Soft Skills – The Other Shoe

“The day of considering quality and teamwork as special has passed. Not because they aren’t important, but because the bar has been raised to the point where we feel they’re mandatory. We don’t even consider hiring someone who can’t exhibit these skills. It’s like getting your measles shot before school.”

- Patricia Murray
Corporate VP for HR
Intel Corp
What Are “Soft” Skills, Anyway?

- Enhance employability
- Enhance advancement
- Non-technical
- Universally applicable

“Technical Skills will get you the interview, but it’s the soft skills that get you the job”
- Heard repeatedly in Industry Focus Groups
What Industry Says

1. Math.
2. Safety.
3. Courtesy.
4. Honesty.
5. Grammar.
6. Reliability.
7. Flexibility.
8. Team skills.
9. Eye contact.
11. Adaptability.
12. Follow rules.
13. Self-directed.
14. Good attitude.
15. Writing skills.
17. Dependability.
18. Advanced math.
20. Good references.
22. Good attendance.
23. Personal energy.
24. Work experience.
25. Ability to measure.
26. Personal integrity.
27. Good work history.
28. Positive work ethic.
29. Interpersonal skills.
30. Motivational skills.
32. Personal chemistry.
33. Willingness to learn.
34. Common sense.
35. Critical thinking skills.
36. Knowledge of fractions.
37. Reporting to work on time.
38. Use of rulers and calculators.
39. Good personal appearance.
40. Wanting to do a good job.
41. Basic spelling and grammar.
42. Reading and comprehension.
43. Ability to follow regulations.
44. Willingness to be accountable.
45. Ability to fill out a job application.
46. Ability to make production quotas.
47. Basic manufacturing skills training.
48. Awareness of how business works.
49. Staying on the job until it is finished.
50. Ability to read and follow instructions.
51. Willingness to work second and third shifts.
52. Caring about seeing the company succeed.
53. Understanding what the world is all about.
54. Ability to listen and document what you have heard.
55. Commitment to continued training and learning.
56. Willingness to take instruction and responsibility.
57. Ability to relate to coworkers in a close environment.
58. Not expecting to become a supervisor in the first six months.
59. Willingness to be a good worker and go beyond the traditional eight-hour day.
60. Communication skills with public, fellow employees, supervisors, and customers.
Critical Soft-Skill

- Communication
- Teamwork/Interpersonal Skills
- Problem Solving
- Initiative and Enterprise
- Planning and Organizing
- Self-Management
- Technology
Some Issues

- Education versus Training
- “I’ll know it when I see it.”
- Can we measure it?
- “Why do I have to learn this?”

“You have to recognize you’re doing this work for others - it’s not an end in itself. We want a long term relationship with the client. We need to work together to ensure meaningful feedback. It’s arrogant and foolish to do otherwise.”

- Edge Knowlin, IBM
Implications

- Integrate soft and technical skills
- Provide opportunities for integrated learning
- Let students see benefits
- Skill standards can point the way
- Make meaning - soft skills are not the ball, they’re the whole ball game!
Implications for Assessment

- Open to a range of assessments
  - Based on learning styles
  - Based on integration of outcomes
  - Involving peers
  - Involving industry
  - Using activities
  - Authentic, integrating normative and criterion references

“The only practical goal of any organization is improvement.”

- Phillip Crosby, ITT
What do we really want?

We want to enable our learners to be independent advocates of their own success!