

National BILT Meeting Minutes
“Employability Skills” Vote and Discussion

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, June 9, 2026	MEETING TIME: 11:30am-1:00pm Eastern	MEETING PLACE: Zoom
RECORDER: Mark Dempsey	RECORDING: Available upon request	PREVIOUS MEETING: Industry trends meeting – April 28, 2026

MEMBERS PRESENT

BILT:		
Scott Andersen	Jess Irwin, Collins Aerospace	James McClain
Randy Dineen, Infoverity	Corey Kirkendoll, 5K Technical Services	Sreekanth Muktevi, YASH Technologies
Yolanda Eyre, Breakthrough T1D	Denis Kosar, DAMA New York City	Lynne Reynolds, Milestone Technologies
Vincente D'Ingianni	Durga Krishnamoorthy, Cognizant Technology	Lee Rosenfeld, McGraw Hill
Bob Hitchins, Fidelity National Financia	Milton Maddox, US Artificial Intelligence Institute	Teresa Younkin, Mosaic Life Tech
EDUCATORS: Lone Star College		
NITIC STAFF: Ann Beheler, Mark Dempsey, Christina Titus, Alie Hernandez, Stephanie Schuler, Diane Meza, Andie Bonkowske, Grayson McKeown, Tatiana Perez (CUNY/Deb Hecht)		

Agenda items	Discussion
NITIC and BILT overview	Stephanie provided some “rules of engagement” for the Zoom call, then provided an overview of the NITIC grant and explained that the goal of today’s meeting is to prioritize job employability skills for entry-level IT workers technicians in the next 12-36 months. She welcomed the BILT members and told them their anonymized feedback will be widely disseminated to educators nationwide. She also noted educators on the Zoom call are invited to primarily listen actively. Ann provided an overview of the BILT (Business and Industry Leadership Teams). BILTs are business advisory councils that put employers in a co-leadership role. Ann explained some BILT expectations, including the point that the discussion after today’s vote is just as important as the vote itself. Ann next explained the 1-4 voting scale. Each item will receive its own individual vote. * “4” means absolutely must be in the curriculum * “3” means should be in curriculum * “2” means it’s a “nice to have” * “1” essentially means delete NITIC offered a separate voting link for educators to conduct their own prioritization. Using a QR code (and URL in the chatbox), the SMEs voted electronically. Anything scoring 2.6 or less will be discussed because, typically, items with scores that low are left out of the curriculum. But the BILT is welcome to discuss any item.

Abilities	<u>A10 – Mathematics - Thinks in models. Expresses complex ideas and derives solutions mathematically, 2.46 average</u> One employer voted A10 low because entry-level workers may not have the skills to do this. Another employer, however, who started as a mathematician, noted his company prefers these sorts of skills. Ann agreed that math classes can affect how one thinks. Another employer noted that while you may not have to think like a mathematician, entry-level workers need to understand the basics of quantifying things and understanding how you might model a certain problem. Another employer rated this high because even entry-level workers interacting with AI models need to think about requirements and specifications. What problems are we solving? What are the patterns of the organization that need to be solved? This big picture approach can be more successful than just relying on prompt engineering. This sort of thinking needs to be taught sooner so they're not behind when they get into a higher-level job role. Another employer agreed with this, noting that AI is based on the highest levels of math. One employer clarified a comment she put in the chatbox that systems thinking is valuable, especially in the ability to create an IT diagram or flowchart to describe solutions to customers. Visuals and graphics are often better than just words. Ann agreed you need to be able to relate a problem or solution or proposal in a clear manner. Ann noted also that because of the way AI changes so often, more and more it's the employability "durable" skills that are emphasized in job interviews. Because content skills keep changing, hiring managers may be relying more on employability skills. One employer agreed with what's being said. At the end of the day, his company is still consulting with customers. He expects his employees to interact and communicate really well with each other and with clients. If a job candidate seems to have the "aptitude to learn the tech side of it," his company will make the hire and teach the tech skills. He further noted that the technologies (software, platforms) they use aren't being taught in college anyway. That's going to be on the job training. That's why their interviews focus on communication, problem solving, and teamwork. From the chatbox: "I do not think mathematics is only important dependent on what industry you go in and what type of technology you may do. I never had math classes for my degrees, and there was no need. Finance was more needed." <u>A16 – Client/Stakeholder focus - Customer-centered. Anticipates client needs and delivers personalized service, 3.23 average</u> One employer noted that some of these items can be seen as "more mature skills" for those who have been at an environment for a while. New hires are not often working with customers. That comes later, which is why she did not vote A16 high. Another employer agreed that they don't typically allow entry-level workers to interact with the businesspeople. It's not efficient – new hires don't know the lingo, don't understand the technologies. This is especially true as the technology changes and they work through a migration to a "multi-cloud multiverse." He wants his developers focused on maintaining the systems and staying current on tools and skills. That's a full time job. Until they understand the business, they won't interact with front-end users. The risk of miscommunication is too high. Another employer wondered about A15 (Teamwork - Collaborative. Builds relationships and resolves conflicts to meet team objectives) and A16. How do we handle those? Is it learning on
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the job? Is it using common sense? Is it understanding the customer needs? How do you put those things into a syllabus? Another employer replied that his company teaches teamwork through collaborative exercises in the room. Make the solve a problem “across the table.” Only over time, as they learn the company, will employees learn how to focus on stakeholder needs. Another employer with experience teaching project management classes explained that they put students into two-person teams and asked them to resolve a conflict. Then they would present their solution to the class, which provided a wide variety of perspectives on how to resolve conflicts. Those exercises also built relationships in the room. This exercise could be used in a community college classroom.

Another employer commented on the client stakeholder element. It took him a while to realize that it’s the customer and their needs that paid the bills. The job wasn’t just working with technology and problem solving. You have to do what the customer wants. This should be emphasized in the classroom. Tell students why they are taking the classes they’re taking and how they will connect to their careers. It’s not always to create new things and fix problems. You have to make the customer happy. Ann agreed that there can be a mindset that IT controls the workflows and systems rather than actively serving the business needs. Another employer noted that at his company, the entry-level workers very well may be meeting with customers. Everyone gets involved. He agreed that new hires cannot seem “ambivalent or antagonistic” to customer needs. It’s the entry-level workers doing the basic customer work, so they need to know what they’re doing and why. An uninformed question or comment can make the whole company look bad. One of their first questions to new hires is “how would you related to a customer?” You can no longer hide socially awkward engineers.

From the chatbox: “It is more the evolution along a skill matrix.”

One employer disagreed that entry-level workers need client stakeholder focus, but agreed those workers need many of the other qualities on the list. Too often she sees entry-level workers nod their head “yes” and just does the work as requested rather than be a creative thinker and challenge the situation. New hires need to feel safe to voice their opinions and ideas. That said, those discussions should not happen in front of the business user or client. Eventually, those workers can be elevated and have that client stakeholder focus.

Ann summed it up: some BILT members think that an entry person should have client stakeholder focus, and others are saying that comes over time or maybe not at all depending on the situation.

One employer responded: imagine an entry-level worker for an e-commerce company. They may not yet fully understand the business or the technology to prioritize tasks and issues, but they should know what it’s like to shop online and appreciate what it’s like to be an e-commerce customer. Focusing on the customer experience overall – why does this matter? what are the impacts? – will lead to better application development. Sharing business templates may help entry-level workers in the early stages of their employment.

A17 – Planning and Organizing - Prepared. Prioritizes tasks and manages time and resources to accomplish important work, 3.15 average

One employer explained that he can’t have an entry-level worker prioritize client needs. They’re on tight budgets and timelines. And with their customers all wanting to use AI, they are often using the newest technologies but must do so carefully and safely. Christina wondered about letting the new hires prioritize their own tasks and time. The employer said “no” because he has a new hire right now that, if left to his own devices, would prefer to spend

all of his time doing what he thought was interesting. Another employer agreed. But another employer did see Christina's point – he read A17 as being able to prioritize a list of tasks provided by his/her manager and stay focused on what is most important. But the counterargument is that new hires who have good technical skills are likely going to be very creative. His company therefore must balance encouraging creativity and innovation with making sure the products are feasible and supportable. Another employer agreed that you won't succeed unless you address tasks that are important, even if they're not fun and interesting.

A20 – Seeking and Developing Opportunities - Proactive and forward-looking. Finds areas where improvements or revolutionary changes are needed, 2.92 average

Ann guessed this will depend on what they do with what they find, and how they present them. One employer noted that innovation is almost mandatory at his company. Entry-level workers are encouraged to look for ways to improve processes and tasks and products. He thinks this point needs to be emphasized to students: look at something and think about how to make it better. That said, those innovations are proprietary so new hires need to understand there's a time and place for disclosing and discussing their ideas.

A22 – Scheduling and Coordinating – Connected. Synchronizes schedules and manages logistics to efficiently fulfill requirements, 2.62 average

Ann noted with a 2.62 this one barely made the 2.6 cutoff. One employer agreed that this is more a function of a team lead, not an entry-level worker. Another employer, however, noted that new hires still need to be able to manage what's on their plates and follow schedules and deadlines. Another employer talked about the value of AI tools like Copilot. So many scheduling and coordinating tasks are now handled by AI that the ability now is more about using prompts with tools rather than doing the work yourself. At her company, they barely schedule meetings; Copilot handles it.

A27 – Business and Public Policy - Logical thinker. Analyzes information to draw conclusions, 3.0 average

One employer thinks this one "depends" on the industry. He voted A27 in the middle because it's one thing if you go to a game development company versus going to a company with strong GDPR-style regulatory requirements like finance or health care. He thinks this is maybe something that the company would handle rather than the school. Maybe the community college could teach the types of policies that are out there and the sort of things the students might encounter rather than teaching the specifics of the policies. Another employer looked at A26 (Professional Ethics - Acts appropriately. Evaluates the merits, risks, and impacts of engineering activities) and A27 the same way. He was thinking about defense contractors or AI companies that might create products an employee doesn't agree with. Students really need to understand the sort of company they're joining. Choose wisely when applying for jobs. Another employer noted that new hires should be willing to report situations that are "not right." That could be internal reporting to managers or external reporting to authorities. Students need to know when to speak up if they see something wrong. Staying quiet creates innumerable problems.

A29 – Compassion and Kindness - Supportive and altruistic. Empathizes with others in both good times and bad, 2.62 average

	One employer noted this is similar to his earlier point about working for a company that you might not ethically agree with. Or maybe over time you have a change of heart. Another employer thinks this comes with maturity as you work at a company and develop relationships with coworkers. This is not something that will happen right away. Another employer believes this is very important because one will lose motivation if the working environment isn't compassionate and kind. One employer called this "squishy" because there's no way to "track compassion and kindness other than the actual actions of a human being." He's not sure this is something you can learn in a classroom. These are great attributes like A30 (Curiosity and Civility - Inquisitive and open minded. Excited about new and different perspectives and committed to respectful and free exchange of ideas), but how can you teach it? Another employer noted you can teach by example. Another employer agreed that many of the abilities in this section are "social skills" that come with maturity and experience but are hard to teach in a classroom. These are developed more through social interactions – family and work and friends. Ann agreed but wondered if students should at least be taught that these are valuable. Another employer agreed that these cannot be taught but should be encouraged. Her experience is that many of these are inherent values and qualities with Generation Z. It's part of their ideology. They are different and older workers sometimes are blind to this. Many Generation Z workers are mission- and compassion-focused. They want to be sure things are inclusive. These traits sometimes conflict with corporate culture. She argues that some of this adjustment should come from the organizational leadership, not the new hires. <u>A33 – Goal Setting- Purposeful and focused. Defines clear, achievable objectives and creates a structured plan to reach them, 2.85 average</u> Ann noted this one was voted lower and wondered if some hoped new hires would learn this on the job. One employer noted that new hires often don't know the organizational goals at first. They may not know what their goals are at first. That comes with time for the job. At first, it's the company setting the individual goals. <u>A34 – Enthusiasm - Positive and energetic. Approaches tasks with eagerness, optimism, and a willingness to engage fully, 3.31 average</u> One employer noted again that this is something that's hard to teach. Motivation often comes from the environment. Workers are more committed in a positive environment. It may be better to teach students what to look for in those situations. Another employer suggested that students should think about this during the interview process. Employers want to feel energy and positivity from new hires. How they answer the questions is important. Ann agreed and mentioned recent experience with community colleges conducting mock interviews with industry. Getting feedback from employers carries more weight than feedback from faculty.
Voting for next time	The conversation shifted away from the list and towards discussing what other employability skills should be included at the next vote meeting. One employer noted that a program her company runs has discovered that employees that are the most valued are those who are willing to ask questions and seek help. Don't just "seethe in silence." Be a self-starter if you run into trouble and ask for help. Offer to chip in if you have free time. So while maybe new hires can't be expected to know everything, they should be willing to ask questions, reach out, seek advice, and learn. From the chatbox: "Do we want to add Emotional intelligence (EQ)? We do look for that in interview process but question comes to how can the college teach? In Carnegie Mellon when

I studied at Tepper B-school we had EQ sessions to cope up in real world and Navigating office politics.”

One employer talked about the importance of **storytelling**. In a job interview, you often have to get past the technical details to demonstrate your skills. That’s where the soft skills come into play. Translate the hard skills into value. You can’t just talk about writing code or doing math. You have to show how those skills – plus your passion and drive – bring value to the organization. Another employer agreed that great leaders are often great storytellers. People follow the visionary. If you can strengthen storytelling skills, these other soft skills will develop as well because you need those to tell stories. This is a skill that can be taught. There are many books available. He noted that humor is also important.

From the chatbox: “Story telling is an important skill, can be taught.”

Another employer added that part of storytelling is communicating a technical problem or solution clearly and positively. Make it relatable to your audience. She took a class in college that taught a variety of business and technical communication modes, both verbal and written. Many of her classmates struggled because they could not create a good presentation or speak in front of an audience. AI can help with some of the writing but ultimately you have to deliver the message.

From the chatbox: “Storytelling is an alignment issue that allows you to build a consensus. It is also is a team alignment.”

From the chatbox: “**Intelligent Questioning** - have we covered it?”

Ann wondered about the value in knowing how to “read a room.” One employer isn’t sure this is relevant for new hires. His job as a senior manager is to read the room, but entry-level workers often do not understand interpersonal and corporate politics. That comes with experience. Ann wondered if this should be modeled somehow in a classroom. Another employer noted you have to be in the room in order to learn how to start reading the room.

One employer suggested that the most important ability is to “**unlearn**.” He thinks students need to learn how to unlearn bad (“stupid”) habits, facts, skills. This should be taught before they get to college. Students need to be open to unlearning so all those other skills can be learned.

Another employer wondered if too many of our perspectives and concerns are “still rooted in the Industrial Age.” He’s had experience with an education program in which teenaged students who excel using AI tools because they were expected to do it well. They were not treated like entry-level hires. The students developed the courses, collaborated with faculty, and taught the content. To him, this illustrates the danger of sticking to older, narrow Industrial Age definitions and models. At his company, everyone is a customer and the employers are all given “net promoter scores” to measure their interactions. His entry-level workers are quickly able to talk to customers because they’ve been measured and prepared. They measure everything. Nothing is too subjective to measure. Civility is crucial. This different approach allows for more creativity and thinking outside the box. They insist on 5% of employee time to be spent on innovation and curiosity with the caveat that eventually they’ll need to present those ideas. The AI quantum age is very different from the Industrial Age.

From the chatbox: “For entry level, definitely listening, active listening, asking questions, understanding where to find answers and information, willingness to be mentored and share

	learnings with others. Reading the room and conscious of nonverbal cues is valuable but comes with watching and experience.” Ann noted her past success introducing group projects into technical classes to improve collaboration and communication and presentation skills. Some of her students have come back to her years later praising those group projects. One employer agreed this is important, especially giving presentations. Another employer agreed that public speaking is very important. She liked the group project idea because it can facilitate communication in a way that would benefit a new hire coming into a company. Another employer noted there are two phases of teamwork: there’s the skill in being a team leader and also the skill in being a team member. Both are important. From the chatbox: “Presentations are VERY important.” From the chatbox: “Facilitation skills.”
Conclusion	Stephanie mentioned the next BILT meeting set for August 25 to vote on AI Literacy skills and knowledge areas. NITIC also hopes to meet twice more in the fall – once to vote on technical support skills and once to discuss IT trends.
Next Meeting: Tuesday, August 25 (10:30am-12noon Central/11:30am-1:00pm Eastern) – vote on AI Literacy knowledge and skills	