Recurrent Themes

What communication skills do Waikato employers want from entry-level graduates?

Presented by Elna Fourie – Wintec
(research by Trish Clokie and Elna Fourie)
What’s the context?

CBITE / Media Arts

How might this inform our curriculum?
Haven’t we heard this before?
Graduate skills surveys, discrete research, institutional & industry body research, careers NZ, etc.
Communication

Experience

Initiative

Work

Solving

Multi-tasking

Decision-Making

Confidence

Written

Active

Common

Leadership

Skills

Flexibility

Skills

Time

Self-motivation

Passion

Self-management

Teamwork

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skills

Skill
More than ten years ago...

“A problem here is that, although indicators such as job advertisements provide an objective measure of employers’ demands, they do not describe the level of competence required in each skill area. If there is no shared understanding of the precise skill attributes...universities cannot know what they need to teach.”

(Bennett, 2002)
Looking for clarity
What are the ‘good communication skills’ they want?
30 Respondents
- media, finance, PR, local govt., dairy, IT, creative, events, sport, health, retail, advertising, agriculture

large / small / private / public

Interpersonal, Written, Business Communication
What is lacking in grads?

Writing, “grammer and spelling” [sic]

- Confidence with face to face
- Functioning in organisational context
- Self-management
Impact of technology on communication

23/30 – ‘Significant Impact’

“constantly moving”
“pace of technology”
“technology evolution is constant”
“reduces the amount of traditional communication”
“Everything can be achieved so quickly that young communicators seem to be losing the ability to consider things deeply.”
Communication in context of all skills/attributes

Most important:
Interpersonal skills; Oral communication; Initiative; Self-management
Written communication; Team Work

Least important: Industry specific skills, cultural sensitivity
Please indicate what you look for in entry-level roles by rating the following skills for importance (1 = not important, 6 = very important):

- Initiative
- Self-Management
- Cultural Sensitivity
- Flexibility
- Aptitude with Technology
- Critical Thinking/Problem Solving
- Technology Skills
- Team Work
- Industry specific skills
- Written communication
- Oral communication
- Interpersonal skills
Focus on Interpersonal & Intrapersonal:

- Assertiveness
- Listening
- Conflict management
- Self-concept
- Leadership
- Motivation
- Teamwork
- Intercultural Communication
- Non-verbal Communication
Please rate the following specific interpersonal skills for relevance to entry-level roles in your industry (1 = irrelevant, 6 = essential):

- Assertiveness
- Listening
- Dealing with conflict
- Self-concept
- Leadership
- Motivation
- Teamwork
- Intercultural communication
- Non-verbal communication
- Other (please specify in text box below)
“These skills are all important – it is hard to rank them. We are now putting more emphasis on hiring for personality and potential rather than on technical skills as in the past.”
Self-Management & ‘Self-Marketing’

“Skills can be learned – attitude, not so much.”

“I think students need to be taught about presence, presenting the right first impression...”
Focus on Business Communication:

Letters
Emails
Reports
Meetings (including minutes)
Presentations
Visual Aids
Proposals
Writing for online platforms
Please rate the following specific business communication skills for relevance to entry-level roles in your industry (1 = irrelevant, 6 = essential):

- Letters
- Emails
- Reports
- Meetings (including minutes)
- Presentations
- Visual Aids
- Proposals
- Writing for online platforms (e.g., social media or blogs)
- Other (please specify in text box below)
“We maybe expect a lot from entry level and need them to hit the ground running. This means we have a higher expectation of the courses to deliver relevant learning.”

“A lot of what they need to know will be learned on the job, so they need to be good listeners and fast learners”
More specific to Comms roles...

“Writing for social media is a specific skill set. Many graduates know how to ‘use’ social media platforms, but lack the ability to create a strategy...”
Focus on Writing Skills:

Spelling
Punctuation
Grammar
Tone
Style
“Style and tone of writing are dependant on the industry and brand you are working for. My experience has shown that as long as the student has the ability to adapt to their environment…”

“Spell check is not reliable...We are not able to check emails before they are sent – hence the importance they are of a high standard.”
Where to now?

- Interview (cultural perspective from a significant Waikato employer)
- Follow up discussions with colleagues
- Provide rationale for update of courses
- Publish findings
“How to get personal attributes out of the too hard basket and incorporate them in a systematic way, into teaching, assessing and reporting, will provide a challenge to educationalists that will question the core of what they are doing.”

(Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2002)

Still waiting for the Communication Revolution?
References


