

Are Soft Skills More Valuable Than Academic Skills In The Workforce?

(NAPSA)—From preschool through college, teachers are instructed to build students' academic skills, like reading, writing and arithmetic. However, students leave the classroom untested for many skills that are directly applicable to one's career. Soft skills may not be "graded," but they can make or break your career.

Soft skills are increasingly important to success in the workplace; it's no longer enough to rely on technical skills to set yourself apart. Employees must also demonstrate highly developed interpersonal skills, which contribute to a positive work culture and promote strong teamwork and enhanced leadership abilities. And employers are looking for employees who are efficient and demonstrate the ability to manage their time wisely, whether it's juggling multiple projects or avoiding personal distractions.¹

A recent 2016 national curriculum survey conducted by the American College Test (ACT) found that supervisors and employees ranked the lack of three nonacademic skill areas—conscientiousness, problem solving and critical thinking—among the top five skills most likely or very likely to lead to a poor outcome for an employee².

"Soft skills begin to develop at a very young age, and it's essential to support the growth of these skills," said Constance St. Germain, J.D., Ed.D., executive dean for University of Phoenix Colleges of Humanities & Sciences, Social Sciences, and Security and Criminal Justice. "Integrating soft skills into our curriculum alongside technical knowledge is an integral approach that University of Phoenix uses to prepare our students for success in the workplace."

Dr. St. Germain highlights the following as among the most valuable soft skills:

1. **Communication:** Effective communication skills, both written and verbal, are integral to success in any industry. A recent Pew Research Center survey found that communication ranked first among the skills that Americans believe are most important for children to have to get ahead in the world³.

2. **Critical Thinking:** According to the ACT survey, more postsecondary science instructors cited weakness in critical thinking than in content knowledge as most likely to contribute to a poor outcome for a student⁴. Critical thinking skills are necessary to navigate a variety of workplace challenges, including making big decisions and communicating a point of view.

3. **Collaboration:** Collaboration is key to a company's success, especially as the landscape of industry demands continues to evolve. According to Cis-



A flair for collaboration can take you far in business and all of life. Fortunately, it can be taught.

co, over the past 20 years, as companies have begun to automate or outsource many structured or process-oriented tasks, much of the work that remains is complex and highly collaborative⁵.

4. **Problem Solving/Creativity:** Problem solving requires a willingness to be creative and think outside the box. Professionals who are willing to be patient and approach problems from all angles are more likely to find solutions, and to be noticed by their supervisors for their resourcefulness.

5. **Emotional Intelligence:** Emotional intelligence (EQ) is as valuable as IQ in the workplace: having perseverance, self-control and the ability to get along with others is necessary throughout one's career. According to TalentSmart, 90 percent of top performers have high emotional intelligence⁶. Fifty-eight percent of job performance is also attributed to EQ⁷.

6. **Professionalism:** Adult learners can begin to incorporate professional behavior in the classroom through their approach to learning, teamwork, tackling assignments and accomplishing their educational goals. The professionalism necessary to successfully complete a degree program, especially as a working adult who may be balancing other responsibilities, can create a strong foundation that will translate into the workplace.

Learn More

To learn more about University of Phoenix College of Humanities and Sciences, visit www.phoenix.edu/colleges_divisions/humanities-sciences.html.

For more information about each of these programs, including on-time completion rates, the median debt incurred by students who completed the program and other important information, please visit www.phoenix.edu/programs/gainful-employment.

Citations:

1. Pew Research Center; The skills Americans say kids need to succeed in life, February 19, 2015
2. National Curriculum Survey 2016, ACT; pg. 29
3. Pew Research Center; The skills Americans say kids need to succeed in life, February 19, 2015
4. National Curriculum Survey 2016, ACT; pg. 23
5. Cisco Connected Workplace Survey 2013 pg. 2
6. Talent Smart; Emotional Intelligence (EQ) | The Premier Provider - Tests, Training, Certification, and Coaching. TalentSmart. Web.
7. ibid