

# BEYOND THE HEADLINES

## At a Glance: Entry-Level Talent in Seattle

JUNE 2017

FOCUS: SKILLS

### Entry-Level Talent in Seattle: Baseline Skills Required for Success

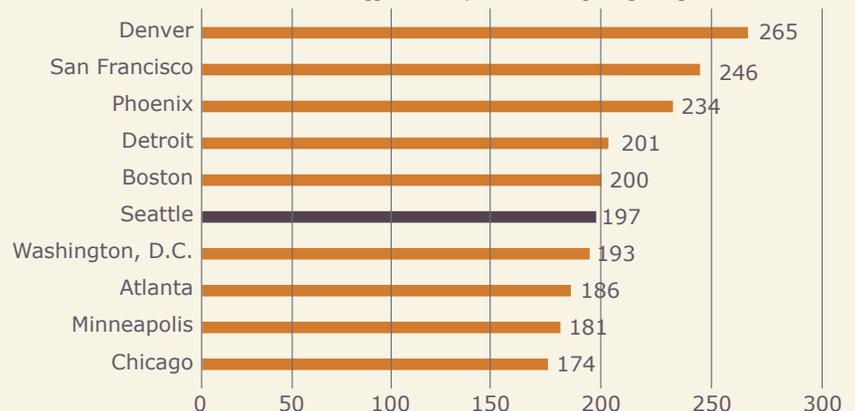
As a workforce intermediary seeking to better connect low-income individuals to living-wage jobs, Seattle Jobs Initiative (SJI) focuses its labor market research on identifying middle-wage jobs in our local economy. Training residents for these jobs provides an opportunity to meet the greatest skills shortages facing local employers while helping low-income and low-skill individuals advance into good-paying careers.

This issue of *Beyond the Headlines* provides information about the baseline skills that Seattle employers seek in entry-level talent (individuals with experience of 2 years or less). Our research(i) shows that Seattle employers are pursuing entry-level talent who display **productivity and leadership skills**, including many **soft skills**, regardless of field and level of education. That said, the demand for these skills is increasing among entry-level job postings recruiting for individuals with less than a college education. Seattle employers in the business, clerical, education/human services, and information technology fields also have high demand for **analytical and technical skills**. Employers in the business, information technology, as well as manufacturing and production fields have a unique demand for a combination of skills connected to **effective communication, improvement, and decision-making**.

Seattle employers are recruiting for entry-level talent who employ a “work smarter” approach (see Chart 1a in Appendix A). The skills that comprise this approach are creativity, detail orientation, teamwork and collaboration, multi-tasking, time management, problem-solving, and meeting deadlines. All of the fields analyzed showed higher demand for these **productivity skills** in Seattle compared to the U.S. average and, among Seattle employers, those

hiring in the fields of sales, information technology, health care, and finance published the greatest number of job postings listing these skills. Employers in other metropolitan areas such as Denver, San Francisco, Phoenix, Detroit, and Boston also listed these skills at high rates in their entry-level job postings.

**Entry-Level Job Postings Listing Productivity Skills Last 12 Months (per 10,000 employed)**



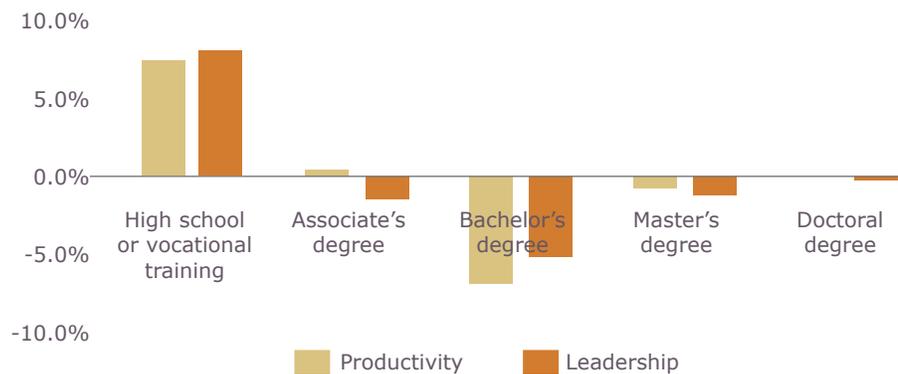
*Seattle ranks 6th in metro areas with high demand for entry-level talent with productivity skills.*

Demand for **leadership skills** in entry-level talent is also strong in the Seattle area (see Chart 1b in Appendix A). Employers are recruiting for entry-level talent who display and maintain a positive disposition as well as build effective relationships. Complementary to these skills is the high demand for entry-level talent with strong communication, organizational, and planning skills. Similar to the pattern seen with productivity skills, fields such as sales, information technology, health care, and finance published the greatest number of job postings listing these skills in Seattle. Denver, San Francisco, and Phoenix ranked top three in level of demand for leadership skills among metro areas – a similar pattern as shown for productivity skills.

The majority of the specific skills that fit into the productivity and leadership categories are **soft skills**. Soft skills are in high demand in job postings regardless of field and level of education. That said, the frequency of these skills is increasing among postings for entry-level workers with no college education and decreasing among postings for entry-level workers with a college education. The increase among postings requiring no college education is driven by a higher percent of sales, customer support, hospitality, and maintenance/repair job postings that are listing these skills. The decline among job postings requiring a college education can be attributed to an increase in more complex skills rising in frequency such as planning, prioritizing tasks, analytical skills, editing, and articulation. The high demand for soft skills has employers thinking about better ways to assess their presence during the recruiting phase, as anyone can list them on a resume.(ii)



### Change in Percent of Job Postings Listing Productivity and Leadership Skills (2011 to 2016)



*Seattle-area employers are increasingly looking for productivity and leadership skills in entry-level roles requiring less than a college education.*

**Table 1  
Roles and Employers Seeking Productivity and Leadership Skills by Level of Education (Entry-Level)**

	No College Education	College Education
<b>Top 6 Roles</b>	Customer Service Representative Office/Administrative Assistant Retail Sales Associate Retail Store Manager/Supervisor Teller Sales Representative	Registered Nurse Software Developer/Engineer Sales Representative Retail Store Manager/Supervisor Office/Administrative Assistant Human Resources/Labor Relations Specialist
<b>Top 6 Employers</b>	JP Morgan Chase University of Washington 24 Hour Fitness Kroger Company Macy's Goodwill	Amazon.com University of Washington Catholic Health Microsoft Corporation JP Morgan Chase Group Health

Source: Burning Glass Technologies (Seattle MSA)

The fields of business, clerical, education/human services, and information technology show higher demand for analytical and technical skills among entry-level workers compared to the U.S. average (see Chart 2). Analytical and technical skills are defined as mathematics, computer skills, research, typing, and troubleshooting. The two roles driving demand for these skills in Seattle are software developer/engineer and office assistant. Employers such as Amazon.com, Microsoft, Seattle Public Schools, and University of Washington have the greatest number of entry-level job postings seeking talent who have these skills.

**Table 2  
Top Roles - Analytical and Technical Skills by Field and Level of Education (Entry-Level)**

Occupation Field	No College Education	College Education
<b>Business</b>	Warehouse Worker Property Manager Inventory Associate	Program Manager Property Manager Project Manager
<b>Clerical</b>	Office/Administrative Assistant Medical Secretary Receptionist	Office/Administrative Assistant Office Manager Executive Assistant
<b>Education and Human Services</b>	Teacher Assistant Training and Development Specialist Youth Counselor/Worker	College Professor/Instructor College/University Administrator Social Worker
<b>Information Tech.</b>	Computer Support Specialist Systems Analyst Software Developer/Engineer	Software Developer/Engineer Computer Support Specialist Systems Analyst

Source: Burning Glass Technologies (Seattle MSA)

The fields of business, information technology, as well as manufacturing and production show high demand in Seattle for a unique combination of skills connected to effective communication, improvement, and decision-making (see Chart 3). In particular, these fields are seeking entry-level talent who are good listeners and self-starters with strong decision-making capabilities. Listening is connected to effective communication as well as learning(iii), whereas motivation (self-starters) and decision-making are connected to continuous improvement and innovation.(iv) Employers such as Amazon.com, Boeing, Microsoft and University of Washington have the greatest number of entry-level job postings seeking talent who have these skills.

**Table 3**  
**Top Roles - Communication, Decision-making, and Improvement Skills by Field and Level of Education (Entry-Level)**

Occupation Field	No College Education	College Education
<b>Business</b>	Warehouse Worker Scheduler/Operations Coordinator Shipping/Receiving Clerk	Program Manager Project Manager IT Project Manager
<b>Information Tech.</b>	Software QA Engineer/Tester Computer Support Specialist Software Developer/Engineer	Software Developer/Engineer Software QA Engineer/Tester Computer Support Specialist
<b>Manufacturing and Production</b>	Quality Inspector/Technician Quality Control Analyst Production Worker	Quality Control Analyst Quality Inspector/Technician Quality Control Systems Manager

Source: Burning Glass Technologies (Seattle MSA)

In summary, entry-level workers in Seattle are expected to come prepared to their first day of work with an array of soft skills and technical skills. Research from nearly 100 years ago shows that 85 percent of success on the job comes from having soft skills versus 15 percent of success coming from having technical skills.(v) That said, soft skills are considered more challenging to teach than hard skills.(vi) Soft skills, such as relationship building and problem-solving, often allow for more productive and collaborative teams. Given the high demand among local employers, it is crucial that the workforce system find the best way to build and sustain these skills among all individuals regardless of their level of education and tenure in the labor market. When it comes to soft skills, previous research conducted by SJI shows that employers believe the responsibility for their development and cultivation lies on the employees themselves as well as the education system.(vii)

**BEYOND THE HEADLINES:** Policy & Labor Market Updates for Those Working to Help Low-Income and Low-Skill Individuals Advance through Education, Training & Living-Wage Jobs

**About Seattle Jobs Initiative**

Seattle Jobs Initiative creates opportunities for students, workers and business to succeed by helping education and job training programs meet the demands of a new economy. We find and apply solutions for people to gain the skills they need for good jobs that create prosperity for all in today’s marketplace.

**Supported by the City of Seattle Office of Economic Development**

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- i. SJI analyzed 44,725 entry-level job postings from 2011 and 102,151 from 2016 to compile the findings in this report. The job posting data was accessed via Burning Glass Labor Insight and was specific to the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA metropolitan statistical area.
- ii. The Issue with Soft Skills and Your Resume  
Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2017/05/10/the-issue-with-soft-skills-and-your-resume>
- iii. *Listening to People*  
Available at: <https://www.hbr.org/1957/09/listening-to-people>
- iv. Ross, V. E., Kleingeld, A. W., & Lorenzen, L. (2004). A topographical map of the innovation landscape. *The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal*, 9(2), 1-19.
- v. The Soft Skills Disconnect  
Available at: <http://www.nationalsoftskills.org/the-soft-skills-disconnect/>
- vi. 'Soft skills' in demand but hard to teach, employers say  
Available at: <http://www.newsday.com/business/columnists/jamie-herzlich/soft-skills-are-in-demand-but-hard-to-teach-employers-say-1.13157849>
- vii. Pritchard, J. (2013). The Importance of Soft Skills in Entry-Level Employment and Postsecondary Success: Perspectives from Employers and Community Colleges  
Available at: [http://www.seattlejobsinitiative.com/wp-content/uploads/SJI\\_SoftSkillsReport\\_vFINAL\\_1.17.13.pdf](http://www.seattlejobsinitiative.com/wp-content/uploads/SJI_SoftSkillsReport_vFINAL_1.17.13.pdf)

## Appendix A: Demand Map for Entry-Level Skills in Seattle

**Chart 1**  
**Productivity and Leadership Skills Demand by Field (Seattle versus U.S.)**

In Seattle, employers across all top fields are showing high demand for talent that comes prepared with soft skills as well as productivity and leadership skills. It is imperative that the workforce system respond by identifying ways to develop and sustain these skills in all individuals so they are better positioned for a competitive labor market.

1(a) Soft Skills - Productivity	IT	Bus	Cleric	Edu	Cust	Manu	Tport	Main	Hlth	Sales	Hspy
Creativity											
Detail-Oriented											
Multi-Tasking											
Time Management											
Problem Solving											
Writing*											
Team Work/ Collaboration											
Physical Demand*											
Meeting Deadlines											

Source: Burning Glass Technologies

Demand higher than U.S. Average
Demand similar to U.S. Average
Skill not listed regularly

<b>1(b) Soft Skills - Leadership</b>	<b>IT</b>	<b>Bus</b>	<b>Cleric</b>	<b>Edu</b>	<b>Cust</b>	<b>Manu</b>	<b>Tport</b>	<b>Main</b>	<b>Hlth</b>	<b>Sales</b>	<b>Hspy</b>
Positive Disposition											
English*											
Communication Skills											
Organizational Skills											
Planning											
Building Effective Relationships											

Source: Burning Glass Technologies

**Chart 2  
Analytical and Technical Skills Demand by Field (Seattle versus U.S.)**

The fields of information technology, business, clerical, and education/human services seek additional skills of their entry-level workers. These fields have high demand for workers with analytical and technical skills such as math, research, troubleshooting, typing and computer skills.

<b>Skills</b>	<b>IT</b>	<b>Bus</b>	<b>Cleric</b>	<b>Edu</b>	<b>Cust</b>	<b>Manu</b>	<b>Tport</b>	<b>Main</b>	<b>Hlth</b>	<b>Sales</b>	<b>Hspy</b>
Mathematics											
Computer Skills											
Research											
Typing*											
Troubleshooting											

Source: Burning Glass Technologies

**Chart 3  
Communication, Improvement, and Decision-Making Demand by Field (Seattle versus U.S.)**

The fields of information technology, business, and manufacturing/production seek a unique combination of skills from their entry-level workers. These fields have high demand for skills that can be grouped as soft skills (communication, listening, self-starter) and decision-making as well as quality improvement.

<b>Skills</b>	<b>IT</b>	<b>Manu</b>	<b>Bus</b>	<b>Edu</b>	<b>Tport</b>	<b>Hlth</b>	<b>Main</b>	<b>Sales</b>	<b>Cleric</b>	<b>Hspy</b>	<b>Cust</b>
Listening											
Self-Starter											
Quality Assurance and Control											
Decision Making											
Presentation Skills											
Telephone Skills											

Source: Burning Glass Technologies

IT	Information Technology
Bus	Business Management
Cleric	Clerical and Administrative
Edu	Education and Human Services
Cust	Customer and Client Support
Manu	Manufacturing and Production
Tport	Transportation
Main	Maintenance, Repair, and Installation
Hlth	Health Care (including Nursing)
Sales	Sales
Hspy	Hospitality

Demand higher than U.S. Average
Demand similar to U.S. Average
Skill not listed regularly