

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



389 Finally – Some Love for Soft Skills

For years I've said that the ability to master soft skills will determine how far a person will go in their career, yet most senior managers look at me sideways when I do because it's harder for them to measure soft skills. I'm Jerry Roberts and today, I get support from a huge player and maybe it'll help you too...that's next on The Extra Point.

The big company that agrees with me is LinkedIn, the global social media platform that caters to business people, which is owned by Microsoft. LinkedIn has in the area of three-quarters of a billion users and they are able to compile a massive amount of data about how their users feel about critical issues. They say 57% of senior leaders feel that soft skills are more important than hard skills.

Even with nearly 60% feeling that way, the process of hiring and training workers slants toward hard skills. Why? Because it's much easier to judge a job candidate on the basis of their technical abilities. If you give them a test of their skills and they do well, it's clear they understand what they're doing. If you give a technician advanced training you can visualize them using it. Again, it's easy. Figuring out if somebody can play nice with the other kids isn't so easy. I mean, it's tougher to measure a job seeker's emotional intelligence or ability to be a team player in a job interview.

However, virtually every problem they will ever have at your company and in cases when they are terminated, it will usually be the result of their lack of ability in soft skills — people skills, getting along well with others, communicating well, learning how to be more productive.

I'll repeat, when things go wrong with a worker it's not because they've forgotten how to fix a widget or make a report, it's almost always because their attitude has changed and they have troubles dealing with other people. Let's also be clear about something else. Almost all

of your headaches in leading and managing will come from problems which are associated with soft skills. You'll spend tons of time on this, tons of money in that time and lost productivity, and you'll end up with a haircut like mine after pulling your hair out in frustration. Is there a solution? Yes.

Get with someone who does what I do and outline your situation, and add not only soft skills training but also the element of coaching into the mix. This gives employees a chance to bounce issues and ideas off an unbiased person who has no turf to protect and will just try to help. This is important as once trust is established, workers will open up and share how they feel and you can make progress. This year I have the privilege of coaching and training a large group of managers, and we've seen good results come from it. Coaching adds an element of accountability and most workers own up to it.

What skills would help your organization? How to resolve conflict? Problem solving? Learning how to motivate workers? Making better use of time and getting more done? Acting in a more professional manner? Building employee confidence and ramping up performance of teams? Learning how to be a leader who others want to follow?

Hard skills can help establish a company. Soft skills determine how well it operates and how far it goes. It's that important.

That's The Extra Point. Get out there and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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