

New Hampshire ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

September 2020

Sunapee Region, Pillsbury State Park - NH DIFD on flickr

How Skills Requested in Job Postings Have Changed Over Time

The labor market has been undergoing a transformation in recent years. A 2016 survey by the World Economic Forum listed a number of technological, demographic, and socioeconomic changes that have impacted or will impact businesses and that have also impacted the skills that businesses look for in their employees. Many of these changes are related to advances in technology – mobile internet, cloud technology, and the internet of things.¹ Other significant drivers of change include the sharing economy and the changing, more flexible nature of work.

In general, these changes cause businesses to be less interested in employing workers based on physical or manual skills, and instead look for workers with social or analytical skills.² This shift results in a change in the occupations that businesses look to hire; it also results in a shift within occupations to focus on or add different skills.

This article uses data from Burning Glass Technologies' Labor Insight tool to examine online job postings from New Hampshire-based employers from 2010, 2015, and from the last 12 months (September 2019 – August 2020) to determine what skills are most requested in job postings, and how those skills have changed over the last ten years.

Tellers

Tellers are almost entirely employed by businesses in the *credit intermediation and related activities* industry subsector – banks and credit unions.³ *Tellers* are

responsible for handling routine banking transactions, such as cashing checks and depositing money. But by 2020, many of these routine transactions are automated, handled by either ATMs or online banking applications. As a result, the responsibilities of a bank teller has changed.

Occupation Title	2018 Employment	Projected Change, 2018-2028	New Skills Requested
Tellers	1,624	-12.2%	Retail Sales
			Sales Planning
			Sales Strategy
			Product Sales
			Cross Sell

In 2020, five of the top ten skills requested in job postings for *tellers* were sales-related: Retail Sales experience, Cross Selling (selling new products to existing customers), Product Sales, Sales Strategy, and Sales Planning. Sales skills were among the top skills requested in 2010, but not to the same degree; skills requested in 2010 were primarily focused on processing routine transactions for customers, such as Cash Handling or Account Opening. By 2020, sales skills were a priority when businesses posted a job opening for a new *teller*, while skills associated with routine transactions were less of a priority.

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The latest 10-year occupational projections expect the number of tellers employed in New Hampshire to decline by 12 percent from 2018 to 2028.⁴ With fewer routine transactions for tellers to perform, the number of tellers needed to fully staff banks is expected to decline. Instead, tellers are being asked to perform a slightly different type of work, one that involves new social and analytical skills. However, this new work is not enough to increase or even maintain the number of *tellers* employed in New Hampshire.

Cashiers

Cashiers process payments from customers purchasing goods and services, and are mostly employed in the *retail trade* industry.⁵ In 2010, 2015 and in the last 12 months, commonly requested skills for *cashiers* included Customer Service, Sales, and prior Retail Industry knowledge or experience. Three skills were among the most commonly requested skills in 2015 and/or 2020 but were not frequently requested in 2010. These skills reflect some of the changes

¹ World Economic Forum, The Future of Jobs, <https://reports.weforum.org/future-of-jobs-2016/skills-stability/>.

² Pew Research Center, Changes in the American Workplace, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/10/06/1-changes-in-the-american-workplace/>.

³ New Hampshire Employment Security, Staffing Patterns.

⁴ New Hampshire Employment Security, Employment Projections by Industry and Occupation, 2018-2028. Projections do not account for pandemic related changes to the labor force in 2020.

⁵ New Hampshire Employment Security, Staffing Patterns.

in the responsibilities of *cashiers* over that time. Familiarity with Palm OS, software commonly used in point-of-sales systems and barcode scanning equipment was requested in 2015 and 2020.

Occupation Title	2018 Employment	Projected Change, 2018-2028	New Skills Requested
Cashiers	22,543	-3.8%	Refunds, Exchanges, and Adjustments
			Processing Item Returns
			Palm OS

Prior experience with Refunds, Exchanges, and Adjustments and Processing Item Returns were also frequently requested. Many retailers today offer self-checkout, meaning fewer cashiers are required to handle payments from customers. Returns, and exchanges, on the other hand, still require a cashier. In addition, as online retail becomes more prevalent, fewer items are physically purchased from brick and mortar stores, but many retailers allow customers to return or exchange merchandise purchased online. As a result of these trends, prior experience with these processes is a skill that employers look for in a new employee.

Stock Clerks and Material Movers

Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand work in many industries, primarily in *manufacturing* and in the *trade, transportation, and utilities supersector (retail trade, wholesale trade, transportation and warehousing and utilities)*.⁶ They move materials to and from storage and production areas, loading docks, delivery trucks, ships, and containers.

Occupation Title	2018 Employment	Projected Change, 2018-2028	New Skills Requested
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	6,241	4.7%	Shipment Sorting
			Barcode Scanning
			Inventory Control
			Inventory Management
			Supply Chain Solutions

In 2010, the top skills requested in job postings for *laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand* were almost all

focused on the physical tasks involved in the job, such as Packaging, Forklift Operation, and Lifting Ability. By 2020, employers that created job postings for *laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand* positions were looking for more than physical skills. The top skills requested in the last 12 months included Inventory Control, Inventory Management, Shipment Sorting, and Barcode Scanning. Job postings for related occupations had a similar shift in the skills requested. Job postings for *stock clerks, sales floor and stock clerks - stockroom, warehouse, or storage yard* over the last 12 months requested prior experience with Sortation systems (automated sorting systems, often using barcodes to sort and route items), Inventory Management, and Data Collection.

Occupation Title	2018 Employment	Projected Change, 2018-2028	New Skills Requested
Stock Clerks, Sales Floor and Stock Clerks - Stockroom, Warehouse, or Storage Yard	14,031	3.8%	Shipment Sorting
			Barcode Scanning
			Sortation
			Inventory Management
			Data Collection

In recent years, one- and two-day delivery for online retail purchases has become more prevalent, as has in-store pickup or curbside delivery for online orders. These options are convenient for consumers, but require supply chains to operate at faster and faster speeds. As a result, technology has become a greater part of many *transportation and material-moving* occupations, and familiarity with these technologies is a useful skill employers look for when hiring new workers.

Unlike *tellers* and *cashiers*, employment for *laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand, stock clerks, sales floor and stock clerks - stockroom, warehouse, or storage yard* is projected to grow from 2018 to 2028. However, this growth is expected to be lower than overall employment growth, which is projected to grow 5.3 percent over that time.⁷

It's important to note that long-term occupational projections are intended to capture structural changes in the economy and workforce, and are not intended to anticipate business cycle fluctuations, natural disasters, or other catastrophic events, such as the coronavirus pandemic. In the case of *laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand, stock clerks, sales floor and stock clerks - stockroom, warehouse, or storage yard*, job postings for these occupations were strongly impacted by the pandemic, which – at least in the short-term – impacted how consumers purchased retail goods. After trending gradually

⁶ New Hampshire Employment Security, Staffing Patterns.

⁷ New Hampshire Employment Security, Employment Projections by Industry and Occupation, 2018-2028.

upwards over the last decade, the number of job postings for these occupations increased exponentially in March and April 2020. Job postings have decreased since then, but remain well above 2019 levels.⁸

Summary

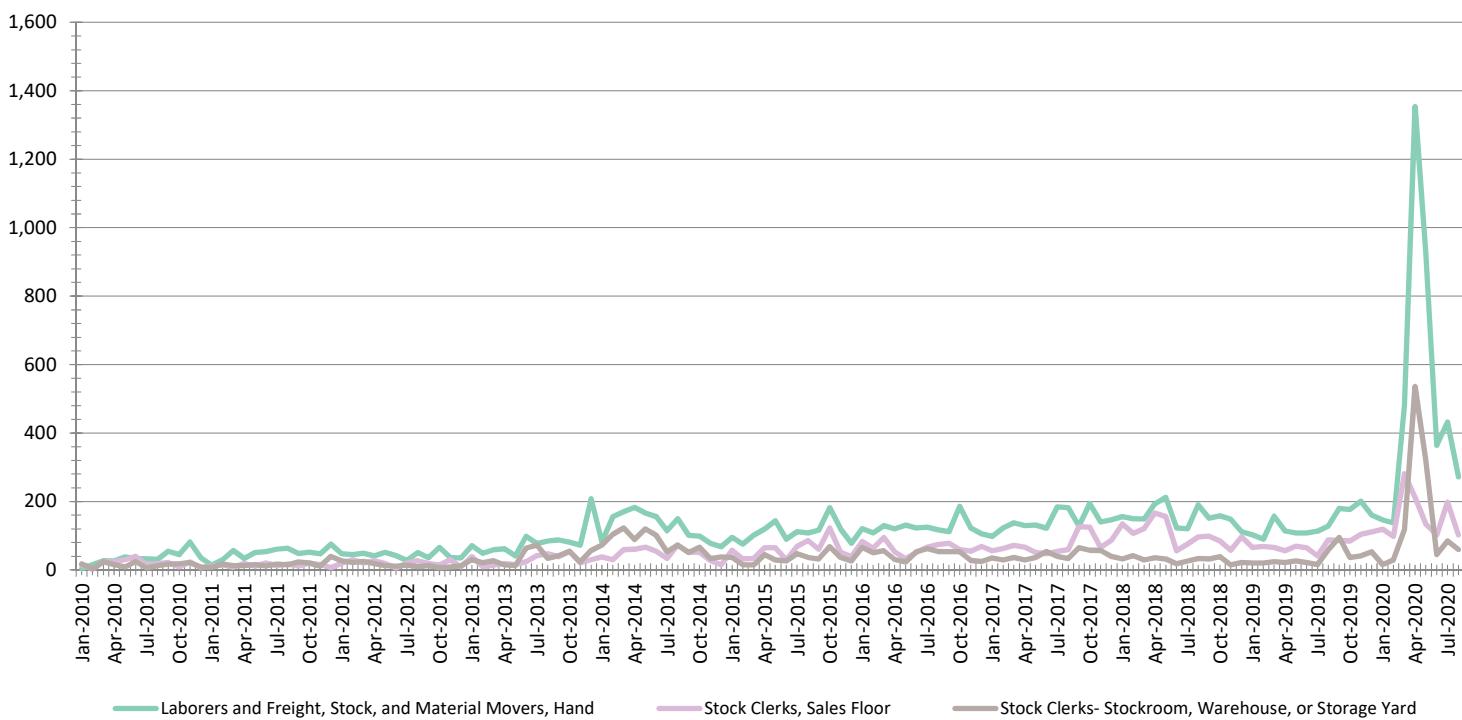
A report on how technology and automation will impact the labor force from the McKinsey Global Institute states that predictable tasks, such as performing physical activities in a predictable environment, operating machinery, or routine data collection and processing, are most likely to be automated, and no longer performed by a worker.⁹ This trend is reflected in the skill changes seen in the occupations discussed in this article. Skills that were frequently requested in 2010 tended to fall into the predictable category – cashing checks and depositing

money for *tellers*, cash transactions for *cashiers*, and physically moving materials for *stock clerks* and *material movers*. Skills added between 2010 and 2020 were not related to predictable tasks; they required more complex actions by workers.

These occupations aren't going to be fully replaced by machines. But some of the tasks they have traditionally performed will be automated, which means workers will either perform new tasks, or fewer workers will be needed to perform the same amount of work. All of these occupations are projected to grow at a slower pace than the workforce overall, which suggests that to some degree, overall employment in these occupations is going to be negatively impacted by automation and technological changes.

- Greg David, Economist

Number of Monthly Job Postings for Stock Clerks and Material Movers



Source: Labor/Insight, Burning Glass Technologies

⁸ Job postings do not necessarily indicate that a position is filled, only that a business created a posting for the opening.

⁹ McKinsey Global Institute, A Future that Works: Automation, Employment and Productivity, <https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/digital%20disruption/harnessing%20automation%20for%20a%20future%20that%20works/a-future-that-works-executive-summary-mgi-january-2017.ashx>