

Are Soft Skills the New Hard Skills?

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Workforce Planning Board
of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin

About this Project

- ▶ Partnership of:
 - ▶ Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin
 - ▶ Project READ
- ▶ Goals:
 - ▶ Identify which soft skills are a priority for local entry-level jobs
 - ▶ Better understanding of employer & industry needs i.e. what do they mean by "communication skills"?
 - ▶ Inform staff of skills needed & how Literacy & Basic Skills programs can help address gaps

About the "Defining Soft Skills" Survey

We surveyed local employers from 3 in-demand industries:

- ▶ Manufacturing
- ▶ Construction
- ▶ Retail



Asked employers:

1. "Which soft skills are the most important for **entry-level** jobs in your industry? (Please choose 3 - 5)".
2. "Please share how an employee did **NOT** have this skill. What were they unable to do, and how did it impact your business?"

The 23 Skills Employers Selected from:

- ▶ Adaptability
- ▶ Analytical / Research
- ▶ Conflict Resolution
- ▶ Creativity & Innovation
- ▶ Customer Service
- ▶ Dependability / Reliability
- ▶ Digital Literacy
- ▶ Follows Directions (Written & Verbal)
- ▶ Leadership
- ▶ Oral Communication
- ▶ Organizational Skills
- ▶ Problem Solving
- ▶ Professionalism
- ▶ Self-Advocacy
- ▶ Self-Motivated / Takes Initiative
- ▶ Teamwork / Interpersonal
- ▶ Time Management
- ▶ Willingness to Learn
- ▶ Work Ethic - Good Attitude
- ▶ Working Safely
- ▶ Works to High Standards / Attention to Detail
- ▶ Works Well Without Constant Supervision
- ▶ Written Communication

Top Requested Skills by Industry

Manufacturing

1. Dependability
2. Work Ethic - Good Attitude
3. Oral Communication

Construction

1. Work Ethic - Good Attitude
2. Dependability
3. Willingness to Learn

Retail

1. Customer Service
2. Work Ethic - Good Attitude
3. Oral Communication

Top 5 Requested Skills (Overall)

1. Dependability / Reliability
2. Work Ethic - Good Attitude
3. Willingness to Learn
4. Oral Communication
5. Customer Service

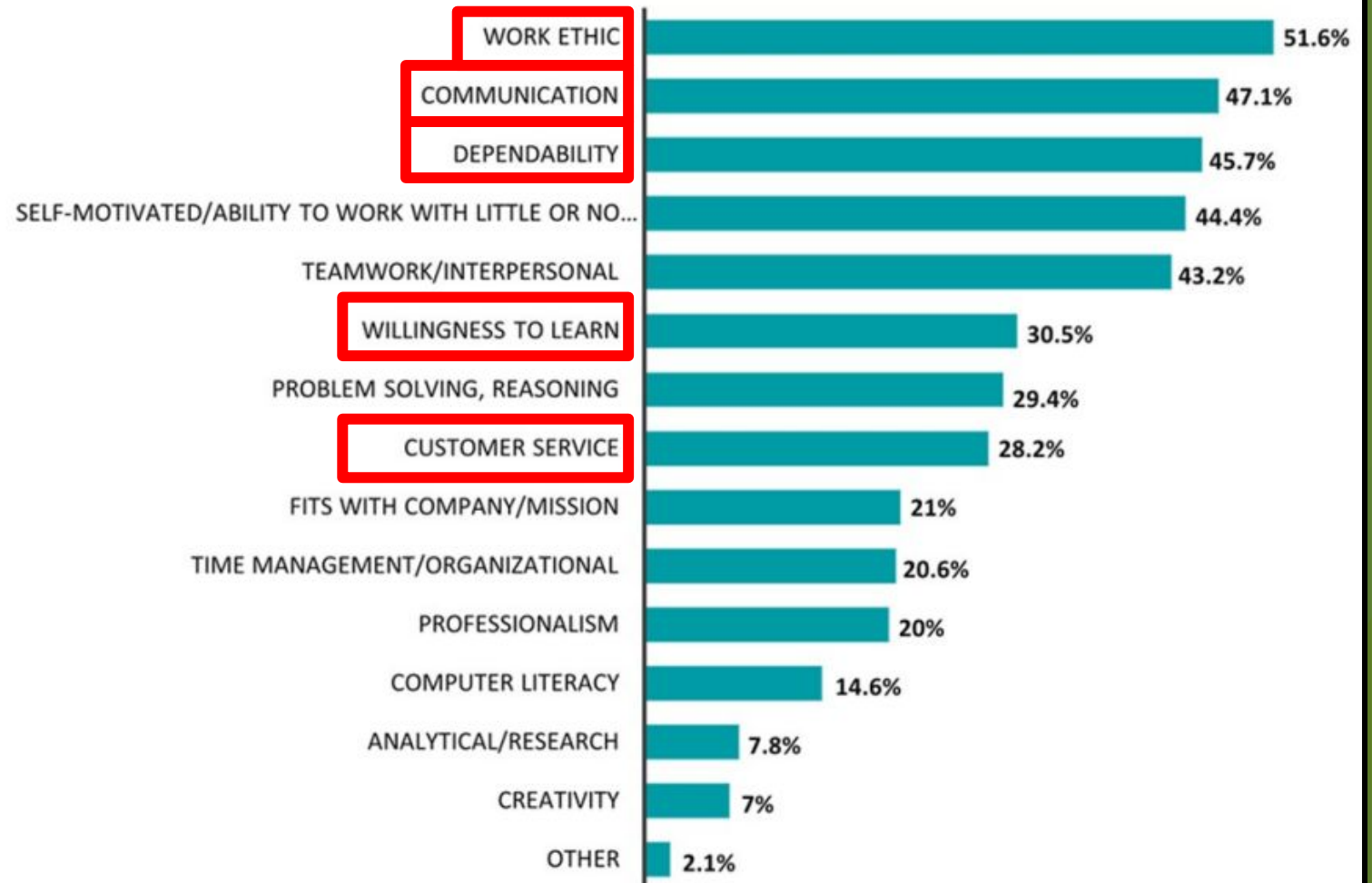


2022 Survey

Had similar outcomes in our last bi-annual survey of employers.

[EmployerONE Survey \(2022\)](#)

Top Competencies Employers Seek



- Work ethic and Dependability were top 3 competencies in 2020 and 2022.
- Communication has been replaced in the top 3 by Willingness to learn.



What Employers Told Us

"Please share how an employee did
NOT have this skill.

What were they unable to do, and
how did it impact your business?"

Dependability

- ▶ “[Job seekers] don't show up to booked and confirmed interviews. Don't show up to work when job was offered and accepted.”
- ▶ “Did not show up at work consistently or call when they were unable to come to work. Makes it difficult to plan workflow and time wasted tracking people down to figure out why they are not at work.”
- ▶ “Stating that they can work 40-48 hours in the interview, come in to work and say oh I can only work 3 days a week.”
- ▶ “Not showing up for a scheduled workday has a huge impact on our schedule. We pre-plan, schedule materials and have clients aware of the schedule. When someone does not show up, they can delay the project/schedule.”

Work Ethic / Good Attitude

- ▶ “New employees need to have a good attitude so other employees will want to work with them and teach them.”
- ▶ “Lazy. Always on the phone and going out for multiple smoke breaks. They were not able to keep up with the expected pace and as a result to job fell behind schedule.”
- ▶ “Employee's lack of good attitude resulted in team conflicts and toxic environment. Tried to resolve and gave several chances to change with no positive results. Consequence - Termination of employee. Impact - Lost time and resources put towards training of employee - Had to replace.”

Willingness to Learn

- ▶ “Employee came with a set of skillsets and refused to adopt and adapt to other ways of doing things. Unable to deliver the expected results. Business has been investing in the learning and development of employee, but the latter remained fixed to own way of working.”
- ▶ “...In some cases learning disabilities or perhaps mental health issues can create anxiety for the employee, making them incapable to learn (even if temporarily). We accommodate as much as possible, but we wish that they would be trained already to be able to handle changes, instructions, or at least come to us with a profile of who they are and how they would learn best....
We're going through trial and error until we figure out what the best method is. However, we are not professionals in this field, so it would be good to receive something like an IEP in schools on how to best support employees with disabilities and or anxiety in the workplace.”

Oral Communication

- ▶ “It's important to communicate, being able to express yourself and be understood. Poor communication can lead to many problems, specifically quality.”
- ▶ “If vehicle concerns are not communicated [from Customer Service staff] to our technicians, it can cost us money and time for tracing issues that could have been easily diagnosed.”
- ▶ “Not sure why but communication lacks big time ever since 2020 happened!”

Customer Service

- ▶ “We had a service advisor who wasn't good at dealing with customers at the service counter. We received negative comments and reviews about her and her interactions. She is no longer with us.”
- ▶ “Rather than look for an item or a solution to a customer request, they simply replied "No, we don't have that." In one instance it cost us the sale of a \$1200 BBQ.

So: Are Soft Skills the New Hard Skills?

- ▶ Hard skills used to be the specific skills sets that can be demonstrated or measured
- ▶ Note that most of the Top Soft Skills are largely learned through informal modeling as a child grows
- ▶ School systems and larger culture as a whole may be focusing more on the tangible "hard skills".



Soft Skills in Literacy & Basic Skills

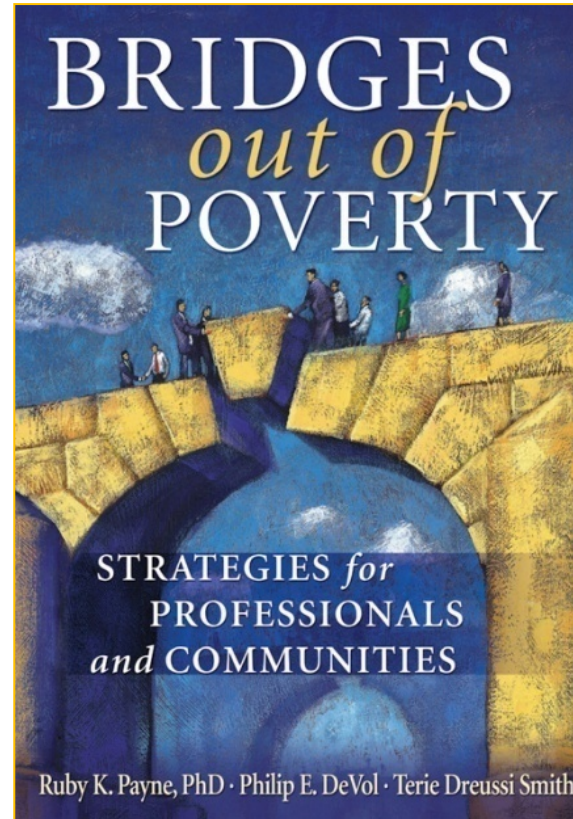
How local organizations can help
with skill gaps.

Soft Skills and Youth

- ▶ Here's a quote I found about youth:
- ▶ “The worst part is that they don't care what people - their mothers and fathers think of them. They haven't any sense of shame, honor or duty....they don't care about anything except pleasure.”

Bridges Out Of Poverty

- ▶ Hidden Rules
 - ▶ Time
 - ▶ Destiny
 - ▶ Humour
 - ▶ Language
 - ▶ Power



The Literacy Group

Customer Service Excellence

- ▶ Dependability
- ▶ Work Ethic/Good Attitude
- ▶ Willingness to Learn
- ▶ Oral Communications
- ▶ Customer Service

Computer Basics - NorthStar Digital Literacy Assessments

- ▶ Work Ethic
- ▶ Willingness to Learn
- ▶ Oral Communications

Your Skills Your Success

- ▶ Dependability
- ▶ Work Ethic/Good Attitude
- ▶ Willingness to Learn
- ▶ Oral Communications

Action Read

- ▶ Call Centre
- ▶ Landscape Maintenance
- ▶ Janitorial
- ▶ Warehouse Worker
- ▶ Receptionist
- ▶ Retail Basics
- ▶ Beginner and Advanced computer courses

Wellington County Learning Centre (WCLC)

- ▶ Let's Get Real Employment
 - ▶ Customer Service
 - ▶ Dependability/Reliability
 - ▶ Work Ethic (good attitude)
 - ▶ Oral Communication
 - ▶ Willingness to Learn
- ▶ Safe Food Handling
 - ▶ Willingness to Learn
 - ▶ Work Ethic
- ▶ Financial Literacy
 - ▶ Customer Service
 - ▶ Oral Communication
- ▶ Customer Service
 - ▶ All 5 skills
- ▶ Bullet Journaling
 - ▶ Dependability/Reliability
 - ▶ Work Ethic
- ▶ From Surviving to Thriving
 - ▶ Work Ethic

Conestoga College

- ▶ Computer Basics (COMP0295)
 - ▶ Willingness to Learn
 - ▶ Work Ethic
 - ▶ Other Soft Skills:
 - ▶ Problem Solving/Critical Thinking
 - ▶ Time Management/Adaptability/Takes Initiative
 - ▶ Digital Literacy

Essential Skills Upgrading (ESU - WRDSB)

- ▶ Soft skills informally assessed on each learner
 - ▶ Worked on within the context of their learning goals
- ▶ Soft Skills Training Module for work, volunteer and community involvement
 - ▶ Communication
 - ▶ Attitude
 - ▶ Professionalism
 - ▶ Organizing/planning/timekeeping
 - ▶ Teamwork/respect/conflict resolution
 - ▶ Initiative
 - ▶ Taking responsibility/asking for help

Core Essentials (St. Louis - WCDSB)

- ▶ Individualized programming
 - ▶ Communication
 - ▶ Problem solving
 - ▶ Creativity and Innovation
 - ▶ Collaboration
- ▶ Digital Essentials
 - ▶ Time management
- ▶ PSW Essentials
 - ▶ Communication
 - ▶ Professional Behaviour
 - ▶ Problem solving
 - ▶ Hard skills vs soft skills

Skills Upgrading Program (SUP - UGDSB)

- ▶ Soft skills are embedded in the program
- ▶ Learners are prepared for continuing into credit programming
 - ▶ Time Management
 - ▶ Problem Solving
 - ▶ Digital Skills

Connecting to Organizations that Can Help

- ▶ Project READ's [Directory of Programs](#) includes contact info & links for organizations within Waterloo-Wellington areas
- ▶ Use the [Help for Jobseekers](#) tool on [FindYourJob.ca](#) to find local organizations in:
 - ▶ Waterloo Region
 - ▶ Wellington County
 - ▶ Dufferin County

*Thank
you*

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