THE SEVEN SURVIVAL SKILLS

for Careers, College, & Citizenship in the 21st Century

Author and educator Tony Wagner (*The Global Achievement Gap*), believes one must possess these 7 skills to survive in this century. Working in small groups, review the skills and address the discussion questions at the bottom of the page.

1. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

" The person who's close to the work has to have strong analytic skills. You have to be rigorous: test your assumptions, don't take things at face value, don't go in with preconceived ideas that you're trying to prove."

— Ellen Kumata, consultant to Fortune 200 companies

2. Collaboration Across Networks and Leading by Influence

" The biggest problem we have in the company as a whole is finding people capable of exerting leadership across the board...Our mantra is that you lead by influence, rather than authority."

—Mark Chandler, Senior Vice President and General Counsel at Cisco

3. Agility and Adaptability

" I can guarantee the job I hire someone to do will change or may not exist in the future, so this is why adaptability and learning skills are more important than technical skills."

— Clay Parker, President of Chemical Management Division of BOC Edwards

4. Initiative and Entrepreneurship

" We need self-directed people...who can find creative solutions to some very tough, challenging problems."

— Mark Maddox, Human Resources Manager at Unilever Foods North America

5. Effective Oral and Written Communication

" The biggest skill people are missing is the ability to communicate: both written and oral presentations. It's a huge problem for us."

— Annmarie Neal, Vice President for Talent Management at Cisco Systems

6. Accessing and Analyzing Information

" There is so much information available that it is almost too much, and if people aren't prepared to process the information effectively, it almost freezes them in their steps."

—Mike Summers, Vice President for Global Talent Management at Dell

7. Curiosity and Imagination

" Our old idea is that work is defined by employers and that employees have to do whatever the employer wants...but actually, you would like him to come up with an interpretation that you like–he's adding something personal–a creative element."

—Michael Jung, Senior Consultant at McKinsey and Company

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

● On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the best, how would you rate yourself on each of the 7 skills?

● Can you give an example of something you are doing to build one of these skills?

● What would you tell an employer to demonstrate your ability in one of the 7 skills?