

## How to Get a Job and Keep It: Soft Skills Matter!

**Q1: Soft skills can be a competitive advantage as a job seeker. With 77% of employers saying soft skills are just as important as hard skills, what two soft skills are considered when it comes down to two candidates?**

A1: 1) Being a “team player” or a person who can “wear many hats.” and 2) It’s important to show not only likeability, but flexibility which makes it easier for others to work with you.

**Q2: Soft skills are sought after by employers who understand their importance in the workplace. How we convey information is a necessary skill and how we communicate can be broken down into three different types. What are they and give an example of each?**

A2: Oral includes face-to-face conversations or your interaction in meetings; written communications are emails or memos; and non-verbal communication is how you present yourself. (Body language and facial expressions.)

**Q3: Problem solving/critical thinking is referred to as the ability to use facts, data, and knowledge to effectively solve problems. What does having this soft skill mean to the employer?**

A3: It’s the ability to achieve a sensible solution in a reasonable amount of time. This is a skill that employers desire when building their teams.

**Q4: A strong work ethic is vital to an organization achieving its goals. It’s based on value, hard work, and perseverance. What are some factors that create a strong work ethic?**

A4: Factors include: integrity, responsibility, quality, discipline, and teamwork.

**Q5: Practicing good time management can allow you to accomplish more in a shorter period of time. So what are the benefits of time management and who benefits from it?**

A5: It makes you feel happier, more successful, and leads to a fuller, stress-free life. Your employer can benefit from improvement in your efficiency.

**Q6: There will always be disagreements at work. Your ability to resolve the conflict depends on being able to identify and handle it sensibly, fairly, and efficiently. What are some of the consequences for avoiding workplace conflict?**

A6: Communications and teamwork can become strained, and it can affect your productivity.

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**Q7: Enthusiasm and positive attitudes are soft skills employers' value. What other values do employers look for in productive employees?**

A7: They look for employees who take the initiative and are self-motivated. Employers appreciate people who don't need to be told what to do. Demonstrating to your supervisor this and other leadership skills can actually lead to promotions.

**Q8: Employers don't expect you to be "superhuman" and in an interview it's OK to be honest about weaknesses you may have. What are some ways to build the soft skills you feel would be valuable to share?**

A8: Build mini-stories around specific examples of how you dealt with specific tasks or issues to help the interviewer understand your skills. This is a good way for the hiring manager to help evaluate your abilities.

**Q9: Self-awareness and self-evaluation are important in understanding why you react to certain situations, and why you become stressed, angry, shy, or irritated. Think about these areas and ask yourself: "How can I improve on them?"**

A9: Ask friends, co-workers, or people you trust for their honest feedback. You should also volunteer for more responsibilities or ask to be on a project team. This will give more narrative for you to draw from in your next interview.

**Q10: It's important to communicate clearly through written, oral, and nonverbal communications. Being aware of how others feel is a start. What skills are needed to develop effective communications?**

A10: Making eye contact, monitoring your body language, practicing public and conversational speaking, and developing writing skills. Start by asking how others feel about your communication skills. Then, begin developing these skills through practicing and monitoring with the help of a friend or mentor.

**Q11: A positive resolution is the ultimate goal of resolving conflict. What steps are needed to ensure this?**

A11: Identify the causes of the conflict, state the reasons for working on the conflict and why you want it resolved, communicate how you want it resolved, address the issue face-to-face and stick to the plan. If necessary, take a time out when emotions interfere.

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**Q12: Listening is a skill that requires focus and self-discipline. What skills are essential for good listening?**

A12: Paraphrase and ask questions, take notes when appropriate, never interrupt other people, and pay attention to the speaker's body language. These skills lead to understanding, empathizing, or evaluating if a plan is a good one.

**Q13: Building relationships in the workplace is important. Your interpersonal relationships build friendships with peers, supervisors, and customers. If a conflict arises, what is a healthy way to manage it?**

A13: Address the issue in private, discuss it in a nonjudgmental way, ask questions to understand their side of the story, and agree to work together to find a solution. If the issue revolves around gossip, stay away from it. Gossip destroys relationships and can ruin your job!

**Q14: The skills of leadership can be used by any employee. Observing your supervisor and how they lead others on your team is a good start. What are some things you can do to begin mimicking the positive traits you've observed?**

A14: Ask to lead discussions in small groups, set examples for others and display a positive attitude where appropriate, and have one-on-one conversations with your supervisor about concerns.

**Q15: Take the initiative by demonstrating responsibility and enthusiasm. What are some ways to demonstrate a greater level of responsibility?**

A15: Finish work on time, be aware of tasks that need done and volunteer to do them, and develop your skills related to your career. Most employers will appreciate your enthusiasm and extra work.

**Q16: You might set yourself up for failure if you try to achieve too much, leaving yourself with a feeling of defeat. Although you cannot change your skill level overnight, what are some resources or strategies you can use to begin the change?**

A16: Research books, blogs, or news articles related to the skill you're trying to improve. Practice that one skill you wish to improve. After you've made good progress, it will give you the confidence to work on other skills. Real change doesn't happen overnight, but with time, you will improve and it will seem as if those skills have been with you for life.

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## WRAP UP:

- ⇒ Problem-solving or critical thinking is referred to as the ability to use facts, data, and knowledge to effectively solve problems. Having these skills helps show you work well under pressure and have the ability to work well in teams. The employer benefits by having a high performance organization.
- ⇒ Interviews are not easy for most people and it's OK to be honest about any weaknesses you may have. During an interview, take advantage of your soft skills strengths and build mini-stories around them. Hiring managers will use this information to determine how you will perform in the future.
- ⇒ Leadership skills can be used by any employee in an organization. It's your abilities to inspire and influence others towards a goal. You should begin by observing your supervisor or someone you look up to. Mimic their positive traits and lead by example, and always display a positive attitude in all situations.

## FINAL THOUGHT:

Soft skills are increasingly becoming the "hard skills" of today's workforce. It's not enough to be highly trained in technical skills, without developing the softer, interpersonal, and relationship-building skills that help people to communicate and collaborate effectively.