

Why these are the top 5 soft skills other employers are looking for in 2020?

 In this article we explore and discuss the top 5 soft skills employers are looking for in 2020.

LinkedIn publishes an annual report into the most sort after skills by employers. Whilst hard skills change with advances in technology, softer skills tend to be more constant. We thought it would be useful to share them and provide you an insight into how we use them within our recruitment.

You can see the report here.

<https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/trends-and-research/2020/most-in-demand-hard-and-soft-skills>

What are soft skills?

Soft skills are your intangible skills. Rather than job specific technical knowledge, know how or experience they are your more aligned to the candidate’s personality or approach. The soft skills identified by the report were:

* Creativity
* Persuasion
* Collaborative
* Adaptable
* Emotional intelligence.

We thought it would be useful to explore each of these skills in more detail and share some insight into how we apply them in our search for own talent.

Creativity

Fortunately for most of us this does not mean we are looking for candidates that have a passion for art or who can turn their hand to producing creative designs. Rather It is about seeking potential employees who have a creative mindset.

What does this mean in everyday business? Well if we relate it to our business, when we recruit, we are looking for individuals who have somewhere along their career path have solved a problem. Fantastic if that was a customer issue but of equal value if the problem was an internal one. For either, we are looking for individuals who solved that problem by coming up with an idea of how to work, process or manage differently.

We are then, actively looking for individuals who do not just have the necessary skills to perform their job well but who can evidence a willingness to think about working differently. And those individuals tend to have a couple of other valuable characteristics.

In business terms creativity is rarely done in isolation. It requires the involving and pulling together of other team members. The involvement of other areas of the business to work through these new ideas. Creative thinkers share, discuss and debate their ideas. They are comfortable expressing their views and encourage views and comments of others. All good qualities we should be looking for in potential recruits.

We have also found that creative individuals tend to be risk takers. Whilst we do want to employ loose cannons, we do want people who are prepared to take a balanced risk. People who challenge the current way of working and can visualise better, quicker, or more productive ways of working.

Persuasive

We think this is the hardest of these skills to explore or discover in a candidate. Not because the quality is not there but it is difficult to distinguish.

Persuasion is strongly associated to creative thinking. It can best be described as the art of moving another person’s opinion, so it is aligned to your way of thinking.

Contrary to some we do not think of it as the art of being able to win an argument. We think of persuasion as the ability to rationalise or think through the arguments and concerns of others. To then be able to articulate an argument or viewpoint that embraces their concerns and allows them to accept your way of thinking.

So, are these individuals simply not good communicators? We are not sure. Let us look at a couple of definitions.

The definition of a good communicator is

a person who can convey or exchange information, news, or ideas clearly

Whilst a persuasive individual is described as

*good at persuading someone to do or believe something through reasoning*

So, we think the difference may be subtle but impactful.

Good communicators have the skills needed to speak or write their view in a clear, concise manner. They can articulate and convey their message. We all seek good communicators in our businesses.

But persuasive individuals move others to their way of thinking by reasoned debate. They must be good communicators to do so. But they do so whilst having consideration of the views of others, they listen and understand the importance of inclusivity, team working and shared visons.

So, for us, persuaders bring others to their way of thinking whilst ensuring they do not leave others feeling they have lost an argument. They are perhaps, leaders?

Welcome your thoughts.

Collaborative

A soft skill that we think is easier to explore with a potential candidate.

We can all think of collaboration as a process by which a group of people work together for or towards a special purpose. To find a way of moving forward together.

Within business we can all see the merits of such an approach. It could be seeking better ways of working between two departments or looking to streamline a process. It could be with an external supplier to see if there are new ways that you can work together to reduce costs. Collaborating with customers to explore the mutual benefits of delivering a potential new product or service together.

But for us to be hugely successful at collaboration it needs to be more than just a process. All parties need to feel they have had an input but more importantly all need to see the benefits. Everyone needs to see how the new way of working, or the new terms of supply or indeed the development of a new product benefits them.

So, applying this to recruitment. If we accept that this inclusive, partnership led approach is good for our business then it must follow that we look for individuals who share those same values. Individuals who are willing to work across teams, involve others and ensure all parties get to see the merits of any change.

Perhaps we are describing good team players?

Adaptable

Change. Well everyone reading will understand the impact of change given events during Covid 19.

If these events have taught us one thing is that we need to be able to respond to changing events. To be able to respond quickly. To be able to plan, manage and implement change at pace.

Adaptability enforces creativity, and creativity is adaptability.”

Pearl Zhu

Probably like you, we have had to adapt our business model, and this has highlighted to us the benefit of an adaptable workforce. But it has also taught us that adaptable is more than being able to do someone else’s work.

Great if individuals can step up and do another’s work in the absence of a colleague. But as we have seen at a business level individual adaptability is a little more.

It is the is willingness of the individual to accept and embrace change. To be an active participant in that change.

Emotional intelligence.

A bit of a buzz word in recent times. Emotional intelligence is the ability to have empathy with others.

So, what is empathy? Empathy is the ability to understand the emotions of others and to see others perspective on a situation. To use that insight to help and support others, usually through periods of change.

We think it is difficult for an individual who has the previous attributes, creative, adaptable, collaborative, and persuasive not to have empathy and in reality we can only measure the degree of empathy an individual has rather than if they have it at all.

Would you agree?

Finally

I hope you have enjoyed this piece and you have found it useful in thinking about your next piece of recruitment.

If you have any comments or thoughts it would be a pleasure to hear them.