

# Applying for a Job: Soft Skills

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- Approximate Time: 30 to 40 minutes -

## OBJECTIVES:

After this lesson, the learner will be able to:

- Define and explain the importance of soft skills.
- Identify broad categories of soft skills, along with specific behaviors related to each.
- Apply soft skills to various aspects of the job search and development.

## MATERIALS:

- Flip chart or dry erase board with markers
- Copies of [UT Extension Publication W 936-G](#)
- Copies of the Skill Up Tennessee marketing brochure

**EVALUATION:** Participants developed an understanding of professional behaviors.

## METHOD:

This lesson is designed to be taught in a group setting. You can teach this lesson either face-to-face or using technology such as Zoom.

## PREP:

- Print copies of the UT Extension Publication W 936-G (see above link, under "materials").A
- Review the lesson plan. Review the publication. Familiarize yourself with the content thinking about how you will present the content to your participants.

## INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of the activity is to help participants get in the mindset of an employer to think about the skills and characteristics of a good employee, with soft skills being emphasized. Lead the following activity with the group:

*Think about your current job or a previous job. Today, you get to be the manager or supervisor. Imagine that you need to fill an open position and are trying to find just the right fit for the job. What are some characteristics you'll look for in a prospective employee? It may help to think about coworkers who you feel are/were successful in their role.*

Have the group name characteristics as you write them on the board or flipchart. It is likely you'll get answers that have to do with the technical skills needed to do a job, which of course are necessary. If the group does not list many soft skills, try some of these prompts to encourage more ideas or add your own.

- What kind of attitude should the person have?
- How should the person relate to coworkers?
- How should the person relate to you as their supervisor?
- Do you want someone who does just as much as is asked or goes above and beyond?
- How important is dependability?

Once you have a good list, put a rectangle around the hard skills, and explain that these are the things needed to perform the job. Then circle the soft skills, and explain that these are just as important and will be the focus of today's discussion.

Paraphrase the information in the *Soft Skills Are Important* section from UT Extension Publication Finding Work: Soft Skills W 936-G.

**INSTRUCTION:**

Write the list of soft skills from page one of the publication on a flip chart or dry erase board. Briefly describe each soft skill and give a few examples that are relevant for the group.

**INTERPERSONAL SKILLS:** Displaying the skills to work effectively with others from diverse backgrounds.

- Show sincere interest in others and their concerns.
- Demonstrate flexibility for change based on the ideas and actions of others.
- Maintain open lines of communication with others.
- Respect diversity.

**INTEGRITY:** Displaying strong moral principles and work ethic.

- Use company time and property responsibly.
- Take responsibility for accomplishing work goals within accepted timeframes.
- Accept responsibility for one's decisions and actions and for those of one's group, team or department.

**PROFESSIONALISM:** Maintaining a professional presence.

- Maintain composure and keep emotions in check.
- Accept criticism tactfully and attempt to learn from it.
- Dress appropriately for occupational and worksite requirements.
- Demonstrate a positive attitude towards work.

**INITIATIVE:** Demonstrating a commitment to effective job performance by taking action on one's own and following through to get the job done.

- Go beyond the routine demands of the job.
- Establish and maintain personally challenging but realistic work goals.
- Perform effectively even with minimal direction, support or approval.
- Strive to exceed standards and expectations.

**DEPENDABILITY AND RELIABILITY:** Displaying responsible behaviors at work.

- Diligently follow through on commitments and consistently complete assignments by deadlines.
- Come to work on time and as scheduled.
- Arrive on time for meetings or appointments.
- Comply with organizational rules, policies and procedures.

**ADAPTABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY:** Displaying the capability to adapt to new, different or changing requirements.

- Be open to considering new ways of doing things.
- Easily adapt plans, goals, actions or priorities.
- Embrace new approaches when appropriate and discard approaches that are no longer working.

**LIFELONG LEARNING:** Demonstrating a commitment to self-development and improvement of knowledge and skills.

- Take actions showing an interest in personal and professional lifelong learning and development.
- Modify behavior based on feedback or self-analysis of past mistakes.
- Take charge of personal career development by identifying occupational interests, strengths, options and opportunities.
- Take steps to develop and maintain knowledge, skills and expertise necessary to perform one's role successfully by participating in relevant training and professional development programs.

**COMMUNICATION SKILLS:** Listening, speaking and signaling so others can understand using a variety of methods.

- Use common English conventions including proper grammar, tone and pace.
- Express relevant information appropriately to individuals or groups taking into account the audience and the nature of the information (e.g., technical or controversial).
- Convey information clearly, correctly and succinctly.

**TEAMWORK:** Working cooperatively with others to complete work assignments.

- Develop constructive and cooperative working relationships with others.
- Exhibit tact and diplomacy and strive to build consensus.
- Respond appropriately to positive and negative feedback.
- Handle conflicts maturely by exercising compromise to achieve positive results for all parties.

**APPLICATION:**

Lead a discussion about how soft skills can help a person get a job, keep a job and advance in a career. Spend a few minutes on each area before moving to the next. In your own words, cover the information on pages 2-5 of the publication as part of the discussion.

*Thinking about what we just discussed, what are some ways soft skills can help you in the following areas?*

- *Getting a Job*
- *Keeping a Job*
- *Advancing in a Career*

**DEBRIEF:**

- Explain to participants that today they learned how to practice certain soft skills that will help them to get and keep a job.
- If applicable, provide each participant with a copy of UT Extension's Skill Up Tennessee marketing brochure. Review the brochure and program with participants.

**CONCLUSION:**

Ask the group to share a few key things they learned that they will start using in their job search or at work.

**EVALUATION:**

Ask participants to respond to the following statement by a show of hands:

*How many of you developed an understanding of professional behaviors?*

Record the answers for entry into SUPER. (Report under "Increase Capacity to Produce Income" - "Short-term Indicators".)



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