Readings on Soft Skill Development

From “Executive Perceptions of the Top 10 Soft Skills Needed in Today’s Workplace” By Marcel M Robles (<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1080569912460400>)

Top 10 Soft Skills Required as per Survey Conducted of Business Executives

* Communication – oral, speaking capability, written, presenting, listening
* Courtesy – manners, etiquette, business etiquette, gracious, says please and thank you, respectful
* Flexibility – adaptability, willing to change, lifelong learner, accepts new things, adjusts, teachable
* Integrity – honest, ethical, high morals, has personal values, does what’s right
* Interpersonal Skills – nice, personable, sense of humor, friendly, nurturing, empathetic, has self-control, patient, sociability, warmth, social skills
* Positive Attitude – optimistic, enthusiastic, encouraging, happy, confident
* Professionalism – businesslike, well-dressed, appearance, poised
* Responsibility – accountable, reliable, gets the job done, resourceful, self-disciplined, wants to do well, conscientious, common sense
* Teamwork – cooperative, gets along with others, agreeable, supportive, helpful, collaborative
* Work Ethic – hard working, willing to work, loyal, initiative, self-motivated, on time, good attendance

Definition of Hard Skills

The ability, coming from one’s knowledge, practice, aptitude, to do something well; competent excellence in performance; and a craft, trade, or job requiring manual dexterity or special training in which a person has competence and experience. Hard skills are those achievements that are included on a résumé, such as education, work experience, knowledge, and level of expertise. Examples of hard skills include job skills like typing, writing, math, reading, and the ability to use software programs (Investopedia, 2012).

Definition of Soft Skills

Desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge: they include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive flexible attitude”. Soft skills are character traits, attitudes, and behaviors—rather than technical aptitude or knowledge. Soft skills are the intangible, nontechnical, personality-specific skills that determine one’s strengths as a leader, facilitator, mediator, and negotiator.

Soft skills are employability skills that are transferrable in many jobs. Cleary, Flynn, and Thomasson (2006) define general employability skills as follows:

* Basic/fundamental skills: technical, knowledge of task, hands-on ability
* Conceptual/thinking skills: planning, collecting and organizing information, problem-solving
* Business skills: innovation and enterprise
* Community skills: civic and citizenship knowledge
* People-related skills: interpersonal qualities, such as communication and teamwork
* Personal skills: attributes such as being responsible, resourceful, and self- confident

Soft skills have more to do with who we are than what we know.

In fact, soft skills are so important that they are ranked as num- ber one and extremely important for potential job hires in many occupations and industries

hard skills will get you an interview but you need soft skills to get (and keep) the job.

Success is based not only on what you know but also on how you can communicate it (Klaus, 2010).

From Research Paper “Evaluating the Demand for Soft Skills in Software Development” By Faheem Ahmed, Luiz Fernando Caprez, Piers Campbell.

Soft Skills Identified for IT Professionals in Job Adverts in NA, Asia and Europe (500+ Adverts)

1. communication skills—the ability to convey information so that it’s well received and understood;
2. interpersonal skills—the ability to deal with other people through social communication and interactions under favorable and inauspicious conditions;
3. analytical and problem-solving skills—the ability to understand, articulate, and solve complex problems and make sensible decisions based on available information;
4. team player—someone who can work effectively in a team environment and contribute toward the desired goal;
5. organizational skills—the ability to efficiently manage various tasks and to remain on schedule without wasting resources;
6. fast learner—the ability to learn new concepts, methodologies, and technologies in a comparatively short timeframe;
7. ability to work independently—can carry out tasks with minimal supervision;
8. innovative—the ability to come up with new and creative solutions; and
9. open and adaptable to change—the ability to accept and adapt to changes when carrying out a task without showing resistance.

9 Soft Skills for Success – Sean Hewitt

So you've got an impressive set of letters that come after your name, a wealth of valuable experience and even a few connections in high places. But believe it or not, that may not be enough to land you your dream job or that promotion you've had your eye on.

These days, the strength of your "soft" skills can make or break how successful you are in the workplace.

**what are soft skills?**

Soft skills are essentially people skills — the non-technical, intangible, personality-specific skills that determine your strengths as a leader, listener, negotiator, and conflict mediator. "Hard" skills, on the other hand, are more along the lines of what might appear on your resume — your education, experience and level of expertise.

Are you an agreeable person? Conscientious? Do you communicate effectively? Solve problems efficiently? These are the types of questions aimed at uncovering the strength of your soft skills.

**why employers care about them**

Employers value soft skills, because research suggests that they are just as good an indicator of job performance as traditional job qualifications or hard skills. One recent study, for example, found that personality measures like conscientiousness and agreeability were equally important predictors of work success as cognitive ability and work accuracy.

**the skills**

So how do you uncover your soft skills and get the most out of them? Here's a list of some of the most important soft skills and how to perfect them.

**1- Have a "winner" attitude -** We've all heard that it's better to see the glass half full instead of half empty. And in the workplace, that type of positive thinking can go a long way. An overall positive outlook leads to an overall positive attitude, and that can be a valuable asset in work environments that typically breed cynicism and negativity.

The key to having a winning attitude is in how you tackle obstacles and challenges that come your way. For example, instead of complaining about a stressful workload, think about it as an opportunity to show off your abilities by getting through it productively and efficiently.

**2- Be a team player -** Employers love an employee who displays the ability to work well in groups and teams. Being a team player means not only being cooperative, but also displaying strong leadership ability when it's appropriate. The next time a conflict arises within your team, take the initiative to mediate. When you find your team getting stuck in a project, take the lead to move things forward. And what if you don't normally work with a team? Try to be more collaborative in the work you do and build professional relationships with your coworkers.Learn how to say what you mean, and watch your body language...

**3- Communicate effectively -** Good communication skills are essential to someone's job performance. Communication is what allows you to build bridges with coworkers, persuade others to adopt your ideas and express your needs. Many small things you already do — things you probably don't even think about — have a big impact on your communication skills. Here are some things you should be wary of when [**communicating with others**](https://www.askmen.com/money/professional_60/77_professional_life.html):

* Make good eye contact
* Don't fidget
* Avoid body movements that cut you off from others, like folding your arms
* Don't talk for the sake of talking; always have a point
* Enunciate your words properly
* Hone your grammar skills with a good reference or style manual

In general, you should become more aware of both the verbal and nonverbal cues you give off to others. Also remember that one of the keys to being a good communicator is being a good listener.

**4- Exude confidence -** In almost every situation where you're trying to impress another person, [**confidence is key**](https://www.askmen.com/money/successful_60/67_success.html). While it's important to accept your limitations and act humble when you receive praise, it's also important to acknowledge your strengths and embrace them.

Make sure you have the knowledge and skills to back up your confidence. If you act confident in some of your job responsibilities — like your written communication, project management skills or leadership abilities — make sure that it's based on genuine, positive reinforcement.

**5- Hone your creative skills -** [**Creativity**](https://www.askmen.com/money/body_and_mind/9_better_living.html) and imaginative thinking are valued in any job. Even the most technical positions require the ability to think outside the box. So never underestimate the power of innovative problem solving.The next time you're handed a tedious task, try to tackle it in a way that allows you to complete it more efficiently. When a problem comes along that others are reluctant to take on, jump at the opportunity to find a creative solution. If it doesn't work, then at least you'll have tried.

**6- Accept & learn from criticism -** This is one of the most challenging soft skills, which is why it's typically one of the most impressive to employers. Your ability to [**handle criticism**](https://www.askmen.com/money/successful_100/111_success.html)says a lot about your willingness to improve. And being able to criticize the work of others constructively is just as important. Be aware of how defensive you get in reaction to negative feedback. Never reject a piece of constructive criticism completely without acknowledging that at least part of it is helpful. And when you dish out criticism, make sure it's done diplomatically. Try to anticipate how the person you're criticizing will react based on his personality, and shape the way you criticize him accordingly.Learn how to be a motivator and prioritize your projects...

**7- Motivate yourself & lead others -** It's important for an employer to know that you're a self-starter who takes initiative. This means constantly seeking out new ways to keep your job interesting and motivational, even if it at the surface it seems repetitive and mundane.

Creativity plays a big role in this, but there's [**more to motivation**](https://www.askmen.com/money/successful_60/99_success.html) than just that. Have the courage to pursue those ideas you've had stuck in the back of your mind, and have the dedication to follow through with them and be successful. Pilot others in the same direction to work towards a common goal. Remember that a good leader leads by example.

**8- Multitask & prioritize your to-do list -** In today's workplace, a good employee is expected to be able to [**shuffle several different assignments**](https://www.askmen.com/money/career/47_career.html) and projects at once. Are you good at tracking the progress of different projects you've been handed to work on? Do you know how to prioritize what's most important? These are the keys to being a good multitasker.

Don't be afraid to take on new tasks. Show off your multitasking skills by taking on projects that fall all over the spectrum. Branch out beyond your direct responsibilities, and be sure to report on the progress of projects regularly.

**9- See the big picture -** Looking at the larger picture in your work means being able to see the determining [**factors of success**](https://www.askmen.com/money/professional_60/72_professional_life.html). It also means recognizing a risk that's worth taking, and knowing when to take it.Say, for example, that you're in advertising and you're handed the task of creating a campaign for a brand of soap. To see the big picture, you should recognize that the goal is not just to sell soap, but also to satisfy the client and provide him with a quality service. Additionally, you make yourself more valuable to your company by showing the unique creativity only you can bring to such a project.

## capitalize on all of your skills

While it's important to recognize and build on your soft skills, that doesn't mean that you should neglect your hard skills. The real key to success in any job is making your soft skills and hard skills complement each other.

From the Research Paper “Is Measuring Soft-Skills Training Really Possible” by Mark Onisk

Classification of Soft Skills

1. Behavioural Development
2. Professional Development
3. Company Specific
4. Compliance
5. Job/Task Specific

Why measure soft skills development programs

1. Is the training effective in transferring the knowledge and competency as intended?
2. Are the outcomes of the training relevant to the needs of the organization?
3. Are the costs of the program worth the competencies obtained?

Why do Organizations Implement Soft Skill Training Programs?

1. Employee and Management Development
2. Certification of Employees
3. Legal / Regulatory
4. Productivity and Competency
5. Communicate Policies and Procedures

Developing Objectives for Soft Skills Training Programs

1. Strategically Relevant
2. Outcome Focused
3. Measurable
4. Achievable
5. Cost-Centric
6. Time Bound

Techniques for measuring Soft Skills Training Programs (Kirkpatrick/Phillips Model – although the author seems to have missed crediting it)

1. Level 1 – Reaction
2. Level 2 – Learning
3. Level 3 – Behaviour
4. Level 4 – Results
5. Level 5 - Benefits