



# Soft Skills - The Path To Organisational Excellence

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## Executive Summary

Soft skills are the underlying principles that trademark a company for professionalism and excellent customer service. They provide differentiation between all the cookie-cutter look-alikes and play a vital role in customer loyalty. In today's working environment, where customers and employees are demanding more, instilling the use of soft skills in your team members is something you simply can't survive without.

It is time to focus on soft-skills training as a tool to improve performance, leadership potential, and bottom line organizational success.

### In this paper we discuss:

1. The reasons for adopting Soft Skills to any given environment
2. What it takes to get the best out of your Soft Skills Program
3. How Horizon can help you improve the efficiency and attrition in your business
4. Why Horizon is ahead of the game.
5. Conclusion

The reasons for adopting Soft Skills to any given environment.

With the Communication and Information Age upon us in its entirety, what every individual let alone Organization is looking for is a dynamic and intelligent approach to their environments. What will it take to achieve this and moreover how can one single person, one word or even one single action bring about the impact that we seek.

Experts ranging from psychologists to business and spiritual leaders, such as Donald Trump and the Dalai Lama, agree that one or more of the soft skills have the greatest impact on your level of success.

Human Capital in the work place needs to be optimized and utilized correctly to ensure that the Organization performs at optimum levels with the work force constantly learning and growing simultaneously.

What most Organizations' look for are Hard Skills. The question is what is the impact as a whole? Of course you still need to be able to demonstrate a certain level of expertise in your field, but this is the Information Age. A lot people have- or have access to- hard skills knowledge but do a lot of people have that certain je ne sais quoi that inspires and motivates the people around them? Do a lot of people have the ability to communicate clearly and effectively? Are a lot of people good at managing their emotions? Try answering that in rush hour traffic or after standing in the customer service line at a local supermarket for 45 minutes!

What makes soft skills so "admirable" is that they present a chance to level the playing field. It has been said that your IQ (Intelligence Quotient) is fixed from birth. But your EQ (Emotional Intelligence Quotient), your IPQ (Influence and Persuasion Quotient), your MQ (Motivation Quotient), and any other type of "Q" that you want to invent can be improved and turned into a sellable and workable skill. More and more corporations around the world recognize that, in order to gain a competitive advantage, they also need to make sure their people know how to handle themselves at work and how to relate with their customers and peers. From showing empathy and optimism to extreme self-awareness to knowing what's going on around them, these vital competencies are an integral part of a progressive organization. They fall under the umbrella of Emotional Intelligence (EQ).

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These soft-skills, or emotional intelligence skills, revelations open the door to a lot of discussion. The western civilization and our traditional management theories tend to lead us in the direction of individualistic promotion. They display our strengths rather than the demonstration of our humanness. These ideas have been so tightly woven into our leadership mentality that they can be challenging to break.

Unfortunately, most graduate schools don't teach how to cultivate soft skills. While courses such as Business Writing and Public Speaking are offered, I have never seen a course entitled, "The Effective Art of Listening to Your Customer." We live in a society that measures intelligence through quantifiable metrics. A professor will give you good grades once you know XYZ, but he or she will not increase your grade for being able to deal with a difficult situation, showing compassion, or solving an unexpected problem.

Yet most compliments that you or your employees receive deal more with the use of soft skills than with your actual knowledge about a particular situation. Most customers appreciate a "willingness to help" and the fact that "she listened to my complaint." The use of these skills is what elevates your organization above the competition

### What it takes to get the best out of your Soft Skills Program

1. **Start Slowly** - Instead of getting a large number of people in a room and preaching to them about their soft skills - move slowly. Introduce the concept with an informative and fun workshop. The program should also be designed to enhance their skills.

2. **Involve Your People From the Start** - Involve as many employees as you can on the decision to create a program, what to include within the program, and how to maintain the program. People support what they help create. Engage them, give them the possibility to make changes within the Organization, do a pilot program with key people, and use the pilot program as an introduction to the group.

3. **Hire Expert Help** - Coaches and Organizational Consultants such as Horizon are experts in building rapport and establishing the right culture for these initiatives. With the right culture and the appropriate training, managers can continue the task of training and

cultivating good relationships.

4. **Recognize Individual Achievement** - There is so much talk about teamwork today that we forget to emphasize how important it is to praise individual achievement as well. From time to time praise your stars. Recognizing personal contributions to the team is an excellent morale booster within any Organization.

5. **Discover the Group's Soft-Skill Identity** - All people are not the same, so their soft skills and strengths are not the same either. Once you know who you have on your team, leverage their strengths and differences because these are the facts that will help distinguish you and your organization from the competition. Illustrate how they can leverage each other's strengths inside the team to develop a new group "identity."

The essence of your business is your people. Making soft-skills development a priority will bring your team to a new level because it focuses directly on them. By allowing the human aspect of your employees to shine through, you are encouraging them to do what comes naturally to them. Don't overlook these all-important skills when evaluating areas of improvement for your team. Find a way to incorporate soft skills into your leadership development programs and see results immediately.

### How Horizon can help you improve the efficiency and attrition in your business

Horizon prides itself at having the best Soft Skills Methodologies in place to ensure that your Organization reaps the benefits and manages it moving forward. Horizon also manages the transition for you in a way that makes business sense and also makes it less tedious for your employees to grasp.

Influencing, communication, team management, delegation, appraising, presenting and motivating are but a few aspects of Soft Skills that Horizon can help your Organization go to the next level. Increasingly, companies aren't just assessing their current staff and future recruits on their business skills.

By assessing Organizations on a whole host of soft skill competencies around how well they relate and communicate to others, we now find it a bit shocking and somewhat disturbing when someone displays the old autocratic style of bullying management tactics (though

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we know it is still unfortunately far more prevalent than is desirable). Many companies simply will now no longer put up with it.

Measuring these soft skills is no easy thing and in the most progressive companies, managers are looking for people's ability to communicate clearly and openly, and to listen and respond empathetically. They also want them to have equally well-honed written skills so that their correspondence (including emails) doesn't undo all the good work their face-to-face communication creates.

Good soft skills also include the ability of people to balance the commercial needs of their company with the individual needs of their staff.

Being flexible and able to adapt to the changing needs of an organization also qualify as soft skills, as do being able to collaborate with others and influence situations through lateral and more creative thinking. The ability to deal with differences, multiculturalism and diversity is needed more than ever.

Very few companies are untouched by the ever-widening influence of other cultures and good soft skills facilitate better communication and people's ability to manage differences effectively. Everyone already has some form of soft skills (probably a lot more than they realize). They just need to look at areas in their personal life where they get on with others, feel confident in the way they interact, can problem solve, are good at encouraging, can schmooze with the best of them.

All these skills are soft and all of them are transferable to the workplace. Horizon has the necessary tools and expertise in place to help you enhance the individual and team skill needed in this fast growing and competitive market.

It is often said that employees don't leave Organizations, they leave people. This phenomenon has eluded many an Organization and the criticality is immense. Fundamentally an Organization works on three principals when employing an individual.

1. **Cultural knowledge** - This includes management practices, values, respect for hierarchy, and decision flows.
2. **Historical knowledge** - this includes the organization's journey from the day it was founded till the present.

3. **Functional knowledge** - this includes technical, operational, process and client information

Attrition is a huge concern for any organization that intends to have a knowledge management system in place. Vacancy of a position might be easier to fill through the proper people-sourcing approaches, but filling in the knowledge gap is not. This is particularly in context of a tough economy where the concept of all-size-fits-all is no longer working and vacancy of a position by attrition is basically vacancy of a knowledge-base, and this vacancy in knowledge base cannot be filled in by any person.

Horizon can help you in the two main areas that are critical and can cause ripples in your Organization through attrition:

1. **Measurement of soft skills** - because gaps exist when the companies say they value their people, and do something else.
2. **Fight attrition with smart training** - taking a longer term perspective in training and development as a retention tool.

### Why Horizon is ahead of the game.

Using the "waterfall" model that follows a systematic path of establishing and managing any learning function, Horizon starts with understanding the business objective(s) and develops training strategies that align with the business objectives. This is then followed up with a series of intense steps that eventually lead to implementation of a learning function.

Horizon Training enriches one's skills in a very customized and easy-to-understand manner. Depending on the process specific module or customized one, the methodology applied takes into consideration the core requirements of the trainees, and the expected outcome at the completion of the module.

Horizon has continuously improved its methods and mechanics with the notion that each industry is different and each requirement is different. Specific tailor-made modules in Soft Skills are put in place to fit to your Organizational needs at any given time.

Companies such as SMART TV Kenya, GTS UK, Sterling Green UK as well as Orange have reaped the benefits of this model with the trend always on an upward scale.

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### Conclusion

In conclusion, we look at the big Question that most employees struggle with and most employers should have the answer to.

Question to ask your underemployed coaching client, from Thomas Leonard.

**Q:** Why aren't you getting paid what your worth?

**A:** Maybe it's because you aren't pleasant to work with.

A constantly changing work environment - due to technology, customer-driven markets, an information-based economy and globalization are currently impacting on the structure of the workplace and leading to an increased reliance on, and demand for, soft skills.

Soft skills are not a replacement for hard- or technical-skills. They are, in many instances, complementary, and serve to unlock the potential for highly effective performance in people qualified with the requisite hard skills.

While many employers feel they can train employees in the technical skills needed to perform the job, there is more concern with the ability to teach the softer skills. Therefore, more companies are seeking job applicants that already possess these soft skills.

Employers of the twenty-first century must be committed to these soft skills and this commitment doesn't begin the first day on the job. This is a commitment that starts even prior to entry in the workforce and stems from the dedication to become a lifelong learner -- constantly updating and revising skills to better meet the needs of the changing marketplace.

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