

## **WHAT ARE SOFT SKILLS ANYWAY?**

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### **Bow Valley College**

MGMT1103: Essential Skills for Teams Collaboration

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### 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 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 their applicability in the workplace.

## **1. Problem-Solving**

Problem-solving is a crucial skill that assists employees in identifying, analyzing, and effectively tackling problems. This skill gives you 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 at 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, and 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 them, and conquer them. They can, therefore, drive innovations and contribute meaningfully to organizational goals and the 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 objectively and logically. 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, and adaptability.

Critical thinking is important in the workplace and indeed in every area of life. Critical thinkers deal with facts and can make rational, sound decisions. They consider diverse options, weigh and evaluate these options, and can anticipate consequences. They can therefore foster innovation, adapt to change, anticipate and offer solutions to complex organizational problems, and ultimately help organizations meet their goals. This is what makes this skill 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 adopt the prescription by changing the medication, dose, or strength. This requires critical thinking, as there is a need to evaluate the situation and make sound judgments so the patient is not harmed. Finally, when counseling 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 good academic results, 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, and goal-setting.

Employees with time management skills can plan, organize, prioritize, and meet deadlines. They are efficient and productive and, therefore, contribute positively to an efficient workplace. This is why it is an invaluable skill for 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 the 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 cooperatively with others. It comes with other skills, e.g., communication skills, conflict resolution, adaptability, resourcefulness, reliability, problem-solving, and 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 helps achieve organizational goals. This is why it is one of the most sought-after soft skills.

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 has an opportunity to learn from each other.

## **Conclusion**

Soft skills are a must-have in the workplace. They determine how employees interact with each other, can define the culture of an organization, and positively impact organizational growth. The ability to solve problems (problem-solving), be agile and flexible (adaptability), think critically and logically (critical thinking), meet deadlines, prioritize effectively and efficiently (time management), and collaborate with others (teamwork) are desirable traits that drive innovation and improve productivity. This is what makes these skills important to employers.



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### Peer Evaluation

Use the rubric below to evaluate each participant

<b>Score 5</b>	Full Participation
<b>Score 4</b>	Good Participation
<b>Score 3</b>	Participated
<b>Score 2</b>	Minimal Participation
<b>Score 1</b>	No Participation

<b>Team Member</b>	<b>Score #</b>
Atai Okokon	5
Oluchi Ruth Osuafor-Humphrey	5
Deepanshi	5
Niriya	5