

## **“SOFT” SKILLS FOR YOUNG IS PROFESSIONALS: A VIEW FROM THE FIELD**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The subject of nontechnical “soft” skills is well recognized as being an important concern of today’s organizations and a critical issue to the success of Information Systems (IS) professionals. This paper acknowledges these concerns and aims to improve our knowledge about how the subject is perceived and managed by the industry and which are the most relevant “soft” skills in order to assure that new IS professionals can smoothly integrate into “real world” organizations.

Moreover, the present study is part of a wider project – the WeKnow Project - that deals with methodologies and tools that could support the process of knowledge transfer between experienced and new professionals. The outcome of WeKnow will be an innovative web-based learning support system - The Web Knowledge Map – that would assist the process and, for that reason, this study also intends to identify which “soft” skills can be more efficiently transferred by knowledge exchange between professionals of distinct generations.

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To accomplish these goals, a questionnaire was completed by senior professionals of both IS and non-IS companies and several semi-structured interviews were conducted with a selected panel of senior managers. With the combination of these quantitative and qualitative approaches it was possible not only to identify the most relevant “soft” skills as perceived by the field but also to understand the rationale that supported the choices.

Our findings show that organizations and senior managers have a significant awareness about the subject and that structured and consistent opinions are reasonably disseminated. Both IS and non-IS respondents agreed on the primacy of structural “soft” skills, such as responsibility, ethical mind-set, self motivation and learning attitude, that appear as the foundation for any professional development, in all the domains. In contrast, different opinions were expressed in terms of IS and non-IS professional needs. While the general panel showed a more conservative approach in terms of “soft” skills, senior IS professionals and IS managers stressed the importance of skills linked with change management, risk taking and network collaboration.

The findings also stressed that work experience and real world exposure are fundamental and irreplaceable tools in developing nontechnical “soft” skills. Therefore, higher education institutions need to pool resources with industry in order to build a “growth medium” where IS students may well develop the skills they need as future IS professionals.

### **KEYWORDS**

Human resources, “Soft” Skills, Nontechnical Skills, IS professionals, Knowledge.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Nontechnical “soft” skills is not a new subject to the IS field and have long been described as critical to IS professional activity. In fact, there is a growing awareness that few activities and professions have seen such a rapid change over the past years as the activities and professions related to the field of Information Systems (IS) (Lee et al. 1995) and, in essence, there is a general agreement between industry and academia, that “soft” skills are becoming more and more important as these transformations occur.

Nevertheless, due to the subjective nature of the topic and to the complexity of the “learning process” it’s normally accepted that few attempts have been made to study systematically the concept of “soft” skills (Joseph et al. 1999) and, therefore, significant research should be conducted addressing the topic (Muzio et al. 2007). Acknowledging these needs, the present study aims to improve our knowledge about the subject and to provide some objective contributions to a debate where subjective and non-systematic approaches are dominant.

## **2. THE WEKNOW PROJECT**

As previously stated, this study is part of the Web Knowledge Map (WeKnow) project. WeKnow is an EU funded project in the European educational program Socrates in the field of Information and Communication Technology and Open and Distance Learning in education. The project is coordinated by the Centre for Learning and Knowledge Management and Department of Computer Science in Mechanical Engineering of RWTH Aachen University (GER). The further participating partners are the Centre for Education and Technology of the

Delft University of Technology (NL), the Department Electronic and Computer Engineering of the University of Limerick (IE), the Faculty of Management Science and Informatics of the University of Zilina (SK) and the Department of Information Systems of the University of Minho (PT). WeKnow aims at developing an integrated methodology by which knowledge will be transferred between experts from industry and new generation professionals. The outcome of WeKnow will be an innovative web-based learning support system, the Web Knowledge Map that suits the "net generation" best and will integrate vital information and knowledge of experienced employees as well as innovative scientific knowledge.

The project achieves its results by designing the Web Knowledge Map jointly with university teachers, students and (retiring) experts of industry (the main target groups of WeKnow) in order to improve how current or emerging information and communication technologies (ICT) can mutually enhance the learning capability and learning effectiveness of individuals and organizations. The strength of this project is a thorough analysis of the needs and content contributions of all the target groups in order to overcome the classic barriers between general academic educational and vocational education.

According to the principles and goals of the global WeKnow project, a specific implementation, concerning nontechnical "soft" skills, was designed. Under the scope of this project and to assist its implementation, the present study aims to identify which "soft" skills are relevant to the industry, which are seen as more suitable to be transferred between senior experts and students and how the relationship between industry and educational institutions should evolve in order to satisfy identified needs.

### **3. THE NEED FOR NONTECHNICAL "SOFT" SKILLS**

Research and general management literature has a long "track record" pointing out the relevance of nontechnical "soft" skills to modern organizations. References to a multitude of personal skills and relational skills, like leadership, communication, teamwork, innovative behavior or negotiation can be found in everyday business literature and normally, even if not so often, in academic journals.

In the last two decades, as a result of significant transformation that occurred in the use of Information Technologies (IT) and in the role of Information Systems (IS) in organizations (Turner 1998; Winter et al. 1997), the topic of IS professionals skills and development attained more attention from researchers.

In effect, several IS studies tend to reflect upon transformations in IS functional roles (Feeny et al. 1999), (Niederman et al. 1991), (Brancheau et al. 1996), (Rockart et al. 1996) and ways of organizing the function (Boynton et al. 1992), (Malone 1997), (Cross et al. 1997), (Heckman 1998), (Sambamurthy et al. 1999). As a result, IS professionals are referred to as deeply affected by this path of change and the research literature addressing the "soft skills" subject is increasing. Nevertheless, not much has been done beyond recognizing the importance of the subject. Strong theoretical frameworks are missing (Joseph et al. 1999), in order to prepare and organize these professionals for the variety of tasks that are expected of them.

Some significant studies were conducted envisaging a complete scenario, covering IS professional skills from the viewpoint of organizational global needs (Heckman 1998; Lee et al. 1995), but most of existing literature is mainly focused in some particular skills or groups

of skills. For instance, developing leadership skills has been addressed by several authors (Klenke 1998), (Applegate et al. 1992) (Farren et al. 1996) as a response to a more “challenging” role that has been identified for the IS function (Cross et al. 1997; Khalil 1997; Winter et al. 1997), (Wilcocks et al. 2000).

Similarly, as a response to the growing importance of topics like IS services (DiRomualdo et al. 1998; Hirschheim et al. 1993), IS and business alignment (Reimus 1997), (Thompson et al. 1999) (Brown et al. 1994) and the multi-disciplinary nature of IS projects, some partial studies covered a diversity of related skills such as teamwork proficiency and network development (Thomsett 1999), (Swan et al. 1996), communication skills (Janczewski 2001) or managerial skills (Mathiassen et al. 1999) (Jurison 2002). Complementing these specific approaches, other authors used different perspectives such as analyzing the evolution of the IS job market (Maier et al. 1998) and the demanded IS skills (Todd et al. 1995),

From another viewpoint, important studies were focused on the model curriculum in the IS field. Work on model curriculum has been done since the 80’s by professional and academic organizations, such as ACM, AIS or the AITP (formely DPMA). The “IS’97 Model Curriculum and Guidelines for Undergraduate Degree Programs in Information Systems” (Davis et al. 1997) and its 2002 Update (Davis et al. 2001) are the most significant results of these efforts. Again, if some concerns with “soft” skills can be found within these relevant works, the topic doesn’t have not the same amount of attention as technical skills and most of the references in the preambles don’t have proportional attention in curricula’ models. Similar position towards the topic can be found near professional organizations. For instance, in the report of the “Annual Workforce Development Survey” presented by the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) in 2004, despite the recognition of “soft” skills as “a sharper competitive advantage” for technical workers and the identification of “relational skills” as an important issue to “those actually hiring IT workers”, only a page is dedicated to the subject, confronting the much larger attention devoted to technical skills.

In fact, albeit research dealing with a holistic view of “soft” skills is nowadays frequent conducted in areas that are adjacent to IS, like the one that deals with the global needs of project managers (Muzio et al. 2007), we can still say that “soft” skills in the IS domain is an area that still demands significant research, especially when a correlation between industry needs and new professionals capabilities is looked for.

Lined up with the lack of theoretical frameworks, and despite the recognition of the importance of this topic, the approach to the problem taken by higher education institutions is still founded on subjective rationales and wishful thinking. As an attest of the concept, it’s easily verifiable that technical skills are normally hardly-coupled to specific learning units in almost every IS undergraduate course while only a few references are made concerning which and how nontechnical “soft” skills can be developed.

#### **4. RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN**

Some particular concerns about the research approach were raised due to the researchers’ belief that a study that deals both with IS professionals and “soft” skills needs contributions both from technological and social science areas. Actually, the particular nature of IS professional activities claims an adequate comprehension of the context, concerning mutually technological, organizational and social transformations. Simultaneously, research skills that

relate with personal, relational and social characteristics of the individual demanded approaches and techniques that are more common in social sciences.

Additionally, the uncertainty that applies to the future of IS activities and professions, the lack of accepted frameworks to anticipate IS function evolution and the nature of the research problem, recommended that the research approach should be based on complementary research methods and techniques, in line with the acceptance of diversity in research approaches (Markus 1997). Based on the same principles, it was also assumed that a more valuable contribution could be made if theory were derived from data obtained from fieldwork, with minimum preconceptions about the problem being researched.

Under these assumptions, the ontological and epistemological principles of interpretative research (Klein et al. 1999), (Orlikowski et al. 1991) were found more suitable to the achievement of the research goals and, accordingly, propositions were expected to derive openly from a continuous interplay between researchers and data (Strauss et al. 1998).

#### **4.1 Research Problem and Questions**

In the main, this study seeks to understand how organizations and managers feel and deal with the topic of non-technical “soft” skills and what are their thoughts and rationales about the most relevant “soft” skills for new generations, particularly to the new IS professionals. According to the above, several research questions were raised:

- What’s the awareness of the industry concerning “soft” skills, particularly regarding young IS professionals?
- Which nontechnical capabilities, skills and attitudes of young IS professionals are most demanded and valued by today’s organizations?
- What are the main differences between “soft” skills expectations regarding IS and non-IS graduated students?
- Which of the relevant “soft” skills are more suitable to be transmitted from senior experts, using a web-based learning support system, like the web Knowledge Map?

#### **4.2 Research Design**

The research process was divided in two major stages. Due the lack of theoretical references and solid research in these areas, a first stage was implemented in order to gain a better insight about the problem under research. During this preliminary research, a debate was raised using different approaches, such as open interviews, an exploratory questionnaire and the creation of a group of discussion that was and supported by an online forum. At the end of this stage, the research problem was better defined, allowing the research team to conduct the second stage using more reliable tools and trustworthy principles.

For the second stage, a mixed research approach was used, combining both quantitative and qualitative tools, in order to fulfill two different goals: first, in a very objective approach, to discover which “soft” skills were mostly appreciated in new IS professionals by the industry and, secondly, to understand also “why” it was occurring, as an addition to knowing “what” was happening, in order to sustain qualified interventions in these domains.

#### **4.2.1 A Questionnaire to find “which Skills”**

To attain the first goal, a closed questionnaire was chosen, due to the fact that precise answers were envisaged. An Internet version of the questionnaire was implemented as the major tool to collect data. The questionnaire was divided in two major sections:

- A first section, where 40 soft skills were showed grouped in four clusters: personal skills, relational skills, leadership and management skills and business orientation skills. For each skill, a short definition and a longer explanation were presented, as can be seen in doc.1. From each cluster the respondent should select 3 “most important skills” and 3 “other important skills”.
- A second section, where the respondent was expected to fulfill two complementary tasks: to narrow the selection of the “most important” soft skills, by choosing only 5 skills from the 12 previously selected, and to point out which of these top 5 skills are more apt to “be transferable” using a multimedia platform.

Finally, same optional information was asked from the respondent - personal, professional data and any additional contributions - and an “e-mail” with a synthesis of the answers was send to the respondent.

#### **4.2.2 Interviews to Understand “why”**

To fulfill the second goals, semi-structured interviewing was selected as research tool to collect information from experts and senior managers, who contributed with their experience, interpretations and views.

The interviews were conducted in a short time after the filling of the questionnaire, in order to gather the fundamentals and the rational that enlighten why these “soft” skills were chosen as the most relevant and/or transferable by the interviewee. These interviews were supported by a script that acted as “hidden agenda” to the interviewee, allowing the researchers to conduct the interview as a result of the interview process itself, rearranging the order and the deepness of the subjects, without losing control (Oppenheim 1992).

#### **4.2.3 A Partnership with the Field**

Having in mind the importance of gaining access to relevant players in the industry and the level of partnership that was expected in future stages, it was decided to conduct the research in straight cooperation with expert people in the field. Thus, this research was conducted with Share ([www.share.pt](http://www.share.pt)), a “non profit” Portuguese organization whose members are mainly retired senior professionals, from multiple professions, that have as their primary goal to share their knowledge and experience with new generations of professionals.

### **5. A VIEW FROM THE FIELD**

As stated before, an Internet version of the questionnaire was the main tool to collect data, which was consolidated in a MS-Access Database, to permit better data manipulation. A total of 121 contributions from the field were accepted as valid, and 34 of these were classified as from the IS field (28%), either because of the professional activity of the respondent or because of the focus activity of the company. It’s important to highlight that the questionnaire was answered almost by managers and senior professionals and that only a small part of the

responses were anonymous, which allowed a better qualification of respondent's characteristics.

Complementing the questionnaire, information has been collected from a group of 15 IS leading experts, through semi-structured interviews (Oppenheim 1992), that were, most of the times, taped for later audition. One of the major concerns for these interviews was to assure the diversity of original fields of the contributors (senior managers, IS managers, senior consultants and IS industry managers) in order to assure a trans-disciplinary approach. Another concern was to assure an equilibrium between IS and non-IS activities, to make possible an understanding of how IS professional needs diverge from those of other young professionals.

## 5.1 Field Awareness and Perceptions

One of the main research goals was to perceive how seriously and deeply the subject was imbedded in daily activity of Portuguese organization and managers. Based on the data gathered from the field, it possible to say that there is a great level of awareness about the subject. Nevertheless almost all the interviewees stated that this level of awareness had no major impacts in the way the subject is being managed both by higher education institution and by the companies.

In an attempt to explain the lack of actions and promotion of solutions, a triangle was virtually drawn by the experts that contributed to the process:

1. Traditional teaching approaches, that proved to be efficient to support graduate students in the technical skills acquisition process, will have a minor impact when used to support the development of "soft" skills. As stated by many interviewees, the only effective way to support the "soft" skills' development process is to "immerse" future IT professionals in a "growth medium" or "cultural medium" that can act as a helpful environment for "soft" skills acquisition. In fact, according to the people from the field, most of the significant personal and professional "growth" that now takes place in the first years of professional activity which provided the "growth medium" that can be found in the professional world, after a long stay in the "aseptic" environment that was provided by higher education institutions.
2. As the second vertex of the drawn triangle, it was stated that, without significant collaboration from industry, higher education institutions could experience great difficulties to create and provide a wealthy "growth medium" to IT/IS students. Higher education institutions can, by themselves and with significant efforts, recreate a "laboratorial representation" of everyday's life but without all the richness of "nutrients" and "relations" that are naturally present in the field. Beyond doubt, it was accepted that the contact with practiced professionals, the experience from factual projects, the connection with actual organizations and problems are fundamental growth factors and nutrients that can be better or even only gained from an effective collaboration between academia, companies and IT/IS professionals.
3. Thirdly, it was acknowledged that the platform of collaboration between academia and practitioners are stills very fragile, mainly supported by individual and detached initiatives, rather than by institutional and widespread ones. Nevertheless, the weakness of the relation is not due to fundamental disagreement about the subject but to the small number of time-honored ties and to the scarcity of commonly built

tradition, which compromise the quality of the relationship. In fact, during the research it was possible to identify the unsuitability between truthful intentions and perceived needs for cooperation and the shortage of knowledge of how to effectively promote it.

As result of the above, it's important to stress the relation between these three vertices and that any changes in any of them will impact and change the two others. As a consequence, any effort to strengthen any of these dimensions will have positive impact on others.

## **5.2 Soft Skills for Young IS Professionals**

### **5.2.1 Personal Skills**

As a result of data analysis regarding personal skills clusters, an important finding emerged as a pattern, showing how relevant “structural skills” are perceived by the field. Despite previous expectations on some “day-by-day” skills, that could immediately support operational tasks, it was clear that the field honored fundamentals skills, which could assure a reliable growth path to young professionals' career.

In fact, “To be responsible/ to assume responsibility” and “To have a positive attitude towards learning and self-improvement” were elected as the most relevant skills both by IS and global respondents to the questionnaires. Additionally, in line with this concern about personal and professional robustness, IS participants selected “To show an ethical behavior and social concern” as the third skill, postponing to fourth place “to seek quality, organization and rigor” led to better acceptance in the global group.

As a reinforcement of the relevance of “structural” skills it should be mentioned that the 3 personal skills chosen by IS participants (ethical behavior, responsibility and positive attitude towards learning) were among the 5 most referred skills in the global “five most important skills” question, respectively 2nd, 3rd and 5th..

### **5.2.2 Relational Skills**

Relational Skills are frequently presented as equivalent to non-technical “soft” skills. The relevance of behaving naturally in a networked world was emphasized by many of the interviewees, as a consequence of changing patterns in today's organizations. According to the field, three major drivers support these changes, especially in IS professional context:

- The first, and obvious one, deals with the growing importance of teamwork, by-and-large accomplished by teams that include professionals from different organizations and multiple areas of expertise.
- The second one originated in the principle that “today, more important than doing, is to assure that it's done”, as stated by one of the interviewees, stressing the importance of services in today's organizations. Despite the simplicity of this statement is important to emphasize how remarkably this paradigm change shapes today's IS professional's skills.
- Finally, “time dimension” emerged as the third driver, based in statements which highlighted that “shorter, sooner and faster” are customary requisites for today's tasks, projects and products. And to accomplish this “need for speed” we depend more and more in dynamic and short lived teams supported by a continuous process



of reconfiguration, whose effectiveness depends on the “strength” of the relational skills of their members.

In line with these ideas that emphasizing the significance of relational skills, data gathered from the questionnaire showed “To feel attracted by teamwork” and “To adjust easily to new contexts” were key choices, both from IS and global arenas. As third choice, “To share and to transfer knowledge” was selected by IS professionals, while globally the selected skill was “To communicate efficiently and to be persuasive”. Remarkably, this small nuance was the first sign of an important finding, which strengthened with deeper analysis of the data, within this and other clusters, and that was corroborated by the beliefs expressed by experts: respondents from the IS field who tend to attach more importance to aspects related with networking and collaborative work, while global respondents showed them to be more attached to hierarchical models of organization and communication.

### 5.2.3 Leadership and Management Skills

The analysis of data from this cluster reinforced the significance of “structural” skills in the field. In fact, “To have charisma, to inspire confidence and credibility” was elected as one of the most important skills in this cluster in almost 50% of the questionnaires, both from IS and global participants and was the fourth referred skill in the global “five most important skills” question. The “soft” nature of this skill was stressed by a senior manager that characterized “charisma” as “*something that is very difficult to define but that is easily detected when we are confronted with it*”. It’s important to highlight that the relevance that was awarded to “charisma” in the questionnaires is consistent with the apprehension due to the lack of leadership, in different organizational levels that was expressed in most of the interviews. Additionally, “leadership” was defined as the critical issue by three of the interviewees.

Concerning other expressions from the field regarding these skills, two major lines were identified:

- First, as a corroboration of the thoughts expressed above, two other selections were “To have a vision and to attract people to projects” and “To promote innovation and change”. The choice of these skills, that received the mutual agreement of IS and global respondents, show the general concern about the need to prepare young professionals in promoting and driving change in a networked environment.
- Second, showing some specificity in the IS field, IS respondent elected as an important skill “To have a holistic view of the business” while the other respondents’ choice was “to motivate and evaluate individual and team work”. These different choices can be accepted as a reinforcement of the propositions that were drawn at the end of the previous section.

### 5.2.4 Business Orientation Skills

In this cluster, the most important skill was “To be ‘customer’ oriented”, as was expected from the preparatory work. It’s important to mention that, albeit the use of quotation marks around the word ‘customer’, in order to express the *lato sensus* use of the word, many experts reinforced the idea that ‘customer’ should be taken as any person, any organization, internal or external, to whom services are provided. These facts show that services’ concepts have deep roots in organizations, namely in the IS field, and, also, that the early preparation of future professionals for this environment is a critical issue. Emphasizing the relevance of this skill,

it's important to state that it was the most referred as one of the “5 most important skills”, collecting the preference of more than one third (36%) of the respondents.

Concerning other choices, this cluster of skills showed the largest divergence between IS field and global opinions. Data gained from the IS field showed a major concern with “risk” and “risking”, supported by the selection of “To evaluate and manage risk” and “To have a innovative attitude and to be ‘different’ (non conformism)” as second and third most important skills. From global field, the others most important skills were “to manage by objectives/results” and “To be effective in finding answers and problem solving”. When confronting these choices with those from the IS field - and having also in mind the results from other clusters - we must agree with one of the experts which stressed that “*IS professionals must adopt a ‘challenger’ attitude even when only a ‘responsive’ attitude in expected by the organization*”.

### **5.3.5 Knowledge Transferability**

The importance of knowledge transfer between generations has shown to be a very spontaneous subject among the interviewees. Two of the most repeated ideas were that “*‘soft’ skills cannot be taught but can be learned by contact*”, as stated by one participant, and, in a complementary way, that most of the nontechnical skills – if not all - can be developed by continuous working out. Under these principles, it seems always possible to develop a “soft” skill if an adequate environment is provided, combining experienced counseling and committed practice.

Nevertheless, as a recognition that some skills are more easily transferred than others, when asked to ponder both relevance and “transferability”, the field adopted three different attitudes: some important skills were kept, such as “to be ‘customer’ oriented” and “to show ethical behavior”, others were dropped, such as “to have charisma”, possible because they are seen as more difficult to transfer, and, finally, some get an higher position, such as “to communicate efficiently”, “to seek quality, organization and rigor” and “to manage by objectives and results”, as they appear, simultaneously, important and easier to be transferred.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTHER DEVELOPPMENT**

As stated before, the present research is part of a larger project – the WeKnow Project – and, accordingly, most of the results findings will be used to support a specific implementation concerning “soft” skills development.

The present study was an important contribution to reaffirm the underlying principles that supported the WeKnow Project proposal. In fact, the work that was conducted in the field gives emphasis to the real importance that industry, and particularly senior management, attributes to the amount of “soft” knowledge that support organizations’ success. Furthermore, the research process shows a deep concern about losing a significant part of the implicit knowledge that was collected by present-day professionals during their careers. Expressions of this concern stressed that “soft” skills and implicit knowledge are fundamental factors in terms of business continuity and that, despite the intangible nature of these assets, they are recognized as being of critical importance.

In line with these findings, the field clear expressed that the “maturity” of new generations of professionals, namely in terms of “soft” skills, will be a critical factor in terms of implicit

knowledge preservation and in minimizing all the disruption that the replacement of experienced professionals can cause. Therefore, the level of “seniority” of young professionals when joining the “real world” was presented has the most significant element to support the knowledge transfer process, mutually by shrinking the integration period and by providing “ready to learn” professionals to the field.

Another contribution from this study is that, despite the lack of structured collaboration between the industry and higher education institutions, there’s no replacement for this collaboration, viz:

- The academic community must continually monitor industry in order to better understand how to adapt the educational process to “real-world” needs, providing the professional skills that are called for,
- In a changing environment, to monitor and to understand is sometimes not enough and contributions should be made in order to suggest and to assist transformation,
- Important contributions to the educational process can be better made by industry experts, particularly concerning non-technical “soft” skills and real case evidences.

Auspiciously, an important insight from the study is that organizations and senior professionals showed a truthful availability to cooperate with higher education institutions and to involve themselves in IS students learning processes, mainly by sharing real-life situation and gained experience. In order to benefit from this momentum, it’s important to gain and assure real commitment from higher education institutions. As such, and having in mind the nature of the change and the lack of tradition in these domains, involvement and leadership should occur at the highest level, in order to assure that “soft” skills development and the correlated industry-academia collaboration are integrated in the vision and in the strategies of the institutions.

Finally, this research process provided the research team the stimulus, the tools and the partnership that will support further research. First of all, by emphasizing the relevance of the topic to the industry, universities and students; secondly by providing the tools and know-how to develop new approaches and projects and, finally, by showing that a good relationship with the field it’s not only desirable but possible.

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**DOC.1 NONTECHNICAL “SOFT” SKILLS FOR YOUNG GRADUATED PROFESSIONALS**

**CLUSTER 1**

<b>Personal Skills</b>	
1.1. To manage time effectively	Knows that time is a valuable and scarce resource. Time management is done in an organized way, without significant wastes and with a good perception of priorities.
1.2. To show a ethical behavior and social concern	When dealing with other people and organizations has a natural ethical attitude. Grants a genuine attention to other people concerns and efforts and acts accordingly accepted practices and rules.
1.3. To be responsible / to take responsibilities	Normally takes responsibility with task and goals. Works in a committed form in order to fulfill expectations, without looking for external excuses or time extensions.
1.4. To think and act assertively under “stress”	When faced with urgent, difficult and/or extreme situations tries to remain calm. Under ‘stress’ acts in a well-adjusted manner, both lucid and effective
1.5. To have a positive attitude towards learning and development	Shows an everlasting and positive attitude towards learning”. As a result is always looking for development both personal and professionally.
1.6. To be self-motivated	Reveals an affirmative attitude and self-motivation, always looking for the “bright side of life” and facing problems as something that needs a solution.
1.7. To communicate well, using different tools.	Acts as a good communicator, passing his messages in an easy way, either orally, in written or by any other mean.
1.8. To seek quality, organization and rigor	Is a very organized person, seeking to perform everything in a methodical and rigorous manner, according rules and accept standards.
1.9. To be autonomous	Denotes an autonomous behavior. Once acquired a “target” is capable of looking and finding alternatives to perform the task, with an adequate management of existing resources.

**CLUSTER 2**

Relational Skills	
2.1. To be able to hear and to identify context	Under new or complex situations is talented to gain a global view of the context. Knows how to hear and gain information from the environment and to adapt his behavior accordingly.
2.2. To communicate efficiently and to be persuasive	When in possession of an idea or a mission, is gifted in sharing it in a satisfactory form, getting other people to the team.
2.3. To build and maintain relationship networks	Is aware of the relevance of relationships in today's society and cares about creating, maintaining and developing links in assorted areas and with multiple people. Is good in "social networking".
2.4. To share and to transfer knowledge	Has a positive attitude towards sharing information and knowledge. As that is always willing to share is knowledge and to motivate the same mind-set among colleagues and collaborators.
2.5. To negotiate	Controls the negotiation process, from all the viewpoints. Capable of defining goals and limits, is good in listening and arguing and is gifted at closing. Is aware that negotiation is a win-win process.
2.6. To feel attracted by teamwork	Knows that "the all must be bigger than the parts".
2.7. To manage conflicts	Is aware that conflicts are part of every aspect of life and that the process of "conflict solving" should be focused in final results. When dealing with conflict tends to adopt a "win-win" behavior.
2.8. To make relationships easily, in diverse contexts	Has a special gift to be accepted as partner by people and groups. Is proficient in promoting interactions, in joining a discussion or in integrating a group.
2.9. To adjust easily to new contexts	Knows that different environments demand different behaviors. According to the context is capable of naturally adapt attitudes and behavior, in an ethical and spontaneous manner .

**CLUSTER 3**

<b>Leadership and Management Skills</b>	
3.1. To promote innovation and change	Is aware that “slowing the path” can be dangerous to organizations and, accordingly, stimulates a healthy mind-set towards innovation and change.
3.2. To have charisma / to inspire confidence and credibility	Is naturally seen as a leader. Other people recognize on him the strength and the determination that promote confidence.
3.3. To effectively delegate authority	Power and authority are delegated in a skilled way. Transfers initiative to his subordinates without losing control or avoiding responsibilities.
3.4. To manage available resources and capabilities	Knows that resources are always scarce and is able to manage the available resources in an efficient manner. Skilled in “cost/benefit” analysis of each investment.
3.5. To manage teams and projects	Is skillful in managing both teams and projects.
3.6. To have a holistic view of the business (holistic vision)	Is aware that maintaining a global vision of a project is important, even when involved in small tasks. When managing a project is capable of acting as “the vision keeper”.
3.7. To promote other people development	Is concerned and promotes other people’s development. The progress of his collaborators is seen as relevant and it’s not subordinate to urgent but not so important needs.
3.8. To be capable of planning	Is prepared to develop and maintain medium and long time plans.
3.9. To be efficient in the analysis/decision process	Handles the process of analysis/decision in a very professional manner. Adequately balances the period of information collection and analysis with the need to produce clear resolutions.
3.10. To know how to evaluate and stimulate people	Maintains a dialogue and a process of "continuous evaluation" with collaborator and teams. Therefore, shows good results on developing and stimulating people.
3.11. To have a vision and to gain people to projects	Having a vision, has a natural tendency to share it with other professionals and normally gains their support and commitment.



**CLUSTER 4**

<b>Business Orientation Skills</b>	
4.1. To be “customer oriented”	Acts in a “customer oriented” fashion. Knows how customers, both internal and external, are important to business success and elects “customer satisfaction” as the main driver for every activity.
4.2. To have business “feeling” (business acumen)	Has a specially “Business orientation” gift that allows to discover and develop business opportunities, in multiple environments, even if small or not seen by other people.
4.3. To be effective and to accomplish results	Works with an efficient and an effective attitude. Is mainly focused in fundamental project tasks or business activities and is driven by the need of getting things done.
4.4. To manage by objectives and results	Manages by objectives, with a focus on achievable goals and aiming to attain the best possible results from available resources. Is capable of managing his own path and has a “no excuse” attitude.
4.5. To seek for new targets and objectives in life.	Is always in the pursuit of new targets and objectives, both in personal and professional life. Works in a sustained way to carry them out.
4.6. To evaluate and manage risk	Is capable of taking and managing risks. Act in a logical way and is ready to prove answerability. In a similar way encourages the workforce around to behave likewise.
4.7. To have a tendency to be innovative and “different” (“nonconformist” )	Has “afraid” of monotony and is in always in the pursuit of new ways to improve activities and to do things differently. Shows some difficulty in accepting blurred “ <i>status quo</i> ”.
4.8. To be resourceful in finding solutions and problem solving.	Knows that problems and difficult are inherent to life and is focused in solving them. Very keen on finding solutions.
4.9. To manage expectations	Is aware that satisfaction levels are normally connect to expectations and is very good in managing them, both with colleagues and customers.
4.10. To be ambitious	Shows ambition, in a healthy way.