

Soft Skills Quick Reference Tool for Managers

Skills

Soft Skills Training May Be Needed If You See These Behaviors ...

Communication Skills

Verbal communication

Struggles to talk or get ideas across · Speaks too loudly or softly · Avoids conversations

Non-verbal communication

Uses closed body language (crossed arms, no eye contact) · Misses others' non-verbal cues

Written communication

Written projects include grammatical errors or misspellings, lack logical construction, etc.

Listening skills

Attention wanders · Ignores the remarks of others · Fails to listen to directions · Interrupts

Participates in team/group discussions

Hesitates to speak in a group/ resists asking questions or sharing opinions · Often dominates conversations

Provides/receives feedback effectively

Displays anger, defensiveness, distress when receiving feedback · Avoids or struggles with giving feedback

Public speaking

Struggles to write and/or deliver speeches · Displays difficulty speaking to groups

Presentation

Lacks proficiency with PowerPoint/other presentation tools · Delivers presentations poorly

Negotiation

Hesitates to negotiate terms for contracts/job aspects, etc. · Lacks ability to compromise

Influence/persuasion/motivation

Unable to gain buy-in of others when needed · Unable to motivate others

Professional and Work Skills

Organization

Unable to set/achieve goals · Work projects consistently lack oversight · Fails to adhere to schedules

Collaboration/teamwork

Does not encourage/support others · Hesitates to ask for/provide help · Hesitates to join in · Causes team conflict

Critical thinking

Lacks analytical skills · Does not question assumptions · Fails to consider varied perspectives

Problem solving/troubleshooting

Allows situations/issues to decline or become problematic · Unable to identify problem causes · Doesn't seek input from others

Decision making

Decisions reflect inadequate information gathering or poor risk vs benefit assessment · Reluctant to make decisions

Work ethic/dedication

Lacks initiative/self-motivation · Does not accept responsibility/accountability · Fails to meet goals/deadlines

Creativity/innovation

Lacks curiosity/imagination · Resists taking intelligent risks/trying new things · Doesn't question assumptions

Resilience/adaptability/flexibility

Low tolerance for uncertainty · Doesn't manage change effectively · Difficulty adjusting to unexpected circumstances

Time management

Fails to create/adhere to schedules · Misses deadlines · Chronically late · Inability to prioritize

Planning/setting/achieving goals

Lacks skills to set/achieve goals · Fails to plan/execute projects · Doesn't measure progress

Professional and Work Skills (cont'd)	
Stress management/work under pressure	Does not identify and minimize stressors · Takes on excessive extra work · Fails to ask for help when needed
Accountability/responsibility/dependability	Does not take ownership of behavior/work/results (makes excuses) · Fails to take initiative · Seen as unreliable
Integrity/ethics	Fails to show respect for others · Does not deliver on work expectations · Conduct does not reflect honesty/values
Assertiveness/initiative	Does not express ideas/opinions well · Does not work proactively/waits for direction · Unduly pushy/aggressive
Technology capabilities	Lacks proficiency with work technologies · Fails to regularly update existing technology skills
Continuous improvement/learning mindset	Does not actively pursue learning/development · Lacks knowledge-sharing skills/motivation · Turns down stretch assignments
Effectively manages difficult people/situations	Gets derailed by conflict with co-workers · Lacks ability to work through disagreements · Chooses inaction vs solving problems
Business etiquette	Does not understand/apply appropriate workplace behavior · Lacks consideration/respect for others
Diversity/inclusion	Lacks understanding/awareness of cultural and other differences · Fails to accept others/seek others' perspectives
Research skills	Lacks ability to vet information sources · Unable to define information needs · Does not actively seek new knowledge
Knowledge sharing	Doesn't find and share learning content or new processes/solutions with others · Hoards information to keep control
Customer service/relationship management	Unable to <i>read</i> or relate to customers · Does not identify customer needs/solve problems · Mishandles upset customers
Personal and Interpersonal Skills	
Self-awareness	Lacks cognizance of own strengths/weaknesses · Fails to reflect/learn from past behavior
Confidence	Demonstrates little acceptance of self/others · Lacks assertiveness · Fails to demonstrate positive <i>can do</i> attitude
Emotional intelligence/social skills	Difficulty interpreting situations/emotions accurately · Lacks mastery of most soft skills · Lacks self-control
Ability to manage stress	Fails to identify and minimize stressors · Chooses unhealthy responses to stress · Lacks work/life balance
Self-directed/lifelong learner	Displays little interest in learning/gaining new knowledge · Not motivated by growth opportunities, prefers status quo
Resourceful	Lacks creativity/imagination · Lacks desire/ability to solve problems · Fails to act with initiative · Lacks persistence
Courteous/polite/respectful	Fails to use etiquette · Does not demonstrate consideration for others · Lacks attentive listening skills
Open-minded/able to see others' perspectives	Lacks empathy · Lacks curiosity/does not ask questions · Unwilling to challenge biases and assumptions
Positive attitude/enthusiastic	Displays low energy/lack of enthusiasm · Lacks self-motivation · Seen by others as negative or disengaged
Integrity/honesty	Does not adhere to company values · Fails to act with integrity · Lacks respect for others
Empathy	Inability to relate to others emotionally · Rarely validates others' feelings · Does not display active/reflective listening
Relationship building	Focuses on self rather than others · Difficulty building trust · Lacks good communication skills · Fails to show respect
Networking	Difficulty/discomfort connecting with peers/colleagues · Rarely volunteers · Does not participate in professional groups
Conflict and issue management/resolution	Avoids conflict/contentious situations or issues · Lacks skills needed to find solutions or compromise
Effectively manages difficult people/situations	Lacks tact/diplomacy · Ignores/mishandles disagreements or conflict · Unable to set boundaries with difficult people

Leadership and Management Skills	
Team leadership/team building . face-to-face	Unable to motivate/direct teams or encourage collaboration · Lacks results orientation
Team leadership/team building . virtual/remote	Lacks technical/managerial skills to direct and support remote/virtual teams
Leadership/development of individuals	Fails to delegate · Individual reports lack direction/underperform · Irregular or inconsistent performance discussions
General management skills	Lacks ability to plan, organize work · Individual reports lack needed resources · Employees feel under- or micro-managed
Meeting leadership/management	Meetings lack agendas, produce no results · Too many/too few meetings held · Group discussions lack focus
Project leadership/management	Work projects lack plans · Project execution fails consistently · Deadlines are frequently missed
Strategic planning	Struggles to create business objectives · Fails to identify trends/opportunities/threats · Lacks enterprise focus
Coaching/mentoring	Fails to build rapport/trust with employees · Can't identify/address development needs · Unable to effectively transfer knowledge
Talent development/instruction/teaching	Lacks needs-assessment skills · Lacks teaching/training skills · Fails to measure development results
Prioritizing and delegating tasks/work	Sets unrealistic schedules · Fails to clarify objectives · Ineffective at assigning work
Problem solving	Situations/issues decline/become problematic · Problems/outcomes not fully defined · Diverse input not sought or considered
Analysis and evaluation	Difficulty identifying credible information sources · Fails to view other perspectives · Lacks assessment skills
Brainstorming and innovation leadership	Lacks skills to lead brainstorming sessions · Fails to drive new product/service development · Rejects <i>out-of-the-box</i> thinking
Conflict and issue management/resolution	Avoids conflict/contentious situations or issues · Unable to resolve or mediate issues · Overly authoritative approach to conflict
Diplomacy/tact	Fails to show respect for others · Unable to see other perspectives · Lacks cultural/diversity awareness
Performance management	Fails to set performance expectations · Lacks skills to provide feedback well · Avoids addressing problem performance
Crisis management	Unable to manage stress well · Lacks analytical skills · Low tolerance for uncertainty · Unable to bring calm to chaotic situations

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