

# Common Soft Skills Needed by Every Employee in Every Industry

Have you heard the phrase, “Train for Skills, Hire for Attitude”? In essence, the phrase suggests that hiring managers look for job applicants who have a set of personal attributes that make for a more effective employee. As a set, these attributes go by many names, including: *attitude, emotional intelligence, soft skills, applied skills, people skills, employability skills, cross-disciplinary skills* or *21st century skills*. Regardless of the label, these are personal characteristics and work habits that can’t be measured, but enable you to interact effectively and harmoniously with others in your workplace. Their presence makes you and others more successful employees. **Every** person at **every** level in **every** industry needs to possess and demonstrate these skills, **every** day.

Multiple studies have identified various soft skills that can help make a person successful on the job. Below, we have combined a number of them to show the breadth of skills you should display both in the job search and on the job. Find ways to show your soft skills in your resumes, cover letter, networking and interviews. Then keep it up once hired.

### 1. **Adaptability (Open to Change)**

Display the willingness to adapt to changing requirements. Be include flexible to various work environments, roles and tasks; take into account diverse viewpoints; handle stress and feedback; and to learn from experience.

### 2. **Analysis/Solution Mindset (Problem Solver)**

Apply critical thinking skills to solve problems by generating, testing, evaluating, and implementing solutions. A problem solver considers multiple points of view and/or carefully examines conditions, information and data to make an appropriate decision, or determine a course of action.

### 3. **Collaboration (Team Player)**

Build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships encompassing a range of perspectives. Demonstrate the ability to work effectively on a team, where the whole achieves a common goal. This requires putting ego aside, respecting differences, allowing for constructive conflict, and offering help or encouragement to others.

### 4. **Communication (Exchanging Ideas, Information)**

Success here includes keeping the lines of communication open in both directions. It also means understanding basic professional etiquette in verbal, nonverbal and written communications. It includes active listening skills and choosing words with care so as to not be misinterpreted. (Google “active listening” if the term is new to you.)

### 5. **Digital Fluency (Good with Technology)**

Most places of work are steeped in essential technology. Employers look for staff to have an understanding of computers and basic software use. Employees need to understand appropriate technology to work collaboratively, as well as basic ethical and legal issues related to information technology. Supervisors also expect employees to understand protocols when using or transmitting documents, pictures or programs.

### 6. **Empathy & Respect (Sensitivity to Others’ Feelings, Differences & Cultures)**

Empathy and respect are critical to building relationships through understanding and valuing diverse backgrounds and cultures. Empathy is acknowledging others and understanding their perspective. Respecting, as well as empathizing with different opinions, points of view, and backgrounds can make for richer, more effective team-work. It also helps connect with customers and clients on a more personal level. Look for commonalities by listening more and talking less.

### 7. **Confidence (Believing in Yourself and Your Abilities)**

Confidence in yourself is central to most other soft skills and professional development. Believing in your abilities and in your work can help you take more initiative and risks, lead others, be decisive, and stay resilient. By being confident and capable, your supervisors, employees, and clients will believe in what you are saying. That being said, overconfidence and arrogance, especially when not backed up by hard skills can be detrimental. Strike a balance. Be aware of your abilities and skills, while staying humble. True confidence is never brash or boastful. Allow your confidence to help you reach your full potential.



### 8. Time Management (Planning & Organization)

Time management is effectively planning and prioritizing work to organize tasks productively and complete them efficiently. It includes the art of arriving to work and meetings on time as well as delivering projects before deadlines. This is accomplished by managing timelines, being organized and keeping to a well-planned schedule.

### 9. Professionalism (Behaving Appropriately on the Job)

Professionalism is a difficult soft skill to pin down because it can change by company, industry, workplace or even manager. It also can blend many other skills together. In general, professionalism means dressing appropriately, arriving on time to work or meetings, speaking and writing in a respectful manner to clients and coworkers. It includes avoiding such things as questionable jokes, teasing, flirting, touching, etc. It can also include dependability and responsibility, being willing to help, and having a strong work ethic.

### 10. Initiative (Motivating Yourself)

Managers want employees who demonstrate an enthusiasm for the job and who seek out new work opportunities and challenges. These individuals are self-motivated and seek new skills, knowledge, and greater responsibility. Employees who are willing to volunteer, take risks, and learn from mistakes think more like entrepreneurs.

### 11. Resilience (Planning for Success & Bouncing Back from Failure)

To be resilient is to respond to setbacks or adversity positively and proactively. Resilience calls for a certain inner strength that can be rooted in confidence and life experiences. It is important to not become overwhelmed and discouraged by challenges, but to analyze situations and make plans to turn bad circumstances into positive ones.

### 12. Self-Awareness (Understanding Yourself)

Self-awareness is knowing and accepting the aspects of your own personality. Being self-aware gives you the clarity in understanding your reactions to conflict, your ability to attack new challenges, and knowledge of what can trigger your emotions. By recognizing your strengths, weaknesses, belief system, motivations, and emotions, you can be a more successful and confident contributor, teammate and coworker.

### 13. Conflict Resolution (Resolving Issues with Coworkers)

Constructive conflict can be healthy in a work environment. Healthy conflict can lead to new ideas, increased understanding, open discussions and a more cohesive team. The skill to resolve issues with coworkers will help you maintain relationships with peers and to work more effectively. Being able to constructively work through disagreements and opposing viewpoints is an indicator of maturity—and of leadership potential.

### 14. Leadership (Taking Charge When Needed)

Regardless of a person's position or title, leadership skills are revered in the work place. Possessing these skills means that you have the ability and wherewithal to take charge of situations and make sure things are completed or resolved. Leaders listen, participate in the solution, keep the team on task and productive, and take responsibility for the welfare and outcome of the project. Strong leaders engender respect.

### 15. Creativity and Imagination (Thinking Outside the Box)

Creativity is not only found in the art, design and marketing fields. Novel ideas are needed to help anyone to create new and innovative ways of approaching tasks or conducting business. It includes the curiosity and willingness to try new things, improve processes, and to think in a more open, flexible manner.

### 16. Writing (Communicating through the Written Form)

Writing skills cross over from a hard skill to a soft one. They are an important part of communication and include clearly expressed thoughts, ideas and information in written form. This includes emails, letters, reports, blogs or strategy plans. Good writing allows you to get your message across with clarity to your target audience. Strong and professional writing skills also include proper use of the language and avoiding grammatical mistakes.