

Introduction:

In today's competitive world, possessing technical skills alone is no longer sufficient for professional growth and success. Employers and organizations are increasingly recognizing the value of soft skills in the workplace. Soft skills encompass a range of interpersonal and communication abilities that enable individuals to interact effectively with others, navigate challenges, and contribute positively to their teams and organizations. In this article, we will explore the significance of soft skills and provide practical tips for enhancing these valuable attributes.

Mastering Soft Skills in the Workplace to Propel Career Growth

With the rise in portfolio careers, part-time work, freelancing, and side jobs, it can be hard to figure out which skills are most important to possess for your career.

Sure, there are “hard” skills, things like coding, welding, or math. But then there are “soft” skills in the workplace, too.

Think of workplace soft skills as the “it” factor when an employer is deciding who to hire or who to promote.

Soft skills are those intangible qualities that can improve work performance regardless of the job.

But, just like defining the “it” factor, defining soft skills is hard. Proving you’ve got those soft skills is even harder.

While hard skills are necessary for many jobs, possessing soft skills can help tip the hiring or promotion scales in your favor. You might possess all the soft skills on our list. But, can you prove that you have these soft skills in the workplace?

What Are Soft Skills?

Soft skills are the skills that make you stand out against the pack. They are those intangible qualities that can improve work performance regardless of

the job. They are skills that you can and will use in any job and any industry. And, fortunately, building these skills doesn't require any specialized training. So, what kind of soft skills do employers want?

- Communication skills
- Team-building and collaboration skills
- Positive attitude
- Time-management skills
- Adaptability
- Curiosity/lifelong learners
- Problem-solving
- Creativity
- Work ethic

But what's so important about these skills? How do they make you a more desirable employee?

Importance of Soft Skills in the Workplace

Soft skills help contribute to everyone's success. Yet, when we think of job listings or our resume, we tend to think of hard skills first. After all, those are the things we can do. And the things we can do are, of course, important. But, surprisingly, they are often the least important skills employers want from employees.

In 2013, Google conducted a study to test how well their hiring and firing process worked. Instead of things like "coding" and "logic and reasoning" being critical, the study found that the top seven traits of successful Google employees were a list of soft skills. It included things like "communication," "listening," and "problem solving."

Curious about the results, Google conducted a second study to try and learn more about the initial findings. That study found that the best teams at Google possessed a range of soft skills. That list included things like curiosity, generosity, and empathy.

But, why are the most successful teams at Google the ones with the most soft skills?

- Soft skills, the study found, are what can make or break a team. A team that listens to and respects each other means that they feel comfortable and confident speaking up and making mistakes. Even if they disagree with the entire team, they know everyone will listen respectfully to their dissent.
- Success at work doesn't rest solely on technical skills. The ability to get along with coworkers professionally and respectfully even when there's disagreement is crucial to the overall success of the company. If everyone is fighting and won't cooperate, nothing will ever get done.
- A team that possesses strong workplace soft skills means that when markets change, employees will pivot, adapt, and change while getting the job done. And, in a crisis, they use their problem-solving skills to keep a level head and work together to find a solution.

How to Show Your Soft Skills in the Workplace

Of course, it's easy to say you've got a positive attitude and are a team player. However, adding these bullet points to your resume doesn't prove you're a team player with good vibes. The trick to leveraging your soft skills is to demonstrate that you are a team player with a positive attitude by giving specific, concrete examples of a time you were a team player with a positive attitude.

How do you do that?

Let us now look at some soft skills and specific examples that demonstrate these skills in the workplace.

1. Communication Skills

Being a strong communicator can be a huge asset in every industry. The ability to express points articulately and connect with others both verbally

and in writing can help with a wide range of job duties, from writing memos to training colleagues.

But having “good communication skills” is more than just writing an awesome memo. To prove you’re an excellent communicator, talk about a time you had to communicate with coworkers. For example, perhaps you were the lead on a project and one of your team members was not putting in the effort necessary.

Did you give that team member feedback? How did you present the information? Did the team member improve their performance? Or, did you have to keep trying to get your point across? Explaining how you gave the feedback and what the results were can help show that you are an able communicator capable of providing negative feedback in a positive manner and motivating others to do their best.

2. Curiosity

Curiosity seems like an odd soft skill. Why would an employer care if you’re curious?

If you are curious, you’re trying to find the answers that satisfy your curiosity. Not only are you asking questions, but you’re also trying to learn. And that’s the key to demonstrating that you’re curious.

When you’re curious, you’re learning. And, when you’re learning, you’re growing. That growth can make you a more valuable employee. Why? Employees that are willing to learn and grow are more likely to be open to change and can adapt quickly and without complaint when that change comes. It also means they’re likely more willing to take on new projects that challenge them.

So, how can you [demonstrate your curiosity](#)? Ask open-ended and meaningful questions about the company. “How do you see the company adapting to a changing market?” This shows that you’re curious about how the company sees the future and what steps they are taking to adapt. This, in turn, gives

you a chance to talk about how your skills and experience can contribute to that future vision.

Or, you could talk about your interests and hobbies outside of work. Are you teaching yourself to brew beer in the garage? Talk about what you're learning and how you're failing. Did you finally decide to learn guitar? What are the challenges and joys of that? Whatever you're learning about, talk about it. It's a great way to demonstrate that you're curious and always open to growth and learning.

3. Work Ethic

If you're trying to get a promotion, it's easy to demonstrate you've got a work ethic in your current position. You show up on time, you're professional, you treat coworkers with respect, and you always complete your tasks on time. But, if you're interviewing for a promotion with someone who you haven't worked with, or applying for a new job, how do you show you've got a good work ethic beyond saying you're always on time?

Give an example of a time that you faced a difficult task. It could be difficult because it had a short timeline, coworkers disagreed, or it was something you had never done before.

Then explain how you accomplished the task in spite of the difficulties. This doesn't mean emphasizing that you worked 15 hour days, seven days a week, for nine solid weeks. If that's what happened, then mention it, but don't focus on it.

Instead, discuss the positive and actionable steps you took to accomplish the task. Did you take a class to learn how to do what you needed to do? Did you rally and motivate your coworkers? Did you reach out to other departments or your boss for help and guidance? Use concrete and specific examples of the steps you took to get the job done and explain how it helped you grow as an employee.

4. Creativity

When employers say they want “creative” employees, they don’t mean they are looking for artists and painters. While you could mention your artistic hobbies, what employers are usually looking for are creative problem solvers.

A creative problem solver isn’t just someone who “thinks outside the box.” Creative problem solvers not only solve the problem, but the solution often helps out the company’s bottom line.

Many people struggle with demonstrating creativity in the workplace. You probably don’t think of your accounting job as “creative.” But, most of us creatively solve problems every day at work and never realize it.

For example, if you’ve got multiple team members working on a project, you need a way to access and organize the information as well as document your progress. Perhaps you were the person who came up with the idea of using a shared spreadsheet or document to keep track of everything. While not very exciting, it shows that you creatively solved a problem for your team and helped contribute to the overall success of the project. And that’s a skill that every employer values.

There are, of course, other, more exciting ways to demonstrate your creativity. For example, let’s say you had to increase brand awareness but didn’t get the budget increase you wanted. How did you increase brand awareness? What things did you do that accomplished that goal, and how did you do it without the extra money? Explaining what you did and how you did it in spite of the challenges demonstrates that you’re a creative problem solver.

Soft Skills Might Be the Most Important Career Skills

Technical skills will always be an asset. And in many cases, a lack of technical skills will prevent you from getting certain jobs. If you can’t program a computer, you’ll probably never get that software engineer job.

But having soft skills in the workplace and demonstrating how you effectively use them is an asset whether you're in a job you love or you're looking to switch careers. Soft skills are the skills you can use in nearly every job, and your mastery of them will make you a more valuable employee throughout your career.

1. Communication Skills:

Effective communication lies at the heart of every successful interaction. To improve your communication skills:

- a. Practice active listening: Pay attention to both verbal and non-verbal cues to understand the speaker's message fully.
- b. Enhance clarity: Use concise and articulate language, avoid jargon, and adapt your communication style to suit different audiences.
- c. Develop empathy: Put yourself in others' shoes, consider their perspectives, and respond with empathy and understanding.

2. Emotional Intelligence:

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize and manage one's emotions while understanding and empathizing with others. Strengthen your emotional intelligence by:

- a. Self-awareness: Reflect on your emotions, triggers, and strengths and weaknesses.
- b. Self-regulation: Develop techniques to manage stress, remain composed, and respond rather than react impulsively.
- c. Empathy: Cultivate the ability to understand and connect with others' emotions, fostering effective collaboration and teamwork.

3. Problem Solving and Critical Thinking:

Employers highly value individuals who can identify, analyze, and solve complex problems. Sharpen your problem-solving skills by:

- a. Analyzing situations: Break down complex problems into smaller components, identify patterns, and gather relevant information.

b. Developing creative solutions: Explore multiple perspectives, think outside the box, and consider innovative approaches to address challenges.

c. Decision-making: Evaluate the pros and cons of various options, weigh the potential outcomes, and make informed decisions.

4. Teamwork and Collaboration:

Working effectively in teams is crucial in today's collaborative work environments. Foster strong teamwork and collaboration by:

a. Building trust: Establish open and honest communication, respect diverse opinions, and promote a supportive team culture.

b. Active participation: Contribute actively to team discussions, listen to others' ideas, and encourage equal participation.

c. Conflict resolution: Address conflicts constructively, encourage open dialogue, and seek win-win solutions that benefit the team as a whole.

5. Adaptability and Flexibility:

In a rapidly evolving world, adaptability is essential. Enhance your adaptability skills by:

a. Embracing change: View change as an opportunity for growth, remain open to new ideas, and be willing to learn and adapt.

b. Continuous learning: Stay updated with industry trends, seek professional development opportunities, and cultivate a growth mindset.

c. Resilience: Develop the ability to bounce back from setbacks, maintain a positive attitude, and persevere in the face of challenges

Conclusion:

Soft skills are indispensable for professional success, irrespective of your field or industry. By investing in the development of these skills, you can improve your communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and adaptability, making yourself an invaluable asset to any organization. Remember that soft skills are not fixed traits; they can be cultivated and refined through practice and self-awareness. Embrace the journey of lifelong learning and watch your soft skills propel you to new heights in your career