

Essential Skills 101: What your company should know about essential skills training

Why are essential skills important?

Essential skills are used in every task a worker performs. Workers use essential skills to complete simple tasks, such as filling out a form or giving a verbal update at a meeting, to more complex tasks, such as writing an operational plan with sophisticated computer software. Employees need essential skills in order to perform their current jobs competently and to learn new skills to advance in their careers.

Does your company need essential skills training? Let's find out.

1. Do your employees use any of these skills to perform job tasks in their day-to-day work?
 - Document use: find or fill-in information to perform job tasks that is found on signs, labels, gauges, tables, graphs, forms, manufacturers safety data sheets (MSDS), schematic drawings, blueprints
 - Reading: use information from log books, memos, brochures, manuals, textbooks, websites, emails to perform job tasks
 - Oral communication: speak or listen face-to-face or with pagers, radio, and/or phone to relay information to customers, the public, co-workers and supervisors. Information can be about shift change, safety talks, mentoring and giving instructions, for example.
 - Writing: write short emails, reports or log book entries, letters and/or forms.
 - Digital use: use specific applications, draft letters and send emails, retrieve and print data, prepare graphs and charts, create spreadsheets, analyze data
 - Thinking skills: make decisions, solve problems, coordinate work plans, prioritize tasks.

2. Low skills show up differently at different levels. Front-line staff may not be filling documents out properly, and project managers may not be managing timelines, and team leaders may not be creating positive team dynamics. Is your company wasting time and resources because of miscommunications or having to redo tasks?

Organizational signs of a low-skilled workforce

- Product errors, product recall, waste
- Poor health and safety records
- Higher rates of worker's compensation insurance
- High rates of absenteeism and staff turnover
- Employees not accepting promotion opportunities

Employee signs of a low-skilled workforce

- May perform well now, but are slow to respond to changes and developments
- Can't read or understand job instructions
- Take a day off to avoid training
- Depend to a high degree on supervisors and team leaders and/or translators
- Make product errors because they can't make calculations or follow procedures
- Can't work within timelines
- Can't understand ISO documentation

3. Is your organization prepared for upcoming trends?

- More stringent safety and consumer protection regulations
- More competitive and geographically diverse customer base
- More diverse workforce in terms of ethnicity, background and skills sets
- Greater digitization and advanced technology
- Loss of occupations requiring low levels of essential skills

Are you getting the best work from your employees? Are they motivated to do their best work for YOU? Find out how essential skills training can improve your company's productivity, your bottom line, employee retention and satisfaction, AND decrease safety incidents and down time.

Click [HERE](#) to find out more about the Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society (AWES) and how essential skills training could help your company, or contact us directly:

Cindy Messaros, Executive Director, AWES

Cindy@awes.ca

Who is AWES?

The Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society (AWES) is a non-profit organization focused on training, research and curriculum development. AWES specializes in developing customized essential skills training solutions for organizations, employers and practitioners.

Employers often come to AWES when they have a problem. The issue might affect productivity, a worker's ability to understand and implement training, employee retention, or health and safety performance. This may cause an increase in absenteeism or time wasted redoing tasks, workplace errors when calculating formulas, filling in shift or incident reports, or making decisions. The problem is often misidentified as a behavioural issue with the workers themselves, poor attitude, a lack of initiative or a lack of common sense. It's far more likely that your workforce has essential skills gaps, and we can help.

AWES identifies skill gaps and develops customized and specialized essential skills responses to problems.