



A GUIDE TO...



SOFT SKILLS



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INTRODUCTION



WHAT ARE SOFT SKILLS?

Soft skills are important for everybody to learn, for both their personal and professional life. They refer to a set of attributes that every working person needs to help develop their career.

They are different from 'hard skills', which refer to trade skills and subject matter expertise- like programming, accounting, financial analysis, or chemical engineering- any specific knowledge or skill you would need to perform your job.

Soft skills include leadership, interpersonal skills, critical thinking, problem solving, and many more. They play a huge role in your career development, so it is important to learn and progress in as many as possible. We have assembled a few of the most important.



LEADERSHIP

NUMERACY

RESEARCH

TIME
MANAGEMENT

COMMUNICATION

INTER-
PERSONAL

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

It can seem obvious that you should develop as a person, however developing as a person and developing as an employee are two quite different things. By taking on new challenges, building new partnerships, and getting your teeth into collaborations you will pick up on the fresh things you are exposed to each day and they will help you grow.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS



WHAT ARE LEADERSHIP SKILLS?

In most groups of people there needs to be a clear leader in order for things to happen smoothly. Whether this is a coursework task or a work project – without any form of leadership it will most likely not be successful.

Having leadership skills does not mean that you are a manager or the leader of something, it simply means that you have the ability to take charge of a situation and make sure that it gets resolved.

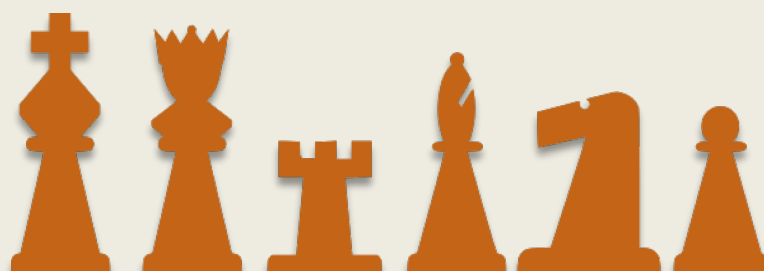
WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Leadership skills are important even if you might not use them very often. Once you enter the workforce you are bound to get responsibility of at least a project or two at some point, and it is then crucial that you know how to get it done.

HOW DO I PICK UP THIS SOFT SKILL?

It is often said that leadership is a personality trait – however it is also a skill that can be learned by doing.

- **Listen to everyone-** let everyone in the group have a say. This is what leads to some of the best ideas you can get and allows everyone to take some space and voice their opinion. You never know who might have an excellent idea that could improve the project.
- **Do as much as you can yourself-** do not throw all tasks to the rest of the group. Leader or not, you need to set a good example and show that you are not afraid to 'get your hands dirty.'
- **Keep it productive-** if you set up meetings and brainstorm, make sure they are productive and that the reason behind them is clear to everyone. Do not waste time and become the leader who cried wolf.
- **Take responsibility-** if you are the leader, you need to take responsibility for the welfare of the project. If something goes wrong, you should step in and ensure that a solution is decided on and implemented.



COMMUNICATION SKILLS



WHAT ARE COMMUNICATION SKILLS?

Communication essentially means that you are transferring information. This can be via verbal, written or visual communication, or via body language. If you have excellent communication skills that means that you can interact easily with others and impart information on them as well as take in information they give you.

WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

It is integral for your career that you can communicate effectively – without this there can be misunderstandings, wrong timings, and personal issues with other employees. When you have mastered this, you will find that your work runs more smoothly and there is never any confusion about what you are doing and why. You will also have an easier time being friendly with your colleagues.

HOW DO I PICK UP THIS SOFT SKILL?

- Think about the way you interact with others. Are you a talker or listener?
- A great communicator is both – try to read the situation and see if it calls for you to give your opinion or whether the other person just wants to vent.
- After some practice you should find your conversations flowing better.

Written communication should always use correct grammar and spelling, and be respectful to the person you are writing. While smileys are generally frowned upon, with your closest colleagues they can be a great way of bonding and softening any criticism you need to hand out.



TIME MANAGEMENT



WHAT IS TIME MANAGEMENT?

Time management is the art of simply being on time. This includes delivering things before deadline as well as being on time for work and meetings etc.

This is achieved by managing your time every day and being organised enough to stick to the schedule you have set out to follow.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

If you are in a job but haven't mastered time management, you will often find that you are fallen behind on projects. This not only impacts you but your co-workers as well – and no one likes being unable to do their job because someone else isn't organised enough.

Other than keeping friendly with your colleagues, proper time management takes pressure off you and ensures that you don't end up doing most of your work at the last minute. This can lead to a lesser-quality end product while you know that you can do better.

HOW DO I PICK UP THIS SOFT SKILL?

This can be quite a difficult skill to maintain, but not a difficult one to pick up. Observe your actions for a few days – how long do your tasks usually take to finish? Which are prioritised over others? Once you have the answers to these questions you can set up a casual schedule for yourself and, as long as you stick to it, never be late for work or a deadline again.



NUMERACY SKILLS



WHAT ARE NUMERACY SKILLS?

Numeracy is defined as the ability to use mathematics in everyday life. To many this probably sounds like a given, however many people struggle with maths and dread having to use it.

In addition to what we traditionally think of as maths, numeracy also includes the ability to interpret graphs and certain documents as well as doing certain calculations.

WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

With everyone carrying around a calculator in the form of a phone in their pocket – who needs numeracy skills? The answer is: everyone.

Being able to look at a complex spreadsheet and interpret what you are seeing is a very valuable skill, along with doing quick and simple head maths when you are sitting in a meeting or giving someone a quote.

Some employers ask their interviewees to complete psychometric testing before extending an offer. These tests have mathematical components and it is vital to get a good result if you are hoping to work for the company.

HOW DO I PICK UP THIS SOFT SKILL?

If maths does not come naturally to you, keep testing yourself. Try to never use that calculator, if you see a 20% off sale start calculating prices in your head, look around online for numeracy tests. Usually, if it has been a while since you left school, all you need is a quick refresher and the basics you need will come back to you.



RESEARCH SKILLS



WHAT ARE RESEARCH SKILLS?

If you have ever attended school chances are you have had to stretch your research legs quite a lot. Essay writing begins with doing the research and finding sources to base your work on. You then need to be able to analyse the material and pick out what is important to you and what is not. Lastly, you analyse the relevant material itself and incorporate it in your work in whatever way you choose.

WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

The ability to research a subject, and well, is a highly valuable skill in an employee that companies always look for. The person who can do decent research will be the one with the firmest foundation to their work and the most knowledge of a subject.

HOW DO I PICK UP THIS SOFT SKILL?

Again, you have probably been utilising this skill throughout your education. Think back on the essays, projects or presentations you have created and how you put them together. You will probably find that you have used online resources, library books and journals, and many other resources to back up your work.

When you have a job interview, inform them of your research skills by mentioning a dissertation or project you have worked on. Another top tip is to show how much you know about the company you are interviewing with – this proves that you have done your research.



INTERPERSONAL SKILLS



WHAT ARE INTERPERSONAL SKILLS?

According to the Oxford Dictionaries, interpersonal skills is “the ability to communicate or interact well with other people”. This includes verbal and non-verbal communication, listening skills, negotiation, problem-solving, etc – essentially all the different ways you communicate and interact with the people you work with.

WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

One of the most basic and important soft skills to master, interpersonal skills will help you in every single step of your career no matter what industry you end up in. Being able to communicate effectively as well as interpreting others’ communication is highly valuable and will always help you in your everyday working life and ensure that you will create great social relationships.

Employers often ask for candidates with ‘strong interpersonal skills’, and what they generally mean by that is that they want those who are able to communicate and work well with others like colleagues, clients or customers.

HOW DO I PICK UP THIS SOFT SKILL?

You probably already do this every day without thinking about it! How do you interact with those around you? Some things you can do to get better interpersonal skills are: Make sure you listen intently when others speak

- Remember people’s names when they are introduced to you
- Speak with confidence and think twice before you do
- Try to be as sociable as possible; forging new friendships is great practice

Once you have these skills down you will always be able to use them to change both your professional and personal lives for the better.



CONTACT US

For more resources, or information on how we can work together, **get in touch!**



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