

Soft Skills (or Workplace Basics)



Many business leaders say, “I hire for hard skills. I promote or fire for soft skills.”

› What are Soft Skills?

In simple terms, you might think of soft skills as “people skills,” or as “workplace basics,” “employability skills,” “emotional intelligence,” “teamwork,” “charisma” or “sales ability.” A big part of it is the ability to get along well with others, both coworkers and customers.

You need these skills in order to do your job effectively. No matter how good you are at welding, computer engineering, writing, nursing, mining, plumbing or whatever your specific job is, you will make it very difficult for yourself to succeed at work if you do not constantly practice these workforce basic skills.

“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.”

Anthony Robbins, motivational speaker and management consultant

› Crucial for Your Success

More Texas companies are defining and measuring soft skills in both the job seekers they interview and current employees. Companies whose employees have strong soft skills have a competitive advantage over other companies.

So developing strong workplace basics can get you noticed among other applicants, to get you hired and then help get you promoted.

THIRTY-ONE SOFT SKILLS

Recently, managers and executives from more than 200 Texas companies came together to develop a list of the 31 most important soft skills, also called “workplace basics.”

They are:

1. **Critical Thinking** – Knowing how to get the proper information for the situation, then knowing how to think and ask questions about it, in order to interpret what that information means and how important it is. Knowing is no longer enough. Applying that knowledge is the competitive advantage in the modern world of work.
2. **Oral Communication** – The skill of talking clearly, expressing ideas and delivering messages concisely and effectively, including explaining why you did something.
3. **Written Communications** – Writing clearly, explaining a concept or describing an idea using simple and appropriate terms so the reader can understand it.
4. **Numerical and Arithmetic Application** – Doing math, compiling data and using numbers to strategize and solve problems.
5. **Leadership** – The ability to guide people, supporting, encouraging and collaborating with people while passing on knowledge, expertise and training.
6. **Teamwork** – Working with people, interacting with coworkers and others to achieve a shared goal.
7. **Appreciation of Diversity** – The ability to work with people who are in some way different from you, showing appreciation and empathy for customers and coworkers from different cultural backgrounds. This also involves being open to new ideas and different perspectives.
8. **Conflict Management** – Avoiding fights, assessing situations and mediating conflict and disagreements between people, including taking steps to avoid future disputes.
9. **Customer Service** – Listening to and taking care of the client, knowing how to uncover and respond quickly to customers’ needs in order to meet or exceed their expectations.
10. **Work Ethic** – Being dependable for your boss as well as being dependable, reliable and focused while completing tasks on time. This includes showing up to work when you’re supposed to.
11. **Professionalism** – Being a mature adult at work, knowing how to dress, speak and conduct yourself appropriately on the job while showing that you are practiced in your field.
12. **Integrity** – Being honest, being trustworthy and making ethical decisions while following rules, regulations and laws.

13. **Attention to Detail** – Having a critical eye, reviewing the attributes and specifics of your work, and taking action to ensure quality.
14. **Adaptability** – Adjusting to the situation, adjusting to new, vague or ambiguous circumstances to accomplish your team’s goals.
15. **Organization** – Ordering your work, planning, arranging and managing different tasks, resources and obligations to create a system and reduce chaos.
16. **Stress Management** – Dealing with pressure, handling deadlines and balancing the multiple demands that come at work and at home.
17. **Multi-Tasking** – Getting multiple things done, setting priorities to establish work flow while handling multiple tasks and deadlines. Everybody has to accomplish multiple tasks at work. Everybody knows that too much jumping between those tasks is distracting and leads to nothing getting done. This involves acknowledging that multiple tasks have to get done in a single day and figuring out how to get all the different work done on time.
18. **Problem Solving** – Figuring out what to do, looking at a situation to find the causes of problems and then finding a workable solution.
19. **Decision Making** – Making a choice, knowing how to ask for information and how to consider rewards, risks, limits, alternatives and goals to take action and pick the best option.
20. **Intellectual Risk Taking** – Being curious and taking on lifelong learning, being able to learn and apply new knowledge to problems.
21. **Thoughtful Reflection** – Pausing to think, using logical reasoning, being able to understand abstract ideas, evaluating data, and understanding in the different issues that confront you.
22. **Initiative** – Willpower; getting work done without being prompted or supervised, sticking with a routine, being flexible while moving toward an objective, and taking action to accomplish a goal.
23. **Creativity** – Coming up with new ideas, conceiving new methods, systems, paths, products, alternatives, or responses.
24. **Dedication** – Finishing the job, demonstrating endurance and follow-through to complete work tasks.
25. **Perseverance** – Endurance, improving work and monitoring progress to achieve successful results.
26. **Pride in Work** – Taking personal ownership of the project, taking responsibility to make sure individuals and teams complete assignments.

“Punctuality, attendance, attitude, integrity and reliability is what managers want. You have to be on time to work every day and be at work. You have to refrain from calling in that you’ll be out. Attitude is said to reveal who you are and how you deal with issues and situations that may arise, integrity says you can be trusted with projects or information deemed confidential.”

Jane Goodenough, workforce manager with Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas

27. **Following Directions** – Obeying rules and procedures, adhering to written or spoken established business practices, policies, and laws, including health and safety rules.
28. **Information Gathering** – Collecting the details and particulars, observing, listening and reading the data and signs around you.
29. **Resources Allocation** – Figuring out how, and how much, to use what you have, identifying, distributing and efficiently using the available material, people and assets to complete work.
30. **Time Management** – Managing your attention, prioritizing tasks, schedules, deadlines and goals in order to complete work efficiently.
31. **Technology and Tool Usage** – Being able to operate equipment on the job, knowing how to run the computers and machines used at work.

Hiring managers are looking for workers who can easily communicate and get along with both coworkers and customers while also having some ability to do basic math, make adjustments at work, prioritize and even demonstrate critical thinking.

The demand for workers with enhanced soft skills is growing. As you strive to sharpen your soft skills, you will position yourself first to get hired, and then to succeed at work.



"Some seem to be born with soft skills, but if anyone is serious about getting and keeping a job they can learn if the desire is there."

*Susan Johnson, workforce development specialist with
Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County*

Click [here](#) for the full curriculum:
"Succeed at Work" by Texas Workforce Commission