

How Mastering These 4 Soft Skills Has Propelled My Business to Success

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Pour through higher-ed or seminar business texts relating to the qualities of an effective leader, and phrases like “analytical prowess,” “restless inventiveness” and “strength of will” tend to creep center stage. In my experience, however, placing too much emphasis on these (to be sure, often admirable) qualities is in error. I’ve found that empathy, compassion and care make a much more significant impact on a company’s success – that practicing such “soft skills” when running my own businesses has allowed me to reach the level of success I occupy today.

Such skills are broadly defined as ways of relating and collaborating with others, and effective communication and complex task completion relies on their deft application, so practicing them routinely in the workplace is invaluable. According to a study by LinkedIn, “92% of talent professionals say they matter as much or more than hard skills when they hire, and 80% say they’re increasingly important to company success.”

I couldn’t agree more.

Not everyone is cut out to be a leader, but an acute understanding of communication, problem-solving and open-mindedness increases any professional’s value. And these capabilities go beyond the workplace, affecting every aspect of life.

Related: The No. 1 Skill Employers Want Job Applicants to Have Might Be the Hardest to Find, New Research Reveals

1. Empathy

This term is defined as the ability to practice awareness of other people's emotions and attempt to understand their experiences and perspectives. It requires a certain level of maturity but makes a profound difference in a staff's willingness to engage – fosters a sense of purpose and trust.

Over the course of my travels around the world, I have both seen and experienced suffering and choosing not to overlook circumstances different from my own –attempting to put myself in someone else's shoes – has taught me a deep sense of humility. It has also inspired me to start many of the businesses I own today, which would not exist without the ability to see beyond my own limits.

To embrace empathy, listening is vital, as is not prioritizing your own tasks more than employees' work. So, commit to making those around you feel heard. (Therapy and business coaching can be great assists in that effort.) Empathy is a skill that must be practiced!

Related: How To Be An Empathetic Leader (Without Getting Walked All Over)

2. Compassion

The desire to take action to help others, compassion differs from empathy in that it's not just an awareness of others' perspectives, but an inclination to be of service to them. It is the application of empathy.

One way I practice it is by allowing employees to bring pets and kids into the workplace – to empathize with situations out of their control (like a babysitter canceling at the last

minute). By opening up the workspace to what some might consider the “untraditional,” the goal is to assist to the best of my ability.

Practicing compassion builds a more inclusive company culture, one that promotes a stronger work ethic by celebrating diversity, and reflecting on your own experiences of hardship and adversity is key. Take the time to evaluate how other people’s compassion towards you made a positive impact, and assess how you can do the same for staff members.

Related: [How to Advocate for – and Implement – a ‘Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day’](#)

3. Adaptability

Put simply, this is the ability to approach change with openness and understanding. When I consider the word, it’s often in the context of developing new health and wellness products, and I assume things won’t always go according to plan. I have to try many different takes/recipes to get the right balance, which is also true in many other facets of business, such as hiring and workflow. By entering a venture with a deliberate focus on sensitivity to change and willingness to pivot, achievement becomes markedly more likely.

Effective adaptation requires patience and calmness, and I’ve found that meditation is profoundly helpful in fostering a positive mindset, but just as important is your perspective on work. Remember that no matter what, you have it good – you are fortunate and have skills to apply. If you truly believe and hold on to that notion, there’s no challenge that can’t be overcome.

4. Integrity

This is one of the most critical soft skills to practice when running a business. It's an untampered dedication to acting on morals and values and requires honesty, fairness and a great deal of introspection. As CEO, you might be placed on a pedestal, so the importance of uncompromised integrity is huge: you must accept your mistakes and look failure in the eye without cheating your values. It's been my experience that knowledge gained from failure far outweighs easy success at the expense of morals.

That said, I know the temptation involved when a person is cornered in a position that seems unforgiving, with a staff relying on the company's success to make a living. That can be daunting. But there is always a choice—a chance to not compromise for monetary gain. At the end of the day, you can forgive yourself for a failure but never for intentional wrongdoing. You'll need a strong sense of purpose because your ethics will be frequently tested.

Related: Leading By Example: Why You Must Chart Your Own Course As An Entrepreneur

Don't assume soft skills will come easily; they get cultivated over time. Anyone can get a degree, but not everyone can effectively practice empathy, compassion, adaptability and integrity, but they are indispensable to running a business and living a happy and healthy life.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/4-soft-skills-you-need-to-run-a-business/475836>