

CEO INSIDER

The 15 Most In-demand Soft And Hard Skills In 2020

 **Karen Gately** [CEO Insider](#)  March 23, 2020



With a network of over 660+ million professionals and 20+ million jobs, LinkedIn are well positioned to provide powerful insight to what matters most to the majority of employers. Each year the professional networking platform releases a list of both the 'hard' and 'soft skills employers are most often looking for.

The 'hard' skills most in demand include new entrants Blockchain and Affiliate marketing. Making the list again in 2020 are Cloud Computing, Analytical reasoning, Artificial Intelligence, UX Design, Business Analysis, Sales, Scientific Computing and Video Production. It's hardly surprising to see technology related skills dominate the list and it's reasonable to expect that will continue to be the case in the foreseeable future.

So-called 'soft skills' can be defined as the character traits and capabilities that enable us to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people. Topping LinkedIn's 'soft skills' list in 2020 are creativity, collaboration, persuasion, adaptability and emotional intelligence.

What stands out in this year's findings, is a shift in mindset away from managing time as a priority, toward managing emotions and relationships. As LinkedIn point out, "the one variation in the most in-demand soft skills list indicates that companies are gravitating toward talent with interpersonal and people-oriented skills."

The addition of emotional intelligence and removal of time management from the list is revealing of the extent to which the strength of our character and effectiveness of our behaviours now matters to employers. While of course task-oriented skills such as the ability to prioritise work, manage time and optimise productivity remain essential, having emotional intelligence is arguably more important.

The inclusion of Affiliate Marketing on the 'hard' skills lists further reveals the growing importance of our ability to understand one another and build strong relationships, whether that be with our colleagues or our customers. More and more organisations are recognising the vital role trust and respect play in achieving great standards of organisational performance.

Emotional intelligence can be defined as the juncture between our thoughts and feelings. Our capacity to be focused, resilient, engaged, empathetic and ultimately effective relationship builders, all rely heavily on our ability to understand ourselves and other people. Ultimately it is our capacity to regulate our own thoughts, emotions and conduct that reveals the extent of our emotional intelligence.

Reflect for a moment on when you have observed a highly intelligent and even experienced person, fail to consistently deliver. Contemplate why that was. Its extraordinarily common to meet people in business who struggle to effectively apply what they know and contribute to a standard reflective of their potential, because they lack self-awareness, empathy or the communication skills essential to earning trust and respect. These people fail to build effective relationships and struggle to collaborate.

Having emotional intelligence underpins our ability to master each of the top four skills listed. For example, creativity demands an open-minded approach to new possibilities. In the vast majority of circumstances truly innovative solutions come from teams working together, not disconnected individuals working in isolation. If a lack of emotional intelligence stands in our way of listening to the people we need to, or letting go of firmly held false beliefs, or maintaining a respectful approach, our creative potential is unlikely to be leveraged.

Equally emotional intelligence matters to our ability to be persuasive. That is, to influence how other people think and feel, as well as the decisions they make. Contemplate for example how most people respond to someone who lacks self-awareness, empathy or the ability to control their emotions. Our ability to influence anyone is entirely dependent upon their willingness to let us. If people think we lack emotional intelligence the chances of them trusting us, and therefore being influenced by us, is dramatically undermined.

A lack of emotional intelligence is also a common reason managing change can be so difficult. Take for example the impact a lack of sensitivity from leaders can have on how a team is feeling about change and therefore their willingness to adapt. A lack of emotional intelligence from both leaders and employees all too often creates unnecessary anxiety, resistance and depression. What matters most is that leaders demonstrate compassion and act with sensitivity if they want people to adapt when they need to.

Written by [Karen Gately](#).