Adaptability

Workers in the 21st Century must be prepared for changes that could completely transform their careers at any time. Broader changes could come in the form of technological advances, economic structural changes, or shifts in demographics or consumer preferences. Smaller shifts that could disrupt work life include changing project teams, emerging conduits or platforms to acquire work, retraining to update skills, and changes in employment status from employed to self-employed. Workers need to be tolerant of inevitable changes in the work environment and adapt accordingly.

Analysis/Solution Mindset

Because many jobs will be automated or outsourced, 21st Century workers with superior analytical skills and a solutions-based mindset will excel in the new world of work. Analytical skills will include statistical analysis, quantitative reasoning, and the ability to sort through data to arrive at conclusions that will create value. A solutions mindset will involve workers taking in all factors in a situation, including the human and emotional factors, which might be missed in automated processes.

Collaboration

21st Century workers need to be excellent collaborators. Collaboration will come in the form of freelance teams formed for specific projects or entire organizations that will need to collaborate to reach shared goals. Workers will need to be able to recognize good partners, employing empathy to see the partners’ points of view. Today's worker is expected to bring value to a collaborative partnership, which includes an understanding of his/her own core skills.

Communication

The 21st Century workplace requires effective communication via email, video conferencing, texting, blogging, and social media, which is just as important as face-to-face interactions and group communication. In both virtual and in person settings, communication essentials such as timing, clarity, tone and point, relationship regarding audience, and social and cultural appropriateness are essential to a worker’s effectiveness.

Digital Fluency

Digital technology is the underlying force behind the acute changes in the modern workplace. Digital technology dictates how workers can collaborate, organize, and communicate remotely. 21st Century workers must be comfortable with current technology and be willing to adapt to emerging technology as it pertains to their specific industries.

Empathy

To have a truly innovative team, all members must tolerate the risk for failure and be able to empathize with members who experience disappointment in order to be more resilient and build from that experience. Instead of seeing peers as potential competition, they should be seen as potential allies or collaborators. Empathy is at the core of trusted relationships, which is
necessary for successful collaborations. Entrepreneurs need to rely on empathy to understand the needs and challenges of their customers, resulting in new solutions and services.

**Entrepreneurial Mindset**
An entrepreneurial mindset is at the core of future work. Workers will need to be able to recognize opportunities and learn from failure. Those who cultivate a strong network to tap into for assistance, work opportunities, and mentorship will enjoy a competitive advantage over passive workers. It will not be enough to work simply on merit—workers themselves are individual brands that must be recognized through appropriate networks to gain continued employment. Workers who adopt an entrepreneurial mindset will be open to developing new skills to differentiate themselves in the marketplace of work.

**Resilience**
There is an ever-growing need to embrace momentary failure in the modern workplace. True innovation requires a degree of risk-taking, the willingness to try something new with the knowledge that it may not work the first time. To develop resilience, workers need to have a healthy relationship with failure. To stay competitive, American workers will need to capitalize on their innovation and creativity, which is often developed through the process of failed projects and re-visioning. Many employers will seek out innovators from within their own organizations or contract with freelancers who are known for their creative thinking.

**Self-Awareness**
In order to succeed in the 21st Century workforce, employees must be acutely aware of their strengths, values, and propensities. Today’s workers need to have a deep understanding of their own transferable skills and strengths that could be applied in seemingly disparate work situations. They must be prepared to pivot as technology continues to transform industries, forcing some jobs into obsolescence

**Social/Diversity Awareness**
Global and multi-generational teams are characteristic of the 21st Century workplace. Workers should be comfortable collaborating on team projects with a variety of people from varying socioeconomic, generational, cultural, and national backgrounds. Gaining an understanding of how to work with others from different backgrounds will be a distinct advantage to the 21st Century worker. Advances in technology have resulted in unprecedented expansion in virtual teams composed of members from around the globe. Workers must have some awareness of cultural customs to communicate effectively and create a nurturing and productive team environment.