

Management Skills

Verbal Skills

The bulk of the duties as a manager involve communicating with others. Managers have to give talks, conduct meetings, make presentations, and generally communicate their ideas to others. To prepare for such tasks, students should take oral communication courses and become active in various student groups. It helps to become an officer and assume responsibility for conducting meetings and giving speeches. It also helps to join a choir or other group to become comfortable performing in front of others.

At least half of communication is skilled listening. A good manager mixes with other managers, workers, clients, stockholders, and others outside the firm. He or she listens to recommendations and complaints and acts on them. Active listening requires the asking of questions and feeding back what you've heard to let others know you're truly interested in what they say.

Writing Skills

Managers must also be able to write clearly and precisely. Much of what they want others to do must be communicated through memos, reports, policies, and letters. Much of what was said in the past by phone or letter is now communicated by e-mail or fax. While secretaries often wrote and/or corrected letters in the past, the managers themselves send most e-mail and fax messages. Consequently, organizations everywhere are complaining about many college graduates' inability to write clearly. If students develop good writing skills, they will be miles ahead of the competition. That means taking courses in grammar, composition, and keyboarding. To learn to write, people must practice writing! It helps to write anything: a diary, letters, notes, and so on. With practice, people will develop the ability to write easily—just as they speak. With this skill, they will be more ready for a career in management.

Computer Skills

The office of the future will be an office full of computers and related technology. As noted above, memos, charts, letters, e-mail and fax messages, and most other communication efforts will involve the computer. The truly efficient manager of the future will be able to effectively use and take advantage of the continuing developments in technology. That includes being able to surf the Internet to find needed facts and figures quickly.

Human Relations Skills

A manager works with people, and that means that good managers know how to get along with people, motivate them, and inspire them. People skills are learned by working with people. That means aspiring managers should join student groups, volunteer to help at their church or temple and local charities, and get involved in political organizations. They should try to assume leadership positions where they are responsible for contacting others, assigning them work, and motivating them. Good leaders begin early by assuming leadership positions in sports, community groups, and so on.

Time Management Skills

One of the more important skills for new managers to learn is how to budget their time effectively. There are many demands on managers' time that they need to control: telephone interruptions, visits from colleagues, questions from team members, meetings scheduled by top management, and such. Time management courses or workshops will help you develop such skills as setting priorities, delegating work, choosing activities that produce the most results, doing your work when you're at your best, and dealing with interruptions.

Technical Skills

To rise through the ranks of accounting, marketing, finance, production, or any other functional area, it is important to be proficient in that area. Therefore, students should choose some area of specialization. To rise to top management, it's a good idea to supplement undergraduate studies with an M.B.A. (master of business administration) or some similar degree in government, economics, or hospital administration. More and more students are going on to take advanced degrees, so you too may need such a degree to keep up with your colleagues.