



SOFT SKILLS TEACHING GUIDE (CRETE PROJECT)

Author

EVM

Collaborator

W2L

Responsible Organisations

EVM and W2L

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Contributor(s): **EVM and W2L**

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Abstract: This document is a teaching guide that is intended to advise academics on how to effectively help their students develop and improve soft skills.

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Consortium

	Name	Short Name	Country
1	AIKATERINI ZOUROU & SIA EE	W2L	Greece
2	INSTITUTO POLITECNICO DO PORTO	IPP	Portugal
3	AALBORG UNIVERSITET	AAU	Denmark
4	UNIwersYTET WARSZAWSKI	UW	Poland
5	ECOSISTEMAS VIRTUALES Y MODULARES SL	EVM	Spain
6	TECHNOLOGICAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CRETE	TEI	Greece
7	THOMAS MORE MECHELEN-ANTWERPEN	TM	Belgium

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With the development of industry 4.0, AI and the inclusion of robots in the working place, technical skills will be far less important in the future, with personal skills becoming more and more critical. Robots and artificial intelligence may help workers to be faster, but they lack the creativity and social skills of humans. These human skills are necessary in order to manage robots and hard skills and work side by side with them. There is no better time than now to start preparing. Improving soft skills may sound challenging, but it's likely to be one of the best investments of time and energy ever to be made.

What will you find in this document?

This document is a teaching guide that is intended to advise academics on how to effectively help their students develop and improve soft skills. It is something unexisting in HEI and its impact to improving students' employability will be quite significant. The guide will help teachers to introduce the above mentioned subject in a practical way so the students can apply the knowledge to their professional career. It will give a general insight of soft skills and training in order to help teachers guide students to develop and improve said soft skills in the field of engineering.

For whom is this guide intended?

This guide is designed to be used by teachers and professionals for training and resources in order to familiarize themselves with soft skills in general. It also provides different approaches to the learning process including assessments, evaluation tools, resources, activities, and more.

1. INTRODUCTION TO SOFT SKILLS

What are soft skills?

Soft skills are a combination of people skills, social skills, communication skills, character or personality traits, attitudes, career attributes, social intelligence, and emotional intelligence that enable people to navigate their environment, work well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals with complementing hard skills. The Collins English Dictionary defines the term "soft skills" as "desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge: they include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive flexible attitude.

General Objectives

- Develop an understanding of the importance of soft skills including how soft skills are connected to technical or hard skills
- Raise awareness amongst students, teachers, and professionals
- Identify necessary soft skills depending on expertise
- Assess how soft skills can be improved
- Clarify and apply effective communication skills
- Define and outline effective leadership skills including best practices
- Examine and develop sense of self and culture

Specific Objectives

- Enhance and tailor written, verbal, and non-verbal communication skills to various workplace audiences, including managers, teammates and clients
- Improve critical thinking and listening skills in response to the needs of various constituents in workplace settings
- Familiarize themselves with possible tools and strategies for engaging in successful business interactions, including how to work efficiently and interact as a part of a team and individually
- Generate efficient presentations and incorporate best practices for presentations, including using visuals to enhance attention, design, and storytelling
- Demonstrate active listening, as well as written and verbal communication in the workplace
- Develop leadership skills and demonstrate working well with team members and peers
- Evaluate best practices for performing a strategic analysis of a problem in the workplace
- Analyze, compare and contrast necessities for crafting a message tailored to a particular audience
- Apply practical guidelines for successful public speaking
- Practice using visual elements to elevate presentations
- Recognize and develop idea of self in the workplace including emotional intelligence and intercultural awareness
- Demonstrate practical and efficient uses of brainstorming and playing in the workplace

INTRODUCTION ACTIVITIES

Students may or may not already know the definition of soft skills. When introducing soft skills, teachers may find it useful to begin with a video, assessment, or question.

→ Option 1: *Compare and contrast*

Teachers may ask students to help develop their own definition of soft skills as a class. Teachers could call on students to identify specific ideas that come to their mind when thinking of soft skills and write them all on the board. After brainstorming many ideas and descriptions, teacher could organize ideas in a mindmap, diagram or chart based on recommendations from students. After organization is complete, the class can begin creating a definition. Teacher then has the option of giving students an official definition from the internet, dictionary, etc. in order to compare and contrast the official definition with the definition created by the class. At this point the teacher can begin to discuss the importance of soft skills and dive into specifics and examples.

→ Option 2: *Video*

Teacher may choose to show students a video describing and demonstrating soft skills allowing students to create a mental definition and gain ideas of the importance while viewing pre-made content. For example, this short video describes soft skills, their importance in and out of the workplace, and how they can be used to complement hard skills.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tiy2LONr050>

→ Option 3: *Self-Assessment*

Teacher may choose to begin by giving students a self-assessment or personality test. Often times students with developed hard skills lack soft skills and what better way to begin than by identifying their own personality traits. In completion of a self-assessment students will gain a better understanding of themselves in addition to identifying soft skills they may already have and kinds of soft skills they are lacking or need improvement. For example, this free online personality test gives students a guide to their personality traits, strengths, weaknesses, and more as an insight into emotional intelligence. It is an adaptation of the world-renowned Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

<https://www.16personalities.com/>

Tips for identifying the soft skills students lack

Before diving into the theory and analysis of soft skills, teachers must gain knowledge about their students' strengths and weaknesses. This fundamental step will give teachers the chance to better advise and motivate students to make any changes required in order to improve themselves.

It is very important for a teacher to be able to identify the soft skills their students lack in order to guide them in understanding their skills and developing new ones. Simply being aware of their skills can be useful to them and their teacher. Tips for teachers to detect students' soft skills:

- Interview questions to gain real insight into student's character
 - Tell me about the last time you had to learn a new task. How did you go about learning it? What, if any tools, did you employ? (learning agility, curiosity)
 - What do you use to keep yourself organized? (organization and planning)
 - Tell me about your greatest challenge as lead. (time management and planning skills, intellectual humility, learning agility, coaching skills, and work ethic)
 - What did you learn from your biggest work failure? (learning agility, work ethic, problem solving)
 - Tell me about the last time a manager/someone rejected one of your ideas. How did you react to his/her feedback? (intellectual humility, ability to take criticism, influencing skills)
 - Describe a situation where you work as part of a team. (leadership, teamwork, communication)
 - What do you expect to be doing in five years' time? (aspiration and motivation)
 - How would a friend or a colleague describe you? (strengths and weaknesses)

<https://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/interview-advice/interview-questions/common-interview-questions>,

<https://www.omniagroup.com/identify-candidates-soft-skills/>

→ Case Studies

Case studies represent an authentic work sample giving the opportunity to gather information.

<https://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/interview-advice/interview-questions/case-study>

→ Simulations and scenarios

Simulations and scenarios can be very engaging and interesting providing insight in order to identify skills gaps

<https://www.ispringsolutions.com/blog/7-tips-for-getting-the-most-out-of-scenario-based-training-simulations>

→ Survey to be filled in by students, friends or classmates

Other people can provide useful information bringing up specific examples and discover things about students that even they didn't know before.

https://www.survey-maker.com/?matchtype=p&device=c&keyword=create%20a%20survey&adposition=1t2&location=1007565&adis=407878072710&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI7Kidu8v45gIViEHTCh3fjg94EAAYAiAAEgLKGVd_BwE

Tips on motivating students to improve their soft skills

After identifying the skills that students lack, different strategies may be used to guide them in enhancing their skills. The first step is taken by teaching students about the importance of soft skills in preparation for entering the workforce.

Tips to motivate students:

A. Define and explain soft skills and introduce their relevance and importance

B. Offer autonomous learning

C. Provide opportunities for students to cooperate, collaborate, and work in teams

D. Develop confidence in students

<https://etonx.com/classroom-tips-to-help-integrate-soft-skills/>

E. Teach and use body language

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/few-techniques-teach-soft-skills-classroom>

<https://medium.com/swlh/self-awareness-body-language-bcd5d3528aff>

F. Give students the opportunity to communicate orally and to write in different genres

G. Promote critical thinking starting each class with an agenda on the board and teach them how to organize learning materials

H. Practice using a problem solving template to teach them how to discuss solutions and consequences, negotiate and make a group decision on the best solution

<https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2015/10/13/strategies-integrate-soft-skills-class/>

I. Use soft skills apps and videos

<https://virtualspeech.com/learn/soft-skills-apps>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_DB7JZy9kKo

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUQz_en7ml

2. COMMUNICATION

Objectives

- Construct and demonstrate written, verbal, and non-verbal communication skills to various workplace audiences, including managers, teammates, and clients
- Practice reading and listening skills in response to the needs of various constituents in workplace settings
- Identify and differentiate between main types of communication
- Assess the importance of effective written, verbal, and nonverbal communication skills
- Analyze, compare and contrast necessities for crafting a message tailored to a particular audience
- Apply practical guidelines for successful public speaking
- Demonstrate active listening, as well as written and verbal communication in the workplace

Introduction

“They say that whole wars can be won or lost based on how effective an army's communication network is. The same holds true in business. Successful leaders know how to facilitate open and effective communication, both within their team and throughout the company. To achieve this they first need to master the art of effective communication themselves.”

Communication is a two-way process. Communication is about passing information from one person to another. This means that both the sending and the receiving of the message are equally important. Communication therefore requires both a speaker (or writer) to transmit the message, and a listener (or reader) to make sense of or interpret the message.

<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/verbal-communication.html>

When thinking of communication many people focus on the act of speaking (or writing) as efficient communication, but listening (or reading) is often overlooked. As teachers it is important to additionally demonstrate and remind students of the importance of effective listening skills and habits.

- **Introduction Activity:** To introduce this topic teachers may turn to an interpersonal skills self-assessment such as this free online test: <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/quiz/343479>

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Introduction

Four Types of Verbal Communication

“Verbal communication includes sounds, words, language, and speech. Speaking is an effective way of communicating and helps in expressing our emotions in words. This form of communication is further classified into four types, which are:

1. Intrapersonal Communication (Within oneself)

This form of communication is extremely private and restricted to ourselves. It includes the silent conversations we have with ourselves, wherein we juggle roles between the sender and receiver who are processing our thoughts and actions. This process of communication when analyzed can either be conveyed verbally to someone or stay confined as thoughts.

2. Interpersonal Communication (1-1)

This form of communication takes place between two individuals and is thus a one-on-one conversation. Here, the two individuals involved will swap their roles of sender and receiver in order to communicate in a clearer manner.

3. Small Group Communication (1-many/communicating with your team)

This type of communication can take place only when there are more than two people involved. Here the number of people will be small enough to allow each participant to interact and converse with the rest. Press conferences, board meetings, and team meetings are examples of group communication. Unless a specific issue is being discussed, small group discussions can become chaotic and difficult to interpret by everybody. This lag in understanding information completely can result in miscommunication.

4. Public Communication (Public speaking)

This type of communication takes place when one individual addresses a large gathering of people. Election campaigns and public speeches are examples of this type of communication. In such cases, there is usually a single sender of information and several receivers who are being addressed.”

<https://aravo.scripts.mit.edu/home/new-services/etiam-dictum-egestas/>

In this unit teachers have a wide range of possibilities to introduce, explain, and demonstrate verbal communication in order to reach learning objectives. It is important for the teacher to effectively deliver the topics allowing the students to differentiate between the four types of verbal communication.

Example Activities

→ Option 1: *Video*

Begin with a video. Teachers may begin by showing students videos of the different types of verbal communication and giving students the opportunity to discuss which type it exemplifies and why.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8eLdbKXGzk>

→ Option 2: *Role Playing*

<https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/RolePlaying.htm>

Role playing is an excellent way to prepare for the future, analyze possible issues and develop a better understanding of real-life situations from different points of view.

- Step 1: Identify a situation and introduce a problem
- Step 2: Set up a scenario with enough details to make it realistic
- Step 3: Identify and allocate roles and perspectives
- Step 4: Act out the scene
- Step 5: Reflection and feedback
 - Students may reflect back on their performance and identify possible mistakes or things they did well
 - Teachers or peers may provide feedback and constructive criticism

→ Option 3: *Elevator Pitch*

An elevator pitch is a convincing argument for an idea/product/service/proposal given in the time it takes to ride in an elevator (about 30-60 seconds). It is a tool used in business to help you think fast and get your point across.

In this exercise students must first choose a topic for their elevator pitch. Topics are not limited to but could be:

- An idea for a website or social network
- A product or service you are offering
- A favour you need from someone
- A unique interior design for a space
- An advertisement for a local event
- A campaign for a political position
- A plan for an event or party
- An invention you want to get patented
- An organization or business plan
- A special project you need to fund

Next, students are given the opportunity to write down some ideas or notes about what they want to say in their pitch. Students are then timed as they pitch their idea to the class. Classmates are given the opportunity to ask questions as if they were in the elevator or give feedback as peers.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Introduction

Written communication is a formal method of communication including all written documentation and materials. It includes written messages, instructions, letters, orders, charts, memos, reports, manuals, bulletins, brochures, posts, tweets, etc. It is less flexible than verbal communication and becomes a permanent record, also meaning it can be used for future reference or legal proof.

<http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/business-communication/written-communication/written-communication-meaning-advantages-and-limitations/70195>

<https://www.morebusiness.com/v3n2/>

Example Activities

→ Option 1: *Video*

Teacher may choose to show this video for improving written communication:

<https://www.mindtools.com/CommSkill/WritingSkills.htm>

→ Option 2: *Exact Instructions Challenge*

In written communication concise details are key. In this activity students must write directions on how to complete a task. Students can choose any task they choose but must be able to write clear detailed directions which can be followed by their partner. Students are to first write the directions individually and turn in the paper. Teacher will then hand out the papers to different students (making sure that no student has their own) and students must come to the front of the room and act out their task following exactly the instructions written on the paper. Students will then be returned with their original instructions and must correct their mistakes in order to clearly write instructions for completing the task. Papers are then redistributed to new students and must be acted out again. Process is repeated until tasks have been completed properly following instructions.

Example:

- Student writes instructions on how to tie your shoelaces
- Different student acts out instructions in front of class
- If the instructions say "Tie a knot in two of the laces" student may tie a knot in laces of different shoes, or may ask how to tie a knot
- Paper returned to writer for corrections
- Paper redistributed to new student and acted out again
- Process repeats until tasks have been completed successfully

Hint: Teacher may choose to show this video before or after the activity:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FN2RM-CHkuI>

→ Option 3: *Creating your CV and Cover Letter*

Having an effectively written resume or cover letter can distinguish applicants from others while having poorly written documents can disclude applicants from even obtaining an interview. These

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documents are of the utmost importance and must be clear, concise, and informative. In this activity teachers are to guide students by giving them tips and examples of nicely written documents. Students then must create their own CV and generic cover letter before being peer reviewed by a classmate. After peer review, students are given the opportunity to make changes before documents are submitted to the teacher for final review and grading.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Introduction

Non-verbal communication includes aspects of communication, such as gestures and facial expressions, that do not involve verbal communication but which may include nonverbal aspects of speech itself (accent, tone of voice, speed of speaking, etc)

<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/nonverbal-communication>

Non-verbal communication can play five roles:

- **Repetition:** It repeats and often strengthens the message you're making verbally.
- **Contradiction:** It can contradict the message you're trying to convey, thus indicating to your listener that you may not be telling the truth.
- **Substitution:** It can substitute for a verbal message. For example, your facial expression often conveys a far more vivid message than words ever can.
- **Complementing:** It may add to or complement your verbal message. As a boss, if you pat an employee on the back in addition to giving praise, it can increase the impact of your message.
- **Accenting:** It may accent or underline a verbal message. Pounding the table, for example, can underline the importance of your message.

Types of non-verbal communication:

- Facial expressions
- Body movement and posture
- Gestures
- Eye contact
- Touch
- Space
- Voice

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships-communication/nonverbal-communication.htm>

Example Activities

→ Option 1: *Video*

This video from the popular TV show *Friends* can be used to introduce non-verbal communication. Teacher can pause the video at different points throughout in order to ask questions and provoke discussion.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvEci5Bjgd4>

→ Option 2: *Charades*

This classic game is an entertaining way to improve non-verbal communication. It can be played as a class or in pairs or groups. Teacher puts words on slips of paper (or an online word generator can be used) and student draws a word. Student must then act out the word using gestures without speaking as classmates try to guess the word. When a classmate has guessed the word, he/she draws another and must act it out. After completion of this activity teacher may facilitate classroom discussion on the differences between verbal and non-verbal communication, and how students felt using non-verbal communication in this exercise.

→ Option 3: *Mock Interview*

After introducing non-verbal communication to students, it's time to put their skills to practice, and what better way than in a mock interview? This exercise can be used to test verbal and non-verbal communication, but in this example we are using it for non-verbal communication. In this activity teachers have the option of interviewing students individually, as a class, or splitting them into pairs and instructing them to interview each other. When being interviewed, students will often become nervous or uncomfortable and it shows in their body language. Some people also may come across as bored, lazy, tired, or even unintelligent simply from their body language. After the interviews are over, the interviewer or peers are to provide positive and negative feedback and constructive criticism in order to identify efficient and inefficient non-verbal communication used by the interviewee, such as eye-contact, gestures, posture, physical appearance, etc. Tips can be found here:

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-use-nonverbal-communication-at-an-interview-20613>

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3. E-LEADERSHIP

Objectives

- Outline and define E-Leadership including roles and changes in comparison to leadership in the past in addition to leadership as a timeline of the past and present
- Define culture by formulating an idea of one's own culture while assessing awareness of other cultures and examining importance of intercultural awareness
- Evaluate best practices for leadership and interactions with other cultures in a business setting
- Interpret and practice decision making as an organized process of appropriate questions and answers
- Analyze importance of emotional intelligence in the workplace and assess personal level including methods of improvement
- Recognize and develop idea of self in the workplace
- Develop leadership skills and demonstrate working well with team members and peers

Introduction

E-Leadership or Electronic Leadership refers to leadership in the new era. Leadership has changed over the years as information systems have developed and innovation has shifted the world to new technological heights. With the global economy of the new era leaders must lead entire teams and projects electronically. Team members may reside in various regions of the world and have often times never even met one another. Leaders now deal with new difficulties while expectations and goals have also shifted. Effective leadership in the new era requires innovative leaders with excellent communication skills but also also with effective skills related to emotional intelligence, intercultural awareness, and decision making.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sK48DH1vvVY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KW-rBmRmjLY>

<https://eskills.org.mt/en/news/Pages/2017/e-Leadership-Skills.aspx>

<https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/traditional-leadership-light-hrms/8782>

PAST AND PRESENT OF THE LEADER

Introduction

In today's world of constantly changing technology, globalisation, and innovation, the skills, attributes, and values of leaders are also changing. Leadership now has a different meaning than in the past and future leaders must learn to go about problems and everyday life in a different manner. Although the fundamentals of leadership remain, leaders now are faced with new challenges and are forced to grow with their environments in order to succeed.

<https://elearningindustry.com/six-leadership-soft-skills-training>

Example Activities

→ Option 1: *Brainstorming Timeline*

Teacher facilitates classroom brainstorming of how leadership has changed over the years. Students may give ideas as teacher writes them on a board. Teacher may help prompt students by mentioning different inventions, innovations, or technological advances and writing them individually in the form of a timeline. Students should then discuss how each innovation may have changed or shaped leadership including *pros and cons*, and outcomes.

→ Option 2: *Teach your group*

In this activity teacher assigns students to groups and each group member is assigned a different article on the topic to be read beforehand. Students then must teach the rest of their group about the article they were each assigned. Students take turns explaining and analyzing their article with their group and must provoke discussion and critique of the article. After all members of all groups have finished, call will reconvene and teacher facilitates classroom discussion and reflection. This exercise can also be used to discuss how different groups may have taken different meanings, lessons, etc from the same article. Here are examples of two possible articles:

<https://iveybusinessjournal.com/publication/how-leadership-has-changed/>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/work-in-progress/2011/08/30/leadership-then-and-now/#6b25aa5a6911>

→ Option 3: *Interview an Expert*

In this activity students are to interview a person of their choosing whom they consider to be a leader. Students will plan and write possible interview questions (must include their perspective on how leadership has changed and what it means to be a leader in the present) and will complete a preliminary analysis as to why they think this person is a leader, rating their leadership skills, etc. Students will conduct an interview (in person, via skype or phone, etc) and will then create a short presentation on the person. Presentation must describe the leader and their leadership skills, identify successes, and discuss the views and opinions of the leader.

INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS

Introduction

In a multicultural world intercultural awareness is crucial in order to be successful. Intercultural awareness is understanding one's own culture and other cultures, as well as the similarities and differences between them, including values, beliefs, and behaviour. These differences are very important when interacting with people from different backgrounds or cultures.

Although it would be wonderful to individually learn about every culture, it is understood that this is a daunting, unrealistic task for most, and not necessary in order to become an interculturally effective person. It is simply necessary to understand that there are many different cultures and each one comes along with its own behaviors and beliefs. No culture should be considered correct, wrong, nor strange.

<https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/intercultural-awareness.html>

Example Activities

→ Option 1: *Stereotypes*

Teachers may introduce this topic by first choosing one group (a country, region, group of people, culture) and having students tell all stereotypes, ideas, beliefs, etc that come to mind. Teacher writes all ideas on the board and then the class must categorize each idea as a stereotype or part of the culture (including discussion). This activity can be repeated with other cultures. This article may also be used to prompt further discussion on stereotyping:

<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-the-meaning-of-stereotype-2834956>

→ Option 2: *Cultural Iceberg Model*

In this activity Teachers must first explain and discuss Edward T. Hall's Cultural Iceberg Model:

https://www.spps.org/cms/lib/MN01910242/Centricity/Domain/125/iceberg_model_3.pdf

Students then must work individually or in small groups to create their own cultural iceberg, identifying and classifying aspects of their own cultures into different parts of the iceberg. Upon completion teacher will facilitate class discussion and identify differences in the placement of cultural aspects from the point of view of different students.

→ Option 3: *International Business Simulation*

At this link teachers will find a simulation complete with instructions and debriefing. Students must be in groups of 4-5 participants.

https://globaledge.msu.edu/content/academy/exercisessimulations/journey_to_sharahad.pdf

DECISION MAKING

Introduction

Decision making is one of the most difficult tasks of leadership. Aside from a few natural-born leaders, people really struggle to make decisions, however it is of the utmost importance in everyday life and one of the top qualities of successful leaders worldwide. Decision should not be made by “listening to one’s gut,” but through an organized process of asking and answering specific questions accurately.

There are many ways to fail at decision making:

- over-thinking a decision
- focusing on insignificant details
- underestimating how long a project will take
- obsessing over extremely unlikely negative outcomes
- rushing to a decision based on incomplete information

<https://elearningindustry.com/six-leadership-soft-skills-training>

Example Activities

→ Option 1: *Class analysis*

In this activity teachers can either give a problem or ask a volunteer from the class to offer up a problem of their own. Classmates must then follow the steps of structured decision making in order to resolve the issue at hand and come to a structured, well-thought out decision. Steps can be found here:

<http://www.structureddecisionmaking.org/uncategorized/steps/>

→ Option 2: *Stranded*

Decision making may be easier for some than others, but how about making decisions as a team? This activity can be done as a class or split into groups, depending on size of class and time constraints. Teacher gives students the following instructions: Students are stranded in the classroom. The doors are locked and knocking down doors or windows is not an option. Students have a time limit (set by the teacher) to decide on 10 items they need for survival and rank them in order of importance. The goal is to have EVERYONE agree on the items and their order of ranking in the designated time frame. Activity should be followed by group reflection. This activity and other similar exercises can be found at this link:

<https://www.wrike.com/blog/top-15-problem-solving-activities-team-master/>

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Introduction

Researchers have suggested that emotional intelligence (EI) can be an even better prediction of success in life than IQ (intelligence quotient), and therefore extremely important, yet often overlooked in today's educational system.

Emotional Intelligence is perceiving, reasoning, understanding, and managing emotions. It also includes empathy and empowerment. Although people once thought that intelligence and emotion were nearly opposites, researchers have recently found them to go hand-in-hand and have declared EI as crucial in the workplace. EI plays a grand role in decision making, stress and conflict management, communication, problem-solving, and leadership.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/utilizing-emotional-intelligence-in-the-workplace-4164713>

Empathy

“Empathy is a soft skill that some people innately possess, and others need to be taught. A non-empathetic person in an executive role can cause great damage in a work environment. Lack of empathy among managers can de-motivate employees, instill fear and suspicion among team members, and increase employee churn. Often, though, it's not sociopathy that's the issue, but inexperience in applying empathy in the workplace. A manager, for example, might need specific training to be able to recognize certain emotions among employees, and to understand how they affect employee morale, and to know how to handle them. One of the most important leadership soft skills is knowing when to put the mask of cold professionalism aside, and engage in emotional support, humor, camaraderie, etc., with the members of your team.”

<https://elearningindustry.com/six-leadership-soft-skills-training>

Empowerment

“Businesses rarely fail because their employees lacked hard skills. Through a combination of pre-employment screening and employee training, those are usually pretty well catered for. It's more common for businesses to fail because their leadership lacked soft skills. That's why the importance of leadership development in the workplace cannot be stressed enough. One of the most crucial, but sadly overlooked, leadership skills, is empowerment. That is the ability of leaders to encourage and inspire their team members to take initiative.”

<https://elearningindustry.com/six-leadership-soft-skills-training>

Example Activities

→ Option 1: *Highs and Lows*

This is a two-part exercise comprised of daily tracking of emotions and weekly sharing with a team.

- **Part one:** Students are instructed to track their emotions multiple times per day and write exactly what they are feeling in a journal, notebook, computer, etc. Students may set alarms as reminders if necessary or may simply stop what they're doing at random points during the

day to come into contact with their feelings and emotions. They should write down exactly what they are feeling in that instant followed by the reason. It's important for students to think about why they are feeling that specific emotion and possible events, people, etc that could have caused it.

- **Part two:** At the end of each week the class should have a short meeting in which each student must share their high and low with the class. On other words, each student will tell the class the highest point of their week (the best moment, best occurrence, time they felt happiest, etc) and the lowest point of their week (worst moment, worst occurrence, time they felt the worst, etc). Some students will resist at first, but by keeping these meetings up weekly students will become accustomed and will develop a deeper sense of their own emotions as well as develop a sense of empathy for their peers as they open up to one another.

→ **Option 2: Best and Worst**

In this activity students are instructed to identify their best and worst qualities. Students should first write down what they believe to be their best and worst qualities (cannot be physical) and why this is their belief. Students then must contact three people of their choosing and ask them to write down what they believe to be the student's best and worst qualities and send it to the student. Students should choose three people that know them fairly well. They may be family, friends, teachers, coworkers, partners, classmates, etc but they may not all come from the same source (ex. they cannot all three be family members). Students should read the received responses and write a summary of differences and similarities in the responses and their own answers, including their own opinion and how it met or differed from their expectations.

→ **Option 3: Emotional Intelligence Test**

Many students may say or believe that they are emotionally intelligent without truly knowing the meaning. There are many free online tests to score their emotional intelligence level. This is an example of an in depth test lasting 60 minutes:

<https://testyourself.psychtests.com/testid/3979>

→ **Option 4: Empathy Map**

Empathy mapping is an excellent way to help students learn the process of empathizing with someone else. Teachers should teach students how to use an empathy map and direct students to use one on their own or in groups or pairs. Teachers can allow students to think of a situation in their life and complete the map based on their own situation or may provide students with case studies or scenarios in order to fill in the map. Further instructions on empathy mapping can be found here:

<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/empathy-mapping/>

4. PROBLEM SOLVING & WORKING UNDER PRESSURE

Objectives

- Evaluate best practices for performing a strategic analysis of a problem in the workplace
- Outline and perform an effective problem solving process
- Justify issues in order to develop critical thinking skills
- Identify and formulate SMART goals
- Examine best practices for goal setting individually and in teams for personal interests and in the workplace
- Analyze methods for sticking to and reaching goals

Introduction

Problem-solving is one of the most important leadership soft skills. Successful leaders are problem solvers. When others cannot find a solution to a problem they will always call on the leader. When a business leader is called to handle an issue it's often times an issue that has occurred previously in one form or another and usually calls for a similar solution to what has been used in the past. In order to develop efficient problem solving skills, one must first be able to identify the problem. Identifying a problem is the first step of the problem solving process however the most frequent mistake is trying to solve the problem in the beginning of the process. Problem solving should be undertaken as an organized process with solution as a final result. The basis of the problem solving process can be outlined as follows:

1. Identify the problem
2. Examine the interests of all parties involved
3. Create and list possible options for solution
4. Evaluate the options
5. Select an option or multiple options
6. Document the agreements made
7. Agree on monitoring and evaluation

<https://www.mediate.com/articles/thicks.cfm>

CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Introduction

“Problem solving and critical thinking refers to the ability to use knowledge, facts, and data to effectively solve problems. This doesn’t mean you need to have an immediate answer, it means you have to be able to think on your feet, assess problems and find solutions. The ability to develop a well thought out solution within a reasonable time frame, however, is a skill that employers value greatly.”

<https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/problem.pdf>

6 Critical Thinking skills:

1. Identification
2. Research
3. Identifying biases
4. Inference
5. Determining relevance
6. Curiosity

<https://www.rasmussen.edu/student-experience/college-life/critical-thinking-skills-to-master-now/>

Example Activities

→ Option 1: *Fact or Opinion*

This exercise will help students learn to differentiate between facts and opinions. A fact can be proven true or false while an opinion is based on feeling or point of view and cannot be proven. In this activity teachers will give students different statements and students must decide if they think they are facts or opinions and why. The *think, pair, share* method (students must first think or write independently, before pairing with a classmate to discuss the differences or similarities in their responses, followed by sharing the answers or experience with the class) can be used to promote deeper critical thinking.

<https://www.schrockguide.net/uploads/3/9/2/2/392267/critical-thinking-workbook.pdf>

→ Option 2: *Lightning Decision Jam*

In this activity students will learn a simple yet highly efficient strategy for identifying and solving problems in the workplace by following this nine-step moderation process.

1. Start with problems
2. Present Problems
3. Select Problems to Solve
4. Reframe Problems as Standardised Challenges
5. Produce Solutions
6. Vote on Solutions
7. Prioritise Solutions
8. Decide what to Execute on

9. Turn Solutions into Actionable Tasks

Full instructions can be found here:

<https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/lightning-decision-jam-ldj>

→ Option 3: *Alien Travel Guide*

This exercise encourages students to take a deeper look at who we are as individuals and as a society. This activity can be done individually in writing or can be acted out in pairs, switching roles for each scenario. There are two scenarios and each scenario requires one human and one alien.

- **Scenario 1:** You are conducting a tour for aliens who are visiting earth and observing humans. You're all in their spaceship when you fly over a football stadium. One of the aliens is confused, and turns to you for help.

Try answering these questions:

- What is a game, and why do humans play them?
 - What are "teams" and why are they so important for humans to be part of?
 - Why is it these games seem to get more attention than other matters on your planet, like disease and poverty?
 - Why do humans get so emotional and even violent when watching games?
 - What would happen if no human could ever play these games again?
- **Scenario 2:** You are chatting with a group of aliens on a tour of a local library. While you all mingle, one of the aliens picks up a volume about the history of global war and conflict. The alien turns to you and asks you these questions:
 - What is war and why do humans wage it upon each other?
 - Humans seem to feel that warfare is often the only way to resolve conflict. Why is this so?
 - How do you decide who wins and who loses? How do you know this is accurate?
 - How does warfare affect those who can't or won't participate?
 - What legacy do you feel these wars will provide for your future generations?

<https://www.schrockguide.net/uploads/3/9/2/2/392267/critical-thinking-workbook.pdf>

<https://www.inc.com/larry-alton/7-mental-exercises-to-make-you-a-better-critical-thinker.html>

GOAL SETTING

Introduction

When teams work together to set goals, they are more likely to feel like part of the process and to stick to them, but setting unachievable goals can create a feeling of impossibility, while setting goals too low has been proven to spark less motivation. Learning how to effectively set goals is imperative in order to maximize productivity. Individual goal setting is different than setting goals as a team.

<https://the-happy-manager.com/tips/team-goal-setting/>

<https://positivepsychology.com/goal-setting-exercises/>

Three types of goals:

1. Outcome Goals (Results)
2. Process Goals (Behaviors)
3. Performance Goals (Standards)

<https://www.kennethmd.com/three-types-of-goals/>

Setting SMART Goals:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time Bound

Example Activities

→ **Option 1:** *One year from now*

In this exercise students are to imagine their best possible self one year from now. They can complete the activity on their own or share it with a peer. Sometimes sharing these ideas with someone else can help students think outside the box and step out of their comfort zone. When completing this activity students are to think about their home, career, finances, relationships, and themselves. Once they've decided what their life looks like one year from now, they must decide what steps are required in order to reach these things. The, being realistic, they should pick one or two achievable and measurable goals for each area and invent a goal setting plan for each. Each plan should include a realistic draft of a timeline to increase accountability. This exercise can be completed on paper or on the computer.

<https://positivepsychology.com/goal-setting-exercises/#goal-setting>

→ **Option 2:** *The Golden Circle*

Students should first watch this video:

https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en#t-36349

[1](#)

Students are then directed to work in groups to create a golden circle for their imaginary company. Companies typically start at the bottom and focus on what they are selling or doing, but in this

activity students must start from the inside and work their way out. In other words, groups must begin with the “why”, followed by the “how”, with “what” are the result. Groups should prepare a golden circle and use their golden circle to create an advertisement, slogan, or commercial to present to the class. Examples can be found in the previous video. More information can be found at this link: <https://www.geckoboard.com/blog/setting-company-priorities-golden-circle/>

→ **Option 3: Set- Track- Achieve**

Many people find success in goal setting by using apps. The technological boom has produced apps for almost everything one could think of, including a plethora of options to help set, track, and achieve goals at the touch of a button. In this activity students must choose at least one goal setting app and download it to their phone, tablet, computer, etc. They must familiarize themselves with their chosen app and use it for at least one week (a greater length of time is preferred if class time constraints permit). After completion of allotted time, students are to present the app to the class including instructions, tips, and opinions. A list of apps can be found here: <https://www.bustle.com/p/11-goal-setting-apps-that-will-help-keep-you-on-track-12961869>

5. TEAMWORK AND NEGOTIATION

Objectives:

- Identify how teams function effectively
- Organise task distribution plans effectively
- Develop strategies to promote a strong team relationship amongst the members
- Manage difficult conversation or uncomfortable situations
- Prepare for debate

Introduction

Organizing a team and working with team members is a vital soft skill. Simply having employees that work in the same office does not constitute a team. Building a real team requires teamwork, trust and reliability, effective negotiation, and proper task distribution. Team members must be able to successfully divide tasks and split workloads in a fair and proper manner while combining individual strengths and skills towards a common goal.

<https://elearningindustry.com/six-leadership-soft-skills-training>

Benefits of teamwork in the workplace:

- Encourages creativity and learning
- Combines individual strengths and skills
- Builds trust and reliability
- Teaches conflict resolution skills

<https://www.sandler.com/blog/6-benefits-of-teamwork-in-the-workplace/>

Tips to improve teamwork in the workplace:

- Hold social events
- Set roles and goals
- Establish effective communication with project management tools
- Reward good teamwork and discourage micro-managing
- Celebrate individuality
- Ask for and listen to feedback

<https://biz30.timedoctor.com/teamwork-in-the-workplace/>

→ Introduction Activity: *Paper Tower*

In this collaborative team-building activity students are split into groups and given newspaper and tape. Teams must build the tallest free-standing tower and are given no guidelines. After completion of activity teacher judges which tower is the winner, followed by class reflection and debriefing about things they did well, would change, etc.

<https://www.schrockguide.net/uploads/3/9/2/2/392267/critical-thinking-workbook.pdf>

TASK DISTRIBUTION

Introduction

Task distribution is a form of breaking down projects into smaller manageable tasks which can be taken on by different people. Task distribution is crucial when working as part of a team. Tasks should be detailed and divided fairly among teammates. Knowing how to delegate tasks to team members involves more than meets the eye. For example, in order to properly delegate tasks a person must be able to give up control, share credit for the final product, and trust his/her teammates. However, it also involves choosing the best person to assign each task, checking on results regularly, and sometimes even teaching a teammate or passing on information while still allowing independence in choosing their own method.

“The mistake in delegation lies in wanting the staff member to do things exactly the way you would do them – or else leaving them a totally free hand. Finding a balance between trust and supervision is the best approach.”

<https://openclassrooms.com/en/courses/5164326-work-effectively-in-a-team/5483336-learn-to-distribute-tasks-and-delegate>

When a project involves more than two people it is necessary to:

- Distribute tasks and create an organizational chart
- Identify responsibility levels
- Centralize all documents and procedures
- Track the tasks and project

Example Activities

→ Option 1: Task Organization Chart

Creating a task organization chart is essential for team members to visualize how and where their tasks fit into the bigger picture. It also helps to ensure appropriate distribution and assists in tracking. In this exercise students should create a task organization chart as a whole class (if class size does not permit, activity may be done in large groups) with minimal facilitation from the teacher. In other words, teacher may assign a project or mission to the class as a whole. It can be on a distinct intricate topic or something simple, like a 30 minute team building activity. Students must use a task organization chart to create a detailed plan of action and delegate tasks to each member of the class. Chart can be hand-written or created electronically. One example of a free online chart creation website: <https://app.creately.com/diagram/create>

→ Option 2: Online Tools

Many innovative companies and SMEs have turned to online task distributing tools to facilitate best practices in the workplace. Online task distribution tools can turn an unorganized team into an

example of success by encouraging clear communication and simplifying the organization process. In this exercise students must work in groups in order to familiarize themselves with some of these tools. Teachers may assign each group to a specific tool or may allow groups to choose their own, making sure every group has a different one. Groups should sign up for a free account and should familiarize themselves with how to use the tool to improve task distribution in teamwork. Each group must then teach the rest of the class what they have learned.

A few examples are:

https://pollunit.com/en/tutorials/distribute_tasks

<https://trello.com/en>

<https://hitask.com/>

<https://www.getflow.com/>

→ **Option 3: Common Mistakes**

This short video sums up the most common mistakes in task delegation from managers and provides useful tips and strategies for effective task distribution. These tips can be equally useful when delegating tasks in between team members.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDs57oRaJHM#action=share>

TRUST AND RELIABILITY

Introduction

“Without trust we don’t truly collaborate; We merely coordinate or, at best, cooperate. It is trust that transforms a group of people into a team.” - Stephen Covey

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/without-trust-team-joseph-huisman/>

Trust and reliability are of the utmost importance for a team to succeed. Researchers have found that the more team members trust one other, the stronger and more productive the team will be. The most important characteristics in earning trust are:

- Sincerity
- Vulnerability
- Clarity
- Consistency
- Accountability

Example Activities

→ Option 1: *Minefield*

This trust building activity can also be used to improve verbal communication skills. Teachers should find an open space and lay out a number of obstacles on the ground (cones, chairs, cups, etc.) Students should be put in pairs, with one of the two in each pair wearing a blindfold. The student without the blindfold must verbally direct their blindfolded partner across the minefield to the other side without running into any of the objects and without touching him/her. The blindfolded student may not talk.

An example may be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwjNFYnlVol&feature=youtu.be>

→ Option 2: *QuizBreaker*

One of the best ways to build trust in teams is by getting to know one another on a personal level. This online weekly quiz is a fun trust building method that can be used even by virtual teams with remote workers. To complete this exercise teachers should sign up all the students in the class at the online platform found here:

https://www.quizbreaker.com/?utm_source=ws

Students will then be prompted to answer personal questions and each week classmates will be prompted to guess which response belongs to each person. This simple game can be an excellent way for students to get to know one another and encourage communication as often times students find things they have in common with one another.

NEGOTIATION

Introduction

Negotiation is discussion aimed at reaching an agreement. Humans use negotiation regularly in their everyday life by negotiating with themselves internally, with peers, coworkers, family, friends, partners, and acquaintances. Tacit negotiation is used in negotiating with oneself, for example, quickly deciding whether or not to hold the door open for someone. Interpersonal negotiation is used for example, when someone is deciding whether or not to go to an event. Some forms of negotiation are almost subconscious, while others require learned negotiation skills. These skills are necessary in order to turn conflicts into opportunities.

This document provides a thorough view of teaching negotiation skills:
<https://nature.berkeley.edu/ucce50/ag-labor/7conflict/04.pdf>

Example Activities

→ Option 1: *Personal Scenario*

Teachers may ask students for someone to offer a real issue they are having currently in their life. It could be an issue with a coworker or classmate, a personal problem with a romantic partner, friend, or family member, an internal dilemma, etc. Once student has shared their dilemma with the class, teacher facilitates a classroom discussion/coaching session in order to help student negotiate their issue.

Example:

- Student offers dilemma: "I can't get along with my husband's female friends but he always wants us to go out with them in a social setting."
- Teacher prompts student by asking questions, and furthermore prompts classmates to ask student questions/give advice: "Why can't you get along with the female friends? Can you get along with male friends? Have you tried different tactics to get along with them? Do you want to get along with them? Why does your husband want to continue going out with them if he knows you don't get along? What does your husband think about the situation? Has anyone else been in a similar situation? How can student use negotiation in this situation?"
- Teacher and students offer ideas and suggestions of ways to use negotiation in situation: "Negotiate with yourself in order to decide if it's worth your time and energy to become friends with these girls. If so, negotiate with yourself new tactics that can be used to try to get along with them. If not, negotiate with your husband in order to spend less time with these girls. Negotiate with these girls in order to discover why you can't get along", etc.

An article about negotiating in everyday life:
<https://negotiation-blog.eu/brexit-why-success-in-negotiations-depends-on-the-right-expectation-management-2/>

Tip: Make sure you thank student for opening up to the class about a personal issue, and remind students that the classroom is a judgement-free zone and everything discussed in class should remain private.

→ **Option 2: Debate**

No matter how hard we try to keep the peace, arguments are a fact of life, but knowing how to argue effectively can make all the difference. Here is a link to an article that can be used to teach the art of arguing:

https://bigthink.com/paul-ratner/how-to-disagree-well-7-of-the-best-and-worst-ways-to-argue?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#Echobox=1577334580

Teachers can also assign students to topics and viewpoints and hold classroom or group debates. After the debate, it is important to discuss with the class that a debate is different from negotiation because the goal is not to reach an agreement, but to prove your point. Students may then discuss which they think is a more effective tool in different situations and why. How to hold a classroom debate: https://www.niu.edu/facdev/_pdf/guide/strategies/classroom_debates.pdf

6. TIME AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Objectives

- Achieve better results through effective planning and clarifying objectives
- Use time management tools more effectively
- Set goals and prioritize them to determine if activities are goal-directed
- Become effective at delegating lower priority items
- Manage resources more efficiently

Introduction

Time Management:

Why is it that everyone has the same amount of time in a day, yet some people can achieve so much more than others in that same time frame? Time management is what sets the achievers apart from the rest. Someone with effective time management skills focuses on results rather than tasks and understands that occupying your time is not the same as effectively working.

https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_00.htm

Benefits of time management:

- Stress relief
- More time
- More opportunities
- Ability to reach goals

Time management tips:

- Set goals correctly
- Prioritize wisely
- Set time limits
- Take breaks between tasks
- Organize yourself
- Remove non-essential tasks
- Plan ahead

<https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/careers/soft-skills/time-management-list-tips/>

Resource Management:

Resource management is the planning, scheduling, and allocating of resources for maximum efficiency. Resources are everything needed for a project or task. Resources include people, objects, skills, methods, knowledge, software, etc. Effective resource management optimizes the use of resources and cuts waste.

Benefits of resource management:

- Prevents burnout
- Avoids unforeseen obstacles

- Increases transparency
- Provides a backup plan
- Measures efficiency

Resource management tools:

- Resource allocation
- Resource leveling
- Resource forecasting

<https://www.wrike.com/blog/what-is-resource-management/>

PRIORITIZING

Introduction

Prioritization is the process of ordering tasks based on their importance. It is an essential task in the modern workplace, and although seemingly simple, can be daunting and unsuccessful if not performed properly. It's also important to be realistic about the amount of work one person can complete in a certain timeframe.

Example Activities

→ Option 1: *Role Reversal*

In this exercise students must research and test different methods of prioritization in order to report back to the class. Teacher can assign students to different methods or may require students to find their own, such as: Ivy Lee Method, ABCDE Method, Warren Buffett's 2-List Strategy, Eisenhower Matrix, etc. Students may choose to report back to class in the form of a presentation, individually or group made video, facilitated discussion, etc but must teach the other students what they have learned.

<https://blog.rescuetime.com/how-to-prioritize/>

→ Option 2: *Effective Listing*

Teachers may explain to students how to effectively make lists and then help students create their own lists. For example, they should first create a master list including all tasks, then break it down into monthly, weekly, and daily goals. More information can be found at this link:

<https://blog.rescuetime.com/how-to-prioritize/>

USING RESOURCES WISELY

Introduction

When looking for information we need to find different types of resources. Nowadays in the digital era we can sometimes feel overwhelmed by the huge amount of information that is shared and that can be found on the internet.

That's why it's important to use the resources and instruments wisely.

First of all, we must know the different type of information resources:

- Primary: give us new or original information, which has not been collected or compiled beforehand. They are mainly information included in monographs or serial publications (books and magazines), and their parts, such as chapters, articles, etc. We obtain the information directly from them.
- Secondary: their main objective is not to offer information but to indicate which source or document can provide it to us, that is to say, they facilitate the location and identification of the documents. They do not contain finished information, they always refer to primary documents. They are bibliographies, catalogues, databases, etc.

Then we will decide which source of information is more convenient for the work ahead

When looking for information on the internet we have to consider two aspects:

- Internet provides access to a large and diverse amount of information and resources but it is not selected or evaluated;
- It is a participatory environment in which anyone can contribute information so not all information is true or proven. Therefore, we must be critical and know how to differentiate which resources can help us.

Some criteria to select the appropriate sources of information, taking into account different aspects:

- Its relevance to our work theme
- The nature of its contents: statistical, bibliographical, biographical, legislative, etc.
- The authority of those who prepare the information
- The updating of its contents
- Your level of expertise
- Their authenticity: that we can identify those who produce them, edit them, etc.
- Their purpose, which can be oriented to the academic world, be informative or informative
- The format: text, multimedia, sound, graphic, etc.
- The language
- Their origin: whether they are personal, institutional...
- Their accessibility

And remember to evaluate the source of information:

<p>Authorship/Authority: person or organization responsible for the recognition of the website</p>	<p>Is it clear who the author is?</p> <p>Does the author provide data on his or her affiliation?</p> <p>Does the author disclose his or her resume?</p> <p>Does he indicate who holds the copyright?</p>
<p>Purpose: The purpose of the information the author presents on the website</p>	<p>What is the purpose of the website? (to inform, entertain, instruct, etc.)</p> <p>Does the domain name of the website indicate the purpose? .edu for Universities</p>
<p>Scope</p>	<p>Are the topics discussed in depth?</p> <p>Do you have relevant links?</p> <p>Updating: validity of the information presented and maintenance and updating of the contents.</p> <p>Do the contents appear dated?</p> <p>Does the date of the last update appear?</p> <p>Do the links work or do they appear to be broken?</p>
<p>Audience</p>	<p>Who is the website for?</p>

Accuracy	<p>Are the sources of information used indicated?</p> <p>Are there any grammatical or spelling errors?</p>
Readability	<p>Is the web easy to navigate?</p> <p>Are the contents well structured?</p> <p>Is it visually pleasing?</p>
Usefulness	<p>Does it satisfy my need for information?</p>

https://www.uv.es/cibisoc/tutoriales/trabajo_social/431_criterios_de_evaluacin.html

Example Activities

→ Option 1: *How to use Google*

To make a Google query, simply type a few keywords in the search box for the topic you are interested in. If we use a single word or expression to find the information, Google is likely to give very general answers.

But to find accurate answer we will need to:

We must use quotes when we need to find complete sentences, literal fragments or proper names. For example: "Digital era".

- Do not use empty words like articles, prepositions, conjunctions... Google automatically discards common terms such as http or .com, as well as certain digits or letters, because these terms rarely help to refine the search. If you want to include one of these terms in your search, you'll need to precede it with a "+" sign (example: university + palms).

- In the same way that we have used the "+" sign, we can exclude a word from the search by placing a minus (-) sign immediately before the term we want to exclude.

- It is not necessary to use capital letters or accents. Google considers all lowercase letters, regardless of how they're spelled. In Spanish, it does not distinguish between diacritical accents, umlauts or the letter Ñ.

- Google has an advanced search that allows you to narrow down some aspects of your search (language, format, domain, etc.) and use Boolean operators.

https://www.uv.es/cibisoc/tutoriales/trabajo_social/223_internet.html

→ **Option 2:** *Find reliable resources*

The students will create groups and the teacher will assign to each group a topic: technology, medicine, biology, education, etc. Each group will have to find on the internet reliable resources such as journal portals, repositories, academic websites, databases, commercial publishers, scientific societies, online library catalogues, etc.

→ **Option 3:** *True or false*

The teacher will make a dossier with reliable, non-reliable information and fake news. The students have to identify and classify the fake news and will have to investigate why some articles are reliable and some are non-reliable considering the evaluation criteria. Use the table to make the evaluation.

7. CREATIVITY

Objectives:

- Understand the role of creative processes in the workplace and learning process
- Describe how an organisation can be encouraged to become more creative and how to create synergies
- Integrating creativity in the learning process
- Develop innovation through creative processes and achieving better results.

Introduction

Creativity is the use of imagination or original ideas in order to create something. It is a crucial soft skill and one of the main skills in which humans still outperform robots, yet it's often seen as unnecessary by those who excel in hard skills.

“Creativity is what fuels big ideas, challenges employees’ way of thinking, and opens the door to new business opportunities. “Creativity” and “innovation” are often used interchangeably for that reason, but are two separate concepts.”

<https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/creativity-importance-in-business/>

Benefits of creativity in the workplace:

- Improved teamwork and bonding
- Increased ability to attract and retain quality employees
- Increased problem solving and productivity

https://www.bestpracticeconsulting.com.au/blog/Articles/post/Fostering_creativity_in_the_workplace/

How to increase creativity in the workplace:

- Encourage in-person collaboration
- Use play to create more personal participation
- Diversify the team
- Create a flexible workplace
- Praise successes
- Involve employees in decisions
- Ask for, listen to and give constructive feedback

<https://filestage.io/blog/29-tips-award-winning-companies-increase-creativity-workplace/>

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Introduction

Thinking outside the box in the workplace can sometimes be difficult, but when properly done, can be the innovation necessary to take an average business or project to the next level. Thinking outside the box involves using creativity to consider different methods in order to reach a desired outcome.

Playing and working have typically been considered opposites but recently psychologists and researchers around the world have been discussing the benefits of playing in the workplace and have declared it an effective tool. Studies have shown that including play in the workplace increases productivity, creativity, collaboration, focus, and employee satisfaction. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-power-of-play-at-work_b_12011462?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAACP3_E8PZIMKA5c3LNooB4_HEqc1qCtM-gLYU2dRDoTDtPAUpSN7BkkPmhRRgybl5nMV0WSnlteAz_YoKDFRUjxSOgTuWjxu9a_3r8vI93j0Omghz18Q3IRL4irQrmjrxF5QwUF0bKr9MKIgpbuQTL9uzVp4FBn_RpfHi2Eyya-fs

Benefits of thinking outside the box:

- Varied perspective
- High-quality work
- Creative problem-solving
- Flexible and different

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/325989>

Tips for thinking outside the box:

- Change up a daily routine
- Spend more time thinking
- Switch media outlets to more positive news
- Devote time without electronics
- Connect with team members and supervisors on a personal level

<https://www.bottomlineperformance.com/how-to-think-outside-the-box-at-work/>

Example Activities

→ Option1: *1001 Ways*

In this brainstorming activity students write the names of everyday objects on slips of paper and place them in a dish/box/hat. Students must then each draw one slip of paper and think of as many new uses for the object as possible. Student has one minute to describe them to the class and then classmates may add additional uses.

<https://www.schrockguide.net/uploads/3/9/2/2/392267/critical-thinking-workbook.pdf>

→ Option 2: *Sketch it Out*

Everything around us started with an idea. In this activity students will use creative visualization to sketch out an idea for a new invention or concept. Students have complete free range but are expected to present their idea to the class in some way at the end.

→ **Option 3: *The Power of Play***

Teachers may have students read about “the power of play” in the workplace and have students work in groups to invent their own games or activities for the class to try.

<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/minds-business/playing-up-the-benefits-of-play-at-work.html>

<https://www.lifehack.org/articles/work/how-harness-the-power-play-transform-your-work-culture.html>

USING VISUAL ELEMENTS TO ELEVATE YOUR PRESENTATIONS

Introduction

Developing presentation skills is important for improving communication and creating positive experiences.

Communication is how people exchange information and, when effective, it allows your audience to understand the content. This can be done through different techniques such as the pace, the tone and the presenters' confidence. These skills are important because they help to:

- Communicate complex information in simple and interesting ways to keep the audience engaged
- Communicate thoughts and feelings effectively
- Develop self-confidence
- Gain real-world skills, such as the ability to present accomplishments and skills during a job interview

But we shouldn't forget about the quality of the presentation. Another important presentation skill is learning to introduce variety in content in order to keep the audience interested. This can be done by introducing audio-visual content and images that support the narrative. Instead of talking all the time, the presenter can engage the audience with other forms of communication, and using visual elements is one of the most fundamental ways to engage the audience. Visuals play a major role and according to several studies this is how people process visual information:

- 90% of the information transmitted to our brain is visual.
- 80% of people are more likely to read content that has colored visuals.
- View rates (online) increase by 94% when content is accompanied by images.
- Presentations with visual elements are 43% more persuasive than those without.

Characteristic of a GREAT presentation:

- Those that require minimal effort from your audience
- Know your message
- Less is more: avoid information overload and make sure there is white space
- The message should be simple to understand and to repeat to other people
- Create a consistent visual style
- Make it custom, try to avoid default themes
- Use quality photography
- Use solid colors as a background
- Use standard-looking fonts and only use "crazy" fonts sporadically as headlines
- Make sure your presentation is readable

<https://www.presentation-guru.com/the-best-way-to-use-visual-elements-in-your-slides/>

<https://www.workfront.com/blog/10-tips-for-designing-presentations-that-dont-suck-part-1>

Example Activities

<https://www.intracon-spain.com/five-elements-create-visually-stimulating-powerpoint-increase-sales/>

→ **Option 1: PowerPoint 101**

This exercise can be done orally. The teacher will show several examples of bad presentations and the students should identify the problems and offer solutions.

→ **Option 2: Gathering**

This exercise can be done by groups or individually. The teacher will give the students a general (e.g: environmental, financial, politics, business, touristic...) or concrete topic (e.g: the use of technology in the classroom, the issue of micro plastic, tourism in the Canary Islands...) and students will have to gather resources that go great together: pictures, lines and vectors, videos, types of fonts, background color, charts...

→ **Option 3: : From Zero to Hero**

<https://24slides.com/presentbetter/bad-powerpoint-examples-you-should-avoid/>

This exercise can be done by groups or individually. In this exercise, students have to modify a “bad” presentation and turn it into an “ideal” presentation considering the aforementioned characteristics. The teacher will provide them with an example of how a good presentation should look like and analyses the characteristics before the students start the exercise (if it hasn’t been done before).

EVALUATION

Evaluation process will help the teacher to understand if the students have assimilated the content and the learning objectives of the course.

In order to do so, we recommend to track the students performance gradually and regularly through different exercises (oral and written assessments) as well as a final test/quiz. In doing so, teachers get immediate feedback on what works and what doesn't.

Some ideas and suggestions that have been proven to work in the classroom are:

- Informal observation: this gives information that tests don't usually give. Teachers can take notes to track their students strengths and needs.
- Continuous evaluation: through class work, exercises, attendance and participation.
- Encourage self- assessment: it helps the students to monitor their own progress. This process is highly motivating and empowering.
- Providing multiple test formats: teachers can use multiple choice, long answer, short answer, diagrams, charts, fill-in-the-blank, and other graphic organizers to have students answer questions.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment and evaluation are very important parts of the soft skills improvement process because this is where teachers and students get to see if all their hard work has been effective. It also gives students opportunities to receive constructive feedback in order to understand where they still need to concentrate their efforts in terms of their own learning. For this reason, teachers may want to keep a balance between formative and summative assessments.

Tips for assessment of soft skills

- Learn the essential skills needed
<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/get-started.htm>
- Checklist or portfolio to keep track of progress
<http://lmi.mt.gov/Portals/193/Publications/Career-Pubs/For%20Job%20Seekers/PEP-Talk-Supp.pdf?ver=2015-10-27-120828-500×tamp=1485805741665>
- Self-assessment of key soft skills
<https://www.makingbusinessmatter.co.uk/self-assessment-soft-skills/>
- Check writing skills reviewing a resume and a cover letter
- Assess verbal skills with open-ended questions
<https://www.bcjobs.ca/blog/soft-skills-tips-for-evaluating-soft-skills/>
- Assess interpersonal skills by giving a hypothetical problem to solve
<https://www.pagepersonnel.ch/advice/management-advice/attraction-and-recruitment-advice/soft-skills-how-assess-them>
- Scenarios: simple, complex or multiple choice
<https://learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/2467/boost-assessment-effectiveness-with-mini-scenarios>
- Questions to assess soft skills in an interview
<https://resources.workable.com/tutorial/soft-skills-interview-questions>

PLANNING THE LESSON

Teaching tips

Teachers should remember that soft skills may not always be taught using the same methods as hard skills. Teaching soft skills requires a different approach and often calls for experiential education, as well as discussion, brainstorming, and guided reflection. However teaching methods are not the only difference. Informal assessment is often seen as the best form of evaluation or assessment of learning outcomes in the field of soft skills. In order to successfully teach students and encourage development of effective soft skills, teachers should prepare themselves by becoming familiar with these innovative methods and ideas. Resources can be found below.

Each lesson should include:

1. Objective(s) or learning outcome(s)
2. Introduction
3. Real world examples
4. Activities or exercises
5. Evaluation or assessment

Experiential learning:

https://www.mcgill.ca/elc/files/elc/doc_ryerson_bestpracticesryerson.pdf

Guided reflection/reflective writing:

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/libraryservices/library/asc/documents/public/Short-Guide-Reflective-Writing.pdf>

<http://www.umsl.edu/services/ctl/faculty/instructionalsupport/reflection-strat.html>

Leading discussion:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/alternatives-lecturing/discussions/facilitating-effective-discussions>

Brainstorming:

<https://blog.ed.ted.com/2017/03/10/how-to-lead-a-brainstorm-for-young-introverts-and-extroverts-too/>

Assessment:

<https://teachereducation.steinhardt.nyu.edu/assessment-methods/>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

(all links accessed on January 24, 2020)

Discussion Question Activities. Accessible at:

<https://www.uis.edu/ion/resources/instructional-activities-index/discussion-question-activities/>

Improving the MOOC learning outcomes throughout informal learning activities. Accessible at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301429228_Improving_the_MOOC_learning_outcomes_through_out_informal_learning_activities

MOOC completion and course activities. Accessible at:

<https://learninginnovation.duke.edu/blog/2014/04/mooc-completion-course-activities/>

Activities for online courses: The Beginning. Accessible at:

<http://www.emoderationskills.com/activities-for-online-courses-the-beginning/>

Competencias profesionales 4.0. Accessible at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321338579_Cometencias_profesionales_40

¿Estamos preparados? Competencias profesionales para la Industria 4.0. Accessible at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=334&v=iPsDiB13j28

The 10 skills you need to thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Accessible at:

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-10-skills-you-need-to-thrive-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>

Towards Industrial Revolution 4.0: Employers' Expectations on Fresh Engineering Graduates.

Accessible at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329356058_Towards_Industrial_Revolution_40_Employers'_Expectations_on_Fresh_Engineering_Graduates

The Communication Soft Skills You Need at Work (+ How to Use Them). Accessible at:

<https://www.careercontessa.com/advice/soft-skills-definition/>

COMMUNICATION SKILLS – SOFT SKILLS CLUSTER. Accessible at:

<http://duncannuggets.com/communication-skills>

Leading through the Fourth Industrial Revolution Putting People at the Centre. Accessible at:

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Leading_through_the_Fourth_Industrial_Revolution.pdf

e-Leadership Capacidades digitales para pymes. Accessible at:

http://eskills-lead.eu/fileadmin/lead/brochure-lead/eleadership_digital_skills_v1_es.pdf

Get Started With Mind Tools Test Your Skills! Accessible at:

<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/get-started.htm>

A Quiz About Soft Skills. Accessible at:

<https://www.proprofs.com/quiz-school/story.php?title=soft-skills-1>

Important Job Skills for Engineers. Accessible at:

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/list-of-engineering-skills-2063751#teamwork>

How to Make a Mind Map. Accessible at:

<https://www.lucidchart.com/pages/how-to-make-a-mind-map>

Resources used by Web2Learn

Common Interview Questions. Accessible at:

<https://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/interview-advice/interview-questions/common-interview-questions>,

10 Great Interview Questions to Identify Candidates' Soft Skills. Accessible at:

<https://www.omniagroup.com/identify-candidates-soft-skills/>

Case Study. Accessible at:

<https://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/interview-advice/interview-questions/case-study>

7 Tips for Getting the Most out of Scenario-Based Training Simulations. Accessible at:

<https://www.ispringsolutions.com/blog/7-tips-for-getting-the-most-out-of-scenario-based-training-simulations>

Produce amazing surveys in minutes. Accessible at:

https://www.survey-maker.com/?matchtype=p&device=c&keyword=create%20a%20survey&adpoistion=1t2&location=1007565&adis=407878072710&gclid=EAlaIQobChMI7Kidu8v45gIViEHTCh3fjg94EAAYAiAAEgLGKvD_BwE

Classroom tips to help integrate soft skills. Accessible at:

<https://etonx.com/classroom-tips-to-help-integrate-soft-skills/>

A few techniques to teach soft skills in the classroom. Accessible at:

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/few-techniques-teach-soft-skills-classroom>

Self-Awareness & Body Language. Accessible at:

<https://medium.com/swlh/self-awareness-body-language-bcd5d3528aff>

Getting Students Ready for the Workplace: strategies to integrate soft skills in your class. Accessible

at: <https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2015/10/13/strategies-integrate-soft-skills-class/>

Top soft skills apps. Accessible at:

<https://virtualspeech.com/learn/soft-skills-apps>

Ways to Improve Soft Skills. Accessible at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_DB7JZy9kKo

Soft Skills Training: Inspirational Quotes. Accessible at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OUQz_en7ml

Get Started With Mind Tools. Accessible at:

<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/get-started.htm>

Soft Skills Checklist. Accessible at:

<http://lmi.mt.gov/Portals/193/Publications/Career-Pubs/For%20Job%20Seekers/PEP-Talk-Supp.pdf?ver=2015-10-27-120828-500×tamp=1485805741665>

Self assessment soft skills. Accessible at:

<https://www.makingbusinessmatter.co.uk/self-assessment-soft-skills/>

Soft skills: Tips for evaluating soft skills. Accessible at:

<https://www.bcjobs.ca/blog/soft-skills-tips-for-evaluating-soft-skills/>

Soft skills - how to assess them. Accessible at:

EU Funded Project

CRETE: Critical Skills for Electronic Engineers of 2020

<https://www.pagepersonnel.ch/advice/management-advice/attraction-and-recruitment-advice/soft-skills-how-assess-them>

Boost Assessment Effectiveness with Mini-Scenarios. Accessible at:

<https://learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/2467/boost-assessment-effectiveness-with-mini-scenarios>

How to assess soft skills in an interview. Accessible at:

<https://resources.workable.com/tutorial/soft-skills-interview-questions>