

Bridging the Soft Skills Gap

How to Teach the Missing Basics to Today's Young Talent

Today's new young workforce, the Second Wave Millennials (born 1990-2000), are now entering the workforce in droves. They have so much to offer – new technical skills, new ideas, new perspective, new energy. What they are way-too-often missing – according to the latest research - is a lot of the old-fashioned basics, what many refer to as “the soft skills.”

RainmakerThinking, Inc. has been tracking generational change in the workplace since 1993. What is the number one issue regarding the youngest people in the workplace today? There is an ever-widening “Soft Skills Gap.” The soft skills gap continues to grow, hiding in plain sight, despite the fact that it costs organizations a fortune every day.

“Soft skills,” in contrast to “hard skills,” refers to a wide range of non-technical skills such as “professionalism” and “good work habits” and “people skills” and “critical thinking.” These skills may be less tangible and harder to define and measure than many of the “hard skills,” but they are absolutely critical. When employees have significant gaps in their soft skills there are significant negative consequences: Potentially good hires are overlooked. Good hires go bad. Bad hires go worse. Misunderstandings abound. People get distracted. Productivity goes down. Mistakes are made. Customer service suffers. Workplace conflicts occur more frequently. Good people leave when they might have otherwise stayed longer. It robs so many young employees of greater success and causes so many managers so much aggravation and so many unnecessary costs.

The soft skills gap is not a household term like the technical skill gap, but it should be!

Bring in Bruce Tulgan to share the latest from RainmakerThinking's decades of research:

First, find out what's going on here: What is the soft skills gap? Where does it come from? Why is it growing? What are the costs? Is there anything employers can do about it?

Second, figure out exactly which soft skills are missing in today's young talent and which ones matter the most to your organization

Third, you cannot hire your way around the soft skills gap, but you can learn best practices for shining a bright light on “mission critical” soft skills in every aspect of your human capital management practices

Fourth, become a true teaching-style leader by using our proven methods for building up the critical soft skills of your employees every step of the way

Based on our continuing research since 1993 and his best-selling book *Bridging the Soft Skills Gap: How to Teach the Missing Basics to Today's Young Talent* (2015), Bruce provides powerful insights, hilarious stories, and concrete takeaways for leaders at all levels to build up the soft skills of today's young talent.

Our Soft Skills Competency Model:

Professionalism: The Missing Basics

Self-Evaluation: Regularly assessing one's own thoughts, words, and actions against clear meaningful standards; and one's own performance against specific goals, timelines, guidelines and parameters

Personal responsibility: Staying focused on what one can control directly - principally one's self - and controlling one's responses in the face of factors outside one's own control

Positive attitude: Maintaining and conveying a positive, generous, enthusiastic demeanor in one's expressions, gestures, words, and tone

Good work habits: Wellness, self-presentation, timeliness, organization, productivity, quality, follow-through, and initiative

People skills: Attentive listening, observing, and reading; perceiving and empathizing; effective use of words, tone, expressions and gestures - verbal, written, and otherwise; one-on-one and in groups; in-person and remotely

Critical Thinking: The Missing Basics

Proactive learning: Keeping an open mind, suspending judgment, questioning assumptions, and seeking out information, technique and perspective; and studying, practicing, and contemplating in order to build one's stored knowledge base, skill-set, and wisdom

Problem-solving: Mastering established best-practices - proven repeatable solutions for dealing with regular recurring decisions - so as to avoid reinventing the wheel. Using repeatable solutions to improvise when addressing decisions that are new but similar

Decision-making: Identifying and considering multiple options, assessing the pros and cons of each, and choosing the course of action closest to the desired outcome

Followership: The Missing Basics

Respect for context: Reading and adapting to the existing structure, rules, customs and leadership in an unfamiliar situation

Citizenship: Accepting, embracing, and observing, not just the rights and rewards, but the duties of membership/belonging/participation in a defined group with its own structure, rules, customs, and leadership

Service: Approaching relationships in terms of what you have to offer - respect, commitment, hard work, creativity, sacrifice - rather than what you need or want

Teamwork: Playing whatever role is needed to support the larger mission; coordinating, cooperating and collaborating with others in pursuit of a shared goal; supporting and celebrating the success of others

Learn RainmakerThinking's proven method for teaching the missing basics to today's young talent:

Make them aware: Name it and describe what the skill means to the organization

Make them care: Explore what the skill means to them

Sell it: Explain the "self-building" value of the skill

Break it down: Spell out exactly what they need to do, step-by-step

Make it easy: Use ready-made lessons and exercises

Get them involved: Give them "credit" for self-directed learning

Make it practical: Spotlight opportunities to practice on-the-job

Follow up: Use coaching style feedback to reinforce the lessons whenever possible