

# Succeeding at Work: Skills and Competencies Needed by College and University Graduates in the Workplace

## HIGHER EDUCATION FORUM

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College enrollment in the U.S. is increasing steadily, with the number of registered students reaching a new crest in 1998 of 14.6 million according to a forecast by the federal Department of Education. This number is up by nearly 250,000<sup>1</sup> from the previous year. Undergraduates choose between many different majors, with over 25% selecting Business, over 15% Social Science, over 10% Applied Social Sciences, 9% majoring in Engineering and Architecture and 7% in Education and Library Studies<sup>2</sup>. The remaining 34% of undergraduates major in such fields as Math, Physical Sciences, Life and Agricultural Science, Health Science, Humanities, Arts and other degree areas.

Each year more than 1.5 million new college and university graduates<sup>3</sup> enter the marketplace in search of a job that is the first step in a meaningful and successful career. Some will pursue positions in business, some healthcare, some public service or government, and others education. Regardless of the sector, all will enter workplaces where their competencies and skills will be a fundamental component of success.

What competencies and skills are needed by graduates to be successful in these workplaces? This question is of great significance to private and public sector organizations who seek increasingly more systematic and effective ways to identify and recruit individuals with the potential to succeed in their organizations.

What competencies and skills are needed by graduates to be successful in these workplaces? This question is of great significance to private and public sector organizations who seek increasingly more systematic and effective ways to identify and recruit individuals with the potential to succeed in their organizations. It is also of vital importance to colleges and universities and last, but certainly not least, to graduates themselves.

Any number of studies have addressed this important issue. It is also a subject of increasing discussion among senior leaders and human resources personnel. And, finally, it is the topic of folklore and fable. As one sorts through the published studies and commentaries on current organizational practices, it becomes clear that this is both an exceedingly important and complex issue.

First, there is a need to develop and organize work on this topic in a manner that permits meaningful comparisons across studies and experiences. There is also the need to identify, precisely define, and cluster competencies and skills. Achieving these goals would provide a foundation for identifying methods for assessing these competencies, determining whether there are gaps between what is needed and what is present among graduates, and developing educational strategies to address gaps that may exist.

The present study is very much a “work-in-progress” aimed at providing this kind of foundation. The following pages include several documents. The first – “Sources and Summaries” – provides an alphabetical listing and brief abstracts of 45 relatively recent sources that identify needed workplace competencies and skill sets from the perspective of the marketplace. Some of these articles are based on quantitative studies, while others are qualitative narratives by practitioners. The second document,

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the “Workplace Competencies Matrix” presents a summary and meta-analysis of these writings and indicates which skills and competencies are noted as significant by which sources.

The matrix also includes indications as to the year of each study and a designation as to whether the findings are based on quantitative (QT) or qualitative (QL) research. The findings from the studies are organized in a manner that categorizes these competencies into six core competency clusters, each defined by a series of associated competency/skill sets:

- 1.0 Personal Competencies
- 2.0 Communication Competencies
- 3.0 Organizational Competencies
- 4.0 International/Intercultural Competencies
- 5.0 Sector/Domain-Specific Competencies
- 6.0 Other Competencies

The next document, the “Competency Category and Skill-Set Definitions” provides descriptions for each category/cluster and the competencies which comprise it. Finally, we present a bar graph illustrating the relative frequency of mention of particular competency-set clusters in the articles we have reviewed.

## Observations

While the literature review, classification, and clustering are still in progress, several important observations can be offered at this point in time.

**Equally important—perhaps more important—is the role that can be played by liberal arts, communication, and social science programs in preparing students for the workplace.**

1. Some of the suggested skills and competencies are sector, or domain-specific (5.0). Most, however, are not. Rather, Personal Competencies (1.0), Communication Competencies (2.0), Organizational Competencies (3.0), and a number of International/Intercultural Competencies (4.0) are generic and cross-sector in nature. They can be seen as being equally important in business, healthcare, public, and government and education.
2. Business, engineering and other professional higher education programs have an obvious role to play in the cultivation of Sector and Domain-Specific Competencies (5.0) and in some International/Intercultural Competency areas (4.0).

3. Equally important—perhaps more important—is the role that can be played by liberal arts, communication, and social science programs in preparing students for the workplace. It is within these curricular areas that one would logically expect to find an emphasis on topics, knowledge, and skills associated with Personal Competencies (1.0), Communication Competencies (2.0), Organizational Competencies (3.0), and a number of International/Intercultural Competencies (4.0).

4. Work to date suggests the value of further research and development aimed at:

- Broadening the base of studies and organizations used as sources in identifying needed competencies
- Refining category and associated skill-set definitions
- Identifying gaps that exist between needed and present skill levels
- Encouraging discussion on the implications of these findings within colleges and universities—not only in business, engineering and other professional schools, but also in the liberal arts, communication, and social sciences
- Developing educational strategies to address gaps
- Identifying methods to assess workplace competencies behaviorally
- Improving communication between higher education and workplace leaders and recruiters

## Succeeding at Work Resources and Summaries

	Resources	Summaries
1	Adelman, C. (1994). "What employers expect of college graduates: international knowledge and second language skills." Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Washington, DC.	Over the last 15 years, there has been a thrust to encourage students to study second languages by colleges and universities in an effort to add an international dimension to the college curriculum. Depending on the company and the industry, different requirements of new hires are found. A common thread is the desire for a graduate to possess a second language. International training will most likely be provided by the employer.
2	Albrecht, D.D.; Carpenter, D.S.; Sivo, S.A. (1994). "The effect of college activities and grades on job placement potential." <i>NASPA Journal</i> , Summer, 31(4).	Business recruiters reported 77.2% preference for grades higher than 3.0 for candidates, with 56.6% of engineering recruiters and 27% of education recruiters indicating a preference for 3.0 or above. In general the results of this study indicate that emphasis is placed on both academic performance and extra-curricular activities.
3	Albrecht, S. (1997). "US educators look to the big picture." <i>Australian Accountant</i> , 67(4): 52-54.	There are nine skills/qualifications/abilities that employers are looking for: 1) Written communication skills; 2) Oral communication skills; 3) Listening skills; 4) People skills - the ability to work in groups effectively; 5) Conflict resolution and problem-solving skills; 6) Organization skills; 7) Analytical skills; 8) Ability to effectively work under pressure; 9) Technology skills.
4	Allen, C. (1996). "Lessons from the field: A survey of employer benchmarks." <i>Journal</i> , Fall.	The top three qualifiers used by employers to screen new graduate job candidates include major, work/co-op experience, and grade point average.
5	Anderson, K. Hayes, C. (1997). "Job feast or famine?" <i>Black Enterprise</i> , 27(7): 85-90.	Characteristics that may be valuable for a new graduate include: technical/computer expertise, problem-solving ability, teamwork, at least dual areas of expertise, professional employment experience through co-ops and internships, interpersonal skills, a second language and communication skills.
6	Anonymous. (1996). "Students need basics." <i>Transportation &amp; Distribution</i> , 37(2): 40.	New graduates are missing the prime ingredients like communication and interpersonal skills (including more psychology), writing skills (with presentation and electronic communication skills, and the ability to see how they fit into the corporate hierarchy).
7	"Are corporations getting what they deserve from campus recruitment?" (1994) <i>HR Focus</i> , 71(10): 14.	New graduates with high grade point averages, over 3.5, receive more job offers, while students with leadership ability (student leaders) with GPA's of 3.18 receive fewer offers. College recruiters are still stressing the importance of leadership abilities.
8	Bellinger, R. (1996). "More jobs, better offers for '97 computer grads." <i>Electronic Engineering Times</i> : 103.	Oral communication skills are the preferred skills for new graduates to possess - with employers ranking them as essential. Employers are also looking for candidates who can communicate and effectively work in teams. Experience from a co-op position or internship is also valued. Some of the largest engineering firms will not consider candidates who don't possess some job-related experience.
9	Bikson, T.K. & Law, S.A. (1995). "Toward the borderless career: Corporate hiring in the '90s." <i>International Educator</i> , 4(2): 12-15, 32-33.	Four categories of human resource needs were suggested: Domain knowledge, which means that some sort of specific knowledge or specialty is desired in candidates. Cognitive, social and personal skills were the second category, which includes problem solving ability, decision making and active learning. The third category pertained to prior work experience and on-the-job training. The last category related to cross-cultural competence.

10	Cappelli, P. (1995). "Is the skills gap really about attitudes?" <i>California Management Review</i> , 37: 108-124.	The attitudes most important in the workplace are personality, motivation and pro-social behavior. Candidates need to be flexible, but they also need reading, writing and arithmetic skills and communication skills.
11	Collins, M. (1992). "Big blue's baby goes to college." <i>Journal</i> : 90-91.	Employment Solutions acts in the role of coordinator and facilitator of the recruitment processes; however all interviewing and employment decisions are made by IBM staff.
12	Connecting schools and employers: work-related education and training." (1995) <i>Change, The Magazine of Higher Learning</i> : 39-42.	The data points to a disconnection between the types of training companies require and the kind of education students receive. Grades, institution reputation and teacher recommendations were viewed as less important than the candidates' communication skills and positive attitude.
13	Curtis, D.B. (1995). "National preferences in business and communication education, II." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Central States Communication Association.	Communication-related skills included public speaking, listening, and enthusiasm were found to be most important for entry-level jobs in business and for career success. Also, the knowledge of business machines, and basic business courses like accounting, marketing and management, is important, but of lesser importance than other traits or skills.
14	Davis, D.B. (1993). "Hard demand for soft skills." <i>Datamation</i> : 28-32.	Technical fields, including computing and information systems, are looking for "soft" skills in addition to technical know-how. Soft skills are defined as writing memos, running meetings, creating budgets and action plans, and listening closely to associates; also communication skills, teamwork and customer (end-user) orientation are important. Technical skills in demand: knowledge of relational databases, project management and computer-aided software engineering.
15	Dillon, P.A. (1992). "What business expects from higher education." <i>The College Board Review</i> , 164: 22-25.	Aside from a liberal arts major, other elective business courses will help the new graduate succeed. These courses include economics, statistics, accounting, advanced English composition, public speaking and computer science. Other qualifications include good communication skills, both verbal and written; "people" and networking skills; and leadership ability.
16	Down, K. O. & Liedtka, J. (1994). "What corporation seek in MBA hires: A survey." <i>Selections</i> , 10: 34-39.	The three most important skills are communication and interpersonal skills, and self-motivation/initiative. Under communication skills sought (85%) were verbal and nonverbal communication ability. Importance is also placed on interpersonal and leadership abilities, with a focus on teamwork.
17	Employer's needs working council. (1992). A report of the total quality leadership steering committee and working councils.	As well as a student possessing an orientation to Total Quality, these other traits were valued by employers: Customer Orientation, Practical Knowledge/Application of Quality Tools; Fact-Based Decision Making, Understanding of Work as a Process; Team Orientation; Commitment to Improvement; Active Learner; Systems Perspective.
18	Flores, D. (1992). "Wanted: Team players for the 1990s." <i>Journal</i> : 67-70.	The skills required to succeed in a team-based environment include technical expertise, management and organizational skills, communicative competence and cooperativeness. Recruiters consider a candidate's involvement in clubs and activities because these are indicators of communication skill and collaborative experience.
19	Golanty, J. (1996). "Train drain." <i>Marketing Research: A Magazine of Management &amp; Applications</i> , 8(4): 9-11.	The demand outnumbers the supply for researchers with experience. Young people with BAs looking to enter the consumer market research industry are finding the traditional avenues closed to them. Job related experience would benefit new graduates and make them potentially more attractive to prospective employers.

20	Heinemann, K.G. (1996). "What do today's employers want from job applicants?" <i>T.H.E. Journal</i> : 69-71.	Employers in technical areas (computing) are looking for candidates with technical knowledge with a mix of people and communication (both written and verbal) skills and the ability to work in a team. Good grades are also viewed as necessary, especially a GPA of 3.5 or above. Work experience will make up for lower GPA's. Candidates should have a positive attitude and show enthusiasm, eagerness and flexibility.
21	Hicks, L. (1998, September 27). Central Iowa labor crisis looms. <u>Des Moines Sunday Register</u> , pp. G1.	According to a "Skills 2000 Survey," over 40% of new employees in 2005 will have been hired during the seven years between 1998 to 2005. Critical competencies for new employees include the ability to write and analyze technical reports, the ability to present ideas to co-workers and work as a team member. In addition, the new employee must be able to communicate with customers effectively, possess problem-solving skills, and be able to positively respond to change and deal with people with integrity. Further, they should possess the ability to use office technology, including software, e-mail, and automated equipment.
22	Job outlook '97. (1997). In H.A Weibe's, "What employers seek in new college graduates." Presented to TQMC in Higher Education, Baltimore, Maryland.	The top criteria and skills employers are looking for in new graduates include, a high GPA and also involvement in extra-curricular activities, in addition to oral communication skills, interpersonal skills, analytical skills, teamwork skills, flexibility, and computer skills.
23	Lo Bosco, M. (1996). "1995 college graduate hiring prognosis: A competitive job market with some salary growth." <i>Compensation &amp; Benefits Review</i> , 28(3): 16-20.	Characteristics that employers are looking for include: Prior work experience, computer literacy, leadership ability, analytical skills, communication skills, foreign language competency, flexibility and adaptability, a positive attitude and the ability to work in a team.
24	Maes, J.D.; Weldy, T.G. and Icenogle, M. L. (1997). "A managerial perspective: Oral communication competency is most important for business student in the workplace." <i>Journal of Business Communication</i> , 34: 67-80.	The oral skills that are most important for new graduates include: Following instructions, listening, conversing (inter-personal communication), and giving feedback. 354 managers across industry participated in a study that revealed the top three hiring criteria for college graduates: 1) oral communication, 2) problem-solving, 3) self-motivation.
25	Maglitta, J. (1996). "IS schools: Need improvement." <i>Computerworld</i> , 30(8): 78-83.	The desired skills for new graduates to possess were not discussed in the article.
26	McCormick, A. C.; Horn, L.J. (1996). "A descriptive summary of 1992-93 bachelor's degree recipients: 1 year later." National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, NCES 96-158.	In a survey of nearly 10,000 recent undergraduates from representative samples across the United States in 1992-93, some interesting facts have been revealed relevant to gender and the chosen major of the undergraduate, grade point averages, and the age of the graduates. For example, an overwhelming 78% of engineering majors were male, while over 78% of education majors and 74% of health professional majors, and 73% of psychology majors were female.
27	McShulskis, E. (1996). "HRM Update." <i>HR Magazine</i> : 16.	Graduates with good grades, work-related experience, and participation in extracurricular activities are being sought by companies. Communication skills are very important and may give the candidate an edge over other technically-oriented skills. Specifically, oral, written and interpersonal communication skills, and teamwork are viewed as important.
28	Neuhauser, C.L; Smith, B.J. (1996). "International business competencies required for all business school graduates." <i>Journal of Teaching in International Business</i> , 8 (1).	Essential Courses: International Trade Theory; International Marketing - Management and Strategy; Comparative Management; Comparative Cultural Values, Customs, Traditions; Management of International Human Resources; Global Competition & Markets.

29	<u>Occupational Outlook Handbook</u> (1996). U.S. Department of Labor and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin 2470.	“Employment is expected to increase by 17.7%” (Occupational Outlook Handbook, 1996, p. 1) a rate that is approximately 7% slower than the previous 11 year period (from 1983-94). Service industries will account for the most significant portion of employment growth, with business, health and education services increasing most notably. Occupations associated with a bachelor’s degree and job-related training will increase the most in terms of number of employees.
30	Occupational projections and training data. (1996). U.S. Department of Labor and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin 2471.	Based on data gathered between 1992-1993, Business and Management degrees were conferred to the largest number of graduates, although the growth in these educational areas has slowed since the late 1980s. In addition, the number of degrees conferred in engineering and computer and information sciences has also declined (p. 37). Degrees in public administration, service fields and social science disciplines, like psychology and sociology, have seen an increase.
31	Porter, J.; Rehder, R. R. and Muller, H. J. (1997). “The invasion of the mind snatchers: The business of business education. <i>Selections</i> , 13(2): 15-23.	There are several skills that business leaders value in a new graduate, including: Interpersonal skills; international knowledge and interests; and the integration of the functional specialties of contemporary business organizations, like TQM.
32	Richards, J.D. (1992). “Trends in education: A conflict of objectives?” <i>Management Accounting</i> , 73(11): 14-15.	Technical skills are the necessary entry-level skills for new graduates; but as employees rise through the corporation, communication skills become increasingly more important.
33	Rubin, R.B. & Morreale, S.P. (1996). “Setting expectations for speech communication and listening.” <i>New Directions for Higher Education</i> , 96.	Speech communication and listening skills are necessary for competence in negotiating effectively, motivating others and working effectively in a team, leading meetings, managing conflicts, listening to others’ opinions and views, and developing situation-appropriate communication messages.
34	Rynes, S. L.; Orlitzky, M. O.; Bretz, R. D. Jr. (1997). “Experienced hiring versus college recruiting: Practices and emerging trends.” <i>Personnel Psychology</i> , 50(2): 309-339.	Capabilities that employers are looking for include: an understanding business, knowledge of competition, realistic expectations, technical skills, interpersonal skills, writing skills, work ethic. New graduates were evaluated against a different set of criteria for jobs than experienced workers, which included GPA, trial work periods (co-ops, internships, and summer employment), and structured interviews.
35	Rynes, S.; Orlitzky, M; Bretz, R. (1996). “Experienced hiring versus college recruiting: Issues and trends.” <i>Journal</i> , Summer.	The hiring of experienced employees exceeds the hiring of new graduates in almost all industries and across every type of job.
36	Scheetz, L.P. (1995). “A Study of 527 businesses, industries, and governmental agencies employing new college graduates. 25 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition.” Michigan State University, East Lansing, Collegiate Employment Research Institution.	Highly desired candidates include: engineering majors, computer science majors, business majors, health professionals, female and minority applicants, and graduates who are willing to relocate. Competencies for new graduates included, computer literacy or proficiency, leadership ability, analytical thinking, communication skills, second language, and flexibility and adaptability.
37	Scheetz, L.P. (1994). “Recruiting trends 1994-95: A study of businesses, industries, and governmental agencies employing new college graduates.” Collegiate Employment Research Institute, Michigan State University.	A college degree is highly desired by prospective employees, even for entry level positions. Qualifications for candidates included a grade point average of 3.0 or higher, “people” skills, teamwork and communication skills, as well as computer literacy. Successful graduates were able to identify with the employers’ needs and presented themselves as a solution to problems.

38	Scott, J. D. Frontczak, N. T. (1996). "Ad executives grade new grads: The final exam that counts." <i>Journal of Advertising Research</i> , 36(2): 40-47.	Successful candidates possess skills and competencies as follows: an understanding of the employers' problems and look for solutions, well-developed teamwork skills, communication skills, and practical work experience. Leadership ability, problem-solving ability, creativity and intelligence and common sense are among the top criteria. New graduates who possess enthusiasm, ambition, people skills, and are adaptable were valued by executives who indicated these characteristics were strengths.
39	Silvesti, G.T. (1997). "Occupational employment projections to 2006." In <i>Monthly Labor Review</i> . U.S. Department of Labor and Bureau of Labor Statistics, 120(11).	The largest area of occupational growth projected for the next years are related computer specialty areas, which include professions such as teaching, librarians, counselors; computer, mathematical, and operations research occupations; and health assessment and treating occupations (Silvesti, 1997, p. 60). Jobs that require an associates degree or higher will grow at a faster rate than jobs that do not require an advanced degree. Jobs that require a bachelor's degree will see the most growth.
40	Theeke, H.A. & Sprague, D.A.; Como, V.M. (1993). "Recruiters reaffirm their need for specialized business generalists." <i>Journal</i> : 44-47.	Findings indicated that employers were seeking business graduates and that the market had softened for liberal arts grads. Several basic student characteristics were highlighted by respondents, including (in order of importance): Communication skills, applicable work experience, educational performance, interpersonal skills, student contribution to college expenses, analytic ability, personality, organizational and leadership skills, motivation, loyalty, and decision-making ability.
41	Tucker, S.H. & Hart, S.A.; Muehsam, M.J. (1993). "Corporate executives express need for better communication between the business world and academia." <i>Management Research News</i> , 16(7): 5-9.	The business world needs graduates who possess international expertise. Colleges need to produce students who possess good management skills as well as skills to function in multi-national corporations.
42	Van Horn, C.E. (1995). "Enhancing the connection between higher education and the workplace: A survey of employees." Published by the State Higher Education Executive Officers and the Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colorado.	Employers are having trouble locating college graduates who have the skills they value most, including teamwork, communications skills, problem-solving, and creative thinking skills. Several other categories of desired skills have emerged, including, interpersonal skills; communication (both oral and written); critical thinking; motivation and personal attitudes; ability to work with data and information; ability to apply mathematics (Van Horn, 1995, p. 4). In addition, work experience, such as an internship, is highly desired.
43	Wash, D.P. (1995-96). "A new way to classify occupations by education and training" <u>Occupational Outlook Quarterly</u> , U.S. Department of Labor and Bureau of Labor Statistics, 39(4).	A bachelor's degree "is considered the minimum training requirement for most professional occupations" (Wash, 1995-96, p. 32). A bachelor's degree is associated with the most professions in the workforce. Many managerial occupations require at least a bachelor's degree or higher and then require work-related experience for promotion. For example, an employee may get hired in a certain position with a bachelor's degree, but for them to advance in the organization work-related experience will help advance them from engineer to engineering manager and beyond.
44	Watkins, T.L. (1993). "What do you want from us?" <i>Across The Board</i> .	Critics attack business schools citing that they produce graduates without communication skills, management ability, knowledge of international markets; however, these skills are being overlooked by interviewers while they focus more on business related course training.
45	Young, D. Lee, S. (1997). "Corporate hiring criteria for IS graduates." <i>Information Systems Management</i> , 14: 47-53.	Information Systems graduates need competence in a broad range of new technologies, as well as practical experience and business knowledge.





## Succeeding at Work Competency Categories and Skill-Set Definitions

### 1.0 Personal Competencies

- 1.1 Positive Attitude:** A positive attitude in relation to managing work relationships and coping with change. This may be referred to as a “can-do” attitude and approaching work with enthusiasm.
- 1.2 Motivation (self):** Self motivation refers to an internal drive to get things done. This quality is associated with a positive attitude.
- 1.3 Flexibility and Adaptability:** Being flexible to and adapting well to change, whether it be in regard to position changes, changes in responsibility, or general organizational reorganization.
- 1.4 Integrity:** Honesty, especially as it applies to interpersonal dealings.
- 1.5 Active Learner:** Willingness to continue a learning process on the job. Employers are looking for candidates who want to grow their knowledge-base for themselves, and to help the company.
- 1.6 Problem Solving:** The skill to resolve issues, and identify solutions to problems. The ability to understand a company’s problem areas and to actively seek solutions to address the problems.
- 1.7 Decision Making Ability:** Fact-based decision making, which includes the skill to assess potential decisions based on facts, not assumptions.
- 1.8 Analytic/Cognitive Ability:** The skill to thinking analytically.
- 1.9 GPA/Academic Achievement:** Grade point averages (GPA) refer to the overall grade point, with the higher the GPA being more desirable. An average of 3.0 or above is sought. GPA has been positively correlated to potential success on the job. Other academic achievements include academic awards and scholarships.
- 1.10 Commitment to Improve:** See Active Learner definition.
- 1.11 Loyalty:** Commitment to the job and organization.

### 2.0 Communication Competencies

- 2.1 Communication, Written and Oral:** Competency in effectively articulating ideas in both written and oral formats.
- 2.2 Public Speaking:** Oral communication skills, public speaking skills, and presentation skills. Presenting information clearly to groups.
- 2.3 Listening Skills:** This skill refers to the individual as an “active listener.” Some articles indicated that a good listener is one who repeats back to the speaker the essence of what they are saying to make sure that the meaning is understood.
- 2.4 Social Skills:** Getting along with others, participation in the creation of positive working relationships. This term is linked to team/group skills.
- 2.5 Team/Group Skills:** Skills to work well in a team or group on projects and jobs. Drawing on combined strengths, including leadership ability and social skills, and the ability to be one of many who collaborate to get the job done.
- 2.6 Networking:** Skills to make connections between people, in offices or departments. This skill may be more important as it relates to company size.

### **3.0 Organizational Competencies**

- 3.1 Organization Skills:** Managing tasks and projects, and files well.
- 3.2 Leadership/Management Skills:** Skills to manage other people to get results and taking the initiative.
- 3.3 Meeting Skills:** The skill to successfully run meetings and participate in meetings, which is also connected to social skills and team/group skills.
- 3.4 Systems Perspective:** This quality defines the individual as working within a broader system, and employers are seeking candidates who acknowledge that they are not working alone, but are part of a bigger system, part of the company as a whole.
- 3.5 Computer Skills:** The skill to use a computer competently is a quality sought by employers. This includes knowledge of MAC/PC and software packages. Other technical skills that employers mentioned included knowledge of photocopiers, fax machines and other office equipment.
- 3.6 Economics/Statistics:** Business courses in economics and/or statistics.
- 3.7 Quality Approach Knowledge:** The understanding of work as a process. Several authors indicated that TQM knowledge is desired, since companies are looking to offer quality services and products, and analyze processes for improvement.
- 3.8 Work Experience:** Through an internship, externship, co-ops or other employment, companies seek those who possess some work experience. This quality is paired with Business Understanding.
- 3.9 Customer Orientation:** The skill related to both social skills and problem solving ability. The skill to relate to people/clients/customers, and address concerns or issues in a positive way. This skill has been more closely identified with smaller organizations (those of 200 employees or less).
- 3.10 Extra-Curricula Activities:** These activities are those that a new graduate may have been involved in outside of class while attending college.
- 3.11 Business Understanding:** Relating to a business environment and its processes. This kind of understanding would be gained through some sort of prior work experience.

### **4.0 International/Intercultural Competencies**

- 4.1 Cross-Cultural Competency:** The skill to deal with others unlike themselves and to do so with a positive attitude. Since some individuals may not have extensive experience in dealing with diverse people, this trait in a new graduate is viewed positively by employers.
- 4.2 International Knowledge:** A basic understanding of international business workings.
- 4.3 Second Language:** Some employers are seeking candidates with skills in other languages.
- 4.4 (International) Management:** Business course in management or international management.
- 4.5 (International) Marketing:** Business course in marketing or international marketing.
- 4.6 (International) Trade Theory:** Business course in trade theory or international trade theory.
- 4.7 (International) Human Resources:** Business course in human resources or international human resources.

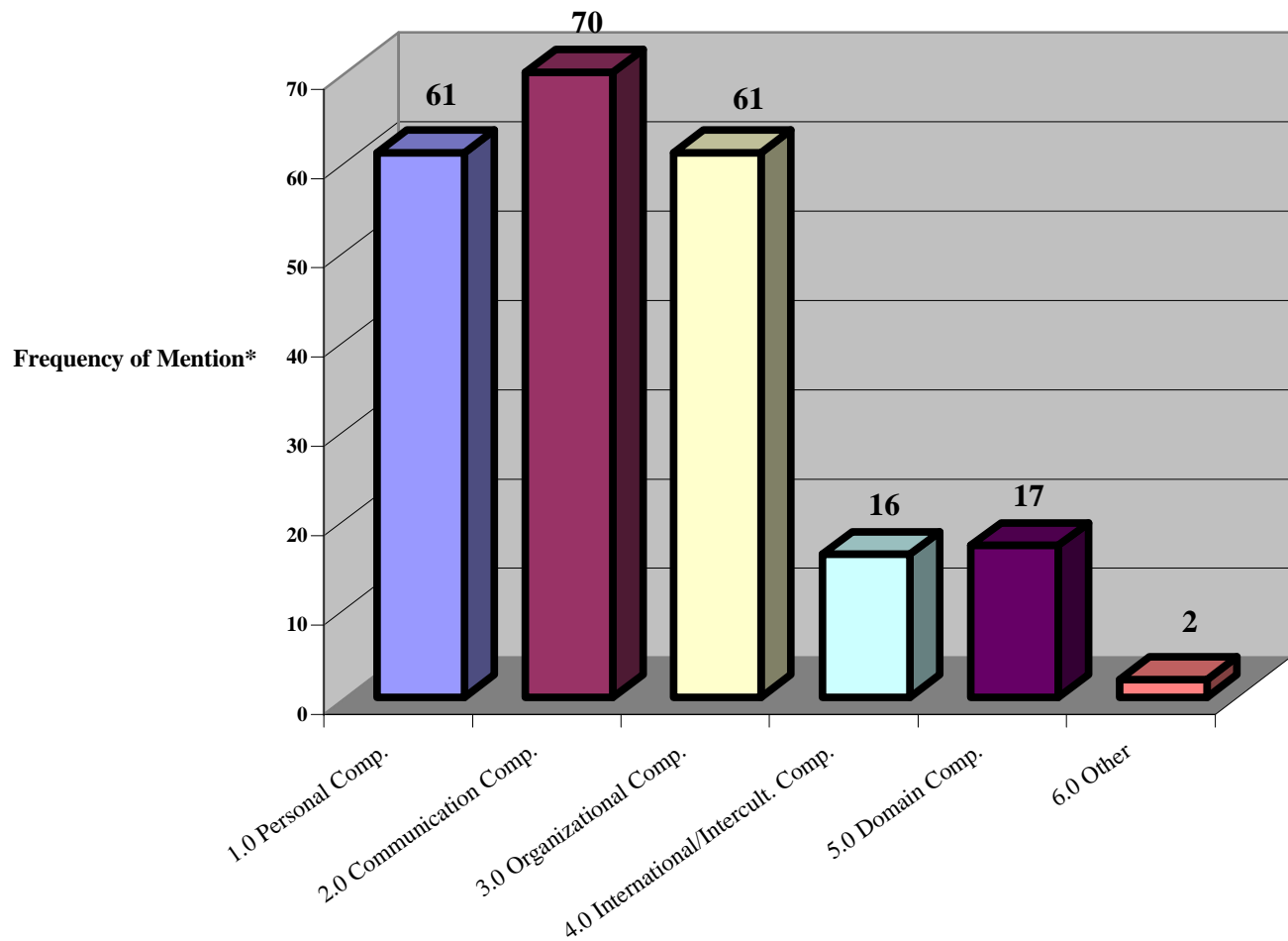
## **5.0 Domain Competencies**

- 5.1 Basic Business Courses:** Some business courses were identified as being useful for new graduates to have taken. Certain undergraduate business college courses were valued because they provided the new graduate with some basic knowledge. Often articles pointed out that a new employee would be taught what they did not know and that sometimes prior knowledge (as gained through such classes) may not be applicable.
- 5.2 Domain Knowledge:** Reflects the knowledge that a person gained through their undergraduate major. Domain knowledge is the one area of concentrated skills/ability gained through college education.
- 5.3 Accounting:** Business or management course in accounting.

## **6.0 Other**

- 6.1 Strategy:** Business or management course in strategy.
- 6.2 College Expense:** The contribution to paying for some, or all, of the educational cost.

## Workplace Competency Bar Chart



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\* Frequency was computed by adding the total number of competencies mentioned in each article and categorizing them by competency type.

<sup>1</sup> Support for this project is being provided by The Conference Board as part of a larger research initiative of the Higher Education Quality Council.

<sup>2</sup> Daily Report, *Academe Today*, 9/8/98.

<sup>3</sup> The New College Course Map and Transcript Files, October 1995, pp. 29 (For the high school class of 1982 in 1993).

<sup>4</sup> USDE; *Chronicle Almanac* 8/29/97, p. 23.

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