

# OK, You're Creative: Five Skill Sets You'll Need in the Job Market

by Matthew Sigelman | May 26, 2016

A lot of people think of creativity as an end in itself. Unfortunately for starving artists everywhere, employers don't.

Employers do want creativity. They ask for it all the time in job postings. Fewer and fewer jobs require a worker to [tighten the same bolt](#) or [fill out the same form](#) over and over, without much thought. A knowledge economy runs on the ability to analyze problems and find creative solutions. And it takes technical know-how to do that.

In fact, creative work increasingly requires technical skills. Those additional technical skills are what give you the ability to translate great thoughts into action. So being "a creative type" won't get you a hall pass out of acquiring hard skills.

The best guide to what those skills are comes from the requirements employers list in job postings—the specific qualities that employers believe are needed to get the job done. So what skills go along with "creativity" when an employer posts a job description? When you look at the more than 500 million job postings in the [Burning Glass](#) database, a few clusters of skills stand out:



## Programming Software and Development

Useful skills in this field would include SQL, JavaScript, JAVA, software engineering, and technical writing and editing. [Coding software calls for creative problem-solving](#). But the programming field is also one of the places most impacted by the rise of "[hybrid jobs](#)," roles that combine skills that aren't usually taught together. The rising field of UI/UX design is a good example, requiring knowledge of marketing, design, and programming to create apps people will actually use.

## Product Development and Management

The act of building products and bringing them to market is a constant stream of challenges, and the more cutting-edge the product, the bigger the challenges are. Product design, concept development and product development, along with product management and marketing, are fundamental to turning ideas into profitable realities.

## Business Skills

Business development, business process, e-commerce, store management, and even accounting are also cited in jobs calling for creativity. Fortunately, we're not talking about the kind of

“creative accounting” that sometimes puts people in jail. Instead, we’re talking about business solutions that a growing number of employers recognize as crucial to creative endeavors. The merging of skills allows businesses to thrive in challenging environments.

## Design Skills

Graphic design, Web design, and software such as Adobe Photoshop, InDesign, and Acrobat, all rank high in jobs asking for creativity. The demand is for the ability to come up with something that looks good—and then actually to build it.

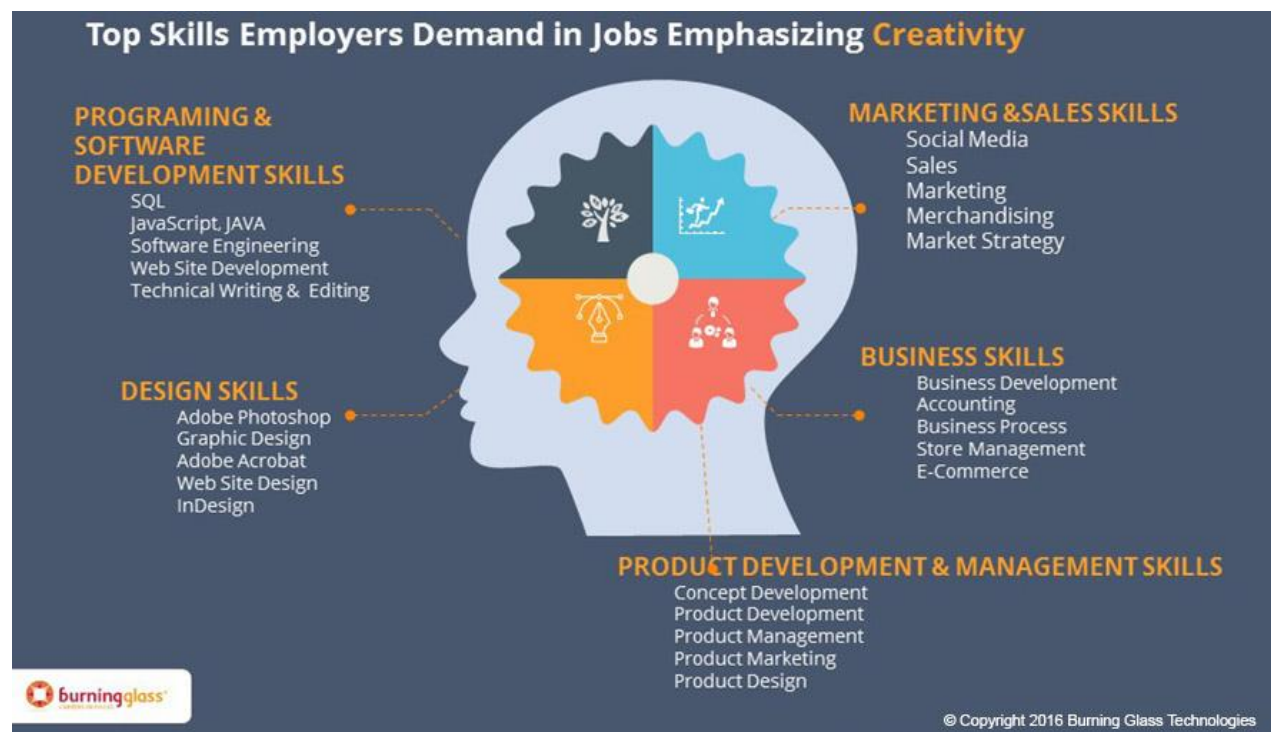
## Marketing and Sales

As “[Mad Men](#)” demonstrated, certain parts of this sector have always been considered creative work. The skills required aren’t confined to advertising, however. The entire field of marketing and sales is represented by skills such as market strategy, social media, merchandising, and sales. If anything, the advent of [content marketing](#) has spread the demand for these skills far beyond the traditional occupations.

There are two main lessons from this list. One is that creativity isn’t just limited to the “creative professions” like arts and media. A generation or two ago, all of these skill sets existed in different fields. Programmers coded software, designers made products look good, marketers pushed products to market, and business executives rode herd over planning and accounting. Now more businesses are seeing these as skills that cross over and demand multiple skill sets.

The other lesson for job seekers is that creativity rarely stands alone. Employers want the whole package: strong technical skills and the imagination to combine them in new ways. Students who think that pursuing creative lines of work will allow them to eschew the increasingly universal demand for STEM skills may be in for a rude awakening.

The net impact is that there is more opportunity for creative people than ever before, because more and more work is considered creative. But all of those opportunities have to be grounded in hands-on, practical skills to make good ideas into good products—and good jobs.



Matthew Sigelman is CEO of Burning Glass Technologies.

# AN OPPORTUNITY FOR TRADITIONAL LIBERAL ARTS PROGRAMS: GET PAST THE LAZY DEBATE

By coupling a field-specific skill set with the soft skills that form the foundation of a liberal education, **Liberal Arts graduates can nearly double the number of jobs available to them.** And these additional jobs offer an average salary premium of \$6,000.

Liberal Arts Jobs	Entry-Level Job Postings	Average Entry-Level Salary	Percent of Bachelor's Entry-Level Jobs
Jobs Traditionally Open to Liberal Arts Graduates	954,996	\$42,731	25%
Jobs Open to Liberal Arts Graduates with Additional Technical Skills	861,572	\$49,052	23%
Total Entry Level Jobs Accessible to Liberal Arts Graduates	1,816,568	\$45,729	48%*

\*The remaining 52% of entry-level jobs are in occupations that require specialized degrees or certifications – such as nurses, engineers, and accountants – and therefore aren't open to Liberal Arts graduates without considerable additional study.



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## SPECIFIC SKILLS MAKE LIBERAL ARTS GRADS MORE MARKETABLE

We identified eight skill sets that Liberal Arts graduates can develop through a modest amount of coursework, such as a minor or online training or internships, that **double their job prospects**:

### IT NETWORKING & SUPPORT

+ \$1,058 premium  
66,429 postings

### SALES

567,855 postings

### GENERAL BUSINESS

+ \$11,144 premium  
577,787 postings

### SOCIAL MEDIA

+ \$3,424 premium  
399,577 postings

### DATA ANALYSIS & MANAGEMENT

+ \$12,703 premium  
136,757 postings



### MARKETING

+ \$336 premium  
359,916 postings

### GRAPHIC DESIGN

+ \$9,188 premium  
134,090 postings

### COMPUTER PROGRAMMING

+ \$17,753 premium  
52,822 postings



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