Preface

Soft Skills for the Workplace is an overview of basic behaviors, etiquette, and protocol that a career-minded person needs in order to communicate effectively as a professional. Soft skills are the employability skills that help an individual find a job, perform well in the workplace, and gain success in a job or career. In today’s workplace, employers look for people who have job-specific skills to perform on the job as well as the know-how to interact with coworkers and customers. You may be the most qualified person in your field in terms of hard skills, but if you lack soft skills, you may have a challenge finding and retaining employment.

Soft Skills for the Workplace presents the important interpersonal skills requested by today’s employers. Presented in one easy-to-use text, your students will learn the basic soft skills needed for career success. There is no need for multiple references to introduce students to employability skills when using this unique text. Suitable for any class or discipline, each chapter can be used as a supplemental conversation starter or as an independent assignment for students. When the course has concluded, the text can serve as a personal reference for students to use as they develop their careers.

The modular format of the content provides flexibility to assign topics in the order that adapts to your curriculum. Fourteen short, concise chapters provide information that prepares students to maximize and refine their talents. A chapter-opening soft skills quiz or video sets the stage for the content that follows. End-of-chapter activities provide opportunities for self-assessment as well as additional practice activities on the G-W Learning companion website.

By studying Soft Skills for the Workplace, students will gain understanding of the value of mastering the art of professionalism for their chosen career. Learning how to embrace and apply accepted workplace protocol is a first step toward personal success. Soft skills are the new hard skills for the 21st century.

Additional Resources

The G-W Learning companion website is a free student resource that provides additional study materials in an interactive electronic format. Data files for the soft skills practice activities at the end of each chapter may be downloaded and completed for additional practice. Also included on the website are pretests, posttests, videos, and vocabulary activities that complement selected chapters. The website is located at www.g-wlearning.com/careereducation/

G-W’s instructor resources include everything you need to utilize Soft Skills for the Workplace in your classroom. A variety of materials are provided on the Instructor’s Resource CD to help you make the most of information needed to teach each chapter, such as answer keys and instructional strategies. For your convenience, lesson plans and activity solutions are also included.
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Focus on Professionalism

*Soft Skills for the Workplace* will help your students jump-start their career in the competitive work environment of the 21st century. To stand out in the employment crowd and compete for a chosen career, each person entering the workforce must develop essential soft skills.

The unique approach to this text presents content in a format that is condensed, to the point, and can be completed in a brief amount of time. The easy-to-read style and meaningful applications introduce behaviors for successful interactions with employers, coworkers, and customers.

**Just the Basics**

Each chapter introduces basic soft skills that are needed for career success as recommended by employers. The topics covered are some of the most requested essential workplace skills that can help students develop professionalism and succeed in a chosen career.

**Learning Outcomes**

At the beginning of each chapter, learning outcomes define the goals that will be accomplished while reading the chapter. Each goal is aligned with the content headings, as well as with the summary at the end of the chapter. The alignment of learning outcomes provides a logical flow through each page of the content so that students may build on individual knowledge as they progress through the chapters.

**Before You Read**

Each chapter begins with an activity to set the stage for the content to come. Through completion of a pretest in chapter 1, an opportunity is provided for students to evaluate their prior knowledge of soft skills. The chapters that follow include a video to bring realism and provide a relevant connection with content that has been learned. A posttest at the end of the text will help students evaluate what has been learned on completion of the content.
Case Studies

Real-world case studies illustrate the importance of mastering soft skills. Each case includes a workplace situation with questions that provide an opportunity to analyze and summarize opinions, while identifying the soft skills that are addressed.

Appendices

Appendices for punctuation, capitalization, and number usage are included at the end of the text. These appendices highlight grammar mechanics and examples for reference as students complete writing assignments.

End-of-Chapter Content

End-of-chapter material provides opportunity for review and application of concepts.

- A concise Summary reiterates the learning outcomes and provides a brief review of the content for student reference.

- Glossary Terms identifies important soft skills terms covered in the chapter and listed in the end-of-text glossary.

- Review questions highlight basic concepts presented in the chapter so students can evaluate understanding of the material.

- Application activities provide an opportunity for self-reflection so students can relate the topics to their personal lives.

- Internet Activity exercises provide additional research opportunities for greater understanding of selected concepts discussed in the chapter.

- Skills Practice activities provide an opportunity for students to engage in hands-on application of the content to perfect their soft skills. These data files are available for download on the G-W Learning companion website.

G-W Learning Companion Website

The G-W Learning companion website is a free resource that provides additional study materials in an interactive electronic format. Data files for the soft skills practice activities at the end of each chapter may be downloaded and completed for additional practice. Also included on the website are pretests, posttests, and videos that complement selected chapters. The website is located at www.g-wlearning.com/careereducation/
Professionalism

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion of this chapter, prepare to:

1-1 Explain how hard and soft skills play a role in professionalism.
1-2 Define positive attitude.
1-3 Discuss the importance of a professional image.

BEFORE YOU READ

Before you begin reading this chapter, see what you already know about soft skills by taking a pretest. The soft skills pretest is available at www.g-wlearning.com/careereducation/
Skills of a Professional

**Professionalism** is the act of exhibiting appropriate character, judgment, and behavior by a person who is trained to perform a job. It is a person's conduct while at work or representing an employer. Professionalism extends to every job, career, and industry. It doesn't necessarily mean wearing a suit, but instead conducting oneself in a manner that exhibits responsibility, integrity, and excellence.

A professional employee comes to work on time each day and performs job tasks in a productive manner. Professionals dress appropriately for their job, take responsibility for their behavior, and are good communicators. They also possess qualities of integrity, honesty, and a positive attitude.

Someone who shows professionalism has the skills to perform specific job tasks and works well with others. A **skill** is something an individual does well. Skills can be categorized as hard skills or soft skills.

**Hard Skills**

**Hard skills** are critical skills necessary to perform the required work-related tasks of a position. They are teachable, clearly defined, and can be measured. Examples of hard skills, also called *job-specific skills*, include the ability to perform accounting tasks, repair a computer, and change the brakes on a car. Additional examples are shown in Figure 1-1.

Hard skills are acquired through work, education, training, or a combination of these experiences. The basic hard skills needed for a specific job are generally standard from business to business. For example, the hard skills required for an accounting clerk position would be very similar or the same at several different companies. Without possessing the required hard skills, an individual is unlikely to successfully perform a given job.

When applying for a job, an interviewer will ask the candidate to identify and describe the hard skills that he or she possesses. The candidate may be required to demonstrate some of those skills as part of the interview process. For example, if applying for a job as an order processor, a keyboarding test may be part of the application process. The applicant's **hard skills** are compared to the requirements for the job to see if that person meets the standards. Once a job is earned, acquiring new hard skills can be a way to earn promotions.

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**Figure 1-1** Hard skills are critical skills necessary to perform the required work-related tasks of a position.

**Examples of Hard Skills**

- accounting
- automotive repair
- barbering
- business management
- carpentry
- commercial driving
- computer programming
- data mining
- editing
- electrical engineering
- graphic designing
- keyboarding
- manufacturing plant operations
- marketing
- network security
- nursing
- pipefitting
- speaking a foreign language
- tax preparation
- welding
Soft Skills

You may be the most highly-qualified person in your field in terms of hard skills, but if you lack soft skills, it may be challenging to become or stay employed. Soft skills are the skills used to communicate and work well with others. They are considered essential employability skills, which are skills that help an individual find a job, perform well in the workplace, and gain success in a job or career. Some soft skills are gained through life experience and social interaction. Other soft skills may be acquired from working at a job and interacting in professional situations. They are not specific to one career and are transferable to any type of position. Examples of desirable soft skills are shown in Figure 1-2.

When applying for employment, a job description may refer to soft skills as people skills or interpersonal skills. Employers look for well-rounded employees who have the hard skills to perform in the job and the people skills to get along with coworkers, managers, and customers.

Soft skills come easier to some people than others. The people who find soft skills easy to acquire often have a high emotional intelligence quotient. A person's emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) is the ability of a person to perceive emotions in one's self and in others and use this information to guide social behavior. Many soft skills rely on a person's ability to communicate with and anticipate the needs of others, as well as to meet those needs appropriately. Therefore, someone with a high EQ is often adept with soft skills.

People who have a high EQ are able to understand emotions in other people easily and react accordingly. These individuals are seen as pleasant and empathetic. Having empathy means having the ability to share someone else's emotions. This often results in better social interactions and relationships, including those with family, friends, coworkers, and supervisors.

Individuals with a high EQ also tend to have a better self-image, which contributes to increased self-confidence and positivity. This can have a beneficial impact on a person's working life, which leads to higher work performance and better social interactions in the workplace. Overall, those with a high EQ tend to experience a higher sense of satisfaction in life and have lower incidences of feeling insecure or depressed.

Figure 1-2  Soft skills are the skills used to communicate and work well with others.
Positive Attitude

Professionals exhibit a positive attitude in their job performance and workplace interactions. **Attitude** is how personal thoughts or feelings affect a person’s outward behavior. It is a combination of how you feel, what you think, and what you do. Attitude is how an individual sees himself or herself, as well as how he or she perceives others.

Individuals with a *positive attitude* are optimistic and look at the upside of a situation rather than the downside. Optimism enables them to look at the big picture, identify what can be changed, recognize what cannot be changed, and make good decisions. Optimists learn from experiences, accurately identify problems, and try to offer solutions, rather than complaints. Optimistic people are proactive and learn from their mistakes.

Attitude influences the way a person performs in a job situation. People with a positive attitude generally are successful in their work life. Positive people are enthusiastic and show interest in their jobs and the activities in which they participate.

---

Case Study

**Professional Image**

Journalist Brian Williams had a well-crafted, professional image. His image projected honesty, integrity, and the ability to communicate complex stories and issues in a way that was understandable and engaging for the common person. His image also projected likability during broadcasts, as well as in appearances outside of the news industry. In early 2015, his professional image came into conflict with the facts of a story he had reported in 2003. The story involved a military helicopter he was a passenger in during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. After the initial report, Williams retold the story many times, but the retellings included differing accounts of what happened. In a January 2015 news broadcast, he reported that his helicopter had been hit by enemy fire and was forced down. This version of events was quickly criticized by a flight engineer on another helicopter involved in the incident. Williams’ reporting came under scrutiny, including many past stories. Ultimately, Williams was suspended for six months by NBC and he lost the network’s nightly news anchor position.

1. What is your opinion in how image played a role in Williams presenting differing accounts of what happened?

2. Discuss how this event affected the audience’s perceived honesty and integrity of Williams.

3. How should Williams have handled the situation after the first erroneous retelling of the story?

4. Describe the professional image of Brian Williams today now that the incident has lost some of its public attention.
They are eager to learn new tasks and make an effort to have productive relationships with those around them.

People who have positive attitudes are generally more resilient. Resilience is a person's ability to cope with and recover from change or adversity. Resilient people are able to aptly handle challenges in one aspect of their lives while not letting it affect other aspects. They can bounce back even when they feel as if they have been knocked down.

You can learn to develop a positive attitude and resilience by looking at the good things rather than dwelling on the bad. Realize that there are things that you can change to improve a situation and some things you cannot change. Learn to work with or around the things that cannot be changed. Understand that you are not personally responsible for everything that happens around you. You can choose to have a positive outlook or negative outlook on your life.

**Image of a Professional**

An **image** is the perception others have of a person based on that person's dress, behavior, and speech. It is what people remember about a person from business, professional, and even social interactions. A **professional image** is the image an individual projects in the professional world. A positive professional image projects honesty, skill, courtesy, and respect for others.

First impressions are usually lasting impressions. Those with whom you come in contact will most likely begin forming an opinion of you immediately, whether or not they realize it. They may not know about your education or other credentials, but the image you project can influence whether you are a person with whom they want to become acquainted.

Image begins with the way you look, but it goes well beyond what a person can see. Your behavior is equally important. Professionals have a positive attitude and a friendly disposition. They avoid gossip, negative comments about their employers and coworkers, and inappropriate subject matter when engaged in conversation with others.

Professionals exhibit confidence through body language and good manners. Initiating an introduction and handshake is a sure sign of an individual who understands the importance of soft skills. Good communication skills, especially listening, are valuable in any business or social situation.

Networking is also an important element of a person's professional image. Networking means talking with people you know and developing new relationships that can lead to potential career or job opportunities. A **professional network** is a group of professionals you know and who know you. These people are supportive in your career endeavors and may or may not be social friends. LinkedIn is an example of a professional networking site that should be used for professional purposes and not a popularity forum. Often, you are judged by the company you keep. Be conscious of those in your professional network. They can be an important part of your professional image.

A professional image can have an impact on a person's ability to get a job, earn promotions, and stay employed. Your career opportunities can be enhanced or hindered by how you demonstrate professionalism.
SUMMARY

• (LO 1-1) **Explain how hard and soft skills play a role in professionalism.** Someone who shows professionalism has the skills to perform specific job tasks and works well with others. A skill is something an individual does well and may be classified as a hard skill or a soft skill. Hard skills are acquired through work, education, training, or a combination of these experiences. Soft skills are the basic skills common to any job, such as reading, writing, and listening.

• (LO 1-2) **Define positive attitude.** Attitude is how personal thoughts or feelings affect a person’s outward behavior. Individuals with a positive attitude are optimistic and look at the upside of a situation rather than the downside. Optimism enables them to look at the big picture, identify what can be changed and not be changed, and make good decisions. Positive people are enthusiastic and show interest in their jobs and activities in which they participate.

• (LO 1-3) **Discuss the importance of a professional image.** An image is the perception others have of a person. First impressions are usually lasting impressions. A professional image is the image an individual projects in the professional world. A professional image can have an impact on a person’s ability to get a job, earn promotions, and stay employed.

GLOSSARY TERMS

Visit the G-W Learning companion website at [www.g-wlearning.com/careereducation/](http://www.g-wlearning.com/careereducation/) to review the following glossary terms.

- attitude
- emotional intelligence quotient (EQ)
- empathy
- employability skills
- hard skills
- image
- networking
- professional image
- professionalism
- professional network
- resilience
- skill
- soft skills

REVIEW

1. Define professionalism.

2. Explain how hard and soft skills play a role in professionalism.

3. Explain emotional intelligence quotient (EQ).

4. Define positive attitude and resilience.
5. Describe networking and its role in a professional image.

APPLICATION

1. Recall a situation in which you observed a person in a business situation who exhibited unprofessional behavior. State the instance and the person’s behavior. How did the situation conclude or resolve?

2. Create a list of your hard skills (job-specific skills). Describe each skill, and rate your level of competency. Spend time developing this list so that you may include these skills on your résumé.

3. Create a list of the soft skills (employability skills) you have developed over the years. Why is it important for you to identify your employability skills?

4. Describe your personal emotional intelligence quotient (EQ).

5. *Empathy* is the ability to share someone else’s emotions. *Sympathy* is feeling sorry for someone’s unfortunate situation. There is a fine line between empathy and sympathy. People may want someone to share their emotions, but not feel sorry for them. Describe how you would coach a coworker to distinguish between empathy and sympathy.

6. Evaluate your attitude, in general, and how it has helped or hindered your personal or professional life.
7. Write a paragraph describing how you think peers would summarize your attitude.

8. How would you describe your personal level of resiliency? Cite examples of situations in which you were resilient and how you handled each.

9. Describe your professional image. How would others perceive you based on your dress, behavior, and speech?

10. If you use LinkedIn, review your contacts and update or edit the list. If you do not use LinkedIn, make a list of the primary people in your professional network. Explain the importance of your network for your professional image.

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Emotional Intelligence. Emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) is important in career success. Conduct an Internet search for an emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) assessment tool. Evaluate your personal EQ.

SKILLS PRACTICE

Visit the G-W Learning companion website at www.g-wlearning.com/careereducation/ to access and complete the following soft skills practice activities:

Activity SS1-1 Hard Skills. Taking an inventory of your hard skills is a helpful exercise to determine your qualifications for employment. Open the SS1-1 file, and list your hard skills as directed in the document.

Activity SS1-2 Soft Skills. Assessing your soft skills will help you determine your strengths and weaknesses. Open the SS1-2 file, and complete the activity to evaluate your soft skills.