

# Technology Today

## Soft Skills A Necessity To Narrow The STEM Skills Gap

(NAPS)—The United States has been battling a STEM skills gap over the past decade, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, where technology has advanced faster than the knowledge and skill level of companies and employees. To help fill this gap, employees must stay up-to-date on the latest technologies and skills.

The less obvious but equally important part is learning the soft skills that enhance efficient workplace interaction.

STEM skills alone aren't enough anymore. Employees also need to excel in soft skills, like communication and critical thinking. Teamwork, for example, can be as important as technical knowledge when it comes to accomplishing most tasks.

According to the Pew Research Center, jobs emphasizing social or analytical skills generally pay more than higher physical or manual skill jobs.

"The lessons learned in the sandbox can extend far beyond the playground and may serve well in competitive environments," says Dennis Bonilla, executive dean, University of Phoenix College of Information Systems and Technology. "Learning to work with others and develop leadership skills are some of the important aspects of improving your company, product or project."

### Speaking Tech

Effective communication is essential in every job, but especially in tech careers. Basic communication, via e-mail, phone or face to face, could be the difference in getting hired by a client or chosen by an investor.

Learning how to communicate well with others plays a big role in tech careers. Employees must be able to explain complicated IT projects and progress in clear, jargon-free language to executives, who may not have the same tech vocabulary.

### There's no "I" in Team

A good product, idea or company can go so far on its own—only with a team with different skill sets does it flourish.

Overcoming the skills gap requires bringing together people with unique skills and knowledge to complete a task. The more agreeable and reliable an employee is, the more likely he or she is to advance in the company.

### Thinking Critically and Creatively

Companies and individuals today



**Companies today want workers with social skills as well as technological know-how.**

need to think outside the box, using both hard IT skills and soft skills such as critical thinking to stand out in a crowded space. Employees who can think creatively and innovatively are more valuable when efficient and cost-effective solutions are necessary.

Thinking critically means having the skills to obtain, organize, analyze and disseminate information. With so much competition today, it's important that employees are provided continuing education opportunities to learn the valuable soft skills not often present in the workplace.

### Helpful Resources

Most soft skills must be learned and some universities offer degrees to help IT professionals stay ahead of the curve. With technology evolving at an exponential rate—and showing no signs of slowing—education no longer has an end date.

University of Phoenix, for example, launched the RedFlint™ Experience Center in Las Vegas, an incubator, accelerator and co-working space to connect with experts, interact with the latest technologies and learn valuable soft skills.

At RedFlint, employees, companies and students have access to workshops, simulations and top tech. University of Phoenix also offers online programs like the Associate of Arts with a concentration in Information Technology that establishes foundational knowledge and critical thinking and collaboration skills needed for any working environment.

For more information about these programs, including on-time completion rates, the median debt incurred by students who completed the program and more, visit [www.phoenix.edu/programs/degree-programs/technology/associates/aaitt.html](http://www.phoenix.edu/programs/degree-programs/technology/associates/aaitt.html).