

Essential Soft Skills to Succeed at Work or in Business



by: Margaret Williams

Essential Soft Skills to Succeed at Work or in Business

Introduction

Most people focus on improving their hard skills—those can be quantified—to apply for a job or start a business. After all, when you need to get something done, you want to go with someone who's an expert or a specialist.

Think about it: When you need to file taxes, you ask a certified public accountant to help. When you need to have an office constructed, you go to a licensed architect or engineer.

However, you'd be surprised to know that hard skills isn't enough, especially if you're looking to get promoted or grow your business.

According to the [2019 Global Talent Trends published by LinkedIn](#), 91% of recruiters and managers point to a candidate's soft skills when choosing they would hire or promote. On the other hand, 89% of them agree that those they consider as "bad hires" are those that lack a strong set of soft skills.

Developing your soft skills are crucial as well if you're starting a business. [80% of entrepreneurs regard soft skills](#) as one of the critical factors that cause their business to be successful.

What are soft skills, anyway?

[Soft skills](#) are those that affect how you handle yourself and relate with the people around you.

Unlike hard skills, you don't have to go to school to learn these soft skills. We learn and develop these skills through our interaction with other people like your family, friends, and teachers.

Soft skills are also influenced by our personalities, past experiences, and emotions. That's what makes it so difficult to measure and prove. You may make friends very quickly. But if you're having a rough day, making friends and pleasantly interacting with others can be more challenging.

Why are soft skills important?

Technology today has dramatically changed the way how we work and do business. In fact, it's come to a point where there are now some [jobs at risk of becoming extinct](#) by the year 2030.

If you want to reduce your chances of losing your job or close down your business, you have to deliver something that a computer program can't.

And that's the very reason why developing your soft skills are essential.

Unlike computer programs and other types of technology now at our disposal, you and I have this uncanny ability to empathize with others. This is [something customers crave for](#) among businesses today.

Essential Soft Skills to Succeed at Work or in Business

Studies show that [customers are happy with the service they get](#) from a company not only encourages them to buy more but also remain loyal to the company.

If you're an entrepreneur, that means more profit for your business. If you're an employee, you're able to meet the quota set for you to reach, opening the door to possible promotions.

More importantly, soft skills aren't just needed for work. Developing these skills can also help with your relationships outside the office: your spouse, children, friends, neighbors, and everyone else you come across.

17 soft skills you need to succeed

Soft skills can be grouped into two major categories. The first is self-management skills. These are the skills you need to manage your personality and emotions. It's often called internal skills because developing these skills help you build up your inner self.

The second category of soft skills is interpersonal skills. As its name suggests, these are the skills you need to build and develop harmonious and fruitful relationships with the people around you.

Self-management skills



1. Self-awareness.

Being aware of your emotions, both positive and negative, allows you to determine what triggers them. Assessing your feelings also help you pay attention to the signs when you're about to lose it. That way, you can take a step back and prevent yourself from lashing out on others.

Essential Soft Skills to Succeed at Work or in Business



2. Growth mentality.

Facing challenges is inevitable, whether you're working as an employee or building your business. These problematic situations come in all shapes and sizes, from an extremely toxic boss to overly demanding clients.

Having a growth mentality means that you approach these challenging circumstances as opportunities for you to grow and become a better person. You focus your attention more towards the lessons you can take away from going through this. Not only are you able to overcome the situation, but you also come out better than before you experienced the challenge.



3. Managing your emotions.

Some personalities tend to be more sensitive to their emotions than others. On the one hand, this helps you become more empathetic to others and able to put yourself in the other person's shoes.

However, if you're not able to control your emotions, it can cause you to make rash decisions that could affect the overall performance of your team.

Not being able to manage your emotions also makes you look unpredictable to your bosses and colleagues at work. As a result, it can cause them not to consider you for an upcoming promotion, regardless of how excellent your hard skills may be.

Essential Soft Skills to Succeed at Work or in Business



4. Grit.

Psychologist Angela Duckworth coined this soft skill. [She describes grit](#) as the "passion and perseverance for long-term and meaningful goals.

Based on this, it's safe to say that being passionate about something isn't enough to make you successful at work or in your business. You also have to be willing to dig in your heels and keep on moving forward no matter what life throws at you.

Of the different self-management soft skills you need to develop, this is the most crucial.

The moment start moving towards accomplishing your goals, it's almost definite that you're going to encounter challenges. Often, these happen when you least expect it. Even worse, they have this annoying habit of coming at you almost at the same time. I'm sure you've experienced situations where you're just about to get it together after a considerable setback when another one hits you.

This soft skill is what sets successful people apart from the rest. Everyone is passionate about something. However, only those that are gritty are those that can hit their goals and become successful.



5. Self-confidence

Self-confidence is more than just having a positive outlook about yourself. It's also the ability to believe yourself that you can make the best decisions based on the situation, circumstances, and facts laid before you.

More important, having self-confidence enables you to accept the fact that there will always be someone better than you.

Take note that there's a big difference between self-confidence and being arrogant. Many have this misconception that self-confident people are arrogant.

Essential Soft Skills to Succeed at Work or in Business

The best way to find out whether a person is self-confident or arrogant is when they make a mistake. Self-confident people accept and admit that they were wrong. They hold themselves accountable for the error and take full responsibility for the consequences.

On the other hand, arrogant people refuse to hear that they made a mistake, much less admit to it. They would quickly blame the error on everyone but themselves.



6. Stress management.

Stress is part of everyday life. Being able to manage your stress levels allows you to remain calm and think clearly, especially when it comes to making critical decisions at work or in your business.

At the same time, stress management also allows you to maintain healthy relationships and work-life balance. After all, the last thing you'd want to happen is arguing with your spouse or lashing out at your kids just because you had a bad day at work.



7. Time management.

We only have 24 hours each day. No more, no less. So you need to be able to determine which tasks you'll spend your time on and how much you'll allocate. That way, you can be able to complete all the tasks you need to finish and meet deadlines at work.

Time management is also helpful outside the workplace. Being able to manage your time efficiently gives you the freedom to spend time with your family without having your mind drifting back to all the pending tasks you need to complete in the office.

When you're also able to manage your time, you'll also find time for yourself to relax and unwind.

Interpersonal Soft Skills

Essential Soft Skills to Succeed at Work or in Business



8. Public speaking skills.

Glossophobia, commonly called the fear of public speaking, is very real. One study shows that

[75% of people living](#)

today suffer from this at different degrees.

Sadly, it's this fear of speaking in public that [decreases your chances for success](#) in your career. Not only does this reduce your chances to get promoted by 15%, but it can also cause you to get paid 10% less than your peers that mastered this soft skill.



9. Listening skills.

Growing up, we've been taught to talk less and listen more. And for good reason.

Taking the time to listen to your team makes them feel important and understood. Both of which are essential in boosting your team's morale. This also opens you to learn better ways to complete various tasks and projects assigned to you and your team, increasing your productivity.

There are three specific listening skills you need to master:

Essential Soft Skills to Succeed at Work or in Business

- **Active Listening.** Contrary to its name, this type of listening skill requires you to be silent and utterly focused on what the other person is telling you.
- **Reflective Listening.** This type of listening skill is where you listen to the person speaking to you, and then you repeat back what they said. Aside from showing the other person you're listening, you're also showing them that you're making a conscious effort to understand what they're saying.
- **Empathic Listening.** We exercise this listening skill more frequently with our family, relatives, and friends when they're going through some pretty tough times.



10. Workplace Communication skills.

There are three different types of communication skills that you need to master if you want to become successful in your career or business.

- **Verbal communication skills.** Simply put, this is the way that you talk with your bosses, colleagues at work, and clients whether face-to-face or on the phone.
- **Non-verbal communication skills.** Your voice tone, facial expression, and gestures when talking can significantly affect the message you're trying to communicate with the person you're speaking with. A lack of non-verbal communication skills is one of the leading causes of disagreements and misunderstandings to arise.
- **Written communication skills.** This is more than being able to write reports, articles, and other materials that your readers can comprehend. It also includes messages you send out through email, SMS, and messenger apps.

Essential Soft Skills to Succeed at Work or in Business



11. Teamwork.

There'll always be the opportunity where you'll be working with people from different departments and with different personalities on a project. How well you can work in these situations will determine the success or failure of this project. In this, this can increase or ruin your chances for a promotion.



12. Presentation skills.

No matter how excellent your project idea is, if you're not able to convince your boss to buy into it, it won't do you any good.

Presentation skills play an even more significant role when you're an entrepreneur. Without this, you won't be able to convince the bank or investors to give you the capital you need to start your business. You also won't be able to get clients to buy your services or products, which means your business won't make any money.

Essential Soft Skills to Succeed at Work or in Business



13. Meeting management skills.

Studies show that the average spends

[30% of their work time](#)

in meetings. However, only a fraction of these is fruitful. The rest is spent trying to clarify and deal with recurring issues.

This is the very reason why developing meeting management skills are crucial. Effective meeting managers give every team member the opportunity to provide their feedback and contribute their ideas.

They're also able to control the conversation so that meaningless conversations are minimized so they can quickly go through the meeting agenda. That way, everyone still has enough time left at work to complete what needs to be done.



14. Sales skills.

Even if you don't work in sales, you still need to develop and master this soft skill.

Think about it: when you're applying for a job or asking for a promotion, you got to convince the interviewer you're the best choice by selling yourself and your skills.

When you're applying for a loan, you need to sell your business idea and get them to buy into your vision so that you can get the capital you need.

Essential Soft Skills to Succeed at Work or in Business

Even something as personal as adopting a child requires you to use your sales skills. When you apply to become a foster parent, you need to convince Child Welfare Services that you're mature enough and have the capacity to bring up the child to become a good person.



15. Leadership skills.

Becoming a leader is more than just having a position where you got people reporting to you. An effective leader is someone that can communicate a vision to a group of people and get them to follow, even if they don't get paid to do so.



16. Relationshipbuilding skills.

Having strong relationship building skills gives you the opportunity not just meet new people, but also connect with them on a personal level.

This gives you a host of benefits. First, you can build connections that can help you advance in your career or grow your business.

Second, you can get their professional advice when you're facing a challenging situation or are torn between several good options.

Essential Soft Skills to Succeed at Work or in Business

That said, you got to withstand the initial resistance from your colleagues and superiors professionally. Also, since you'll need their support for the solution to work, you got to be able to change their minds and accept the changes and answers you're presenting.

How to develop your soft skills?



17. Problem-solving skills.

Problem-solving skills goes beyond your ability to provide pragmatic solutions to an issue you face at work or in your business. That's because solving problems often involves changing certain practices and behaviors.

What makes developing your problem-solving skills challenging is the fact that change is not something that people readily accept. It's even harder when the change that has to happen involves something that's been recognized as the status quo.



1. Do a personal soft skills audit.

Auditing your soft skills isn't a matter of finding which ones you have and which ones you don't. This is because we all possess all the soft skills shared earlier.

Instead, doing a personal soft skills audit will help you pinpoint which ones are your strengths and which ones are those that you need to enhance and develop.

Essential Soft Skills to Succeed at Work or in Business

To do a personal soft skills audit, you'll need to get a copy of your job description. If you don't have a copy, you search for this online or get a copy from your Human Resource department.

Next, go through each of the skills and responsibilities listed here. Ask yourself which of these do you find challenging.

Finally, list down the reasons why you find these challenging. These will then give you an idea of the soft skills that you need to develop.



2. Get feedback from others .

Asking other people for their feedback will help you see areas where you need to improve that you may not be aware of. At the same time, how you will take the input these people give help you gauge some of your interpersonal skills.

Some people you can approach to give you feedback on your soft skills are:

- Your immediate superior
- Colleagues you usually hang out with at work
- Your closest friends



3. Take a personality development course online.

Websites like [Udemy](#) and [SkillShare](#) offer lots of courses to help you develop those soft skills you need to enhance. Some are free while others are paid courses.

The good thing about these is that you can pace yourself as you go through the lessons. So you can take one lesson, apply what you learn immediately at work, and evaluate yourself before going to the next.

Essential Soft Skills to Succeed at Work or in Business



4. Hire a professional coach

Hiring a professional coach to develop your soft skills can be a significant investment in your time and money. However, it's the best way to quickly build your soft skills.

For starters, a professional coach is trained to help you pinpoint not only which soft skills you need to develop, but also explain to you why you're struggling in these areas.

This is because factors like your upbringing, past experiences, and even your personality can cause some of your soft skills not to be as developed as others. By addressing the root of the problem, you and your coach can now work together to improve your soft skills more effectively.

Another reason to hire a professional coach is that you get a personalized development program. Each person is different. What works for one person may not give you the same results. A professional coach is trained to create a program that fits your schedule and your budget.

Finally, hiring a professional coach means that you have someone to consult and talk with during those times when you're feeling frustrated as you go through the process. Your coach can help you process these feelings, shift your perspective, and get you back on track, so you don't feel like you're alone in this journey.

Success starts with YOU!

While not all soft skills may come naturally, the good thing about this is that it's never too late to start developing them.

offer lots of courses to help you develop those soft skills you need to enhance. Some are free while others are paid courses. For starters, a professional coach is trained to help you pinpoint not only which soft skills you need to develop, but also explain to you why you're struggling in these areas.

This is because factors like your upbringing, past experiences, and even your personality can cause some of your soft skills not to be as developed as others. By addressing the root of the problem, you and your coach can now work together to improve your soft skills more effectively.

Another reason to hire a professional coach is that you get a personalized development program.

Essential Soft Skills to Succeed at Work or in Business

Each person is different. What works for one person may not give you the same results. A professional coach is trained to create a program that fits your schedule and your budget.

Choose one of the soft skills listed in this ebook and set yourself to do one thing each day that will help you improve this. Once you begin to see improvement, move on to the next one.

Keep on doing this, and you'll soon find yourself with a strong set of soft skills that will help you progress and succeed to achieve your goals.

And if you're considering having a coach to help you through the process, you can [schedule a FREE 30-minute Discovery Session](#) with me.

All the best,

Margaret Williams