

Soft skills: what they are and why they are important at work

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Today more than ever, **hard skills** are no longer enough to ensure business success. That's because advances in technology and social priorities have transformed (and will continue to transform) the **world of work** quickly and continuously.

In other words, today it's nearly impossible to learn a specific skill and base your career on that. What is needed is a fluid and dynamic approach that allows companies to keep pace with these transformations.

Against this backdrop, **soft skills** have become crucial within any company, regardless of industry or market. In this article, we will focus in particular on the following topics:

- Soft skills: what are they?
- Soft skills: why are they important at work?
- The top 10 soft skills in business

Soft skills: what are they?

Soft skills are general skills that relate to the way we learn and think, as well as the behaviors we use in social and work contexts. In other words, soft skills are the **interpersonal and behavioral skills** that indicate how we position ourselves in different situations.

The term "across the board" refers to the fact that they are useful in any industry or job position, as well as in personal life. Because of this, they are also called "transferable" skills, meaning that they can be applied to different contexts.

Soft skills: why are they important at work?

All the most important studies of recent years (from LinkedIn to McKinsey to the World Economic Forum) show a steady **growth in the demand for soft skills by companies**. This means that, today more than ever, soft skills make the difference between an adequate candidate and the ideal candidate. Let's take a look at why together.

Soft skills improve individuals' performance and productivity

If staff can manage their time effectively and communicate their thoughts with ease, they will be able to speed up the time it takes to complete tasks without compromising quality.

Soft skills therefore improve employee performance and productivity and enable them to function within more or less complex teams and organizations.

Soft skills facilitate collaboration

For a company to function effectively, people must work well together to achieve a common goal. A stronger team dynamic, thanks to interpersonal skills, also facilitates greater collaboration: everyone understands their role, leverages their strengths, and works together to achieve common goals, preventing resentment from building up below the surface.

Soft skills improve customer service

The most direct benefit of soft skills in the workplace is an increase in customer satisfaction. Employees are better equipped to actively listen to consumers' needs, identify the problem and help solve it. They also have more compassion and empathy. Which is critical for customer service.

Soft skills increase sales

Happy customers lead to more sales. But soft skills in the workplace also benefit salespeople during the negotiation process, helping them turn leads into satisfied customers.

Soft skills improve leadership

Soft skills (such as active listening, empathy, etc.) help prepare employees for leadership positions. This is especially important when we consider that many employees leave their jobs because of inadequate leadership.

Soft skills increase employee confidence and reduce stress

Another notable benefit of soft skills in the workplace is increased self-confidence. Employees know they have what it takes to complete their job duties, team members can rely on each other, and conflict is reduced.

But that's not all: more trust and confidence lead to lower stress levels as employees not only have more compassion for others, but also for themselves.

The top 10 soft skills in business

Soft skills are important in every industry because, as we've seen, they improve performance at work. But what are the top 10 soft skills within companies?

1. Communication

Communication skills can be oral or written, but also include skills such as active listening, conflict resolution, negotiation, etc.

Skilled communicators know how to adapt tone and style to the interlocutor and situation, understand instructions and explain complex issues to colleagues or clients, and find ways to tactfully disagree without creating conflict.

For this reason, communication skills are important in any work setting.

2. Ability to work in teams

The ability to work in a team is a key workplace skill because it enables you to work well in a group setting. However, team building is a weakness for many organizations and often negatively affects performance and flexibility.

3. Adaptability and flexibility

The complexity of today's work demands fluid, dynamic, constantly changing roles that require unprecedented adaptability and flexibility. Changes in processes, tools, and markets can happen quickly, and employees who are able to adapt to new situations and ways of working are valuable in many industries and jobs.

Flexible employees are willing to help where needed, take on extra responsibilities and can adapt quickly when plans change, as well as embrace new tasks and challenges calmly and smoothly.

4. Problem Solving

There are many skills related to problem solving: creativity, risk management, teamwork, critical thinking, etc. Employers highly value people who can solve problems quickly and effectively.

5. Time Management

Time management is unquestionably linked to productivity. When an employee is able to make the most of their time, they are more likely to meet deadlines and complete tasks efficiently. This, of course, translates into greater profitability for the company.

6. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the ability to use logic and reasoning to analyze and evaluate different situations with accuracy, precision and competence. It is based on the ability to detect and observe experience and, subsequently, work out possible solutions and the pros and cons of these.

7. Creativity

Creativity is a key skill for responding to change and adapting to the increasingly complex scenarios that characterize the world of work. Employing a workforce of creative thinkers is essential to introducing new ideas, services and products. Employees with creativity can find new ways to perform tasks, improve processes or even develop new and exciting avenues for the company to explore. Creativity can be used in any role at any level.

Then again, as artificial intelligence and automation evolve in business, creative and critical thinking skills will be increasingly needed to complement machine capabilities.

8. Leadership

Leadership is a useful soft skill even if you don't directly manage other resources. People with good leadership skills, in fact, have a positive attitude and the ability to make quick and effective decisions, as well as communication skills aimed at effective conflict management.

9. Negotiation and conflict resolution

At work, conflict can arise within many different interactions: between colleagues, with clients or vendors, etc. The ability to negotiate and resolve conflict makes for a more peaceful work environment and enhances productivity.

10. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize one's own and others' emotions, identifying their causes and possible consequences. More specifically, it allows you to classify emotions and moods, even complex ones, and integrate them into cognitive processes in order to improve thinking, problem solving, planning and decision making.

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