Learning Resources Inc
Assessing, Developing & Documenting Soft Skills

Phone: 203-637-5047   Fax: 203-637-2786
e-mail: support@Learning-Resources.com
www.Learning-Resources.com

No-Gaps Credentialing:

Addressing the Competencies – including soft skills – That Jobs Require

When hiring, an employer's most fundamental question is: "What kind of worker will this person be?" All too often, the employer's response to an applicant's interview is **"Why don't people have the skills we need?"**

Work-Readiness – Overview

What are these skills that applicants don't have and that employers and jobs require? Assessors (of technical, academic and soft skills each) believe that the skills their technology measures are especially important. Learning Resources, Inc. (LRI) believes that the following matrix best describes the ranges of skills that employers and jobs require:

Job Type	Academic Skills	Technical Skills	Soft Skills	PROFILES OR Tests	PERSONALITY Tests
Basic or Entry Level	CASAS	NOCTI, MSSC, IT, ASE, AWS, NIMS, Prove It and others	Workforce Readiness		
High Wage and High Skills	WorkKeys		Workforce Success		

The above matrix suggests:

1. That work-ready is an <u>employer-defined</u> combination of the academic, technical and soft skills required of a particular job.
2. That employers from the same sector may define their competence-requirements differently. Job-ready means meeting these different employer-identified needs.
3. Entry-level job skills differ from those of higher-level positions.

The great challenge for workforce and economic development is to align employers' competence requirements with the skills of future and incumbent workers.

LRI - Introduction

LRI's soft skills programs have validly, legally and predictively enabled employers and workforce developers to assess over 4,000,000 incumbents, applicants and future workers.

LRI has been involved with workforce development's credentialing of people's effective workplace behaviors since 1995. We worked with Arnold Packer at Johns Hopkins University to create a more credible resume - a comprehensive credential that documented people's knowledge, skills and abilities. Packer is a former Assistant Secretary of Labor and Executive Director of the SCANS initiative (The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills). Packer and LRI shared an interest in helping individuals prepare for first jobs - the first rung of a career pathway's ladder. One outcome of the partnership was the development of an interpersonal, soft skills assessment program for entry-level jobs, called Workforce Readiness Skills. That program appears in the above matrix next to the academic and technical instruments it complements.

Any credential that fully addresses work readiness must address the three skill sets that define work: soft, academic and technical skills. Credentials that help align demand – the skills employers require – with supply – the skills applicants develop through workforce development – best serves the needs of employers, individuals and those in workforce education and training.

Applications

Workforce development supports disparate employers and a wide range of incumbent and future workers, each with their own challenges. Where does one establish or improve an existing system to address the concerns outlined above? Where and how can the likelihood of success of such an effort be enhanced?

Effective, no-gaps credentialing implementation should:

- Define a manageable target population for the effort's launch. The current job-order system is a particularly appropriate place to begin.
- Appeal to employers already using the system, which will evolve into a resource that enables them to:

  o Effectively determine the soft skills competencies that are not currently addressed and list those skills (along with technical and academic) on job-postings.
  o Brief workforce developers on the soft skill competencies being added to job-orders – and stress that applicants need to bring evidence of their possession of these skills..

- Encourage workforce professionals to assess job-applicants and equip them with tools to remediate soft skill deficits.
- Refer applicants who have documentation attesting to their academic, technical and soft skills competencies – skills that match the competencies employers identify in their job postings.
- Once the new model is established, apply the system broadly to workforce development in the region or state.

Summary

Employers need to be clear as to the competencies they seek in applicants. Soft skills are central to determining what kind of worker someone will be. Both employers who complain about soft skill deficits and workforce developers have a shared opportunity:

- Employers can identify in job-postings and on job-orders the soft skills required of jobs. LRI provides competency lists for a wide range of positions – from entry-level to managerial. Employers can check-off the skills they require; and/or, they can confirm or

determine these skills by benchmarking. Academic and technical competencies required by the employer can also be specified and included in a resulting credential. We currently do this with CASAS, an academic skills assessor.

When specific competencies identified by employers are communicated to workforce developers, the task of building competencies that align with employers' requirements becomes efficient, coherent and measureable.

- Future and incumbent workers served by this system will then bring to interviews credible evidence of their academic, soft and technical skill competencies.

- **Results**: Employer demand and workforce supply move toward alignment. Employers interview fewer people to find the 'right' person. Cost and time devoted to the selection are reduced – as is turnover.

Does the above raise questions in your mind? I would be pleased to:

- Respond to them;
- Provide additional information – including validation reports, customers and the like; and,
- Provide you/your team with the opportunity to go on-line to experience work simulation-based, video-delivered, employer-derived and employer-validated soft skills assessment.

Please let me know if a conversation would be appropriate.

Alan Lesure, President
Learning Resources, Inc.
LRI: 203-637-5047
alesure@learning-resources.com