

Introduction

Introducing students to soft skills should not be done in isolation. In fact, they should be intentionally included in a career portfolio. A 21st century career portfolio is a living artifact which highlights crucial aspects of job performance which shows how individuals demonstrate the ability to interact with others, manage situations and contribute to a team. These aspects often are considered just as important as technical skills by colleges, universities, and employers, making you a more well-rounded candidate and increasing your chances of being accepted to college and landing a job position.

The Woven Traditions 21st Century Career Portfolio is designed with the following in mind:

Demonstrates your ability to work with others:

Soft skills like communication, teamwork, and leadership which show how effectively you can collaborate with colleagues and contribute to a positive work environment.

Highlights your adaptability:

Skills like problem-solving and critical thinking demonstrate your ability to handle challenges and adapt to changing circumstances.

Provides insight into your personality:

Soft skills can reveal your professionalism, work ethic, and overall attitude, which are crucial factors for employers.

Complements hard skills:

While technical skills are essential, soft skills can be the deciding factor when choosing between candidates with similar technical abilities. These intangible qualities, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving are increasingly sought after by employers. Showcasing soft skills in your portfolio can set you apart and demonstrate that you are a well-rounded candidate.

The Woven Traditions 21st Century Career Portfolio helps students grow personally and professionally. It allows learners to document everything they are learning. A chance to explore your curiosities, document, and evolve as you go.

Working Definition

Soft skills are personal attributes that help you fit into a workplace and are often the reason employers decide whether to keep or promote an employee. They are different from hard skills, which are technical skills that are directly relevant to a job. Soft skills are becoming increasingly important in today's job market. They refer to the personal attributes that enable you to interact effectively with others, such as communication, teamwork (also known as collaboration), problem-solving, and time management.

Stages of Soft Skill Development

The evolution of developing soft skills typically starts with **basic self-awareness** and **active listening**, gradually moving towards more complex abilities like **conflict resolution, leadership, and emotional intelligence** where individuals can effectively navigate complex situations and influence others, all while continuously refining their **communication** and **adaptability** to different environments and people.

When considering the **STAGES** of soft skill development, you can typically see a progressive continuum from the **Foundational Level** to **Intermediate Level** and further to the **Advanced Level**.

Foundational Level	Active listening: Learning to fully focus on others, understanding their perspectives, and responding appropriately.	Basic communication: Clearly expressing ideas, both verbally and in writing, while respecting others' viewpoints.	Positive attitude: Maintaining a constructive outlook and demonstrating willingness to collaborate.	Time management: Effectively organizing tasks and prioritizing responsibilities.
Intermediate Level	Teamwork: Contributing positively to group projects, collaborating effectively, and supporting team members.	Problem-solving: Identifying issues, analyzing options, and implementing solutions with critical thinking.	Adaptability: Adjusting to changing circumstances, embracing innovative ideas, and being flexible in approach.	Conflict resolution: Identifying and addressing disagreements constructively, mediating between parties when necessary
Advanced Level	Leadership: Inspiring and motivating others, setting clear goals, and delegating tasks effectively	Emotional Intelligence: Recognizing and managing one's own emotions, as well as understanding and responding to the emotions of others.	Decision-making: Analyzing information, weighing options, and making informed choices under pressure.	Interpersonal communication: Building strong relationships, establishing trust, and effectively communicating with diverse individuals.

Factors influencing soft skill development

Examples of Soft Skills

Active Listening	Active listening is the ability to focus on and understand the speaker's message fully. This soft skill involves paying attention to non-verbal cues, asking clarifying questions, and providing feedback to the speaker. Active listening is essential for effective communication, building trust and rapport, and resolving conflicts.
Adaptability	Adaptability is the ability to adjust to change and new situations with ease. A highly adaptable person can work effectively in diverse environments, be flexible with changing priorities, and learn new skills and systems quickly. This soft skill also involves being open-minded, creative, and innovative, and able to think on one's feet.
Attention to detail	Attention to detail is the ability to notice intricate details and ensure accuracy and quality in work. This soft skill involves being meticulous, thorough, and focused on delivering high-quality results. A person with strong attention to detail can minimize errors, enhance productivity, and maintain customer satisfaction.
Coaching and mentoring	Coaching and mentoring is the ability to guide, teach and mentor others to achieve their goals. This soft skill involves providing feedback, modeling behavior, and supporting others in their professional development. A skilled coach and mentor can build relationships, inspire growth, and promote a positive team culture.
Communication	Effective communication is the cornerstone of any successful professional relationship. Being able to articulate your thoughts and ideas clearly and concisely in written or verbal form is crucial for maintaining productive working relationships. This soft skill also encompasses active listening, understanding, and interpreting non-verbal cues, and adapting communication style to suit different audiences.
Conflict management	Conflict management is the ability to manage conflicts effectively and reach win-win solutions. This soft skill involves effective communication, active listening, and negotiation. A person with strong conflict management skills can resolve disputes, build consensus, and promote collaboration in a team environment.
Conflict Resolution	Conflict resolution is the ability to manage and resolve conflicts effectively. A skilled conflict resolver can identify the underlying causes of conflict, communicate clearly and empathetically, and negotiate win-win solutions. This soft skill also involves active listening, problem-solving, and the ability to remain calm and objective under pressure.
Creativity	Creativity involves the ability to generate current ideas, think freely outside the box and approach problems from different angles. This soft skill requires imagination, curiosity, and the ability to see connections between seemingly disparate ideas. Creativity is essential for innovation, process improvement, and finding novel solutions to complex problems.
Critical Thinking	Critical thinking is the ability to analyze information objectively and make informed decisions. This soft skill involves evaluating evidence, identifying assumptions, and recognizing biases. A skilled critical thinker can synthesize complex information, consider multiple perspectives, and make logical and evidence-based conclusions.
Cultural awareness	Cultural awareness is the ability to understand and respect cultural differences in the workplace. This soft skill involves recognizing and appreciating diverse perspectives, beliefs, and values. A culturally

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