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Soft skills Vs Technical Skills by [Mike Pagan](#)

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It is amazing how many business people have the same initial response to the phrase "Soft Skills Training". Be honest, what was your initial reaction when you saw the newsletter entitled "Soft Skills vs. Technical Skills"? Was it positive or were you sceptical? I believe that we have all been conditioned to think "soft skills" means fluffy nonsense that might be good for us and nice to do but only if time and budget allows or any other excuse can be made to avoid them.

For a legal firm or IT organisation, technical skills are mandatory - be that professional CPD requirements or the need to be up to date with the latest software and enhancements. So why then, when the training is not counted as technical skills, do they become "soft"?

I believe soft skills training should be rebadged as "hard skills" for a number of reasons.

It can be very difficult for companies to measure the immediate success of soft skills training. Many soft skills take a long time to learn or old, bad or indifferent habits take a long time to retrain and break out of. This means that there isn't an immediate response. Take for example first aid training, at the end of it there is a certificate for the attendee and should someone in the office fall ill then there is someone on hand that may well have a massive impact as to whether the person lives or dies; there is also a legal requirement to have the right number of people certified as first aiders. Contrast that with coaching difficult people, customer care or speaking skills - none of which have a legal requirement to be in place, all of which are so important to the survival of a business yet all are stereotyped as "soft" skills and treated as a nice to have.

For accountants to be able to complete their work they need to know where to put the numbers to create the documents that balance the books and pay the right taxes. Without technical accountancy training they cannot do their job. That is just one aspect of their job but they still need to know how to communicate, how to manage, how to overcome adversity or simply put, how to become better business people.

"Soft skills" are not soft, they are hard, very hard in places and can take a lot of financial and time investment to have maximum impact. Without the "soft skills" a business will never stand out in the crowded marketplace, they may be technically excellent car valeters or carpenters but do they possess all the necessary skills to be the best business they can be?

The reason why you had that gut feel at the beginning of this newsletter when you read the title was because many people use the phrase "soft skills" in a dismissive way, often to hide the areas of our lives that we really need to work on but try to avoid doing. By giving it the less than important title of "soft", we can permit ourselves to pay less attention to it and what it means and therefore avoid it more easily. Rebadging these training skills as "HARD" skills makes them stand out and be seen - not so easy to avoid!

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Mike Pagan is a highly sought after professional motivational speaker, conference speaker, and business coach. He has half a lifetimes experience in the corporate world with HSBC Group and

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My passion is productivity, one of my greatest frustrations in life is seeing talent and opportunities go to waste because of faffing about.

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