



Soft Skills: A Guide for Managers

“Soft skills” is a shorthand term for a variety of interpersonal abilities that assist with building relationships and enhancing collaboration. Managers who cultivate these qualities may feel more prepared to address conflict, cope with problems, and lead their team. To enhance your soft skills, focus on these areas:

- **Engagement.** Learn about your team’s day-to-day experiences and support their efforts to complete their work. Pitch in and help when “all hands on deck” are needed. This is sometimes called “managing by walking around.”
- **Clarity.** Communicate your specific expectations and how they contribute to team goals. Provide a big picture overview that connects individual tasks and desired outcomes to the organization’s larger objectives.
- **Encouragement.** Commit to helping each team member enhance their abilities and fulfill their potential. Recognize and celebrate successes, while framing disappointments as learning opportunities.
- **Empowerment.** Remind your team that you are confident in both their individual skills and their ability to solve problems collaboratively. Recognize the value that each team member brings to the workplace.
- **Fairness.** Avoid playing favorites or creating the perception that some team members are more important than others. Make decisions based not on personal preferences, but on what is best for both your team and the larger organization.
- **Patience.** Create reasonable expectations for productivity and performance. Give team members time to absorb new information or skills and incorporate them into their workflow. If a team member is struggling, either due to personal issues or because of performance concerns, make a referral to LifeMatters.
- **Trustworthiness.** Respect each individual’s privacy and personal information. Avoid making promises you can’t keep. In times of stress or uncertainty, short-circuit rumors by sharing as much information as you can on a timely basis.

Improving your soft skills will help you to enhance your emotional intelligence, a key leadership skill. In addition, it will set an example for your team to emulate. If you “walk the talk,” your team will be more likely to do so as well.

The LifeMatters Management Consultation Service can suggest resources that will help you develop your soft skills. In addition, LifeMatters is available 24/7/365 to assist with any management concern. We’re here to help!

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