

Putting Customers First



Soft Skills at Work

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What are Soft Skills?

Research shows that soft skills are often better predictors of success in the workplace than technical skills. Soft skills are also called interpersonal or people skills. These skills help people to work effectively with others. Soft skills also ensure a collaborative, productive and healthy work environment. Employers look for these soft skills:

teamwork

problem solving

motivation

communication

flexibility

punctuality

The discussion and activities that follow help students understand a specific soft skill and its importance in the workplace. As well, students consider the soft skill in their daily lives and how to apply it.

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(A) Discussion

1. Salma is more flexible than Jojo.

Salma is able to change or adapt to new situations.

Describe how Salma is more flexible.

Why is it important for Salma to be flexible?

2. Read about Bev and Mick.

Discuss the questions.

Bev has worked at the same place for 20 years.

Things are changing at Bev's workplace.

Bev should fill in her timesheet online.

But Bev still hands in a paper timesheet.

Bev says, "This is the way I've always done it."

Mick has worked at the same place for a couple of years.

Things are changing at Mick's workplace.

Mick should fill in his timesheet online.

But Mick still hands in a paper timesheet.

Mick thinks, "I need help using the online program."

- (a) Who is more flexible? Explain.
- (b) What are reasons that people might not be flexible?
- (c) Why is it important to be flexible on the job?

3. Describe a time you had to be flexible.
Why did you have to be flexible?
Was it easy for you to be flexible?
Explain why or why not.
You were flexible. How did that help others?

4. Think of someone you know who is flexible.
What do they do that shows they are flexible?

5. What words describe a person who is flexible?

(B) Application

1. Make a Plan

(a) In what situation can you be more flexible?

When changes occur at home? At work? In your community?
With people you know?

I can be more flexible when _____ .

(b) How can you be more flexible in this situation?

By listening more? By seeing other points of view?
By thinking about the pros and cons of a situation?
By being less defensive? By asking for help?

I can be more flexible by _____
_____ .

(c) What is the first step you have to take to be more flexible?

My first step is _____ .

(d) What can you do to help yourself remember to think about being flexible?

I can _____ .

(e) Who will help you be more flexible in this situation?
How can they help?

_____ will help me by _____
_____ .

2. Reflection

Why do you want to be more flexible in this situation?

How will things be better if you are more flexible?

Sometimes things do not go as we planned.

Think about all the ways your plan might affect you and others.

Do you need to make changes to your plan?

(C) Reading & Writing**1. Read the story below**

Find three words that do not make sense.

Cross each out. Write a word that makes sense.

The first one is an example.

works

Salma ~~lives~~ in a grocery store.

Salma fills shelves.

Today, Salma has a lot of work.

“Excuse me,” says a customer.

“Which cheese is on sale?”

Salma checks the prices.

She gives the bread to the customer.

Salma starts to fill the shelves again.

But a shopper wants skim milk.

Salma goes to the back.

She drinks the skim milk.

She gives the skim milk to the customer.

Salma goes back to work.

A customer drops eggs on the floor.

Salma cleans up the bathroom.

Salma goes back to work.

“Excuse me,” says the customer.

“Thank you for your help.”

The customer walks away.

Salma starts to fill the shelves again.

2. Complete the sentences.

(a) Salma talks to customers.

Customers need *attention*.

Customers need _____ .

Customers need _____ .

Customers need _____ .

(b) Sometimes work piles up.

That makes me feel *frustrated*.

That makes me feel _____ .

That makes me feel _____ .

That makes me feel _____ .

(c) Everyone needs to be flexible on the job.

Taxi drivers need to be flexible.

_____ need to be flexible.

_____ need to be flexible.

_____ need to be flexible.

Read your sentences again.

Which words do you want to remember?

Add these words to your word bank.

LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH

Step 1: Start a Discussion

Possible prompt: What did you learn about being flexible on the job?

Step 2: Record the Students' Words

Print the students' responses on the board, using their exact words. Print clearly. Say each word as you print it.

Step 3: Read the Text

Read the student-generated text out loud to the students, pointing to each word as you read. Then read each sentence, inviting the class to read along with you. Finally, read each sentence out loud, inviting the student who contributed the sentence to read along with you. Always point to each word as you read.

The purpose of using the **Language Experience Approach** is to help students establish the link between spoken and written words and to develop reading skills through using their own words.

Note: Educators and ESL students may not be comfortable working with text that contains non-standard English forms. A flexible approach is recommended. The extent to which you choose to make corrections unobtrusively while recording should reflect the needs and concerns of the students.

Step 4: Use the Student-generated Text

(a) Sight Words

Have students choose three words they would like to remember. Have them add the words to their personal dictionary or word bank.

(b) Cloze

Cover highly predictable words (one per response) with paper and tape. Read the text back to the students. Stop when you reach a covered word and ask students to predict a word that makes sense and sounds right. Check their predictions by uncovering the word.

(c) Review Phonics and Word Families

Have students find, circle, and copy words that start with a specific letter or word family.

(d) Copying

Have students copy the language experience text. Copying the text provides practice in both printing and in learning the letter-sound relationships.

(e) Frame Sentences

Choose one sentence from the language experience text. Print the sentence on the board. Underline one word and ask the students to substitute the word with their own words. Print the sentence frame again to record each student's response.

Example:

Soft skills are important.

Soft skills are _____.

Soft skills are _____.

Soft skills are _____.