

**Employability Skills for the Future Project 2002
Supporting SME Research**

**EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FOR AUSTRALIAN SMALL
AND MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES**

**Report of the interviews and focus groups
with small and medium enterprises**

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Purpose of the Project

This project's objective was to undertake research with a sample of small and medium sized enterprises to identify their views as to the employability skills individuals require to enter employment and continue to participate in the workforce.

Enterprises were asked to focus on the future needs of their enterprises. Participants focused on the implications these changes had on the skill needs of the enterprise and through this process identified the employability skills they thought were most important.

The research also sought to ascertain how relevant the Mayer Key Competencies (1992) are in light of the changing nature of work and the features of school and training programs most likely to promote better understanding of and capability in employability skills.

This research was conducted in the context of a larger study designed to identify the employability skills relevant to Australian industry in the future.

1.2 Project Management

This research project was commissioned by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Business Council of Australia to contribute to a project they were undertaking for the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

A reference group was established at the commencement of the project to provide guidance. Members of the Reference Group are:

- Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) - Steve Balzary
- Australian Industry Group (AiG) - Brian Curtin
- Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) - Paul Byrne
- Business Council of Australia (BCA) - Maria Tarrant, Chair
- Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) – Murray Judd
- National Council for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) - Chris Robinson
- National Farmers Federation (NFF) - Richard Calver

The Reference Group provided strategic advice as to the areas for research and key issues that required consideration.

This research report "Employability Skills for Australian Small and Medium Sized Enterprises" has been endorsed by the members of the Reference Group.

1.3 Definition of ‘employability skills’

For the purposes of the project, the Reference Group defined “employability skills” as “skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one’s potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions.”

1.4 Research Methodology

Focus group discussions and individual interviews with employers were used as the research methodology.

A comprehensive, open-ended questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was developed after discussions with ACER who undertook the literature research (Curtis, D and McKenzie, P 2001) and with Field Consulting who undertook the employability skills case study research with large enterprises. The Reference Group endorsed the questionnaire. Some individual interviews were conducted via telephone in order to ensure the participation of enterprises in distant locations.

The forty enterprises that participated in the research were selected on advice from the business associations represented on the Reference Group. The criteria for selection included the need to ensure inclusion of enterprises from different industry sectors and metropolitan and rural localities. Enterprises were drawn from the manufacturing, farming, hospitality, tourism and service sectors. Twenty enterprises employed between two and fifty people. Eight enterprises employed between fifty-one and two hundred employees. Nine enterprises employed just over two hundred people and three employed over one thousand. These three were included in this research to ensure industry sector representation. The list of the enterprises that participated can be found in Appendix 1.

1.5 Summary of Project Findings

1.5.1 Overview of the changing nature of work

Enterprises were asked to consider the factors that would impact on the nature of work over the next five years. Several key causes of change in the nature of work were identified. The enterprises participating in the research indicated these changes in business operations and the nature of work to be undertaken impacted on enterprise expectations of new and existing employees.

The enterprises in the research identified six important areas which impact on skill requirements of employers. Most of the enterprises interviewed highlighted the changes in the demographics of their client base and the new demands clients have as key contributing factors to the changing nature of work.

The client base

Clients are becoming older, they are demanding more, and new and different services, and come from an increasingly diverse background in terms of nationality and culture. It can be expected that higher levels of customer service will be required.

The role of technology

All enterprises now use technology irrespective of the service they provide. Every job is affected and rapid change in the technology being used is common. Employers noted the arrival of more sophisticated systems, smart wiring in buildings, new production technologies and growth in online services. Employees will need the skills to work with the new technologies and adapt to the ongoing changes in technology.

Financial and legislative requirements

New financial and legislative requirements are necessitating changes in administrative operations. Also, financial constraints within enterprises are leading to “leaner operations”. Employees will need problem solving and innovation and enterprise skills to assist with this situation.

Approaches to learning and training

Employers identified that ongoing skill development would play a key role in ensuring an effective workforce. Learning and training will need to be take place both on and off the job using a range of technologies including online learning tools and link to the needs of the enterprise. Employees will need to take a proactive role in their learning and development.

The importance of innovation and enterprise

There is increased emphasis on innovation and enterprise as a toll to attaining increased market share and ensuring competitiveness. Lateral and creative thinking will be required to respond to the diversification of markets and products.

Increased project based work

Employers indicated more work will become project based requiring employees to have planning and organising skills and the ability to manage small and large projects from commencement through to completion and evaluation.

1.5.2 Employability Skills for the Future

The employers interviewed placed a greater emphasis on broad employability skills rather than industry specific skills alone.

During this research, enterprises interviewed identified a set of personal values and employability skills they felt were generic and relevant to all employees in all industry sectors covered in the research project. Enterprises interviewed suggested such skills were relevant not only for employees entering the workforce but to those seeking to remain in employment.

An important finding in this research has been that the enterprises interviewed emphasised that it was essential for employees to have a set of personal values such as honesty, positive self-esteem and personal presentation. Employers indicated such values supported harmonious workplaces, and assisted employees to better manage change.

The enterprises went on to identify the eight essential employability skills as communication, teamwork, problem solving. Initiative and enterprise, planning and organising, self awareness, learning and the ability to work with technology.

1.5.3 A Framework of Employability Skill

Given these research findings a framework was developed to provide details of the thinking about employability skills of small and medium sized enterprises participating in this research.

The framework identifies a set of employability skills relevant to new and existing employees according to the enterprises in this research.

The frameworks identifies both a set of personal values and a set of employability skills which are both seen as equally important by the enterprises in this research.

The framework combines personal values, skills and indicators. Indicators is the term used in the framework to capture the details provided by the enterprises with regard to each skill. Enterprises during the research also used terms such as sub skills, components and elements to describe this level of detail.

The list of indicators included in the framework is not exhaustive. The enterprises participating argued there would need to be considerable flexibility at this level of detail given the needs of the enterprises will change over time and enterprises also expected the mix of indicators would vary job to job and enterprise to enterprise.

A number of enterprises indicated they now felt it was as important if not more important to find people with the employability skills the enterprise requires, even if the employer has to then provide the industry specific skills training.

The skills in this framework have been ranked in priority order according to the number of times they were mentioned by those participating in the research. However, it must be emphasised that the hierarchy cannot be taken as a prescription for all employees and jobs.

The skills of communication and teamwork however, appear to be important in all jobs in the enterprises participating in this research. The balance between the remaining areas of skill and the detailed indicators described will vary from job to job according to the nature of the work to be undertaken.

Summarised below are the components of the framework.

Personal values

All enterprises interviewed emphasised the central importance of a set of personal values that include loyalty, commitment, honesty, positive self-esteem, enthusiasm, reliability, positive personal presentation and a positive attitude towards life.

Communication

This skill is crucial across all levels of employment. Employers interviewed advised they felt communication skills contributed to a harmonious workplace and better customer relations. Communication skills, such as listening, talking, writing, negotiating, and empathising were most frequently mentioned. The interviewees advised that the indicators of communication required would vary across jobs.

Team work

Employers emphasised the importance of team work as it contributed to workplace relations and productivity. Employees must be able to work as members of a team and in small partnerships with each other as well as with the clients.

Problem solving

In this research problem solving skills were seen as essential in both entry level and existing employees. However, the enterprises interviewed noted that the level and range of problem solving indicators would vary according to the nature of the job.

Initiative and enterprise skills.

The enterprises participating in the research spoke of the need for self starters, people able to see emerging issues and anticipate the implications. Such skills aided personal and business performance.

Planning and organising

Given the changing nature of the workplace, flatter structures and the focus on timely service and solutions, planning and organising skills were identified as essential. Enterprises spoke of needing employees who could manage their own time and plan how to carry out tasks efficiently.

Self awareness

The ability to self-evaluate work is crucial according to the enterprises interviewed. They suggested that this skill helped employees “fit into” the workplace and perform more effectively.

Learning

Ongoing learning was seen as being an important skill that supported an employees ongoing development and employability. The capacity to do this independently and in the workplace was seen as important. Many enterprises in the research suggested that this skill was an important contributor to managing and being comfortable with change in the workplace

Technology

Basic computer skills and a willingness to retrain and adapt to rapid technological changes are required. Demonstrating knowledge and understanding of occupational health and safety are essential. The need for appropriate physical ability to apply technology was also noted.

During this research, it was recognised that the development of employability skills takes place over the lifetime of the employees. During the interviews, it became apparent that many of the enterprises are using on the job training to support the development of these employability skills in their employees.

The following table presents an overview of the skills identified by the enterprises in the form of a framework applicable to different sized enterprises. The table is constructed to reflect the approach employers took in describing the employability skills they require.

- The theme column in the table indicates the interrelated skill groups from the perspective of the enterprise. This grouping is notional and is not considered critical to the framework.

- The employability skill column provides more detail about what the enterprises identified as the eight critical employability skills for new and existing employees in all industry sectors
- The indicators column provides details of the skills. These indicators are not an exhaustive list but an indication of the details required. This listing would be expected to change from job to job, enterprise to enterprise and over time.

Personal Values	Loyalty Commitment Honesty Positive self esteem Enthusiasm Reliability Positive personal presentation	
Theme	Employability skill	Indicators
Inter personal skills	Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens and understands • Speaks clearly and directly • Writes clearly • Negotiates effectively • Reading independently
	Team work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works well with peers, customers, supervisors and support staff • Works across different ages • Transfers effectively between individual work and team work • Knows their own role as part of the team in the work situation • Shows cultural sensitivity
Initiative and enterprise skills	Problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops creative solutions • Is practical • Shows independence and initiative in identifying problems and solving them • Problem solves in teams • Able to estimate and calculate • Understands tables of figures and can interpret graphs • Understands basic budgeting
	Initiative and enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapts to new situations • Develops a strategic vision
Learning skills	Planning and organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manages time • Manages self and work alone • Resourceful • Makes decisions • Understands relationships amongst workplace processes and systems • Adapts resource allocations to cope with contingencies • Establishes clear project goals and deliverables • Allocates people and other resources to tasks
	Self awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a personal vision and goals • Evaluates and monitors own performance
	Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has enthusiasm for ongoing learning • Willing to learn in any setting • Open to new ideas and techniques • Prepared to invest time and effort in learning new skills • Acknowledges the need to learn in order to accommodate change
Workplace skills	Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to relate the use of technology to work • Has basic computer skills • Willing to upgrade technology skills • Willing to use a range of technologies • Uses technology to seek, process and present the information • Uses physical abilities for the application of technology • Relevant physical ability to apply technology

1.5.4 Assessment and Appraisal of Employability Skills

Entry level assessment

When asked to identify the strategies they use to assess for employability skills the respondents described a range of approaches including observation, attaining the opinions of previous employers or other people such as teachers, and requesting the applicant to provide demonstrated evidence such as samples of previous work and school projects.

Several of the enterprises interviewed suggested that observation is a highly valued tool of assessment. Some enterprises ask candidates to participate in a trial placement in the company so that their interaction with others can be assessed. Others indicated that casual employment provided an opportunity to identify possible future employees.

Employers also indicated that evidence from any facet of the employee's life is considered valuable including sport and community activities.

Ongoing workplace assessment

The employers interviewed identified the importance of assessment of ongoing employees to ensure they had relevant skills. This was done informally through supervisors and sometimes more formally through a performance appraisal system.

1.5.5 Conclusions for Applying the Employability Skills Framework

This project identified the emergence of new thinking within the enterprises that participated in the research, about what are the key employability skills, how to educate and train for better performance in them and how to assess the employability skills of the individual.

Enterprises participating in the research are placing emphasis on the need for employees with initiative, enterprise, self management and ongoing commitment to ongoing learning as well as skills such as communication and team work which are part of the Mayer Key Competencies (1992).

The framework of skills presented in this report is indicative of the employability skills preferred by employers from a range of small and medium sized enterprises in different industry sectors and geographical locations. Personal values and the eight employability skills are important for all industry at all levels. However, employers interviewed emphasised the need for this framework to be flexible and responsive. This framework enables flexibility in its usage through the range of indicators suggested.

2 INTRODUCTION

This research is part of a larger project commissioned by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) to deliver a report which considers the following issues:

- possible new requirements for generic employability competencies which industry requires, or will require in the foreseeable future, since the Mayer Key Competencies were developed;
- clear definitions of what Australian industry and leading business enterprises mean by “employability” skills and the consistency or otherwise between the various terms similarly used;
- a proposed suite(s) of “employability” skills, including an outline of assessment, certification and reporting of performance options that suit both industry and education; and
- industry (small, medium, large businesses) reactions to the proposed suite and reporting options.

The forty enterprises that participated in this research were identified by the business associations represented on the Reference Group and were drawn from the manufacturing, farming, hospitality, tourism and service sectors. (See Appendix 1 for details of participating enterprises). All efforts were made to ensure representation from a wide geographical area.

Twenty enterprises employed between two and fifty employees. Eight enterprises employed between fifty-one and two hundred employees. Nine enterprises employed slightly more than two hundred employees. Three participating enterprises were large enterprises employing over one thousand employees. These enterprises were included in order to ensure a spread of industry sectors was represented in the research.

The questionnaire used in the research was designed to be completed in approximately half an hour with most of the questions being open ended. Questions sought to find out the employability needs of the enterprises, the relevance of the Mayer Key Competencies to the future and enterprise views on assessing employability skills.

Participating small and medium enterprises verified the information they provided which was then used to develop this report.

3 THE CHANGING NATURE OF WORK

Curtis and McKenzie (2001) undertook a literature review considering employability skills. One issue they identified was that the changing nature of work is requiring enterprises to seek a different set of skills in their employees.

This research has sought to identify the views of the small and medium sized enterprises on changes in the nature of work, the causes of these changes, and the impact on skills required in both entry and existing employees. Enterprises identified six causes of change:

- the client base;
- the role of technology;
- financial and legislative requirements;
- approaches to learning and training;
- the importance of innovation and enterprise; and
- increased project based work.

3.1 The Client Base

The nature of employees' work is being affected by changes in the demographics and requirements of the client base. The causes of changes to the client base as reported by the participating enterprises are:

- clients are becoming greater in number;
- clients are generally becoming older;
- client groups are changing;
- clients are becoming shareholders;
- clients are being drawn from an increasingly cultural diverse community; and
- there has been an increase in the number of international clients.

These changes are leading to new and enhanced expectations of the enterprise. Clients are now requiring:

- more service;
- higher quality of service and products with both needing to be tailored to meet the particular needs and circumstances of the clients;
- expectations of an ongoing and responsive relationship with the enterprise through its employees;
- a one stop approach with expectations that enterprises can provide a whole and integrated service;
- user friendly products that clients can use in their own workplace or home with back up support;
- integration with the community and acknowledgment of the skills within the community; and
- guarantees of profit (clients as shareholders).

These expectations are leading to new ways of providing goods and services. Enterprises indicated they needed to ensure they have efficient and harmonious workplaces with innovative approaches enabling quick and sympathetic responses to client needs.

Interpersonal skills are particularly important in this context as they contribute to good relations within the enterprise and between the enterprise and clients, leading to greater productivity. The employability skills identified by the employers interviewed most relevant to achieving good relations with clients are:

- communication;
- teamwork; and
- problem solving.

Increasingly, enterprises are now selecting employees on the strength of their interpersonal skills and training them on the job for the more industry specific skills. Examples of what individual participating enterprises said are:

- The number of overall clients is increasing and they are requiring more service and advice - Adelaide Convention Centre
- More client site work with more dynamic and responsive relationships is expected - Aspect Computing
- Every one from the cleaner to the senior management will be part of the one team which will be expected to stay together for the next ten years. Planning and selecting the right people will be more important - PBR

3.2 The Role of Technology

Enterprises are increasingly using technology to enhance the way they do things and in support of the creation of new products and services. The reliance on technology is also being stimulated by the development of new production techniques, new administrative systems, the need to keep better records as part of quality control and in response to government requirements, as well as the need to find more efficient ways of operating. Whether on the farm, or in an office setting, the reliance on technology is evident. The advent of the greater use of technologies such as robotics, computers, new production machinery, has seen the nature of work change in many areas with many physical or manual functions having been mechanised. Enterprises participating identified that:

- the use of technology is now evident in all enterprises, irrespective of size, service provided or product produced;
- technology now affects almost every job within the enterprise in some way; and
- the changes in the types of technology are rapid and ongoing.

Because of an increasing reliance on technology, many enterprises reported they need higher levels of computer literacy amongst their employees. At entry level, employees are expected to

have basic technology and computer skills but they are also expected to be willing to continually learn new technology and computer skills on the job.

In some situations, employees needed a willingness to use technology in partnership with other skills. For example, the farmers indicated that employees needed the physical capacity to operate the new farm equipment.

The following comments indicate employers' views about the role of technology and its relationship with other skills:

- We now have technology in all aspects of the business - Adelaide Convention Centre
- Administration work is more technical partly because paper work has increased ten fold and needs to be more precise - Redback Electrical
- The merging of IT with communications is happening and so is the move from mainframe to desktop to palm - Aspect Computing
- Farming is becoming more and more mechanised necessitating more contract work - JW & JA Hinton
- We will be involved in establishment and servicing of increasingly complex systems even in the home e.g. smart wiring in houses allows more remote control of the home's electrical functions via computer - Redback Electrical

3.3 Financial and Legislative Requirements

New financial and legislative requirements are necessitating changes in administrative operations. Also, financial constraints within enterprises are leading to "leaner operations". In detail, the changes reported by the enterprises are:

- greater legal/regulatory requirements including financial and occupational health and safety requirements;
- more proof of quality assurance;
- increased taxation requirements, including BAS and GST reporting;
- more clients require individualised documentation;
- greater accountability for funding received; and
- restructures in some medium sized organisations.

These factors are leading to employees needing to have skills in planning and organising, problem solving, the use of technology and mathematical ability. The following comments were made by the participating enterprises:

- More bookwork is evident – legal requirements, quality assurance documentation, taxation issues - GE & PA Hendy

- I will be undertaking more contract work - fencing, spraying & sheep handling or just helping on casual rates. Sheep shearing is also looming as an option - Tubukone Pastoral Co
- Smaller projects and system integrations are being undertaken - Aspect Computing
- We need to seek wider sources of funding and align our work to different funding criteria - Eastside SA Inc.

3.4 Approaches to Learning and Training

There is increasing importance placed on learning and training. This is primarily because of the need for enterprises to continually improve the skill base of the enterprise as a means of ensuring the ongoing growth of the enterprise.

In order to cope with this emphasis on ongoing learning employees need skills in communication, working in teams and a commitment to engage in ongoing learning in and out of the workplace. Employers made the following comments:

- Creativity and enterprising approaches to creating the learning environment are crucial. There is recognition that learning is a holistic, ongoing enterprise. Also, there is now more action learning rather than traditional learning - Learning for Life Education
- Training programs are now designed to examine new innovations - keeping ahead of the game is important - PBR
- In the future there will be no institutionalised delivery and there will be more needs based training – just in time - Douglas Mawson Institute of TAFE

3.5 The Importance of Innovation and Enterprise

Two of the large manufacturing enterprises participating in the project reported that the most significant changes they were witnessing related to the increased emphasis placed on innovation and enterprise as a way to improve competitiveness. This was being caused by the need to increase market share and profit.

Employees need to be able to demonstrate that they can contribute to innovative practices. They need to be able to find creative and practical solutions to problems, show initiative and independence, be able to work in teams, and adapt to new situations. The following comments demonstrate why innovation is important:

- We need to be more competitive and make a large profit - Norske Skog
- We now design our own technology and have it made overseas - PBR Australia
- Very lateral thinking will be required by all employees – PBR

3.6 Increased Project Based Work

Enterprises in the research spoke of the current trends in contracting and business operations leading to more project based work with high demand for solutions and results. These changes are reflected in the planning and organising skills now required in employees – most particularly the need to be able to manage small and large projects from commencement through to completion and evaluation.

3.7 Managerial Competence

Although not mentioned as a skill required in all employees the employers interviewed recognised the need for changes in managerial competence. The link was made between the demand for increased skill development in employees and the need for high order skills in people management in supervisors and managers in order to facilitate ongoing skill development and to get the best out of people. It was widely recognised that those in management level positions will need to be able to:

- respond to the new emphasis on selecting the right person for the job - the first time;
- keep abreast of ongoing developments in training for personnel management;
- do more with fewer staff; and
- facilitate team approaches.

3.8 Summary

In summary, the future of work will involve:

- increases in the overall number and diversity of clients who will be more knowledgeable and demanding consumers;
- ongoing reliance on technology and the ongoing development of new technologies;
- employees who are more highly trained particularly in personal and inter personal skills;
- an increasing emphasis placed on using initiative and enterprise and finding creative solutions in the workplace; and
- an increase in people orientated management competence.

4 EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE OF AUSTRALIAN SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES

Focussing on the workplace of the future, enterprises interviewed were able to identify a set of employability skills that they believe will assist employees and enterprises to succeed.

The interviewees highlighted the importance of general employability skills - that is skills not specific to an industry sector or particular enterprise but skills relevant to all work. Employers recognise the need for good general employability skills as a foundation upon which industry specific skills can be developed. They indicated that it is easier for enterprises to train employees on the job in the industry specific skills if general employability skills are already evident. The following opinion typifies the attitude of employers towards employability skills:

The generic employability skills are crucial. They are the foundations upon which industry specific skills are developed. Students in particular need solid abilities in all the generic employability skills as described in the Mayer Key Competencies. - Ballarat Group Training Company.

During the research employers indicated that the Mayer Key Competencies continued to be relevant but that the range of skills required had grown and personal values were now as important and needed to be included in any consideration of employability skills.

4.1 General Employability Skills for all Employees

Employers participating in the research were asked to identify the employability skills specific to employees entering the workforce. However, in answering the question most employers indicated that they had not differentiated between employees entering the workforce and existing employees. Employers did indicate in the discussions that they placed different levels of emphasis on particular skills of indicators of skills for different jobs.

4.1.1 Personal values

Employers expressed strong support for a range of personal values, important to all employees irrespective of their academic qualifications or experience to do the job. These values are seen to contribute to harmony and productivity within the workplace and to developing good relations with clients. They are also seen as important contributions to leadership in the workplace. In their responses, employers emphasised the following personal values:

- loyalty
- commitment
- honesty
- positive self esteem
- enthusiasm
- reliability, and
- positive personal presentation.

The following comments from employers indicate their views:

- We no longer interview for skills - we interview for values - employees with good values enhance the culture of the business – Eclipse Ford
- I now hire on attitude as well as technical aptitude so my drop out rate is low – Redback Electrical
- Honesty is important, above everything else - Maxima Group Training
- Loyalty to the enterprise and each other as employees is essential - Bartlett Covering
- Self esteem is crucial and is particularly lacking in boys – a student’s attitude is more important when entering the workforce than their aptitude - Ballarant Group Training
- Enthusiasm and motivation are basic - all else is teachable - these aren’t - Newcastle City Council
- These are needed: a desire to work, genuineness and honesty, reliability, punctuality and physical fitness - Riverina Wool Combing Co.
- A passion for the work of the enterprise and also for self - MP Personnel
- Cleanliness and personal presentation and body language are monitored - Red Lion Bistro

4.1.2 Communication

Enterprises placed great importance on communication. This skill was the one most frequently mentioned by employers as being crucial across all employees and positions. Employers placed different emphasis on the different forms of communication. Sometimes verbal communication was emphasised, at others written communication was emphasised. Having empathy and listening to clients was sometimes mentioned as the key aspect of communication skills. Many employers discussed the need for employees who could not only read and write but also be able to explain complex concepts in a manner easily understood and who could listen and consider the implications of what was being said to them. Employers suggested that communication skills included:

- listening and understanding;
- speaking clearly and directly;
- writing legibly and concisely;
- negotiating effectively;
- reading independently.

The following comments from employers indicate their views:

- Everyone has good ideas but without being able to communicate them there is no value in them – Noske Skog

- Reading service manuals and relaying information via writing to the customer is crucial - Ballarat Truck Company
- It is important to be able to interpret what the client wants and communicate alternatives where necessary - Redback Electrical
- Communication in ways that support everyday operations and team development is what we need - Eastside SA Inc.
- Young employees need to learn to talk to a broad range of people - Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser

4.1.3 Team work

Employers highlighted that being able to work in a team was an important skill. This skill becomes more important for ongoing employment and advancement. Participating enterprises advised that there is no position that did not require elements of teamwork.

Employers when discussing the application of this skill identified a range of relationships where this would be essential - with customers, peers, supervisors and support staff. They also noted the need to understand cultural, gender and age factors in ensuring effective teamwork. Further indicators included an employee being able to transfer between individual work and teamwork and an employee knowing their own role as part of the team in the work situation. The following comments from the enterprises demonstrate why this is so:

- Each employee brings specific skills but they combine to complete the overall project - Learning for Life Education Centre
- In the banquet area two staff handle four tables of ten and each pair are in a larger team of twelve. Larger teams have 400 to 500 customers - Adelaide Convention Centre
- Juniors are especially required to work as part of a team. If they can't work in a team things go wrong on the worksite and they do not necessarily learn skills. - Redback Electrical Company
- Employees must get on with their workmates. Conflict causes too many problems which take time to sort out - Maxima Group Training

4.1.4 Problem solving, initiative and enterprise skills

Problem solving

The employers interviewed indicated problem solving skills were essential for both entry level and existing employees. Employers suggested the mix of problem solving skills required would vary according to the level of complexity of the job and the types of problem employees would encounter. According to the employers an employee with sound problem solving skills could demonstrate they:

- developed creative solutions;
- were practical;
- were independent and demonstrated initiative in identifying problems and solving them; and
- could problem solve in teams.

Comments made by employers included:

- Each employee is empowered to solve their own problems at the coal face - Adelaide Convention Centre
- To show initiative in problem solving rather than rely on others is essential - Lorn Surgery
- Employees need to resolve problems and create a good outcomes - Redback Electrical
- The ability to assimilate with our clientele and to solve their problems and impediments is essential - New Apprenticeships Centre

Employers also advised they felt all employees should have sufficient numeracy and mathematical skills to be able to apply mathematics to everyday situations such as being able to understand and to interpret basic graphs, figures or tables and apply these skills to problem solving. Key mathematical abilities identified were:

- basic budgeting;
- estimation; and
- calculation.

Initiative and enterprise

The pressure on enterprises to grow and find new markets is leading to the identification of this area of skill as critical to employability. The enterprises recognise that they need to continually provide new services and products in order to extend current markets or secure new markets. The role of employees in developing these new services and products is seen as crucial. The employers interviewed suggested enterprises no longer just relied on managers and specialists to take the initiative in developing the business or identifying new approaches. The identification of initiative and enterprise skills as critical employability skills reflects a new perspective from employers. Employers gave the following examples of the skill set:

- adapts to new situations; and
- can develop a strategic vision.

The following comments are from employers on this matter:

- Need to show initiative - Learning for Life Education Service
- Employees need initiative and to be able to work without constant supervision - Hunter Valley ACC Bendix Mintex
- We can't supervise them always - Tubukone Pastoral Company

4.1.5 Planning and organising, self awareness and learning

Planning and organising

Many of the employers cited the importance of planning and organising skills. Employers highlighted the need for employees who are independent and able to manage their time and priorities. Many interviewees noted part of the planning and organising skill is also to know when to work alone and when to seek support. Increasingly employees are being required to manage projects from conception to completion. Accordingly, employees must be able to:

- manage time – sets time lines and co-ordinates sub tasks;
- manage self and work alone;
- be resourceful;
- make decisions;
- understand relationships amongst work place processes and systems;
- adapt resource allocations to cope with contingencies;
- establish clear project goals and deliverables; and
- appropriately allocate people and other resources to tasks.

In their written responses employers said of planning and organising:

- It is fundamental to achieving aims - Greater Murray Health Services
- Working without supervision and planning and organizing self - Tuberkone Pastoral Company
- The skills of planning are important for project management - Central Highlands Water

Self-awareness

Employers indicated that this is emerging as a priority area of skill related to the need for employees to be better able to cope with change and pressure and identify how they can succeed in these circumstances. Employees are expected to know their own strengths and how to best apply them. They are also expected to know their weaknesses and to be prepared to improve on them. In some enterprises the training programs are developed in response to the outcomes of self and peer evaluation of job performance. Employers suggested that employees must:

- have self esteem;
- have a personal vision and goals; and
- be able to evaluate and monitor their own performance.

Learning

Employers throughout this research emphasised the need for employees to show a commitment to ongoing skill development in line with business needs. Employers sought new employees who would continue to learn in the workplace as required and emphasised the need for existing employees to maintain relevant skills. A number of employers identified the need to keep abreast of developments in technology and the landscape of the world of work. While the enterprises interviewed are all conscious of their responsibilities to provide training for employees they also

believe that the employees themselves need to take responsibility for their own learning. The skills and attitudes related to being willing and able to continue learning include:

- enthusiasm for ongoing learning;
- willing to learn in any setting;
- being open to new ideas and techniques;
- being prepared to invest time and effort in learning new skills; and
- acknowledging the need to learn in order to accommodate change.

Comments made by enterprises included:

- Being involved in ongoing learning in the workplace and out of the workplace is crucial - Ballarat Group Training
- Learn about the industry sector – Retail Autobarn Albury
- Show initiative in wanting to learn more about the business - Norske Skog
- Be willing to learn new skills all the time - JW & JA Hinton Pty Ltd
- Be keen to take on the philosophy of the enterprise and prepared to learn - Glenecho Neighbourhood Centre

4.1.6 Technology

Participating enterprises are increasingly using a range of new technologies across all aspects of their business. As a result the employers indicated that both new and existing employees would need to be able to use technology to do their work and would need to consider how technology could be used to benefit the business. Employers from farming and agriculture related enterprises interviewed discussed the issue of a general need for employees to have an appropriate level of physical ability to apply the technology. Employers advised it would be necessary for employees to:

- be able to relate the use of technology to work;
- have basic computer skills;
- be willing to upgrade technology skills;
- be willing to use a range of technologies; and
- be able to use technology to seek, process and present information.

Comments made by employers included:

- In the administration area it is required to use IT continuously - New Apprenticeship Centre
- There is a shorter learning curve if employees have basic computer skills - Techcel Computer Services
- Basic technology skills are fundamental to employment - Wagga Wagga Daily Advertiser

- Every position uses some sort of technology. It is always changing - Norske Skog
- Reliance on technology is increasing – Tuberkone

4.2 Leadership

Throughout the research with small and medium sized enterprises there was discussion of the capacity of employees to take on leadership roles both formally and informally in the workplace.

Enterprises spoke of the desire for employees to show leadership. Many enterprises suggested that this would be an outcome where employees integrated aspects of the personal values and employability skills. Key leadership behaviours identified by employers were confidence, initiative and teamwork.

As enterprises reflected on leadership in the organisation they talked of employees acting in particular ways in the workplace eg:

- encouraging co workers and team members to focus on the work goals;
- motivating peers and more junior employees;
- taking responsibility for themselves and others;
- participating in and facilitating change and improvement using “systems thinking”; and
- building stronger customer relationships through thinking about problems differently.

4.3 Customer Service

Enterprises participating in this research focussed on the need for all employees to provide customer service and support positive long-term customer relationships. Many of the managers interviewed suggested that for an employee to be customer orientated, provide excellent customer service and build strong relationships with customers, the employee would need to apply a range of the employability skills identified in an integrated way. Communication, problem solving and enterprise skills would all need to be used together to ensure a successful outcome in any interaction with a customer.

4.4 Employability Skills and the Mayer Key Competencies

Employers were asked to consider the Mayer Key competencies and their relevance for the future. Some of the employers advised that they had been using the Mayer Key Competencies as a framework for their selection and training processes. Employers confirmed the Mayer Key Competencies had an ongoing relevance but needed to be supplemented to reflect the changing nature of work and the workplace. Personal values and skills such as self awareness, innovation and enterprise are now required.

The enterprises participating in this research were provided with a number of opportunities to identify employability skills for the future and compare them with the Mayer Key Competencies.

The table contrasts the list of skills identified by participants with how participants then rated the original Mayer Key Competencies in light of the changing nature of work.

Participants listing of the employability skills most crucial	Participants ranking of the Mayer Key Competencies
Personal values	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Team work • Problem solving • Planning and organising • Initiative and enterprise • Technology • Learning • Self-awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in teams • Communicating ideas and information • Solving problems • Planning & organising • Using technology • Collecting, analysing and organising information • Using mathematical ideas and techniques

All enterprises in the research recognised that the personal values were critical and it would now be necessary for the education and training system to devise ways of assessing and providing advice on these to individuals as well as the employability skills.

4.4 Employability Skills by Industry Sector

The results of all questions were analysed to ascertain differences in viewpoint between industry sectors. For example, did farmers have a different view to the employers from the manufacturing sector? No differences were evident with regard to the generic employability skills.

5 AN EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FRAMEWORK

Given these research findings a framework was developed to provide details of the thinking about employability skills of small and medium sized enterprises participating in this research.

The framework identifies a set of employability skills relevant to new and existing employees according to the enterprises in this research.

The frameworks identifies both a set of personal values and a set of employability skills which are both seen as equally important by the enterprises in this research.

The framework combines personal values, skills and indicators. Indicators is the term used in the framework to capture the details provided by the enterprises with regard to each skill. Enterprises also used terms such as sub skills, components and elements to describe this level of detail.

The list of indicators included in the framework is not exhaustive. The enterprises participating argued there would need to be considerable flexibility at this level of detail given the needs of the enterprises will change over time and enterprises also expected the mix of indicators would vary job to job and enterprise to enterprise.

A number of enterprises indicated they now felt it was as important if not more important to find people with the employability skills the enterprise requires, even if the employer has to then provide the industry specific skills training.

The skills in this framework have been ranked in priority order according to the number of times they were mentioned by those participating in the research. However, it must be emphasised that the hierarchy cannot be taken as a prescription for all employees and jobs.

The skills of communication and teamwork however, appear to be important in all jobs in the enterprises participating in this research. The balance between the remaining areas of skill and the detailed indicators described will vary from job to job according to the nature of the work to be undertaken.

The table is constructed to reflect the approach employers took in describing the employability skills they require.

- The theme column in the table indicates the interrelated skill groups from the perspective of the employer. This grouping is notional and is not considered critical to the framework.
- The employability skill column provides more detail about what the enterprises identified as the eight critical employability skills for new and existing employees in all industry sectors
- The indicators column provides details of the skills. These indicators are not an exhaustive list but an indication of the details required. This listing would be expected to change from job to job, enterprise to enterprise and over time.

Personal Values	Loyalty Commitment Honesty Positive self esteem Enthusiasm Reliability Positive personal presentation	
Theme	Employability skill	Indicators
Inter-personal skills	Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens and understands • Speaks clearly and directly • Writes clearly • Negotiates effectively • Reading independently
	Team work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works well with peers, customers, supervisors and support staff • Works across different ages • Transfers effectively between individual work and team work • Knows their own role as part of the team in the work situation • Shows cultural sensitivity
Initiative and enterprise skills	Problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops creative solutions • Is practical • Shows independence and initiative in identifying problems and solving them • Problem solves in teams • Able to estimate and calculate • Understands tables of figures and can interpret graphs • Understands basic budgeting
	Initiative and enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapts to new situations • Develops a strategic vision
Learning skills	Planning and organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manages time • Manages self and work alone • Resourceful • Makes decisions • Understands relationships amongst workplace processes and systems • Adapts resource allocations to cope with contingencies • Establishes clear project goals and deliverables • Allocates people and other resources to tasks
	Self awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a personal vision and goals • Evaluates and monitors own performance
	Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has enthusiasm for ongoing learning • Willing to learn in any setting • Open to new ideas and techniques • Prepared to invest time and effort in learning new skills • Acknowledges the need to learn in order to accommodate change
Workplace skills	Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to relate the use of technology to work • Has basic computer skills • Willing to upgrade technology skills • Willing to use a range of technologies • Uses technology to seek, process and present the information • Uses physical abilities for the application of technology • Relevant physical ability to apply technology

6 ASSESSMENT AND APPRAISAL OF EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Employers were asked to describe the sort of information they needed in order to make judgments about potential employees.

Many employers not only described the information they looked for but also mentioned the source used to gain the information. The following table provides details of participants' views.

Employability skills	What employers are looking for	The sources employers use
Personal attitudes and interpersonal employability skills	Whole picture of the persons attitudes and competencies, passions and pursuits	Evidence of involvement in community activities Outcomes of participation extra curricular school activities Samples of School projects/work References from school advisors and employers Testimonials from community members Interview performance
Interpersonal	Team work	Evidence of how the student interacted with teachers, students in school Interview performance
	Communication	Interview performance
Innovation and enterprise Learning	General employability skills performance	Previous work history TER score Training undertaken TAFE qualifications Hobbies Interview performance Trial in the enterprise

7 EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO ENHANCE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Enterprises in the research had a keen appreciation of the connection between skill development and education and training. Enterprises understood that skills needed to be developed upon the foundation of a comprehensive school education and training needs to be made available throughout a persons working life. In summary those interviewed:

- recognise the ongoing nature of learning;
- relate learning to the future needs of the enterprise and employee; and
- try to make learning more responsive to the needs of the employee (learner).

Participating enterprises noted the role of schools, VET and Higher Education in supporting the creation of employability skills in individuals, as well as their own role as the employer. When questioned the interviewees focussed on the role of schools in skills development.

7.1 Schooling and employability skills

Generally, the enterprises were very supportive of schools, reporting that they enjoyed good relations with their neighborhood schools and that there was evidence of school curriculum better addressing education for work programs. For example, a number of enterprises were aware of the Mayer Key Competencies as a result of efforts of their local school assessing and reporting student progress using the competencies as the organising framework.

The participating enterprises suggested that in order to ensure that all students have experience of all general employability skills, schools could address employability skills across all areas of the curriculum. It was suggested that schools could expand the provision of programs that ensure students gain more general knowledge on the world around them including the nature of modern workplaces, an understanding of the world of work, and the relationship between enterprises and economic growth. (Appendix 2 includes detail of further suggestions).

7.2 Training and Employability Skills

The participating enterprises also considered the nature of work based training in their own enterprises. They suggested it was important to consider the needs of young employees by giving them time to adjust to the different culture and pace of the workplace. A large number of the enterprises in the study also stressed the need to:

- promote ongoing learning by employees;
- develop enterprise, initiative and positive attitudes in employees; and
- help employees develop the skills needed for better working relationships.

Appendix 3 includes further details of participants' comments on work place training.

8 CONCLUSIONS

This project identified the emergence of new thinking within the enterprises that participated in the research, about what are the key employability skills, how to educate and train for better performance in them and how to assess the employability skills of the individual.

The framework of skills presented in this report is indicative of the employability skills preferred by employers from a range of small and medium sized enterprises in different industry sectors and geographical locations.

An important finding in this research has been that the enterprises interviewed emphasised that it was essential for employees to have a set of personal values - honesty, positive self-esteem and personal presentation. Employers indicated such values supported harmonious workplaces, and assisted employees to better manage change. The personal values identified are as important as the employability skills identified in the research

The enterprises identified the eight essential employability skills as communication, teamwork, problem solving. Initiative and enterprise, planning and organising, self awareness, learning and the ability to work with technology.

Enterprises participating in the research are placing emphasis on the need for employees with the personal values and skills of initiative, enterprise, self management and ongoing commitment to ongoing learning as well as skills such as communication and team work which are part of the Mayer Key Competencies (1992). This reflects a further change in the thinking of enterprises that will need to be taken into consideration in future policy developments.

The personal values and the eight employability skills are seen as essential for not only new entrants but also existing employees.

Employers interviewed emphasised the need for any employability skills framework to be flexible and responsive. The framework developed in this report enables flexibility in its usage particularly at the indicator level where most enterprises felt changes would occur. Indicators is the term used in the framework to capture the details provided by the enterprises with regard to each skill. Enterprises also used terms such as sub skills, components and elements to describe this level of detail.

The list of indicators included in the framework is not exhaustive. The enterprises participating argued there would need to be considerable flexibility at this level of detail given the needs of the enterprises will change over time and enterprises also expected the mix of indicators would vary job to job and enterprise to enterprise.

REFERENCES

Australian Education Council (1992) *Key Competencies*, Canberra, AGPS

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APPENDIX 1- THE PARTICIPATING ENTERPRISES

Name of Enterprise	Product / work performed
Adelaide Convention Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conventions & Events
Archway of the Hunter Tours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism transport
Aspect Computing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Software development
Autobarn Albury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auto parts & accessories
Ballarat Group Training Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment and training services
Ballarat Truck Centre Pty Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truck parts & service
Bendix Mintex Pty Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of Disc pads
Business SA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Apprenticeship Centre
C.E. Bartlett Pty Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural products and synthetic materials
Central Highlands Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water works
Devlin Consulting Australia Pty Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial supplier manufactured goods
Douglas Mawson Institute of TAFE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational education and training
Dyecraft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineering
Eastside SA Inc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human services
Eclipse Ford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car sales & service
Ford Motor Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car design, production, manufacture & sales
GE & PA Hendy Pty Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seed & Grain production • Sheep farming • Hay & Silage production
Glenecho Neighbourhood Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of services to community
Globetrotter Corporate Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate travel services
Greater Murray A.H.S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Service delivery • Telehealth technology
Hunter ACC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government services
JW & JA Hinton Pty Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed farming
Learning for Life Education Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance to schools & community groups
Maxima Group Training Inc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit & select trainees & apprentices for both Small & large business
Mission Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment services
MP Personnel Consulting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resources services
Newcastle & Hunter Business Chamber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work placement
Newcastle City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services to ratepayers
Norske Skog Albury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacture of newsprint
PBR Australia Pty Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacture of automotive brake components
Redback Electrical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial installations • Domestic service
Riverina Wool Combing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean comb wool (95% exported)
Sovereign Park Motor Inn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motel and gaming room
Techcel Computer Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer sales & support
The Lorn Surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical practice
Tubukone Pastoral Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime lamb production • Grain growing • Agricultural contracting
Wagga Daily Advertiser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper publication
Wagga Wagga City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Services

APPENDIX 2 - PARTICIPANTS SUGGESTIONS FOR ENSURING THAT SCHOOL PROGRAMS ADDRESS EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

In many instances when making suggestions for ways in which school programs might address employability skills employers aligned their suggestion with a specific employability skill. These suggestions and the area of skill with which they were aligned are:

Schooling and the development of Interpersonal skills

In their responses the participating enterprises suggested that schools could address the interpersonal skills, particularly communication by:

- _ teaching students how to interact in realistic situations;
- _ teaching students how to develop positive and confidence building relationships;
- _ encouraging students to learn about the importance of human values and respect for individuals;
- _ encouraging in students a greater understanding of respect for another persons property and other peoples rights;
- _ teaching students about rights and responsibilities in human relations;
- _ teaching the full range of communication skills;
- _ providing training in interpersonal communication at the secondary level;
- _ improving standards in written and oral language;
- _ teaching body communication e.g. teach students to look people in the eye and stop picking their finger nails;
- _ teaching conflict management skills;
- _ teaching written and oral communication;
- _ teaching reading and writing;
- _ teaching about rights and responsibilities;
- _ teaching communication skills;
- _ teaching verbal skills and concise writing skills;
- _ facilitating working in teams;
- _ teaching “people skills”, including group dynamics.

Schooling and the development of workplace skills

In their responses the participating enterprises suggested that schools could address the skills identified as those being specific to the workplace as distinct from those that have wider application by:

- _ providing students with work ready programs;
- _ teaching the three Rs;
- _ teaching sound skills in numeracy and literacy;
- _ teaching students that they have to start at the bottom and work up;
- _ teaching quality concepts;
- _ providing students with the opportunity to observe differing workplace experiences;
- _ inviting employers to conduct training sessions in schools;
- _ making greater use of on the job education work trials;
- _ reintroducing the TRAC program (ie structured workplace learning);
- _ identifying the work ethic and encourage it in students;
- _ teaching financial curriculum;
- _ providing a greater focus on technology and its use;

- _ providing information on how technology is used in the workplace;
- _ involving businesses in secondary school education;
- _ providing greater variety of experiences built around generic employability skills e.g simulated work places and experience in unpaid work settings;
- _ teaching basic understanding of OHS;
- _ providing training in the actual running of a business; and
- _ teaching rights and responsibilities of employees and employers.

Schooling and the development of learning skills

In their responses the participating enterprises suggested that schools could address the skills related to developing an appreciation of and the skills related to ongoing learning by:

- _ promoting the importance of a willingness to learn.
- _ promoting concepts of self improvement.
- _ creating mentoring projects.
- _ teaching students to plan and follow through on projects.
- _ providing more programs to develop students ability to self assess.
- _ teaching that learning doesn't finish at school.
- _ undertaking an individual analysis of student needs.

Schooling and the development of innovation and enterprise skills

In their responses the participating enterprises suggested that schools could develop the ability to be innovative and enterprising by:

- _ teaching students to reason effectively;
- _ relating problem solving exercises to real life situations; and
- _ teaching creative problem solving (think outside the square)

Schooling and the development of personal values

Whilst recognizing that values and attitudes are more likely to be formed and developed in the home and wider community the enterprises nevertheless thought that schools could assist in the development of positive values by:

- _ placing more emphasis on personal presentation; and
- _ providing encouragement in personal development.

APPENDIX 3 – PARTICIPANTS SUGGESTIONS FOR ENSURING THAT WORKPLACE TRAINING PROGRAMS ADDRESS EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

On the job training and learning skills development

The responding enterprises thought that training programs should follow up on the work of schools in promoting the importance of ongoing learning by:

- _ creating in employees a willingness to learn;
- _ providing supportive environments that incubate quality outcome for employees;
- _ providing practice at doing hands on and “heads on” tasks;
- _ ensuring employees have and know how to plan a routine of skills development;
- _ teaching systems understanding and thinking skills the on the job:
- _ teaching information gathering and communication skills;
- _ encouraging flexibility and commitment to life long learning;
- _ encouraging an ability and willingness to take on new tasks;
- _ encouraging self improvement; and
- _ providing ongoing education in the working area “desired” by the employee as an incentive to keep learning

On the job training and enterprise specific skill development

It was recognised by enterprises participating in the research that they had a special responsibility to train employees in an understanding of the issues and skills related to the specific industry in which they operate and that much of this can best be accomplished on the job in very practical ways. The enterprises suggested that they could all enterprises could:

- _ focus on the adaptability and transferability of skills and encourage employees to understand the value of improving their performance with them;
- _ encourage workers to be prepared to listen and learn employability skills applicable to the industry sector;
- _ provide public relations training and connect employees with outside training around product knowledge and product changes;
- _ provide customer service training;
- _ provide a Certificate II in early wool processing;
- _ provide upskilling programs;
- _ provide specific training;
- _ provide knowledge of how to run the business;
- _ formalize training manuals – skills recognition log book with career paths and provide cross training acquiring skills that can take them to their next job; and
- _ provide realistic (related to the job) and relevant skills development.

On the job training and Interpersonal skills development

Although the enterprises participating in the research felt that there was much schools could do to improve the interpersonal skills of communication and teamwork it was also felt that enterprises themselves should build on this and continue to develop communication skills – not only in young employees but in all employees. It was felt that all training programs should:

- _ assist apprentices to learn how to do their paper work;
- _ show employees how to fill their job card and other paper work;
- _ train employees in how to negotiate with clients;

- _ ensure that employees get to know each member of the team and their role;
- _ teach employees how to give and receive feedback;
- _ train employees about working in a team environment;
- _ teach safety, quality and team work;
- _ train for working in teams and communication; and
- _ need good coping skills in first few years to cope with peer group pressure.

On the job training and the development of personal values

When talking about values the enterprises recognised that they have a special responsibility to practice what they preach by modeling the values they expect to see in their employees. The suggestions outlined below are all substantial and requiring strong commitment of time and other resources. It was felt that enterprises could:

- _ help develop a keen attitude in employees;
- _ provide positive role modeling within the workplace;
- _ establish a career path and provide a structure for a career path;
- _ assist employees with their personal development;
- _ tailor training to individuals needs and interests;
- _ train in personal development skills; and
- _ provide anything that helps workers to gain confidence - this is the key to getting the most out of people.

On the job training and workplace skills development

Some of the employability skills mentioned by the enterprises participating in the in the research related to specific industry sectors and in some cases to the detailed work of individual enterprises. The suggestions made outlining ways training programs could address these skills were detailed and requiring strong commitment from the enterprises. Suggestions made were that enterprises could:

- _ provide apprenticeship schemes;
- _ train in quality concepts;
- _ provide on the job training according to the needs of workers;
- _ provide training in a general employability skills such as OHS and basic safety induction;
- _ provide training in basic IT; and
- _ provide training in improvement of existing skills.