



Soft Skills Expected in the Workplace

Introduction: In addition to academic knowledge and technical training, the success of young workers will be heavily influenced by “soft skills”. These are specific habits and behaviors that can add substantially to a worker’s job performance and satisfaction, although they may not be formally taught in high schools. The following statement is addressed to high school students to help them understand employer “soft skills’ expectations and to supplement the Geauga Growth Partnership’s forthcoming statements on expectations for academic achievement and system improvements.

Soft skills play a vital role in workplace success; they can make or break you. Developing your soft skills help you stand out from the crowd, and move up in the highly competitive business world.

- **Be on time.** If you are early, you are on time; if you are on time, you are late.
- **Professionalism.** This includes dressing appropriately for the workplace, staying productive, observing technology privileges, and respecting everyone.
- **Oral and written communication.** Workplace communication is very different from communication at school. You are expected to know how and when it is appropriate to share ideas and concerns.
- **Language skills.** Good grammar and proper spelling will go a long way.
- **Teamwork and collaboration skills.** Successful businesses rely on team players.
- **Problem- solving skills.** Employers highly value the ability to use knowledge, facts, and data to solve workplace problems and to communicate ideas.
- **Enthusiasm.** Employers look for employees who display an interest in the job and in being trained.
- **Integrity.** Make responsible decisions concerning questionable actions in the workplace, even when coworkers or management are not following the rules.



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- **Bring Energy.** Energy is not only *Perceivable* it is *Marketable*.
- **Inspire Others.** In order to accomplish your ultimate goals in life you will need to inspire others to help you.
- **Get, Remember and Use peoples' Names.** Networking with others is a key to success.
- **Don't be interesting, be interested.** Learn about and take an interest in your colleagues and employers.
- **Interaction.** How your world reacts to you is a direct reflection of how you are interacting with your world.
- **Appreciate Others' Opinions.** Not only respect but appreciate others' opinions for they are what make conversation not only necessary but enjoyable.
- **Be your BEST HELLO!** Look people in the eye, offer a firm handshake and smile.
- **First Impression.** You are never meeting just one person. The impression you make will carry forward from the person in front of you to others that person communicates with about you. Are people passing on your name or simply passing... on your name?
- **Be Encouraging.** When you encourage others and you watch them become encouraged it will encourage you to encourage others.



More on Soft Skills

Be on time.

Being on time not only affects you; it affects your coworkers, employers, and customers. You do not like being kept waiting, so do not return the favor. Showing up late shows a lack of consideration: whoever you are meeting is not worth your time. It also implies that you are unorganized and that you do not have a good sense of responsibility. From the point of view of your employer, your showing up late can decrease productivity and hurt the company's goals. The company is trying to produce a product or service, but cannot do so effectively if employees are not committed to their work. Sometimes being late is unavoidable, in such an instance as a traffic accident. In a case like that, always make sure to notify whoever is expecting you.

Professionalism

It is always important to act professionally in the workplace. That is what clients look for in a company: discipline and professionalism. Make sure to follow your company's dress code, whatever it may be. Some companies have business attire dress codes, and they expect nothing less. When companies have casual dress codes, it is still important to look put-together. For example, holey jeans, low cut shirts, and muscle shirts are usually frowned upon. If you are unsure of the dress code, ask. In general, it's better to be more formal than less.

Employers hire employees to work on projects given to them, and these employers expect you to be productive the entire time that you are there, or to put in the time necessary to complete the job. These days, most companies use technology to help with everyday tasks, and part of being professional is not abusing company-provided technology. Make sure you understand and observe your employer's rules about dealing with personal matters on company time, including using your own technology. For example, turn off your cell phone ringer so you are not distracting yourself or disrupting everyone around you.

Oral and Written Communication

Keep communications brief and concise, without needless illustrations or words. Do not muddy the waters beating around the bush; keep communications short, sweet, and to the point. While communicating with others, one of the most important skills you can have is the ability to listen and to accept other opinions and ideas.

Communication in schools is usually led by an instructor who assigns homework, and the students respond or ask questions when directed to do so. In the workplace, however, your employer will often assume that you will notify him/her of anything that needs to be brought to their attention without being asked. The challenge of communication in the workplace is deciding when it is appropriate to share your ideas and concerns. Do not be afraid to share your opinion, as it is often

appreciated and needed. Just beware of how you sound when you voice opinions; arrogance is not a becoming trait.

Language Skills

Language skills go hand in hand with communication, because good grammar and proper spelling are expected in the workplace and increase effectiveness. When communicating with a client, it is very unprofessional to have spelling errors, or to use texting abbreviations such as “lol.” Simple mistakes can give people the wrong impressions, which can be difficult to overcome. Even when communicating with coworkers whom you are friendly with, you must remember that you are still in a professional environment.

Teamwork and Collaboration Skills

Very often employers will ask several employees to work together, because it can be helpful to bounce ideas off each other. Knowing how and when to lead and when to follow can make a good impression on others, and can help avoid unnecessary conflict. Different people can bring different ideas and perspectives to the table, as well as different professional competencies. People may express ideas in very different ways; consequently listening is a very important skill. While working on a team, do not underestimate the power of a compromise. Elements of several ideas can often be melded together to create one. Working as a team can also help create closer relationships with your coworkers, which can make any job more fun and interesting.

Problem Solving Skills

The use of facts and data can help to prove a point or to solve a problem. When you are using these resources, keep them brief and to the point. The more useless information you put in, the less credibility your useful facts will have.

Do not be afraid to voice your opinion to employers. They often like it when new employees come in with fresh, new ideas. But tread carefully. When you are new at a company, you may not be completely aware of all the factors in play regarding a situation, so be careful of what you are trying to change. When you are tasked with a problem, you often do not have to answer immediately. The ability to create a well thought out solution in a reasonable time frame is a skill that most employers value.

Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm is a distinguishing quality that employers look for in prospective employees. Someone who is enthusiastic and willing to do the job is usually more productive, and in general, happier. After being employed, take the initiative and find more challenging work for yourself. This often includes performing tasks needing to be done before being asked. Being enthusiastic shows your commitment to your job and is a good way to rise within the business. Stay engaged in your work; the company, as well as yourself, will benefit.



Integrity

Though all workplaces have specific guidelines, they are not always abided by. No matter whether it is management or coworkers not abiding by the guidelines, always try to follow the rules yourself. You will need to use your judgment in many situations. Many infringements are trivial and do not need to be reported, but you should report anything that seems seriously questionable, such as instances of sexual harassment or theft.

Your job is to do the best that you can do, to benefit both yourself and the company. Important traits in situations such as these are honesty, integrity, and morality. There is no set solution to this problem, which comes in many shades of grey. All that can be said is to use your best judgment, and do what you honestly and thoughtfully believe to be right.

Sources:

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