

Own Your Future

Update Your
Skills with
Resources and
Career Ideas
from Microsoft®

KATHERINE MURRAY

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Ideas from Microsoft®

Katherine Murray

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Foreword

In the midst of a struggling economy, our fast-changing, knowledge-based economy has created unprecedented challenges for employers and workers alike. Employers increasingly need workers with a broad range of information technology (IT) skills. These skills will become even more important as we continue to retool major sectors of our economy, such as healthcare, transportation and energy. By 2014, more than three-quarters of all jobs in the United States will require some level of computing or technology skills, and the vast majority of newly created jobs will require post-secondary education or training.

To meet this demand, students need a solid foundation in science, technology, engineering, math, and design, as well as in related disciplines such as computer science. And this means that workforce training systems need to be improved and expanded to meet the needs of all workers—the underemployed, the unemployed, and students who need better access to the requisite skills. Everyone entering or already in the workforce should have access to the resources they need to become lifelong learners who can adapt to an ever-changing workplace.

Technology is only one piece of the puzzle, but it has a pivotal role to play in these efforts. It can offer students, workers, and employers the training tools they need, and it can help to quickly and efficiently expand access to educational resources. IT also helps people develop other essential 21st-century skills such as collaboration and teamwork, finding and interpreting information, and using data to aid in decision making.

In this book, students will find a wealth of Microsoft resources they can use to identify the technology skills they need, and gather knowledge and experience to help them take charge of their careers. Here at Microsoft, we care about students' career success and hope these resources will open doors to learning that will lead them to better opportunities and a deeper understanding of the way technology continues to change and improve the ways people work—both here in the U.S. and around the world.

Lutz Ziob
Microsoft Learning General Manager

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—Katherine Murray

Introduction

SO, YOU JUST GOT the phone call. The human resources representative sounded a bit harried, like she had to fit in a bunch of calls by the end of the day and you were on her list. She asked you to come in for an interview and gave you a choice of three dates and times next week. You took the one that doesn't conflict with your afternoon class.

Graduation isn't some far-off goal anymore: it gets closer every day. Chances are that you, like many people, are wondering what the marketplace will look like when you finally have that diploma in hand. With so many candidates searching for work right now, how can you increase your chances of being the chosen candidate for the job you want most?

When you are looking for work in challenging economy, it becomes more important than ever to be able to interview with confidence. And that means you need to be able to share clearly with your interviewer your skills, abilities, and interests so that the other person can see easily that you would be a great asset to the company. You need to make sure you have the technology skills to really shine when it comes to the projects the prospective position requires; you need to be able to share examples of your experiences and demonstrate your comfort level with teams of all types and sizes.

Own Your Future: Update Your Skills with Resources and Career Ideas from Microsoft helps you add to your skill set and expand your technology experience by providing a number of tools and resources that will help you chart your career development path. Along the way, you'll learn a lot about yourself—your learning style, your interests, your talents—and discover a huge range of Microsoft online resources, programs, and courseware that will help you get the learning you need in areas where you feel underprepared or express an interest. The book wraps up by helping you create your own career marketing plan and brush up on your resume, presentation, and interview skills. That way, when you step out on the sidewalk and head toward that first professional interview, you'll have a fuller sense of your practical, real-world skills and be able to articulate how they will impact your prospective employer's workplace.

Preparing for a 21st-Century Workplace

Whether you are currently a high school student or college student, or an adult preparing for a new career, you will soon be stepping into a workplace much different from the one your predecessors entered. Today, technology is an integral part of all careers. From business to medicine to technology to farming, computers are part of the culture,

communication, and completion of business-critical tasks. No matter which professional area you're interested in, increasing your computer proficiency—with standard applications, operating systems, and even programming languages and design skills—will help your employers see that you've got the skills they are looking for.

You are beginning your job search at a time of great change in the U.S. workforce. The working population is aging—more than half of all engineers and scientists today are nearing retirement age. All across the country, and to some extent around the world, older workers who learned how to use computers relatively late in their working lives are leaving the workplace and new, always-connected, Web-savvy young professionals are taking their places.

Another big change is that this younger, always-connected workforce is collaborative and increasingly global. People work together, face to face and virtually, sharing ideas and creating projects while communicating and collaborating in real time, working together toward a common goal. And in addition to the heightened need for technology skills both to produce projects and to work together, today's work world places an even greater emphasis on using data as the basis for decision making. Especially as we begin to emerge from the troubled economy of 2008–2009, businesses want to know that the choices being made are smart and likely to be successful. And that means employers want to know that prospective employees can think critically and understand what the data is saying about important business decisions.

In this competitive “knowledge economy,” if you can show your employer that you have the ability to use technology effectively and creatively, that you have a collaborative nature and will be a contributing member of the team, and that you continue to learn and assess based on the data you collect, you will stand head and shoulders above the crowd.

“Employers want people who have a broad range of information technology (IT) skills. These skills will become even more important as we work to change the healthcare, transportation, and energy sectors. By 2014, more than three-quarters of all jobs in the U.S. will require some level of computing or technology skills. The majority of new jobs will require post-secondary education or training.”¹

¹ *Building a 21st-Century Workforce: Working Together to Meet Today's Skills Development Challenges.* Microsoft, 2009.

Who This Book Is For

This book was written for students who are interested in exploring their career choices and gaining the skills they need to increase their marketability in the workplace. But the ideas and resources you'll find in *Own Your Future: Update Your Skills with Resources and Career Ideas from Microsoft* also apply to you if you are currently unemployed or underemployed, preparing to return to the workforce, or just considering polishing your skills and increasing your chances for a promotion or a better job down the road.

Specifically, this book will help you

- Learn what technology skills employers are looking for today
- Identify your learning style and your work style, and see how that knowledge can help you in the workplace
- Assess the skills you have, and identify new skills you need
- Chart a learning map for your own career development
- Explore Microsoft resources to learn the skills you need in key areas
- Practice a set of demonstrable abilities—making a pitch or delivering a presentation—that you can use in your interviews
- Create a career marketing plan to manage your job search

What You'll Find in This Book

Chapter 1, "Imagine Your Potential: Assess Your Skills," is all about identifying the various types of skills you already have and seeing how they connect to the workplace. You'll learn about transferable skills, updatable skills, technical skills, and soft skills in this chapter. All this information—it's all about you here—will help you get a clear sense of how much you bring to today's workplace.

Chapter 2, "Spotlight Your Learning Opportunities," takes a step back and surveys the landscape of today's job market. You discover what Tony Wagner, author of *The Global Achievement Gap*, calls the "Seven Must-Have Skills" for a 21st-century workplace. And you'll identify those places where you really shine as well as those areas where you could use a little polish.

Chapter 3, "Chart a Course for Career Growth," helps you put your skills into the context of your long-term goals. Determine where you want your job search to take you, and identify the qualities you are most looking for in the right workplace for you. Find out how you learn best, and discover how to present that information to prospective

employers. This chapter also helps you identify the skills you still need to learn to make yourself the best candidate for the roles you seek.

Chapter 4, “Survey the Learning Landscape,” shows you a wide range of Microsoft tools that are available to help you master the learning you want to accomplish. Whether you are looking for online resources and toolkits, online courses, certification options, or competitions, this chapter gives you a clear look at the various learning opportunities available to you and shows you how to get started.

Chapter 5, “Fast-Track Your Skills with Online Tutorials and Local Training,” encourages you to choose one of the seven must-have skills you feel you need to work on and create a learning plan using Microsoft resources to fill in the gaps in your learning. You might take tutorials on Microsoft Office Online, watch webcasts, take a Microsoft eLearning course, or find training in your local area. This chapter shows you how and brings other resources into the mix.

Chapter 6, “Ramp Up Your Abilities in Vital Areas,” shows you how to brush up on key skills that will make your abilities really shine. This practical chapter helps you learn to demonstrate how you can pitch a new idea, solve a problem, mediate a solution, save your employer time, and much more. Think of these abilities as techniques you can practice and have ready on the spot when they are called for in an interview. Being able to demonstrate one of these abilities on the fly is sure to impress an employer who is looking for these skills.

Chapter 7, “Put Together a Marketing Plan,” helps you put some thought into an overall plan for marketing your career. Whether you’re just getting started on your job search or you have been at it a while, putting together the best resume possible, brushing up your presentation techniques, practicing your interview skills, and managing your contacts effectively is all part of taking charge of your career, and that will pay off in the long run.

Chapter 8, “Invest in Specialized Skills for Tomorrow,” ends the book by helping you think through the types of knowledge you’re likely to acquire next. What topics fascinate you? What are you curious about? Becoming a lifelong learner means you’re always growing and mastering new skills—and that benefits not only you, but also your employer and any teams lucky enough to work with you.

The appendix rounds out the book by offering a collection of resources you can use to continue your learning and begin your job search. You’ll find Web resources for learning and much more.

Next Steps

Now that you know the overall game plan, let’s get started by taking a look at what the work world needs now and identifying what you bring to the party.

CHAPTER 1

Imagine Your Potential: Assess Your Skills

IN THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL

- Learn which skills employers need today
- Complete a skills inventory
- Identify your marketable skills

LET'S START with the good news. Whether you're aware of it or not, and no matter what the statistics say, the workplace really does need you. It needs your skills, your creativity, your curiosity, and your initiative. All businesses—from the largest to the smallest—need fresh ideas, innovation, and problem-solving mindsets. Whether you are great at building things with your hands, with your mind, or through relationships, the workforce is waiting for you to show up.

This chapter helps you consider the skills you already have, the ones you will bring to the workplace no matter which occupational area you choose. Specifically, you'll read about ways to anticipate the types of skills that will be needed in the future. At first glance, many of these skills might not seem directly related to technology, but as you think about the way you'll apply these skills—you will use your communication skills, for example, by using Microsoft Outlook to send e-mail and write project proposals in Microsoft Word—you will see that technology is the means you use to contribute those skills to your workplace. You will use a series of exercises to identify the skills you already possess in four key areas:

- Transferable skills are skills you take with you from job to job that help frame your preferences for the type of work you do, the way you work, and the way you relate to those you work with.
- Updatable skills are learned skills that require continuing knowledge and experience.

- Technical skills are related to specific technical tasks—for example, becoming proficient with computer software or learning how to write a program, run manufacturing equipment, or operate a vehicle.
- Soft skills are the personal traits you bring to the job—such as honesty, work ethic, and the ability to work well on a team.

TIP

This might seem like a lot of different skills to master when you're just starting out. Don't worry. Many of these skills arise naturally from your particular working style. Others you can learn as you go along, and this book provides resources and describes Web tools that will help you do that.

Today's Skills for Tomorrow's Need

Wouldn't it be nice to have a crystal ball so that you could see just the types of industry areas that will have the biggest need for workers over the next 5 to 10 years? That way, you could prepare yourself for the areas with the most need, and you'd be likely to find work that offers you some measure of security and room to grow.

Even in the midst of a challenging economy, you can do a little forecasting for the future. First, you can take a look at the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (OOH), 2010–11 edition, published by the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. According to the latest edition of the OOH, the five industry areas with the greatest amount of growth projected through 2016 are

- Education and health services
- Professional and business services
- Leisure and hospitality
- Trade, transportation, and utilities
- Financial activities

You can find information from the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2010–11 online at <http://www.bls.gov/OCO/>.

Table 1-1 lists the growth projections for some of the most popular industry areas.

TABLE 1-1 Growth in Jobs by Industry

SECTOR	PERCENTAGE INCREASE	NUMBER OF JOBS ADDED BY 2016
Accommodation and food service	11.4	1.3 million
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	30.9	595,000
Computer systems design	38.3	1 million
Finance and insurance	13.2	815,000
Government	4.8	500,000
Healthcare and social assistance	25.4	4 million
Information (including Internet, wireless, media broadcasting, and much more)	6.9	212,000
Professional, scientific, and technical services	28.8	2.1 million
Public and private educational services	10.7	1.4 million
Real estate rental and leasing	18	392,000
Retail	4.5	700,000
Transportation and warehousing	11.1	496,000

TIP



Not all of the new jobs that will be added between now and 2016 will be connected to growth in the labor market. The mature Baby Boomer workforce is now beginning to retire, so many of the jobs opening in the coming years will be positions made available because of the retiring workforce. And even though the positions might currently be occupied by people with more experience than you have, you bring something valuable to the mix—a natural comfort with technology, experience with a range of Microsoft applications, and perhaps even some program development experience if you've taken a

programming course or played around with Web 2.0 tools. Figure 1-1 shows you a chart from the Bureau of Labor Statistics providing the projections for the number of new jobs due to industry growth and the replacement of current workers.

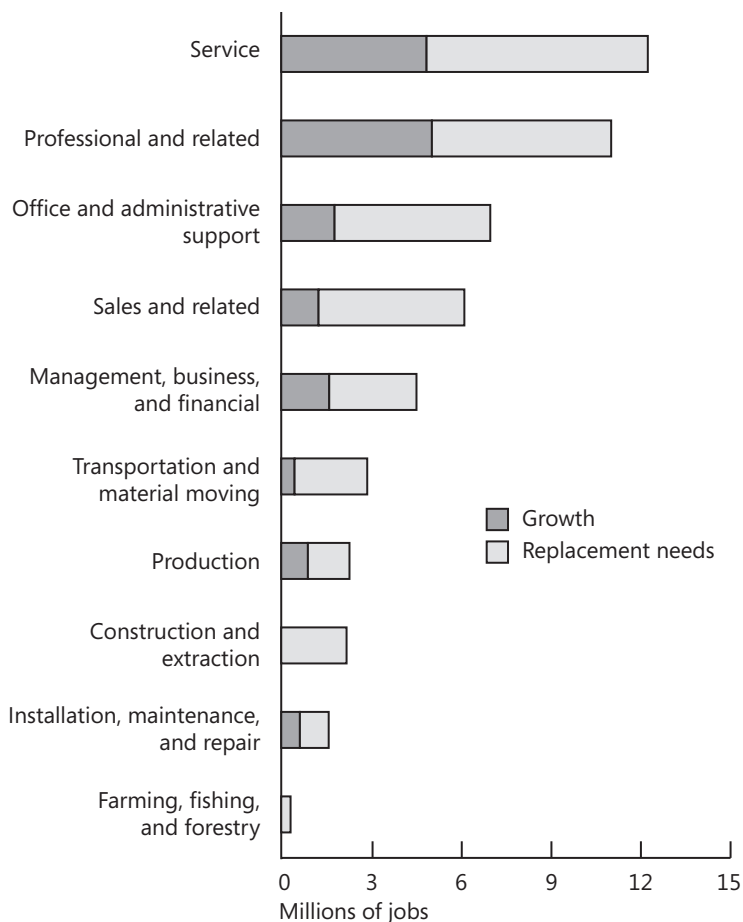


FIGURE 1-1 Percentage of jobs projected from growth and replacement

TIP



As you consider the forecasts for the next few years, you can also do a little projecting of your own. Take a look at your own use of technology and consider the ways in which

you complete your projects at school or at home. What kinds of changes do you notice? Chances are you might discover some (or all) of the following trends:

- Information technology is everywhere in our daily lives (think Windows Mobile, Xbox Live, Netflix, and online courses).
- Seamless PC-to-Web applications, simplified server-client relationships, and cloud computing are realities for many businesses, large and small.
- Computer programming skills are in demand—you might have experimented with Microsoft Visual Studio, Microsoft Visual Basic, or another programming language in school or on your own.
- Computer users are more savvy and interested in learning Web 2.0 technologies and using social media to connect with peers, friends, and family.
- Consumers are looking for greener ways to live and work, so skills that enable the easy and secure transfer of data through remote technologies are in demand.
- Electronic publishing (such as the technology used to produce this book!) is growing in popularity because it provides a fast, flexible way to provide information while reducing the number of resources used to produce it.

KNOW THE STANDARDS IN YOUR INDUSTRY

As you consider the types of skills you already bring to the table, be sure to know what the standards are in your chosen industry area. You can keep up to date with changes in your industry and find out about news and job openings by doing a little research in your chosen area. For example, you can

- Find the requirements for licensing in your state.
- Identify key industry associations, and visit their Web sites.
- Subscribe to the leading professional journal in your industry.
- Find out whether a professional association in your industry has a local meeting you can attend.
- Join a LinkedIn or Facebook group in your industry area.
- Subscribe to online forums or listservs in your particular interest area.
- Read blogs written by those working in the industry in which you are preparing to work.

Right Skills, Right Person, Right Role

Chances are that as you've taken classes, you've loved some and tolerated others. Many factors probably contributed to whether you enjoyed the class. If the topic interested you, the teacher made the topic interesting, you had an aptitude for the work, and you were able to complete the tasks expected of you, it was probably a pretty good class. If you didn't care about the class topic, weren't thrilled with the teacher, took the class at a time of day when you weren't awake, and were always falling behind in your course work, you probably didn't enjoy the class.

When you search for the right fit in the job market, many factors can influence your success and happiness on the job. Understanding your own personality, work style, values, and passions can help you identify the type of roles that would be a good fit for you. The following resources can help you accomplish this:

- The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment is available free of charge through the Center for Applications of Psychological Type (<http://www.capt.org/take-mbti-assessment/mbti.htm>). The assessment measures your personality preferences on four different scales (Extraversion and Introversion; Sensing and Intuition; Thinking and Feeling; and Judging and Perceiving). The assessment results provide you with a type (for example, ENTP or INFJ) that helps you learn more about the way you relate to the world.
- The Keirsey Temperament Sorter is an assessment that uses a modified approach to Myers-Briggs to provide you with information that can guide you in the types of roles you consider. You can register to take the free test online at <http://www.keirsey.com/sorter/register.aspx> and determine whether your particular temperament fits different styles in one of four main categories: Guardian, Idealist, Rational, Artisan.

TIP



Start at the Beginning: A Skills Inventory

No matter what your previous work experience might be, you are already using skills in everything you do. Simply by virtue of your personality and the life experience you have gathered so far, you have developed many skills you bring naturally to any job you have.

Transferable Skills

Transferable skills are skills and abilities that go with you from role to role. They are not tied to a particular job or industry area and include the great assets of experience you can offer to each company where you interview.

TIP



ACTIVITY 1-1 IDENTIFY YOUR TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

You can use the following activity to identify the transferable skills you already possess. Here's how it works: Go through the skills in the following table, indicating in column 1 how well you perform that specific task (1 = excel; 2 = average; 3 = poor). Then look at each skill you identified as a 1 (excel) and assign the skill an A (enjoy), B (it's okay), or C (don't enjoy) to show how much you enjoy the skill at which you excel. After completing the list, indicate which level-1 transferrable skills you really enjoy. As you interview, keep these skills in mind, because they show you some of the assets you uniquely bring to the roles you consider.

	WHAT DO YOU DO WELL? 1 = Excel 2 = Average 3 = Poor	WHAT DO YOU ENJOY? A = Enjoy B = It's OK C = Don't enjoy
COMMUNICATION		
Artistic abilities	_____	_____
Expressing verbal and written ideas	_____	_____
Foreign-language skills	_____	_____
Interviewing skills	_____	_____
Sign-language skills	_____	_____
Speaking	_____	_____
Visual-communication skills	_____	_____
Writing	_____	_____
HUMAN RELATIONS		
Advocating for others	_____	_____
Being aware of others	_____	_____
Creating trust	_____	_____
Describing feelings	_____	_____
Facilitating discussions	_____	_____
Helping others	_____	_____
Interviewing	_____	_____
Listening	_____	_____
Negotiation skills	_____	_____
Perceiving the feelings of others	_____	_____
Providing feedback	_____	_____
Respecting differences	_____	_____
Sharing credit	_____	_____
Teaching	_____	_____

	WHAT DO YOU DO WELL?	WHAT DO YOU ENJOY?
	1 = Excel 2 = Average 3 = Poor	A = Enjoy B = It's OK C = Don't enjoy
LEADERSHIP		
Accepting responsibility	_____	_____
Asserting	_____	_____
Balancing	_____	_____
Conflict resolution	_____	_____
Creating systems.	_____	_____
Decision-making skills	_____	_____
Delegating	_____	_____
Event management	_____	_____
Goal setting	_____	_____
Implementing ideas	_____	_____
Managing groups.	_____	_____
Motivating, coaching	_____	_____
Negotiating	_____	_____
Persuading	_____	_____
Prioritizing tasks	_____	_____
Problem solving	_____	_____
Respect for all views.	_____	_____
Team building	_____	_____
Troubleshooting	_____	_____
Understand multiple perspectives.	_____	_____
Work well under pressure	_____	_____

	WHAT DO YOU DO WELL? 1 = Excel 2 = Average 3 = Poor	WHAT DO YOU ENJOY? A = Enjoy B = It's OK C = Don't enjoy
PROJECT-BASED SKILLS		
Adapting to change	_____	_____
Calculating	_____	_____
Computer skills	_____	_____
Design and layout skills	_____	_____
Editing and proofreading	_____	_____
Managing time	_____	_____
Meeting goals	_____	_____
Organizing	_____	_____
Paying attention to detail	_____	_____
Programming	_____	_____
Reasoning	_____	_____
Reporting	_____	_____
Selling	_____	_____
Setting and meeting deadlines	_____	_____
Staying focused	_____	_____
Using equipment	_____	_____
Using perception and spatial abilities	_____	_____
RESEARCH AND PLANNING		
Analyzing information	_____	_____
Creative thinking skills	_____	_____
Generating ideas	_____	_____
Identifying resources	_____	_____
Making predictions	_____	_____
Reading comprehension	_____	_____
Researching	_____	_____
Thinking logically	_____	_____

Being aware of these transferable skills enables you to include them on your resume and articulate them in an interview. And this helps the human resources representative see clearly what you bring to the organization—which can be the difference between a good interview and a great one.

Updatable Skills

Updatable skills are skills that required some learning initially and that you can improve with practice, experience, and further training. Perhaps you learned how to manage the reservations system software at the travel agency where you worked last summer. Learning new software, working with the computer, and understanding the travel reservation system are all examples of skills that can be updated in various industry areas. Maybe you took an online course in Visual Studio last year—now you can update those skills and build on them so that you can demonstrate your knowledge to a prospective employer.

Tip



So what can you do to update skills you already have? Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **Identify the skills you want to update.** If you know that project managers are finding work in an industry area you're interested in, dust off those project management skills and find resources to help you refresh your basic knowledge.
- **Find online resources to help you update your skills.** If you worked a little with Microsoft SharePoint Designer in a class, for example, search online for tutorials, videos, and more advanced learning courses to help you build on the experience you already have.
- **Search online or browse your local bookstore to find books related to the topic you want to enhance.** Whether your interest is in general business skills or a specific skill set (such as programming, human resource management, or green IT), you can find a how-to guide to help you navigate the steps to increasing your learning.

- **Join local interest groups that focus on the skills you want to update.** If you need to brush up your presentation skills, consider looking for a Toastmasters group in your area.
- **Find conferences in your particular industry area, and network with others who are in the industry area you want to join.** Visit the exhibit hall at the conference to discover support resources, training opportunities, and networking possibilities.
- **Visit the Web sites of associations in your particular industry area.** Associations typically post resources for continuing education and standards for association members. Associations also typically offer student memberships for members still completing their education.
- **Consider certification in the area that interests you.** Adding a certification in a key area can add a lot to your resume and demonstrate to your employer that you are serious about developing that specific skill set.

ACTIVITY 1-2 LIST OPPORTUNITIES FOR UPDATING SKILLS

Use the following activity to think through the skills you’d like to update. Indicate in column 1 when you last updated the listed skill; then, in column 2, list a resource you’d like to explore as you seek to update the skill. In the blank lines provided, add any skills you’d like to update that are not listed here.

UPDATABLE SKILL	YEAR TRAINED	RESOURCE
Basic computer skills	_____	_____
Specialized technology skills	_____	_____
Networking skills	_____	_____
Project management skills	_____	_____
Research skills	_____	_____
Design skills	_____	_____
Presentation skills	_____	_____
Sales skills	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Technical Skills

The word *technical* might bring to mind the image of you working at a desktop or laptop computer, but in fact technical skills can be any skill that requires specific knowledge of a task or process. In this way, a technical skill can be your ability to use or repair audio-visual equipment; your skills in setting up sound systems; your ability to troubleshoot a computer problem; or a specific skill you have in an application, programming language, or Web technology.

Technical skills are in high demand today as businesses continue to look for ways to increase efficiency and productivity while expanding their products and services to an increasingly global audience. Your Web 2.0 skills, familiarity with software, and comfort level with translation tools will be a big plus to the company you eventually join.

A number of resources are available online and in classroom settings to help you build on the technical skills you already have. If you use a computer, cell phone, digital camera, or gaming system, chances are that you already have a demonstrable comfort level with technical tasks. If you have completed a big project for a course that required the research, synthesis, and reporting of information, you can demonstrate project management skills. Think through the technical skills you already have and be willing and ready to share them in an interview. Use the following activity to help you spotlight key technical skills you'd like to augment.

Tip



ACTIVITY 1-3 SHOWCASE YOUR TECHNICAL SKILLS

In the following activity, identify the technical skills you already possess, list when you learned that particular skill, and describe the experience you've had in each of the areas listed. Also for this activity you expand the list to include additional technical skills and software experience you might have.

TECHNICAL SKILL	YEAR TRAINED	DESCRIPTION
Project management (for example, Microsoft Project, Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft SharePoint)	_____	_____
Software skills (any software applications, including Microsoft Office applications, Internet Explorer, development tools, and so on)	_____	_____
HTML and XML skills (Microsoft Expression Web, Microsoft Word)	_____	_____
Programming skills (Microsoft Visual Studio, Microsoft Silverlight, the Microsoft .NET Framework, ASP.NET, Visual Basic, Visual C and C#, and more)	_____	_____
Database skills (Microsoft Access)	_____	_____
Networking skills (Microsoft server products, home networks, experience with networking hardware)	_____	_____
Security skills (Windows Defender, Windows Vista, Windows 7, Windows XP, security in application software)	_____	_____
Point of sale (Microsoft Dynamics)	_____	_____
Business intelligence (Microsoft SQL Server)	_____	_____
Communications skills (Microsoft Outlook, Office Communicator, Microsoft Exchange, SharePoint Workspace)	_____	_____

Soft Skills

Soft skills are intrinsic traits you bring to your role that enable you to work well with others, accomplish your projects with integrity, and contribute to the overall success of your team or department. Prospective employers look for evidence of a potential employee's "soft skills" to gauge whether she will ultimately be a helpful and supportive employee or a challenging one.

To help identify some of your soft skills, consider the following questions:

- How good are you at following directions?
- When you don't know the next step in a process, what do you do?
- How punctual are you?
- Can you share credit with others?
- Are you willing to learn new things?
- Can you work independently or do you need supervision?

The following table lists various soft skills you can consider as you prepare your resume and get ready to begin the interview process. Many of these soft skills can be demonstrated in person—for example, in your interview you will automatically communicate your ideas about punctuality, courtesy, professional appearance, eye contact, and personal connection. Other soft skills—such as awareness, dependability, cooperation, and commitment to ongoing learning—might be evident only as you talk about your experiences and answer the interviewer's questions.

Accountability	Demonstrates wisdom
Adaptability	Dependability
Awareness	Eye contact
Basic skills	Flexibility
Basic spelling and grammar	Follows rules
Being drug free	Good attendance
Common sense	Good attitude
Completes tasks	Good communication skills
Confident	Good references
Cooperation	Good work history
Courtesy	Grammar
Critical-thinking skills	Honesty

Getting the Big Picture: Your Marketable Skills

As you can see, whether you are just starting your job search or planning to polish your skills and re-enter the workforce, you have a number of skills in key areas that prospective employers need. Considering the job projections in your industry area, which skills do you feel are the most marketable? Which skills are your strengths? Which skills do you want to improve?

Tip



Use Activity 1-4 to identify your top abilities in the different skill sets and match them with needs you anticipate in the area in which you want to work. You can include skills that you are currently in the process of updating. The idea here is to create a list of marketable skills employers in your career area will want to see on your resume and hear about in an interview.

ACTIVITY 1-4 COMPILING YOUR MARKETABLE SKILLS

In the following activity, identify the skills in each of the four areas and match those skills to needs you anticipate in your industry. The first one is completed for you.

CATEGORY	EMPLOYER'S NEED
TRANSFERABLE SKILLS	
<i>Goal setting</i>	<i>Software program management</i>
UPDATABLE SKILLS	
TECHNICAL SKILLS	
SOFT SKILLS	

CHAPTER 2

Spotlight Your Learning Opportunities

IN THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL

- Learn what employers want today
- Find out about seven “must-have” skills
- Match your skills to what employers need

CHANCES ARE that you’ve been listening to the news stories and reading the headlines about unemployment rates. If you’ve felt that cold lump in the pit of your stomach, you’re not alone—millions of people are out of work, underemployed, or anxious about their positions right now. Most families are feeling the pinch of the economic times, hoping to find or keep their jobs in this challenging landscape.

As you complete your course work and prepare to step out into the workforce, it’s important to know clearly what employers are looking for and be able to shine a light on the skills and experiences you have that meet their needs. This chapter helps you think through areas where you’d like to learn more so that you can enhance the value you offer your prospective employer.

Reality Check: Working in Today’s Economy

You don’t have to go very far in the world today to find signs that this is a tough time for the U.S. workforce. As of November 2009, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 15 million people were unemployed, compared to a national figure of 7.5 million in December 2007 before the start of the recession. Scores of businesses have been unable to weather the economic crisis and

have closed; others—some of the largest corporations in the country—have reduced their workforce and taken other cost-cutting measures.

Set against this kind of backdrop, it would be easy to get discouraged about future prospects, wouldn't it? The reality of times like this, however—and history backs us up here—is that even the down times are part of a larger cycle. The economy is beginning to rally; jobs will come back; portfolios will strengthen; people will go back to work. And by investing in your career and technology skills now and getting a clear picture of what skills you bring to the marketplace, you'll be able to step up to those opportunities as you discover them.

It won't be business as usual, though. Far from it.

Today's workforce is going through a major change. Widespread retirement of the Baby Boomer generation means older workers who are not as tech-savvy are moving out of the workforce, creating a real shift in the age and experience of today's workforce—and how comfortable with technology it is. At the same time, we are seeing major shifts in the way entire industries function. There are fewer manufacturing jobs than ever, and that industry's declining trend is not likely to change. Service businesses are changing—from local to global companies. And the publishing and media worlds are stretching to incorporate—and stay viable in the midst of—the rapidly growing online options for information and entertainment.

As you consider the skills you want to grow for your own career development, know that the changes in the following list will continue to affect any industry you choose:

- There are an increasing number of applicants for most jobs.
- Applicants are better educated and often have work experience.
- Competition isn't just local—it's global.
- Technology evolves rapidly and creates a continuous learning curve.

More Competition

Today with 10 percent of the U.S. workforce looking for jobs, you have a great amount of competition for open positions, no matter what your area of expertise may be. In terms of sheer numbers alone, getting an interview with a major company may be a major coup. Having the skills to create a great—not just good—résumé, offer a professional presentation, and demonstrate the technical skills you can bring to the job become critical abilities that can help you get called back for a second interview.

Better Competition

In addition to the fact that there are more people looking for work, the people who are looking are better prepared than unemployed workers in years past. Today degreed workers and people who have substantial experience are in the same candidate pool as those who are vying for entry-level positions. The questions “What distinguishes you from other applicants?” and “Why is this job the right fit for you?” are both important here. Being able to show a comfort level with technology and a willingness to take on new challenges can help you stand out from the crowd.

Global Competition

Today's work teams span not only departments but also continents. Aspects of a project—or, in some cases, entire projects or lines of business—might be outsourced to another country. The person competing for the job you're interviewing for might not just be someone who graduated from a nearby college but rather someone—or several people—around the globe with similar skills and work and academic experience.

Being part of a team today is likely to mean more than simply partnering with the marketing department down the hall—it could mean planning meetings with colleagues around the globe. In addition to having a comfort level in working with people from different cultures, knowing how to work with translation tools and communicate in real time and across time zones using video conferencing and webinars, and understanding server methods and technologies become important skills you can bring to the table.

Evolving Technology

You might find it hard to remember a time when the Internet wasn't part of your life. That makes you a technology native—you have grown up with technology, and it is probably second nature to you to communicate via text message, over social networks, and more. This is viewed as a huge plus by employers now and will continue to be in the future, and knowing how to articulate that reality will help you shine in your job interviews.

Just because technology is not likely to be a stumbling block for you doesn't mean, however, that you don't need to develop your skills. Today most job seekers know the basics of popular programs such as Microsoft Office Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. They can put together a résumé, design a presentation, and perhaps blog or manage their social networks by communicating with friends, posting status updates, and researching and sharing online information.

Technology today changes so quickly—and there’s so much of it—that as soon as you feel proficient in one application, it’s time to upgrade your skills to master the latest release. To compete in an evolving world of technology, you need to be willing to continually improve your skills. Take a Web design class. Learn a programming language. Demonstrate your curiosity and willingness to master new programs. Learn how technology relates to business’s bottom line by exploring the concepts of *business intelligence*, *teamwork*, *enterprise content management*, *enterprise search*, and *unified communications*.

Being able to show a prospective employer not only that you are comfortable with technology in general but that you are able to adapt to and embrace new and continually evolving technologies is a great asset and can help you stand out during the interview process.

TIP

SPEAKING THE LINGO

You might hear the following phrases used in business to describe key business practices or values. Think about any related skills and experience you might already have that you could share with a prospective employer in an interview.

Business intelligence The concepts and methods used to help a business make better decisions through the use of fact-based support systems

Enterprise content management A set of tools and practices used to gather data and documents and store, manage, and deliver the content to users

Enterprise search Identifying, indexing, searching, and displaying content to users

Unified communications Tools and methods that enable users to manage different sorts of communications (voice, picture, text, e-mail, and more) using a single application

What Do Employers Want Today?

Understanding the changing nature of the marketplace today is just one piece of the puzzle as you consider how your interests and abilities fit the need that's out there. Knowing what employers are looking for means understanding which skills, characteristics, and abilities they are likely to notice during the interview process.

Some qualities employers want are simply common sense: a good working attitude, ethical practices, a desire to do a good job and succeed, a sense of teamwork, and an overall loyalty to the company. Other qualities vary depending on the nature of the industry you're interested in, but you can bet most employers want a prospective employee to demonstrate the following abilities:

- **Good communication** Whether you work in a large office, speak to hundreds of customers, or simply write an occasional memo now and then, being able to communicate your ideas clearly and in a focused way goes a long way toward success on the job. Plus, good communication skills help you do well in the job interview.
- **Flexibility and insight** A prospective employee who can show flexibility is an asset on any team. Flexibility means you are able and willing to adjust your expectations to meet the changing demands of the job. Insight enables you to understand how the changes fit in light of the bigger picture of your department or company success.
- **People skills** Having the empathy to relate well to others is a valuable asset employers notice early on. A person with people skills is often a peacemaker and a potential leader in the workforce. If you have good people skills, you can serve in numerous roles, from customer support to training to sales and management.
- **Ability to follow instructions** This might seem like a no-brainer, but being able to listen to and follow up on instructions demonstrates a receptivity that employers want to see. Good listening enhances your ability to communicate and improves your people skills. And following instructions also shows a certain level of humility, which is another good asset when you spend much of your time on collaborative projects.
- **Critical thinking** Thinking critically is a skill that enables you to gather information and look at situations from various angles before formulating a response. Critical-thinking skills contribute to effective problem solving and communication, and they enable you to come up with creative ideas that will benefit everyone on your team.

MORE SKILLS ON THE “MOST WANTED” LIST

Recently CNN reported a list of top qualities employers were looking for in new hires, according to a survey posted by Careerbuilder.com and Robert Half International (a recruiting firm). These qualities included the following:

A strong online presence With the popularity of social media, blogging, and networking, candidates with expertise in online technologies stand out from the crowd.

Long-term potential Remember that the employer who hires you doesn't want your skill set just for today; the employer also wants to know that a year from now you'll still be an asset to the company. Be prepared to talk about the skills you're developing (Chapter 3, “Chart a Course for Career Growth,” and Chapter 4, “Survey the Learning Landscape,” help you with that) and share your vision of where you see yourself in one, two, and five years.

The ability to multitask With the presence of always-on technology and the various ways we can connect remotely, many prospective employees today are good at multitasking. When you're interviewing, share the way in which you currently balance multiple tasks without breaking a sweat. Having the ability to do it might not be that unusual today, but being able to articulate it clearly for your prospective employer just might be.

To read more about the results of this survey, visit <http://tinyurl.com/ykdscag>.

Seven Must-Have Skill Sets for Tomorrow

In his book, *The Global Achievement Gap* (Basic Books, 2008), author Tony Wagner identifies seven survival skills all students need to succeed in a global economy that is increasingly centered on working with knowledge. Education as a whole, Wagner says, is underpreparing students in the following areas—but there's no reason you can't build these skills yourself.

1: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Critical thinking is a skill that has been picked up in the popular media as a trait that most savvy employers know applicants need to demonstrate today. But in Wagner's interviews with top company CEOs, he noticed an interesting characteristic connected to critical thinking: the ability to ask good questions. When you can frame the right

question about a particular issue—whether it’s how to complete a project within budget and on time, how to reduce the cost of overhead, or how to improve customer service in your department—you have a better chance of arriving at an effective solution. In Wagner’s book, people with true critical-thinking skills know how to ask for what they need to discover—and then they set out looking for answers themselves.

- When you think critically about your response to a situation, you consider it from a variety of perspectives and use that knowledge to inform your response. For example, you could turn the situation into a question—such as, “What is this situation showing me about the types of skills I need here?” As Wagner points out in his conversations with CEOs, asking a good question is critical to getting an effective answer.
- Consider the various factors involved in the situation. (Alternatively, you can research the situation to discover possibilities you haven’t considered.)
- Consider the big picture impacted by the situation.
- Frame a list of possible responses to the situation.
- Think through each response, keeping in mind the various factors and the big picture.
- Suggest a possible and plausible response.

So the short form of *critical thinking and problem solving* could be simply, “Think for yourself.” But don’t forget to consider various perspectives and factors before you solidify your approach.

USE TECHNOLOGY TO HELP YOU THINK CRITICALLY

- Collect your notes in Microsoft OneNote 2010.
- Create a SmartArt diagram to create a decision tree of possible responses.
- Print an Excel chart showing the various factors that were weighted in your decision.

2: Collaborating Across Networks and Leading by Influence

Today technology makes it possible for us to work collaboratively on projects large and small. You might work with others as part of a large shared project, as part of a small team, or on a document or task you develop with a peer. Some companies use

project-based work teams to complete business-critical tasks; for example, a team might come together with members from different departments to produce the annual report, plan an event, launch a new campaign, or design a new Web site. Other companies use established teams regularly to support business functions. The marketing team, for example, is responsible for all messaging and marketing, or the tech team provides all training and support for office staff. Software makes collaboration easy by providing streamlined communications, server technologies, group scheduling, and more.

The same software that makes it easy for us to work cooperatively with team members in different departments also enables us to build teams across geographic borders, giving us the chance to work with colleagues around the globe and increasing the need for global competencies. No matter what small town you grew up in, when you're talking about a global economy, you are a citizen of the world. The ability to do business around the world gives companies a competitive advantage: time zones, languages, and locations are no longer barriers but assets. Knowing how to communicate with a global workforce is important, and it's something employers look for in prospective hires. If you can demonstrate your ability to work with individuals of diverse cultures, your collaboration skills can help you make a positive impression in your interview.

The other aspect to this particular skill is the level of influence you can have within your collaborative groups. Working with your network and leading through influence are grassroots mobilization efforts that you can demonstrate at a local level. By demonstrating the way in which you influence your team in a positive way, you can show leadership skills that fit you for the teams of the future—collaborative instead of top-down, egalitarian rather than authoritarian.

WAYS TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP YOU COLLABORATE

- Use Microsoft SharePoint Workspace 2010 to create a shared work area for your team.
- Use the Translation and Language tools in Office applications to translate words, phrases, and entire files.
- Use instant messaging and social networking features in Outlook 2010 to connect with team members instantly.

So, what's the bottom line of collaboration and leading by influence? Learn the skills you need to work effectively with colleagues from other cultures, and be aware of your impact in your circle of influence.

3: Agility and Adaptability

It's been said before: The only thing constant is change. How you respond and adapt to change can be the difference between taking competitive advantage of opportunities in the marketplace and clinging to outdated ideas that ultimately get you nowhere. When you can show an employer that you are agile enough to take advantage of new ideas and adapt to changes in the overall game plan, you demonstrate that you are willing to be flexible and act in the best interest of the team.

Knowing when your particular situation calls for adapting and when it calls for staying the course can be a tough call, because change sometimes means survival, sometimes growth, and sometimes loss. Knowing how to read the situation and determine which action to take may or may not be your call—but being willing to adapt your approach for the good of the group is.

WAYS TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP YOU DEMONSTRATE ADAPTABILITY

- Use Outlook to track tasks and prioritize (and reprioritize) them as needed.
- Learn to develop Excel worksheets that show the outcomes of different business scenarios.
- Create a shared OneNote notebook your team can use to collect information about different courses of action.

None of us has a crystal ball, and the nature of business requires that we continually analyze results and adjust the course as needed. The trick to agility and adaptability is to keep the best interest of the company in mind and be willing to align your best efforts as needed toward that end.

4: Initiative and Entrepreneurialism

Wagner makes the point that you might be a good critical thinker and have the ability to adapt to your surroundings, but if you don't take the initiative to share and implement your ideas, a company might be missing out on the best you have to offer. Showing a prospective employer that you take initiative in an appropriate way and that you have a spark of entrepreneurialism about you—meaning you feel some sense of ownership in your project, your team, or your department—indicates that you are a dedicated worker who commits to the overall effort.

Taking initiative means that you can see clearly what your priorities should be and take the necessary action to reach your goals. Your coursework in school is one example of how you can show initiative, because you planned your courses, managed and completed projects, and worked with fellow students. You can also show initiative through volunteer projects, previous work experience, or personal development skills or hobbies you've invested your time in.

WAYS TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP YOU SHOW INITIATIVE

- Turn your ideas into an action plan in Microsoft Project 2010.
- Create and assign tasks and meetings in Outlook 2010.
- Design a learning plan at Microsoft Learning (www.microsoft.com/learning), and complete a course.

TIP



5: Effective Oral and Written Communication

Being able to communicate your ideas clearly in a way others can understand is a core skill in every industry. Wagner's book shows that employers want to hire employees with good communication skills that enable them to write well, speak clearly, and create presentations that help others grasp key concepts.

Organizing your thoughts logically will help you clarify what you want to say and present information in a way that makes sense to your audience. You can use features in business software—for example, data visualizations and sparklines in Excel 2010 or data bars in Access 2010 reports—to help you show data trends in your written documents.

TIPS FOR IMPROVING VERBAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

- Clarify your message.
- Be as concise as possible.
- Focus your points.
- Speak or write with energy and passion.
- Consider what you want your audience to remember.
- Develop your own voice.

In today's texting world, shorthand phrases (lol, btw, and imo, for example) are the norm, but in written business communication, a more formal style is considered professional. Demonstrate your written abilities in communication by sharing examples in a portfolio; be sure your résumé is well-written and includes no grammatical or spelling errors.

WAYS TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP YOU COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

- Use Word 2010's contextual spelling checker to clarify your message and grammar.
- Get expert advice in PowerPoint 2010 to communicate visually in a way your viewers will understand.
- Co-author documents, and invite team members to review and comment on your files so that you know your message is as clear as possible.

Tip



6: Accessing and Analyzing Information

Wagner lists accessing and analyzing information as number six of his seven skills, but depending on who you talk to, some companies might put this need first on the list. Knowing how to get your hands on the information you need to complete a task, finish a project, or make a business decision is an important skill. Having access to good data is the lifeblood of a business. How can you make a good purchasing decision, for example, if the inventory numbers are wrong? How can you launch a new product when you don't have the specifications that describe it? How can you send your new catalog to potential customers if your database isn't working properly? Demonstrating your ability to re-search information—both online and using traditional resources—will be a plus in your job interview.

But knowing how to find the information you seek is only half the battle. With the volumes of data there for the picking, how can you separate the reliable information from the rest? Being able to analyze the data you find and put it in a framework that helps others see what you see is a vitally important skill.

Microsoft's Bing search engine is unlike any other search tool because it not only gives you access to the information you seek, but helps you make decisions based on the information you find. You might not use Bing for important business choices, but the search tool is worth trying at www.bing.com.

WAYS TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP YOU ANALYZE INFORMATION

- Create an Access 2010 database to gather information.
- Design a Web-based InfoPath form to collect data from others.
- Use an Excel 2010 worksheet to collect and analyze information.

7: Curiosity and Imagination

Curiosity and imagination—much more than work skills—tend to frame your overall approach to life. Do you find that you wonder about things you don't understand? Perhaps you'd like to know how something works, think of ways to improve processes, or imagine new products or services you've never seen before. The workplace needs you!

Early in their education, students are encouraged to be creative and draw, write, paint, and develop their own forms of expression. As students get older, they learn to focus on achieving measurable goals, making certain grades, and completing projects. Being able to do both—tap into your creative abilities and put it in a logical, goal-oriented framework—is a great skill that your employer really needs.

The marketplace needs not only bright, analytical minds, but also creative, curious minds. When you are in touch with your own sense of curiosity and imagination, you are aware of the large and small things in life. You can focus on details but also see larger possibilities. You might, for example, notice that your department's reporting process isn't working smoothly, and you get curious about it. Looking a little closer, you see that at one point in the process, the flow of information gets bogged down because of data entry. By suggesting a new way to route the information, you unclog the process and make everyone—including your customers—happier. Just through your observation and curiosity, you were able to offer a solution that improved performance and maybe affected customer satisfaction in a positive way. That's a skill employers are willing to pay for.

WAYS TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP YOU EXPAND YOUR IMAGINATION

- Use a OneNote 2010 notebook to capture your sketches, audio recordings, notes, pictures, and more.
- Create and enhance pictures, screen shots, and diagrams in Office 2010 documents.
- Visit Ramp Up (<http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/rampup/default.aspx>) to find a free online community designed to help you learn development skills for ASP.NET, SharePoint, and Windows Azure.

A Quick Skills Match-up

In Chapter 1, you considered the set of skills you have in each of four specific areas: transferable skills, updatable skills, technical skills, and soft skills. In this chapter, you considered the current economic climate and learned about the types of skills employers are looking for most. You also found out what experts are forecasting as the must-have skills for the future. Now you are ready to identify the experience you already have that matches those skills. And if you don't feel quite ready to deliver on all these skills, don't worry; your next step will be to create a learning plan.

ACTIVITY 2.1 NAME YOUR EXPERIENCE

In the following activity, write down the specific tasks, projects, or situations for which you’ve demonstrated the needed skill. Writing down these ideas will help you call them to mind when you’re in a live interview. Additionally, write down one idea in each skill group that you would like to follow up on.

CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING:

One idea to follow up on: _____

COLLABORATION ACROSS NETWORKS AND LEADING BY INFLUENCE

One idea to follow up on: _____

AGILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

One idea to follow up on: _____

INITIATIVE AND ENTREPRENEURIALISM

One idea to follow up on: _____

EFFECTIVE ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

One idea to follow up on: _____

ACCESSING AND ANALYZING INFORMATION

One idea to follow up on: _____

CURIOSITY AND IMAGINATION

One idea to follow up on: _____

Now you can evaluate your skills to see where you shine and where you would like to gain more experience. Use the following activity to rate your proficiency in each of the skill sets.

ACTIVITY 2-2 RATE YOUR SKILL PROFICIENCY

Use the following scale to rate your proficiency level in each of the following skill sets, according to these values:

- 1 = Little experience,
- 2 = Some experience,
- 3 = Average experience,
- 4 = Good experience,
- 5 = Proficient.

After you complete the scale, list the three skill sets where you show the lowest proficiency. You will build on these skill sets in the chapters that follow.

SKILL SETS	SCALE
Good communication skills.	1 -- -- 2 -- -- 3 -- -- 4 -- -- 5
Flexibility and insight.	1 -- -- 2 -- -- 3 -- -- 4 -- -- 5
People skills.	1 -- -- 2 -- -- 3 -- -- 4 -- -- 5
Follows instructions	1 -- -- 2 -- -- 3 -- -- 4 -- -- 5
Critical-thinking skills.	1 -- -- 2 -- -- 3 -- -- 4 -- -- 5
Strong online presence	1 -- -- 2 -- -- 3 -- -- 4 -- -- 5
Long-term potential.	1 -- -- 2 -- -- 3 -- -- 4 -- -- 5
Ability to multitask.	1 -- -- 2 -- -- 3 -- -- 4 -- -- 5

THE THREE SKILL SETS I WANT TO DEVELOP ARE

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

CHAPTER 3

Chart a Course for Career Growth

IN THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL

- Identify your goal
- Discover your learning style
- Chart your course

NOW YOU have identified the types of skills you have to offer a prospective employer and developed a sense of the types of characteristics and experiences employers are looking for in a new hire. In addition, you identified three areas where you would like to enhance the skills you have. Seems pretty simple, right? You have what employers need—and now you just need to shine up your talents so that they can't be missed by your future employer.

This chapter helps you identify what you want to accomplish in the job market. Perhaps you are starting fresh out of school, looking for your first professional position. Or maybe your former job was downsized and you went back to school to brush up on your knowledge in a specific area; now you're ready to head back out into the workforce. Another option is that you want to be promoted in the job you already have or do more to add some job security to your role. Those goals—and the steps you can take to plan for those destinations—are explored here.

■ Start with the End in Mind: What's Your Goal?

Job search sites, training experts, and job counselors have lots of advice for you on the type of roles you should consider, how you should go about considering them, and what you need to do to enhance your chances of getting hired.

Chances are, there are good nuggets of advice in all the information you gather.

But remember that none of the Web sites or friends or authors (including yours truly) are in your shoes; none of us has your experience, your perspective, your insight, your passion, your skills. That's why the important piece of this puzzle—charting your career growth and ramping up your skills—is all about you.

In the previous chapter, you identified three skill sets where you feel you could use some improvement. As you consider the different topics in this chapter, keep those skill sets in mind, and when you get to the end of the chapter and design your next steps in developing those skills, be sure the plan you create feels right for you.

Find a New Job

Many job seekers who are entering the job market for the first time feel a certain amount of anxiety—and for good reason. As you learned in Chapter 2, “Spotlight Your Learning Opportunities,” the competition isn't just tough; it's also well prepared and global.

No matter how much competition you might have for a position, however, fight the temptation to compare yourself to others or rate your skills based on the experience you think another person may or may not have. With the “right person, right role” approach you learned in Chapter 1, “Imagine Your Potential: Assess Your Skills,” the right person for a role brings a particular mix of skill, insight, dedication, and passion to a role—and to top it all off, there has to be chemistry.

How is it possible that a hiring manager can interview 145 candidates for a role and then suddenly, in the first few minutes of an interview, realize that he's talking to the person he wants to hire? This happens more often than you might think. With so many candidates, there were surely some that looked great on paper—they had good work experience, their education was solid, they seemed like they could be a good fit. But something was missing—perhaps it was passion. Maybe it was attitude. But most likely, it was that the sense of “right person, right role” hadn't kicked in. When the hiring manager was face to face with the person who was right for the job, his instincts knew it.

In your next interview, maybe that person will be you.

It's not all up to chance, of course. You need to be well prepared for your interview, ready to showcase your talents and abilities. You need to take along a great résumé with writing samples and a presentation, if one was requested. Use the following suggestions to help increase your chances of making a favorable impression:

- **Organize your search** Experts say you should approach your job search with the same focus and tenacity that you plan to use on the job you eventually get. This means you should get organized, develop a system for checking job postings, respond with a cover letter and résumé, and follow up. Table 3-1 offers a set of Microsoft templates you can use for all kinds of correspondence related to a job search. In addition to tracking all your application letters, keep track of the companies you've applied to, and follow up periodically with the contact person at the company if you haven't heard anything in a reasonable period of time. Keep good records about where you submitted résumés and to whom, and include the names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of key contact people.
- **Start growing your skills now** The best time to begin enhancing the skills you've identified as needing work is immediately if not sooner. As Chapter 4, "Survey the Learning Landscape," shows you, Microsoft offers a number of online learning programs you can use to begin augmenting important and marketable skills.
- **Use the buddy system** For the best results, find a friend, partner, fellow student, or colleague who can serve as a "buddy" to you as you search for a new position. You can show your record keeping to this person, report on your interviews, and generally rely on her to hold you accountable to your overall goal. Having someone to talk to about your efforts can also help you gain insight about interviews that just didn't feel right, presentations that put people to sleep, or a résumé that got a yawn.

Tip



TABLE 3-2 Templates for Résumés, Cover Letters, and Thank-You Letters

TEMPLATE	TYPE	FORMAT
Transfer within company résumé	Résumé	Word 97 or later
Chronological résumé (Blue Line theme)	Résumé	Word 97 or later
Functional résumé emphasizing education	Résumé	Word 97 or later
Administrative assistant résumé	Résumé	Word 97 or later
Journeyman electrician résumé	Résumé	Word 97 or later
Legal firm accountant résumé	Résumé	Word 97 or later
Chronological résumé (Traditional theme)	Résumé	Word 2003
Functional résumé (Minimalist theme)	Résumé	Word 2003
Cover letter with salary requirements	Cover letter	Word 97 or later
Cover letter with referral from mutual acquaintance	Cover letter	Word 97 or later
Cover letter in response to technical position ad	Cover letter	Word 97 or later
Cover letter for unsolicited résumé	Cover letter	Word 2003
Cover letter for temporary position	Cover letter	Word 2003
Request for reference from ex-boss	Reference request	Word 97 or later
Request for reference from manager	Reference request	Word 97 or later
Reference list	Reference list	Word 2003
Follow-up to cover letter and résumé submission	Follow-up	Word 97 or later
Withdrawal from consideration for open position	Withdrawal	Word 97 or later
Thank-you for interview	Thank you	Word 2003
Thank-you for successful reference	Thank you	Word 2003
Acceptance of job offer	Acceptance letter	Word 2003

Job Security

What is job security today? For some, job security means finding a job in an industry that shows signs of growth—even if the pay isn’t what they had hoped for. For others, job security means enhancing the skills they have to make them even more indispensable to

their department than they already are. No matter how you attempt to increase your job security, chances are that the process will involve learning to use or enhance important skills. What do you need to learn? Will that learning translate directly to skills that will give you a leg up as well as increased security in your field?

Getting really good at the skills employers need (as discussed in Chapter 2) is a good way to make yourself indispensable. You might be able to see what those leading-edge skills are for your particular company just by looking around:

- Does your company have a green computing initiative? If not, you can research and write a policy to help your company demonstrate its environmental concern.
- Does your company work with an extensive database? If so, learn how to create queries and run reports to help support others in your department and throughout the company. (Of course, check with your supervisor before just jumping in to this type of task—depending on the nature and size of your company, there might be permissions issues involved in giving you this type of data access.)
- Have you learned more than the basics with the core Office 2007 or Office 2010 applications? If not, get really good at creating professional reports in Word, developing worksheets in Excel, or producing presentations in PowerPoint. Be willing to help your teammates troubleshoot their problems with applications that show how you will be able to support your peers.
- Does your company regularly hire out custom programming projects? If so, you might be able to help the company bring control of projects in-house by learning how to do your own programming.
- Most companies today need people who are comfortable writing, editing, designing, and posting to the Web. Can you help your company create a vibrant Web site, complete with RSS and social media? If so, be sure to volunteer and have something to show for your efforts. Web and social media is a big area, and developing skills in this area definitely pushes you up the indispensability scale.

Tip

Job Promotion

Perhaps maintaining a position in a certain company isn't exactly what you had in mind. You want to excel and be promoted within the department or company. In addition to distinguishing yourself as indispensable, what can you do to demonstrate that you're the right candidate for positions with more challenges and responsibility when they open up?

- First, do your job really, really well. Don't just complete your tasks on time but take things to a different level, by demonstrating your ability to think creatively, problem solve, innovate, and lead the team.
- Follow through on all your tasks—from the small and mundane to the large and exciting. Being able to show your employer that you complete with care whatever responsibilities are assigned to you is a good way to earn additional possibilities.
- Continue to learn new skills that are important to company success. Take a training course on project management software. Learn the ropes for Microsoft Customer Relationship Management (CRM). Do the research on Microsoft SharePoint and be able to share a presentation with your team on how shared workspaces can streamline communication and collaboration.
- Demonstrate critical-thinking skills, and lead by example in work teams. Show that you're a team player, but be willing to take on more responsibility when you have the chance.
- Stay up to date on new job postings in your department or company, and use the appropriate procedures for inquiring about and applying for the job. Following your company's promotion process—even if you know the people on the team well—is respectful to all involved.

Tip



DEMONSTRATE YOUR MAD SKILLS

If you tend to be a bit of a wallflower in the office, doing what's asked of you and not making a fuss about it, it's possible that you are appreciated but sometimes overlooked for roles that require a more dynamic presence. You can share your accomplishments without boasting by adding a few simple techniques to your work routine:

- Do the stuff no one else wants to do. No, it's not called *brown-nosing*, it's seeing an opportunity to showcase your abilities.
- Take on assignments that make you stretch. Volunteer for tasks that seem a bit outside your usual responsibilities to show a broad range of skills. You might offer to do a staff training on a specific program, for example, or run an online event for sales staff.
- Keep learning no matter what. Choose a business-related area you'd like to know more about, and complete an online course, read a book, or attend a seminar about that topic. Share with your team what you learned and how you feel it could impact your work.
- Stay up to date on the latest news (and share what you know). Know which sites and publications to review to keep current on industry news. Share news items with your team, and show how the news items are connected with day-to-day business.

A New Job in Your Industry

If what you want to do is find a new job in a specific industry, you might have some research to do. Educate yourself about the industry, and know who's hiring, what they want to see, and where you begin. Use the following ideas to get started:

- Check with industry publications to get the latest news in the field.
- Subscribe to an industry listserv or forum to participate in online discussions about the field.
- Know who the leaders in your industry are: read their blogs, friend them on Facebook, follow them on Twitter.

- Find out what your role models study—for example, Microsoft Visual Studio, ASP. Net, SharePoint Server—and take a course in the same thing.
- Look for a mentor in the industry who is willing to meet with you—in person, virtually, or by phone—to check your progress and provide accountability and feedback.
- Find out what the current trends are in this industry. Is the area growing? Which roles are the most popular? What kinds of skills are required for those positions? Table 3-2 lists the top 10 jobs with the greatest growth rate, according to a survey done by CNN Money.

TABLE 3-2 Top 10 Growing Jobs

RANK	JOB	EMPLOYED NOW	PROJECTED GROWTH RATE
1	Telecommunications Network Engineer	21,000	53%
2	Systems Engineer	88,000	45%
3	Personal Financial Advisor	20,000	41%
4	Veterinarian	68,000	35%
5	Senior Financial Analyst	127,000	34%
6	Business Analyst, IT	125,000	29%
7	Software Development Director	12,000	28%
8	Physical Therapist	181,000	27%
9	Physician Assistant	82,000	27%
10	Computer/Network Security Consultant	13,000	27%

ACTIVITY 3.1 SET YOUR GOAL

Take a moment and think through what you will accomplish with your job search. Identify whether you are (1) looking for a new job, (2) hoping to increase your security on the job, (3) working for a promotion, or (4) finding a new job in your current industry. Next, write a brief paragraph about the job, listing the skills you want to use in the role and describing a typical day.

My job search goal is to: _____

My industry is: _____

My position will be: _____

A typical day in my position looks like this: _____

Find Out How You Learn Best

You've probably heard about different learning styles. In the early 1980s, Harvard professor Howard Gardner developed a theory of multiple intelligences that stated that different people learn differently, based on their natural gifts. The types of intelligence people have shapes the way they learn. Ultimately, Gardner identified eight different types of intelligence:

- **Bodily/Kinesthetic** People with this type of intelligence are aware of their bodies and love to move, dance, and participate in sporting events.
- **Interpersonal** Folks with interpersonal intelligence have great social skills and are generally good with people.
- **Intrapersonal** People who demonstrate intrapersonal intelligence are self-aware and in touch with their own thoughts, emotions, and processes.

- **Logical/Mathematical** Employees with logical intelligence demonstrate an ability to reason through problems or resolve challenges in an orderly (logical) way.
- **Musical** People with musical intelligence have a sense for rhythm and composition and are musically gifted.
- **Naturalist** Individuals with this intelligence have a heightened awareness of and appreciation for nature.
- **Verbal/Linguistic** Individuals with this type of intelligence speak and write well and are good at memorization
- **Visual/Spatial** Individuals with visual/spatial intelligence are tuned in to their surroundings and easily remember images and elements in the landscape.

Tip

Knowing your particular type of intelligence can be helpful as you think about the type of work you want to do and the way in which you plan to learn what you need to master new skills. If you are a musical learner, for example, you will remember the items you study better if you play music softly in the background as you study. If you are a naturalist, you might want to alternate times of study with quick walks outside or a few minutes sitting in the sun.

Your particular intelligence type can also provide some affirmation for the type of work you feel drawn to do. If you're interested in learning how to develop Web applications, you might find that you rate high on the Logical/Mathematical and Verbal/Linguistic scales. If marketing and social media appeal to you, interpersonal might be your style.

ACTIVITY 3.2 KNOW YOUR STYLE

After you complete the intelligences assessment, write down your top two learning styles. Then list your favorite three work-related tasks and your least favorite three tasks. Viewed in light of your intelligence types, can you see why one set of tasks might be easy for you and the other might be more difficult? Finally, write down three techniques for your particular intelligence style that can help you retain the information you study as you work to build your skills.

Top intelligence type: _____ Score: _____

Secondary intelligence type: _____ Score: _____

Favorite three work-related tasks:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Least favorite work-related tasks:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Three ways to support learning for your primary intelligence type:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

■ Charting Your Course

Now you get to pull together all the information you've been gathering and chart your course for enhancing your learning. Review the following items you've completed in the first three chapters and then complete the chart in Activity 3.3 to map your plan for updating the following career skills:

- Your transferable, updatable, technical, and soft skills
- The skills employers want in your industry
- Your strongest skills
- The skills you want to enhance
- Your particular learning style

ACTIVITY 3.3 DEVISE YOUR CAREER SKILLS LEARNING MAP

With your various skills and your learning style in mind, create a map of the ways you want to enhance your career skills using a variety of Microsoft resources.

CAREER SKILLS LEARNING MAP

What's your goal? _____

What skills are employers looking for in your chosen industry?

What are your strongest skills?

Which skills do you want to improve or develop?

How can you use technology to demonstrate the enhanced skill?

What is your particular learning style?

CHAPTER 4

Survey the Learning Landscape

IN THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL

- Learn about opportunities for education
- Discover resources for skills in science
- Learn to enhance your business skills
- Find out about Web and graphics design
- Learn about game and program development

ONCE YOU'VE identified where you want to go, you can explore various ways to get there. Microsoft offers many different types of learning programs that provide resources, toolkits, and in some cases online tutorials and video to help you get where you want to go. This section introduces you to tools and resources that connect you with key skills in your industry.

Specifically, this chapter spotlights Microsoft resources in each of the following areas:

- Education
- Science
- Business
- Web and graphic design
- Game and software development

Within each industry area, of course, you can further apply the skills to the particular position you are interested in finding. The skills you master in education, for example, translate to marketable skills no matter which level you plan to teach. Lesson plans, research sources, curriculum guides, and more are available to help you use technology in an effective way and brush up on your own skills in the process.

Similarly, learning that applies to business overall will help you specifically with a position in marketing, support services, accounting, and more. So as you read through the various resources available, picture how the skills and techniques you learn can help make you more marketable in your desired position.

■ Learning Opportunities for Education

No matter what your expertise area or grade level might be, having a well-developed set of technology skills will enhance what you bring to any job in education. Teachers, support staff, faculty, and administrators all recognize the value of technical proficiency. Whether you want to be the go-to person for technical support, help students with research projects, teach computer keyboarding classes, or help third graders use math-skills software, keeping up to date with what's happening with technology in education is a big plus. The resources in this section spotlight some of the learning options Microsoft offers in education.

Microsoft Faculty Connection

Microsoft Faculty Connection (<http://www.facultyresourcecenter.com/curriculum/facetmain.aspx>) offers a huge range of resources, whether you plan to be a classroom teacher, need to plan a lesson, or simply want to know the basics of specific technologies used in education. You'll find all kinds of resources and preparation materials that show how to use Microsoft technologies as a part of learning. Specifically, the site includes

- News
- Resource kits
- Videos
- Software
- Shared content
- Events
- A newsgroup
- Regional sites for 20 different countries

Microsoft Faculty Connection can help you whether you are currently working in education and want new ideas for the classroom or you are looking for ideas to help in an interview. For example, suppose that you've been asked to prepare a five-minute presentation on using technology in the classroom. You can begin by going to the Microsoft Faculty Connection site and clicking Search. Type technology in the classroom, and click Submit. (See Figure 4-1.) The resulting links offer a number of resources with information you can reference in your presentation.

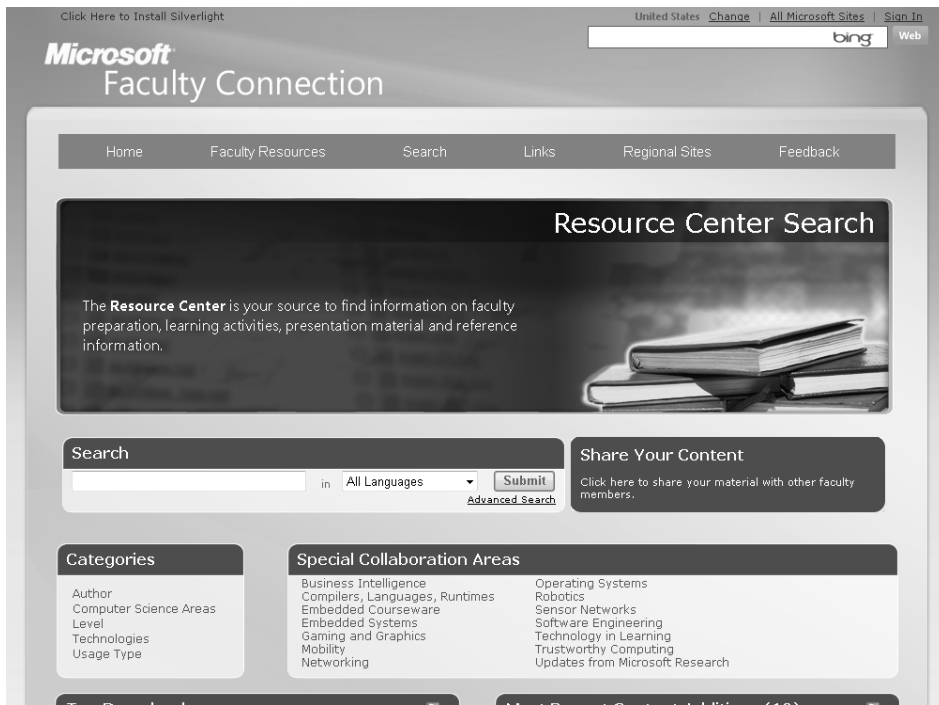


FIGURE 4-1 Microsoft Faculty Connection provides a comprehensive collection of resources designed to help educators apply technology in meaningful ways.

Microsoft Academic Search

If the work you do—or plan to do—takes you into a more academic realm, you will love Microsoft Academic Search. As you know from the papers you have already completed in your coursework, finding good resources and citing them properly is an important

part of putting together a viable paper on any topic. Microsoft Academic Search provides links, statistics, and citations for millions of academic articles. You'll find Microsoft Academic Search at <http://academic.research.microsoft.com>. (See Figure 4-2.)

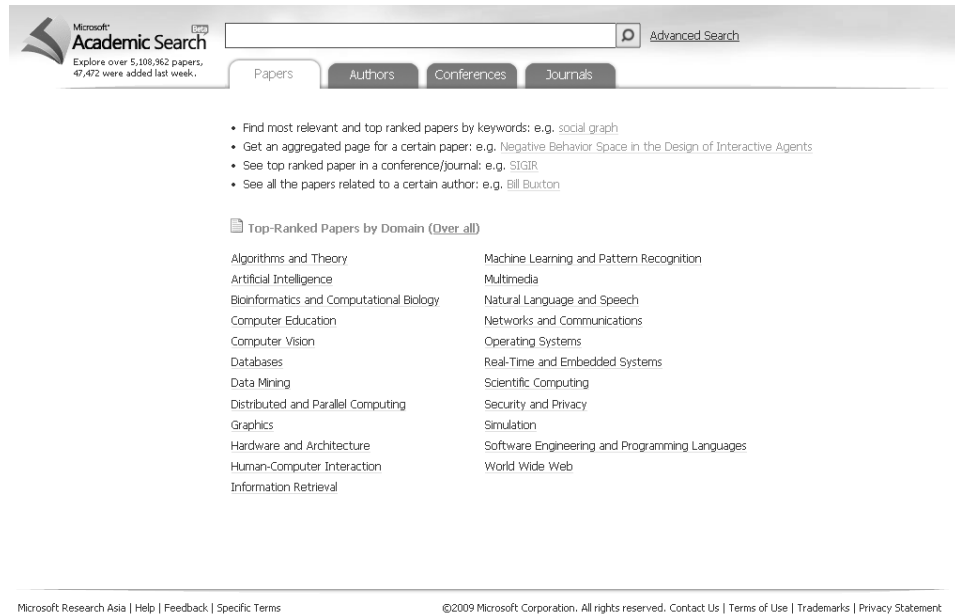


FIGURE 4-2 Microsoft Academic Search enables you to find academic papers on a wide range of current topics.

Microsoft Academic Search provides you with several tools you can use to search for the top papers in specific content areas. You can also locate conferences, find specific authors, and locate academic journals that publish in the areas that interest you.

Ideas for Innovative Teachers

Through the Microsoft Partners in Learning program, Microsoft Hungary has published the book *101 Ideas for Innovative Teachers*, offering classroom educators specific ways to enhance student learning through technology while teaching 21st-century skills. If you're interviewing for a job in education, this free e-book (available at <http://tinyurl.com/ouovh>) will give you lots of ideas for creative lesson plans with a technology twist.

Beginning with an introduction to teaching approaches, the book includes specific lesson ideas in specific content areas: geography, mathematics, biology, literature, language, physics, history, foreign language, chemistry, and information technology. Each section provides a description of the activity as well as a list of specific software tools from Microsoft available for each task.

Resources for Skills in Science

If you're fascinated with the latest developments in technology or have some great ideas you'd like to develop some day, check out the resources in this section. Find out what some of the greatest minds in science are doing today to apply technology to pressing problems around the world. This information can help you talk about the latest tech developments in your next interview, too.

Tip



Microsoft Research

Microsoft Research is a thriving initiative that supports and publishes the research of scientists working in computer science and software engineering around the globe. More than 800 researchers—including computer scientists, engineers, mathematicians, physicists, psychologists, and sociologists—currently work on contemporary issues in research labs and centers around the world. You can find out about Microsoft Research and the various fascinating projects researchers are currently working on by going to <http://research.microsoft.com>.



FIGURE 4-3 Microsoft Research supports ongoing research and development with more than 800 scientists around the world.



MSR EXTERNAL RESEARCH

As part of Microsoft Research, the Microsoft External Research group develops partnership with schools, businesses, and governments to extend and apply innovative research. Opportunities are available for fellowships and scholarships for interested students and faculty. (See <http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/collaboration/awards/default.aspx> for more information.)

The Microsoft External Research group focuses on research in four key topic areas: computer science; earth, energy, and environment; education and scholarly communication; and health and well-being. In addition, the group supports collaborative research groups in Asia-Pacific countries as well as Europe, India, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and North America.

Microsoft Robotics

How great would it be to learn the basics of robotics from some of the leading scientists at Microsoft? Available free online right now are a series of labs on robotics that teach you the basics, such as reading sensors, controlling actuators, and designing simple behaviors. You'll also learn how to cause a robot to interact with its environment.

Visit the Microsoft Robotics Learn page to see the full collection of tutorials available to you. Here's the link: <http://www.microsoft.com/robotics/#Learn>. Choose your skill level (Beginner, Intermediate, or Advanced), and click Search to display all the labs you can download and complete. In addition to the Robotics Tutorials available at the bottom of the screen, you can explore a number of downloadable labs. Here are just a few of the labs available for beginners:

- *4x4 Vehicle Sample* demonstrates how to control a 4x4 vehicle with a joystick or game controller.
- *Controlling Simulated Robots with VB.NET* provides an overview of Microsoft Robotics Studio and Visual Basic.NET.
- *Direction Dialog* demonstrates using five buttons to control the movements of a robot.
- *Drive by Voice Command* shows you how to drive a robot using voice commands.

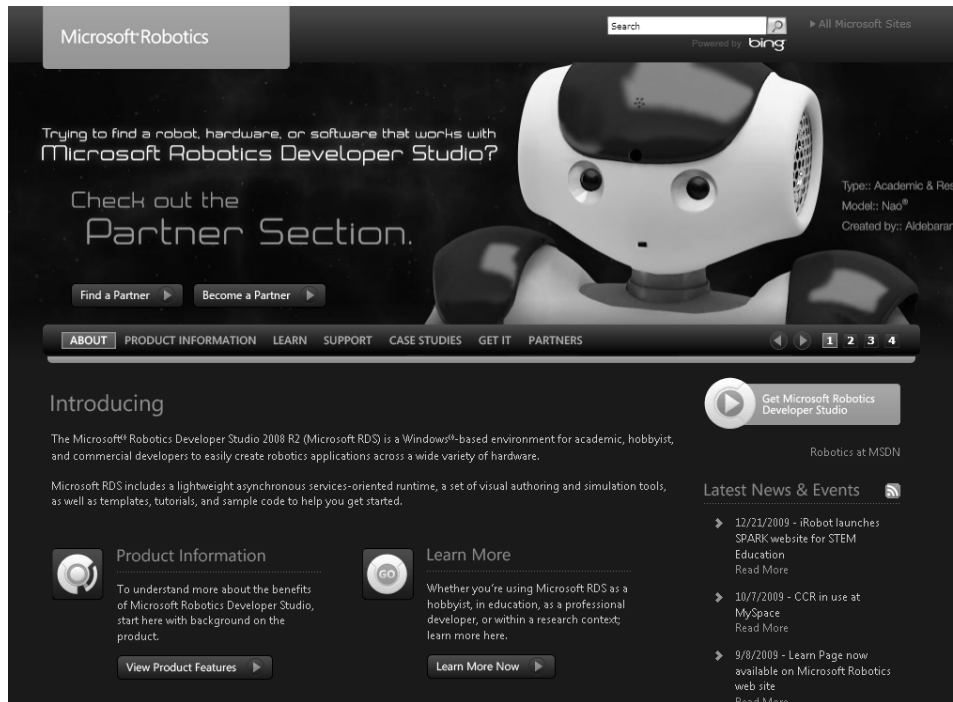


FIGURE 4-4 The Microsoft Robotics Learn page offers tutorials and simulations to get you started learning the basics of robotics.

■ Enhancing Your Business Skills

Just about anywhere you look in business, you see technology. When you go into an office for an interview, the person at the desk is likely surrounded by technology—a sophisticated phone system, desktop computer, and perhaps a digital sign-in system that enables you to register as a visitor and let the hiring manager know you're waiting in the lobby at the same time.

Employees of the company where you're interviewing are likely to be using all kinds of applications—e-mail programs like Microsoft Outlook or Microsoft Exchange, Web browsers like Internet Explorer, and applications software like Microsoft Office Word, Excel, or PowerPoint. Others are likely to be using accounting or data management software.

Whatever your daily tasks might eventually be, being able to demonstrate a comfort level with regularly used applications—like Microsoft Word—is a plus in any interview. In addition, your proficiency shows your employers you are able to learn and work with technology and that you are interested in expanding your skills and learning new things.

Microsoft offers a number of resources to help you gain the technology experience you need for a job in the business world. This section introduces you to self-directed tutorials you can complete on Microsoft Office Online, courses you can complete on Microsoft eLearning, or official Microsoft courses you can finish in a particular area.

Microsoft Office Online

Microsoft Office Online provides you with a huge collection of information about all your favorite Office applications. If you are a bit rusty on some of the techniques you think your prospective employer might ask you about, spend some time watching the demonstrations, listening to podcasts, and taking an online training course or two. All information on Office Online is free, and you can work through the various techniques at your own pace.

In addition to how-to articles, community forums, and links to books and Microsoft Learning courses, you'll find the following resources:

- Webcasts
- Podcasts
- Video tips
- Mini Webcasts
- Tutorials
- Demos

To get started, visit <http://office.microsoft.com> and click the Help and How-to tab to see the wide range of resources available to you.

Microsoft Learning

If your new role will require a level of proficiency with one or many Microsoft products, Microsoft Learning is a great resource for you. (See Figure 4-5.) Microsoft Learning creates and offers world-class training in a variety of programs that fit just the types

of skills and credentialing you need. You can choose from three tracks in the Microsoft Learning site:

- Find Training enables you to locate the courses you'd like to take.
- Guide My Training helps you create a learning plan.
- Get Certified provides you with links and resources for Microsoft Certification.



FIGURE 4-5 Microsoft Learning enables you to find the training you want, create a training plan, or prepare for certification.

Specifically, you can find out more about

- Microsoft Certification
- Participating in the Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) community
- Becoming a Microsoft Certified Trainer (MCT)
- Subscribing to the Microsoft IT Academy

In addition to these various career development options, Microsoft Learning offers a comprehensive course catalog offering online and downloadable courses. Some courses are free; others have some cost. To browse the course catalog and see whether there's a course you'd like to try, visit <http://learning.microsoft.com/Manager/catalog.aspx>.

A Closer Look at Certification Options

Microsoft Certification is a great credit to be able to add to your résumé. Certification assures potential employers that you have demonstrated excellence in the technology of your choice. In addition to the high level of expertise certification adds to your résumé, certification gives you additional benefits, including access to Microsoft's MCP Career Center, special access to information and tools, and membership in the MCP members-only community.

You can begin the process of preparing for certification on the Microsoft Learning site. Microsoft currently offers certification on the following topics:

- Server technologies
- Developer tools and applications
- Microsoft Dynamics
- Windows
- Microsoft Office
- Security

Use the available tutorials and coursework to prepare for the exams and find a certified testing site in your local area. You can get an overview of Microsoft certifications by going to <http://www.microsoft.com/learning/en/us/certification/cert-overview.aspx>.

Microsoft Students to Business

As part of the Microsoft IT Academy, the Students to Business (S2B) program connects Microsoft partners and customers with talented students who are looking for entry-level jobs and internships. Students to Business helps students expand their skills with Microsoft technologies through mentoring, training, and certification opportunities. Microsoft also helps employers assess the technology skill sets they need on the job and find the right students to fill the bill.

The S2B program has helped expand the career skills of 300,000 students in more than 65 countries, and it has helped 15,000 students find jobs or internships. To find out more, visit <http://www.microsoft.com/studentstobusiness/home/default.aspx>.

If you find yourself in the position of teaching about technology, check out the Microsoft Official Academic Course (MOAC) series. The MOAC courses provide comprehensive training tools, software, assessments, and tools, all put together to enable you to teach a great—and official—class, complete with labs. To find out more about MOAC courses, visit <http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/Section/id-302887.html>.

Microsoft Official Distance Learning

Another option if you want to take real-deal courses from Microsoft enables you to complete the courses in the comfort of your own home and at your own pace. Microsoft Official Distance Learning (MODL) collaborates with Learning Solutions partners to provide quality courses that blend live discussions, online classroom work, real-world scenarios, and self-directed work to help you develop a comprehensive understanding of the subject you select.

Individual instructors are Microsoft Certified Trainers who work with you to assess your needs and help you progress in the course. Examples are based on tasks and techniques you need to know in the real world of work and relate directly to the job skills you need. Interactive activities help you reinforce learning through games and engaging exercises. And best of all—you can complete the courses anywhere and at your own pace to master the skills you need for your future position.

For a quick overview of MODL, visit <http://www.microsoft.com/learning/modl/promo/promo.html>, or to see which courses are available through MODL, go to <http://www.microsoft.com/learning/en/us/training/format-classroom.aspx>.

Building Networks

Knowing how to set up, maintain, and secure networks requires specialized skills that are in high demand. If you have an interest in finding out more about creating networks, Microsoft has an introductory course that can help you get started.

Understanding and Building Networks includes a range of course materials as well as step-by-step lesson plans, presentations, and evaluations to help you learn the whole

scope of planning and building a network. The course also includes teacher-tested strategies and labs that help you make sure you've mastered the material.

Get started by going to this site: http://www.microsoft.com/uk/education/curriculum_materials_for_teachers/building_basic_networks.mspx.

RESOURCES FOR HELP ALONG THE WAY

As you work with the different resources in this chapter, don't overlook some of the easiest ways to get good information:

- Microsoft Press publishes dozens of books each year designed to help you learn about Microsoft technologies in the way that is most comfortable for you. Whether you want to work toward certification or simply learn the basics of an Office application, Microsoft Press is likely to have a book that can help. Browse the Microsoft Press catalog at <http://www.microsoft.com/mspress/findabook/list/title.aspx>.
- Microsoft bloggers are very active in the blogosphere, and you can learn a lot about specific techniques, new developments, and program workarounds by reading your favorite blogs. Many of the Microsoft blogs are run by program developers or managers, so in addition to the in-the-trenches view you also learn something of the concept behind the software you are learning. To view a list of Microsoft bloggers, go to <http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/cc531155.aspx>.

Web and Graphics Design

Are you a budding Web designer? Do you enjoy designing artwork, producing effective layouts, or thinking through the way a program screen *could* look? Microsoft Expression Studio 3 is a creative suite of design tools that enable you to be creative online and off. You can use Expression Web to design great standards-based Web sites, Expression Blend to add interactivity to your designs, SketchFlow to create effective prototypes quickly and easily, Expression Design to design terrific graphics that work with other authoring tools, and Expression Encoder to prepare videos to be used in a variety of ways.

Expression Studio 3 packs a lot of punch into the various applications, and a number of tutorial videos on the site help you learn the basics. Knowing basic skills for creating a Web site, designing an interactive graphic, or preparing a video can be a big story in your interview, so check out the resource to see whether anything catches your eye.

You can choose from training videos, starter kits, tutorials, and white papers for each of the Expression Studio 3 applications. Begin by going to this site: <http://expression.microsoft.com/en-us/cc136535.aspx>.

Tip

■ Game and Program Development

Are you a big game player? Maybe you've had an idea for a game you'd like to create yourself if you had the skills. Whether you're a fan of Xbox Live games, Web 2.0 tools, or gadgets, if you're curious about what goes into creating the programs you enjoy, do a little researching to find out more.

Microsoft XNA is a site that offers a range of resources for both professional game developers and those who are just starting out. For professional developers, Microsoft offers a set of authoring tools, libraries, samples, white papers, and more. Resources that professional game developers count on include

- Microsoft Casual Games Developer Info: <http://zone.msn.com/en/microsoftcasualgames/default.htm?dr=t>
- MSDN DirectX Developer Center: <http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/directx/default.aspx>
- Xbox 360 Developer Programs: <http://www.xbox.com/en-us/dev/default.htm>

For students and hobbyists, Microsoft provides the XNA Creators Club Online community at <http://creators.xna.com/en-US/>. (See Figure 4-6.) This community provides you with samples, tutorials, XNA Game Studio Express, other XNA gaming tools, community forums, and much more. Ask and answer questions, learn from the pros, and try your hand at some game development.



FIGURE 4-6 The Microsoft XNA Creators Club Online walks you through the process of creating, sharing, and playing your game.

Microsoft Beginner Developer Learning Center

If you are interesting in learning more about programming with Visual Basic, stop by the Microsoft Beginner Developer Learning Center (<http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/beginner/default.aspx>). This online center provides a great range of resources, all presented with the beginning programmer in mind.

At the Beginner Developer Learning Center, shown in Figure 4-7, you can download Microsoft Visual Studio Express for free and work with other development tools, such as Visual Web Developer Express. On the site, learn to create a number of different projects, including the following:

- Web sites
- Online applications
- Web services

- Windows applications
- Utilities
- PC games

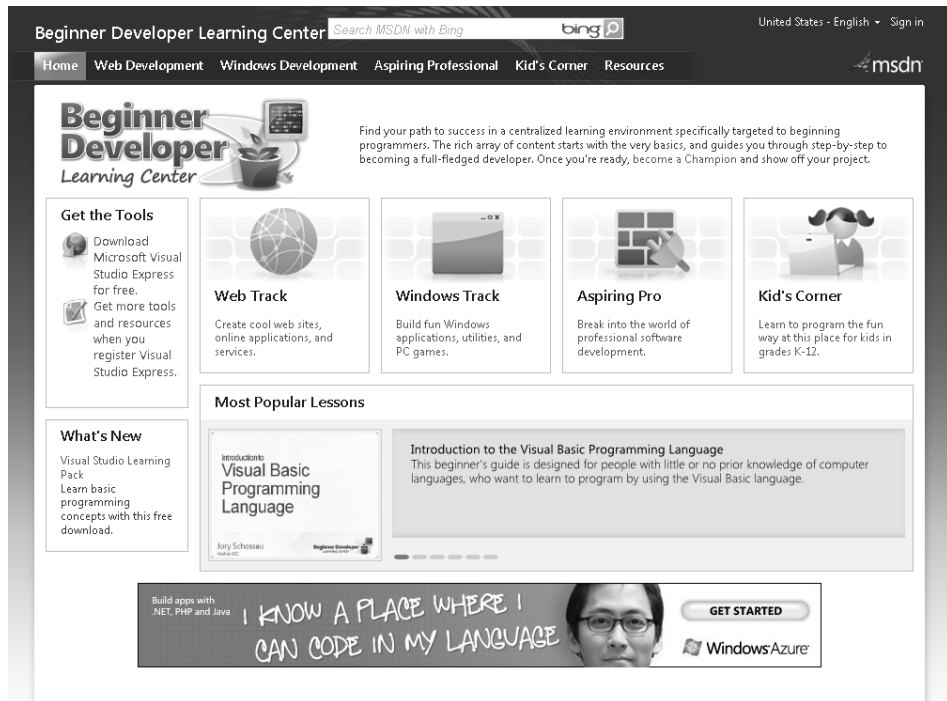


FIGURE 4-7 The Beginner Developer Learning Center offers a variety of learning tools to help you learn more about programming.

Simply click the area showing the topic you want to explore, and find a collection of resources to help you with your learning.

CHAPTER 5

Fast-Track Your Skills with Online Tutorials and Local Training

IN THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL

- Review the seven “must-have” skills
- Prepare for online learning
- Create a learning plan

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER took you on a tour through many of the Microsoft resources available in specific industry areas you may be pursuing. This chapter helps you make the connection between the skills you want to improve and the technology you want to learn.

In this chapter, you choose one of the seven must-have skill sets that Tony Wagner, author of *The Global Achievement Gap* (Basic Books, 2008), says employers are looking for today, and then use free resources online to add to your technology skill set. You also create your own learning plan, scope out the courseware available in Microsoft Learning, connect with a learning community, and locate training in your area.

■ Seven Must-Have Skill Sets—The Remix

In Chapter 2, “Spotlight Your Learning Opportunities,” you learned about the seven critical skill sets employers are looking for in students and new hires entering the marketplace today. This section revisits those seven skill sets and provides examples of ways you can expand those skill sets using the technology that interests you:

- **Critical thinking and problem solving** How might you build these skills in a technology framework? Any time you learn a new way to use software to achieve a goal—for example, you plan a project in Microsoft Project, produce a marketing flyer in Microsoft Publisher, or design a database

in Access—you are adding to your skill set and enhancing your ability to solve real business problems with the tools that are available to you.

- **Collaboration across networks and leading by influence** Today's always-on technology—which includes social networking, instant messaging, video and web conferencing, and more—gives you lots of opportunity to expand your skills in collaboration and leadership. Consider learning about networking, social media, Microsoft SharePoint Server, or other server technologies for starters.
- **Agility and adaptability** Any time you learn new software, unbox new equipment, or take a course to expand your technical knowledge, you are demonstrating your interest and ability in learning and growing. This is an important skill and one employers are looking for—any new position will involve a learning curve, and a prospective employer will want to know that you're up to the challenge.
- **Initiative and entrepreneurialism** Demonstrating initiative and entrepreneurialism using technology might involve something as simple as writing up a new communications plan in Microsoft Word, or it could be as complex as creating a prototype of a new gadget that will advertise your company on the Web. Working with concepts, design, plans, and strategy—no matter which technology you use—demonstrates the initiative you bring to the team.
- **Effective oral and written communication** Your communication skills show in everything you do—from your earliest e-mail correspondence with the human resources person to the look and tone of your résumé, to presentations and reports you create on the job. Virtually any technology you use—business software, Web design applications, programming languages—will rely on your ability to communicate your ideas to others clearly and effectively.
- **Accessing and analyzing information** Knowing how to interpret, analyze, and report on data you gather is a highly sought-after skill set in today's businesses. Especially in light of the economic challenges of 2008–2009, businesses are carefully weighing the choices they make in virtually all areas of their business—from hiring to product development to purchasing to distribution. Learning to create effective worksheets in Microsoft Excel, design great database queries in Access, or use InfoPath to gather user information tells your prospective employer that you will be able to help collect, analyze, and communicate business-critical information.

- **Curiosity and imagination** Of all the skills you can demonstrate through technology, showing curiosity and imagination is sure to get noticed by others. Whenever you learn a new application or figure out how to do something new—for example, editing a video in Microsoft PowerPoint 2010, creating a new gadget in Visual Studio, or setting up a shared workspace for your remote team—you are demonstrating your curiosity and imagination.

ACTIVITY 5.1 CHOOSE YOUR SKILL SET

In Activity 2.2, you identified the specific experience you had that demonstrated each of the preceding skills. You also named one idea in each skill group you want to expand. In this activity, review the various skill sets and choose the one skill set you'd like to focus on improving. Write down your answers to the following questions as you think through the skills you'd like to grow.

Which skill set would you most like to grow?

What do you already do well in this skill set?

What specifically would you like to learn to do?

How do you see yourself using these skills in your position?

■ Training with Microsoft Office Online

Chapter 4, “Survey the Learning Landscape,” introduced you to the big picture of resources that are available on Office Online. If it’s likely that you’ll be working with Office applications on the job, take some time to visit the site and check out all the resources available there. This section shows you how to plan your own learning using the various tutorials, webcasts, articles, and more on Office Online.

Begin the process by going to <http://www.office.microsoft.com> and clicking the Help And How-to tab. In the navigation panel on the left side of the screen, you’ll find various commands that offer different learning resources. (See Figure 5-1.)



FIGURE 5-1 Begin the process of charting your Office learning at Office Online.

■ Reviewing Learning Roadmaps

Knowing specifically which skills you want to expand and improve helps you identify an end goal and focus on the steps you need to take to get there. The Office Training Roadmaps give you a sequence of tutorials to follow for each of the major Office applications. To display the training roadmaps for the application that will enable you to expand the skill set you want to grow, follow these steps:

1. In Other Training Resources, click Office Training Roadmaps.
2. Choose the name of the application you want to learn more about (for example, Excel 2007).
3. Click the title of the training you want to complete.

Tip



ACTIVITY 5.2 CHOOSE A ROADMAP

Interested in learning more about Office applications? Being able to demonstrate at least a basic proficiency in Word, Excel, Outlook, and PowerPoint is a definite plus. Identify the following roadmap you want to try first, and list the first three training courses you plan to complete.

Which application roadmap did you select?

How is this application used in your industry?

Identify the three training courses you will complete first:

■ Completing the Tutorials

The tutorials available on Office Online showcase key program features and techniques and include tooltips to help you learn more about the various items on the screen. When you start the tutorial, the left navigation panel changes to show the lessons and topics in each tutorial. (See Figure 5-2.) You can follow sequentially through the tutorial by clicking Next at the completion of each page, or you can skip around in the tutorial by clicking the topic you want to view in the navigation panel.

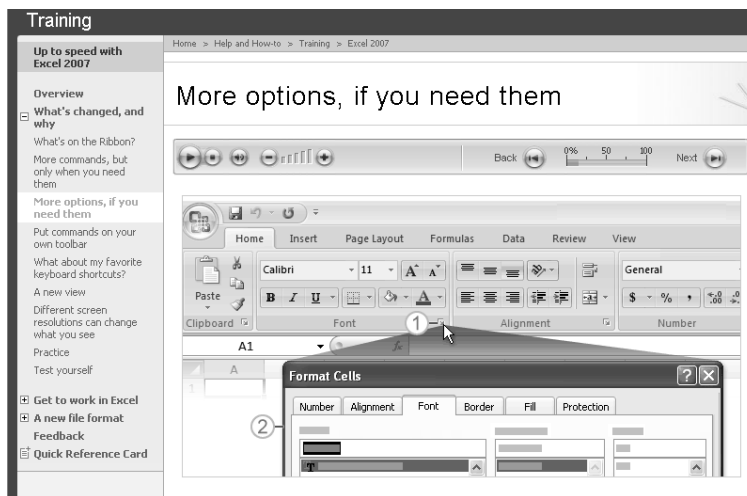


FIGURE 5-2 You can click the topic you want to complete or click Next to advance the tutorial.

Each tutorial includes two or more lessons and typically also offers practice sessions you can use to try your hand at the techniques being taught. Self-tests at the end of each lesson enable you to assess your learning before you move on to the next lesson.

At the bottom of the navigation panel, you'll find any downloadable items that are available for that particular course. In the tutorial shown in Figure 5-2, the downloadable item is the Quick Reference Card. When you click this link, a screen displays so that you can print a summary of all items covered in the tutorial.

Using Webcasts and Podcasts in Your Learning

You can also learn more about the various Office applications by watching webcasts and podcasts through Office Online. When you click the Webcasts link in the navigation panel, Office Online displays the Webcasts & Podcasts page, offering three types of resources:

- Click an item in the Webcast column to view a previously recorded webcast that you can stream online or download to your computer.
- Click an entry in the Podcast column to play the podcast in Windows Media Player.
- Click an item in the Video Tip column to display a video demonstration of a specific technique.

When you click a webcast, the View Recording page appears. The Recording ID and Recording key for the webcast are already entered. Type your name, and click View Recording. The View Recording Info page appears, telling you when the webcast was recorded and giving you options for viewing or downloading the webcast. (See Figure 5-3.)

Microsoft Office Live Meeting - View A Recording

My Home

Meet

Join Meeting

Easy Assist

Join Session

View

Recordings

Register

Public Events

View Recording Info

Recording Subject: Microsoft Office System Webcast: How to Create a 15-Minute Presentation
 Recording ID: 1032378660
 Organizer: WWEvents Organizer
 Recorded On: Thursday, Jun 12, 2008 9:02 AM (PST)
 Duration: 0:59

For best viewing experience, use Microsoft Office Live Meeting High-Fidelity Presentation format including video playback. Download size will be larger and may take longer time to download.

Use Microsoft Office Live Meeting Replay for quicker downloads. Installing Microsoft Office Live Meeting Replay Wrapper provides a rich way to view the recording for this format. You only need to download the Replay Wrapper once per computer. [Install Now](#)

View And Download Recordings

View	Download	Format	Available
		Microsoft Office Live Meeting High-Fidelity Presentation	Yes
		Microsoft Office Live Meeting Replay	Yes

[Scanning Information](#)

FIGURE 5-3 You can view a previously recorded webcast or download it to your computer so that you can watch it later.

You can download each of these items to your computer so that you can watch or listen to them later if you like. Simply right-click the link for the item and choose **Save Target As**; then choose a folder and click **Save**.



ACTIVITY 5.3 PLAN YOUR WEBCASTS AND PODCASTS

Use the following activity to list three webcasts or podcasts you plan to watch and indicate how they will enhance the skill set you want to grow. The first one is completed for you as an example.

WEBCAST OR PODCAST	YOUR SKILL SET CONNECTION
<i>Summarizing Data in Excel 2007</i>	<i>Accessing and Analyzing Information</i>

■ **Taking a Microsoft Learning Course Online**

In addition to the self-directed tutorials, webcasts, and podcasts, Office Online also provides access to Microsoft Learning. Microsoft Learning offers thousands of high-quality online courses as well as classroom training, certification options, skill assessments, and much more. Whether you prefer to complete your courses online, participate in a classroom session, or work with a learning plan to prepare for certification, you'll find all this and more on Microsoft Learning.

Begin by going to <http://www.microsoft.com/learning> or clicking Microsoft Learning in the navigation panel of the Training page in the Help And How-to tab of Office Online. The home page of Microsoft Learning presents you with three primary choices:

- Find Training

- Guide My Training
- Get Certified

Click Find Training to search the Microsoft Learning course catalog and add courses to your learning plan. Click Guide My Training to find out how to create and use learning plans to organize the courses you take to build your skills. Click Get Certified to find out more about certification options and find out which certifications are available for the technologies you're most interested in.

Finding Training

When you click Find Training, the Microsoft Learning Manager page appears. (See Figure 5-4.) On this page, you can search the Learning Catalog to find the online courses you want to take. To find courses in Excel 2007, for example, follow these steps:

1. Click in the Search box.
2. Type a word or phrase that reflects the technology you want to learn more about (in this case, **Excel**).
3. Click Go.

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Learning Manager interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with "Microsoft Learning" and a search box. Below this, the "Learning Manager" section includes tabs for "My Learning" and "Learning Catalog". The "Learning Catalog" tab is active, showing a list of training resources. On the left, there are filters for "Available catalogs" (English), "Prices in" (United States), and "Search the Learning Catalog" with a "Go" button. Below the search box, there are sections for "Products and Technologies" (Dynamics, Office, Visual Studio, Windows, Server Technologies, Other Technologies), "Training Options" (Learning Plans, Classroom Training, E-Learning, E-Reference, Books, Exams, Certifications, Learning Snacks), and "Subject" (Administration, Architecture, Database, Programming, Security, Software Design). The main content area displays a table of training resources with columns for "Learning Resource Title", "Resource Type", "Price", and "Action". The table lists several courses, including "Clinic 10277: What's New in Microsoft SharePoint 2010 for Developers", "Clinic 10259: SQL Server 2008: Database Infrastructure and Scalability", "Course 10167: Windows 7 Essentials II", "E-Reference 10-day Free trial of Complete Library", and "Clinic 10183: What's New in Windows Server 2008 R2". On the right side, there are sections for "Special Offers" (Register to receive free chapter offers, Save 20 to 40 percent on Microsoft Certification exam packs, Take a Second Shot at Certification and Advance Your Career, Microsoft SQL Server 2008—special offers, Save up to US\$3,550 on the Microsoft Certified Master program), "Best Sellers", "Expert Picks", "New Products", "Upcoming Titles", "Free Products", and a "Live Chat" button.

Learning Resource Title	Resource Type	Price	Action
Clinic 10277: What's New in Microsoft SharePoint 2010 for Developers	E-Learning Course	Free	Save to My Learning Sign In To Get Started
Clinic 10259: SQL Server 2008: Database Infrastructure and Scalability	E-Learning Course	Free	Save to My Learning Sign In To Get Started
Course 10167: Windows 7 Essentials II	E-Learning Course	\$14.99	Save to My Learning Add to Cart
E-Reference 10-day Free trial of Complete Library	E-Reference	Free	Save to My Learning Sign In To Get Started
Clinic 10183: What's New in Windows Server 2008 R2	E-Learning Course	Free	Save to My Learning Sign In To Get Started

FIGURE 5-4 Search for the training you want to complete in the Microsoft Learning Catalog.

The center area of the screen shows the results of your search. You can sort the results by clicking the Sort By arrow at the top of the list and choosing the option that reflects the way you'd like to arrange the results. For example, choose Price (Low to High) to arrange courses according to cost, ranging from free courses to the most expensive ones in your results list.

When you find a course you want to add to your learning plan, click the course title. The next page displays more information about the course. You can save the course by clicking the Save To My Learning button in the upper right. If the course has a cost associated with it, you can click the Add To Cart button to add the course to your shopping cart.

Tip



Create Your Own Learning Plan

When you click Guide My Learning on the Microsoft Learning home page, the Learning Tools page appears. On this page, you can view and save to My Learning existing Learning Plans that help you meet specific goals (for example, "Student Learning Plan for Web Developer Job Role" or "Learning Plan for Database Developer Job Role").

If you plan to work toward certification in a particular area or intend to look for a specific technology-related job, consider using one of the existing Learning Plans to structure your training with Microsoft Learning. Microsoft Learning Plans are based on industry standards and offer up-to-date examples, techniques, and resources that reflect what's needed in specific job roles today.

In addition to the existing Learning Plans, Microsoft offers a personal space for you to save the courses, training, exams, and plans you want to work with on Microsoft Learning. The online area is called My Learning, and you will see numerous links throughout the site offering you the option of saving resources to your My Learning page.

CHARTING YOUR CAREER

On the Microsoft Learning home page, you'll also see a link that says Chart Your Career. Click this link to find out more about Learning Plans available for specific technology job roles for IT professionals and developers. For example, on the Chart Your Career page (<http://www.microsoft.com/learning/en/us/start/start-career.aspx>), you'll find links to Learning Plans for each of the following IT roles:

- Enterprise messaging administrator
- Enterprise administrator
- Enterprise support technician
- Database administrator
- Server administrator
- Consumer support technician

You can display the job roles for developers by clicking the Developer jobs list link.

To find out more about the Learning Plan for a particular role, click the role icon. A page appears providing information about the role and the required skills, and listing the various Microsoft training options available for that particular skill set.

Find Training in Your Local Area

If you want to mix and match online courses with real classroom training, you can do that with Microsoft Learning. Click the Locate A Training Center link on the Microsoft Learning home page to display the Microsoft Learning Class Locator. (See Figure 5-5.)

Enter the course topic you'd like to take, specify your location, and click the type of instruction you'd like to take (Classroom, Online class, or both); then click Go. A results page lists all available courses that meet the specifications you entered. You can click the View Training Centers That Offer This Course link to find out more about the course, see a map to the location, and register for the course.

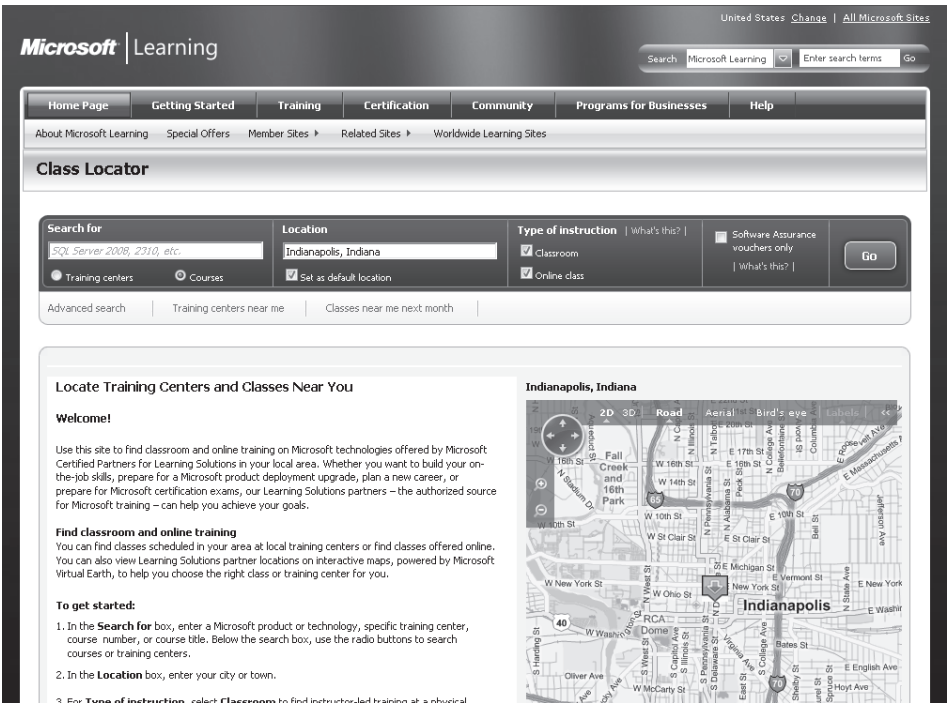


FIGURE 5-5 Use the Microsoft Learning Class Locator to find classroom training in your local area.

ACTIVITY 5.4 SUMMARIZE YOUR LEARNING PLANS

Most likely, you’ve found a number of online resources that can help you get started building your skills in key areas. Use the following activity to summarize the resources you want to use as you expand your skills. In the first column, list the name or topic of the resource; in the second column, indicate the resource type; and in the third column, add a note about what you hope to learn from the resource.

TOPIC	TYPE	LEARNING GOAL

CHAPTER 6

Ramp Up Your Abilities in Vital Areas

IN THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL

- Pitch a new idea
- Solve a problem
- Create community
- Mediate a solution
- Get people and projects organized
- Save your employer time and money
- Help your business look good

ONCE YOU master the basics in key areas—tech skills and soft skills—what can you do to make those skills stand out? This chapter provides suggestions for applying your new techniques in practical ways that showcase your abilities and use the technology to accomplish professional results efficiently and easily. Specifically, you'll learn how to provide real solutions and ideas that your employer needs by

- Pitching a new idea
- Solving a problem
- Creating community
- Mediating a solution
- Getting people (and projects) organized
- Saving your employer time and money
- Helping the business look good

When you contribute your skills toward making a positive difference in any of these ways, the experience gives you more to talk about in future interviews. You can also know you are making a real difference right where you are—no matter what your current role might be.

■ Pitch a New Idea

Ideas are assets in every organization, providing the energy for new products and services, increasing efficiency, streamlining productivity, and touching more peoples' lives. If you are an idea person, knowing how to pitch a new idea—both how to communicate it and to whom—is a vitally important part of getting your ideas heard.

Although the phrase “pitching an idea” is often used in creative industries such as broadcasting or journalism, any time you present a new idea to someone who has the power to say yes or no, you're in effect pitching your idea. There are as many different ways of sharing ideas as there are people who share them:

- A customer service representative envisions a new way to log customer service calls in a Microsoft Access database.
- A Web developer thinks of a way to use InfoPath to collect information from the Web.
- A marketing person discovers a technique for gathering and sharing boilerplate text in Word documents.
- A project manager wants to use Live Meeting to launch a new initiative and get everybody on board.
- An artist thinks of a new way to market her work by broadcasting live from PowerPoint.
- A human resources person plans to digitize, organize, and archive personnel files in a new way.

So when inspiration strikes and you think you have an idea worth sharing, what can you do to help ensure others like what you have to say? Here are a few ideas for preparing and testing your idea before you pitch it:

- **Remember the 5 Ws (who, what, when, where, and why)** Think through your idea carefully so that you can explain succinctly who the idea will impact, what it will involve, when you would like to implement it, where it will be most useful, and why it is a good idea for your department or organization at this point in time.
- **Write up the idea—even if it's just as a paragraph in an e-mail message—and read it through before you share it with anyone** Be objective as you read and ask yourself, “If I were seeing this for the first time, what would my reaction be?”

- **Play the devil's advocate, and think through possible reasons your idea might not work** Perhaps someone else is doing something similar—or it would require an investment of funds your department wouldn't want to spend. Thinking through the possible Nos beforehand helps give you courage when the time comes to pitch the idea.
- **Test out the idea on a peer first** After you've thought through the idea and written it up, share it with a peer and ask her opinion. Does she understand what you're proposing? Does she see any reasons it might not work? What suggestions does she have for you? Take the feedback in stride, and revisit the idea if necessary to make any changes you want to make.
- **Follow company protocol in sharing your ideas** If you work in a collaborative environment where anyone can share ideas at any time, choose the person who has the power to implement the idea as the one to pitch your idea to. If your department has a certain protocol about sharing new ideas—for example, you're supposed to take your idea to your manager before working your way up the administrative chain—follow company expectations in delivering your idea.

Depending on the type of idea you want to pitch (and where, and to whom), you may be able to use a variety of tech tools to present your idea:

- For a quick idea you think is likely to find a receptive audience, an e-mail message might do the trick.
- For a larger idea that requires some explanation, consider a write-up in Word or preparing a short PowerPoint presentation.
- If your idea involves a new design or a program change, use a program such as Publisher to mock up an example to show others what you're thinking.
- If you are proposing a change to a process, use SmartArt (available in Microsoft Office) to show the changes clearly in a diagram.

Tip



■ Solve a Problem

Ask any project manager—if you want to be in management one day, learn to eat problems for breakfast. An employee with a knack for problem solving is a great asset for any company because the skill set involves critical thinking and leadership skills. This person is able to see the “big picture” raised by an issue and think creatively to uncover possible solutions.

Not everyone is naturally great at problem solving, but you can develop your skills in this area by focusing on the following things:

- **Get used to noticing common business problems around you** These might be as simple as employees repeatedly missing the Monday scheduling meeting or as far-reaching as a lack of cash flow for new initiatives.
- **Look at the problem from all angles** Whatever the problem may be, what does it look like from a management angle? From the point of view of a staff worker? From the client’s point of view. Imagine yourself circling the issue 360 degrees and see how it looks from multiple vantage points. Perhaps management is unhappy because staff misses the Monday meeting but the staff members are serving clients. How does this issue look from all sides?
- **Brainstorm possible causes** What do you feel might be causing—or at least contributing to—the problem? Capture your answers, no matter how far out they might seem, in a OneNote notebook or a Word document. One cause of the employees missing the meeting might be that the meeting is scheduled in a high-call time; another possible cause is that employees don’t want to attend the meetings because they feel they are a waste of time.
- **Weigh the possible causes, and focus on one that seems most likely** Think through the issue—and weigh it against other options—to see whether it is the most likely candidate. Perhaps after weighing all the options, you feel that the staff members want to make the meeting but feel that keeping clients happy is more important—in the long term—than attending the meetings.
- **Once you’ve identified the possible cause, brainstorm possible workarounds or solutions to correct the issue** If you begin to look for solutions and things don’t seem to be coming together smoothly, return to your “possible causes” list and see whether another candidate is a better fit. One solution might be to suggest the time of the meeting be moved. Another could be to have members of other departments take the phone calls while the meeting is going on. Yet another option could be to enable the staff members on the phone to attend the meeting via Live Meeting so that they can take calls as needed and still contribute to the overall meeting.

- **Test your solution with a peer** Or write up your solution, put it in a drawer overnight, and revisit it in the morning—before sharing it with your manager or leadership team.

How will you use technology to demonstrate your solution? You could write up a Word document that states the problem, causes, and possible solutions clearly. You could also use PowerPoint or OneNote to collect your thoughts and share the process you used to come to possible solutions. Informally, you could simply share your idea in an e-mail or instant message. But no matter how you share your solution, be sure to keep a copy for yourself, because it's a demonstration of a valuable skill you can talk about in future interviews or personnel reviews.

Tip



■ Create Community

If you are currently using Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, or any number of other social networking sites, you know inherently what it means to build community. When you create your own community, you friend the people you like and block the people you don't. Creating community means posting links and updates, responding to others' posts, and generally engaging those who are connected to you through the social software.

Creating community for your employer follows largely the same approach, with a bit more of a marketing angle. Community is a powerful force when developed, cultivated, and nurtured over time. A business that knows how to create a thriving community is likely to have a happy—or at least engaged—customer base and a vital audience.

A number of Microsoft tools can help you create and work with social media as well as post to blogs and create shared workspaces. Here are a few of the tools you may want to learn more about:

- The release version of Microsoft Outlook 2010 will include social media features that help users integrate status updates, appointments, and more that are posted by their contacts.

- SharePoint Server and SharePoint Workspace enable you to create community within your organization by developing ways for your teams to work together seamlessly and share files, have discussions, and work collaboratively.
- Collaboration features are part of Microsoft Office applications like Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. You can share documents, compare file versions, and communicate easily with co-authors in Office 2010.
- With Microsoft Expression Web, Visual Studio, or SharePoint Designer, you can create sites that invite community and provide a way for others to communicate with you through commenting, discussion forums, and more.

Tip

■ Mediate a Solution

Chances are that you may not feel comfortable jumping right into a mediation situation your first week on the job, but if you are a peacemaker at heart, you may find that your mediation skills are sought after by your employer. A person who is good at mediation has well-developed interpersonal and critical-thinking skills; this means he or she can see all points of view in a situation, can speak to the situation in a supportive way for all involved, and can help others think through possible solutions.

Although formal mediation is often used for legal and organizational issues that might otherwise go to litigation, you can use mediation skills on the job anytime you have two individuals or groups who seem to be at an impasse on an important decision. For example, you could use mediation skills

- When two departments are in conflict over a project deadline
- When two employees disagree about the way tasks should be allocated
- When a valuable client has a conflict with an account representative
- When two staff members are having a personality conflict
- When your company goes through a merger and needs to establish new relationships

You might not use a lot of technology as you employ your mediation skills, although you might want to create a meeting agenda in Microsoft Word or Publisher, or perhaps include one or two participants by Live Meeting or Windows Live Messenger if some staff members work remotely. For your second mediation meeting, you might want to show PowerPoint slides that list key ideas from the previous meeting or spotlight the issue or goal you all want to work toward.

Here are a few ideas to help your mediation go smoothly:

- Get together with all those who want to resolve the issue.
- Find a goal for your discussion that all can agree on. In your first conversation, your goal might simply be “To make sure all people involved have a chance to share their points of view.”
- Set a tone of respectful listening in which all can share their ideas clearly without judgment.
- Help all consider the situation from a variety of perspectives.
- Avoid forcing a resolution if a group is still in the discussing or exploring stage.

Mediation is a fascinating skill, and there are many tools and training options you can find to develop your interest in this area.

■ Get People (and Projects) Organized

Thank goodness for the people who just naturally seem to put things in a logical order for the rest of us. We don’t always like it—especially if they are asking for files we should have turned in last week or expecting all our expenses to be accounted for in a specific worksheet. But organizing people, projects, and data is something that some people do naturally and well, and the effectiveness and success of a business depends on these people using their skills.

Whether you are naturally a well-organized person or not, you can easily build your organization skills in any role you undertake. Here are a few tips for techniques you can add to your work day to add a bit more structure:

- **Know your priorities** When you go into work in the morning, have three things in mind you’d like to accomplish by the end of the day. If you get more done than that, great! But at least you have clearly defined your top three priorities.

- **Schedule, schedule, schedule** Let Microsoft Outlook become a close friend—or at least a working acquaintance. Some people use Outlook religiously, sending meeting requests, scheduling every appointment, sharing their calendars with team members, and more. If this works for you, terrific. If not, at least make sure you add business-critical events (staff meetings, project deadlines, outside appointments) to your calendar to help you stay on track.
- **Assign tasks—and follow up** Outlook 2010 and SharePoint Workspace 2010, as well as the Shared Document Workspace in Word 2007, enable you to assign tasks to team members and follow up when items are completed. In this way, you can ensure that all parts of your project are moving along nicely.
- **Communicate with everyone continually** Whether you use Outlook, Windows Live Messenger, Office Communicator, or Microsoft Exchange to do it (or whatever communications software your company uses), make the effort to keep everyone on the same page. Set the milestones for your project, and communicate them clearly. When people turn things in on time (or even if they don't), let everybody know. If you keep the lines of communication open and make sure all the people involved in your project know what's going on, everything will run more smoothly.
- **Assess and adjust** Organizing projects and people isn't something you do one time and then have everything work according to clockwork. Things change, people get reassigned, and priorities get shifted, and your plan will need to change accordingly. Review the progress of your project regularly, and adjust as needed—for as long as needed.

Tip

■ Save Your Employer Time (and Money)

You might be surprised to know that employers value new employees for more than the skills they bring to the job; their fresh perspective can also be a big help for everyday business processes. Whether you've had a lot of previous job experience or not, your point of view can help your employer see where procedures are unnecessarily complicated, where effort is unnecessary, and where money is being wasted on tasks that aren't benefiting the company in any real way.

As you learn the tasks that will be part of your regular role, keep your eyes open for technology improvements. For example, you might discover ways to streamline contacts, improve data-gathering procedures, or simplify routine tasks.

Write up any money-saving or time-saving ideas you have in Word or Outlook (remembering to keep a copy for yourself), and share your ideas with the appropriate people on your team.

■ Help Your Business Look Good

Every business and organization cares about the way others perceive its mission and the delivery of its programs and services. You can help your business tell its story effectively in a number of ways, no matter what your day-to-day job may be:

- **First, know the company's mission** If your business does not have a mission statement, find out what the overarching goal of the company is. For example, your company might pride itself on offering the best customer service in your industry. Or perhaps you build custom data solutions for businesses. Whatever your focus, know what's important to your company and be able to share it with others.
- **Spread the word** Add your company's mission or goal—or your business tagline—to your e-mail signature in Outlook. This simple idea helps get the word out about your company's focus and builds the brand.

- **Consider design** Think carefully about the design you use for any documents, worksheets, presentations, or other files you share with the outside world. Each professional document you share represents your company, so if you have an accepted template with a specific color and font scheme that is used for your company, be sure to use it. (If your business or department hasn't developed or selected a template, you may want to suggest one to add a consistent look to your files.)
- **Marketing ideas** As a consumer, you already know instinctively which kinds of messages get your attention—and which ones don't. If you have specific ideas about ways to share the word about the company you work for, write them up and share them.
- **Identify makeover candidates** Here's a great idea for you when you first begin a new role: notice which materials are in need of a makeover. Often businesses have brochures, flyers, booklets, and other materials that are several years old; you can suggest easy (and inexpensive) updates using software you have at hand. For example, you might use Microsoft Publisher or Word to create the new files and then save the new designs as PDFs, to be printed in small batches or printed on your company's own color printer and distributed as needed.

CHAPTER 7

Put Together a Career Marketing Plan

IN THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL

- Create a career marketing plan
- Prepare for your job search
- Give your résumé a makeover

THE WAY YOU present yourself—in person and in print—tells your prospective employer a lot about how you value your skills. What does your résumé say about you? Does your cover letter look like every other cover letter the personnel director will receive? This chapter helps you present yourself and your career in the best possible light by putting together a career marketing plan. It's never too early to do this, so whether you're still in school or you're out in the marketplace actively interviewing, putting consistent time and energy into your career efforts will pay off in the long run.

Much of what you've done throughout this book has helped you gather the information you can use in your career marketing plan. When you identified your transferable, soft, technical, and updatable skills (in Chapter 1, "Imagine Your Potential: Assess Your Skills"), you listed all the specific assets you bring to a new position. When you learned about the critical skill sets employers are looking for today and matched your skills to those needs, you discovered how your skills can fit what employers want in a new hire (in Chapter 2, "Spotlight Your Learning Opportunities"). In Chapter 3, "Chart a Course for Career Growth," you charted the course for the career skills you most want to grow and, in Chapter 4, "Survey the Learning Landscape," you explored many different Microsoft resources designed to provide learning opportunities and support in a number of industries. In Chapter 5, "Fast-Track Your Skills with Online Tutorials and Local Training," you connected the skills you

want to learn with specific online learning offerings from Microsoft. And in Chapter 6, “Ramp Up Your Abilities in Vital Areas,” you thought through practical ways you can use technology to make a difference in any position you have.

■ What’s in a Career Marketing Plan?

Approaching your job search in an organized, professional way is a great way to practice the professionalism you want to convey in your interviews. If you work at *getting* a job with the same level of focus and commitment that you plan to work at the job, you will find that each interview you complete and each résumé you send gets you closer to the right job fit for you.

To help you organize and present your knowledge, skills, learning, and experience, you can put together a career marketing plan. A business marketing plan clearly defines the business products or services being marketed, it includes goals and objectives, and it includes a timeline for the accomplishment of the stated goals. Similar to a business marketing plan, your career marketing plan pulls together your strengths, talents, and learning, and sets it all in a structure of goals, objectives, and timelines. You have been identifying your skills and abilities throughout this book. You have put together your learning plan for the skills you want to develop more fully; you also can outline your goals and objectives for finding the job you want, as well as establishing a timeline that sets your expectations for the number of résumés you want to submit, interviews you hope to have, and job offers you’d like to receive within a certain period of time.

Tip



Identify Your Interests

Start by identifying the type of job you’d like to find in the industry of your choice. Think through the role carefully, including where you’ll work, what kinds of technology you’ll use, what your daily responsibilities will be. Envision your work environment, the size of the company, and the contribution you hope to make there.

Summarize Your Skills and Experience

Next, review the skills you identified in Chapters 1 through 3 and list them according to the skill sets employers most want to see. These are the skills you most want to highlight in your job interviews.

List Your Learning

List the training you've completed that augments the skills you bring to your career search. Include any online tutorials, Microsoft Learning courses, or other site materials you've completed.

Prepare Your Materials

What kinds of materials will you want to develop for your job search? First and foremost, focus on your résumé. When your résumé is in order, you create a great cover letter, pull together work samples for a portfolio, and organize a list of references. Additionally, you may want to take to the interview your business cards, a notepad, and a list of questions for the interviewer.

Plan Your Job Search

As you think through the overall plan for your job search, set your overall goal as well as measurable objectives that will get you there. For example, suppose that your goal is to find a technical support position with a mid-sized to large company within three months. Objectives to help you reach your goal might include submitting a certain number of résumés per week, approaching a specific number of companies, or going to a set number of interviews. The objectives help you measure your progress toward your overall goal. You can also create a time frame to help you accomplish your objectives within a specific period of time.

ACTIVITY 7.1 CREATE YOUR CAREER MARKETING PLAN

Use the following activity to put together the information you want to include in a career marketing plan. You can refer to your answers in previous activities to complete the following plan.

YOUR INTERESTS*(Refer to your answers for Activity 3.1)*

The job you want: _____

Your chosen industry: _____

Describe the work environment you envision: _____

Describe generally the colleagues you hope to work with:

Describe a successful day for you at work:

YOUR SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE*(Refer to your answers for Activity 2.2)*

Indicate your demonstrated experience in the following skill sets.

Critical thinking and problem solving:

Collaboration across networks and leading by influence:

Agility and adaptability:

[illegible]

YOUR MATERIALS

- ☐ Your résumé
- ☐ Cover letter
- ☐ References list
- ☐ Work samples
- ☐ Portfolio (optional)
- ☐ List of questions to ask interviewer
- ☐ Business cards (optional)

YOUR JOB SEARCH

Your goal:

Objectives:

Time frame:

Name and e-mail address of your accountability partner:

■ Preparing for Your Job Search

Most likely you've already been keeping an eye out for positions that interest you, whether you're still in school or already reading the classifieds both online and offline. Thankfully, there are many resources you can use to help you in your job search:

- Online job postings
- Local and regional newspapers and publications
- Journals and newspapers in your industry area
- Openings posted through your college's career center
- Openings you hear about through friends and family
- Networking with peers, colleagues, and organizations where you volunteer

With the economy of 2008–2009 in a state of upheaval, the number of people who chose to volunteer while looking for a job increased. Volunteering helps you develop new skills, make new relationships, and explore interests that could lead you into a new career down the road.

Researching Positions

Through a partnership with Monster.com, Microsoft offers résumé templates, access to job postings, and more on Office.com. Begin by going to www.office.microsoft.com and clicking the Help And How-to tab. In the upper area of the window, just below the tab bar, you can click the Get Started button to explore Monster.com job resources. This takes you to the Microsoft Office Career Center, where you can download all sorts of résumé templates, find open positions, and post your résumé online. (See Figure 7-1.)

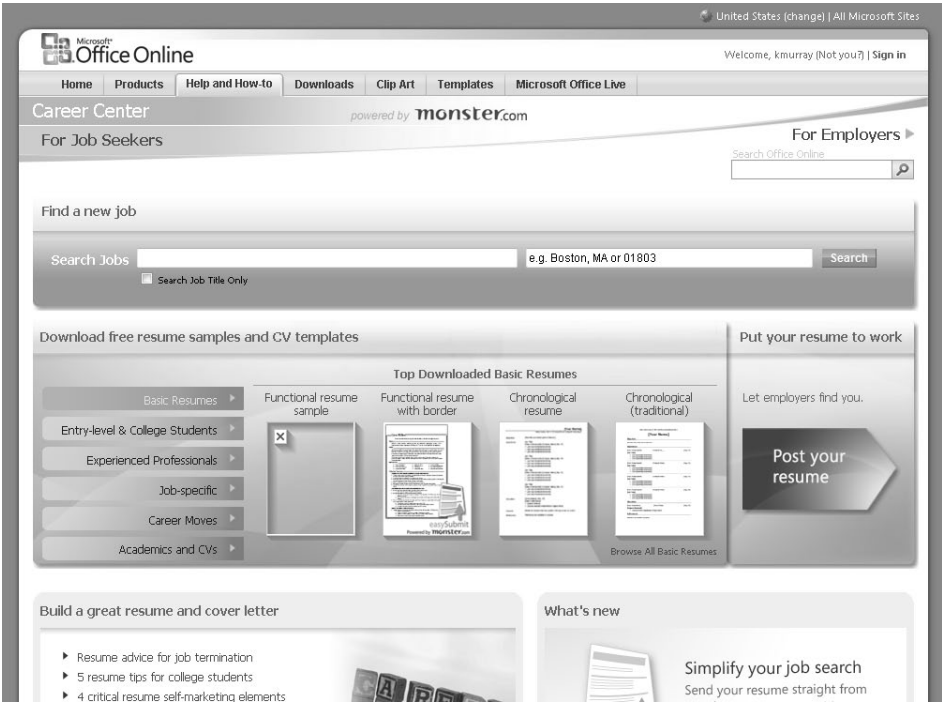


FIGURE 7-1 Office.com partners with Monster.com to provide free résumé templates and access to job postings online.

ACTIVITY 7.2 IDENTIFY YOUR JOB SEARCH PREFERENCES

Use the following activity to identify resources you plan to use in your job search. Indicate the format for the resource (online, newspaper, in person, and so forth), and use the final column to note any details related to that resource (for example, “New jobs posted on Mondays”).

Resource	Format	Notes
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Remembering Your Profiles

Searching for a job today is much different than it was just a few years ago, before the exploding popularity of social media sites. Today employers can often find a considerable amount of information—sometimes more than they want!—by doing an online search for a candidate's information.

Before you begin applying for positions, check your online information to be sure that only information you want to be known is available. On social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, set your profile to private so that your photos, postings, and links aren't publicly available.

If you share photos on public sites like Flickr, change the permissions so that only friends can view the photos you've posted.

Do a search for your own name (including nicknames) in both Bing and Google to see whether there are links to any information items you'd rather not share with an employer. Search for images as well as text links, and remember that a variety of things can sway a potential employer's opinion. If you blog about personal items, political views, or passionate social concerns, realize that the person searching your information may have different views and this could affect your candidacy. Human resources personnel do try to keep their own personal views in balance and find the best candidates for a position, but your stated and public views do help others form an opinion about your fit for a particular position.

You don't need to censor yourself or be someone you're not in order to get a job, of course, but it's good to be aware of all the factors that could influence your job search.

ACTIVITY 7.3 CHECK YOUR PROFILES

Use this activity to make a list of social media, Twitter, and blogging sites you want to review to make sure you are sharing only the information you want to share about yourself.

SOCIAL MEDIA/SEARCH	PROFILE STATUS	NOTES
_ Bing.com _____	_____ N/A _____	_____
_ Google _____	_____ N/A _____	_____
_ Facebook _____	_____	_____
_ MySpace _____	_____	_____
_ Flickr _____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Collecting References

What kind of references should you bring to your interview? Think through the skill sets you listed in Activity 7.1. Who do you know—a former employer, a professor, a friend—who can attest to your mastery of those skills? Consider also requesting references from people you worked with at volunteer organizations—the executive director of a food pantry, for example, could offer thoughts about your reliability, work ethic, and commitment.

Before you begin applying for positions, come up with a list of five or six people you can ask to serve as references for you. If possible, choose people who have seen different types of skills you offer—for example, a coach could attest to your initiative, a professor could talk about your timeliness and attention to detail, a former manager could share that you are a team player and that you contributed to the department in a positive way.

Gathering Work Samples

Being able to show what you've done can make a good impression on your prospective employer, so think of projects, reports, or completed designs or diagrams you can take to your interview to show examples of the work you do. Here are a few suggestions for examples you might want to take:

- A printed image showing a Web site home page you designed.
- A one-page write-up of a project you managed. Include information that explains the scope of the project, who you managed it for, and how many people it affected.
- A code example of a project you contributed to. (Be careful not to share anything that is proprietary, however.)
- A writing sample.
- A page showing the design of a database you set up and maintained. (Don't provide another company's data in the example, however.)
- A sheet of statistics about your work on a previous job (for example, the number of projects completed within a specific time frame, the number of raises or positive reviews and recommendations, and so on).

Tip



■ Give Your Résumé a High-Energy Makeover

Creating a good résumé really isn't rocket science. In fact, if it *is* rocket science, it likely won't get a second look. Although there are books and books written about how to produce a great résumé (and you can find lots of good templates on Office.com), the real secret to a good résumé is to be as clear and concise as possible.

It's fine to show a little personality, and you should certainly be honest about your objectives, work history, education, and interests. But the bottom line is to make the résumé as easy as possible for the interviewer to read and to show very clearly how your skills map to the needs the company has. With clarity and skill-connection in mind, consider these tips when you ramp up your résumé:

- **A little design goes a long way** Some people use fancy color (and perfume, like Elle in the movie “Legally Blonde”) to get their information noticed. But although special effort may get your résumé noticed initially, you're not going to make the cut if you don't demonstrate the skills the prospective employer is looking for. For best results, tone down the design (by using one or two headline styles and consistent and readable body text) and keep the special effects to a minimum. Spotlight your skills, big time.
- **Put all your contact information clearly up front** Bold and centered works well and is easy for a reviewer to see. Do make sure all your information is current—if you've recently graduated, make sure your permanent address, not your school address—is listed on your résumé. Provide your e-mail address and any links to LinkedIn, blogs, or other Web sites you want your prospective employer to use as a resource for your information.
- **List your work history in chronological order, with your most recent job first** There are different schools of thought about how much detail to include in your job descriptions. To make your skills really stand out, spotlight the responsibilities you had that match the critical skill sets discussed in Chapter 3. You can make the description sentence style if you like, but including lists of tasks is okay too.
- **Try to keep your résumé to one page, two at the most** If you've had many jobs (summer jobs, part-time jobs, and more), don't feel you have to list every position. Include the most recent positions, as well as the ones that connect most directly to the current position you're applying for. Be prepared to answer questions about any perceived lapses in employment that show up on your résumé, however.

SUBMITTING ONLINE APPLICATIONS

The approach varies from job to job, but many companies today ask that you complete an online application as part of their submission process. You may be asked to fill out a form (in which case, you can copy and paste your own résumé into the blanks) or attach your résumé and send it through the employer's job site.

One of the challenges to applicants that the online process presents is that many résumés are never seen by human eyes. Sophisticated and automated searches are used to gather a results list of submissions that have specific key words and phrases. For example, if you are applying for a marketing position but don't use the word *marketing* anywhere in your résumé, chances are that through an online submission process your résumé will never show up near the top of any results list. And as a result, you may not get called to interview for a job you really want.

So the moral is this: When you're asked to submit your information via an online process, be sure to tailor your résumé to use words and phrases that are included in the job position announcement. Then you at least know that if your fate is left up to a smart search engine, you've done everything you can to get your résumé noticed.

Also remember that just because the company requests online applications doesn't mean that you can't call to follow up. After you submit your application, wait a day or two and call and ask to speak to the personnel hiring manager. Introduce yourself and explain that you submitted your application online and would like to know more about the position—for example, when interviews will begin. Personal contact is much more effective than an impersonal online form. If a company posts "No phone calls, please" on their listing, however, be sure to honor that request.

■ Demonstrate Mad Presentation Skills

Depending on the type of role you are applying for, you may be asked to give a brief presentation to demonstrate some of your skills. An applicant for an IT training role, for example, could be asked to teach a technique. New teachers are often asked to teach a

lesson to a small group of fellow teachers and the principal. Marketing professionals may be asked to introduce a product; a new fundraiser may be asked to explain a campaign.

If you are asked to prepare a short presentation to give during your interview, first, don't panic! Microsoft PowerPoint makes the whole process easy, and with just a few guide-lines you can create a presentation that will leave your audience wowed:

- **Great visuals work** PowerPoint includes lots of great, professional templates you can use to give your presentation instant polish. (See Figure 7-2.) Add one or two of your own great photos to ramp up the visual interest.
- **Provide value, clearly** Make your text as logical and clear as possible. For a three-minute presentation, aim for 5 or 6 slides. Give yourself room to breathe and talk. Don't try to fit too much information into a short time frame.
- **Be logical in your approach** A three-minute presentation gives you time to make (maybe) three points. So if you've been asked to present a new marketing idea, plan on something like this:
 - Introduction and welcome
 - Point 1: It's time for a new marketing effort (show why)
 - Point 2: Green consciousness doesn't just sell—it's the right thing to do
 - Point 3: Ways we can "go green" and help our customers feel good about their purchases
 - Summary and end (thanks for listening)
- **Summarize what you've presented** The basic tenets in any kind of training or instruction are these: (1) Tell your audience what you're going to tell them; (2) Tell them; and (3) Tell them what you told them. Summarize for your audience what you presented, and they will remember your points clearly—which leaves them with a positive memory of your presentation.
- **Remember the extras** Saying "Thanks for listening" and asking for questions is an important part of your presentation, no matter how short or long it is.

Tip

- **Start with your strengths and show that you're a good fit for the role in the first paragraph** Use key words and phrases from the job listing in your content.
- **Be confident and clear about your skills and experience, but don't pad what you've done** Most people sniff out exaggeration easily, so it's best to just be clear and honest and represent yourself as accurately as you can.
- **Be open** Let the person know that you'd love to have a conversation about the position and would be glad to come in for an interview at his convenience. Graciousness does make a difference in business, as it does in life.

TRACK YOUR SUBMISSIONS AND CONTACTS

Right from the outset, have a method of collecting and logging job-opening information, as well as the contact information, submission dates, and interviews you complete. You may want to create a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, use Outlook contacts, or simply create a Word table to track the following information for each opening:

- Position name
- Company name
- Company location
- Company Web site
- Primary contact name
- Primary contact e-mail address
- Date résumé submitted
- Copy of cover information
- Date response received
- Interview date
- Company response

This information is valuable in helping you determine who to contact, when to follow up, and how closely this company fits what you're looking for.

■ Ramp Up Your Interview Skills

Okay, so you got the call (this is where we started the book, remember?) and you've got a time set for the interview. Now what do you do?

The following tips help you do a little leg work and help make sure you're prepared to present yourself as professionally as possible:

Do your homework. Learn about the company before you go to the interview. You can discover much about it by visiting the company Web site, searching for it online using Bing and Google, or talking to others you know who currently work there. Find out about its products and services, how long it has been in operation, its mission statement, and any philanthropic efforts the company supports. Know what is important to the business overall, and have some idea of how your own skills can help the company achieve the goals it is reaching for.

- **Be prepared** Gather all your materials, and make sure they are as professional as possible. Take a notepad and pen, copies of your résumé, and your work samples or portfolio to your interview.
- **Dress the part** Often applicants are uncertain about what to wear to an interview. You want to look "put together" but not like you're trying too hard. For best results, look your professional best for the interview, wearing if not a suit then business casual. No matter what your role will eventually be, presenting yourself well and caring about your attire tells the prospective employer that you are serious about your job search and care about the effort you make for the job. This will translate to the sense of caring and work ethic you bring to the work, and that speaks well of you.
- **Be on time** Showing up for your interview on time—not too early or too late—gives an important first impression of dependability and accuracy. It also says you care about providing what the employer asks of you, which is one of the deeper questions the employer needs to answer about you before a position is offered.
- **Turn your cell phone off** In today's always-on world, it's easy to overlook the likelihood that your cell phone will ring or you will receive texts in a job interview. Your prospective employer will immediately connect the interruption with your work performance, whether or not that connection is warranted. So protect your time in your interview by turning off your cell phone for the hour you are there. Let friends and family know ahead of time that you'll be out of reach for that specific period of time; then you can return calls when it's all over.

- **Shake hands** Yes, we hear in the news with all the coverage of the H1N1 virus that shaking hands may be a tradition that's sliding out of date. But a good, friendly handshake still communicates something important about you. Both men and women shake hands at first meeting, signifying welcome and a formal greeting. The pressure of your handshake and even the speed communicates something about your personality to your interviewer. (This is a fascinating study—if you want to know more, enter *handshake etiquette* in a Bing search.)
- **Be aware of your body language** Chances are that you will be a bit nervous in your interviews—don't worry, that's natural—and it's likely your body language will show it. Relax as much as possible, and avoid the temptation to cross your arms or send other signals that you are guarded. Sit with your back straight; look at your interviewer in a straightforward, friendly way; and smile if you feel like it. (There's nothing worse than a fake smile, so don't force yourself to smile if that feels unnatural for you in the moment.)
- **Envision a friend** Although you will feel some pressure in a job interview (they've got a job, and you want it, after all), remember that the expectations you bring into the interview have some part in shaping how things go. As you mentally prepare for the interview, imagine yourself relaxed, talking easily to your interviewers. Imagine things going well. And remember that ultimately, if they feel your skills are not the right fit for their position, chances are that it's not the right place for you anyway. Keep your chin up and envision success, and you will find the spot that's right for you.
- **Share what you know** Some people struggle with how much to say about their experiences and accomplishments in an interview, but this is your time to really shine. Be gracious about your successes, and be clear about the successes of your team, how others have helped you, and who has been instrumental in your learning and your life. But don't hold back when you talk about the skills you've mastered and the areas that fascinate you. You want the interviewer to see who you are and what you bring to the organization, so be willing to show up and provide real details of your accomplishments.
- **Stay positive (don't badmouth a boss)** Although it's clear that not every job is the ideal position, keep in mind that the attitudes you show in an interview tell your prospective employer important information about you. If you blame coworkers or your boss for your loss of a previous job, your interviewer may be thinking, "That could be us someday." Take responsibility for your situation, demonstrate acceptance, and avoid speaking negatively about previous roles, even if your criticisms are warranted.

- **Ask your own questions** It's common practice in interviews that after the interviewer has completed his or her process, you will have a chance to ask questions. Be prepared with two or three questions you're wondering about the group. Perhaps you want to ask why the position is available, what the company hopes to accomplish through this role, or something similar.
- **Follow up** After the interview, send a thank-you note or e-mail message to the interviewer and express your willingness to talk again at her convenience. If you have any lingering questions, ask her.

The waiting game after an interview can be maddening—it's hard to wait to hear how you stacked up against other applicants when you've interviewed for a job you really like. This is the time for some good Zen practice. Feel good that you've done the best you can do, and let this particular interview go for awhile. Trust that the right position will open up for you, whether it's this role or another one. And in the meantime, don't stop your job search—keep applying and interviewing. The worst that can happen is that you get so many job offers that you have to decide which one you like best!

CHAPTER 8

Invest in Specialized Skills for Tomorrow

IN THIS CHAPTER, YOU WILL

- Find out about technology trends
- Consider changes in communications
- Anticipate the changing workplace

WHEN THE economy is pitching and swaying, most people are doing what they can to hold on until things get more stable. What can you learn during this uncertain time that will make you invaluable to your employer? Make the most of your learning opportunities and fine-tune the skills that help you adapt, adjust, and advance in the midst of change. This chapter helps you anticipate future changes and focus on skills you can add before those changes arrive.

■ Growing Trends in Technology

So what's the next big thing in technology? Changes are happening so quickly—perhaps heading toward some kind of still-mysterious convergence—but some trends we can predict.

Power is for the people. People are becoming more and more savvy about the technology they use. Generally, we want always-on, easy-access computers and devices that help facilitate our connection to the information and entertainment we seek. This means that learning about communications technologies, mobile devices and software, and programs that help teams work cooperatively are all good bets.

We want to create things. Think about Web 2.0 and all the tools, gadgets, and bells and whistles that are available online today that didn't exist just a few years ago. Also, think about what you expect from your social media. You want to choose your friends. You put

together your own groups. You rearrange things, choose colors, add skins, install gadgets, and customize to your heart's content. These preferences and activities will continue as consumers become more confident in their abilities to create online. Any technology that helps them do that effectively, naturally, easily—and for free—will be one worth watching.

Visit Channel 9 (<http://channel9.msdn.com>), a site dedicated to conversation (via video, podcasts, webcasts, and community forums) about emerging Microsoft technologies. (See Figure 8-1.) You can find out more about hot products, get links to tutorials and videos, and be part of the dialog.



FIGURE 8-1 Channel 9 is a site dedicated to conversations, videos, podcasts, and more that look at emerging Microsoft technologies.

Another organization to watch is Gartner Dataquest, an organization that focuses on data and emerging trends in technology. Visit Gartner's Podcasts page to download or listen to the latest information about emerging technology trends: http://www.gartner.com/it/products/podcasting/asset_137461_2616.jsp.

HOW CAN YOU KEEP AN EYE ON NEW TECHNOLOGIES?

- Find blogs, sites, and Twitter feeds that reflect new developments in technology.
- Attend conferences in your area about technology changes.
- Look for opportunities to learn more and share what you know.
- Use new tools as they become available. (Free is good!)
- Participate in discussion forums related to the technology you enjoy.

■ The Changing Nature of the Way We Communicate

So, what kind of a cell phone do you have? How many computers are there at your house? When is the last time you sent a text message? How many texts do you get in a single day?

Our culture has begun to radically alter the way we communicate with friends, family, colleagues, clients, and organizations. Making contact no longer relies on mailed letters and the U.S. Postal Service. Telephone calls don't have to wait until you get to the office or back to the house—you can make the call anywhere, anytime, to almost anyone you like. And creative ideas can be shared instantly—by text, e-mail, phone, or instant message—as quickly as they occur to you. Technologies such as Microsoft Windows Mobile, Xbox Live, messaging, security, and portable application development are all worth keeping on your radar screen.

And if you're a creative person who doesn't like to be limited to text, new creative programs enable you to capture ideas the way they feel right to you. Microsoft OneNote 2010 is one of those programs—an electronic version of the pocket notebook you can share with one or many people. OneNote enables you to doodle, record voice notes, add video, animations, text, Web clippings, and more to your blank pages. (See Figure 8-2.) Be as creative and freeform as you like—just get your ideas captured so that you can use them easily later.

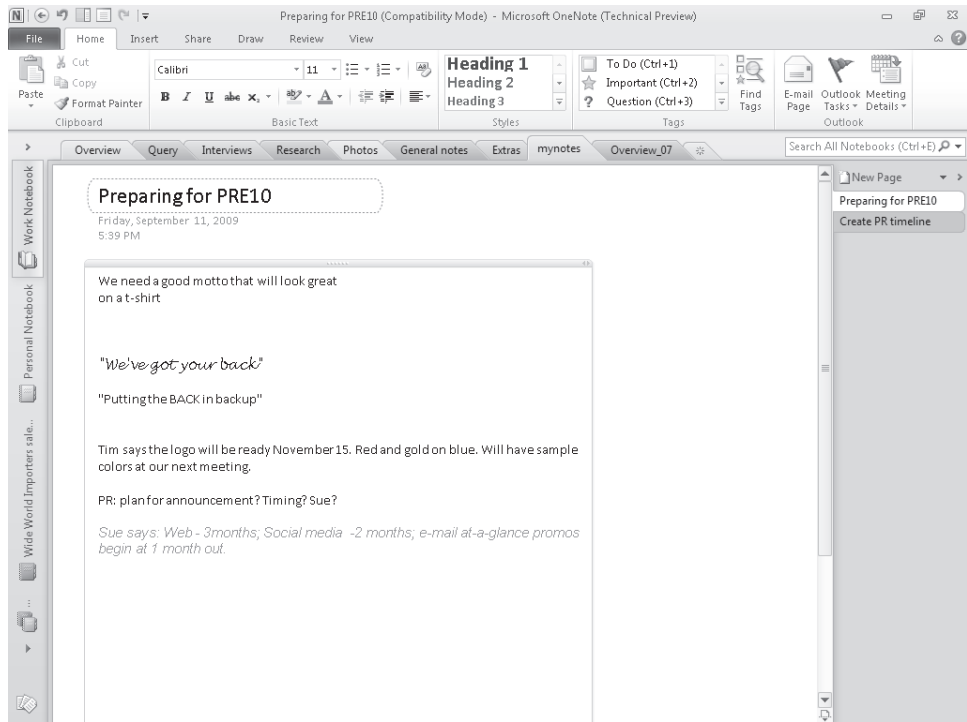


FIGURE 8-2 Microsoft OneNote 2010 enables you to type, write, ink, draw, or record notes you can use easily later.

HOW CAN YOU PREPARE FOR COMMUNICATION CHANGES?

- Keep up with social networking, Twitter, and blogging changes (and watch for whatever the next big thing will be).
- Learn about co-authoring and sharing throughout Microsoft Office 2010.
- Learn how to integrate instant messaging, texting, conferencing, and more.
- Explore server technologies, and find out more about networking trends and capabilities.

■ Working with Large Data Sets

If this heading makes your eyes glaze over, you're not alone. And yet a growing number of researchers and scientists—and worksheet builders—in the world are interested in working with huge data sets that enable them to accurately forecast trends, solve mind-boggling equations, and produce data models with a higher degree of accuracy than ever before.

Working with large data sets requires an increase in processing power and the capability to access and manipulate that kind of data volume, which requires both the development and application that can make it happen. One real-world area this is occurring in right now is the new 64-bit version of Office 2010. Now 64-bit users working with Excel 2010 can manipulate supersized worksheets up to 1 gigabyte in size, and a new program add-on, called PowerPivot for Excel, enables analysts and researchers to manipulate huge volumes of data in Excel worksheets.

You may recall from Chapter 4, "Surveying the Learning Landscape," that scientists involved with Microsoft Research are also interested in developing our capacity to work with huge data sets, and as the world continues to turn toward data-driven decision making (in education, business, and government), this area is only going to grow. So if data is your thing, keep your eyes open for upcoming technologies that make it possible for us to work with an ever-growing body of data.

HOW CAN YOU PREPARE FOR CHANGES IN DATA PROCESSING?

- Develop your data management, querying, and reporting skills.
- Follow blogs, Twitter feeds, and sites in your industry that focus on data-processing trends.
- Visit sites such as <http://theinfo.org> to discover basics of working with and analyzing large data sets (and share ideas with others who are doing the same thing).
- Explore ideas in database development and programming as well as financial application models.
- Find out more about application development, research, and statistical models.

■ The Changing Workplace

You don't have to look far to see how technology is rapidly change the way we work. Telecommuting is at an all-time high, and with the economy the way it is and the soaring price of gas—not to mention the daily commute's addition to U.S. carbon-dioxide (CO₂) emissions—people have good reason to look for options to driving to the office every day.

Technology is making it easier than ever to do all kinds of work virtually. Video conferencing is the next best thing to being there, which means instead of flying 2000 miles to meet with a client you can get together face to face with a Web cam and Microsoft Live Meeting. For this reason, any skills you can develop or programs you can learn related to conferencing or telecommuting will be put to good use.

The need for flexibility is going to increase as a larger number of businesses become increasingly adept at using virtual options to cut costs and save time. Teamwork is also on the rise—on a global scale—so skills that develop your translation abilities, demonstrate your comfort in working with people from other cultures, show project management prowess, or spotlight a talent for leading a team scattered remotely throughout the world will all serve you well.

One technology that is present now that is sure to have an increasing presence in the way we work in the coming years is Microsoft SharePoint Workspace, now part of Office 2010 Professional Plus, which enables teams to work together effectively, share files, and hold discussions and shared work sessions from any point on the globe. (See Figure 8-3.)

Trendwatching.com is a great site, with the latest articles on emerging consumer trends throughout the world. Each month Trendwatching focuses on a different topic and offers free monthly briefings on the latest developments. (You can also subscribe to the Trend Report and gain access to an extensive database.) To sign up for the free briefings, go to <http://www.trendwatching.com>.

HOW CAN YOU PREPARE FOR THE CHANGING WORKPLACE?

- Read books about workplace development, the growing global economy, and cloud computing.
- Check out the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics site (www.bls.gov).
- Download data from the Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11 Edition (<http://www.bls.gov/OCO>).
- Visit Office.com regularly for the latest how-to articles, tutorials, and more.
- Read e-journals, like the one published at America.gov (www.america.gov), that focus on global trends.

Resources for Learning

THIS APPENDIX lists a number of resources you can use to learn new skills that will enhance your chances of getting the job you want. We hope this book has been helpful to you and that these resources will assist you as you continue to learn. Good luck!

Resources for Your Continued Learning

- **The Microsoft Student Experience** is a one-stop resource for all kinds of information, tools, discounts, and more related to Microsoft products. (<http://www.microsoft.com/student>)
- **The Microsoft Student Lounge** provides a place for you to hang out and discuss various technologies that interest you with other students around the world. Watch videos, talk about CSS or Silverlight, debate the changes in the Office 2010 beta—it's up to you. It's your place. (<http://www.microsoftstudentlounge.com>)
- **DigiGirlz @ Microsoft** is a technology program for high school girls designed to provide opportunities for learning about technology through a variety of events and camps. (<http://www.microsoft.com/about/diversity/programs/digigirlz/default.aspx>)
- **The Microsoft IT Academy** is a subscription based site for school administrators, educators, and students that offers IT training, courseware, and certification options. (<http://www.microsoft.com/education/msitacademy/default.mspix>)

- **Microsoft Education** works with all stakeholders in school communities to help provide tools, programs, technology, lesson plans, and resources that answer the pressing needs in education today. (<http://www.microsoft.com/Education/Default.aspx>)
- **Microsoft Learning** offers comprehensive technology training in a variety of areas. You can choose a learning plan and prepare for a specific career or take on-line or in-class courses that meet your needs. (<http://www.microsoft.com/learning>)
- **Ramp Up** is a free online community learning program that offers different learning tracks for those wanting to add tech skills to their professional development portfolio. (<http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/rampup/default.aspx>)

■ Resources For Your Job Search

- **Microsoft Student Career Counseling** provides resources, links, and videos to help you prepare for career opportunities in IT. (<http://www.microsoft.com/student/en/US/career/career-counseling.aspx>)
- **The Microsoft Academy for College Hires (MACH)** is a global initiative that provides talent development for new college graduates in Microsoft's sales, marketing, and services divisions.
- **Microsoft Recruiting** is a site for college students interested in a career with Microsoft. Explore the many links and visit the job postings to see what's available for you. (<http://www.microsoft.com/student/en/us/career/microsoft-recruiting.aspx>)
- **Microsoft's JobsBlog** provides tips, suggestions, articles on more on developing a resume, interviewing, and finding a job at Microsoft. (<http://microsoftjobsblog.com>)
- **Own Your Future** is a Microsoft site for college students that offers practical suggestions and videos on creating a resume, setting up your job search, preparing for an interview, becoming a student leader, and speaking publicly. (<http://www.microsoft.com/student/en/us/career/own-your-future.aspx>)
- **Students to Business** is a Microsoft site for college students that connects Microsoft partners and customers with qualified students for entry-level and internship positions. This program offers unique mentoring, training, and certification opportunities (<http://www.microsoft.com/studentstobusiness/home/default.aspx>)
- **View <myWorld>** is a Microsoft site full of videos posted by Microsoft employees, telling in their own words about (and in some cases, showing) what it's like to work for there. Interesting stories! Visit the site at <http://viewmyworld.com/default.aspx>.

About the Author

Katherine Murray has been writing about technology since the mid-1980s, which means that over the years she's seen lots of changes in the way technology is used. She specializes in writing about software that enables us to connect and collaborate, and publishes a number of blogs, including BlogOffice, which offers tips and ideas on using Microsoft Office. In addition to her writing about technology, Katherine is a member of the Society of Environmental Journalists and writes regularly about earth care topics. As the mother of three (and now grandmother of two), she believes that continuing to learn about the latest technologies is both fascinating and empowering, enabling students to bring sought-after skills to the workplaces that need them.

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