

## The Importance of Soft Skills in Construction Leadership

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Until just a few years ago, executives who had a firm grip on budgets, logistics, and productivity were seen as indispensable to a company's success. However, in recent years, social skills, often referred to as "soft skills," have become just as critical, if not more so.

Traditionally, the construction industry has focused on hard skills like project management, budgeting, and technical expertise as key qualities for leaders. Yet as the workforce has diversified, and the complexity of projects has grown, so has the demand for leaders who can inspire, communicate, and collaborate effectively.

Leaders with strong social skills build trust, foster teamwork, and manage conflicts which are non-negotiable elements of successful project execution. What was once seen as a nice to have quality is now essential.

Here are just a few of the many beneficial outcomes of polishing your social skills.

### Internal Team Dynamics Benefit

The construction industry, like many others, has experienced a rapid change in workforce expectations. Millennials and GenZ employees prioritize workplace culture and relationships. Leaders who excel in empathy, active listening, and emotional intelligence are more likely to retain top talent and foster a loyal, motivated workforce. In contrast, leaders who lack these skills often struggle to connect with their teams on a deeper level which can lead to disengagement\*, resentment, and



ultimately job quits.

In an industry known for its fast pace and high-pressure environments, leaders with interpersonal skills are also better equipped to manage stress and keep morale high.

### External Relationship Benefits As Well

To be an effective business leader, one must establish rapport with many kinds of stakeholders. Therefore, soft skills are not only beneficial for internal team dynamics, they also benefit external relationships with clients, trade partners, communities, governing bodies, and more. Business relationships become personal relationships. As projects become more integrated with other sectors - such as technology, sustainability,


and infrastructure - the ability to work well with multiple stakeholders is of growing importance.

### **Change Adaptability and Productivity is Increased**

Leaders who can effectively communicate the rationale for change, allay employee fears, and guide their teams through transitions are far more likely to have teams that are cooperative, innovative, resilient, and tenacious problem-solvers.

### **How to Develop Soft Skills**

To develop *any* skill requires starting with self-awareness. Regularly seeking feedback, investing in “soft skills” training, and practicing relationship building techniques are ways to develop the interpersonal abilities that today’s leadership demands. Mentors and coaches are also helpful resources who can guide decision-making and communications that involve more than just technical expertise.

As the construction industry continues to evolve, the demands for leaders who are both technically proficient and socially skilled is only going to increase. Knowing “the numbers” and having operational expertise will always be important, but today’s leaders must also inspire, motivate, empathize, and lead change well. Soft skills are not optional. 

\*According to Gallup, 51% of American workers are moderately disengaged and 17% are actively disengaged.



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## About the Author

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Dr. Nanette Miner is a leadership development and workplace-learning strategy consultant. Through her firm, [The Training Doctor](#), she has revolutionized the way that individuals are prepared for leadership roles in their organizations. Rather than a chosen few, her process is aimed at ensuring everyone in the company has the skills and business acumen of a leader. This approach ensures both immediate and long-term return-on-investment (ROI) for an organization.

She has written articles for Chief Learning Office magazine, Forbes, and MBA World and is a frequent guest on workplace training and career podcasts and talk radio such as Inc. Radio and America's Workforce Radio.

Nanette regularly speaks at industry conferences and corporate learning events on how to integrate leadership capabilities throughout an organization. An author of eight books, her most recent is Future-Proofing Your Organization.

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