



WHY SOFT SKILLS MATTER AND TOP 5 TO LOOK OUT FOR

With the world of work undergoing a major transformation over the past year, the demand and value of employees' skillset have also changed. Innovation is everywhere, and it's on businesses, their owners and employees whether or how much they choose to adjust. A good balance of soft skills, theoretical knowledge and practical experience has always been a winning combination to look for in an employee. While all three elements are still highly regarded in the workplace, it is the soft skills that have been capturing more of employers' interest.

Soft skills aren't as soft as they sound. They can make or break professionals, careers and businesses. Soft skills are defined by Workable as "general characteristics that help employees thrive in the workplace, no matter their seniority level, role or industry".

Today, there are more remote jobs than ever, however, there are also more remote job-seekers. This means that the market is saturated with candidates, many of whom are equally qualified from a technical standpoint. In a flooded hiring pool, hard skills matter—but soft skills are what can make a candidate stand out.



So, why are soft skills so important?

What is it that makes a business withstand the rapid and radical changes in current times? While securing teams with technical expertise and practical experience are important, a major coalition of businesses, policy experts, trade groups, and academics are demonstrating that soft skills—specifically interpersonal skills, the ability to manage and control your emotions, communication skills, leadership, adaptability, and problem solving—are critical.

Talent with the right soft skills is scarce. In fact, [LinkedIn's Workplace Learning Report](#) cited soft skills as the top training priority and 59% of U.S. hiring managers believe it's difficult to find candidates with the right soft skills.

Still not convinced about the significance of soft skills? A [study](#) from Boston College, Harvard University, and the University of Michigan came to a finding that soft skills training, like communication and problem-solving, boosts productivity and retention 12 percent and delivers a 250 percent return on investment based on higher productivity and retention.

With that said, here are some of the most in-demand soft skills for 2021:

1

Resilience

Resilience presents the ability to bounce back, learn and thrive from challenges. Many workplaces have ever-changing and stressful environments, and the challenges they present can truly test a person's tenacity. A resilient employee can manage to make the most out of a bad situation and prevent feeling personally affected when things don't go the way they want or expect. Hence, resilience should be one of the top abilities to look for when hiring, especially in dynamic and high-stress workplaces.

2

Adaptability

With typical business operations turning upside down over the past year, being versatile and adaptable to changing circumstances has become a must. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, for an employee who resists change to thrive. There are several new software platforms to help run effective team meetings, communicating with clients, internal communication strategies and providing guidance and feedback.

This also includes being more accepting of others needs and learning how to work with those who may have childcare or other critical needs that require flexible work schedules, which is important in most industries and levels of work.

3

Creative thinking

Establishing a creative team or creative work environment is essential for introducing fresh ideas, services and products. The more creative workforce, the higher the chance of innovation, business growth and survival amid difficulties. In fact, creative and critical thinking skills were ranked second and third on the World Economic Forum's top skills employees will need to thrive in the fourth industrial revolution.

4

Active listening

Listening has always been a vital component of communication as it's the key to understanding the needs and wants of colleagues, business partners or clients. Having a developed focus and ability to actively listen pays off big time. Careful listeners are more likely to recognize when information is missing and are therefore able to ask questions to fill in the gaps and possibly find solutions.

Not to mention that the feeling of being heard in the workplace will likely result in better working relationships and overall work climate, resulting in a healthier and more productive culture.

5

Emotional intelligence (EQ) – teamwork, compassion

Emotional intelligence is often described as the capacity to understand and manage emotions. The skills involved in emotional intelligence are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Having employees who have solid self-awareness, can self-regulate, have empathy and compassion will likely lead to improved teamwork, communication and higher efficacy. Also, most work environments include working with diverse groups of people and challenges, so such skills are valuable across a wide range of industries.

Finally, the good news is that soft skills can be developed and are universally useful. The skills listed above play an important role not only in well-being but also in success in the workplace. Fortunately, there are numerous lessons and training in emotion psychology that can be utilised to develop EQ and foster greater emotional competencies to improve work performance and culture.