



80%
of job success
comes from
well-developed
soft skills.

How Soft Skills Prime Students for Success in College and Career

In today's highly competitive job market, post-secondary education and skills training are crucial for a successful career. However, many students struggle to be successful at the post-secondary level. Why? Obviously, students need a solid foundation in academic skills—reading, writing, and arithmetic—but that's not enough. Students also need a set of real-world skills, or "soft skills" that go beyond core academic skills.

What are these soft skills and why are they so important?

Soft skills include **personal qualities, characteristics, and attitudes.**

It is essential for students to develop soft skills as they prepare for college and as they graduate and enter the workforce to achieve success in these key stages of life.

Essential soft skills for college and workplace-bound students include:

1 Self-Management and Time Management

The structure students depended on in high school to organize their work and complete assignments efficiently is largely absent in college. For many students this loss of structure is often the most difficult aspect of the transition to college. **To be successful, it is imperative that students be fully self-sufficient in supervising and motivating themselves,** managing their time and prioritizing actions. The ability to track multiple projects (multitask) in an organized and efficient manner, as well as intelligently prioritize tasks to complete work on time, are also extremely important skills for students long after graduation.

2 Communication and Interpersonal Skills

A common complaint amongst employers is that young people do not know how to effectively carry on a conversation and are unable to do things like **ask questions, listen actively and maintain eye contact.** Students need to recognize and tailor communication styles for their audience. They need to know how to listen to those around them and share their thoughts and ideas, both in writing and orally.

Electronic devices have undeniably connected young individuals to one another, but many argue they have also lessened their ability to communicate face-to-face or by telephone. **The ability to effectively express thoughts, feelings, ideas, and challenges is key** to building good relationships, networking, gaining references and recommendations, and effectively navigating college classes and adult life, in general.



Soft skills make
life manageable
and goals
achievable.

Essential soft skills for college and workplace-bound students include:

3 Collaboration

Colleges prepare students for the workplace—and that means a lot of projects requiring teamwork. Being adaptable and flexible, cooperating with others, showing personal energy and contributing to a team are key skills for success.

Cultural sensitivity and awareness are essential as students must be comfortable working and communicating with those whose backgrounds, worldviews, and ways of thinking are not necessarily like theirs. They must be able to embrace differences as an opportunity to create better work instead of seeing those differences as a threat. It's also important that students know how to **navigate conflicts and disagreements, learn to compromise and to give and receive criticism in a way that's respectful and productive.**

4 Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking

After college, students will be faced with a number of unexpected challenges in life. They must be able to solve problems in creative ways and determine solutions to issues with no prescribed formula. Students who are accustomed to learned processes and who cannot occasionally veer off-course, will struggle to handle unanticipated setbacks.

In college the curriculum is much more ambiguous than high school. **Students are challenged to push the boundaries of their thinking beyond memorization and recall, consider different viewpoints, make inferences and tackle difficult questions.** Creativity, persistence, and a willingness to accept and learn from experience are necessary for success in the college classroom and in life.



- A **2014 Harris poll** of more than 2,100 hiring managers revealed that a whopping **77% believe soft skills are just as important as hard skills** when evaluating potential job candidates, and 16% said they were even more important.

- A recent study by **Leadership IQ** of 20,000 new hires over a 3-year period found 46% of all first time hires **lost their job** in their first 18 months of employment: 11% from a lack of technical skills, **89% from soft skill deficiencies.**

- **University research** has concluded that more than **80% of job success comes from well-developed soft skills.**

- The Huffington Post asked **Faizolhardi Zubairy, Head of Digital Media at PETRONAS Dagangan Berhad**, what was the most valuable advice he'd ever received when he was facing challenges in his career. **His answer was to hone your soft skills:** *"While your technical skills may get your foot in the door, your people skills will open more doors for you. Your work ethic, attitude, communication skills,*

negotiation skills, emotional intelligence and leadership are the soft skills that are crucial for career success."

- According to a survey by the **International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP)**, **67% of HR managers indicated that they would hire an applicant with soft skills whose technical abilities were lacking.** However, only 9% would hire someone with strong technical expertise but weak interpersonal skills.

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