DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS

So what are soft skills?

Soft skills have more to do with who we are than what we know. Soft skills can be defined as the character traits and interpersonal skills that characterize a person's relationships with other people. Soft skills will influence how well one interacts with others, and are usually a definite part of one's personality. Hard skills can generally be learned and perfected over time, whereas soft skills are more difficult to acquire and change.

A person's soft skills are an important part of their individual contribution to the success of an organization. For this reason, soft skills are increasingly sought after by employers in addition to standard qualifications.

While your technical skills may get your foot in the door, your people skills will open most of the doors in the future. Your work ethic, your attitude, your communication skills, and a whole host of other personal attributes are the soft skills that are crucial for career success. With these soft skills you can excel as a leader. Problem solving, delegating, motivating, and team building are all much easier if you have good soft skills. Knowing how to get along with people and displaying a positive attitude are crucial for success.

The importance of these soft skills is often undervalued, and there is far less training provided for them than hard skills. Soft skills are increasingly becoming the hard skills of today's work force. It's just not enough to be highly trained in technical skills, without developing the softer, interpersonal and relationship-building skills that help people to communicate and collaborate effectively. These people skills are more critical than ever as organizations struggle to find meaningful ways to be more productive and remain competitive.

Become familiar with the common soft and hard skills and learn how employers rate them in order of importance.

SOFT SKILLS

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

LISTENING - Paying attention to what other people are saying, and taking time to understand the point being made.

READING COMPREHENSION - The ability to understand complex written paragraphs, instructions, reports.

SPEAKING - Talking, giving speeches, or speaking in a group to convey information, explain ideas, or give instructions.

WRITING /AUTHORING - Composing and communicating your ideas in written form.

PEOPLE SKILLS

HELPING - Actively looking for ways to be of service to people.

NEGOTIATING - Bringing people together to discuss and resolve.

PERSUASION - Persuading, encouraging and motivating others to accept your ideas.

SOCIAL PERCEPTIVENESS - Being aware of the reactions of others, and understanding why they react the way they do.

TEACHING -Teaching others how to do something.

PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS

DECISION MAKING - Weighing out the options in a situation or a problem and logically choosing the best course of action.

PROBLEM SOLVING - Ability to identify a problem, review related information, develop and evaluate options, and implement a solution.

REASONING - Using logic to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.

TROUBLESHOOTING - Analyzing the symptoms of a problem and deciding what actions should be taken to resolve the problem.

MANAGEMENT SKILLS

MANAGING TIME - Allocating and budgeting your time for different tasks so that things get done when needed.

MANAGING PEOPLE - Assigning duties to others, motivating them, and evaluating their performance.

HARD SKILLS

SCIENTIFIC SKILLS

COMPUTER PROGRAMMING - Writing computer programs to perform specific information operations

MATHEMATICS - Using mathematics and/or statistics to solve problems.

SCIENCE - Using scientific methods to investigate and conduct experiments.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

DESIGNING - Analyzing requirements for a new product or service and creating a design to satisfy those needs.

EQUIPMENT SELECTION - Identifying the most appropriate equipment and tools needed to get the job done.

INSTALLATION - Installing equipment, machines, wiring, etc. according to a set of specifications.

MAINTENANCE & REPAIR - Performing routine maintenance and/or repairs on equipment using appropriate tools.

MANUAL DEXTERITY - Using your hands to operate fine instruments and precision tools.

MONITORING EQUIPMENT - Watching gauges and any other types of indicators to make sure equipment is running properly.

OPERATING MACHINES - Operating equipment and machinery.

QUALITY CONTROL -Inspecting and testing products or services to assure they meet the desired specifications.

CREATIVE AND ARTISTIC SKILLS

FINE ARTS - Painting, drawing, crafting, sculpting and creative designing.

PERFORMING ARTS - Dance, drama, music, that is, things that are performed in front of an audience.

MANAGEMENT SKILLS

MANAGING MONEY - Determining how much money is required to get a job done, allocating those monies, and then accounting for all expenditures.

MANAGING PHYSICAL RESOURCES - The ability to make appropriate use of equipment and materials to get the job done.

Employers rate candidate soft skills/qualities in order of importance

1. Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization
2. Ability to work in a team structure
3. Ability to make decisions and solve problems
4. Ability to plan, organize and prioritize work
5. Ability to obtain and process information
6. Ability to analyze quantitative data
7. Technical knowledge related to the job
8. Proficiency with computer software programs
9. Ability to create and/or edit written reports
10. Ability to sell or influence others

Source: Job Outlook 2013