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The Communications Bank

COVER STORY/CAREERS

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# Communication skills needed in new jobs

Demand for physical skills has decreased

By CAROL KLEIMAN  
Chicago Tribune

A change has taken place in job requirements: They've moved to communication and computer, or "high," skills from physical skills, known as "low" skills.

The U.S. economy is "becoming increasingly centered on the flow of information and knowledge creation," according to a recent report by the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago.

"Surveys of new jobs being created by business suggest that new skill demands are higher than those of previous and existing jobs," the report continues. "A survey of firms in Atlanta, Detroit, Los Angeles and Boston reported that skill needs for new jobs have risen, even in the relatively short time frame of the last five to 10 years."

The bank emphasizes that new skill requirements also apply to blue-collar jobs, previously considered "low" skill. Thirty-two percent of the firms say their skill needs have increased.

The findings underscore the

fact that knowledgeable workers who have technical skills, the ability to communicate and are team players are in demand.

Here are the skills the bank found are needed in new jobs:

- Customer contact was listed by 73 percent of those surveyed.
  - Reading or writing paragraphs, 68 percent.
  - Arithmetic, 68 percent.
  - Computer, 56 percent.
- If you don't have these skills, get them.

Instead of using the current unemployment rate, which is low,

as the only barometer of the labor market, economist Audrey Freedman urges the federal government also to consider "productive hours lost to our total economy."

"We should also think in terms of economic growth potential lost forever," she said. "Once those hours are wasted, they do not return any contribution to the gross domestic product."

Writing in her newsletter, *Unconventional Wisdom*, which she publishes out of New York, Freedman observes that 385 million hours of labor were available last year that weren't used. Most of the time, she says, was spent in job search.

Another 28 million hours were lost by employed people whose full-time jobs had been cut back. Freedman urges the federal Job Service to reduce the millions of hours wasted in fruitless job searches.

One good start in that direction could be the government's online America's Job Bank, created by the Department of Labor and listing more than 500,000 jobs nationwide.

You can find it at <http://www.aib.dni.us> on the Internet.

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