

The Hard Truth about Soft Skills

What are Hard Skills versus Soft Skills?

HARD SKILLS

SOFT SKILLS

How does this transfer from this leadership class to courses, classes, leadership positions, graduation school/service/careers and beyond?



“Hard skills ...are typically easy to observe, quantify and measure. They’re also easy to train, because most of the time the skill sets are brand new to the learner and no unlearning is involved. By contrast “soft skills”...are typically hard to observe, quantify and measure...Are needed for everyday life as much as they’re needed for work.” (Dennis Coates)

Top 60 Soft skills

The Workforce Profile, a survey conducted by the Smyth County Industry Council, defined about 60 "soft skills", desired by employers. These soft skills are applicable to any type of work/field, and according to the study are the "personal traits and skills that employers state are the most important when selecting employees for jobs of any type." (<http://www.rediff.com/getahead/2007/jan/08soft.htm>)

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1. Math.
2. Safety.
3. Courtesy.
4. Honesty.
5. Grammar.
6. Reliability.
7. Flexibility.
8. Team skills.
9. Eye contact.
10. Cooperation.
11. Adaptability.
12. Follow rules.
13. Self-directed.
14. Good attitude.
15. Writing skills.
16. Driver's license.
17. Dependability.
18. Advanced math.
19. Self-supervising.
20. Good references.
21. Being drug free.
22. Good attendance.
23. Personal energy.
24. Work experience.
25. Ability to measure.
26. Personal integrity.
27. Good work history.
28. Positive work ethic.
29. Interpersonal skills.
30. Motivational skills.



31. Valuing education.
32. Personal chemistry.
33. Willingness to learn.
34. Common sense.
35. Critical thinking skills.
36. Knowledge of fractions.
37. Reporting to work on time.
38. Use of rulers and calculators.
39. Good personal appearance.
40. Wanting to do a good job.
41. Basic spelling and grammar.
42. Reading and comprehension.
43. Ability to follow regulations.
44. Willingness to be accountable.
45. Ability to fill out a job application.
46. Ability to make production quotas.
47. Basic manufacturing skills training.
48. Awareness of how business works.
49. Staying on the job until it is finished.
50. Ability to read and follow instructions.
51. Willingness to work second and third shifts.
52. Caring about seeing the company succeed.
53. Understanding what the world is all about.
54. Ability to listen and document what you have heard.
55. Commitment to continued training and learning.
56. Willingness to take instruction and responsibility.
57. Ability to relate to coworkers in a close environment.
58. Not expecting to become a supervisor in the first six months.
59. Willingness to be a good worker and go beyond the traditional eight-hour day.
60. Communication skills with public, fellow employees, supervisors, and customers.

Most common/highly rated:

- Positive work ethic
- Good attitude
- Desire to learn and be trained

'Soft skills as important as hard skills'

BL CLUB

Our Bureau

Chennai, April 3

Interpersonal skills, business etiquette, team spirit, social graces, negotiation skills and behavioural traits such as attitude, motivation and time management are the essential soft skills needed in a globalised world, according to Mr Uday Zokarkar, Chief Business Officer of Clickjobs.com, a division of Consim Info Pvt. Ltd. (earlier BharatMatrimony Group).

He was speaking with students of the KMM Institute of PG Studies (Tirupati) on the importance of developing soft skills at the workplace. The lecture was organised as part of the BL Club lecture series.

Differentiating between soft and hard skills, he said soft skills such as leadership and negotiating, listening and conflict mediating, were as important as hard skills such as education, experience and level of expertise in today's global workforce

A positive work ethic, good attitude and the desire to learn and be trained were among the most important characteristics that an employer looks for in his or her employees, he added.

Further, analytical think-



Adopt 'winner' attitude: Mr Uday Zokarkar, Chief Business Officer of Clickjobs.com, a division of Consim Info Pvt Ltd (earlier BharatMatrimony Group), addressing students of the KMM Institute of PG Studies (Tirupati) as part of the BL Club lecture series.

ing, leadership and team-building skills, the ability to communicate effectively, creativity, problem-solving skills, listening skills, diplomacy, change-readiness, giving and receiving feedback, criticism and compliments were some of the effective soft skills needed in the workforce. Adopting a "winner" attitude was the most effi-

cient way to improve a person's soft-skills.

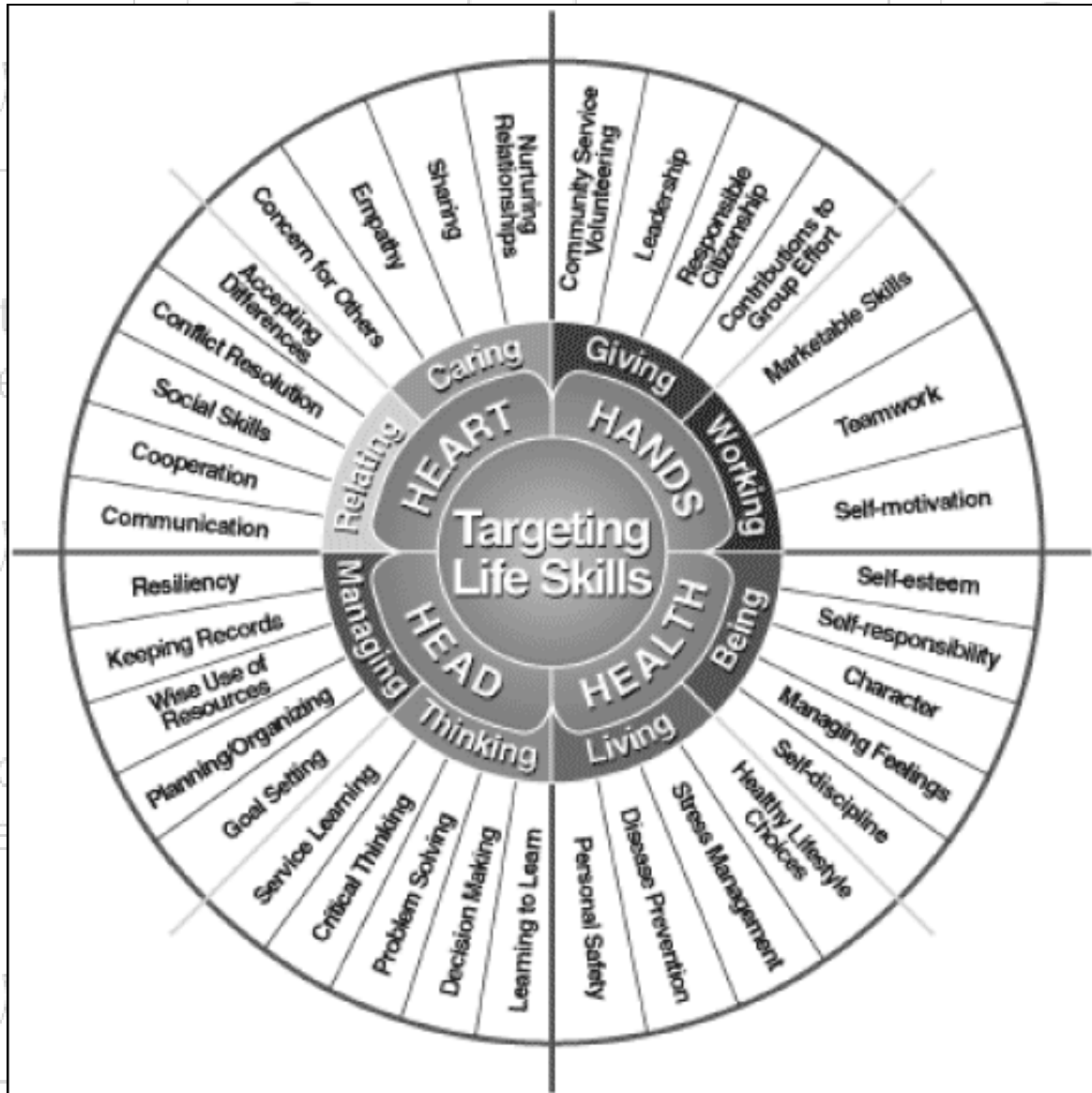
"You have to be a team player in the workforce, who can communicate effectively," he said, adding "little things like making good eye contact, enunciating words properly and good body movements will develop your soft skills," he said.

"Accepting criticism and

learning from them is another trait every person in the workforce should possess," he said.

Receiving and seeing off guests at home and office, being courteous to kids, women and elders in a movie hall and behaving while on a flight were some of the soft skills that every person should adopt, he said.

Soft Skill Development/Life Skills



Analytical Thinker

Diplomat

Analytical Thinker

Diplomat

Great Listener

Effective Communicator

Analytical Thinker

Effective Communicator

Great Listener

Effective Communicator

Great Listener

Effective Communicator



**Case Studies/Vignettes:
Identify the Soft Skills & Hard Skills**

Case Study 1: Career Scenario

You are a professional career individual who has had the opportunity of an education, had a chance to experience professional development as an undergraduate student and graduate student (attended various conferences, etc), has Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree. You graduated from your graduate degree program in May, and it is now early October– you are still looking for a job. You have applied for hundreds of positions in your chosen field, interviewed for many, and have gone in for a few second round interviews. No luck on securing a job yet. You've gone back to speak with a Career Counseling representative at your alma mater, and the counselor asked you to walk her through the process of your average job search procedural steps as you've experienced them so far. You tell her that you send out your resume and cover letter (that you thoroughly updated your senior year of college, then added the graduate school info recently) to potential employers, when they contact you for an interview, you go in, meet w/representatives from the company, then leave and wait to hear back. The counselor immediately identifies some areas that can be worked on on your end, to increase your chances of hearing back sooner and ultimately getting hired.

What are the hard skills at play in this scenario?

What are the soft skills at play in this scenario?

What are the recommendations that you think the counselor made or that you can make in this situation?

What opportunities do you think exist to enhance the soft skills here? (Put yourself on the Siena campus in this scenario)...What resources could you take advantage of?

Case Study 2: Teamwork, Class Project Scenario

You are part of a five-person team working on a final group project for marketing class...you need to complete a PowerPoint presentation and a design project that encompasses creating a logo for the company you are working on, looking at advertising techniques, analyzing data to determine what will draw consumer interest, etc. The overall project is worth a significant portion of the final grade, and requires the five person team to present the PowerPoint to the class, make a pitch about the ideas that have been generated, and give an comprehensive summary of the group's suggested marketing strategies for the customer. The project clearly requires a variety of skills that have been gained throughout the duration of the class. There are a variety of personalities at play within the group. One member of the group (Member A) immediately takes on the "group leader" role (there is no official group leader assigned to any of the groups) and starts dictating what everyone else should be doing. This individual is determined to facilitate everyone else's tasks and to check in with everyone daily about status updates. Group Member B is eager to contribute, listens to Group Member A, tries to take on as many responsibilities as she can so as to look like she is accomplishing much of the work that needs to get done. She has great intentions, but some of the work is being duplicated because she forgets to check in with her colleagues to see what everyone else is doing before jumping ahead to complete the task herself. Group Member C is quiet and does not say much at all. He goes along with whatever anyone else is telling him to do, but has not yet vocalized his own opinions or thoughts. Group Member D is upset at Group Members A and B, but is letting his frustrating and aggression build up. He is angry that no one else seems to be able to have a say, and is has not brought up his concerns to the group to talk about. He has awesome ideas, and wants to contribute, but he's sick of the attitudes he's experiencing and the bossiness he feels is taking over from Member A especially. Group Member E is dependable and flexible. She is willing to listen to Group A's suggestions, but has had a conversation with A already about the need to be open-minded and communicate openly with the rest of the group. E has asked Member C if he has any suggestions or wants to contribute in a specific area, and really wants the group to work in harmony.

What are the hard skills at play in this scenario?

What are the soft skills at play in this scenario?

What are the good occurrences in this situation?

What opportunities do you think exist to enhance the soft skills here? (Put yourself on the Siena campus in this scenario)...What resources could you take advantage of?

Skills on Display...Role Play in Groups!

Purpose

This exercise helps delegates to practice communicating assertively. Assertive communication as opposed to passive or aggressive communication is usually the best way to handle aggressive communication. The focus of this exercise is on learning how to constantly use assertive communication and not necessarily only at the beginning of a conversation.

Objective

Respond assertively to another group no matter how they respond to you.

Setup

- Divide the delegates to an even number of groups.
- Pair each two groups together and explain that groups will be role playing a conversation between two people. It is their choice to choose a subject for the conversation so long as it is something the groups disagree on.
- The conversation is fully recorded on paper. So each group should write one statement on the paper and pass it to the other group. The other group, after thinking about their reply can write it and pass it back.
- One group should only respond assertively and the other group has a choice to respond anyway they like; aggressively, passively or assertively.
- Allow the conversation to carry on for at least 8 statements on each side.
- Ask groups to provide feedback to each other about their conversation. In particular the assertive group's responses should be examined to see if they are assertive enough.
- Mix all groups in a way so that those groups who have not been assertive can now be assertive.
- When conversations are completed, encourage a feedback session.

Timing

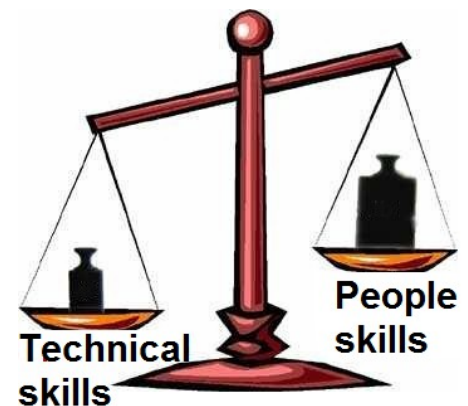
Explaining the Exercise: 2 minutes

Activity: 10 min round 1 + 10 min round 2 = 20 minutes

Group Feedback: 5 minutes

Discussion

Was it easy to be assertive? Was it easy to become aggressive as soon as the other group showed aggression? What happened when the other group was passive? How did you feel about the lack of body language? Did you feel it was more difficult to show assertiveness or did it not matter?





References & Resources:

Coates, Dennis E. People skills training: are you getting a return on your investment: Retrieved from: <http://www.praxisconsulting.org/PeopleSkills.pdf>

Phani, Ram Challa S S J. The top 60 soft skills at work. Retrieved from: <http://www.rediff.com/getahead/2007/jan/08soft.htm>

Phani, Ram Challa S S J. How to improve your soft skills at work. Retrieved from: <http://www.rediff.com/getahead/2007/jan/09soft.htm>

Resources:

Skillsconverged.com

The Targeting Life Skills Model: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/learningandliving/main/tlsmodel.html>



