



DEBORAH THOMAS LOOKS AT THE HIDDEN SOFT SKILLS REQUIRED TO SUCCEED IN TODAY'S COMPETITIVE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE.

TOUGHEN UP

The rules for recruiting the perfect treasury specialist are constantly evolving. Whilst there will always be focus on talented, knowledgeable people, the argument exists for placing more importance on how the professional will handle themselves in a work environment and how they will relate with their clients and peers. These are known as 'soft skills' and are not found in a candidate's CV.

Clients respect and expect technical expertise but technical skills without the motivation to keep growing and learning will soon become obsolete. Employers need people who are open and adaptable, with a passion for continuous improvement in all aspects of their performance.

An individual's soft skills can play a huge part in their career development and personal progression within their company. These skills include motivation, people management (at all levels), assertiveness, handling of difficult situations and the ability to think laterally. The more senior the individual, the more these skills play a part in assessing their suitability for the role. The relationship between a treasurer and his or her FD/CFO and delivery at board level is crucial. For these reasons, psychometric testing at senior levels is becoming best practice.

Candidates need to think about their softer skill sets in their current and future roles. Your background heavily dictates how you respond to various scenarios presented to you and developing these skills can be key to helping you achieve your goals. You can use your softer skill sets to assess future opportunities and the characteristics of your future employer. Assessment of corporate culture, the boss and team you will be working with is a key element in deciding if the role is right for you.

Many organisations offer senior staff a mentoring service to assist with the development of their softer skills. Some are internal, driven by senior management and HR. Other companies offer external mentors who provide an individual to confide in who

also acts as a completely objective source of advice and support.

Technical skills will take you a long way to obtaining the role you aspire to but the ability to effectively communicate with your boss, co-workers and customers will ultimately determine your long-term success. Ability comprises more than knowing the mechanics of the task; it also includes interpersonal skills, alignment with the corporate culture, the ability to work as an effective and contributing team member, and the political savvy to know

SOFT SKILLS

how to get things done in the organisation.

At the recruitment

consultancy stage, candidates can be advised on interview techniques, management skills, team building and other skills designed to enhance personal development. By receiving the best possible tools for securing the position, they can dramatically improve their chances of getting a job based on cultural fit as well as the appropriate skill sets.

Soft skills are the underlying principles that trademark a company for professionalism and excellent customer service. Training is fundamental, but budgets for this area are difficult to justify as they cannot compete against the likes of training in new programs and systems, which are relied on by employees on a day-to-day basis.

The secret to being the sought-after candidate includes ongoing attention to the interpersonal and social skills of self-awareness and emotional control.

So, before you dismiss the team development or communication skills program because you are too busy doing "real work," before you clash with your co-worker over an inconsequential task-specific issue, and before you consider soft skills training (something that HR offers but no-one has time to take), think about how maybe you could take your skills and performance to the next level of effectiveness. It won't necessarily be easy, but it will be worth it.

Keys to 'soft skills' success

Consider the following overall pointers as key to career success:

- Take the initiative and be confident enough to take calculated risks;
- build relationships;
- have a big-picture perspective;
- create opportunities and manage your career;
- leave your ego at the door;
- take ownership;
- contribute to team success, manage conflicts, assist others;
- lead others through vision, commitment and marshalling resources;
- have political savvy: know how to navigate competing interests, promote co-operation, and address conflicts to get things done; and
- know how to effectively communicate and influence.



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