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moving from common sense to common practice

Why Soft Skills Training is Key to Employee Retention and Organizational Strength

By Lori A. Hoffner

In my staff training workshops or conference education sessions, I often share a lighthearted comment: as much as I'd love to think the information I present is "earth-shattering or rocket science-level technical skills," it's not. Instead, it's practical, actionable knowledge and skills that anyone can use, no matter their role or position. These are soft skills—what Simon Sinek aptly calls "people skills." The difference between understanding these concepts and mastering them lies in taking these commonsense ideas and transforming them into common practice.

In today's workplace, soft skills have evolved from being "nice-to-have" qualities to essential components for individual and organizational success. Recruiters and talent managers prioritize these skills when evaluating both new hires and internal candidates. Organizations that invest in soft skills development reap significant benefits: improved performance, stronger team dynamics, enhanced retention, and long-term resilience.

Research underscores the critical role of soft skills in the workplace. A study by The Stanford Research Center revealed that 85% of job success comes from soft skills, while only 15% stems from technical abilities. This highlights the importance of incorporating soft skills training into learning and development (L&D) strategies. Beyond improving day-to-day operations, such initiatives contribute to employee satisfaction, talent attraction, and a more robust organizational culture.

As the demand for soft skills continues to grow, employees increasingly value workplaces that prioritize training in these areas. Businesses that fail to provide such opportunities risk losing top talent to competitors who offer comprehensive development programs. On the other hand, organizations that demonstrate a commitment to employee growth create a supportive culture, fostering loyalty and long-term engagement.



The benefits of Soft Skills training are that it directly impacts organizational efficiency and employee morale. For example:

- **Effective Communication and Collaboration**
Clear, empathetic, and concise communication enables teams to break down silos, execute projects more efficiently, and boost productivity. Employees equipped with strong communication skills articulate ideas clearly, solve problems collaboratively, and contribute to a more cohesive workplace.
- **Conflict Resolution and Team Dynamics**
Employees with well-developed interpersonal skills can navigate challenges with greater agility, reducing conflicts and misunderstandings. These abilities foster a sense of belonging, key to employee retention and team cohesion.
- **Leadership Development**
Leadership is no longer just about technical expertise. Emotional intelligence, active listening, and the ability to navigate difficult conversations are vital. Leaders with strong soft skills inspire trust, encourage collaboration, and create supportive environments. Investing in these skills ensures a steady pipeline of capable leaders who contribute to organizational continuity.
- **Adaptability and Problem-Solving**
In today's fast-paced business landscape, employees with strong critical thinking and adaptability skills are better equipped to handle uncertainty and innovate. This flexibility enhances organizational resilience and ensures long-term success.

Building a Soft Skills Training Program

As I work with organizations to develop an effective soft skills training program, there are several key steps we can examine and implement:

1. **Assess Employee Skill Gaps**
Begin with an assessment to identify areas of improvement. Identify gaps in skills to target the most critical development areas.
2. **Educate Employees and Leaders**
Use internal communication channels to emphasize the importance of soft skills for individual and organizational success. Gaining leadership buy-in ensures support and demonstrates the program's value.
3. **Incorporate Engagement Strategies**
Programs that include gamification, workshops, and incentives encourage participation. Additionally, showcasing these training efforts in recruitment materials positions your organization as an attractive employer.

Organizations that prioritize soft skills development enjoy benefits that extend beyond individual employee growth. Such programs enhance engagement, improve retention, and foster a resilient workforce. Moreover, these initiatives position businesses as employers of choice in competitive markets.

Soft skills training isn't just about personal development—it's about creating a foundation for organizational strength and success. By transforming commonsense concepts into common practice, organizations can build high-performing teams and ensure sustainable growth in an ever-changing workplace. How will you improve soft skills with your team to develop and sustain a positive and connected work environment?

Lori A. Hoffner, Organizational Development Speaker & Trainer helps people and organizations create open, positive, and inclusive environments through her speaking, training, and consulting. Since 1997, Lori has had the pleasure of working with audiences across the country to help them learn, grow, and develop positive practices for their organizations. If you want more information on the topics and workshops that Lori can provide, please [contact us](#).