

When being soft can be as powerful as being hard – How soft skills can put your career at an advantage

We have always associated a successful career with excellent academic qualifications or years of experience.

However, it's been often forgotten how important other factors come into play. If you are really fortunate to be working in a company that allows for you to grow and develop your career, your career will definitely be on the path to great success.

With that said, luck may not be favourable in everyone's books. It is perhaps time to look at other areas you may explore to put your career on the forward track.

How about soft skills?

Soft skills refer to a set of skills that determine how we interact with others. Examples of soft skills include effective communication, problem-solving skills, leadership, team building, flexibility, personal energy, positive attitude, interpersonal skills as well as the willingness to learn.

Would you consider playing up your soft skills in your job search? Soft skills alone may not land you any job but when applied together with what you have already learnt and mastered, it could possibly be the best tool you can have.

Soft skills play a highly important role in the workplace as well as in one's career success. They enable you to stand out in a crowd of other equal or higher-qualified job seekers and are applicable to almost every field of work.

Doesn't everyone already have it?

Soft skills are usually behavioural traits inherent in an individual. Some individuals simply have the right set of soft skills that allows them to excel in any situation such as understanding instructions quickly, executing them effectively, having the ability to take control and gain respect from a team of executives.

Such traits cannot be taught or picked up simply by reading a book. However, soft skills may be developed through constant practice and training. Take for example problem-solving skills. Some individuals are simply equipped with the ability to find solutions to most problems at the snap of their fingers while others simply ponder for too long and in vain.

To be able to develop such a soft skill, you will have to learn more about problem-solving. Perhaps, attend a workshop or two on how to look at problems from different perspectives and then continuously train yourself to learn.

Standing out

Job seekers with the necessary academic qualifications and experiences are aplenty. But finding the one ideal job seeker with complementary soft skills is almost like finding a needle in a haystack.

Though most employers do not usually state such a requirement in their job advertisements, soft skills are definitely qualities they seek in their candidates.

Many companies are willing to hire candidates who possess and demonstrate a high level of soft skills on top of their academic qualifications. Some organisations may even tailor training programs for candidates to provide a better fit for the position, thus giving candidates with only “hard-skills” a run for their money.

Going the extra mile

If you already possess these useful skills, do take time to hone and enhance them. This will allow you to further develop these skills and equip yourself for the fast track ahead.

Which ones are the right kinds of soft skills?

There is no right or wrong type of soft skills but there are some soft skills which employers would love to see more of.

Effective Communication

This helps to minimise misunderstandings, conflicts and allows for smoother operations.

Leadership

Being equipped with leadership skills allow you to be groomed for bigger roles in time to come. In the present role, you could be seen as an employee with potential and be given more important tasks to perform.

Problem-Solving

With this powerful skill, nothing should stand in your way. You will be able to resolve issues quickly, thus saving precious time.