

7 Not-So-Soft Skills Every Entrepreneur Needs

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Soft skills are a bit of misnomer when considering the hard implications of not demonstrating them.

Mastering these seven soft skills can help you thrive in a 24-hour, boundaryless world regardless of what hard or technical skills an entrepreneur might possess. These skills are the foundation of empathy and creativity, which we all need as we divine new ways to manage the increasingly blurred lines between personal and professional life, and still meet our business objectives.

Entrepreneurs will find that soft skills are essential tools in their toolbox, which are invaluable in almost all industries.

1. Be a master communicator

A leader's message is only as good as their ability to share it. Entrepreneurs must be consistent, clear and concise. Their messages must be able to translate across different cultures and languages. Everyone on the team must understand and embrace common goals and expectations. Further, all team members should feel they have an open communication channel with their leader.

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2. Be innovative

Technology is constantly evolving. This allows us to work remotely globally, but we must determine which tools are best for team activities. Entrepreneurs will need to stay on top of the situation to ensure that tools are simply tools, not cumbersome obstacles to overcome while getting work done. Teams should be able to concentrate on a project – not on learning yet another complicated new platform or system.

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3. Be creative

Entrepreneurs should consider how they can mix things up to keep teams' ideas fresh and plentiful. How can they ensure talent stays motivated and productive? What new or different tactics can inspire people to meet goals and employ some creativity in their daily role? Innovation is important. Even routine, necessary tasks may need to be retooled to fit a remote, tech-centric workplace.

4. Be collaborative

No person is an island – even if someone is working from one. Each of our colleagues has valuable expertise that we can use to enhance our own work product and meet business goals. Entrepreneurs in particular need to know how to collaborate effectively, especially across diverse and geographically dispersed teams, and actively encourage and facilitate collaboration wherever possible.

5. Be emotionally intelligent

Empathy is one of the most critical – yet unsung – entrepreneurial attributes and soft skills there is. It

enables one to be mindful of teams in new ways. For example, now it's important to consider the "whole person" not just who we see at work. Why? Working remotely poses challenges most of us haven't consistently had to deal with before. Also, it's important to maintain balance. In certain situations, the in-person workers may have an advantage when it comes to face time with a leader. So, make sure other team members have equal representation, opportunities, and voice.

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6. Be culturally aware

It is imperative that entrepreneurs are culturally aware when leading a global team. Be mindful of different customs, languages, nuances, rituals, and important dates in each team members' culture. Lead respectfully, and appreciate the benefits cultural diversity can bring to a team and to the business. It's easy to offend when unaware, so make an effort to learn, leverage cultural differences to advance goals, and where appropriate, bolster the organizational mission.

7. Understand the power of etiquette

At its core, etiquette is about treating people with kindness and respect, two nouns that all entrepreneurs should acquire as they promote and "live" their company's values. When they develop and consistently deploy etiquette, entrepreneurs can reap myriad benefits. For instance, they can foster a collaborative company culture where diversity and inclusion flourish by ensuring everyone is treated fairly, with dignity, and respect.

A diverse team deserves to feel safe – even when working remotely – to voice their opinions and suggestions. Even

better, that diversity of thought can promote innovation, process changes, and other efficiencies that can improve workflow, operations, and even create new products and services. Everyone on the team should feel included, heard, and valued.

Mastering these seven soft skills can empower an entrepreneur to reach new business heights. Using respect, gratitude and other soft skills as fuel, entrepreneurs can build happy and productive teams and advance their businesses.

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