



MONDAY MOTIVATOR

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People Skills

In almost all jobs, your people skills – also known as "soft skills" – have as much of an impact on your success as your technical skills. (Mind Tools)

There are five life activities that consume most of our mental capacity. They are Health, Career, Relationships, Money and Community. All five of these human activities require communication and people skills and that's where it gets interesting.



Perhaps you've noticed that people are alike in a lot of ways and unlike in thousands of ways. What makes us all different is a topic of focus that would require a bookshelf full of tomes devoted to how we got to this point, starting about two hundred thousand years ago. From the discovery of fire to the discovery of the wheel and later all the other innovations created by mankind, we humans have developed personalities, dispositions, mind-sets and attitudes about who, how and what we are.

In most societies, there are layers of classes of people. The layers are divided along two distinct lines – education and wealth. Those with the education tended to have or control the wealth. Those without the education had very little of that wealth and not much control over anything substantial. For a very few in every class of society there was, and is, an opportunity to earn respect and a

decent living by simply understanding the differences between people and communicating to those differences.

For example, if you run a small business you know how important it is to do the following:

- Negotiate agreements with vendors, suppliers or others in logistics
- Interview, discuss and decide about new hires for your company
- Communicate your company strategy to your teams and seek agreement on action steps
- Handle employee conflicts and still stay within HR compliance requirements
- Sell your products or services to any number of prospects or existing customers
- Deal with customer service issues if and when they require your involvement
- Demonstrate leadership where management accountability is a key consideration
- Participate in industry sector common interest groups, associations, etc.
- Integrate into your community in support of broad scope social issues



And there may be many other places where you or your key managers must be able to demonstrate good people skills to address a larger agenda. The importance of having solid people skills transcends industry and profession; so, whether you lead people, aspire to lead people, or work within a team of professionals, you need to apply people skills to achieve your objectives.

What are people skills anyway? According to Business Dictionary online: A set of skills enabling a person to get along with others, to communicate ideas effectively, to resolve conflicts, and to achieve personal or business goals. People skills are essential for business functions such as sales, marketing, and customer service, but are also important for all employees in order to ensure the smooth functioning of an organization.

Portland Business Journal describes people skills as:

- Ability to effectively communicate, understand, and empathize.
- Ability to interact with others respectfully and develop productive working relationship to minimize conflict and maximize rapport.
- Ability to build sincerity and trust; moderate behaviors (less impulsive) and enhance agreeableness.

By now you must be thinking a lot about your own experiences where people skills were needed. Usually it comes down to how we communicate with each other. So why not title this edition of the Monday Motivator “Communications Skills?” The reason is that people skills require a whole different set of skills than communication all by itself.



Business, labor and government authorities agree that wide-ranging people skills are necessary for 21st-century work success. Skills like customer service, building effective relationships, and team work are among the abilities most requested by employers in job postings. Lacking these skills are considered a serious psychological handicap. Constructive leadership based companies engage in helping individuals to grow, and through that growth employees take on more responsibility and discharge it effectively. This in-turn will enhance the basic attitude of the individual; and that will reflect the general level of performance in the workplace.

On the surface of it you could assume that personalities are where people skills start. To address this all our clients participate in our DISC assessment. This tool allows both the client and his or her coach, supervisor, manager or HR to understand the four key personality traits that drive ambition, communication styles and task management. This in turn, helps leadership apply people skills by knowing in advance the key differences between team members.

The D stands for dominance. Behaviors include seeing the big picture. This type of person can be blunt, accepts challenges and gets straight to the point. D's make far better leaders than followers so your people skills would need to take this into account. For example, you would not meet a high D and start to make small talk around the water cooler. You will likely find yourself standing alone quickly.

The I in this personality assessment stands for Influence. This means that a person with this type of trait is a person who places emphasis on influencing or persuading others. This person likes openness and relationships. Here your people skills would be to understand that if you want

something done, and particularly if you need team consensus, you would turn to this type of person to help you get it done. Your skills would include starting the conversation with a focus on how much you appreciate the relationship this person has with the staff in general.

The S in the personality assessment stands for Steadiness. This is a Person who places emphasis on cooperation, sincerity and dependability. Your people skills here would include your awareness of this type of person's desire to not be rushed. Also, this type of person likes a calm manner and a calm approach with supportive actions. By now you can see how much importance there is in simply knowing the types of people in your organization. It helps your people skills in the area of communications especially.



Finally, the C in the personality assessment stands for a Conscientiousness nature. This type of person places emphasis on quality and accuracy, expertise and competency. Your people skills here will require you to turn to this type of person for detail work, where accuracy is important.

In summary, there is a little more to people skills than just communications. One of the biggest opportunities in any organization is for leadership to take the time and effort to acknowledge team members in front of their peers. Countless studies have been conducted on what team members want most with the options being more money, more responsibility or a fancy title with an office to match. The great majority of respondents have said that what they value most is acknowledgement for a job well done. If your people skills can include this important concern you are on your way to leading your team to the winner's circle.

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Our consulting and coaching focus supports management, sales, customer service and operations. Included are sales and management assessments and surveys as well as leadership, teambuilding, sales operations efficiency and online tracking projects. Our other team members bring additional disciplines as well. We will showcase them in future editions of this business journal. We are all committed to driving the results you want.