Building Your Soft Skills

Dianne Hunnam-Jones
District President
The Value of Soft Skills

- Involvement on project teams
- Interaction with other departments
- Presenting to clients, colleagues
- Describing financial information to non-financial audiences
Skills in Demand

- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Written and verbal communication
- Flexibility
- Initiative
Collaboration

- Team or group approach is common

- Successful collaboration requires:
  - Diplomacy
  - Tact
  - Negotiation
  - Willingness to let others lead
  - Ability to listen
  - Openness to new ideas and approaches
Leadership

• Inspire, motivate team members to successful completion of project

• Use big-picture perspective to anticipate the needs of the company

• Understand business objectives and priorities

• Ability to solve problems is key
Written and Verbal Communication

• Explain financial data and regulatory requirements, make suggestions and offer solutions to senior management and others within company

• 34% of CFOs surveyed ranked communication skills as the characteristic that impresses them most during an interview with a prospective employee
Flexibility

• Ability to adapt to change cited by 35% of CFOs as necessary for success

• View change as an opportunity, not an obstacle

• Don’t just respond to change, help bring it about when it will benefit your company
Initiative

- Immediately assume ownership of a project
- Be proactive in finding resources and solutions
- Propose innovative approaches
- Alert executives to issues or developments that could impact the company
Soft Skills in the Job Search: The Cover Letter

- Stay focused
- Write clearly and concisely
- Demonstrate knowledge of the company
- Avoid typos
Soft Skills in the Job Search: The Resume

- Keep it simple

- Emphasize your accomplishments
  - Leadership positions (i.e., in student groups)
  - Writing or public speaking recognition

- Avoid typos
  - 34% of CFOs surveyed said typos or grammatical errors were the single most common mistake job seekers make on their resumes

Robert Half Finance & Accounting
Avoid Resumania®

• “Through my career experiences I have become inept at communication skills.”

• “I was instrumental in helping the company go through bankruptcy.”

• “Skills: Office management, keyboard skills, Internet, database, communication, sense of humor, writer, designer, published humorist/cartoonist. Stuff.”

• “Am allergic to copy toner and scoundrels.”

Robert Half Finance & Accounting
Avoid Resumania®

• “Job duties: I assassinate drivers their new hours of service.”

• “I’m looking for a position position.”

• “I prefer a fast-paste work environment.”

• “I am very interested in the accounting stuff position.”

• “Additional skills: I am a Notary Republic.”
Avoid Resumania®

- “Dead Sir or Madam:”
- “I taught intro-to-writing courses.”
- “If U hire me, I’ll provide excellent customer service. U will not have any regrets!”
- “Although I am seeking an accounting job, the fact that I have no actual experience in accounting may seem discouraging.”

Robert Half Finance & Accounting
Soft Skills in the Job Search: The Interview

• Making a good first impression
  – Dress appropriately
  – Arrive on time
  – Be pleasant to everyone
  – Let the interviewer lead
Soft Skills in the Job Search: The Interview

- Do your homework
  - 47% of CFOs polled said little or no knowledge of the company is the most common mistake candidates make during job interviews.
Soft Skills in the Job Search: The Interview

- Prepare to discuss your skills, experience, career plans and goals
- Articulate your thoughts
- Describe how you can contribute
- Be a good listener
- Send a thank-you
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