



Getting in touch with your soft skills

Are we losing the ability to communicate face to face in today's digital world?

In today's technologically advanced world it seems that too many of us have lost the art of communication.

Social media and text messaging, while great innovations, have worsened our level of communication and made us lazier in the way we interact with others.

That's why it's essential that we develop the right soft skills to be able to deal with people more effectively in the workplace.

This is especially important in the real estate industry where you might be meeting with clients every day, attending staff briefings or calling contractors working on site.

WHAT ARE SOFT SKILLS?

Soft skills are a combination of people, social and communication skills, character or personality traits, attitudes, career attributes, social intelligence and emotional intelligence that enable people to navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well and achieve their goals.

They include key skills like common sense, the ability to deal with people and a positive, flexible attitude.

When it comes to communication, soft skills are the tool you use to converse clearly and effectively with others, define

and set expectations, and work collaboratively with others on projects. Failure to communicate your message properly or misunderstanding what someone has said could result in your whole project collapsing, costing your company thousands or even millions of pounds.

We communicate verbally and in writing every day, whether it's a face-to-face meeting or sending an email, so it's vital we use these five key soft skills:

- **Listening:** to hear what someone is telling you.
- **Verbal:** to get your message across using words effectively.
- **Non-verbal:** using eye contact, body language, facial expressions and words.
- **Written:** to write powerfully and persuasively using the right tone of voice.
- **Presentation:** a combination of listening, verbal and written skills.

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But how you use each of these skills is markedly different, and depends on the situation we are in. Your first contact with someone may be the only chance you get to impress them, so make it count.

In most cases you will want to be friendly to open people up and get more out of them, but other times you might need to be more direct and steer them away from going off at a tangent.

You also want to be confident in your tone yet show respect and be empathetic to other people's causes while keeping an open mind and listening to feedback.

Getting the right balance will enable you to more effectively greet someone, start up a conversation, negotiate a deal, or sell them your product or service. It can also help you to influence, delegate, appraise, motivate and manage teams.

Often less is more: the more concise and to the point you are the easier you are to understand and therefore the more likely you are to get more out of your conversation.

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