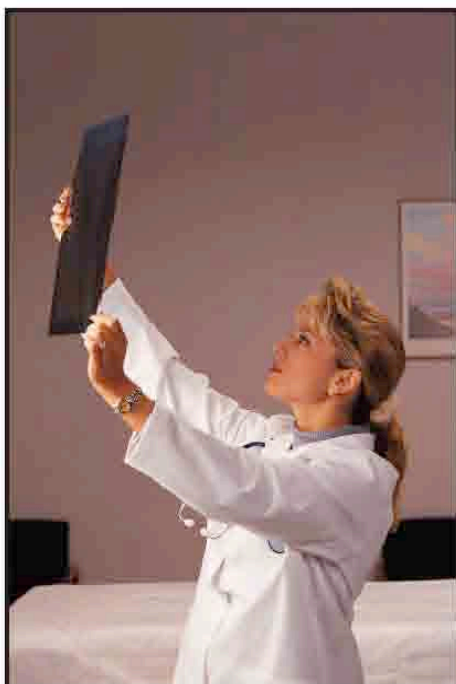


**Building your bottom line.....starts with building
your workforce.**

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

**The foundation of workplace safety
and productivity.**



A Helpful Guide for Local Employers brought to you by:

**EMPLOYMENT
ONTARIO**

This Employment Ontario project is funded in part by the Government of Canada



Seneca



WHAT ARE ESSENTIAL SKILLS

While many organizations require specific technical skills and abilities, there are some skills that are common to virtually every job. In fact, those same skills are the ones that we use often in our daily lives. Because of their importance, they have been identified as Essential Skills.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada has done extensive research for the past 8 years and identified nine Essential Skills. Each of the nine skills is important in itself, and each provides a foundation for learning more specific job skills.

- Reading text
- Document use
- Numeracy
- Writing
- Oral communication
- Thinking skills
- Working with others
- Computer use
- Continuous learning



Workforce Foundation Skills

The complexity of each Essential Skill is rated on a scale from 1 (basic tasks) to 4 or 5 (advanced tasks) as it relates to a specific job. As an employer your bottom line depends on your employees having the Essential Skills required to effectively perform their job from entry level positions to managers.

Does your workforce have the foundation needed for today's requirements?

IMPROVE SAFETY

According to the **Canadian Trucking Human Resource Council's** Essential Skills research report (www.dhrc.com), changes in technology, regulations and traffic patterns make it necessary for the growing trucking industry to have better trained workers with higher levels of basic skills than were sufficient in the past. This study indicated that many drivers and dispatchers were lacking in areas such as reading text, oral communication, document use and numeracy. Drivers with low levels are at least 1.5 times more likely to have a safety-related incident than those with the required levels. The industry has responded with its own National Essential Skills Strategy.



Work
force

Safety

Productivity
Improving

IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY

The skills and productivity of our employees are a key factor in our ability to increase profits. Employees today are expected to play a broader, more responsible and self-directed role than ever before in the workplace. To do this, they need new and more varied skills than in the past.



More than ever, most employees must be able to:

- Operate computers
- Have good problem solving abilities
- Understand written materials
- Complete reports
- Have a good grasp of math
- Operate equipment
- Have good logical abilities
- Communicate with fellow team members

Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, Ontario Division
www.cme-mec.ca

Recent Facts

A 2004 Statistics Canada study found that a rise of one percent in Essential Skills literacy scores is associated with an eventual 2.5 percent increase in labour productivity and 1.5 percent increase in Gross Domestic Product.

In 2005, Statistics Canada identified that investment in education is three times as important to economic growth over the long run as investment in physical capital such as machinery and equipment.

The International Literacy and Skills Survey (2005), confirmed that millions of Canadians experience serious literacy challenges, and supports the idea that literacy is more important than ever in today's information-based society and economy. Four in ten working age adults scored below the literacy level that experts consider necessary in today's society and low literacy was deemed as a serious challenge across Canada.

Locally.....

The South Simcoe Training & Adjustment Board recently released their Trends, Opportunities & Priorities (TOP) Report 2008. It states that York Region is one of the fastest growing areas in Canada and continues to add between 15,000 to 20,000 jobs each year to the current base of 465,000 jobs in 29,000 businesses across the region.

- York Region is the primary destination for new immigrants, accounting for 43% of the Region's total population according to 2006 census data. This new workforce is generally highly educated, however their language and essential skills are of concern for employers.
- The youth unemployment rate of 11% is double the rate of adult unemployment in York Region. Experts anticipate that by 2013, two-thirds of the non-student jobs will require some level of post-secondary education.
- York Region's aging population is growing at a faster rate than the Canadian, Ontario and GTA average. The aging population represents 37% of York Region's total population. Many mature workers do not have adequate computer experience and if they do, often it is specific to one field. Skills upgrading is required in order for mature workers to remain competitive in today's changing labour market.

Employers in York Region do not have a clear understanding about essential skills. Investing in skills development and learning in the workplace has an impact on job performance resulting in increased profits for the employer.

For more information from the TOP report, visit:

http://www.ysstab.on.ca/english/top_report/pdfs/top_report_2008.pdf

LOCAL EMPLOYER

Improvements Success

A small chemical company in Toronto, National Silicates, employs 93 workers in six plants across Canada. The Toronto plant incorporates Essential Skills training into its Chemical Operators Program. The training is seamless and transparent, imbedded in activities already developed. As a result, when operators finished this training, management noticed that employees were more effective and flexible. The Toronto facility has become known as the “go to” source for the sister plants. Conference Board of Canada Case Study. March 2005 www.conferenceboard.ca

Other benefits noted include:

- Zero voluntary turnover rate
- More versatile employees
- Reduction in overtime hours
- Improvements in efficiency

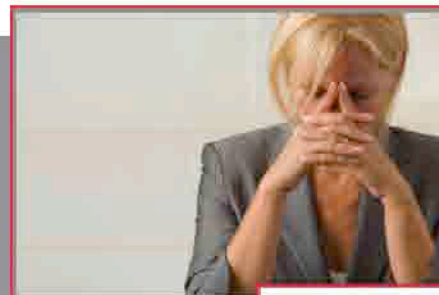


Can you relate to any of these issues?

There are a variety of warning signs that indicate a need for an Essential Skills approach

Complaints Low Morale

- Increased customer complaints
- A rise in workplace accidents
- Higher absenteeism
- Lower sales
- Increased errors
- Lower performance than competitors
- Low staff performance
- High staff turnover
- Poor financial indicators
- Low morale
- Problems with suppliers
- Non-productive friction between departments and employees



Workplace Accidents

Building your workforce will build your bottom line

Why should you look at the Essential Skills of your current and future workers? Essential Skills can help you benchmark consistent job requirements and establish succession planning to meet your organization's current and future needs.

Essential Skills can

- Improve performance
- Increase profits
- Improve production and customer service
- Reduce errors
- Decrease absenteeism
- Increase job mobility within the organization
- Reduce Health & Safety incidents in the workplace
- Enhance worker development
- Build effective teams
- Increase customer retention

Developments
Profit

Production
Enhance
Improvements



Teamwork

We are here to help you

Essential Skills development in the workplace is a process rather than an event. It takes time to implement training, use new hiring tools and processes and experience positive results. The most important aspect is to tie training to your corporate strategy in order to attract the interest and involvement of management, unions and workers.

NEED HELP LOCATING JOB DESCRIPTIONS, PREPARING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS OR ASSISTING WITH TRAINING & SUCCESSION PLANNING?

There are over 200 occupations profiled and accessible for FREE. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada continues to add new job descriptions often.

http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/ES_Profiles_e.shtml

RUNNING A SMALL TO MEDIUM SIZE BUSINESS AND DON'T HAVE THE HUMAN RESOURCES MANPOWER TO GET STARTED?

The Essential Skills web-site has FREE printable activities to conduct a workplace check-up, take an organizational survey to analyze your company needs, and easy training activities to build your teams.

http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/tools_apps_e.shtml

Those companies that have an HR department may want to collaborate with managers and teams to take an Essential Skills approach throughout the company. You might mobilize existing staff as trainers, hire an outside training company or partner with local literacy agencies to consult their expertise.

Locally – you can contact your Community College or Literacy Councils to discuss other resources available to you. Refer to page 12 for contact information.



YOU WANT TO HIRE THE ESSENTIALLY SKILLED WORKER BUT NOT SURE HOW TO SCREEN APPLICANTS?

The Essential Skills web-site has FREE printable reading, document use and numeracy indicator exercises to use during your recruitment and succession planning process.

http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/tools_apps_e.shtml

Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES).

www.towes.com

This cost-effective test is a comprehensive assessment that uses authentic workplace documents to accurately measure the three key essential skills that are needed for safe and productive employment: Reading Text, Document Use and Numeracy. TOWES identifies areas of strength and weakness and is a standardized test used across Canada.

TOWES is significantly different from other skills assessments. It uses workplace documents and test takers must assume the role of a worker and use information imbedded in authentic documents to solve real problems. Some of the documents used include, catalogues, order forms, labels, and schematics. TOWES has undergone an extensive psychometric review and nation-wide field-testing involving thousands of Canadians to ensure its validity. These results prove that TOWES is the best measure of Essential Skills in Canada.

To find out how your employees Measure Up!

For more information about process, costs, setting up information or testing sessions contact Seneca College, an authorized TOWES distributor in the GTA and York Region.

www.workforceready.ca

Measuring Up
Strengths
Skills



ESSENTIAL SKILL HIRING ASSESSMENT/INTERVIEW GUIDE

Please use the following as a guide to help you assess the Essential Skills levels of an employment candidate. Once completed, you can attach it to the candidate's resume as an additional resource when making your hiring decision.

SKILLS	Superior	Good	Fair	Poor	N/A	Reference Check Rating Superior/Good/Fair/Poor
Reading, Document Use and Writing Reads text, refers to company's brochure or web-site. Easily fills in written information in your presence.						
Numeracy Answers numerically based questions related to specific job requirements.						
Oral Communication Speaks with confidence, language is both concrete and abstract, deals with facts, opinions and emotions.						
Thinking Skills Processes questions and responds appropriately.						
Working with others Speaks highly of others and cites importance of teamwork. Can offer examples of effective interactions.						
Computer Use Confirms confidence with computers, has typed resume and cover letter.						
Continuous Learning Refers to on-going training, has set goals and can demonstrate involvement.						
QUALITIES	Superior	Good	Fair	Poor	N/A	Reference Check Rating Superior/Good/Fair/Poor
Character/General Attitude						
Work Ethic						
Trustworthiness						
Problem Solving						
Customer Service Skills						
Leadership Attributes						

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- ☐ Candidate has required education level and/or relevant experience
☐ Candidate has provided proof of education
☐ Candidate has required essential skill levels

- ☐ Candidate has signed release for References
☐ Criminal Record Check completed
☐ References verified
☐ Candidate needs to be referred to Essential Skills Centre

Additional Information/Notes: _____

CANADIAN OCCUPATIONS AND ESSENTIAL SKILL LEVELS

This is an example of some of the occupations and the recommended Essential Skill Levels. Research shows that workers will be better equipped to handle the demand of these jobs if their skill levels match the requirements. For a complete occupational list or for more information about the skills each job requires, visit www15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca.

OCCUPATION	NOC	READ LEVEL	DOC LEVEL	NUM LEVEL
Accounting & Related Clerks	1431	3	3	3
Banking, Insurance and Other Financial Clerks	1434	3	3	3
Bricklayers	7281	2	2	2
Business Service Managers	0123	3	4	3
Chemical Plant Machine Operators	9421	3	2	2
Customer Service, Information Clerks	1453	2	3	3
Dispatchers and Radio Operators	1475	3	3	3
Food and Beverage Servers	6453	2	2	2
Grocery Clerks and Store Shelf Stocker	6622	2	2	3
Guest Service Attendants	6672	3	2	2
Human Resources Professionals	0112	4	3	4
Industrial Engineering Technicians	2233	3	3	3
Machining Tool Operators	9511	2	3	4
Mechanical Assemblers & Inspectors	9486	3	3	4
Nurses Aides & Orderlies	3413	2	3	2
Painters & Decorators	7294	2	2	3
Paramedic	3234	4	4	4
Plumbers	7251	3	4	3
Printing Machine Operators	9471	2	2	2
Security Guards	6651	3	2	2
Shippers & Receivers	1471	2	2	2
Stationary Engineers & Auxiliary Equipment Operators	7351	2	3	3
Trades Helpers & Labourers	7612	3	3	2
Truck Drivers	7411	2	2	2
Welders	7265	3	4	3

YOUR LOCAL LINK TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES

Some people in York Region need help with literacy, math and other skills to reach their work or other life goals. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Literacy and Basic Skills program helps people whose literacy skills fall below what is required at work. Academic upgrading is also available, to help people qualify for postsecondary training or employment. The program is free and offered throughout York Region.

To find a location in your area, call one of the locations below or visit

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/tcu/jobseekers/services.html>

Bradford Learning Centre	905-775-4432	157 Holland St.E	BRADFORD
Learning Centre for Georgina	905-476-9900	90 Wexford Drive	KESWICK
Literacy Council	905-853-6279	17817 Leslie St, Unit 12	NEWMARKET
Seneca College	905-773-7141	16655 Yonge Street, Unit 3	NEWMARKET
Seneca College	905-780-9622	10610 Bayview Avenue, Unit 12	RICHMOND HILL
Literacy Council	905-771-7323	7755 Bayview Ave, 2nd floor	THORNHILL
Uplands Adult Learning Centre	905-731-9557 Ext 307	8210 Yonge St	THORNHILL

HELPFUL WEB-SITES
Canadian CEO

www.canadianceo.ca

A showcase of Canadian business, labour and civic leaders who are championing Essential Skills and workplace literacy.

CON*NECT The Colleges of Ontario Network for Education and Training

http://www.collegeconnect.on.ca/pages/general_links.asp

The 24 Ontario Colleges operate in 850 sites in 200 communities across the province.

National Adult Literacy Database

www.nald.ca

This digital library provides resources and hosts websites for literacy organizations; connects partners with experts in the field; and publicizes literacy-related events, all free of charge.

Ontario Literacy Coalition

www.on.literacy.ca

This charitable organization supports literacy in Ontario and works with other organizations committed to literacy. Discover the benefits to unions of upgrading basic workplace skills.

Ontario Skills Passport

<http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca>

Find clear descriptions of the skills in virtually all occupations, plus critical work habits as well as a method of assessing and recording performance – handy for employers thinking of implementing Essential Skills training.

Workplace Literacy Central

www.conferenceboard.ca/workplaceliteracy

This free resource offers information, tools and advice for Canadian employers interested in improving employee basic skills.

BUILD YOUR BOTTOM LINE

An Essential Skills approach will help your company to be the best it can be. With a foundation of strength, you will be able to build a safe and productive workplace, resulting in positive effects and the economic future of your organization.

To highlight the importance of Essential Skills in the workplace, this booklet was created as part of an overall initiative with Seneca College, York South Simcoe Training & Adjustment Board and the Literacy Council York Simcoe to promote literacy and skills development in the workplace. The goal is to help employers and the Canadian economy, increase productivity and safety.



Seneca

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10610 Bayview Avenue, Unit 12
Richmond Hill, ON
905-780-9622 ext 307



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17665 Leslie Street, Unit 42
Newmarket, ON
905-967-0605



Literacy Council York-Simcoe
17817 Leslie Street, Suite #12
Newmarket, ON
905-853-6279