

BOOKLET

12 SELECTED SOFT SKILLS IN THE WORKPLACE



TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROJECT: Breaking The Ceiling (BTC) - Soft skills to deconstruct the "glass ceiling" and gender stereotypes in the workplace.

INTRODUCTION

01

DEFINITION OF SOFT SKILLS

02

REFERENCES

27



INTRODUCTION

The booklet provides training material that is part of the Erasmus+ "BREAKING THE CEILING. Soft skills to deconstruct the "glass ceiling" and gender stereotypes in the workplace". It is a project co-funded by the European Union and involves six European organizations, Europass (Germany), VAEV (Austria), Skill Up Srl (Italy), Step by step (Iceland), E-school (Greece), and INDEPCIE (Spain).

The material developed is a didactic resource that compiles the **12 essential soft skills that women need to know and practice in order to strengthen their professional careers**. The project consortium, based on surveys conducted in national contexts, identified and selected a set of competencies to strengthen emotional intelligence and related interpersonal competencies in the context of women's professional lives. Questionnaires disseminated to working women in each of the countries have reinforced this increased awareness and selected the 12 essential interpersonal competencies to break the glass ceiling in their respective career paths.

The BTC project acts as a catalyst to encourage this development of professional and personal development among professional women, as it is one of the most important and widespread problems in the world of work. Many organisations have made progress in promoting gender equality, but there is still a long way to go. There is still an invisible barrier that prevents women from reaching the top. We need greater awareness of the problem, as well as concrete measures to achieve full gender equality.

What is the glass ceiling?

The glass ceiling is a metaphor for the invisible barriers that prevent women from rising to positions of power. It represents the invisible but undeniable barriers that stand between women and leadership positions within businesses, corporations and other organisations. In other words, the term glass ceiling refers to a set of implicit, unwritten rules that make it difficult for women to access top management positions within the company.

In this didactic material, you will find the definition of the 12 Soft Skills, what it means in the professional field and, more specifically, how it affects women. It is supplementary material to make professional women of all ages aware of the importance of interpersonal competencies in today's labour market.

We hope you can put it into practice in your professional work to strengthen based on your work experience!



Co-funded by
the European Union

DEFINITION OF THE SOFT SKILLS

- 1 ACTIVE LISTENING
- 2 COMMUNICATION
- 3 CONFLICT-RESOLUTION
- 4 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
- 5 EMPATHY
- 6 FLEXIBILITY
- 7 ORGANISATION
- 8 POSITIVE WORK - ETHIC
- 9 PROBLEM - SOLVING
- 10 SELF-CONFIDENCE
- 11 TEAMWORK
- 12 TIME - MANAGEMENT

1. ACTIVE LISTENING

GENERAL DEFINITION

Active listening is a crucial communication skill that can enhance personal and professional relationships. It is a technique that involves paying full attention to the speaker, understanding their message, and providing feedback through verbal and nonverbal cues. Research has shown active listening can improve interpersonal communication, reduce conflict, and improve mental health outcomes.

Active listening was first introduced in 1957 by Carl Rogers and Richard Farson in their book titled "Active Listening," where they defined it as a method that "requires that we get inside the speaker, that we grasp, from his point of view, just what it is he is communicating to us".

According to a study conducted by Reis et al. (2013), active listening can improve communication in intimate relationships, leading to greater intimacy and satisfaction. Another study by Killian (2017) found that active listening can improve communication in the workplace, resulting in a more positive work environment.

In addition to improving communication and relationships, active listening has also been shown to have mental health benefits. A study by Bauer et al. (2016) found that active listening can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.

To practice active listening, one must focus on the speaker and show interest through nonverbal cues such as nodding, maintaining eye contact, and using affirmative phrases such as "I see" or "I understand." Active listening also involves asking open-ended questions and summarizing the speaker's message to ensure understanding.

In conclusion, active listening is a vital communication skill that can improve personal and professional relationships and mental health outcomes. Individuals can create a supportive and empathetic environment by showing interest and understanding, leading to more effective communication and positive outcomes.

1. ACTIVE LISTENING

IMPORTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Developing active listening in the professional field means intentionally improving your listening skills to facilitate effective communication, build trust, and achieve better outcomes in the workplace.

Active listening is an essential and valuable skill that can benefit individuals, teams, and organizations in many ways, including better communication, stronger relationships, increased job satisfaction, improved decision-making, and more successful outcomes;

- helps individuals understand their colleagues' perspectives and concerns, leading to better communication and collaboration.
- is crucial for teams to work effectively together.
- is vital for organisations to create a positive and productive work environment.

BENEFITS FOR PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Active listening is a skill that can significantly benefit professional women in the workplace in several ways:

- **Building relationships:** Helps women build stronger relationships with their colleagues, supervisors, and clients.
- **Overcoming stereotypes:** Women sometimes face stereotypes and biases that can prevent them from being heard or taken seriously in the workplace.
- **Resolving conflicts:** Helps women resolve conflicts more effectively.
- **Enhancing leadership skills:** This crucial leadership skill helps women inspire and motivate their team members.

In summary, active listening is a powerful tool that can help professional women overcome stereotypes, build relationships, resolve conflicts, and enhance their leadership skills in the workplace. By developing this skill, women can advance in their careers and contribute to the success of their organizations.

2.COMMUNICATION

GENERAL DEFINITION

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, communication is *the transmission or exchange of information by speaking, writing or any other medium. [...] The successful transmission or exchange of ideas and feelings*. In other words, we can say that communication is simply the act of transferring information from one place, person or group to another. All communication involves (at least) a sender, a message and a receiver (or multiple receivers).

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, communication can also be *the exchange of information and expression of feeling that can lead to understanding and a written or spoken message*. It is an act of establishing and enabling communication between individuals and others. Apart from verbal communication, where you can listen to a person and understand what they mean, and written communication, where you can read their meaning, there is also non-verbal communication, where you observe a person and infer their meaning.

Individuals should be able to communicate in a variety of communication situations, both orally and in writing and with other media, and to monitor and adapt their own communication to the needs of the situation. This ability also includes the ability to distinguish and use different types of texts, to search for, collect and process information, to use aids and to formulate and express one's own oral and written arguments in a convincing manner appropriate to the context. This ability also includes appropriate and creative interaction in a wide range of social and cultural contexts, in education and training, at work, at home and in leisure.

Types of communication include verbal, written, narrative, decisive talk and non-verbal communication, e.g. facial expressions, posture, tone of voice, body language, eye contact and even touch.

An effective communicator understands their audience, chooses an appropriate communication channel, tailors their message to that channel and codes the message so that it is not misunderstood by the recipient(s).

2. COMMUNICATION

IMPORTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Effective communication in the workplace is the ability to create a free flow of information with and between different stakeholders at all levels of the organisation to achieve effective results. There are some important benefits of effective communication in the professional sphere. Communication can improve productivity and boost morale. It can also increase employee satisfaction and build trust in management. In addition, effective communication in the workplace can strengthen teamwork and increase employee engagement.

Besides written, oral and non-verbal communication, there are some other communication skills that are important for any job, such as presentation, public speaking, active listening, clarity, confidence, friendliness, clarity and conciseness, respect, etc.

BENEFITS FOR PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Communication and its benefits are crucial for professional success, teamwork, and business results. Effective communication is the process that holds the company together. For women in the workplace, communicating productively and confidently is especially important to be heard, gain advantages and achieve goals.

The benefits of effective workplace communication for women may include:

- Improved collaboration in the industry
- Relationship building
- Improved trust and credibility
- Promoting team building
- Creating clarity and direction
- Increased commitment

Consistently applying productive and assertive communication in the workplace requires self-awareness, commitment and significant effort. But the benefits are worth the investment, especially for women in leadership positions.



Co-funded by
the European Union

3. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

GENERAL DEFINITION

Conflict resolution skills refer to effectively managing and resolving conflicts in interpersonal, professional, or organizational settings. These skills involve identifying the underlying issues, understanding the perspectives of all parties involved, and developing strategies to address and resolve the conflict productively and constructively.

Many societal developments between the outbreak of World War I and the end of World War II were the precursors for contemporary conflict resolution. They include research and social innovations that point to alternative ways of thinking about and conducting conflicts and ending them.

Researchers Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann developed five conflict resolution strategies that people use to handle conflict, including avoiding, defeating, compromising, accommodating, and collaborating. This is based on the assumption that people choose how cooperative and assertive to be in a conflict. This model is known as the Thomas-Kilmann model.

Conflict resolution theory guides the informal or formal process that two or more parties use to solve their dispute peacefully.

Conflict resolution skills include a range of abilities, such as active listening, effective communication, empathy, problem-solving, negotiation, compromise, and mediation. These skills are essential when individuals or groups have conflicting needs, interests, or goals and can help prevent the escalation of conflicts and the breakdown of relationships.

Effective conflict resolution skills require practice and ongoing development. With time and experience, individuals can develop the ability to manage and resolve conflicts that promote understanding, cooperation, and mutual respect, leading to positive outcomes for all parties involved.



Co-funded by
the European Union

3. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

IMPORTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Conflict resolution skills are extremely important in the workplace. Conflicts and disagreements are bound to arise in any workplace, regardless of the industry or size of the organization. These conflicts can range from minor disagreements to major disputes that can affect the morale and productivity of the entire team.

Effective conflict resolution skills enable individuals to handle conflicts constructively and find mutually acceptable solutions to problems. They also help to build positive relationships and promote a healthy work environment.

Without these skills, conflicts can escalate and lead to negative outcomes such as tension, stress, low morale, reduced productivity, and even employee turnover. In some cases, unresolved conflicts can lead to legal action or serious consequences.

BENEFITS FOR PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Conflict resolution skills help women professionally by improving their communication, boosting their confidence, enhancing their problem-solving abilities, fostering stronger professional relationships, and increasing their chances for career advancement. Women can create a positive work environment by effectively resolving conflicts, asserting themselves professionally, and standing out in their careers.

Conflict resolution skills benefit professional women in the workplace in several ways, including:

- Improved communication
- Increased confidence
- Enhanced problem-solving abilities
- Stronger professional relationships
- Career Advancement



Co-funded by
the European Union

4. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

GENERAL DEFINITION

In recent years, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been gaining recognition as an important soft skill in many sectors. The term was pioneered in the late 20th century by authors such as Howard Gardner (1983), Mayer and Salovey (1990) and Daniel Goleman (1995), who put emotion and emotional capabilities at the centre of intelligence assessment.

Emotional intelligence allows you to understand and manage your emotions to self-motivate yourself and create positive social interactions; it is the first step to realising your true potential. According to the authors, the main characteristics of emotional intelligence in people are knowing how to recognise one's own and other people's emotions, adapting one's emotions to the environment and using them to guide cognitive abilities to achieve specific goals. Daniel Goleman states: "It is the ability to recognise one's own feelings and those of others, to motivate ourselves, to manage emotions well, both in ourselves and in our human relationships".

Howard Gardner, in 1983, stated that measuring intelligence by IQ was a mistake. In fact, he confirmed that there were eight different types of intelligence, among which two types of emotional intelligence stand out: intrapersonal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence. Goleman also includes in his work these two basic types of emotional intelligence. In other words, Goleman's basis is Gardner's proposal, but with the addition of different details of each type, which are detailed below:

- Intrapersonal intelligence. It is related to our ability to relate to our inner self. It is made up of *self-awareness* (how we understand our strengths and weaknesses and the emotions we feel). It is accompanied by *self-regulation* (the ability to regulate our impulses or emotions) and *self-motivation* (the ability to maintain the desire to achieve the proposed goals).
- Interpersonal intelligence. It depends on the relationships you have with other people. Its two pillars are *empathy* (your ability to understand other people's emotions) and *social skills* (the way you interact with others in an assertive way).

4. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

IMPORTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Emotional intelligence consists of knowing how to handle situations in which uncontrollable emotions appear, using techniques and strategies that allow us to reflect and think about what is the best option. Daniel Goleman explains that intellectual intelligence (IQ) accounts for only 20% of a person's success and that the other 80% is attributed to emotional intelligence. Studies show that productivity can increase by up to 20% when team members use emotional intelligence correctly.

If we look at our own emotions we experience a range of emotions at any time and because of our relationships with other people. Working on EI is extremely important in the workplace for many reasons but we can highlight mainly two:

- 1 - It is associated with higher job satisfaction.
- 2 - It is closely related to work productivity.

BENEFITS FOR PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

The importance and benefits of emotional intelligence are immense in terms of personal and professional development. It is a key skill in the professional world and can lead to advancement in education and career success, improving relationships and enhancing a wide range of skills.

Women seeking to develop their careers need to improve their emotional competence because it increases their ability to: cope with pressure, build confidence, negotiate, influence others, navigate workplace politics and take smart risks.

The benefits of developing emotional intelligence for women in the workplace:

- Maintain close and meaningful relationships.
- You will be able to handle everyday stress.
- You will be socially competent.
- More optimal well-being.
- You will have optimal psychological performance.



Co-funded by
the European Union

5. EMPATHY

GENERAL DEFINITION

Empathy can be defined as the ability to feel the emotions of others, or the ability to imagine what others are thinking and feeling. It is possible to see the ability of empathy in many emotions. According to Merriam-Webster, empathy is defined in part as “the act of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and indirectly experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another.” While people can adapt to their own emotions, it can be difficult to achieve this harmony with the emotions of others. For people with high empathy, this situation is easier, and they can feel the emotions of others. Empathic people do this by cognitively and emotionally perceiving an experience that someone else has experienced or observed. Empathy studies have revealed that empathetic people are more likely to show compassion and help others.

According to the Greater Good Science Center, a research institute that studies psychology, sociology, and neuroscience, “Empathy is a building block of morality—following the Golden Rule helps people put themselves in someone else's shoes.” It helps us understand their perspectives, needs, and intentions.” Empathic people usually show similar characteristics that include frequently thinking about how others are feeling, feeling overwhelmed by tragic events, being good at listening to others, being one of the people others usually talk to about their problems, and/or being good at understanding other people's feelings.

Psychologist Daniel Goleman defined empathy in terms of five basic elements:

- The first is to understand others. People who can understand others are good at both verbal and nonverbal communication and can follow emotional cues.
- The second is to develop others, which means mobilizing them in the face of their needs and concerns and helping them develop to their full potential.
- The third is to have a service orientation. It is to understand the people you serve and to try to offer the best alternative for them.
- The fourth is leveraging diversity. It means interacting with different people as they need to and recognizing that different types of people bring different opportunities and developments.
- The fifth is political awareness. This shows the importance of collective work.



Co-funded by
the European Union

5. EMPATHY

IMPORTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Our lives, both personally and professionally, depend on our capacity for empathy and interpersonal connection. Empathy in the workplace is an important soft skill that has often been overlooked. Showing empathy helps leaders and workers to get along with people from different departments, teams, nations, and cultural backgrounds. Empathy in the workplace is positively related to job performance.

Empathy facilitates an environment where open communication between all participants in the workplace is supported. Understanding another person's perspective, strengthening interpersonal relationships, and gaining a wider perspective on the world are all made possible through empathy. Empathy is an important factor of emotional competence, improves leadership effectiveness and may lead to favorable results for both individuals and organizations.

BENEFITS FOR PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

It was found that women in professional environments often offered emotional support and checked on the general well-being of their colleagues. 87% of organizations deemed this labor to be vital. Enhancing empathy at the workplace benefits all employees but it is especially important to acknowledge that women face challenges that are different than those of their male colleagues. Empathy enhances

- Retention
- Engagement
- Inclusion

Moreover, a more empathetic work environment can foster:

- Higher creativity
- Less Burnout



Co-funded by
the European Union

6. FLEXIBILITY

GENERAL DEFINITION

Flexibility can be defined as the ability to adapt and work in different situations and with different people. It is the ability to adapt to work environments, to the constant changes that occur in them and involves understanding and valuing different positions or conflicting points of view.

According to the World Economic Forum's "The Future of Jobs 2020" report, as the adoption of technology increases, 50% of workers will need to retrain by 2025. This new scenario will cause HR professionals in companies to look for candidate profiles that are much more open to change, with an interest in learning new tasks and adapting to new times.

To help guide people's change towards flexibility it can be suggested that the person increases their ability to objectively recognise the factors present in each situation, these elements provide the keys to deciding what behaviour to adopt. For example, to achieve a result with a very dependent person, it works to offer a directive behaviour, to indicate what we are going to do and how; on the contrary, if we are dealing with a person who does not tolerate orders from others, a suitable way is to make him/her participate, to ask him/her to express and suggest ideas. The nature of the tasks demands the adoption of specific behaviours and a person has to develop the sensitivity to notice differences. The development of flexibility requires systematic work to increase perception, i.e. to become more able to read the elements that are present in each situation.

Identifying emotions, accepting them and keeping them at appropriate levels, while encouraging others, will help you to improve your flexibility and adaptability precisely through emotional intelligence. But no one has ever taught us how to do this and it is not easy for us to do so. It is unknown how the labour market will evolve in the coming years and we may be faced with jobs that do not even exist today. Therefore, having flexible employees capable of adapting to these circumstances, of learning and, why not, of unlearning what they have learnt, without producing an emotional imbalance in their person, will be fundamental.



Co-funded by
the European Union

6. FLEXIBILITY

IMPORTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

In the labour market, changes force us to ask ourselves the question: Am I ready for a new challenge? Or what else can I bring to my profession? This is where soft skills become crucial, as they allow you to advance your career. But what makes a flexible worker?

- **Mental flexibility:** It is important to keep an open mind and be able to demonstrate that you can integrate new information and draw conclusions from it.
- **Responsiveness.** Being able to respond with a positive attitude and being willing to learn new ways of achieving goals and objectives is a key competence.
- **Creativity:** Looking for new ideas, different ways of doing things, experimenting and having the confidence to improvise.
- **Modifying your behaviour:** You can adjust your working style or approach to meet the needs of a given situation or environment.

BENEFITS FOR PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Flexibility is a skill that you can and should develop, especially when in a work environment to overcome any obstacle or gender stereotype, as it produces the following benefits:

- Greater ability to adapt to changes, both personal, professional and environmental.
- Being aware that the ability to adapt depends on the effort we put into it, and the importance of having objectives and goals for improvement.
- One type of skill is "cognitive flexibility", which allows us to move from one concept to another or to adapt behaviour to achieve goals in a new or changing environment. Cognitive flexibility gives us the ability to see that what we are doing is not conducive to success and to make appropriate changes to achieve it.
- Flexible thinking is key to creativity; that is, the ability to think of new ideas, make new connections between ideas and make new inventions. It also supports academic and work skills, such as problem solving.



Co-funded by
the European Union

7. ORGANISATION

GENERAL DEFINITION

An ordered structure for arranging or classifying things is what we mean when we talk about organization as a soft skill. This is because organization refers to the capacity to handle your tasks in a timely manner. In addition to this, it assists in the distribution or disposal of persons or things in a proper or methodical manner, in a way that generates the greatest potential results for all of the constituents.

Your capacity for organization reflects how well-equipped you are to complete a task. In addition to this, it displays how quickly you are able to share the resources you have, keep to your deadlines, and relate your outcomes to other projects. Last but not least, it demonstrates that you are able to make an accurate assessment of a situation and that you are able to figure out how to rank and categorize the problems that need to be fixed.

Organizational skills can be classified as internal and as external.

- Mental abilities pertain to internal organization. They assist you in analyzing complex problems in order to devise solutions. These are the skills that enable you to maintain control under pressure. Internal organizational skills include creative and strategic reasoning, among others. This is where your mental fitness typically comes into action. Your brain possesses a variety of skill sets that it employs in various situations. It is essential to maintain your mental fitness in order to rely on these skills when necessary.
- External organizational abilities. These organizational abilities are more about how you collaborate with others. They help you maintain a clean and clutter-free workspace, making it simpler to complete your tasks. It involves establishing deadlines for goals, breaking objectives down into manageable tasks, communicating with others, and collaborating with them. You will perform well as a team member if you have strong external organizational skills. Prioritization, documentation, workflow management, and teamwork are a few examples of external organizational abilities.

7. ORGANISATION

IMPORTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

According to the pan-European ESJ (European Skills and Jobs) survey, conducted by CEDEFOP (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training), Organizational skills can be classified as Transversal skills and they are closely related to planning skills.

There are described as the ability to:

- prepare training plans,
- assign tasks according to the plans,
- plan the activities of others,
- assign tasks,
- organise staff working time or the time of others.

BENEFITS FOR PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Organization is a skill that professional women can develop in order to foster the following benefits:

- aim for more high-level positions in the workplace
- break stereotypes that perceive women staff members as less equipped for managerial positions
- become a high-value employee
- do high-quality work
- develop strategic thinking and planning
- develop effective communication and cooperation with other colleagues
- become time and budget efficient

8. POSITIVE WORK-ETHIC

GENERAL DEFINITION

Work ethic is a system of behaviour and belief standards regarding what is and is not acceptable at work. The work ethic traits include **Punctuality, Dedication, professionalism, communication, cooperation, organizational skills, productivity, respect** and **teamwork** which are defined as essential for the workplace. Employee tardiness takes a toll on productivity; Consistent tardiness indicates a lack of commitment, which can be detrimental to productivity in the workplace. Strong work ethic employees are dedicated to their jobs, teams, and work, and they will go the extra mile to complete their projects or assist their colleagues with completing tasks. You can always count on a devoted employee to be the first to volunteer to assist with achieving a goal. These employees are diligent and contribute significantly to the company's culture.

A professional employee will also do whatever is necessary to guarantee the efficiency of team operations. Professional employees have a high level of emotional intelligence and do not allow their emotions to interfere with the team's hard work. Professionalism entails treating your colleagues with respect and never treating them with disrespect. Professionalism is one of the greatest indicators of an employee's strong work ethic.

Good Work Ethic Example: Barbara is known for her meticulous work. She never misses a deadline, and still doesn't sacrifice the quality of her work to do so. While it may take more focus, and time for certain tasks, she always delivers high-quality, reliable work. Her supervisors know that they don't need to double-check her work. No matter what day, what time, or what the circumstances are Barbara never turns in work that would be considered sub-par.

Bad Work Ethic Example: Sheila is sometimes bothered by the tasks required of her. However, she never addresses this with her superiors. Instead, she complains to co-workers, friends, and anyone that will listen about her job. Ultimately it displays a very poor image of the company and creates a more hostile working environment for her co-workers. Being resentful and complaining, rather than seeking solutions, is another strong indicator of poor work ethic.



Co-funded by
the European Union

8. POSITIVE WORK-ETHIC

IMPORTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Strong work ethic employees take their work seriously and dedicate their time to going above and beyond what is required. Due to their dedication to their work, they will complete tasks efficiently and to the best of their ability. Work ethic can be positive or negative depending on the personal beliefs of employees, their motivation, and the company's ethos as a whole.

A positive work ethic is an employee's attitude that demonstrates a high level of enthusiasm for their work and may have a competitive spirit, but their competition is typically with themselves to accomplish their professional goals. Individuals with a strong work ethic frequently present themselves as "ideal employees" because their desire for success motivates them to work to achieve successive goals. Work ethic can be fostered, although it is frequently a component of a person's personality and outlook on life as a whole. Strong work ethic employees will put their personal issues aside and work hard to keep them from affecting their work.

BENEFITS FOR PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Business ethics has a great impact on women's empowerment and can be visible in its functional areas of marketing, finance and human resource management. When women are empowered in the workplace, they have greater control over their careers. Investing in training, mentoring, equality programs, education grants, and promotion to senior-level positions ensures their career advancement, which is crucial for retaining employees.

Leadership based on ethical principles promotes women's empowerment and gender equality. Companies with ethical executives provide equal opportunities for women and men through the implementation of ethical policies and procedures. In detail, women have the following benefits through maintaining the positive work ethic traits mentioned previously:

- higher chances of employment
- higher chances of maintaining a job and moreover moving up the scale
- better salary and more benefits
- gender equity
- equal chances



Co-funded by
the European Union

9. PROBLEM-SOLVING

GENERAL DEFINITION

Problem-Solving is a process, a mental activity by which, when faced with a problem, we examine the situation and make assumptions about how to solve it or what is the best way forward.

It is something that humankind has always done for their own survival, from the invention of the wheel to the control of fire or the first systems for cultivating the land. Over time, this activity has been studied to develop techniques for solving the most diverse problems, from scientific to economic to emotional and relational. From a theoretical point of view, problem-solving can be defined as a cognitive process involving:

- 1) the formation of an initial representation of the problem,
- 2) the potential planning of sequences of actions to solve the problem,
- 3) the execution of the plan and evaluation of the results.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the definition of problem-solving was broadened to include virtually any cognitive activity other than perception and memory:

“Problem-solving is defined as any goal-directed sequence of cognitive operations” (Anderson, 1980, p. 257).

“What you do when you don't know what to do” (Wheatley, 1984, p. 1).

Essentially, any goal-oriented activity was considered problem-solving. However, in more recent times this broadening of the definition is supposed to compromise its theoretical and research usefulness.

At some point in the 1990s, both European and American researchers saw fit to distinguish between simple and complex problem-solving.

- “Simple problem solving” refers to the process of solving cognitive or practical tasks through simple reasoning programmes, using pure logic.
- “Complex problem solving” is achieved through dynamic, time-dependent and complex activities. In these situations, the problem does not require a single decision, but a long series of decisions, with the former conditioning the latter. Although many individuals are naturally more predisposed to problem-solving, it should not be forgotten that this is a skill that can also be acquired.



Co-funded by
the European Union

9. PROBLEM-SOLVING

IMPORTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

In the workplace, the problem-solving process is one of the key moments in the development of a company. This is why problem-solving is among the soft skills most in demand by entrepreneurs and most present in job advertisements. It is a valuable aid because it opens us up to new ways of seeing and dealing with difficulties, stimulating us to change our perspective, discover new resources within ourselves and thus work more efficiently.

The person who has the competence is able to focus attention on the positive aspects of the problem, is able to formulate objectives and find solutions among those suggested, having acquired a method for gathering information. This ability is increasingly valued because the instability of work in recent years requires people to demonstrate greater planning autonomy and to be able to manage uncertainties and critical issues, emergencies and conflicts.

BENEFITS FOR PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Developing and nurturing problem-solving skills is very important for women, not only because it allows better career opportunities, but also because finding structured solutions to a problem enables them to grow personally, as well as professionally.

In fact, problem-solving helps to:

- Develop one's creativity with a practical and useful approach,
- Discover the levers of change and set them in motion,
- Refine one's ability to make decisions and put them into practice,
- Develop one's capacity for lateral thinking, finding solutions outside the box.

10. SELF - CONFIDENCE

GENERAL DEFINITION

Self-confidence is the belief a person has in their skills and judgement, which allows them to openly communicate their knowledge and opinions freely. Self-confidence, however, is not a constant emotional state, with time, a person's degree of confidence may rise or fall. While some people exhibit constant confidence, others frequently encounter altering circumstances, and still another set of people exhibits absolutely no confidence at all. A person's temperament, societal and cultural circumstances, degree of education, wealth, success, and failure patterns can all affect one's level of self-confidence.

A crucial part of self-confidence is knowing one's own strengths and also weaknesses very well to be able to manage criticism, communicate clearly and set reasonable goals and expectations. Important to mention is that self-confidence mostly depends on beliefs and perceptions about one's skills rather than their actual competence. Perceptions can be deceiving.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory describes self-efficacy (academic term for self-confidence) as the "belief one has in being able to execute a specific task successfully." Self-confidence affects almost every element of a person's life, including their capacity for optimism, their ability to endure challenges and being able to complete tasks. Motivation is provided by self-confidence and plays a crucial role in persevering through obstacles.

To increase self-confidence recognizing the own skill level and competences is important. Praising and rewarding yourself for your efforts and advancement, being gentle and compassionate towards yourself when encountering a challenge and mostly avoiding wallowing in defeat when faced with failures helps building confidence. Adhering to realistic goals and not emulating perfectionism, approaching challenges calmly and logically increases self-esteem. On a personal level it is crucial to stand up for oneself and setting boundaries is inevitable for self-confident individuals.

10. SELF - CONFIDENCE

IMPORTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

In a job environment that requires being the center of attention, a very high degree of self-confidence is crucial. Those jobs include lawyers, managers, actors, teachers, etc. However, all other branches and employment relationships benefit as well from healthy and stable self-confidence as a soft skill.

Self-confident workers and leaders can openly express themselves during job applications and interviews and can leave a lasting impression. People are more likely to trust self-confident individuals because self-confidence is often linked to (professional) competence. Entrepreneurs and pioneers are motivated to start new initiatives by their own sense of confidence. Exhibiting a high level of self-confidence allows you to make better judgements in the work environment. Self-confidence helps to be able to continuously request what is needed to do the work most efficiently.

BENEFITS FOR PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Enhancing the self-confidence of professional women can help foster the career prospects of motivated and competent workers even more. Stepping outside of one's comfort zone and establishing relationships with key decision-makers helps acquire exposure.

Gaining others' trust and highlighting important accomplishments is a sign of self-confidence that improves the image of professional women. Increased self-confidence provides many benefits and shows through

- Solution-oriented work
- Clarity and excitement that motivates others
- Calmness in situations of failure
- Positive attitudes

11. TEAMWORK

GENERAL DEFINITION

*“Great things in business are never done by one person; they are done by a team of people.” — **Steve Jobs***

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, teamwork is *the joint action of a group of people working together effectively to achieve a goal. [...] The activity of working together as a team, or the skills required to do so.*

In simple terms, teamwork is when people, usually from different backgrounds, work together to achieve a common goal, task and/or project. These goals can be professional, but also personal. For example, people may work together to paint a house, launch a marketing campaign or play a team sport. However, it is important to point out that teamwork is not only about achieving something as a team but also about the ability to work effectively with others and help them to develop their full potential and positive qualities and in this way achieve the common goals.

Knowing and understanding the definition of teamwork may be easy and simple, but learning how to work well in a team can be difficult and complicated. This depends on many factors, such as skills, goals, type of work, personalities, types of challenges, etc. For this reason, teamwork is one of the most sought-after skills for employers. Moreover, many claim that teamwork is more important than ever due to the increase in remote and mixed work.

Good leadership and team management can also inspire well-functioning teamwork. There are several characteristics that groups have in common with good teamwork, such as good communication and cooperation between team members, encouraging mutual participation, shared values and common goals, and much more.

The most important key to a successful team can be summarised as follows: when individual members realise that working together on a project is more effective than working alone. Teams work well when they do not simply divide up tasks and work independently to get them done faster. Good teamwork is about working together and finding better approaches together.



Co-funded by
the European Union

11. TEAMWORK

IMPORTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Effective teamwork is very important in any workplace and in any type of work (remote, in-person, mixed) because working as a team is the best way to get things done and achieve common goals. The importance of teamwork in the professional sphere can be summarised in the following reasons. Teamwork can build trust between teams (employees) and increase productivity. It can also improve efficiency and enhance creativity and learning. In addition, effective teamwork in the workplace can increase the potential for innovation, contribute to better problem solving and lead to fewer mistakes.

There are also some teamwork skills that are very important for professional success, such as time management, communication, listening, leadership, critical thinking, problem-solving and collaboration.

BENEFITS FOR PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

“When women get together as a group, it is immensely powerful.” — Annie Lennox.

Effective teamwork is essential for professional and business success and can lead to strong bonds between team members and increase motivation. Empowering women in the workplace through teamwork is good for business, and promotes a sense of community but also a sense of being part of a team to achieve goals and thrive. The benefits of effective teamwork in the workplace for women can include:

- High motivation and inspiration
- Greater opportunities for growth
- Stress reduction
- Cooperation instead of competition
- Gaining new perspectives
- Increasing collective intelligence
- Breaking down traditional stereotypes

It is good to strengthen female staff in strategic thinking, negotiation skills and risk assessment while promoting cooperation in the group.



Co-funded by
the European Union

12. TIME - MANAGEMENT

GENERAL DEFINITION

Time management consists in individuating tools and strategies that allow one to set clear, attainable goals, prioritise important and time-sensitive tasks, and eliminate unnecessary distractions and downtime.

The objective of time management is to focus all one's energy on "what really matters", with respect to reaching goals and high-quality results in all areas of life. Like every other resource, time and energy need to be carefully managed so as to reach goals more efficiently and with less stress, and to achieve a healthier work-life balance.

Well-done time management is a continuous self-monitoring of the use of the most precious and undervalued resource. It is based on setting the right priorities, changing those habits that cause us to waste time unnecessarily, and on adopting new behaviours that lead us to make the most of our time to do what we have decided will be really useful for our work and life goals.

With good time management, you are not only in control of your time but also of your energy and stress levels. It will help you to maintain a satisfactory balance between your work and your personal life, while also finding sufficient flexibility to respond promptly and effectively to any negative surprises or new opportunities.

A common mistake in the field of time management is to think that there is only one skill for time management and to scramble around trying to improve it, without really grasping its essence. In fact, just as a football team is not made up of just one player, time management skills are many and include a variety of competencies that, taken together, will help you manage your time well.

Using the same analogy, as in a football team the coach tries to identify and support those players who are not performing at their best, in time management you should identify which skills you have not yet developed to the best of your ability, in order to improve them.

12. TIME - MANAGEMENT

IMPORTANCE IN THE WORKPLACE

As the saying goes, 'time is money': when people do not make the best use of their time, the work does not reach its full potential. Good time management is the 'fuel' that makes an organisation run at its best, as it allows all activities to run smoothly, workloads to be scheduled, deadlines to be met and customers to be satisfied, ensuring that products and services can be delivered on time and reliably. However, it's very different to organise your own work and that of a team.

Organising workload and project deadlines requires a customised approach, to follow both each individual's natural predisposition and the organisational method that works best for all. Understanding each person's personality and distributing activities accordingly, is the best way to ensure that everyone manages their time to the best of their ability.

BENEFITS FOR PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Managing time for a professional woman is particularly important, as women often have a heavier care workload than men. In many European countries, the burden of caring for the home, children or elderly parents falls more heavily on women.

This is not only a question of the actual work to be done, but also of the so-called 'mental load': even when there are men in the family who share the burden of housework or care work, women are still expected to hold the reins of this work, keeping in mind what needs to be done and distributing tasks to family members. For this reason, time management skills are particularly important for women to be able to reconcile private and working life.

REFERENCES

1. ACTIVE LISTENING REFERENCES:

- ACTIVE LISTENING - Wholebeing Institute. https://wholebeinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/Rogers_Farson_Active-Listening.pdf
- Dheer, R., Lenartowicz, T. (2019). Cognitive flexibility: Impact on entrepreneurial intentions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*.
- Rollin, A., & Delgado-Romero, E. A. (2016). Active listening: An important skill for acquiring information and building relationships. *Journal of Counseling Research and Practice*, 6(2), 61-67.
- Rogers, C. R., & Farson, R. E. (1957). Active Listening. Industrial Relations Center, University of Chicago.
- Reis, H. T., Collins, W. A., & Berscheid, E. (2013). The relationship context of human behaviour and development. *Psychological Bulletin*, 90(3), 218-247.
- Killian, K. D. (2017). Active listening: The key to workplace success. *Journal of Business Communication*, 54(2), 165-180.
- Bauer, E. B., Johnson, G., & Liang, H. (2016). Listening to depressed college students: A pilot study on active listening. *Journal of College Counseling*, 19(2), 127-142.
- Sörensen, L. B., & Conklin, C. J. (2013). Applying active listening skills in communication with patients with an autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Neuroscience Nursing*, 45(4), 232-238.

2. COMMUNICATION REFERENCES:

- Merchant, Karima, "How Men And Women Differ: Gender Differences in Communication Styles, Influence Tactics, and Leadership Styles" (2012). CMC Senior Theses. Paper 513. http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/513. Accessed 5 April 2023.
- Communication Skills for Workplace Success - The Balance Money. <https://www.thebalancemoney.com/communication-skills-list-2063779>. Accessed 5 April 2023.
- Top 11 Communication Skills (For Your Life & Career) - Noveresume. <https://novoresume.com/career-blog/communication-skills>. Accessed 5 April 2023.



Co-funded by
the European Union

REFERENCES

- 12.5 Different Types of Communication - Minnesota Libraries. <https://open.lib.umn.edu/principlesmanagement/chapter/12-5-different-types-of-communication/#:~:text=Communication%20can%20be%20categorized%20into,a%20person%20and%20infer%20meaning>. Accessed 5 April 2023.
- Vital Assertive Communication Skills for Women in Business - Amanet. <https://www.amanet.org/articles/vital-assertive-communication-skills-for-women-in-business/>. Accessed 5 April 2023.
- The 7 Benefits of Effective Communication in Personal and Professional Settings - Portland Community College. <https://climb.pcc.edu/blog/the-7-benefits-of-effective-communication-in-personal-and-professional-settings>. Accessed 5 April 2023.
- What is Communication? - Skills You Need. <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/what-is-communication.html#:~:text=Communication%20is%20simply%20the%20act,actually%20a%20very%20complex%20subject>. Accessed 5 April 2023.

3. CONFLICT-RESOLUTION REFERENCES:

- Law, David. "Constitutional Archetypes." Texas Law Review, vol. 95, no. 2, University of Texas, Austin, School of Law Publications, Inc., Dec. 2016, p. 153.
- Conflict Resolution (Thomas-Kilmann Model) | Quality Gurus. <https://www.qualitygurus.com/conflict-resolution-thomas-kilmann-model/>
- Dheer, R., Lenartowicz, T. (2019). Cognitive flexibility: Impact on entrepreneurial intentions. Journal of Vocational Behavior

4. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE REFERENCES:

- Houston, L. (2019). The Importance of Emotional Intelligence (Incl. Quotes). <https://positivepsychology.com/importance-of-emotional-intelligence/>
- Daniel Goleman (1995). Emotional intelligence.
- Sauber, T (2018). How to Improve Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace. <https://positivepsychology.com/emotional-intelligence-workplace/>
- Forbes (2016). Using Emotional Intelligence Is A Woman Leader's Secret Weapon. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2016/11/02/using-emotional-intelligence-is-a-woman-leaders-secret-weapon/?sh=5a39c49619f7>



Co-funded by
the European Union

REFERENCES

5. EMPATHY REFERENCES:

- Baskin, Kara (2021). "The 'empathy advantage' of great women leaders." The Boston Globe. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/11/05/magazine/empathy-advantage-great-women-leaders/>. Accessed 22 March 2023.
- Cherry, Kendra. "Empathy: Definition, Types, and Tips for Practicing." Verywell Mind, Verywell Mind, 5 Jan. 2015, https://www-verywellmind-com.translate.goog/what-is-empathy-2795562?_x_tr_sl=en&_x_tr_tl=tr&_x_tr_hl=tr&_x_tr_pto=wapp.
- "Empathy Definition | What Is Empathy." Greater Good, <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/empathy/definition#what-is-empathy>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2022.
- Hariton, Lorraine (2022). "Empathy Improves Inclusion, Engagement, and Retention." IWD. <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/Activity/17524/Empathy-improves-inclusion-engagement-and-retention>. Accessed 22 March 2023.
- Leading Effectively Staff. „The Importance of Empathy in the Workplace.” Center for Creative Leadership, June 28, 2022. <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/empathy-in-the-workplace-a-tool-for-effective-leadership/>. Accessed 22 March 2023.
- "Why is Empathy Important In The Workplace: 4 Benefits At The Workplace". Impactly Inc. <https://www.getimpactly.com/post/empathy-important-in-the-workplace>. Accessed 22 March 2023.

6. FLEXIBILITY REFERENCES:

- World economic forum (2020). Tu próximo cambio de trabajo podría ser más fácil de lo que piensas. <https://es.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/tu-proximo-cambio-de-trabajo-podria-ser-mas-facil-de-lo-que-piensas/>
- Zafrilla, J., Laencina, T (2017) Adaptación y flexibilidad. Colección formación por competencias. Escuela de administración pública de la Región de Murcia.
- De la Casa, J. (2022). Adaptabilidad e inteligencia emocional. <https://javierdelacasa.com/adaptabilidad-e-inteligencia-emocional/>.
- Caballero , D., Blanco, A. (2007). Competencias para la flexibilidad: la gestión emocional de las organizaciones Psicothema, vol. 19, núm. 4, 2007, pp. 616-620 Universidad de Oviedo, España



Co-funded by
the European Union

REFERENCES

7. ORGANISATION REFERENCES:

- Καραλής, Κ. (2022). Εκπαιδευτικές ανάγκες σε ήπιες δεξιότητες (soft skills) για ζητήματα διαχείρισης κρίσεων σε ιδιοκτήτες και εργαζόμενους μικρών και μεσαίων επιχειρήσεων.
- Καψαλιάρη, Ε. (2022). Εκπαίδευση ενηλίκων και διαχείριση ανθρωπίνων πόρων: Αξιολόγηση των ήπιων δεξιοτήτων (soft skills) των εργαζομένων στον δημόσιο τομέα στην Ελλάδα και πρόταση για τον σχεδιασμό εκπαιδευτικού προγράμματος (reskilling & upskilling) για την ανάπτυξη αυτών.
- Μέγα, Π. (2018). Κίνητρα για την εκπαίδευση προσωπικού στους οργανισμούς: Μεταφορά εμπειρικής γνώσης στον εργασιακό χώρο και ικανότητες εκπαιδευτή (SOFT SKILLS). ISO 690

8. POSITIVE WORK- ETHIC REFERENCES:

- Justin, Mercia. (2018). Business Ethics and Women Empowerment. 10.9756/BP2018.1012/26.
- VALAMIS LEARNING SOLUTION, Work Ethic in the Workplace, December 23, 2022 (<https://www.valamis.com/hub/work-ethic#what-is-work-ethic>)

9. PROBLEM-SOLVING REFERENCES:

- Tonelli, M. (2011). "Unstructured processes of strategic decision-making". LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, Germany.
- Wang, Y.; Chiew, V. (2008). "On the cognitive process of human problem solving". Cognitive Systems Research. Elsevier BV. 11, 81–92.
- Frensch P. A. & Funke J. (Eds.) (1995), "Complex problem solving: The European Perspective". Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Sternberg R. J., & Frensch P. A. (Eds.) (1991), "Complex problem solving: Principles and mechanisms". Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Van Lehn, K. (1989), "Problem solving and cognitive skill acquisition". In M. I. Posner (Ed.), Foundations of cognitive science (pp. 527-579). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Wheatley, C.L. & Wheatley, G. H. (1984), "Problem Solving in the Primary Grades". In The Arithmetic Teacher, Vol. 31, No. 8 (April 1984), pp. 22-25, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.
- Anderson, J.R. (1980). Cognitive psychology and its implications. New York: Freeman



Co-funded by
the European Union

REFERENCES

10. SELF-CONFIDENCE REFERENCES:

- Lundberg, K. M. (2008). Promoting Self-confidence in Clinical Nursing Students. *Nurse Educator*, 33(2), 86–89. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.NNE.0000299512.78270.d0>
- Kelly, Jack (2020). “Self-Confidence Leads To Success In Your Job Search And Career—Here’s How You Can Start”. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2020/08/24/self-confidence-leads-to-success-in-your-job-search-and-career-heres-how-you-can-start/?sh=41be446bdcdf>. Accessed 22 March 2023.
- “Self-Confidence” *Cleverism*. <https://www.cleverism.com/skills-and-tools/self-confidence/>. Accessed 22 March 2023.
- Tallon, Monique (2020). “What is Self-Confidence and Why is It important for Women in Leadership – Part I”. <https://moniquetallon.com/what-is-self-confidence-and-why-is-it-important-for-women-in-leadership/>. Accessed 22 March 2023.
- “What is Self-Confidence?” *University of South Florida Counseling Center*. <https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/counseling-center/top-concerns/what-is-self-confidence.aspx>. Accessed 22 March 2023.

11. TEAMWORK REFERENCES:

- What is teamwork? Including definition and characteristics - *Indeed*. <https://uk.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/what-is-teamwork>. Accessed 6 April 2023.
- What will make or break your next role? Find out why teamwork matters - *Betterup*. <https://www.betterup.com/blog/what-is-teamwork>. Accessed 6 April 2023.
- What is teamwork: definition, meaning - *Weje*. <https://weje.io/blog/what-is-teamwork>. Accessed 6 April 2023.
- 7 Important Teamwork Skills You Need in School and Your Career - *Herzing University*. <https://www.herzing.edu/blog/7-important-teamwork-skills-you-need-school-and-your-career>. Accessed 6 April 2023.
- Top 11 Benefits of Teamwork in Workplace - *ProofHub*. <https://blog.proofhub.com/top-11-benefits-of-teamwork-in-workplace-24a55b8ab46e>. Accessed 6 April 2023.



Co-funded by
the European Union

REFERENCES

- The importance of teamwork (as proven by science) - Atlassian. <https://www.atlassian.com/blog/teamwork/the-importance-of-teamwork>. Accessed 6 April 2023.
- Teamwork in the Workplace: Why Women Learn and Grow Better in Groups - Poker Power. <https://pokerpower.com/teamwork-in-the-workplace-why-women-learn-and-grow-better-in-groups/>. Accessed 6 April 2023.
- Empowering & Retaining Women in the Workplace: Guide for Employers - Team Bonding. <https://www.teambonding.com/empowering-women-in-the-workplace/>. Accessed 6 April 2023.

12. TIME-MANAGEMENT REFERENCES:

- Richard Walsh (2008). Time Management: Proven Techniques for Making Every Minute Count. Adams Media
- Morgenstern, Julie (2004). Time Management from the Inside Out: The Foolproof System for Taking Control of Your Schedule—and Your Life (2nd ed.). New York: Henry Holt/Owl Books.
- Doran, G. T. (1981). "There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management's goals and objectives". Management Review. 70: 35–36.
- LeBoeuf, Michael (1979). Working Smart. Warner Books.



PROJECT: Breaking The Ceiling (BTC) - Soft skills to deconstruct the "glass ceiling" and gender stereotypes in the workplace

This publication results from the Erasmus plus project "Breaking The Ceiling: Soft skills to deconstruct "the glass ceiling" and gender stereotypes in the workplace". The text and images of the publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the individual partner for non-commercial purposes and training purposes only. Please leave a reference to the original material and authors if reproducing.

You can find a downloadable PDF version at WEBSITE.

LINK TO WEBSITE: <https://break-the-ceiling.eu/>

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



Co-funded by
the European Union