

Unit 6 ➤

1 Match the soft skills 1–5 with the definitions a–e and the soft skills 6–10 with the definitions f–j.

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|----------------------------|---|
| 1 emotional intelligence | a we look at things in a fresh, new way |
| 2 creative thinking | b we look at something complicated and understand it |
| 3 analytical abilities | c we keep positive and think that good things will happen |
| 4 decision-making | d we understand our feelings and the feelings of others |
| 5 optimism | e we look at the facts and then make the right choices about what to do |
| 6 problem solving | f we are confident of success and not afraid of difficult jobs |
| 7 flexibility | g we look at a difficult situation and know what to do |
| 8 can-do attitude | h we understand how people behave with each other |
| 9 collaboration | i we can easily change when a situation changes |
| 10 interpersonal awareness | j we can work together with other people to produce something |

2 Read the article quickly and choose the best summary.

- Teamwork is becoming less important in business. At job interviews, they will ask you about soft skills.
- Soft skills are becoming more important in business. At job interviews, they will ask you about teamwork and other things that show your personal qualities.
- Soft skills like teamwork or collaboration or interpersonal awareness are all the same and are not very important. At job interviews, try not to answer questions about soft skills.

3 Find and underline each phrase in the article. Then look carefully at the context and decide if the meaning is a or b.

- operational skills (Para. 1)
 - the knowledge and ability to do the basic, technical, day-to-day tasks in a job
 - the ability to operate complicated equipment in a factory
- face to face (Para. 2)
 - talking to another person close together and directly
 - sitting on the other side of the desk in the office
- conflict with another team member (Para. 3)
 - serious disagreement between you and one of your colleagues
 - poor communication between you and one of your colleagues
- the company's values (Para. 4)
 - the company's ability to make money
 - beliefs about what is important in the company and how people should behave
- your background and experience (Para. 5)
 - the education and training you received at school and at work
 - all the things you have done in your life that are important for the job

4 Decide if these statements are *true* (T) or *false* (F).

- Teamwork is about working with people near you.
- Soft skills are connected with personality.
- Many CVs contain examples of why candidates are good team players.
- In job interviews, you need to explain difficult situations to the interviewer.
- Theresa McHenry does not value soft skills.
- McHenry suggests that employees at Microsoft will not stay in the same positions.

5 Complete the sentences with the words in the box. Then check your answers in the article.

about across from in of to under with

- 1 You might be working _____ different time zones.
- 2 Soft skills relate _____ your personality.
- 3 Soft skills include staying positive _____ pressure.
- 4 Soft skills are difficult to identify and test _____ a job interview.
- 5 This presents a problem to the interviewer on the other side _____ the desk.
- 6 _____ her point of view she needs some evidence.
- 7 She is likely to ask a job candidate to talk _____ some concrete examples.
- 8 Go to a job interview prepared _____ stories that show your personal qualities.

6 Decide which sentence (a or b) makes the most sense.

- 1 **a** These days, someone in business needs soft skills.
b These days, everyone in business needs soft skills.
- 2 **a** In a job interview, someone might ask you to tell a story that shows your soft skills.
b In a job interview, everyone will ask you to tell a story that shows your soft skills.
- 3 **a** Is emotional intelligence something you are born with?
b Is emotional intelligence everything you are born with?
- 4 **a** In modern business, teamwork is something.
b In modern business, teamwork is everything.
- 5 **a** Show interest in other cultures. Everyone comes from somewhere.
b Show interest in other cultures. Someone comes from everywhere.

From teamwork to soft skills

The speed of change in modern business is fast. These days you will need other skills besides the operational skills related to the job itself.

- So what are these other skills? Well, the first is definitely teamwork. You will be working with people on a variety of projects, from different departments, and from different cultures. You might be working across different time zones, and meeting your colleagues via the internet rather than face to face. So you will need things like emotional intelligence and communication. These qualities are often referred to as 'soft skills' because they relate to your personality. Other soft skills include creative thinking, analytical abilities, decision-making, staying positive under pressure, problem solving and flexibility.
- One feature of soft skills is that they are very difficult to identify and test in a job interview. This presents a problem to the interviewer on the other side of the desk. For example, many of the CVs and résumés that she receives will include the phrase 'good team player', but from her point of view she needs some evidence. She is very likely to ask a job candidate to talk about some concrete examples. She might ask: 'Can you give me an example of when you solved a problem as part of a team?' Or perhaps: 'Can you give me an example of conflict with another team member? How did you handle it?' You will need to have stories ready to demonstrate your soft skills, not simply say that you have them.

Theresa McHenry, a director of Human Resources at Microsoft, puts soft skills in another context – whether a candidate's personality fits with the company's values. In a *Financial Times* article, she says: 'Everyone we hire is Microsoft first and the job second.' Although their jobs change, an employee might stay at Microsoft for years. She identifies the core Microsoft values as a can-do attitude, optimism, interpersonal awareness and collaboration.

The lesson is clear: go to a job interview prepared with stories that show your personal qualities in action, and don't just talk about your background and experience.