

The Graduate School of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

SKILLS ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

This worksheet is designed to assist GSPM Students in learning and determining what types of skills are required for the myriad of job opportunities in the fields of political management, legislative affairs, and public relations. Most of the jobs in these fields require many of the same skills. Some of the common skills required are outlined below.

GSPM strongly encourages its students to avail themselves of all of the library and career resources available to students. All students may visit GWU's Gelman Library in person or virtually to obtain further resources/information: <http://library.gwu.edu/> Additionally, GSPM has a librarian specifically assigned to help its students: Dr. David Ettinger, email: dettinger@gwu.edu. Further, GSPM has its own Career Director to help students/alums with career development plans: Mag Gottlieb, email: mag@gwu.edu.

Common Skill Requirements

1. **Communication Skills**- listening, verbal, written – need ability to listen, write and speak effectively
2. **Analytical/Research Skills**- deals with ability to assess a situation, seeks multiple perspectives, gathers more information if necessary and is able to identify key issues that need to be addressed
3. **Computer/Technological Abilities**- requires basic understanding of hardware and software, word processing, spreadsheets, email, texting, etc.
4. **Flexibility/Adaptability/Managing Multiple Priorities**- relates to ability to manage multiple tasks, set priorities, managing and adapting to change/conditions/work assignments.
5. **Interpersonal Abilities**- means ability to relate to co-workers, inspire others to participate and to be able to navigate potential conflicts with co-workers
6. **Leadership/Management Skills**- requires ability to take charge and to manage people and projects
7. **Multi-cultural sensitivity/Awareness**- awareness and sensitivity to other people and cultures

8. **Planning/Organizing**- denotes ability to design, plan, organize and implement projects and tasks within given timeframe and also involves goal setting
9. **Problem Solving/Reasoning/Creativity**- means ability to find solutions to problems using creativity, reasoning, past experiences as well as available information and resources
10. **Teamwork**- many jobs involve working in groups. One must have the ability to work with others in a professional manner while aiming to achieve common goals.
11. **Personal Values**- means values, personality traits, and personal characteristics. Some of these traits include: 1) honesty, integrity, morality; 2) adaptability/flexibility; 3) dependability, reliability, responsibility; 4) positive attitude, motivation, energy, passion; 5) professionalism and 6)self-motivation and ability to work with little or no supervision; and 7) willingness to learn new things.

Specific Skill Requirements

In addition to the common skill requirements of jobs in the political management, legislative affairs, and public relation fields, various jobs/positions will require candidates to possess heightened skills/abilities/training in order to effectively perform. Some of these jobs and skill requirements are outlined below.

1. **Association Professionals/Executives**

- *Need strong organizational skills
- *Need ability to work with volunteer committees
- *May require social media skills on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and others since each social media platform has become a crucial business tool in its own way
- *May need to speak/read second language
- *May require financial management and public relations skills

2. **Campaign Managers/Consultants/Pollsters**

- *Requires great flexibility and ability to work long/off hours
- *Need to be able to massage egos, run the campaign like a business, and focus on systems that staff can implement (fundraising, grassroots, communications, and managing volunteers)
- *May require entrepreneurial skills such as: having a vision, plan designed to accomplishing the vision, and an ability to implement the plan.
- *Need ability to build a base among the staff, volunteer groups, financial committee and candidate's family
- *Need keen judgment and decision-making abilities

*Like the candidate, needs to be a politician with the ability to move campaign in a positive direction

3. **Corporate Executives**

*Requires a wide range of skills including familiarity with administration/management; economics and accounting; laws and governmental rules; and customer and personal services *Need to be particularly attuned to customer needs and quality standards for services and an ability to evaluate customer satisfaction

*Need executive decision-making and judgment and applied problem-solving abilities

4. **Elected Officials**

*Should be able to communicate well, be committed to public service and possess supreme self-confidence and feel confident in asking constituents for their votes

* Should be honest and have integrity in order to retain the trust of the public

*Need excellent public speaking skills

*Need firm grasp of logic and need to learn basics of public policy

*Need to take decisive action and ability to make good decisions

5. **Fundraisers + Political Action Committee (PAC) Managers**

*Fundraising + PAC staff play a role in any charity or political campaign.

*Responsible for meeting donation targets by approaching trusts, corporations, major donors and individuals and organizing money-raising events

*Need to increase contribution of those individuals and groups by building relations and exploring new fundraising techniques and ideas

*Fundraising is similar to sales and marketing, so individuals with those backgrounds should have relevant transferable skills.

*A good fundraiser has an ability to do research, has a series of important skills: database and IT; organizational ability; budgeting experience; relationship-building talent; people management; direct marketing experience; enthusiasm

*Must be able to see potential opportunities

6. **Government Leaders**

*Need keen ability to be able to quickly understand the implications of new information for current and future problem-solving and decision-making

*Requires resource management skills to be able to allocate resources effectively

*Need to be able to think and move quickly according to organization's needs

7. **Issue Advocates/Non-Profit Professionals**

*Many people have particular passions/issues they get involved with and then became issue advocates on these issues.

*Need very effective time management skills

*Need to invest in people since people are the greatest asset in the nonprofit sector

*Need to be able to quickly develop networks of internal and external constituencies and to be able to motivate people

8. **Labor Union Leaders**

* Labor Union Leaders/Advocates work to represent Union Members interest at the federal, state, and local legislative and regulatory levels

*Need ability to negotiate, communicate with a broad range of people, and be empathetic with members

*Requires courage, aggressiveness and willingness to handle tough positions

*Should be able to set good example to followers

*Should be able to stand up to justify every action taken

*Must be able to make decisions that benefit the majority of union members

9. **Legislative Representatives/Lobbyists/Law Firm Representatives**

* Need to have a deep understanding of clients' interests in active legislation; strong communication skills to reinforce clients' positions; ability to be persuasive and at times perhaps aggressive; and ability to build strong relationships

*People successful in these jobs should be able to manage high levels of stress and to meet critical deadlines as well as have creative thinking, good judgment and the ability to take the initiative

*Need prior experience as Legislative and/or Regulatory Staffers at the federal, state, and local legislative and/or regulatory levels

10. **Legislative/Regulatory Staff**

*Requires excellent communication skills, writing and editing skills, knowledge of the legislative process, ability to handle stress and to work long hours and the talent to think quickly and to be discreet

*Need to have familiarity with legislative and administrative systems

*Need ability to research and analyze relevant issues, to track legislation, and prepare member briefings and materials

*Need ability to multi-task under strict deadlines

*Must be able to maintain confidentiality

11. Media Professionals/Public Affairs Firm Leaders/Strategic Communications

Firm Leaders

*Need excellent skills in writing, communication skills, attention to detail, media relations, strong work ethic, blogging, social networking, IT, and an ability to work on teams and to juggle multiple demands

*Need to understand how to align a research method (such as a survey, focus group or interview with research questions

*Need to be able to create survey questions, manage focus groups and conduct interviews

*Need to be able to very effectively assemble and lead teams of diverse specialists such as writers, designers, editors and technicians

*Must be able to think very quickly and creatively

12. University Administrators and Professors

*Will likely need further education to become a professor.