated candidate assessment outcomes to data collected on job performance evaluations and company-wide measures of reduced turnover and ROI in talent acquisition.

Despite the lack of in-house validation, other firms noted that they were confident in their third-party assessments and tools because they were validated using data from significantly large populations. Others reported that they developed confidence in their methods through feedback from managers and informally tracking successful or unsuccessful employees.

Overall, employers seemed fairly confident in their assessment methods. However, the large majority – including those who used data for validation – still expressed a strong interest in developing stronger validation of their methods. Interviewees wanted to be able to more accurately assess the relevant skills for specific positions, as well as assess candidates for the right evidence. Some also wanted assurances that their methods of assessment were inclusive, not culturally biased, and would offer opportunity to a diverse set of qualified candidates.

Most employers commented that despite the desirability of validating their process formally – from skills identification through assessments – lack of resources and staffing limited the rigor and depth of their efforts.

Key Takeaways: Share Knowledge; Explore Validation; Articulate Competencies

Our report focuses on how employability skills fit into employers' hiring processes. Participating employers demonstrated how deeply integrated employability skills are in their hiring efforts. While it is helpful to identify and define important employability skills, their biggest value comes from applying them to job-specific expectations and the organizational culture. The biggest challenges employers face regarding employability skills are finding reliable methods to assess candidates for those skills and validating those methods.

There are three key takeaways from our analysis of employability skills that could help Indiana employers, students, and educators better navigate hiring processes.

Firms will share a great deal of knowledge about 'what works' in assessing for employability skills.
A significant issue in HR-talent development is the time and resources available to explore, select, implement and evaluate assessment tools or services related to employability skills. Reducing this time and expense would be valuable, especially for smaller firms. Some Indiana firms are very sophisticated in their usage of assessments and methods of identifying employability skills and are willing to share information. Employers in our sample expressed interest in:

- Learning more about evaluating and selecting assessment tools;
- Opportunities to learn what works from other practitioners in assessment procedures and tools;
- Distributed information on validated assessment strategies and methodologies.

Validation, a critical issue in hiring, is challenging for firms to do themselves.
Validation techniques are generally the territory of experts and third-party assessment providers.

Employers and human resource personnel want to know that the skills they seek are related to hiring outcomes, and contribute to the success of their companies and employees. Generally, only the largest firms have the resources to carry out in-house validation studies. Employers in our sample all expressed interest in:

- Economical means and methods to conduct in-house validation;
- Independent validity analyses of assessment tools;
- Technical assistance in conducting validation studies.

Through better awareness of employer interests in employability skills and competencies, job seekers will have an advantage in the hiring process.
Our interviewees were generally very satisfied with the quality of technical education held by applicants and graduates of Indiana's colleges. At that same time, employers expressed a strong interest in students being better prepared to articulate the competencies they offered. Several firms indicated that they were working with area programs and departments to improve the linkage between educational outcomes and employer interests and needs. Educators and career service providers can be important in:

- Preparing students to identify how their education, experiences, and capabilities can be expressed as the competencies employers look for;
- Aligning the language educators use to describe the outcomes of courses and programs with the language employers use to describe employment opportunities.

Appendix A

Literature review and Sample Employability Skills Frameworks

Overview of Employability Skills Frameworks

Prepared for Ascend Indiana by FutureWorks, April 2017.

A common refrain from employers across the country is that baseline employability skills are in short supply among workers. These are foundational skills across occupations and industries that every employee needs to be successful in the workplace, such as strong academic grounding in **cognitive skills** like reading and math, proficiency in **workplace skills** such as decision making, organization and planning, and **non-cognitive abilities** such as behaviors and mindsets such as adaptability, integrity, and dependability.

Employers say that the lack of these basic skills hampers their ability to hire and keep workers, and cuts into their profitability. Moreover, imprecise and untested pedagogy to build these basic employability skills impedes workers from obtaining good jobs and earnings.

In fact, employers in multiple surveys have said they are eager to have a workforce with higher order skills such as creativity, critical thinking, communication, and cognitive flexibility. It's as if employers and educators can't hear that sometimes they are talking about the same thing. It doesn't help that these discussions take place with an imperfect vocabulary, starting with the term liberal arts, which often prompts confusion or indifference among working adult students and others outside of academia. Other terms like general education, 21st century skills, foundational skills, soft skills, and cognitive skills have their own limitations.

This document identifies various frameworks proposed by others to define common employability skills (see an assortment of definitions in the subsequent pages). We also summarize themes and common issues that surface upon further analysis.

Summary Themes

- Employability skills generally are viewed for application on the lower end of the spectrum (e.g. showing up on time and not talking back to your supervisor) and, as such, often bring with them pejorative views that are somewhat negative. But many of the skills are meant for highly-educated managers (critical thinking skills). One way to gain value from employers, they must be viewed as strategic for all employees, not just those on the lower end.

- The definitions of the skills, traits, mindsets, behaviors and more are very broad with little operational interpretation. Are these the same for a frontline employee and a manager?

- There are many established assessments for some employability skills, but most are not linked to any employability skills framework. How do we know when someone has achieved some "employability" standard?

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- There are few high quality instructional resources for teaching comprehensive employability skills. While there are many resources for developing individual employability skills, there are few that bring these diverse skills together into a practical, integrated package.

- Where would these skills be taught - in a secondary school, an adult education program, a college, a workforce development program, or the incumbent workforce? How much time would be available and investment needed?

- There is also a balance between what we know is needed for employability skills now and what employability skills will be needed for the future. How do we teach both?

Preliminary Observations

Educational institutions need to:
- Place additional emphasis on developing skills such as critical thinking, insight, and analysis capabilities

- Include experiential learning that gives prominence to soft skills—such as the ability to collaborate, work in groups, read social cues, and respond adaptively

- Integrating interdisciplinary training that allows students to develop skills and knowledge in a range of subjects

Businesses need to:
- Place additional emphasis on retention strategies
- Move to more competency-based hiring
- Broaden the learning constituency beyond recent college graduates to adult incumbent workers
- Commit to supporting lifelong learning and skill renewal

Policy makers need to:
- Link competencies expressed in the workplace with educational curriculum

Selected Inventory of Employability Skills Frameworks

21st Century Skills for Workplace Success, NOCTI:
http://nocti.org/PDFs/JobReady/1337_21st_Century_Skills_for_Workplace_Success.pdf

Arizona's New Workplace Skills, Arizona Department of Education:
http://www.expectmorearizona.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Workplace-Employability-Skills-Executive-Summary-7-11-v2.pdf

Assessing 21st Century Skills, Board on Testing and Assessment, the National Research Council:
https://www.sri.com/sites/default/files/publications/imports/21st_century_skills.pdf

Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills, Cisco, Intel, and Microsoft
Business Roundtable Employability Skills:
https://businessroundtable.org/sites/default/files/Common%20Employability_asingle_fm.pdf

Citizenship Foundation Skills and Knowledge Clusters, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services:
https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Office%20of%20Citizenship/Citizenship%20
Resource%20Center%20Site/Publications/PDFs/M-794.pdf

Common Employability Skills, National Network of Business and Industry Associations:
http://nationalnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Common-Employability-Skills-Two-Pager.pdf

Comparative Analysis of Soft Skills: What is Important for New Graduates? U.S. Department of Agriculture:
http://www.aplu.org/members/commissions/food-environment-and-renewable-resources/CFERR_
Library/comparative-analysis-of-soft-skills-what-is-important-for-new-graduates/file

Employability Skills 2000+, Conference Board of Canada:
http://www.conferenceboard.ca/spse/employability-skills.aspx

Employability Skills Blueprint, SkillsUSA

Equipped for the Future, Center for Literacy Studies, University of Tennessee:
http://eff.clee.utk.edu/fundamentals/default.htm

Indiana Employability Skills for Today's Workforce, Indiana Department of Workforce Development:
http://www.in.gov/dwd/files/IN_Employability_Skills.pdf

Industry Competency Models, Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor:
https://www.careeronestop.org/CompetencyModel/competency-models/building-blocks-model.aspx

Maryland Skills for Success, Maryland State Department of Education:
http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/CTE/cte_sfs.pdf

Partnership for 21st Century Skills: http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework
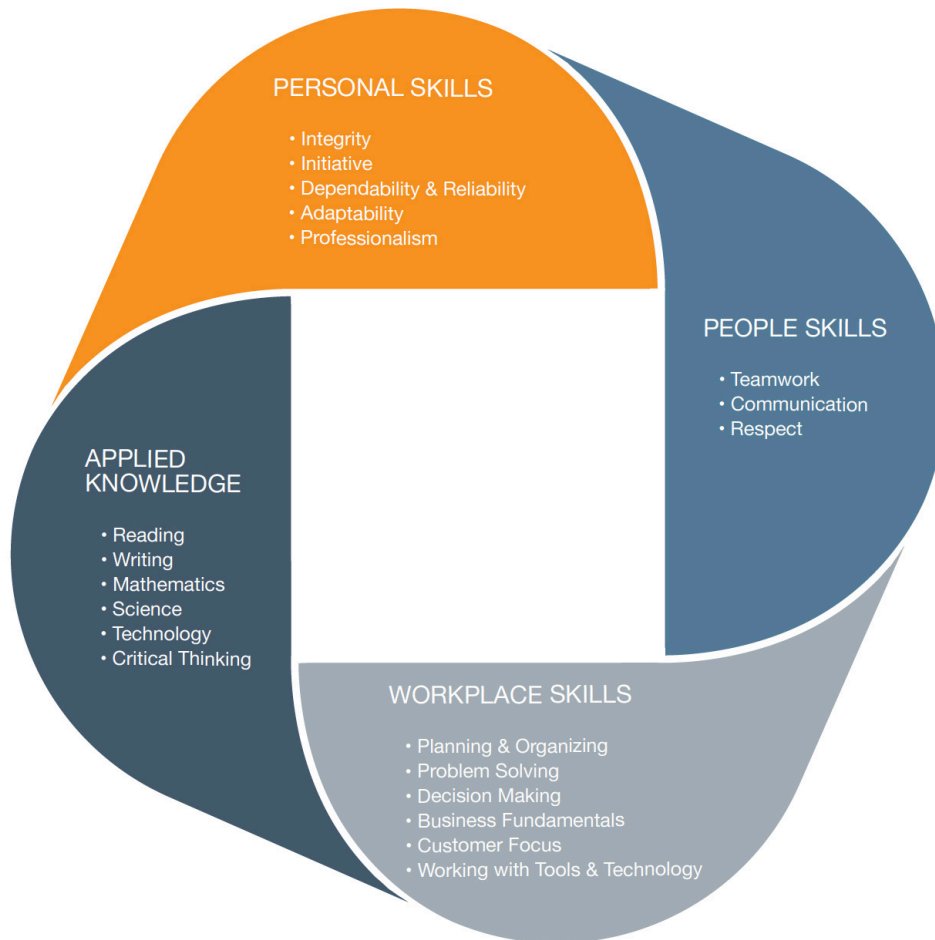Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), U.S. Department of Labor:
http://programs.honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/sites/programs.honolulu.hawaii.edu.intranet/files/
general-college-mtg-2009-08-20-scans.pdf

US Department of Education, Employability Skills:
http://cte.ed.gov/employabilityskills/index.php/framework/index

Workforce Skills Certification System, CASAS and Learning Resources, Inc.:
https://www.casas.org/docs/default-source/WSCS/WSCS-brochure.pdf?sfvrsn=8?Status=Master

## Three Examples of Employability Skills Frameworks: The National Network

The National Network (formerly the National Network of Business and Industry Associations) is a group of businesses and industry associations that represent 75 percent of projected U.S. job growth through 2020. The National Network recently cataloged employability skills into groups consisting of personal skills, people skills, workplace skills, and applied knowledge, as seen below.

PERSONAL SKILLS
- Integrity
- Initiative
- Dependability & Reliability
- Adaptability
- Professionalism

PEOPLE SKILLS
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Respect

APPLIED KNOWLEDGE
- Reading
- Writing
- Mathematics
- Science
- Technology
- Critical Thinking

WORKPLACE SKILLS
- Planning & Organizing
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making
- Business Fundamentals
- Customer Focus
- Working with Tools & Technology

http://www.nationalnetwork.org/resources/common-employability-skills-3/

Employability Skills: US Department of Education

The US Department of Education defines employability skills as general skills necessary for success in the labor market at all employment levels and in all sectors. They have created a framework comprised of three broad categories: applied knowledge, effective relationships, and workplace skills.

http://cte.ed.gov/employabilityskills/
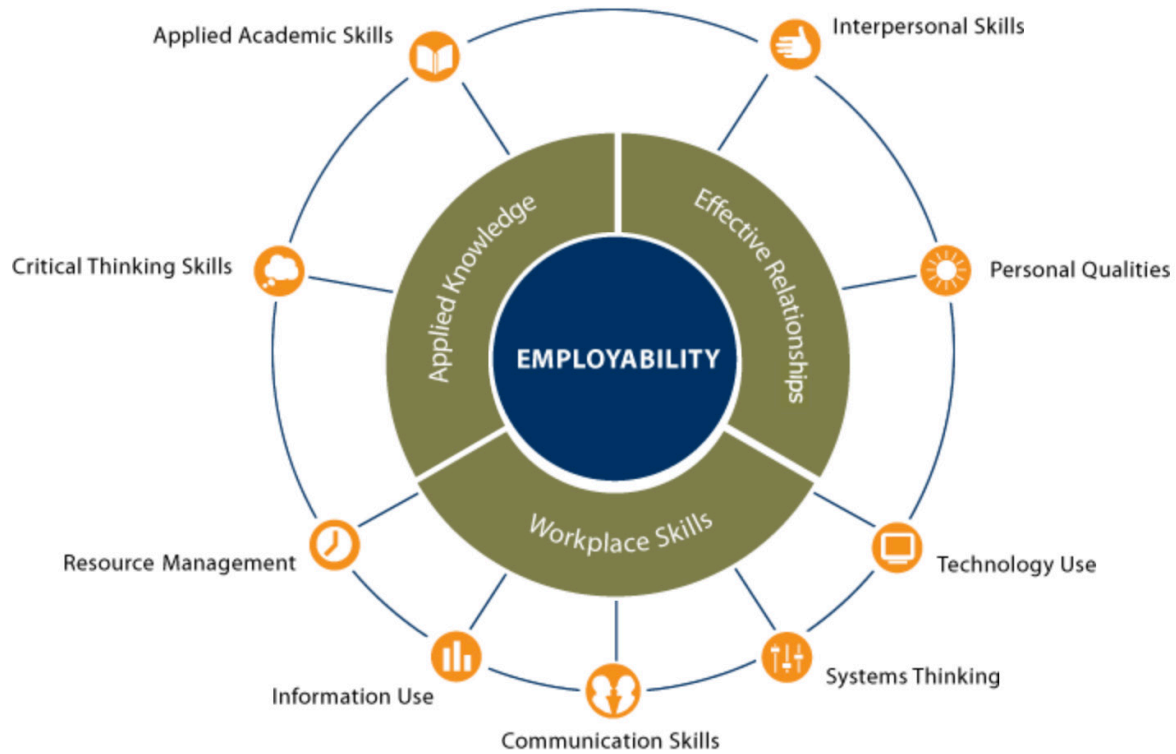
Employability Skills Indiana Department of Workforce Development

Indiana's Employability Skills Benchmarks describe a set of workplace skills recommended for success in today's competitive workforce. Formerly referred to as "soft skills," these are identified as essential, in-demand skills for all job seekers regardless of experience or occupation. The term "soft skills" may give the appearance that these skills are of less value, but in fact they are crucial to finding employment and succeeding in the workforce. Indiana's Employability Skills Benchmarks were vetted statewide by Hoosier employers and establish a common language across all Indiana workforce sectors.

The skills identified by Indiana employers as essential for success in the workplace fall into five categories, delineated below by color:

Employability Skills for Today's Workforce

MINDSETS

Intellectual Risk Taking - Develops a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional and physical well-being; understands that life-long learning is necessary for long-term career success; willingness to work and learn and continually apply new knowledge

Appreciation of Diversity - Embraces diverse views and varying perspectives; demonstrates empathy and respect for others

Self-Confidence - Possesses belief in own ability to succeed

Sense of Belonging - Demonstrates a sense of belonging in the job environment; demonstrates commitment to an organization

Career Path - Relates interest, aptitude and abilities to appropriate in-demand occupations in order to select career path

SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Pride in Work - Assumes responsibility, takes personal ownership of performance quality; understands short-comings and sets goals to improve

Self-Discipline - Demonstrates self-discipline and self-control

Independence - Works independently; creates relationships with mentors and supervisors that support success

Perseverance - Delays immediate gratification for long-term rewards; demonstrates endurance, follow-through and capacity to complete tasks

Stress Management - Overcomes barriers to learning in the workplace; demonstrates effective coping skills when faced with a problem; performs under pressure and achieves deadlines

Time Management - Prioritizes and balances school, home, work and community activities

Adaptability - Manages transitions and adapts to changing situations and responsibilities

Integrity - Trustworthy, honest and comprehends ethical courses of action

Professionalism - Uses appropriate judgment; demonstrates empathy and respect for others, demonstrates social maturity and behaviors appropriate to the situation and environment; dresses appropriately, speaks politely

Work Ethic - Punctual with good attendance; does not abuse drugs; maintains appropriate hygiene and attire; demonstrates ethical decision-making and social responsibility

LEARNING STRATEGIES

Written Communication - Applies reading, writing, math and scientific principals and procedures

Decision Making - Utilizes critical thinking skills to make informed decisions based on options, rewards, risks, limits and goals

Initiative - Applies self-motivation and self-direction to learning

Technology Savvy - Applies existing and emerging media and computer application skills

Attention to Detail - Demonstrates high-quality work by reviewing the detailed aspects of work process and end products or service

Organization - Plans and organizes long and short term academic, career and social/emotional goals; balances all types of workplace and personal situations

Information Gathering - Observes and gathers evidence and considers multiple perspectives to make informed decisions; locates, organizes, analyzes and communicates information

Problem Solving - Applies critical thinking skills to complex problems; evaluates causes, problems, patterns or issues and explores workable and innovative solutions to improve situations

SOCIAL SKILLS

Oral Communication - Clearly, effectively and convincingly expresses ideas and messages to others

Teamwork - Creates positive and responsive relationships with peers, colleagues and customers; uses effective collaboration and cooperation skills

Leadership - Guides, supports and encourages groups of diverse teams; sharing knowledge and skills when possible

Conflict Management - Negotiates to resolve or mediate conflict; avoids potential or perceived conflict

Self-Advocacy - Asserts self when necessary

WORKPLACE SKILLS

Personal Safety - Demonstrates personal safety skills

Follows Directions - Follows employer established policies and business practices

Resource Allocation - Identifies, leverages and distributes money and materials effectively and efficiently

Customer Service - Responds quickly to the needs of customers and achieves customer satisfaction

http://www.in.gov/dwd/employabilityskills.htm

Appendix B

Organizations Interviewed

Appirio

Central Indiana Corporate Partnership

Charles Schwab

Community Health Network

Cook Pharmica

Horizon League

Innovatemap

KAR Auction Services, Incorporated

Kinney Group, Incorporated

Kronos Incorporated

LDI Limited, LLC

Leaf Software Solutions

Ontario Systems

Orr Fellowship

PERQ

Testing for Public Safety

Interviewees included CEOs, Senior Executives, Directors of Human Resources, and Talent Acquisition Planners.

Appendix C

Important Employability Skill Groups

Important Employability Skill Groups	Frequency (in 16 interviews)	Typical Descriptors
Relational Skills	14	Generosity, Humility, Low on Ego, Personable, Relatable, Builds Relationships, Selflessness, Social Awareness.
Integrity	12	Honesty, Effective, Ethics, Fair, Good Person, Kind, No BS, Respectful, Trustworthy.
Collaboration	12	Collaborative, Group Skill, Cross-Functional, Teamwork.
Communication	11	Communicate Effectively, Articulate.
Flexibility	8	Multi-tasking, Adaptable, Situational Adaptability, Accommodate Others' View
Customer Service	8	Customer Fanatic, Patients First, Customer Centric.
Innovative	8	Research new ways of improvement, Innovation, Free to Explore.
Engagement	7	Enthusiasm and Attitude, Getting Hands Dirty, Motivation, Passion, Dedication, Savvy.
Organization	7	Detail orientation, Planning and Aligning, Organized, Time Management.
Resilience	6	Grit, Perseverance, Overcome difficult obstacles, Chopper, Dedication.
Ability to Learn	5	Perpetual Learner, Coachability, Continuous Learner, Learning Agility, Can ask for Help.
Initiative	5	Bias to Action, Shows Initiative, Internally Motivated, Self-guided, Self-Directed.
Problem Solving	4	Apply logic to complex problems, Solves Problems, Good Thought Process.
Responsibility	4	Accountability, Dependability, Timeliness, Solid Workstyle.
Presentation	3	Presentation Skills, Self-Presentation.

Appendix D

Employability Skills Assessment and Resources from
3rd Party Providers

Type	Method	# of Interviewees Who used this Provider
Predictive Index (Advisa)	In individual assessments, candidates or employees are presented with two lists of descriptive adjectives, both containing 86 items, and are asked to endorse those which they feel describe them (the "self" domain), and then those which they feel coincide with how they feel others expect them to behave (the "self-concept" domain). The PI measures four primary and fundamental personality constructs: 1. Dominance, 2. Extroversion, 3. Patience, and 4. Formality. The PI also measures two secondary personality constructs: decision-making and response level (or how responsive an individual is to the environment).	**3**
Gallup	Gallup offers a talent development, hiring and employee development system that is evidence-based and customized for clients. The foundation rests on the reliability of large data that through analysis leads to the identification of the qualities and talents required for good job performance. This assessment is part of a package of services that is delivered in a consulting engagement.	**1**
Korn-Ferry	Korn Ferry has developed an analytics engine based on "world's richest data set: over 7 million executive and professional candidate profiles and 2.5 million assessments." These data are used to develop assessments and predictions of success over four dimensions of Competencies, Experiences, Traits and Drivers.	**1**
Topgrading, Inc.	Topgrading is an interviewing and assessment methodology in which prospective employees undergo a 12-step process that includes extensive interviews, detailed job scorecards, research into job history, coaching, and more. After being interviewed and reference-checked, job candidates are grouped into one of three categories: A Players, B Players, or C Players. A Players have the most potential for high performance in their role while B and C Players may require more work to be successful.	**1**
WHO	The system organizes the hiring process into four steps that are premised on clarity of understanding the mission, outcomes, competencies and cultural competencies required and implementing a rigorous methodology to identify people who will likely be successful. WHO offers 8 free templates that could be useful from screening candidates to onboarding new hires.	**1**

Appendix E

Interviewee Assessment Processes

Development	Assessment Methods	3rd Party Resource or Tools	Validation
Formal Assessment Development and Process			
Referenced to company strategic plan; structured assessment procedures.	Applicant Questionnaire, Job Profile, Candidate Profile and Scoring Results, Team Interviews.	XXXXXX[6]	XXXXXX[6]
Referenced to corporate structure for assessment procedures.	Applicant Questionnaire for Cultural Value Assessment, Interviews.	Gallup (Analytics-Based Hiring)	Unknown
Referenced to company strategic plan; structured assessment procedures; job profiles.	Applicant Questionnaire, Job Profile, Candidate Profile and Scoring Results, Team Interviews.	WHO, Geoffrey Smart "Top Grading Program"	Yes, with metrics on job profile, assessments, and performance.
Referenced to organizational analysis of job descriptions and culture.	Structured Questions, Scoring Based on Job Profiles and Culture Interviews with Trained Interviewers.	No, internal development	Yes, with metrics on job profile, assessments, and performance.
Referenced to core competencies for job profiles and key business values.	Screening for Competencies, Behavioral and Situational Interviews.	Korn-Ferry	Planned
Referenced to organizational analysis of job descriptions and culture.	Structured Questions, Scoring Based on Job Profiles and Culture Interviews with Trained Interviewers.	No, internal development	Yes, with metrics on job profile, assessments, and performance.
Semi-Formal Assessment Development and Process			
Derived from Core Values and Job Profiles.	On-line Predictive Index Assessment, Interviews.	Advisa Predictive Index	Validated with national data.
Derived from Core Values and Job Profiles.	Phone Screen, Interview for Cultural and Technical Competencies, Scored Interviews.	No	No
Derived from Core Values and Job Profiles.	Predictive Index Job Profile, Benchmark Assessment, Interviews.	Advisa Predictive Index (Profile+ Assessment)	Validated with national data.
Derived from Job Profiles and Culture.	Interview Questions (Predictive Index).	Advisa Predictive Index (Profile+ Assessment)	Validated with national data.
Informal Assessment Development and Process			
Based on cultural fit and values.	Interviews.	No	No
Derived from Core Values.	Interviews.	No	No
Based on Job Descriptions and Discussion with Leadership.	Behavioral and Situational Interviews.	No	No
Based on List of ES and Job Skills.	Structured Questions by Position.	No	No
No structured assessment.	Interviews.	No	No
Not yet developed	NA	No	No

The following table provides descriptions of the assessment methodologies used by the employers interviewed.