

[MUSIC PLAYING]

This is Eastern Michigan University's *Career Corner*, hosted by the career coaches of the University Advising and Career Development Center. And welcome to season 4 Career FAQ.

Welcome back to the *Career Corner* podcast. I'm a career coach at the UACDC. My name is Barb Gehring. And I'm excited to be back answering another common question in our series Career Frequently Asked Questions.

Our episode today hits on a very important subject impacting students seeking employment. How have employers' expectations changed post pandemic? The last year and a half dealing with COVID-19 has impacted organizations all over the country and the world. One key variable that has changed since the pandemic is what skills employers are looking for, since the work environment has transitioned to a more virtual structure.

What used to be known as soft and hard skills are now seen differently. Skills are now seen as either durable, semi-durable, or perishable. Meaning, durable skills you bring in have more than 7 and 1/2 year lifespan. And those are described as soft skills that comprise important professional capacities and capabilities including leadership, critical thinking, communication, et cetera, and personal qualities like creativity, mindfulness, and fortitude that lasts throughout an entire career.

Semi-durable have a shorter life span of 2 and 1/2 to 7 and 1/2 years, and they tend to focus on frameworks that are based on understandings that may remain relevant for a few years. Every field has frameworks like these, base sets of knowledge from which field-specific technologies and processes will arise. Perishable is less than 2 and 1/2 years. These are considered tech skills, especially those related to specific vendors, platforms, or programming languages that are really updated quite frequently. Organization-specific policies and tools are also highly perishable. They're frequently going to shift due to transformation initiatives and changing organizational leaderships and philosophies.

So imagining these three qualifications skill sets, it's going to be somewhat like the envisioning of a tree. So if you look at a tree being the metaphor, the trunk would be your durable skills, the branches are the semi-durable skills, and the leaves would be your perishable skills. Employers are more focused on applicants that have durable skills, and then they will provide training on semi-durable and perishable skills.

Stackable credentials is another qualification that employers are open to considering, which is a change from the traditional expectation that you go to college, you get your degree, and then you start to begin your job search. The US Department of Labor defines stackable credentials as being part of a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time to build up an individual's qualifications and help them to move along a career pathway or up a career ladder to different and potentially higher-paying jobs. More plainly, stackable credentials can be viewed as building blocks where each short-term credential that a person earns builds into a higher-level credential.

Some of the examples for this include linear pathways, which means-- so you would start with getting an associate's, and then you would go on to get your bachelor degree, something like nursing assistant certificate, and then taking the exam, and then becoming certified nursing assistant, and then complete your degrees. Another one might be a work-based learning so you can get training on the job that your employer sponsors. So an example of that might be Google Ads to work more effectively on social media platforms. And one other one might be, say, military connected. You'll receive credit towards secondary education for your military experience that you bring.

So I want to just cover a couple of things around jobs and the demand and the change in demand. So employers seeking skill sets is changing, so therefore demand in jobs is going to change. So jobs that employers are filling continue to evolve with these expectation changes. Some of the increases in demand are around data analytics and scientists, digital marketing and strategy specialists, business development professionals, or even information security analysts.

Some of them that are decreasing would be things around administrative and executive secretary roles, assembly and factory workers, some general operations manager positions, and material recording and stock keeping. So a number of new niche occupations are emerging as automation becomes more prevalent. I just want to share with you what a couple of these look like to give you an idea of what the future starts to hold for all of you.

So roles such as digital media specialist, coordinator, and content writer, maybe artificial intelligence specialists or data scientists, engineers, developers, and analysts, also digital marketing specialists, managers, project coordinators, and consultants all around digital marketing, and human resources talent recruiters.

So basically, just keep in mind that the world of work is fluid and ever changing. Employers' expectations have to move with that change. We want to support you in preparing to be skilled up and confident in what you have to offer. Keep in mind career coaches are here to help as you plan your career path. We support your goals.

[MUSIC PLAYING]