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Adrienne J. Royo

*Southern Adventist University*, [aroyo@southern.edu](mailto:aroyo@southern.edu)

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## Soft Skills that Employers are Seeking

Adrienne Royo, Ph.D.

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### Abstract:

As a university professor who wishes to discover ways in which I can enhance my students/advises knowledge on how to prepare and plan for their future, I have executed a literature search relevant to the soft skills that employers are seeking in the graduates of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The following article summaries purposely seek to elucidate this question for today's graduates. A summary is provided at the end.

\*In the article, from the Insider Picks Team, "***4 Soft Skills LinkedIn says are most likely to get you hired in 2018 - and the online courses to get them***", the four skills that are highlighted are: 1) Leadership; 2) Communication; 3) Collaboration; and 4) Time Management. This article provides the data gleaned from a survey of 2,000 business leaders, which indicates that 57% of the respondents (being members of LinkedIn) indicated that the soft skills are the most important factor in acquiring a job. The author's analysis is that one "can always progress technically, but soft skills translate to any career path and most aspects of being a great employee, teammate, and leader."

\*"***Employment: the 10 most in demand skills for 2019***", published by @ascorrespondent indicates that "employers are looking for different skills sets than they were last decade." The article underscores the fact that the face of the job market has changed significantly. No longer are technical skills going to be the sole component of employment; but key 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies are essential. This article outlines the five key soft skills being sought: 1) Creativity; 2) Persuasion; 3) Collaboration; 4) Adaptability; 5) Time Management. The authorial team indicates that Generation Z is expected to have very positive customer satisfaction skills; which is what is being sought in the 2019 business world.

\*"***Is Generation Z Ready for Employment***", authored by @SoumikRoy. This article addresses the dilemma in which companies find themselves, in that, they feel that they have recently adapted to the needs, distinctiveness, and expectations of the Millennials, and now they find themselves searching for an understanding of Generation Z. this new generation is the executives entering the job market, falling within the age group of the 19-23 year olds. According to this article, it is estimated that by 2020, this group will represent 20% of the workforce.

The issue is that the Gen Z group feels prepared for the workforce, in the field of technology; however, according to employers this is not the case. Additionally, this new employee is seeking additional benefits to their paycheck; they want to work for a company that is socially responsible, as well as, being able to enhance skills in the workplace.

On the other hand, companies feel that the Generation Z, “digital native” has much to offer in being an integral part of the value-added assets of 21<sup>st</sup> century companies. Additionally, they are much more conscious of the impact and significance of privacy and social media.

This article recommends that schools teach students, not solely what to learn, but how to learn. – Companies are encouraged to teach students soft skills through internships, job rotations, and other programs, while they capitalize on their prior knowledge, drive, and energy while safeguarding the meeting of their goals and expectations.

\*”**6 Soft Skills Employers are looking for in the Workplace**”, authored by Tyler Omoth. This article asserts that the key to success in the workplace is the ability to identify the “it factor”, also known as the “soft skills” Omoth indicates that no matter whether one is an athlete or otherwise, the same principle applies, one must recognize what separates the potential employee from the competition. The author states that once one determines what the unique characteristics are of one’s skills set, the edge will be evident; although, not necessarily quantifiable.

Omoth defines the term soft skills as personal skills that may come naturally, or may be developed by the individual. The author identifies the following skills as those that have been determined as most important: 1) Strong Work Ethic; 2) Communication skills; 3) Creative problem-solving; 4) Time Management; 5) Team work; 6) Leadership..

In conclusion, the author sets forth the following challenge:

Think of your soft skills as the accessories to your training in your field. They, alone, cannot qualify you for a job, but when paired with solid credentials, they can make you a much more attractive candidate for any job. From cashier, to construction worker, to CEO, soft skills are needed in today’s workforce. Learn to cultivate yours and display them for employers to see and you’ll keep yourself ahead of the pack.

\*”**Soft Skills for Career Success**”, a YouTube video in which the presenter seeks to define the differences between soft skills and hard skills. The video effectively presents a working knowledge of what each area *of employment tools represent, 13 minutes and 25 seconds.*

\*”**Soft Skills –What are Soft Skills**”. This WikiJob article opens with a definition of “hard skills”, by stating that these are “tangible and technical skills easily demonstrated by a candidate’s qualifications and specific professional experiences” In contrast to this class of skills, is the group of “soft skills”, which are defined as: “the more intangible and non-technical abilities that are sought from candidates”.

The article continues its description of the “soft skills”, by stating that “sometimes the ‘soft skills’ are referred to as” transferable skills or professional skills”. The article continues by saying, “these are skills that are less specialized, less rooted in specific vocations, and more aligned with the general disposition and personality of a candidate.” The article also indicates that: “being able to demonstrate your soft skills equates to demonstrating great potential to succeed and progress in the career of your choice.”

The following “soft skills” are indicated as key: 1) Communication; 2) Self-motivation; 3) Motivation; 4) Leadership; 5) Responsibility; 6) Teamwork; 7) Problem-solving; 8) Decisiveness; 9) Time Management; 10) Flexibility. This listing is followed by strategies concerning how to promote your “soft skills” in your CV, as well as, in an interview.

*\*The Bilingual Advantage in the Global Workplace\**, authored by Mehdi Lazar, identifies the four traits that give bilinguals a competitive edge. The author argues that, based on research individuals who are bilingual and bicultural have four shared traits: 1) better focus and multitasking skills; 2) better adaptability; 3) increased cultural fluency; 4) more opportunities. So many companies are of an international nature; therefore, these entities are seeking those individuals who will be an asset to their success and marketability.

The article further explains that being bilingual/multilingual, linguistically and culturally, does not replace a solid education, but it does provide human capital, that cannot be gained any other way. The combination of the two points of job skills provide what employers are looking for in their employees –in the global marketplace.

\*In the article, *“The Most Important Soft Skills Employers Seek”*, Alison Doyle draws attention to the fact that the typical individual seeking employment will emphasize the “hard skills”; however, she points out that it is necessary to highlight one’s “soft skills”, also, in order to draw attention to the fact that you are the best candidate for the position.

Doyle points out that when one is seeking employment, “the soft skills are as important as the hard skills.” She explains that “soft skills” are much more difficult to define than “hard skills”; however, they are of equal importance; because, any job involves the need for interpersonal relationships.

Doyle points out the top 7 “soft skills” that employers are seeking: 1) Acting as a team player; 2) Flexibility; 3) Effective communication; 4) Problem-solving and resourcefulness; 5) Accepting feedback; 6) Confidence; 7) Creative thinking, as indicated by Indeed’s Director of Recruiting, Mike Steiner.

This article also outlines the variant soft skills needed for different types of jobs, such as managerial or technical; however, the author proceeds to stress the point that strong written and oral communication skills are paramount to any job.

The author also provides the key factors that are necessary to the acquisition of a job, i.e., in the writing of one’s resume, as well as, during the interview. One must cultivate the skills necessary to highlight the fact that one has the knowledge that is required for the job, as well as, being able to specifically point out one’s “soft skills”.

\*In the article *“The Top 10 Soft Skills Employers Look for Most”*, authored by Matthew Sigelman, the reader is informed that the “soft skills” are “an inherently fuzzy concept.” The author terms “soft skills” as “baseline” skills that are not specific to any given job, they are skills that sought by employers across the board. Based on research performed by Burning Glass Technologies, in their analysis of millions of job postings, it was determined that 33% of the

skills enumerated in ads could be appropriately listed as a “soft skill”. It is also noted that these are skills that can be taught, they are not skills that one has to acquire throughout childhood.

The skills that are indicated in this article, in the author’s determination of importance are: 10) Research; 9) Computer Literacy; 8) Planning; 7) Problem-solving; 6) Microsoft Word; 5) Microsoft Excel; 4) Customer Service; 3) Writing; 2) Organizational skills; 1) Communication skills.

**“Top 10 Soft Skills Employers are Seeking”**, by Nancy Anderson points out to the reader that too often job seekers focus on the “hard skills”, to the detriment of the showcasing of their “soft skills”, which often are the key to presenting oneself as a well-rounded and desirable candidate.

Anderson indicates that the following are the top “soft skills” being sought by employers: 1) Confidence; 2) Openness; 3) Adaptability; 4) ambition; 5) Positive Attitude; 6) fast learner; 7) Team work; 8) Conflict management; 9) Communication; 10) Trustworthiness. The author points out that by learning to showcase one’s skills the chances of obtaining employment much more quickly are greatly increased, as well as, obtaining one’s dream job.

**“the Top 12 Soft Skills employers Seek”**, by Penny Loretto, introduces the topic by pointing out that there are specific “soft skills” that employers are seeking; although, there can be variations in skills being sought, due to differences in company and business needs. The author points out that research has demonstrated that “soft skills” can be equally valuable in indicating the suitability of a job seeker, as the “hard skills”. Loretto states that “soft skills”, i.e., personal qualities, attitudes, verbal and nonverbal behavior, determine what type of employee one will be. The skills that are listed as desirable, by this author are: 1) A Positive Attitude; 2) A Strong Work Ethic; 3) Excellent Communication and Interpersonal Skills; 4) Problem-solving Skills; 5) Time Management Skills; 6) Flexibility; 7) Work Well in a Team Environment; 8) Computer/Technological Skills; 9) Project Management Skills; 10) Self-confidence; 11) Ability to Accept Constructive Criticism; 12) Strong research Skills.

**“the Ultimate Transferable Skills List: 50+ Transferable Skills for Your Resume”**, authored by LiveCareer Staff Writer, who introduces the article by defining the term, “transferable skills” as skills that one acquires during one’s education, internships, and prior jobs, but that can be valuable to any job, following the employee into whatever setting, in which they find themselves.

The author points out the importance of identifying these skills on one’s resume, indicating the significance and need for making one aware of these skills and pointing them out to potential employers.

The author identifies 6 broad areas of “soft skills” sets and then breaks them down into more specific skills:

### **Transferable Skills List: Communication**

This section refers to the expression, transmission, and interpretation of knowledge and ideas, and includes these specific skills:

- Speaking effectively
- Writing concisely
- Listening attentively
- Expressing ideas
- Facilitating group discussion
- Providing appropriate feedback, either independently or when asked
- Negotiating
- Perceiving nonverbal messages
- Persuading others
- Reporting information
- Describing feelings
- Interviewing
- Editing

### **Transferable Skills List: Research and Planning**

This list includes your ability to conceptualize future needs, your solutions for meeting those needs, and your search for specific knowledge that's required for completing a task.

- Forecasting and predicting
- Creating ideas
- Identifying problems
- Imagining alternatives
- Identifying appropriate resources
- Gathering information
- Solving problems
- Setting goals
- Extracting important information
- Defining needs and requirements
- Analyzing information
- Developing evaluation strategies

### **Transferable Skills List: Interpersonal Skills and Human Relations**

This refers to your ability to work well with others, especially when it involves conflict resolution or problem-solving.

- Developing rapport with coworkers and customers

- Being sensitive to others
- Listening
- Conveying feelings appropriately
- Providing support for others
- Motivating others
- Sharing credit with colleagues
- Counseling
- Cooperating
- Delegating with respect
- Representing others
- Accurately perceiving feelings or situations
- Asserting

### **Transferable Skills List: Creative Thinking Skills**

This list includes competencies related to thinking critically or being flexible in your thinking. You might need to spot patterns in the information you're analyzing, for instance, or devise a new solution to an ongoing problem.

- Demonstrating cognitive flexibility, thinking outside the box
- Conceptualizing situations
- Showing curiosity
- Being imaginative
- Predicting and anticipating shortfalls
- Showing foresight
- Making abstract connections
- Making inferences
- Synthesizing ideas

### **Transferable Skills List: Organization, Management, and Leadership Skills**

These skills relate to your ability to supervise, direct, and guide individuals and groups in the completion of tasks and fulfillment of goals.

- Initiating new ideas
- Handling details
- Coordinating and planning tasks
- Managing groups
- Delegating responsibility to others
- Teaching
- Counseling
- Coaching
- Promoting change
- Selling ideas or products

- Decision making with others
- Managing conflict
- Following through on tasks
- Multitasking
- Demonstrating effective time management

### **Transferable Skills List: Work Survival Skills**

These are the day-to-day, nitty-gritty skills that assist in promoting effective production and work satisfaction.

- Making and implementing decisions
- Cooperating
- Enforcing policies or established rules
- Being punctual
- Managing time wisely
- Attending to detail
- Meeting goals, both short-term and long-term
- Enlisting the help of others when you need it
- Accepting responsibility
- Setting deadlines and meeting them
- Organizing

LiveCareer concludes the article with this statement:

Whether you're jumping back into the workforce, a recent college grad, or exploring a new career path, you're bound to get better results and call backs for jobs you apply for when you make sure to include a transferable skills list on your resume. Don't miss out on the opportunity to impress a prospective employer with the talents and aptitudes you've developed over the years. They just might be the things that tip the scales in your favor and earn you your next dream job.

***\*"Top 10 In-Demand soft Skills employers are Looking for in 2018: Boost My Employability"***, authored by Alison indicates that 94% of hiring managers believe that employees with "stronger soft skills have a better chance of getting hired or promoted than a well-experienced employee with limited soft skills." The article challenges the reader to acquire and perfect these "soft skills", which will make the potential employee competitive and the employer's first choice:

The "soft skills" that are identified are the following: 1) Problem-solving abilities; 2) Time Management Skills; 3) Interpersonal communication; 4) A willingness to learn; 5) Self

Motivation; 6) Being a Team Player; 7) Being Adaptable; 8) Working Well Under Pressure; 9) computer Literacy; 10) Planning Skills.

## **Conclusion -**

In my analysis of the above-reviewed articles, I have concluded that the following 10 “soft skills” are the most important in today’s global world, enabling the employee to acquire the desired employment, as well as, the availability of opportunities to work to one’s potential:

- 1) **Communication** – Written, oral, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, digitally listener, facilitator, negotiator, perceptive.
- 2) **Time Management** – Punctuality, effective task completion, function independently, set deadlines
- 3) **Teamwork** – Interpersonal skills, cooperation, delegate, respectful listener, perceptivity, flexibility, adaptability, collaborative
- 4) **Research** – the ability to discover information that will facilitate solutions and enhance knowledge and skills, identify & gather appropriate resources
- 5) **Goal-setter** – the ability to make decisions and pursue the outcomes, accept responsibility, planner, visionary
- 6) **Leadership skills** – managerial, self-directed, motivational, assertive, persuasive, adept at negotiation and conflict resolution
- 7) **Creative thinking** – thinking outside the box, visualize, solution-seeker, analytical, alternative seeker
- 8) **Positive attitude** – self-confident, encouraging, inspiring
- 9) **Assessment** – ability to provide productive feedback, ability to accept/receive constructive evaluation
- 10) **Strong work ethic** – Valuable and ethical behavior, consciousness of the meaning and implications of attention to confidentiality and discretion globally, perseverance, focus

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