

WHY SOFT SKILLS MATTER

For years, job seekers have benefitted from a candidate-driven labor market. Unfortunately, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has upended that model. Hiring freezes—or worse, layoffs—are the new normal and are having a tremendous impact on companies of all sizes across all industries. Restaurants, airlines, retail; all have felt the economic squeeze of a world that has come to a virtual standstill. The silver lining to this pandemic—if one is to be found—is an **increase in hiring** at companies such as Amazon and Walmart, and in positions in the healthcare sector.

If you're a job seeker who may not be qualified or interested in employment in the grocery, healthcare, or warehouse sectors, what can you do to keep pushing through these unprecedented times? Recommendations from industry experts and Human Resource professionals vary, but most agree that focusing on your marketable "soft skills" is a good place to start when looking to set yourself apart. While hard skills are defined as specific "quantifiable" skills gained through education and experience, soft skills are often referred to as "people skills" and are harder to define—but just as important. These skills may include—but are certainly not limited to—agility, collaboration, and critical thinking. Below are expanded descriptions of each:



Agility

Agility often is described as the ability to quickly adapt or evolve in response to changing circumstances. Some people have it; others don't. In case you're wondering which group you fall into, try to recall a time when you abruptly had to adjust a project or deliverable to meet a change in a timeline or scope of work. When faced with such a challenge, some employees may bristle, resist, or complain; others, who are more agile, are able to swiftly change course and re-focus on the new goal and direction with a positive attitude.



Collaboration

Collaboration is when two or more people work together toward a common goal that benefits the company. Those who embrace this attribute and recognize its benefits are often called "team players." **Are you a collaborator?** Think about a time you had to work on a team project, a process that often involves divvying up tasks and then combining individuals' efforts into one cohesive outcome. One person in the group often emerges as the de facto leader. Conflicts may arise if another member of the group also sees himself/herself in this role. Another may prefer to defer leadership in favor of toiling on a specific task. If you have ever been part of a collaborative project, how did you handle the distribution of work? Did any conflicts arise that you needed to solve?



Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the ability to use logic to solve a problem. Those who are superior critical thinkers tend to be solution-oriented. Is that you? Think about a time when you were faced with a business challenge that needed a creative solution. How did you go about it? What logic did you use?

While soft skills such as agility, collaboration, and critical thinking should be a part of any job seeker's tool kit, at Butler/Till these competencies are highly valued and an important part of our organization's DNA. Since we are an employee-owned company, we also tend to use them as a guide for career development and as a way to evaluate both our individual and group performance.

To learn more about our core competencies and the key roles we're hiring for, [visit our website](#) and follow us on [LinkedIn](#) for updates.

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