

Theory and practice

Soft and hard skills are needed to fill in-demand jobs

INTERVIEWED BY ADAM BURROUGHS

In Northeast Ohio and across the country, employers are looking for skilled candidates to fill in-demand jobs. Regardless of industry, employers are putting an emphasis on communication and creativity, looking for those who can offer fresh perspective and innovation to a too often stagnant menu of offerings.

Smart Business spoke with Paul Cox, dean of Creative Arts, and Michael Huff, dean of Hospitality Management, both at Cuyahoga Community College. They offer their perspective on how the next generation of candidates is gathering the skills needed to fill critical roles in this region and beyond.

What should employers know about those with a creative arts education?

Creativity, broadly, is applicable to all jobs, even those more closely associated with science, technology, engineering and math skills. Those running manufacturing companies are more often saying creativity is a key attribute in an employee. They say they don't necessarily need more people to build their products, for instance, they need people instead to reimagine the concept of their products to create something new.

Creativity is a habit of mind, a skill that's applied to invent new and better ways to accomplish objectives. It can also help in other aspects of business life regardless of industry or technical discipline, for instance being comfortable making presentations to groups of people, being brave enough to expose a new idea to others and to confidently confront failure.

In what fields can those with a creative arts education be employed?

Each discipline has its own job prospects. For example, those with an education in recording arts often work in live sound —

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from major music artist tours to conferences. Visual communication students are helping large corporations with web and print designs, as are photographers who are showcasing companies' products and events.

But regardless of whether the student was educated in filmmaking, music or journalism, what they all share is an entrepreneurial spirit. Many of them start their own businesses and promote themselves as if they're their own brand. They also network and collaborate with others to finish projects and grow their enterprises. These are highly desirable attributes regardless of industry.

What are the career paths that are available to students with an education in hospitality?

Hospitality is a people industry that emphasizes serving others. There's significant demand in Northeast Ohio and nationally for qualified talent to fill these positions today and in the future. The Department of Labor is projecting a 14 percent growth in culinary and hospitality service careers through the next 10 years.

Those with an education in culinary receive a good foundation in advanced culinary techniques, preparing them to work in various aspects of the culinary industry. That education also includes training in the managerial skills needed to work in a supervisory role in kitchens, along with

experience to get started on the path to becoming a sous and executive chef, or training to do specialty work in baking, pastry professional or personal chef.

Degree study in restaurant and food service management prepares students for food service supervisory and management positions. Those can include positions in specialty restaurants, country clubs, at major event venues, commercial food service operations and large companies.

What are the core skills of those with an education in hospitality?

Many institutions of higher education are integrated into the local industries that they serve — their programs not only teach the Xs and Os, but often these programs stress the communication and critical thinking skills needed in these business applications. Chefs and managers alike must be able to communicate with servers, vendors and customers clearly to be successful.

Those with an education in either hospitality or the creative arts are learning critical skills employers want in high-demand industries. Because educational institutions are so involved at the working level with area businesses, more job candidates are entering the workforce with both the theoretical knowledge and practical understanding of how to operate and thrive in their fields. ●