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# Why Dance Majors Make Good Employees

*As dancers, we learn how to audition, but what about getting another kind of job? Your dance degree has value beyond learning pirouettes, so learn to market your many related skills now*

by Danielle Dunmire

Whether you are interviewing for a job in the arts or an outside profession, you'll find that your degree in dance has helped you develop many skills. How many? Just take a look at this list of qualities that dancers have gained from years of dancing. What you've learned as a dance major might be just the thing to make you a valuable employee in any field.

## Top Ten Reasons To Hire A Dance Major:

1. Communication: Clearly, we emote with our bodies to get a message across, but we have also been trained in listening, writing, and speaking in the process of getting our degree. Through our four years of dancing at a university we have worked with many different people, all the while learning how to communicate. It involves marketing to the public about upcoming events or to fellow cast members about important information. Dancers tend to rely on modes of communication to get through their day and realize the importance of communicating with people in order to be successful. In Randall S. Hansen and Katharine Hansen's article, *What Do Employers Really Want? Top Skills and Values Employers Seek from Job-Seekers*, communication skills in writing, listening, and speaking are the first most sought- after critical employability skills.
2. Team work. Many jobs involve working in groups of one or more people, which forces you to work professionally with different people while reaching a common goal, developing teamwork abilities (Hansen & Hansen). As the University of Texas points out in their article, *A Career Guide for Dance Majors*, "dancers seldom perform unaccompanied, so they must be able to function as part of a team." Dancers understand that there may be participants in the group who you do not get along with. To many people this might be a tough situation, but for us we tend to find ways to form a connection with one another since team work revolves around trust.
3. Respect. Learning dance technique has a mass amount of respect involved which transfers into real life. Simple habits such as saying thank you and respecting the leader in the room transfer from the dancer world into the working world. Performers learn that time is valuable and "time is money," an important concept that will make you attractive to a future boss. According to Alison Doyle's article, *Most Common Interview Mistakes*, not paying attention is a big flaw in an employee. It is disrespectful and wastes time. From technique class we are trained to be attentive and polite, because if we do not know the combinations we may face being called out by our professor. An employer does not want to hire someone who is inconsiderate. This is something that cannot be shown on a resume, but it's simple to display during an interview. After all those years of dance

training, you'll know better than to slouch in an interview. Take what you have learned in class and put it to use. You say thank you at the end of class, right? You don't need to curtsy to the interviewer, of course, but a simple hand shake, eye contact, "thank you," and smile will do. Interviewing tips from the California Government website even suggests writing a thank you note two or three days after the interview.

4. Analytical thinker. This term means you have learned "highly analytical thinking with demonstrated talent for identifying, scrutinizing, improving, and streamlining complex work processes" (Hansen & Hansen). Performers have perfected their problem-solving skills through dealing with various situations in a live performance and having to improvise. It's important to be "quick on your feet" in dance class, which relates to being quick thinkers. Having the ability to gather important information and react quickly and positively are talents that can take years of training.
5. Understanding technique and technology. It's possible that dancers might not be as computer-literate and proficient in software as other majors might be (although the field of dance and technology is growing, so that may be an old cliché). However, after obtaining a degree from a four year university we know the basics that we learned through out general education classes. I feel that performers are actually very technical. We develop by paying attention to details, which help us to understand patterns and how things work.
6. Trainable. Performers have this amazing ability to adapt to change. This makes dancers very teachable. With the combination of being technical, quick thinkers and being able to pick up details, dancers are quick learners. From spending hours in the studio in front of an instructor striving for perfection, dancers are able to take constructive criticism well because we tend to feel the need to be successful. This is shown through the long days in front of the mirror perfecting turning sequences until the artist is satisfied or physically unable to continue.
7. Good time manager. Going to a university for a dance degree means you are going to have a busy schedule. Dancers appear to have the most intense schedules going from academic classes, to dance classes, to rehearsals every day. The only way to be successful is to be organized and manage our time. Hansen and Hansen mention the importance of promoting yourself as a well-organized planner, which "deals with your ability to design, plan, organize, and implement projects and tasks within an allotted timeframe." We are used to being in a time crunch, whether it is cleaning up a routine or finishing an essay, we know how important it is to prioritize in order to get tasks done.
8. Determined. Dancers tend to be detail-oriented, making us hard workers and persistent. In Hansen and Hansen's article, there is a list of what they feel are the 10 most important personal values that employers seek in employees, and work ethic is high on the list. The person who has dedication, a willingness to work hard, and tenacity is described as a "productive worker with solid work ethic who exerts optimal effort in successfully completing tasks" (Hansen & Hansen). As dancers, I feel we could all come up with many examples of having tenacity in our art. For instance, recovering from an injury.

When I was hurt, all I wanted to do was to be healthy and able to dance full out again. To get to that state, I needed to keep up with my physical therapy. This is sometimes a long process filled with a roller coaster of emotions. At one point I even felt that my injury would never heal, but with dedication I was able to make a full recovery which reveals my work ethic of not giving up.

9. Creative. On Hansen and Hansen's list of skills most sought after by employers, one of the categories is creativity, which involves reasoning and problem solving. Graduating from the School of Arts means you spent the past four years being creative and advancing in your art form. Artists have a way of approaching situations differently and thinking outside the box. This is a unique quality that a dance major can bring to any work environment. Highlighting that fact, that you could provide your different perspective in the work force, might give you an edge over the other people interviewing for the position.
10. Positive attitude. From my experience, dancers tend to have the ability to think optimistically. This might develop from surviving the audition process over and over without being completely discouraged when it doesn't turn out the way you hoped. Hansen and Hansen call it being an "energetic performer consistently cited for unbridled passion for work, sunny disposition, and upbeat, positive attitude." It's what job-seekers need to get hired and eventually to get promoted in a company, using the kind of enthusiasm I think you can find in any experienced performer.

Even though some people believe that as a dance major all we can do is dance, it is clear that we have developed many marketable skills through our intense training. These qualities are just some of the many ways you can start creating a brand for yourself to market the value of your degree.

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*Danielle Dunmire graduated with a dance degree from the University of California, Irvine, in 2013. Since then, she has danced with Celebrity Cruises and the Utah Ballroom Dance Company,*

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