

Bridging the Soft-Skill Gap in Engineering Hiring

#	Aspect of the Gap	Key Evidence / Statistic	Implication for Hiring & Retention
1	Employer demand for soft skills	89% of employers in <i>NACE Job Outlook 2025</i> rate problem-solving, teamwork, and communication above technical GPA. ^[4]	ATS screens and job posts still emphasise tools and degrees, missing talent that signals those abilities.
2	Measured skill shortfall	Survey of ~500 firms found new engineers met expectations in just 2 / 26 ABET soft-skill areas—worst gaps: “business perspective” and “verbal communication.” ^[5]	Reinforces perception that “approachable, business-savvy” engineers are rare when the real issue is readiness, not raw potential.
3	AI era amplifies need	74% of Gen Z and 77% of millennials say soft skills will matter <i>more</i> as Gen-AI automates coding tasks. ^[1]	Demand for hybrid talent will accelerate; hiring rubrics must evolve now to stay competitive.
4	Executive signal	Cisco CPO Jeetu Patel calls imagination, empathy, and strategic vision the “grossly underestimated” skills for future engineers. ^[9]	Top-down messaging legitimises weighting these traits in requisitions and promotion paths.
5	Candidates must <i>show</i>—not list—soft skills	84% of managers in a 2024 <i>Forbes</i> poll say applicants must <i>demonstrate</i> soft skills in interviews. ^[7]	Behaviour-based scenarios (“explain a trade-off to the CFO”) outperform keyword screens.
6	Closing gaps now a priority	58% of companies report that fixing soft-skill gaps is a higher priority post-pandemic. ^[3]	Yet many still default to technical quizzes; shifting resources to skill-building and assessment is overdue. Without new taxonomies, hybrid-skilled engineers remain hidden in applicant pools.
7	Structure slows progress	Deloitte finds most firms still organise work around static titles rather than demonstrable skills, stalling “skills-based” reforms. ^[2]	
8	Skills-based hiring exemplars	Siemens, IBM, and Unilever now credential candidates on strategic thinking and customer empathy alongside coding. ^[8]	Shows it is feasible at scale and signals to job seekers that breadth is valued.
9	Early-career rotation programs	Cisco, Google, Honeywell, and others use cross-functional rotations cited by talent-platform studies as top development pathways. ^[6]	Rotations boost approachability and business fluency, feeding a stronger internal pipeline.
10	Mentoring culture reduces turnover	Mentoring programs cut voluntary turnover by up to 17% and raise engagement. ^[10]	Embedding mentoring formalises the soft-skill ethos and keeps well-rounded engineers on staff.

By reframing requisitions around demonstrable soft skills, using behaviour-anchored interviews, and institutionalising rotations and mentoring, companies unlock a talent pool that is both technically excellent **and** business-savvy—bridging a gap created less by scarcity and more by legacy hiring filters.

References

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