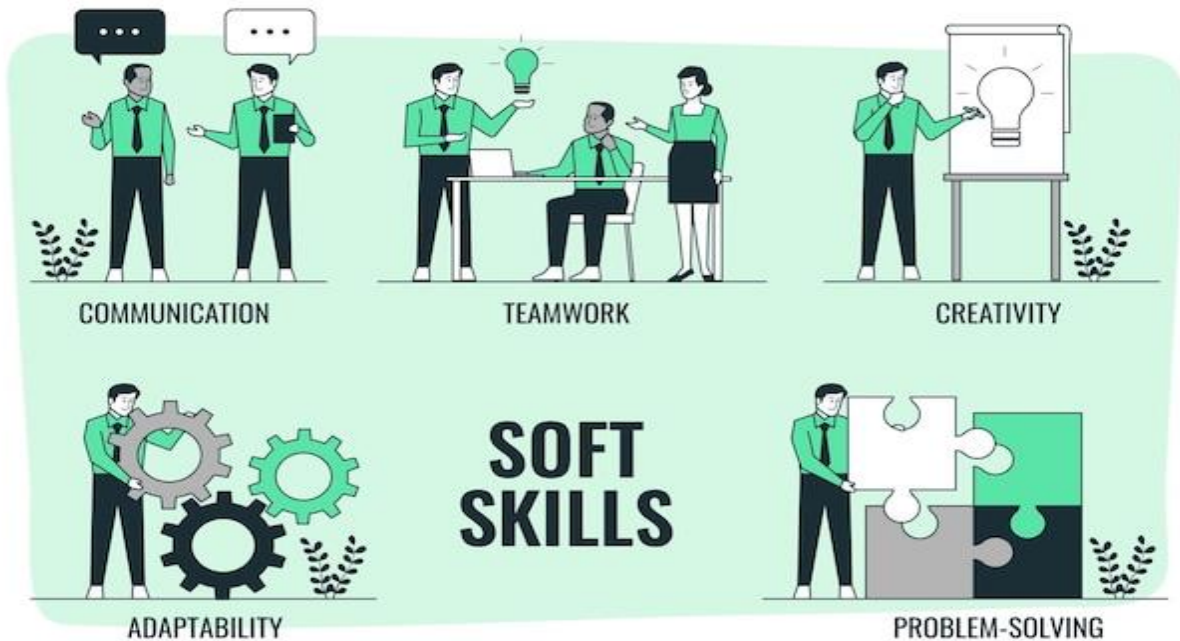


Beyond the Numbers – Soft Skills for Financial Professionals



The world of accounting and finance is a complex one requiring professionals to have top notch mathematical and technological skills. Success often depends on a keen understanding of quantitative mathematical equations and financial models. Adding to the complexity is the need to incorporate recurring global instability and a variety of stakeholders into the equation.

It's clear that success in finance requires more than just a solid understanding of numbers. To stay competitive in a rapidly changing field, professionals need a solid grasp of soft skills as well. As with most industries, success requires the ability to communicate ideas and build solid relationships. It's great to have all the answers, but if you can't communicate your ideas and package the information – nobody is going to buy in.

Here are 6 soft skills you need to stay on top of your game:

Strategic and Critical Thinking

According to Tom Hood from the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants and the Business Learning Institute, [the number one skill most in demand for finance professionals is strategic and critical thinking](#). Communications and storytelling are next, along with data analytics.

As the future workplace and global economic climate continue to evolve, there will always be a need for new technologies and new ways of working that directly impact a company's decision making process. Seasoned professionals capitalize on their knowledge and take a proactive approach to their financial decisions.

Communication Skills

Number crunching is great, but you have to have the ability to package and convey complex information in a way that people can understand. Getting your message across in an effective way to numerous stakeholders builds trust and allows you to grow and cultivate key relationships.

Data is often complex so consider packaging the information in a way that tells a story. Show people how your ideas solve their problems and you'll be well on your way to being a trusted resource.

Have a Vision

Nobody has a crystal ball, but the ability to anticipate and react to change is beneficial both to your success – and the success of your organization. Understanding the big picture enables you to take proactive measures ensuring your organization is able to rapidly pivot and react to market or legislative changes. Adaptability and flexibility are key as new tools and processes are always being introduced as a way to react to industry trends.

Success in the financial world means helping your organization stay ahead of industry trends and global events so that when the inevitable occurs, you're ready to act rather than react to the situation.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

The business world is full of complex interpersonal relationships that require more than a cold, numbers first approach. To effectively manage others means having the ability to manage one's own emotions first. Empathy and social awareness are critical to understanding and influencing the emotions of others.

Responding with empathy shows people that you're listening and willing to collaborate. In the world of finance, things aren't always cut and dry so be ready to capitalize on your soft skills. Take the time to truly understand people and use your listening skills to help resolve conflicts. Your team will thank you for it!

Problem Solving

Problem solving in the financial world includes your ability to focus and prioritize work in the face of conflict or change. It's a high pressure environment where the stakes can be high. Effective problem solvers are able to use their experience to make good judgment calls. When change happens or where there is conflict, numbers don't always tell the whole story so it's critical to think outside the box and use your intuition.

The Human Touch

Despite the prevalence of AI, there will always be a need for the human touch. Business is all about relationships and establishing strong connections with stakeholders will help to sustain profitable growth. Software and technology are critical to functioning in today's workplace, but skills such as communications and leadership can't always be replaced by software. When it comes down to it, people want to deal with people. It's in our DNA.

As a species, we have a strong need to be understood and despite significant advances in technology, most people would rather deal with a live person capable of understanding and empathy than a machine or software program.

To stand out in the world of finance, it's critical to pay attention to soft skills. Being well versed in technology or data analytics is great, but fine tuning the skills listed above will propel you to the heights of your field and beyond.