POWER SKILLS IN ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENTS

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**Land Acknowledgment**

The Portland Metro area rests on traditional village sites of the Multnomah, Wasco, Cowlitz, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Bands of Chinook, Tualatin, Kalapuya, Molalla, and many other tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River. Indigenous people have created communities and summer encampments to harvest and enjoy the plentiful natural resources of the area for the last 11,000 years.

I want to recognize that Portland today is a community of many diverse Native peoples who continue to live and work here. I respectfully acknowledge and honor all Indigenous communities—past, present, future—and are grateful for their ongoing and vibrant presence.

I also acknowledge the systemic policies of genocide, relocation, and assimilation that still impact many Indigenous/Native American families today. As settlers and guests on these lands, I respect the work of Indigenous leaders and families, and pledge to make ongoing efforts recognize their knowledge, creativity, and resilience.
Special Acknowledgment

• I would like to thank my dear colleague Pierre-Jean Alarco. We worked together to develop a Power Skills model for research administrators. It was my pleasure to co-present with him on the topic of Power Skills for Research Administrators at the CARA General Conference in St. John's, N.L. on May 15th, 2023.

• His ideas, opinions, thoughts, feedback, and suggestions on how to develop this PowerPoint presentation have been invaluable.

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OUTLINE

- What Are Power Skills?
- Power Skills for Research Administrators
- Putting Your Power Skills Into Practice
WHAT ARE POWER SKILLS?

Power is a tool, influence is a skill; one is a fist, the other a fingertip. – Nancy Gibbs
Concept of Soft Skills (Power Skills)
Soft Skills in Academia Curricula – Study 1

2009 European University College Association - ModEs (Modernizing Higher Education Through Soft Skills Accreditation) project¹²

• Involved 15 partners from 10 countries for three years
• Aimed at integrating a common European program on soft skills in the academic curricula
• Experts from the different partner organization involved in the ModEs developed a list of skills and their definitions from a literature review and their professional experience. They also engaged people working in the area of human resources and staff professional development for their input
• 35 experts from different European countries with academic or consultancy backgrounds determined the relative importance of the skills required and their groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 Groups</th>
<th>21 Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Skills</td>
<td>Learning skills, Tolerance to stress, Professional Ethics, Self-awareness, Commitment, Life Balance, Creativity/Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Skills</td>
<td>Communication, Teamwork, Contact network, Negotiation, Conflict Management, Leadership, Culture Adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content-reliant/Methodological Skills</td>
<td>Customer/User orientation, Continuous improvement, Adaptability to change, Results orientation, Analytical skills, Decision making, Management skills, Research and info management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Soft Skills in Students Entering the Labour Market – Study 2**

2015 European University College Association - eLene4work (e-Learning for work)

- This ongoing project aims at helping students develop the soft skills mostly required by companies and to fill the gaps between the university and the labour market
- Wrote a report “Which soft skills do students have and which should they have? To describe and compare qualitative data about soft skills gathered through focus groups carried out in 9 partner countries: Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, UK
- Organized 2 focus groups: 1. Students & young workers; 2. Employers, HR managers, HE teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4 Groups</th>
<th>17 Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Skills</td>
<td>Teamwork, Communication (online but also face-to-face “traditional” communication; all levels: speaking, listening, formal and informal writing), Flexibility, Openness for constructive feedback and humility (in social contacts students are too self-confident and convinced they know everything)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Skills</td>
<td>Empathy (and other competences appropriate for emotional intelligence), Honesty, Commitment and motivation, Openness for new things to learn, Curiosity, Patience, Perseverance, Capacity to learn from one’s failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Skills</td>
<td>Like self-evaluation, self-regulation of the learning process and, as a consequence, capacity to make a conscious career choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Skills</td>
<td>Synthesis, Skills of numeracy, Ability to absorb in and deeply familiarize the topic, Presentation skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Core Power Skills (aka Soft Skills)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are Soft Skills and Why Should We Call Them ‘Power Skills’ Instead?⁵</td>
<td>Understanding personal bias, Decision-Making, Empathy, Resilience, Communication, Giving and receiving feedback, Mindfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s Stop Talking About Soft Skills: They’re Power Skills⁶</td>
<td>Optimism, Curiosity, <strong>Tenacity, Flexibility</strong>, Integrity, Learning, Generosity, Joy, Teamwork, Communication, Drive, Ethics, Empathy, Followership, Time Management, Happiness, Generosity, Kindness, Forgiveness, Awe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Your Future. Power Skills⁷</td>
<td>Intercultural and Social Fluency, Career Engagement, Communication and Relationship Building, Leadership, Thriving, Teaching and Learning, Discipline Knowledge and Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Power Skills⁸</td>
<td>Critical Thinking, <strong>Problem Solving</strong>, Communication, Leadership, Adaptability, Emotional Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Power Skills Replaced Soft Skills⁹</td>
<td>Presentation Skills, Personality, Persistence, Growth Mindset, Flexibility, Self-Promotion, Team Spirit, Coaching, Creativity, Selling Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving from soft skills to power skills¹¹</td>
<td>Analytical Thinking &amp; Innovation, Active Learning and Learning Strategies, Creativity, Originality and Initiative, Technology Design &amp; Programming, Critical Thinking &amp; Analysis, Complex <strong>Problem Solving</strong>, Leadership &amp; Social Influence, Emotional Intelligence, Reasoning, Problem-Solving &amp; Ideation, Systems Analysis &amp; Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five ‘power skills’ for becoming a team leader¹²</td>
<td>Teamwork, Communication, Commitment &amp; Reliability, Adaptability, Open-Mindedness and Empathy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why should we rebrand “Soft Skills” to “Power Skills”?  

- The skills of the future are not technical but behavioral. These so-called skills are identified as “Soft Skills”. They give us the real “power” at work, so they should be renamed “Power Skills”.
- The term “power skills” was coined by Dartmouth University president Philip Hanlon.
- By renaming soft skills to power skills, we remove the false assumption that soft skills are only “nice to have” skills when actually they are behaviors skills or “human skills” that are a “must-have” for top-performing employees.
- The importance of each power skill may vary depending on what stage of career the individual is in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Stage of Career</th>
<th>Core Power Skill(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interoffice Relationships, Communication Strategies, Developing a Work Plan, Time Management</td>
<td>New Employees</td>
<td>Communication (e.g., Interoffice Relationships, Interpersonal Communication); Professionalism &amp; Integrity (e.g., Accountability, Reliability, Work Ethic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-Life Balance, Stress Management, Rebranding Failure, Developing Relationships with Faculty, Job Advancement</td>
<td>Mid-Career Employees</td>
<td>Resiliency &amp; Adaptability (e.g., Growth Mindset, Stress Management Techniques, Work-Life Balance); Collaboration &amp; Promotion (e.g., Relationship Building, Creativity &amp; Initiative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be a Leader, Spread Some Kindness</td>
<td>Late-Career Employees</td>
<td>Leadership (e.g., Empathy, Judgment, Management Skills, Mentorship, Societal Influence)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
POWER SKILLS FOR RESEARCH ADMINISTRATORS

“The future belongs to those who learn more skills and combine them in creative ways.” – Robert Greene
5 Power Skills for Research Administrators

- Communication
- Leadership
- Resiliency & Adaptability
- Professionalism & Integrity
- Collaboration & Promotion

PROBLEM SOLVING

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Power Skills Model for Research Administrators

COMMUNICATION
- Emotional Intelligence
- Interoffice Relationships
- Interpersonal Communication
- Writing Skills

LEADERSHIP
- Empathy
- Judgment
- Management Skills
- Mentorship
- Societal Influence

RESILIENCY & ADAPTABILITY
- Autonomy & Self-Development
- Growth Mindset
- Stress Management Techniques
- Work-Life Balance

PROFESSIONALISM & INTEGRITY
- Accountability
- Conflict Resolution
- Professional Competencies
- Reliability
- Work Ethic

COLLABORATION & PROMOTION
- Creativity & Initiative
- Knowledge Mobilization
- Teamwork/Team Spirit/Team Growth
- Intersectoral Communication
- Relationship Building

Alarco & Mosier ©2021
“Communication – the human connection – is the key to personal and career success.” – Paul J Meyer
TREY research

Power Skill - Communication

COMMUNICATION (e.g., Emotional Intelligence, Interoffice Relationships, Interpersonal Communication)

Problem Solving

Boss needed a fresh opinion. Identified there was an expert in this area right across the street to review it.

Had an agreement signed by the other party that needed to be reviewed and signed by our institution by a certain date. Needed an expert from another university to review it that didn’t show up. The deadline was approaching.

The agreement was signed by the deadline. The opportunity was not lost.

Team Goals
Signed agreement.
Opportunity achieved.

Personal Career Goals
Recognition from boss.
Credible reputation.
Leadership

“Leadership is about empathy. It is about having the ability to relate to and connect with people for the purpose of inspiring and empowering their lives.” – Oprah Winfrey
Power Skill - Leadership

LEADERSHIP (e.g., Empathy, Judgment, Management Skills, Mentorship)

Problem Solving

Developed group timelines. Organized 2 team workshops. Regular team communications.

Facility were mentored through the process & expectations were communicated. The LOI and research grant were submitted on time.

Co-facilitated (with consultant) a LOI & grant application for a large multidisciplinary, multi-institutional collaboration including international partners in a very short time-frame.

Team Goals
Engage each team member. Collect needed information.
Submit LOI/grant.

Personal Career Goals
Gain experience in facilitating team grants.
Improve mentoring skills.
Resiliency & Adaptability

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change.” – Charles Darwin
Resiliency & Adaptability

- Autonomy & Self Development
- Growth Mindset
- Work-Life Balance
- Stress Management

Alarco & Mosier ©2021
Power Skill - Resiliency & Adaptability

RESILIENCY & ADAPTABILITY (e.g., Autonomy & Self-Development, Growth Mindset, Stress Management Techniques, Work-Life Balance)

Problem Solving

Started my first job in research administration. Was still “learning the ropes”. Had to organize an international conference with part-time co-worker. Took almost a year of planning and hard work.

The conference was a success. Learned stress-management techniques & negotiating time off in lieu of OT.

Had freedom to organize the event the way I saw fit & chance to pick up new skills, but I had to deal with high stress & long hours.

Had to organize an international conference with part-time co-worker. Took almost a year of planning and hard work.

Team Goals
Hold international conference.
Meet Dept. strategic goal.

Personal Career Goals
Build reputation.
Have work-life balance.
Professionalism & Integrity

“Being accountable is part of personal and professional integrity.” – Francesca Anastasi
Power Skill - Professionalism & Integrity

I was able to do my job successfully. Learned about how to deal with bullying.


Started new position. Advice from “senior” office mate turned from friendly suggestions to overt directives. This caused inner conflict as I could see tasks that needed to be prioritized.

Problem Solving

PROFESSIONALISM & INTEGRITY (e.g., Accountability, Conflict Resolution, Professional Competencies, Reliability)

Team Goals
- Financial accountability of Dept.
- Reconcile backlog of Dept. funds.

Personal Career Goals
- Do my job well.
- Resolve interoffice conflict.
Collaboration & Promotion

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”
– Helen Keller
Collaboration & Promotion

- Teamwork/
  Team Spirit/
  Team Growth
- Intersectoral Communication
- Creativity & Initiative
- Relationship Building
- Knowledge Mobilization

Alarco & Mosier ©2021
Power Skill - Collaboration & Promotion

Had to facilitate a large grant application with multiple team members with diverse backgrounds and expertise.

Problem Solving

The grant application was submitted. A good foundation of trust was laid for future collaborations.

Had to leverage the “commonwealth of expertise”, select the right person for each task, and explicitly recognize each team member.

Team Goals
- Get buy-in from the group.
- Submit grant application.

Personal Career Goals
- Build networks.
- Gain credibility.
PUTTING YOUR POWER SKILLS INTO PRACTICE

“Soft skills get little respect but will make or break your career.”
– Peggy Klaus
Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Lens

What is an EDI Lens?
Intentional incorporation of EDI principles into daily practice

Using an EDI lens can look like:
• Learning about community demographics
• Checking our assumptions
• Identifying unconscious bias
• Examining the role of power & privilege in one's life
• Thinking about the experience of a marginalized group differently
• Asking questions about inclusion and;
• Exploring intersectionalities
Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it locks and intersects. It is the acknowledgment that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

- Kimberlé Crenshaw
Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how a person’s different social and political identities can combine and overlap to create different and increased levels of discrimination (e.g., a Black woman faces both racism and sexism while a white woman faces sexism only). The application of an intersectional lens to EDI work is a key component of understanding the complex systems, barriers and power structures that impede the development of an equitable, diverse and inclusive research ecosystem (e.g., breaking down population data to understand the differing levels of impact of policies and practices on individuals with intersecting identities).

- Kimberlé Crenshaw
Finding The "Power" in Power Skills

How to Be Successful In Your Job & Have More Meaningful Relationships With Your Colleagues
Scenario #1 Tasks Aren’t Not Getting Completed

Jill is a pleasant employee. She has worked 6 months in her current position. Prior to this job she had worked in a similar position but in a different department for 4 years. Her boss gave her a glowing review about her job performance. Jill doesn’t have any children but her mother with dementia recently moved into a nursing home. This is the second time in the last month that Jill hasn’t completed a task by the required deadline.

If you were Jill’s manager, how would you handle this situation? What power skills would you use to find a solution?
PROBLEM: Tasks aren't getting completed by the deadline. This is the second time in the last month that Jill hasn't completed her work by the deadline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you know?</th>
<th>Has this happened before?</th>
<th>Was the work completed?</th>
<th>Any other incidents?</th>
<th>Lack of training?</th>
<th>Known external stressors</th>
<th>POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Pleasant personality; hard working employee | No                        | Yes. Each time it was one day late. | No                    | Unlikely. She did a similar position for 4 years | Mother has dementia             | • Have a conversation with Jill  
• Ask her if she has any external stressors in her life that might be affecting her work  
• Discuss any aids/supports/modified work plan  
• Suggest that Jill might want to seek counselling  
• Does she need to take a personal leave to handle the stress? |
| Worked here for 6 months                |                           |                         |                       |                   |                         | Moved her mother to a nursing home                                                  |
| Did similar position for 4 years prior to this job |                           |                         |                       |                   |                         |                                                                                  |
| Has no children                         |                           |                         |                       |                   |                         |                                                                                  |
Bev is the manager for the department of medical imaging. She is a Research Facilitator, and she supervises 5 full-time and part-time research assistants. Bev has a work from home arrangement with her department head. To promote better communication and to keep updated on who is doing what and how the research projects are progressing, Bev meets once a week virtually with her 5 colleagues. Cora started working as a full-time research assistant for the department 2 months ago. She is friendly and enthusiastic employee, but she had no previous experience working as a research assistant. She has four months left in her probationary period. Cora has missed 3 out of 4 of the weekly virtual meetings in the last month.

How would you handle this situation? What power skills would you use to find a solution?
**PROBLEM:** Cora has missed 3 out of 4 of the weekly virtual meetings in the last month.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you know?</th>
<th>Has this happened before?</th>
<th>Is her work still getting done?</th>
<th>Any other incidents?</th>
<th>Is this a communication issue?</th>
<th>Known external stressors</th>
<th>POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Friendly and enthusiastic employee         | Yes. 3 times in the last month | Yes                             | No                   | Verified that she was sent the email about weekly virtual meetings. | Unknown                   | • Have a conversation with Cora  
• Ask her if there is a reason that she is missing these meetings e.g., in the middle of a patient interview  
• Discuss if a different day/time would suit her to meet  
• Give Cora the option to have the meeting in person or explore other options  
• Set Cora up with a mentor as a new employee |
| No previous experience prior to work as a part-time research assistant |                           |                                 |                      |                                |                           |                                                                                  |
| 2 months into 6 month probationary period |                           |                                 |                      |                                |                           |                                                                                  |
| Mandatory to meet with Bev once a week via virtual format |                           |                                 |                      |                                |                           |                                                                                  |
Questions?
References


2. Hasselberger, D., Perez, E., Cinque, M., & Capasso, F. Mediating Soft Skills at Higher Education Institutions: Guidelines for the design of learning situations supporting soft skills achievement. Version 1.0. EU programme "Lifelong Learning Erasmus" and ModES (Modernisation of higher education through soft skills accreditation). Retrieved from European University College Association (EucA) website: https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/67267c_df6eeb2f47664754a4085f3bdf4bc7bb.pdf


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10. αUMi. (n.d.) 5G Career Development Skills. Retrieved from αUMi website: https://5gpowerskills.com/5g-power-skills/

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