

SKILLS FOR SUCCESS™

STRENGTHENING COLLABORATIVE PROJECT SKILLS



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XINA M. UHL

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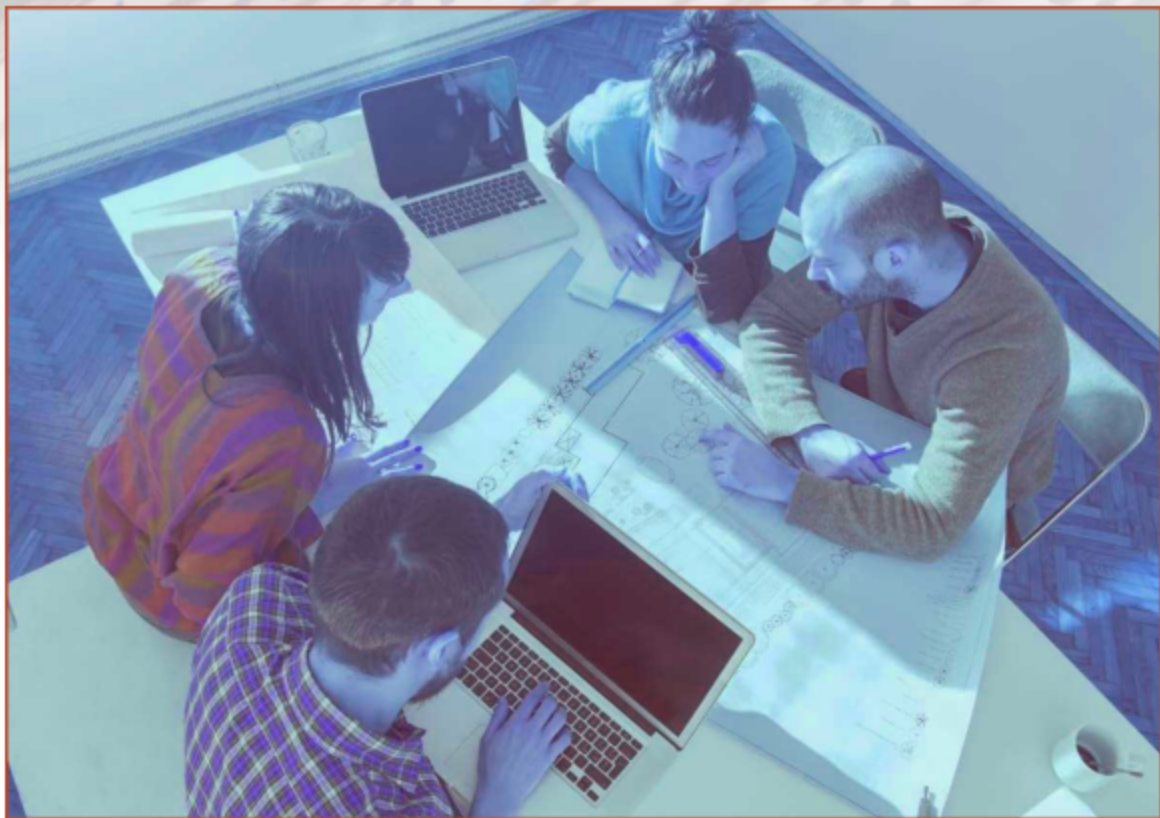
INTRODUCTION

Many situations in life involve groups of people. After all, you cannot play a game of baseball by yourself. Neither can you singlehandedly build a bridge over rushing waters, fight an out-of-control wildfire, provide food and shelter in a disaster zone, or supply troops with clothing on a foreign military base. Yet these are tasks that need to be carried out all over the world. Apart from involving groups of people, what similarity do they all have? First, and foremost, they are accomplished with teamwork.

Teamwork sounds simple, doesn't it? Everyone has his or her own role. By combining efforts, many people can produce a result that would be much more difficult—even impossible—on one's own.

Teamwork is not that simple in practice, though. Successful teamwork is made of different elements and skills. It can be learned. The foundations that underlie it are many. Breaking them down is helpful for understanding it. It includes a willingness to work as one, a unified purpose to accomplish some goal, clear communication between team members, and action that is timely and effective.

Teams exist everywhere, in school as well as in the workplace. Perhaps you are volunteering, putting together a group project, playing sports, or working in an office building.



This group of young people is working together to complete a project, a scene that replays itself again and again in schools, workplaces, and homes the world over.

Each of these efforts requires you to excel as a team. That means communication should be clear, respectful, and done in a way that supports your goals and results in effective action. Team members each have something to contribute. Whether this is the ability to lead, complete a certain task, or perform research depends on the members' skills and talents and the needs of the group.

One thing is certain in a team. Interpersonal skills oil the wheels and provide smooth operation. If you break down the word "interpersonal," you see that "inter" means

between and “personal” means involving people. Therefore, the definition of interpersonal is between people.

Many types of skills help people to get along. These can be everything from the words you choose to how you gesture when you say them. We will cover these skills and give you real-world examples of how to improve them. When you practice these skills you will progress more quickly and more purposefully than learning on your own without a plan of action.

But that’s not all we will cover. Learning and practicing skills are valuable but so is reflection. There are techniques you can use to review past happenings and learn from them. That way when you are presented with similar circumstances, you can do the same thing (if that worked before) or try something better (if it didn’t work).

Collaborating, or working together, will help you throughout your life. Social situations occur here, there, and everywhere. After all, you have family, friends, school-mates, and in time, coworkers. You even meet strangers who drive the bus you take or run the cash register at a supermarket. The fact is people need people. You will learn how to make the most of these interactions, today and in the future.

What Is Teamwork?

In 1962, the United States seemed to be falling behind as a world power. The Soviet Union was working hard, building rockets and testing flights. It wanted to be the first to visit the moon. President John F. Kennedy made a decision. On May 25, 1961, in a speech before Congress, he announced it. “This nation,” he said, “should commit itself to achieving the goal, before the decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth.”

The Space Race was on. Up until this point America’s space program had sent rockets into the air, yes, but many had come crashing down. It had achieved spaceflight with humans, but only for fifteen minutes. How could the country possibly meet the president’s challenge in a decade?

First, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) had to decide how to get to the moon. The answer turned out to be the Lunar Orbit Rendezvous (LOR). This one-time vehicle would send a rocket that contained a landing craft to the moon. But how could it do that?

Scientist Wernher von Braun and his team would need

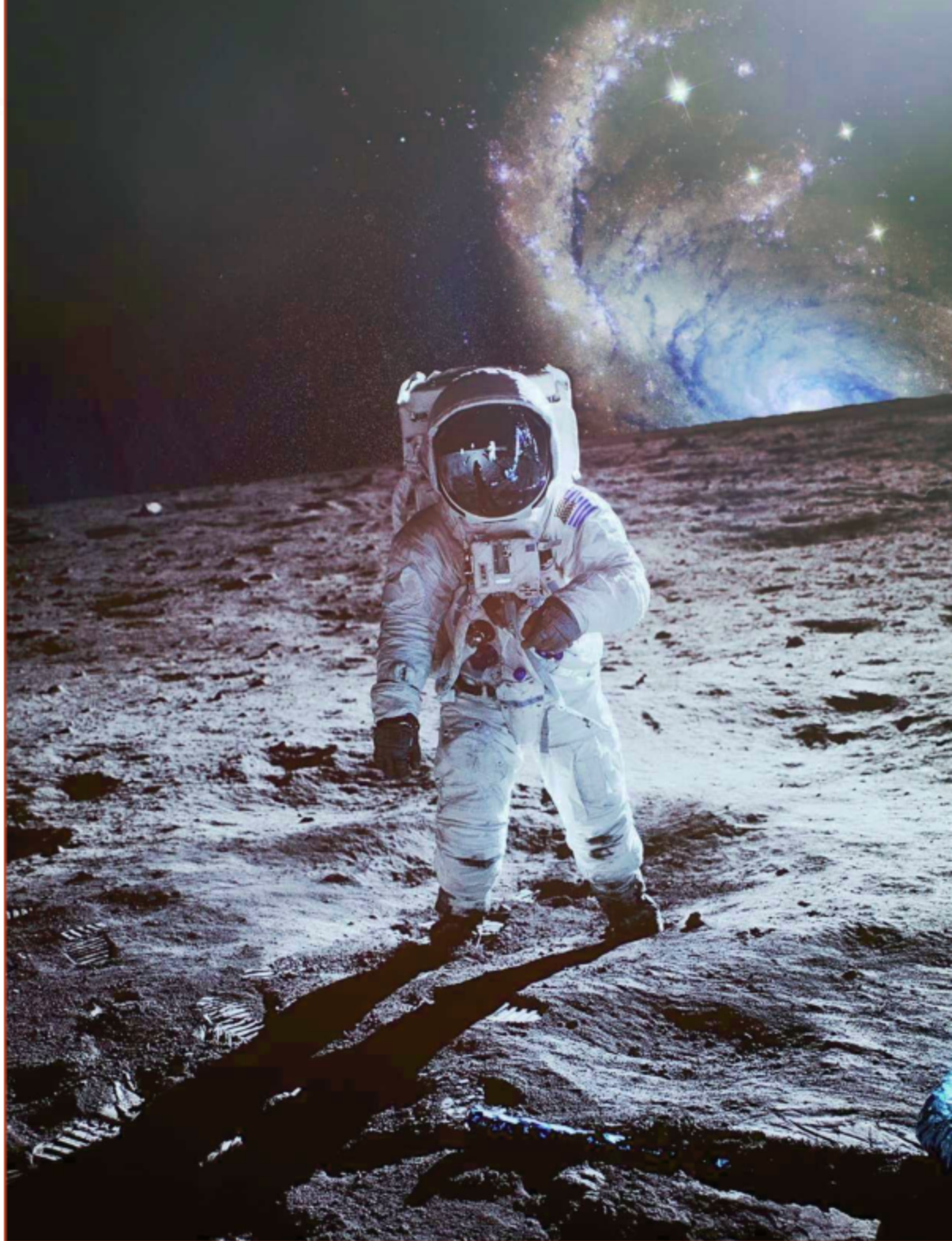
to build a powerful rocket. They set to work in Alabama. For five years they designed, built, and tested the Saturn V rocket. It had a problem, though. Three engines failed during flight. Paul Castenholz and his team of engineers worked to fix the problem. One of these engineers, Marshall McClure, asked the team if the engine would function differently in space than on the ground. The team tested the engine on the ground in a lab that simulated conditions in space. As they did so they discovered that ice was building up on the fuel lines, which caused the engines to fail. They stabilized the lines, and the problem was fixed.

Then to the next step: design a craft to land on the moon. Thomas Kelly and his team of engineers set to work. They faced many obstacles. One seemed too hard to solve, though. The craft was way too heavy. How could they lighten it? According to the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), one team member spoke up: “What if we get rid of the seats?” That question sent the team in the right direction.

On July 20, 1969, the *Apollo 11* mission succeeded. Men landed on the moon. The United States had won the Space Race. In part, its success was due to three teams who solved critical problems. Two questions from team members steered work in the right direction.

BREAKING INTO TEAMS

The moon landing is just one example of the great things that teams can accomplish together. Teams exist all over the



When astronaut Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon, his first words were, "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind."

place: in schools, workplaces, houses of worship, charity organizations, museums, governments, and other institutions. Young people participate in a lot of teams, too. Perhaps you and other students have joined in an economics project to design a new product line. Maybe your church youth group has committed to build a playground in a poverty-stricken area. Or perhaps you and your volleyball team are working to beat your rivals and capture a pennant.

Teams are formed when tasks are too big for any one person to do alone. That much is clear. But what makes up teamwork? Andrew Carnegie was one of the wealthiest businessmen of the nineteenth century. He had a high

These men at work long ago in the Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation in West Virginia acted as a team in order to accomplish difficult—and often dangerous—manufacturing tasks.



opinion of teamwork, saying, “Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.”

The old proverb applies: two heads are better than one. But why is that? What is so special about teamwork?

- It gets things done quicker. Many hands make light work. It turns out that old proverbs can have a lot of wisdom!
- It creates synergy. People are more effective when they work together.
- It teaches members to be flexible. In order to make things happen sometimes you have to take on duties that you have never done before. This can be scary at first. However, it often ends up giving you confidence and a feeling of success.
- It is more efficient. Because members have different skills, they can do what they are best at. For instance, if you are a great writer, you can likely take better notes than someone who is better at building models.
- It builds trust. Trust is necessary in more than just friendships. It helps build you up and does the same for others. By trusting the people you work with you will be more likely to offer ideas. Remember the members

of the NASA teams mentioned earlier? Where would *Apollo 11* have been without them? We'll never know, but it's likely that the project would have taken longer.

- It teaches you to resolve conflicts. Everyone is not going to get along all the time. People come from different backgrounds. They have different opinions. While this can often be good, other times it can lead to disagreement. Learning how to compromise and still get the job done is one of the most valuable skills there is.
- It teaches risk taking in a healthy way. Risks are part of life. Should you introduce yourself to that new person in your class? Should you enter that art competition? Each of these activities is a risk you might take for an uncertain reward. Risks can be harmful, of course. Jay-walking on a busy street is a dangerous risk. But standing up in front of a class to give a group presentation is a good risk to take. It teaches you worthwhile skills that will help you in the future. With every healthy risk you take you build trust in someone important: yourself.

LONE WOLVES AND TEAMWORK

Maybe you aren't convinced, though. Some people don't like to work in groups. They dread talking to people they don't know. They would rather just work alone. Schools are focusing more and more on building up "soft skills" like



Teams form for any number of reasons. These young women have come together to host a bake sale to earn money for their volunteer organization.

communication and collaboration. This is in response to the needs of the job market. A recent analysis by Bloomberg.com shows that soft skills occupy a “sweet spot” in job applicants. This means that they are less common skills but employers want them more often. Communication is right up there. Teamwork is highly desired as well. If that isn’t enough, here are other downsides to solitary work:

- A lack of feedback. It’s easier to realize you are going down the wrong path when you can get input from teammates. You will save time and energy with feedback.
- A lack of motivation. Teamwork introduces peer pressure

BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER

Teams don't only appear in the human world. They also appear in the animal world. Have you ever looked up in the sky to see geese flying in a V formation? They do that for a few important reasons. One, it saves energy. Except for the leader, each bird flies a little bit above the bird in front. This reduces the wind resistance, making flight easier. Each bird takes turns in the front position. When they get tired, they fall back.



The animal kingdom provides many examples of teamwork, such as geese flying in a V formation. Wolves that hunt in packs is another example of teamwork in nature.

By flying in this manner the whole group is able to fly for a long time before stopping to rest. Pelicans flying alone work much harder than those that fly in formation. A second benefit of flying in a V is that everyone is accounted for. It's easy to make sure that all group members are together. Third, it helps the birds communicate with one another. Once you look around for them, examples of teamwork appear in the most unlikely places.

to a project. No one wants to let others down so you are motivated to get to work. Often it's easier to brush off duties when it's only ourselves that we let down.

- Lower lows and higher highs. Working on anything can have discouraging times. Perhaps an experiment fails. A presentation bombs. Or maybe you just don't understand parts of the task. When you are working with a group you have the support of others. This can make the bad times better. On the flip side, when something goes well or the project is finished, a group can celebrate together. It's hard to give yourself a pat on the back, after all.

Take a healthy risk. Develop those soft skills even though it might be hard to do at first.

There are plenty of suggestions for just how to do that in the sections ahead.

How to Build Your Team

Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith talk about their studies on teamwork in their book *The Wisdom of Teams*. In it, they identify three basic kinds of teams. There are teams that recommend things, like a team of teachers that recommends the subjects and material that should be covered in school. There are teams that make things or do things, like a baseball team that works together to hit the ball and make more runs than their rival team. A third kind of team runs things. These groups make sure that a place or organization functions correctly. An example is a board of directors. This is a team that makes sure a company runs correctly.

To put a team together, one must gather a group of people. Each member should be respectful of one another, act in an effective manner, and do their share of work. Being in a team is more than just getting along with people. It also means putting the needs and goals of the group above your own. Let's look at what successful teams have in common.

- Team members are respectful of each other. This means



Each member of a baseball team has a certain role to play to win the game, whether it is pitching the ball, catching it, or scooping up a ground hit.

that everyone is valued, listened to, and supported. While all team members need not be friends, they do need to treat each other politely.

- Team members maintain a good attitude. They put aside complaining, gossiping, and anger. They do their best to be pleasant and helpful. They also participate fully. They don't just sit back and let others do all the work.
- Team members understand what is expected of them. It may be a challenge to figure out how to achieve it, though. President Kennedy's goal to create a manned

A TEAM GOES DOWN THE DRAIN

Researchers Pina Tarricone and Joe Luca studied successful and unsuccessful teams in depth. They examined two teams of students at Edith Cowan University in Australia. The teams' task was to design and develop a website for a client. One team succeeded. One failed. The failed team had these problems:

One team member wanted to create a high-quality product. Two members just wanted to pass. They did not want to put more than minimal effort in.

Two team members competed with each other. They did not want to help others solve their problems. Instead, they focused only on their own tasks.

Members made hurtful comments during meetings. Some members seemed surprised that this lack of care for people's feelings would affect the team.

Team members were criticized when they tried to discuss problems with the project. The result was that communication did not proceed freely. Because of this, the problems were not solved.

The team was thrown together without much thought. The team was formed because four members were needed. People's skill sets were not considered. No one understood what was expected of them.

The project manager was the youngest person on the team. Because of this, some members did not respect him. Others complained that meetings wasted

time. Some team members did not show up to meetings on time. One felt that he was not included when decisions were made. He also did not receive communication about team happenings.

A tutor tried to resolve these issues. Over the course of several meetings the tutor had little success. Two team members argued at the final meeting. After that, the team split. The assignment was not completed.

space flight to the moon required a huge effort. But by putting plenty of resources and lots of smart, dedicated people to work, it succeeded.

- Team members are accountable to one another. If a team member does not complete his or her assigned task, the whole group suffers.
- Team members work to achieve goals. Obstacles can and do pop up during projects. Learning how to meet challenges head on has wonderful benefits. They include better communication skills and boosted confidence.

Successful teams are all around you. By just going to the movie theater, you can see how employees act as a team. Look at the role each one plays. One person sells tickets. One takes the tickets and tells you which theater your movie is playing in. One or more people sell popcorn and snacks, and so on.

Families use teamwork, too. Dinner is a good example. Someone needs to cook, to set the table, to serve the food, and to clean up afterward. Perhaps one person does more than one job. Often, though, they are split up among several people. Voilà! It's a team.

WHAT DO TEAMS NEED?

Now that we know what qualities successful teams have, let's look at other elements that make them run smoothly and succeed. First, teams need a reason to come together. A team cannot exist without a common purpose. This usually

Even everyday tasks, such as a family coming together to prepare a home-cooked meal, demonstrate the importance of teamwork.



comes from a leader such as a teacher, supervisor, or coach.

Second, teams need one or more goals that are clear. Such goals must be measurable.

Third, teams need members who have different skills. Each of these elements will fail without team members who put forth the proper effort to reach the team's goal. In summation, teams need a common purpose, goals that are specific and measurable, and members with diverse skills.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Now that you know what successful teams look like and what they need in order to function, what can you do to improve your teamwork skills? You can seek out and join teams, of course! You can find them at school, local charities or nonprofit organizations (like museums or animal shelters), or your faith community, among other places. If you're having trouble ask for help. Ask for advice from your teacher, school counselor, or parents. You can also take actions yourself to improve your fitness as a team member. How do you do that?

First, assess your skills and talents. Figure out what you are good at and enjoy doing. Usually, they are the same thing. Skills fall into three categories: things, information, and people. Ask yourselves questions about these three groups. For example, for things: Do I like to use my hands? Perhaps you like to draw cartoons, create model airplanes, or tend to animals. An example of an information skill is



The student raising her hand here may be challenging herself to speak up when she would rather stay quiet. The more she challenges herself, the easier it will be.

searching for facts at the library. Finally, think about how you deal with people. Are you a good listener? Do you enjoy leading a group? Check out the resources at the end of the book for more details on assessing yourself.

Second, identify a weakness. Let's say you know that it's hard for you to speak up in class. That might keep you

BE A JOINER

Schools and local organizations usually provide lots of chances for students to do extra activities. Sure, they take some extra time and effort, but they can have great

rewards, too. Here are some ideas for clubs that can help you develop your teamwork skills:

Speech and Debate Team: How do you become a strong public speaker? Practice. You'll learn techniques on how to persuade people to your point of view, explain a process, relay an experience, and more. Teams join together to compete at local and regional events, too.

Glee Club: Do you like to sing and dance? Join with others to perform before an audience.

Red Cross: This worldwide group works to help people who are suffering. This might be due to a local heat wave, a flood or wildfire, or many other causes.

Yearbook club: Do you like to take photographs? Then perhaps your school could use help snapping pictures for the yearbook.

Animal welfare: Animal shelters usually need groups of people to clean cages, soothe frightened pets, and walk dogs.

The possibilities are endless. Perhaps, though, you can't find an interesting club nearby. You can always start one yourself. Chances are that others are looking for the activity, too.

from speaking up in a team. Or perhaps you have trouble paying attention to details or instructions? This might lead to mistakes in projects. Trusted adults can help out if you need a suggestion or two.

Third, plan for improvement. This final step involves taking action. Make a plan to address your weakness. Challenge yourself to raise your hand in class if you struggle with speaking in public. If you have trouble listening to details, practice repeating class directions in your head. Read a book about your missing skill.

When you do take part in a team, recognize that challenges and obstacles will occur. Like the example of the failed team mentioned earlier, problems have a way of cropping up. But if you learn to identify them you can figure out how to keep them from causing more trouble than they need to.

Conflict isn't always bad. It can help you grow and open up new paths of thought and action. American journalist Walter Lippmann said, "Where all think alike, no one thinks very much."

Soft Skills and Teamwork

Hard skills are any professional skills needed to perform a task or job, such as knowledge of complicated spreadsheets, the ability to operate specialized medical equipment, or bricklaying expertise on a construction site. Hard skills are learned in order to do a specific action. They can be tested with exams.

Soft skills are less easily defined and tested skills. They include your ability get along with others and your attitude toward life and work. The most important soft skill is communication, and that is what we will cover here. In the next chapter we'll cover the other soft skills.

For a lot of people, soft skills can be the most challenging skills to develop. They can definitely be learned, though it can be harder to do so. They cannot be assessed easily with objective measures such as exams. Just because they may be challenging doesn't mean you can't rise up and conquer them, though.



Getting along with other team members isn't just a nice act. It also puts people at ease so that they can perform at the top of their game.

WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

Communication is the number one soft skill for a good reason. Everyone has to give and get information from others. Everyone needs to let others know what they are thinking and feeling. Relationships are impossible without communication. The good news is that you've been communicating since your childhood. What did you do when you were hungry, thirsty, or tired? You cried. Someone then attended to your needs. Later, as you developed, your skills became more sophisticated. You already know how to communicate with your family and friends. Why should you work on making

THE GENERATION GAP

One communication gap you may have noticed is between older and younger people. Chances are you've encountered it in your day-to-day life, between yourself and your parents or grandparents. People's ideas, technology, and values tend to differ based on when they were born. This is called the generation gap. Technology gaps between the young and the old are particularly noticeable. Consider these differences.

Looking up phone numbers: Younger people are used to finding phone numbers via the internet, most likely on their smartphones. Older people were raised using the phone book.

The morning newspaper: Older people often relaxed in the morning by reading the newspaper, which could be delivered to their homes. While they still exist, they are dying out. Today's young people tend to check the news on the internet.

Writing checks: Younger people tend to pay for goods and services with debit or credit cards, while older people are more likely to feel comfortable paying via check.

The phone: Older people grew up having a landline, or house phone. It had the disadvantage of being

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wired to one spot, unlike cell phones or wireless phones, which can be answered on the go. Landlines lack most features other than the ability to make voice calls. Younger people are used to playing games, sending text messages, researching information, and playing music on their phones.

All these differences between older and younger people can make it harder for them to communicate. What is taken for granted by younger people is not the same as for older people. Patience is required for both age groups to bridge this generation gap.

those skills better, then? Because it is essential to build trust and respect to get your needs met, solve problems, work in a team, summon help, avoid confusion, and resolve conflict.

The style that people use to communicate can change depending on the person involved. For example, in Western countries such as the United States and Canada, eye contact is valued. But in some cultures in Asia it is considered rude or disrespectful.

COMMUNICATING WITH WORDS

Communication skills fall into two major categories: verbal and nonverbal. Verbal skills involve speaking. They cover

what you say, *how* you say it, *why* you say it, *when* you say it, and when you *don't* say it. The sounds you make, the language you use, and your tone of voice are all included in this. There are three principles that make verbal communication proceed more easily. First, speak clearly. Enunciate your words. Don't mumble. On the other hand, don't speak too loudly, either. Second, remain calm and focused. Make sure you are clear about what you are trying to say. And third, be polite.

Once you have the basics down, you can move on to the actual verbal exchange. These are skills that you can use

In order to give a successful presentation to a group of people, it's necessary to project confidence and speak in a clear, calm, polite manner.



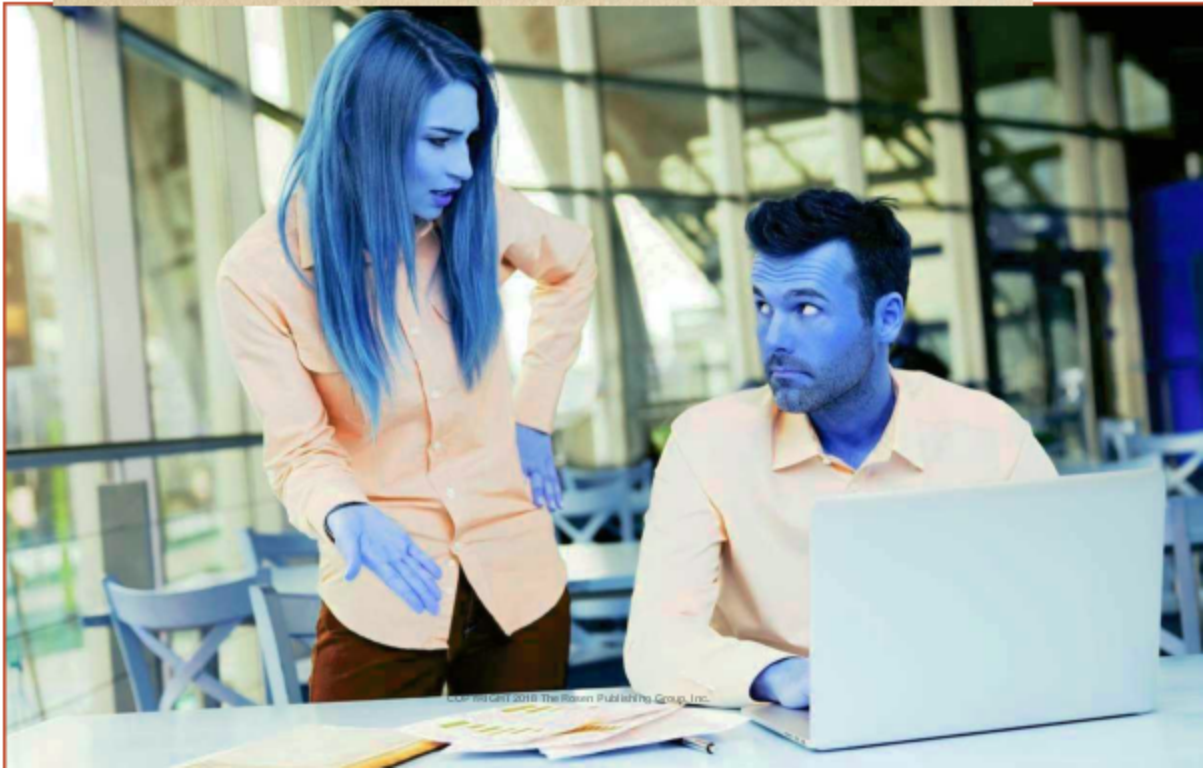
SILENT MESSAGES

In 1981, Dr. Albert Mehrabian published a famous book about nonverbal communication called *Silent Messages*. Another term for “nonverbal communication” is “body language.” The book talks about how much communication occurs through posture, movements, and facial expressions, as well as the tones, volume, and speed of speech. Dr. Mehrabian looked at numerous studies and experiments. He found that actual words make up only 7 percent of communication. Thirty-eight percent of communication involves the way words are spoken—the speed, volume, tones, and inflections. A whopping 55 percent of communication involves facial expressions.

All this means that communicating requires more than just listening to spoken words. You also need to observe a person’s body language while they deliver the words. If a person is slumping and frowning, they are communicating unhappiness. If the person is laughing, they are communicating something else. The next time you have an interaction with someone, listen to what they say and observe how they look when they are saying it. Do the two match up?

equally in formal conversations, like a job interview, or an informal conversation, like a chat with your mother about your day. Successful verbal communication proceeds with the following. First, the opening: this involves acknowledging the person or group you are speaking with. In a formal setting you would introduce yourself or shake hands. In an informal setting you would greet the person with something as simple as “Hello,” “Hey,” or “What’s up?” Next, there is reinforcing. This shows the other person that you are paying attention to him or her. A lot of reinforcement is nonverbal and will be covered in the next section. Verbal

The man and woman in this photo are communicating a lot of information without saying a word, just by their facial expressions and postures.



reinforcement can involve saying, “Yes, I understand,” or “Okay,” when the person is speaking.

Third, there’s listening. Wait a minute. Aren’t we talking about speaking? Yes, of course. A lot of listening is nonverbal. But it also involves processing what people are saying and responding in an appropriate manner. This means staying on subject and using language that is acceptable for the situation.

Next, ask questions. In order to have a conversation you will need to understand what the other person is saying. That’s not always easy. If you don’t understand a point, ask for more information. “Why do you say that?” “What do you mean?” “Are you talking about...?” All these are ways to clarify what the conversation is about.

Keep in mind that there are two kinds of questions: open and closed. Closed questions require short, concrete answers, often one or two words. Examples are: “Did you have breakfast this morning?” “Did you go to the library this morning?” In other words, these questions do not start conversations. Open questions do start conversations. Examples are: “What do you think about yesterday’s game?” “How do you feel about John?” These types of questions lend themselves to a greater exchange between people.

Fifth, give feedback. This involves summarizing the message. This feedback allows you to recount the conversation in your own words. This way you can check that you understood correctly. It also shows that you are

interested in what took place and that you are considering another's viewpoint.

Finally, close your communication. Like opening a conversation, closing one can be formal or informal. During a job interview, for example, the interviewers will often thank you for coming in and offer to walk you out of the room. You may shake hands again. An informal interaction may end with something as simple as "Bye" or "See you later."

COMMUNICATING WITHOUT WORDS

Speech is only one way to send messages to others. Non-verbal communication sends messages as well. It consists of behaviors that tell people what you mean. They include facial expressions, tone of voice, touching or not touching, how you dress, your posture, and how close you choose to stand or sit next to someone you are communicating with.

Consider this example. Mike enters biology class. He's wearing a baseball cap. He slumps into a chair at the back of the class and pulls the brim of his hat down over his eyes. As the teacher starts to give the day's lecture, he taps his fingers on the desk and looks out the window.

What nonverbal message is Mike giving out? The seat he chooses, his posture, and covering his eyes with the brim of his hat say that he is not interested or excited

about the class. The way he taps his fingers on the desk and looks out the window communicates that he is not listening to the lecture.

Nonverbal communication plays five roles. The first role is agreement. It tells the person speaking that you understand and agree with the message he or she is giving. The second role is contradiction. This shows that a person does not agree with the verbal message. A frown or shaking one's head shows disagreement with the message. Third, nonverbal communication substitutes information without using words. Someone who narrows his or her eyes and stares unblinkingly at another communicates hostility.

The students in this photo give off body language that indicates they are interested in the speaker and paying close attention to what she has to say.



Fourth, nonverbal communication complements words. Imagine that a boss approaches you with a smile on her face. She says, “Good job on the project!” and pats you on the back. The smile and the pat on the back complement her words, telling you that she is pleased with your work. Lastly, nonverbal communication accents words. If a person pounds his fists on the table during an argument he is emphasizing, or accenting, his unhappiness.

The first step in improving nonverbal communication is to become aware of the messages you and others send out. Observe the motions others make with their arms. How close do they stand to you? What do their facial expressions say? This will take practice. Becoming aware of these messages will help you to learn the cues others give off. Maintaining eye contact is one way to read others’ body language and effectively communicate yourself. Show others that you are interested in what they have to say by looking them in the eye. Observe whether others look you in the eye when they speak with you. Not looking someone in the eye can show that they are uncomfortable with you, or even dishonest.

Your posture is also a means of communicating. Sit up straight and keep from slumping in order to show that you are paying attention. By holding your shoulders back, you project confidence. Watch the posture of others, as well. Someone who folds his arms across his chest may be showing that he is closed to your message. Someone who stands relaxed with her arms at her side may be more open



The young man leading this discussion sits up straight, a posture that helps him command others' attention and makes him appear more confident.

to your message. The sound of your voice and not just what you say is another form of communication. Do you speak gently to small children? This is usually to show that you are not a threat to them. Do you speak loudly when you want to show that you mean business? Change your tone and volume depending on the message you want to give.

Never lose a chance to look for improvement. Observing your own reactions and knowing how you want to appear to others will give you ideas about how to better communicate. Reading books and watching videos about nonverbal communication will help you understand it more completely and learn how you can present the image you want to.

The Other Soft Skills

While communication is the most important soft skill, there are others that will help you collaborate and succeed as well. These include making decisions, motivating yourself, solving problems, managing your time, and resolving conflict. Let's look at each of these and discuss how to build these skills up yourself.

MAKING DECISIONS

We all make decisions day in and day out. Most of them are small. Which shirt should you wear today? What will you have for breakfast? Will you do your homework or let it slide? But making decisions in class projects is important. Perhaps your group needs to choose a subject for a report, for example. It's also important in the working world. You will be hired to get tasks done, often by working together. All employees have to make many decisions themselves.

Not making decisions can have a real impact on your collaborative projects. For example, imagine that your history

teacher has placed you and three fellow students into a small group. You need to complete a tough assignment on one American president. If you can't decide which president, though, you won't even be able to get started.

Good decisions have certain components. They require getting important facts. They involve asking for advice and keeping in mind the big picture of what you are trying to accomplish. They also require you to keep in mind what's at risk if you make a bad decision.

MOTIVATING YOURSELF

Motivation is a force that drives you to take some kind of action. When you are hungry, you are motivated to eat. When you find yourself disgusted with a dirty bathroom, you clean it. When you get a job, you are motivated to show up because you want the reward from it: the paycheck. These are simple examples, but the truth is that motivation can be complex, just like human beings can be complex. Imagine that Juan wants to join a team that will run a 10K race. However, he has never run a race before, much less in a group. The following principles will help to motivate him and his team.

First, set realistic, but challenging goals. Goals should be high enough that they push you to accomplish something, but not so high that they discourage you from trying altogether. Juan's goal of running a 10K is something that he can achieve. If he and his team members give themselves enough time and start slow, they can build up their stamina by practicing.



These young people are doing more than just running—they are strengthening their motivation and discipline by committing to a training regimen.

Be sure to take the right risks. New efforts usually involve some sort of risk. If you decide that the rewards outweigh the risks, that is likely the right risk for you. Ask for feedback to improve. A coach could give Juan and his team advice that could benefit them greatly. The same is true for other efforts to improve, master a skill, or complete a project. Learn how to deal with setbacks. Setbacks are inevitable. Perhaps Juan twists his ankle or the team captain comes down with a nasty cold. By anticipating that setbacks will occur, you can deal with them and get back on track without abandoning your efforts entirely.

ANOTHER KIND OF INTELLIGENCE

You have likely heard of IQ, which stands for “intelligence quotient.” It involves measuring a certain aspect of intelligence with tests. But what about emotional intelligence, or EI? Two scholars came up with the term in the 1980s. John Mayer and Peter Salovey wondered how emotions communicate information. They saw that some people were able to use this information more easily than others.

EI is the capacity to reason through emotions and the information that comes from them. It helps you identify and manage your own emotions. It can also help you to affect others’ emotions. This allows you to harness these emotions to think more clearly and solve problems.

The author of *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, Travis Bradberry, describes an interesting finding. People with average IQs do better than those with the highest IQs 70 percent of the time. This surprising fact showed that there is something other than intelligence that contributes to success. That something is EI. It is made of four components.

Self-awareness: This involves accurately identifying your emotions as they ebb and flow.

Managing yourself: This involves using your emotions instead of letting them use you.

Empathy: This involves picking up on emotions in other people.

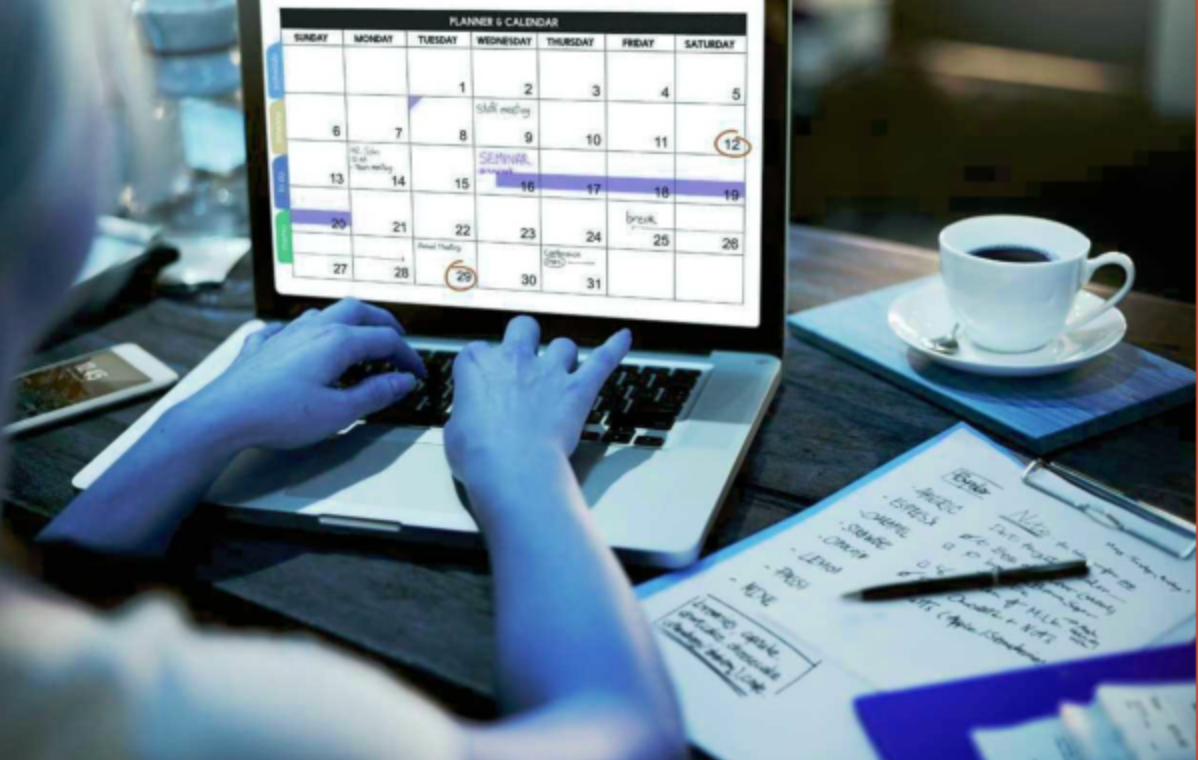
Social skills: This involves managing interactions with people by being aware of emotions. They allow you to build relationships with others and get work done.

Using EI can help you understand your own actions better. For example, maybe you are anxious to meet your friends in an hour. But your dad says you have to study for your biology test first. You might be tempted to rush through your studies, if you don't recognize your impatience. By managing it you can then apply the energy you spent on impatience to studying. When you meet your friends later you can do so knowing that you are better prepared for the test.

SOLVING PROBLEMS

Learning how to be effective at solving problems is a great asset to you and whomever you work with. Having a plan on how to deal with problems puts you ahead of the game. First, identify what the problem is. Others could have a different idea about the issue. Being clear keeps you from doing unnecessary work.

Second, understand the barriers that keep the problem from resolution. A barrier is anything that keeps you from



It's all too easy to let the day slip by without making progress on your goals. Scheduling tasks using a calendar can help keep you on track.

the immediate solution.

Next, look for solutions to the problem. There could be more than one, each with its own pros and cons. Fourth, implement a course of action. Finally, evaluate. Did your solution work? If not, try another way.

MANAGING TIME

Countless classes, books, and articles have been devoted to time management. That's because it is a crucial skill. It's easy to become overwhelmed with the number of tasks each day brings. However, having a plan is the answer, whether it is for your own tasks or those you collaborate

on with others. First, identify and complete the most important tasks. This simple step forces you to cut through the details to find the main idea of your tasks. Second, focus entirely on the task at hand. Interruptions break concentration and cause tasks to take much longer than they would otherwise. Third, be organized. Create schedules, calendars, and lists that help you to set deadlines and achieve goals. Finally, learn to say no. It can be easy to say yes to requests for help or extra work. Such requests can be a healthy challenge or a destructive, exhausting slog. Learn how to identify which is which.

RESOLVE CONFLICTS

Disagreements happen whenever people work or live together. Emotions can run high, so it is helpful to know specific steps to take to resolve such conflicts. First, identify what the source of the conflict is. Get to the heart of the matter by obtaining as much information as you can. Stay calm as you do so. Second, establish a common goal for both parties. Discuss what the end goal should be. It may take time as everyone cools off.

Next, discuss how to accomplish the end goal. Patience is crucial as both sides need to listen to one another and brainstorm solutions. Work together to resolve the conflict. Both parties must agree on a solution that they can live with. This can involve compromise on both sides. Finally, repeat the solution and outline the actions that each side



Whenever two or more people work together, there is the possibility of conflict occurring. Sometimes the intervention of a third party can clear up disagreements.

needs to take to solve it.

TAKE ACTION

Each skill here requires practice in order for it to be learned. The library is a good place to find resources on each subject. So are websites from respected organizations. Reading, watching videos, and thinking about past challenges you have experienced are good strategies. You can join an extra-curricular club. This requires you to meet others and work or play with them. Not only will you likely learn new things but you'll also have fun doing so. After all, you are more

JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT USA

In 1919, two respected businessmen and a senator formed Junior Achievement in order to assist young people with knowledge and skills to insure their economic success. At first, it was only offered to high school students. In 1975, it entered the middle grades as well. Today this organization reaches more than four million students per year with programs that help them plan for their future and make smart academic choices.

The three main areas of programs are work readiness, starting a business, and understanding finances. Its website states its purpose: “to inspire and prepare young people to succeed in a global economy.” With locations in classrooms and after-school programs, volunteers teach in cities and rural areas in all fifty states.

Junior Achievement empowers young people regardless of race, religion, age, gender, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation. Check out what it has to offer in your community. You just might find a whole new world of possibilities there.

likely to attend meetings and events when you enjoy them.

You can also look for a mentor. Mentors are everywhere, if you only look. A mentor can be a teacher, counselor,

community leader, or professional. Ask for help and advice. Most people are happy to share their experiences. If you need help locating an appropriate mentor, ask a trusted adult for suggestions or introductions. Finally, consider volunteering. This can be fun and rewarding, in addition to providing you with people skills and project skills. Opportunities can be found in your local government, faith organizations, school, or private charities.

Moving Forward with Goals

We've covered teamwork, communication, and other soft skills so far. What's left to strengthen your collaborative skills? Setting goals, evaluating your progress, and taking action are all good uses of your time that will serve you well both now and in the future.

GOALS HERE AND GOALS THERE

Goals are anything you want to achieve or accomplish. Perhaps your hockey team desperately wants to win your division. To make this goal come true involves more than just a desire to win. It also requires a plan. By setting a goal your team can work backward to accomplish it. For example, to win your division you must strengthen your team's strategies, sharpen individual players' skills, and practice frequently. Each of these elements is an objective, or milestone, to reach your end goal. Goals also require timelines, otherwise they are just wishes. After breaking goals down



Charting out clear and concrete markers of achievement, such as the progress of group projects, helps keep you on track toward your goals.

into objectives, each objective should have a reasonable deadline to be accomplished in.

Goals can be short term or long term. Short-term goals are smaller in scope than long-term ones. For instance, your team's goal of winning a hockey pennant is short term. Long-term goals usually involve careful thought. A city council that wants to expand the network of hiking trails in its territory needs a long-term plan. It will take years to draw up plans, purchase land, construct paths, and so forth. Each step requires objectives that will need to be reached to make the long-term goal a reality.

COMMITTING TO EXCELLENCE

If you are reading this, you are probably already interested in improving yourself. You are searching out information, getting ideas, and thinking about how to apply both. This quality will serve you well now and in the future. There is always something to work on within ourselves. This does

YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT

The functions of local, state, national, and international governments cannot succeed without the collaboration of many people. A good way to immerse yourself in a collaborative atmosphere is to join youth groups designed to demonstrate how government works. One such group is Youth and Government, sponsored by the YMCA.

These model government programs take place nationwide. They give young people the opportunity to meet in local groups to debate and discuss issues in their community. Youths can propose legislation and serve as delegates during state conferences. By working together and involving themselves in local concerns, teens can learn valuable collaborative skills. Talk to your school counseling office or look up model government groups in your area to learn more.



Collaboration comes in many forms, and it happens later in life in addition to in school. Opening a new business is just one example of this.

not mean that we aren't worthy as we are, just that life gives us endless opportunities to grow and learn. Take advantage of those opportunities to reach your full potential as a human being, employee, and citizen.

There is one more trait to cover that is a tall order. You can work on it for your entire life, should you see fit. It is called the Golden Rule, and it is simple: treat others as you would like to be treated yourself. By following this rule you will build many healthy, long-lasting relationships that will assist you in accomplishing many projects and goals, at work, at school, and in your personal life. The Golden Rule in action means that you should pay attention to others,

listen to what they have to say, and treat them with consideration and kindness. This does not mean that you don't stand up for yourself when necessary, but rather that you respect others as well as yourself.

The Golden Rule sounds simple, and it is. Putting it into action can be difficult, though. Luckily, you have a lifetime to practice.

GLOSSARY

- ACCENT** To make something more noticeable.
- ACCOUNTABLE** To be held responsible.
- CAPACITY** The power or ability to do something.
- CLARIFY** To make something better understood.
- COMPLEMENT** To add to something in a way that improves upon it.
- COMPONENT** A part of something.
- CONTRADICT** To disagree or deny the truth of a statement.
- CRUCIAL** Something that is essential or very important.
- EMPATHY** To be aware of and share another's feelings.
- ENUNCIATE** To pronounce words clearly and audibly.
- NONVERBAL** Not using or involving words or speech.
- OBJECTIVE** A milestone toward a goal.
- OBSTACLE** Something that impedes or prevents progress toward a goal.
- PRINCIPLE** Basic truth.
- PROFICIENCY** A skill obtained through practice.
- PROVERB** A brief, wise saying.

REINFORCEMENT Strengthening of or support for an argument or opinion.

SKILL SET The abilities or skills a person has acquired.

SOFT SKILLS Qualities that a person has that enable him or her to interact well with others.

SOPHISTICATED More relevant or complex.

SYNERGY Interaction that produces an effect greater than could be produced without interaction.

VERBAL Involving the use of words.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

American Camp Association

5000 State Road 67 North

Martinsville, IN 46151-7902

(800) 428-2267

Website: <http://www.acacamps.org/campers-families>

The American Camp Association supports quality summer camp programs for young people in order to enrich their lives. Their website includes more than 3,500 camps across the United States and internationally.

Kids Now

1500 Avenue Road, #1314

Toronto, ON M5M 0A1

Canada

(416) 488-4848

Website: <http://www.kidsnowcanada.org>

Kids Now provides free after-school programs for young people aged eleven to fourteen years that concentrate on developing leadership, communication, and other life skills to help them successfully move into high school.

National Defence Headquarters

Major-General Pearkes Building

101 Colonel By Drive

Ottawa, ON K1A 0K2

Canada

(800) 627-0828

Website: <http://www.cadets.ca/en/index.page>

Canadian youth aged twelve to eighteen years can join the Sea, Army, or Air Cadet Program in order to learn teamwork and communication skills, improve self-confidence, and nurture a sense of responsibility. Participants develop good citizenship, leadership, and fitness skills while participating in environmental and community activities.

Pew Research Center

1615 L Street NW, Suite 800

Washington, DC 20036

(202) 419-4300

Website: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/02/19/skills-for-success>

This webpage includes bar graphs and analysis of a 2014 survey conducted through Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel, which includes a representative sample of US adults. The analysis provides the best skills for young people to develop to thrive in today's world.

VolunteerMatch

550 Montgomery Street, 8th Floor

San Francisco, CA 94111

(415) 241-6868

Website: <http://www.volunteermatch.org>

VolunteerMatch provides a directory of more than 100,000 participating volunteer organizations in the United States, Canada, and internationally. Young people can locate volunteer opportunities in their communities that fit their interests and need their help.

WEBSITES

Because of the changing nature of internet links, Rosen Publishing has developed an online list of websites related to the subject of this book. This site is updated regularly. Please use this link to access this list:

<http://www.rosenlinks.com/SFS/collab>

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PHOTO CREDITS

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Strengthening Collaborative Project Skills

Strengthening Collaborative Project Skills *Xina M. Uhl. Skills for Success New York, NY: Rosen Young Adult, 2018. 64 pp.*

This book provides guidance on building and participating in teams, bolstering interpersonal skills, and developing assertiveness, teaching students how to develop research projects that are like those they might face in their careers.

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