



THE EVEREST *Leadership Academy*

The Skills Most Leaders Don't Have

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Defining Hard Skills and Soft Skills

- Hard skills
 - Occupational skills necessary to complete the tangible elements of a job
 - Subject matter skills learned in the classroom
 - A finance director must know how to balance books
 - A waiter needs to know how to take an order
 - A software engineer needs coding skills - build an app



Defining Hard Skills and Soft Skills

- Soft skills
 - Behavioral ways in which people go about their occupational tasks
 - How does the finance director interact with colleagues?
 - How does the waiter engage with the guests?



Conclusion

- Hard skills can get the job done
- Soft skills make the difference between a job that gets done and a job that gets done exceedingly well

- Leadership requires a sophisticated approach to both
 - That's even harder



Leadership's Hard and Soft Skills

- Leadership has its own set of occupational skills:
 - The ability to synthesize data
 - The clarity to make timely and informed decisions
 - The capability to define priorities and goals
 - The aptitude to see situations from a wide, organizational perspective



- On the behavioral side:
 - Requires a high degree of skill in working with and for others
 - Holding others accountable to their commitments
 - Marshalling others to work together
- The more your role involves leadership, the more your job must focus on blending the:
 - The occupational and the behavioral
 - The hard and the soft



This Balance Can Be Extremely Difficult

- Many people define themselves by their ability to be experts in their occupational skills while viewing behavioral skills as secondary or incidental
- In this way, especially for leaders, traditional “soft” skills are harder to get right



Leadership's Harder Skills

- The occupational skills of leadership are much different than those of everyone else
- Leadership at any level is necessarily about other people, leaders must be aware of their behavior, and be visible to others, in ways that non-leaders don't have to be
- As a leader, you don't have the convenience of behaving only for yourself – you must behave for others and not continue to act for one's self



Improving Your Harder (Soft) Skills

- Admit that inter-personal skills are important:
 - Some leaders resist this because they fear it shows weakness to superiors, peers, and subordinates
 - If I expect to lead others, I must first be able to lead myself
- Rethink your definition of “hard” and “soft” skills:
 - How do I define and exercise my hard and soft skills?
 - Do I try to keep them separate?



- Get some help:
 - It is difficult to identify how our default behaviors and habits affect others
 - Learning to make different or new choices requires the structure and support of a good coaching process