

# WorkWise: Got the job? Get up to speed

By Mildred L. Culp  
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*Princess Clark-Wendel, a financial specialist dealing with the unique needs of minority women, was featured in the WorkWise syndicated column by Dr. Mildred Culp the week of June 6, 2010, where she discussed important steps to take to upgrade your skills in a new job, particularly after a long period of unemployment or underemployment. Read more about her commitment to ongoing self-development and worry-free living at [www.livelifeworryfree.com](http://www.livelifeworryfree.com).*

Many of the millions of job-hunting Americans — unemployed or underemployed — need to be prepared for a hiring agreement requiring getting their skills up to speed.

This condition will arise regardless of age, because long-term unemployed and underemployed may be viewed as having outdated skills. Dexterity with technology, entrepreneurial concepts and execution, and on-the-job relationships will be the three most urgent skills. How can you improve them in short order?

Don't forget the most important skill of all — interpersonal, based on good communication. John Rooney, who directs the M.A. Program in Clinical Counseling Psychology and is an emeritus professor at Philadelphia's La Salle University, mentions that "people need to be able to collaborate to reach a common goal. That helps them be more effective and tends to give them more satisfaction." If you've been job hunting a long time or working in isolated environments, these skills might be rusty.

Princess Clark-Wendel of Chicago's Princess Clark Consulting Inc., consults with people changing jobs and others who want to find new opportunities to increase their earnings.

"I make them see that we've moved from a manufacturing economy to a more technology- and knowledge-based economy," she says. "Their skill set, just like their iPods and cell phones, changes every year or becomes outdated. Technology is ever-evolving; so they must evolve as well."

David Gammel, president of High Context Consulting L.L.C., in Salisbury, Md., indicates that as the cost of technology declines, "the ability to crunch numbers and target messages can now be had for cents or for free. This is a tremendous opportunity for a person or organization to be entrepreneurial in developing products and marketing services."

He emphasizes that entrepreneurial behavior can be learned, that it's an essential skill.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

If only for cost-savings, Clark-Wendel says, your boss will be motivated to help you.

"Take good notes of what you do well and what value you bring to the organization," she suggests. "Then negotiate a three-to-six-month action plan to ramp up your skill set." Be entrepreneurial, Gammel advises, by "taking ownership of your project and your future, regardless of whether your boss is supportive."

Both Rooney and Gammel comment that you "learn by doing." Rooney says to "take initiative in interacting with people on the job or in a volunteer situation. Practice collaborating. This may involve a little risk. Learn from your successes and failures. We're all in the habit of relating to people certain ways.

"For example, if you think compliments are insincere, give sincere ones. As you do, check reactions and find ways of expressing your sincerity — not necessarily out loud — affirming other people and your value and respect for them."

Gammel, who helps organizations use technology more effectively, suggests you "talk with your boss about how you can find opportunities to stretch entrepreneurially." He also recommends being open and flexible in creating outcomes customers and employers want and abandoning "procedures, processes and projects" that no longer work.

Rooney stresses:

- obtaining feedback from people you trust;
- communicating clearly, not vaguely and ambivalently;
- listening to others to understand why they think what they do; and

- finding middle ground for compromise when there's disagreement.

"Identify a compromise that you both feel good about afterward," he says.

All of these people advocate learning. Clark-Wendel favors it through educational institutions, online and, on the job, across the generations (with you sharing your knowledge). Use your fine-tuned interpersonal skills to identify and partner with others as resources. Be one yourself. Rooney mentions that there are lots of workshops that can help, even if their quality is mixed.

"Technology is too important to leave to IT these days," Gammel observes. "I think technology is a core tool for anyone who wants to be entrepreneurial in an organization. Read. Look beyond the walls where you work."

**Dr. Mildred L. Culp welcomes your questions at [culp@workwise.net](mailto:culp@workwise.net).  
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*Princess Clark-Wendel (right) consults with a client employed at a Chicago hospital who wants to become a full-time real estate broker while she studies to become an R.N. Clark-Wendel's Princess Clark Consulting Inc., is based in Chicago. (Alan Klehr)*