

Ten Soft Skills You Need

Openness and Honesty

Open, honest communication is the key to building workplace relationships and demonstrating professionalism. While you do not need to discuss personal or private topics in the workplace, being transparent and honest about work matters and generally being willing to communicate with others is vital. People can sense when someone is hiding something or withholding information, and tend not to trust him or her. This damages workplace trust and relationships, and may lead to lower productivity and morale. Each of us has a different level of comfort with what we choose to disclose about ourselves, but being willing to share parts of yourself with your colleagues also helps to build rapport.

Managing Distractions

A major key to productivity, especially if you want to find a flow state, is to manage your distractions. Distractions happen – we can minimize them and manage them, but never eliminate them altogether. Creating a plan for managing distractions is a key time management skill. The first step is to determine what your major distractions are. Is it colleagues popping into your office? Is it your email or voicemail? Do you get bored with routine tasks if you have to focus on them too long? Figuring out what your major distractions are can help you brainstorm solutions and better manage them.

Some common distractions are:

- Colleagues stopping by to chat
- Checking email or voicemail
- Clutter in your workspace
- Boredom after spending too long on one task

You can solve these by:

- Establishing “open door” hours
- Closing your door or otherwise indicating “Please Do Not Disturb”
- Using noise canceling headphones
- De-cluttering your workspace
- Building in breaks

The Multitasking Myth

Multitasking is exactly what it sounds like – trying to do more than one thing at a time. Many of us multitask throughout our day – listening to a colleague while checking email, working on a document while talking on the phone. We have the idea that we get more done when we multitask or that this is the best way to maximize our time. However, studies show that 30-40% more time is spent when you multitask rather than when you mono-task (work on one thing at a time). Multitasking also means your attention is divided, which can lead to miscommunication and errors. Multitasking can also damage relationships, as it may convey that we are not really interested in what another is saying. It can be difficult to break the multitasking habit, but it is key if we are to be the best we can be.