

Soft Skills – so what?



Following on from the 6th May, 2018 BESIG webinar about the future of soft skills, here are a few tips, resources and references for you:



The essence of this webinar was about unpacking, to some extent, what “soft skills” actually are, direct you to some useful definitions and statistics about them and what employers are looking for and to examine the “soft skills training landscape” and the opportunities therein for the Business English trainer. I also wanted to introduce you to my rationale for distilling these skills into 7 key competences and why we ALL need to develop these day-to-day but also take the risk for introducing them into our training too.

www.unimenta.com - join here – it’s free and there are lots of useful free experiential learning soft skills training resources you can use immediately as well as further reading/references on this.

Soft skills and what employers want – references and resources

Pearson 2030 research - <https://futureskills.pearson.com>

Future work skills 2020 - <https://unimenta.com/product/future-work-skills-2020/>

Interesting research into types of soft skills - <http://www.nationalsoftskills.org>

The 7 skills of adaptability, critical thinking, empathy, integrity, being proactive, optimism and resilience

I believe that what we need to focus on in order to develop the competences needed for today and tomorrow’s workplace are self-awareness and behavioural change. The quickest route to self-awareness from a training perspective is experiential learning.

Information on each skill - <https://unimenta.com/seven-skills/>

Daily tips to help you develop each skill – scroll down to the bottom of this page to sign up for a daily video clip, quote and tip - <https://unimenta.com/the-advantage/>

The Neuroscience of Empathy - <https://unimenta.com/product/the-neuroscience-of-empathy/>

Resources for resilience and positive psychology -
<https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/services/penn-resilience-training>

Using the experiential approach in your training

Apart from approaching Business English training from the angle of “soft skills plus English” rather than the other way around, remember that you as BE trainer are more than perfectly equipped to deliver this kind of training. The soft skills “market” is unregulated, ambiguous and over-crowded. In the midst of this are opportunities to demonstrate the value you are adding to what you offer, find opportunities to collaborate and introduce soft skills focus into your work. Consider also offering soft skills training to native speakers – they need this PLUS they still need language skills!

Some ways to do this (there are lots!):

- Very short EL activities followed by the complete EL cycle as explained during the webinar
- Allow reflection questions to be in L1 – a simple reflection process is also on the webinar
- Consider introducing mindfulness – takes 5 minutes and is fast track to developing focus and attention – crucial for active listening and empathy
- If doing a session on CVs/interviews – show them Amy Cuddy’s great TED talk on power posing, teach them about resilience and perseverance
- If doing a session on presentation skills same as above PLUS breathing, voice work, drama exercises and link in to how they are feeling and why
- One simple thing I often do is take coloured pipe cleaners in and get each person to choose one and then shape it into something that depicts in some way how they are feeling. Short and impactful.
- If working on team project include reflection on how they contributed (or not) to that activity. For really focused work on team, just do a simple activity like passing a plastic bowl around with your feet and THEN reflection on what happened, what worked, what didn’t etc. – I guarantee you that whatever behaviour they exhibited during that short exercise is the same as the way they behave in a team exercise. And you want them to experience that and work that out for themselves.

