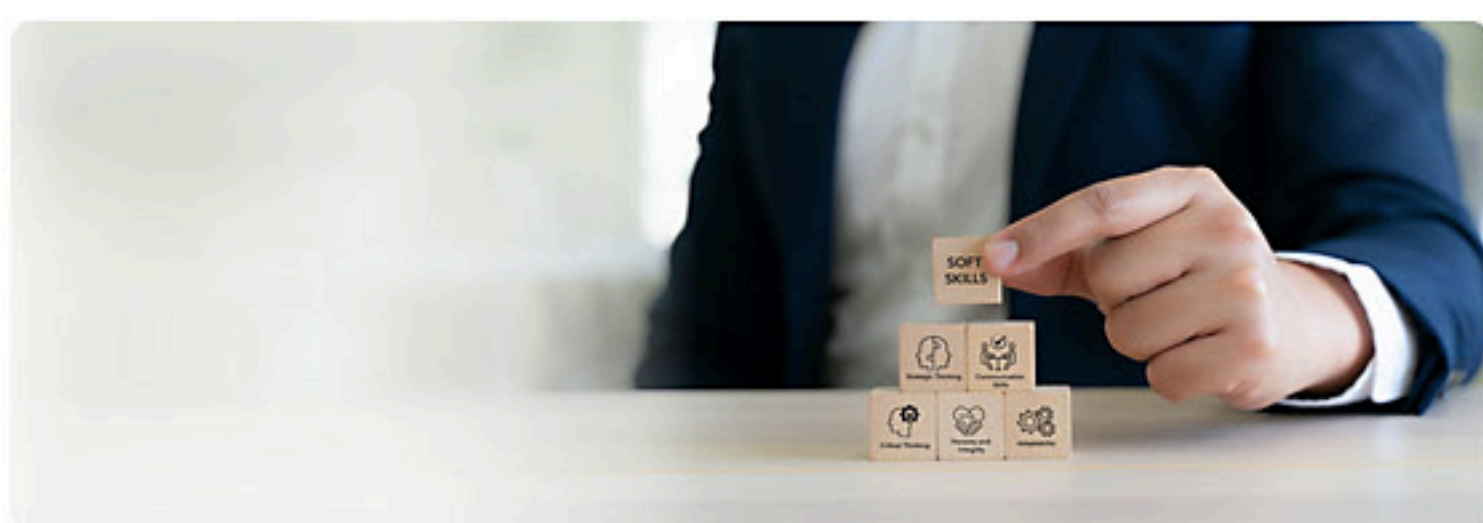


Articles, News

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The Importance of Soft Skills in Today's Workplace, Insights from Thierry Baux



The Importance of Soft Skills in Today's Workplace, Insights from Thierry Baux, Managing Partner at IMSA Search Global Partners France and CEO of B-ressource

In an age when technology is king and STEM rules the schools, the importance of soft skills in today's competitive job market cannot be overestimated. While resume must-haves include relevant work experience and particular job skills and knowledge, corporate HR officers and C-suite leaders agree that soft skills are essential for success in most positions across industries, departments, and positions.

Defining Soft Skills

According to the US Department of Labor, soft skills are a critical component of work readiness. These include:

- **Professionalism** – Showing up with a positive attitude and ready to work demonstrates respect for the job and for co-workers; a true professional is reliable, accountable, arrives on time, and meets deadlines.
- **Work Ethic** – Employers, managers, co-workers, and customers alike value the hard-working individual; exceeding expectations gets attention.
- **Communications** – Both oral and written communication skills are at the core of how business gets done; whether working internally as part of a team or external-facing in sales or customer service, communications is the foundation of productive relationships.
- **Teamwork** – Most jobs involve some collaboration, whether project-based, within departments, or organization-wide; getting along with others and contributing to the whole team's deliverables is highly valued.
- **Creative Problem Solving** – In today's tech-driven world, change is a given; being able to think critically and creatively to address new situations and solve problems as they arise, will win the day.
- **Leadership** – No matter where one sits on the organizational ladder, the ability to understand and motivate others drives success; leaders at all levels want employees who will inspire those around them to achieve goals.

The Value of Soft Skills for Employees and Employers

Employees and employers recognize the value of soft skills in today's workplace. According to LinkedIn's Global Talent Trends Report survey of over 5,000 talent professionals/hiring managers: "80% believe soft skills are increasingly important in today's business world," while "92% say human capabilities and soft skills matter as much or more than hard skills."

Reports from the World Economic Forum (WEF) and France Stratégie converge on the same conclusion: soft skills are now one of the primary drivers of organizational competitiveness. The WEF estimates that 44% of workers' skills will need to evolve by 2027, while France Compétences notes that French companies now rank "relational intelligence" and "communication" among the three most difficult skills to recruit. For managers, this shift is not theoretical. It is evident in how they lead hybrid teams, defuse conflicts, and rally a group around a strategic direction. In a constantly evolving environment, soft skills have become the backbone of leadership.

Soft Skills, Relationship-Building, and the Need to Stay Flexible

Soft skills are critical to building and maintaining strong relationships. And relationships are the foundation of business success. The ability to listen with empathy and understanding, and to articulate and convey information clearly and persuasively establishes rapport among co workers, vendors, customers, and other stakeholders. Rapport builds trust, supports collaboration, prevents misunderstanding, all of which lead to enhanced productivity.

Soft skills require consistent effort, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and a willingness to listen to others, all of which are transforming managerial practices. The rise of hybrid organizations, project-based collaboration, and the integration of demanding talent are redefining expectations. In French startups and scale-ups, where teams are small and decisions are made quickly, managers must demonstrate relational flexibility, empathy, and strategic clarity. A 2024 study by Bpi France Le Lab reveals that 72% of SME (small and medium size enterprise) leaders consider human resource management their primary challenge. As a result, soft skills are becoming the foundation of sustainable and innovative managerial performance. They facilitate innovation, rapid decision-making, and the effective management of daily challenges.

AI vs. Humans – Soft Skills Provide a Competitive Edge

Business is all about people. And when "AI vs. Humans" dominates the press, leaders give humans an edge. Thierry Baux, Managing Partner of IMSA Search Global Partners France and B-ressource asserts, "The rise of artificial intelligence is profoundly transforming HR practices, but far from eclipsing soft skills, it makes them more crucial than ever. Specifically, AI has a positive impact on the:

- **Automation of technical tasks:** AI takes over analytical and repetitive skills, pushing recruiters to value human qualities such as creativity, adaptability, and emotional intelligence.
- **Human-machine complementarity:** Soft skills allow employees to better interact with AI tools, gain perspective on data, and exercise critical judgment.
- **Leadership and collaboration:** In a hyperconnected world, skills such as active listening, oral communication, and feedback management are becoming pillars of modern management.

In short, AI doesn't replace soft skills—it reveals, measures, and values them. It's a combination of artificial and human intelligence that is redefining recruitment."

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