

WHAT ARE SOFT SKILLS ANYWAY?

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Bow Valley College

MGMT1103: Essential Skills for Teams Collaboration

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January 26,2024

WHAT ARE SOFT SKILLS ANYWAY?

Soft skills are personal traits or characteristics that determine how we relate or interact with others in the workplace. It is how we communicate, solve problems, react to situations, and navigate social situations in the workplace. Soft skills are as important as technical (hard) skills. They can impact performance in the workplace and, impact the company's bottom line and goals. It is common knowledge that employers value employees with the right mix of skills.

This paper explores five soft skills: **problem solving, adaptability, critical thinking, teamwork, and time management (PACTT)**, their importance to employers and applicability in the workplace.

1. Problem Solving

Problem-solving is a crucial skill that assists employees identify, analyze, and effectively tackle problems. This skill gives the ability to deal with unpredictable circumstances without panicking. It is a package that comes with other skills needed to solve a problem effectively e.g., listening, logical thinking, creativity, and decision-making. Problem solvers can work effectively under pressure and in almost any situation. They can help the organization tackle challenges, make quick decisions, improve efficiency, and achieve organizational goals. This is why problem-solving is one of the top skills employers look for.

Nikita works as a receptionist in a hotel. Her job is to ensure customers have a positive experience at the hotel. While working, guests at the hotel come to her with their problems; She must attentively listen to their problems, communicate effectively, and produce a logical solution even under pressure. Thus, this skill plays a significant role especially when we must manage our work as well as interact with other people.

2. Adaptability

Adaptability is the ability to adjust to new situations and change plans when needed. It means being open minded to new and unfamiliar situations an employee may face in the workplace. Being adaptable means the employee can learn new things and is not afraid of change. Adaptability is a package that comes with other skills e.g., teachability, open-mindedness, critical thinking, flexibility, resilience, agility, versatility, problem solving, emotional intelligence.

Employers value adaptability. It is an important skill in our ever-changing world as it provides the ability to navigate and adjust to new, sometimes unexpected circumstances. Adaptable employees can face new challenges, effectively navigate, and conquer them. They can, therefore, drive innovations and contribute meaningfully to organizational goals and bottom-line. This is why employers love this soft skill.

Immigrants are the poster child for adaptability. Oluchi moved from Nigeria to Canada to further her education. She has had to adapt to her unfamiliar environment, the weather (coming from a tropical country), the timing (8-hour time difference) and the teaching format in her new school. She is resilient and has adjusted quickly to life in Canada.

3. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze, evaluate, solve problems, and make decisions in an objective and logical way. It is the ability to filter through information objectively and produce the most logical solution based on what is available. Critical thinkers do not accept information without determining if it is reliable, credible, or not and this is an important skill in today's world where we have an overload of information (both true and false) thanks to the internet and social media. Critical thinking is a package that comes with other skills e.g., resourcefulness, creativity, problem solving, good judgment, decision-making, adaptability.

Critical thinking is important in the workplace, and indeed every area of life. Critical thinkers deal with facts and can make rational, sound decisions. They consider various options, weigh, and evaluate these options and can anticipate consequences. They can therefore, foster innovation, adapt to change, anticipate, and proffer solutions to complex organisational problems, ultimately helping organizations meet their goals. This is what makes this skill very attractive to employers.

Atai is a pharmacist and critical thinking is an integral part of her job. When a patient brings in a new prescription, she must review their medication history, identify potential drug interactions, and proactively communicate with the prescriber. In some cases, she can decide to adapt the prescription by changing the medication, dose, or strength. This requires critical thinking as there is need to evaluate the situation and make sound judgement, so patient is not harmed. Finally, when counselling the patient, critical thinking helps tailor the message to suit the individual's unique needs.

4. Time Management

The most valuable thing in an individual's life is time. Time management is a crucial skill for everyone. Not only employees but also students struggle to find a balance in life between getting a good academic result, holding a full-time or part-time job, participating in extracurricular activities, and staying active. Time management has become crucial in today's workplace, where individuals should prioritize their work by making schedules and setting agendas. Like most soft skills, time management comes as a package with other skills e.g., Organization, Self-discipline, decision-making, prioritization, reliability, goal setting.

Employees with time management skills can plan, organize, and prioritize and meet deadlines. They are efficient, productive, and therefore, contribute positively to an efficient workplace. This is why it is an invaluable skill to employers.

Navneet is a student who struggled in the first semester of his academic period: juggling academics, a part-time job, and involvement in extracurricular activities. By making a well-planned schedule, setting priorities, and minimizing distractions, Navneet not only meets academic deadlines but also does great in his job, and actively develops new skills through extracurricular activities.

5. Teamwork

Teamwork is a soft skill in which collaboration of group efforts matters to achieve a common goal and complete a task efficiently and effectively. Thanks to this skill, we can demonstrate our ability to work co-operatively with others. It comes with other skills e.g., communication skills, conflict resolution, adaptability, resourcefulness, reliability, problem solving, the ability to build trust with our peers.

Organizations thrive on teamwork. Teamwork makes the workplace conducive as it fosters a positive work environment. It promotes collaboration, innovation and creativity, impacts work culture, fosters cohesiveness and trust amongst colleagues, enhances productivity, and ultimately helps achieve organizational goals. This is why it is one of the most sought-after soft skill.

This group activity is an example of teamwork. We learned how to collaborate, and enhance other skills such as listening, communication, and how to speak with teammates. The beauty of teamwork is that every member had an opportunity to learn from each other.

References

Peer Evaluation

Use the rubric below to evaluate each participant

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| Score 5 | Full Participation |
| Score 4 | Good Participation |
| Score 3 | Participated |
| Score 2 | Minimal Participation |
| Score 1 | No Participation |

| Team Member | Score # |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Atai Okokon | 5 |
| Oluchi Ruth Osuafor-Humphrey | 5 |
| Deepanshi | 5 |
| Niriya | 5 |