



LITERACY TEXAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2023
AUGUST 1 & 2 [LITERACYTEXAS.ORG/CONFERENCE](https://literacytexas.org/conference)

“Soft Skills Are Not Soft”

Jackie Aguilera, MLA

****Houston Mayor’s Office for Adult Literacy (MOAL)*
Project Manager***

****Learning Futurist****

****Literacy Consultant****

****IG Entrepreneur****

*

AEL Unleashed



What's In It for Them? (WIIFT)

- Employer-driven approaches for soft skills development.
- Awareness of benefits for both employers and education providers.
- Tips for identifying and aligning with contextualized soft skills targets.





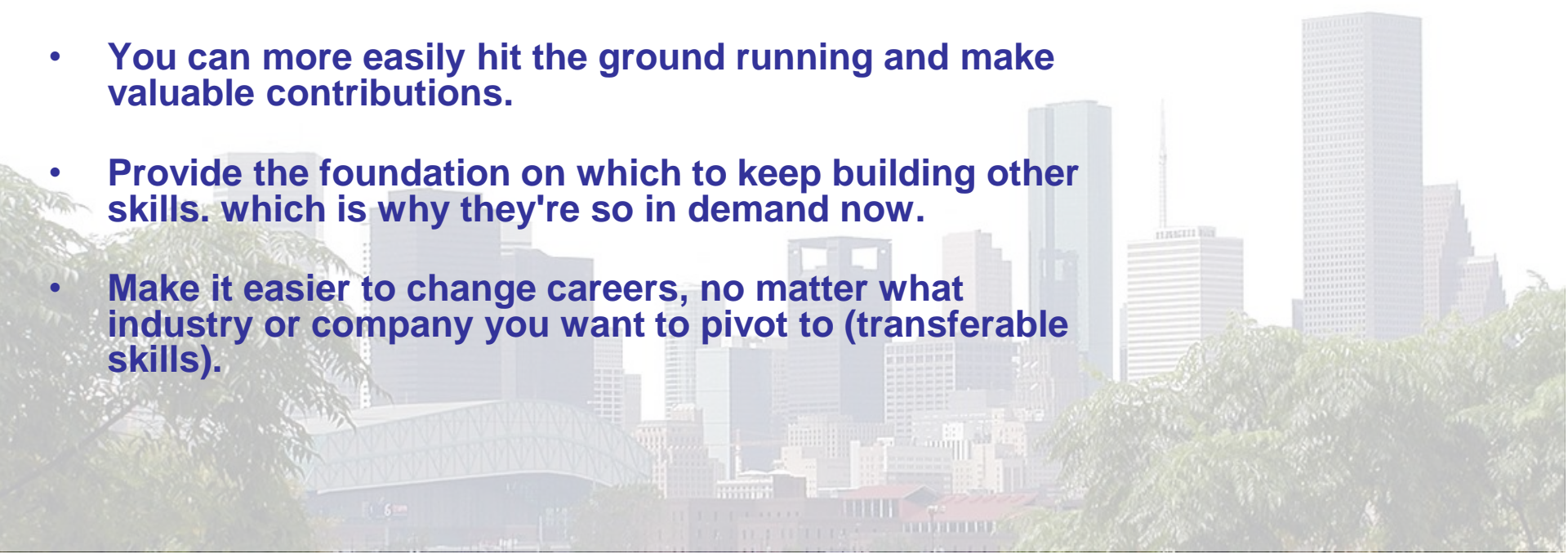
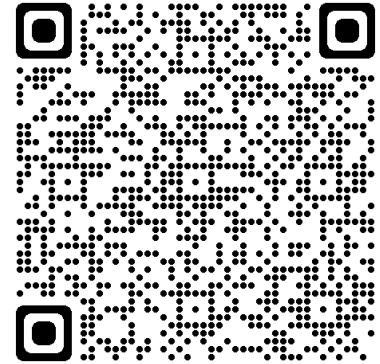
The Employer Mindset. What do you think “drives” them – Hard or Soft Skills?



[Hard Skills or Soft Skills \(google.com\)](https://www.google.com)

According to Forbes Why Soft Skills Are More In Demand Than Ever (forbes.com)

- **Technical skills constantly change, but soft skills remain with you throughout your career.**
- **Relevant, transferable and keep an individual highly employable.**
- **If you already have them, your employer doesn't have to train you on them.**
- **You can more easily hit the ground running and make valuable contributions.**
- **Provide the foundation on which to keep building other skills. which is why they're so in demand now.**
- **Make it easier to change careers, no matter what industry or company you want to pivot to (transferable skills).**

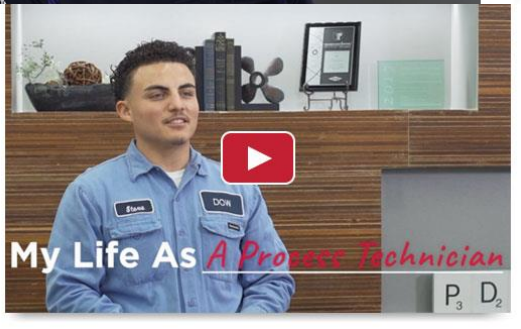


CASE STUDY 1: UpSkill Houston



UP**SKILL**
HOUSTON

[UpSkill Houston | Soft Skills Development | Career Videos & Resources](#)
upskillmylife.org



Contextualized Skills



WHAT ARE YOU UP FOR?

MY LIFE AS A SLEEP TECHNOLOGIST: JONATHAN MILLER

UPSKILL HOUSTON

Jonathan learned about careers in sleep technology from his father, who's in the field. However, Jonathan's interest in the career is entirely his own. "I love dealing with children, specifically, but I like dealing with people, in general," Jonathan said. "In sleep, you have to enjoy talking to people and being able to work with them. That's a key part of any medical field but a part of sleep, particularly, because when their sleep is not right, it affects people during their day."

Houston employs more than 350,000 healthcare professionals. One of eight jobs in the region is in healthcare. Numerous positions offer on-the-job educational opportunities to enhance professional growth and technical knowledge.

Jonathan completed the Accredited Sleep Technologist Education Program, which can be done online, and received training towards his license and registration on the job. He works with a team of technologists and physicians to help patients with sleep-disordered breathing.

REQUIREMENTS:

High school diploma or GED; Registered Polysomnography Technologists (RPSGT) by the Board of Registered Polysomnographic Technologists (BRPT) Sleep Technologist registry by the American Board of Sleep Medicine

SALARY:

\$40,000 - \$60,000

CAREER PATH:

Sleep trainee, sleep technician, sleep technologist, senior sleep technologist

ADVANCEMENT:

Advancement can include sleep health educator, night supervisor, sleep center manager, sleep center director, and sleep program manager

TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

Patience, compassion, and good communication are important skills for this field. "Without those things you won't be able to give proper patient care," Jonathan said. "Beef up your communication skills," he advised.

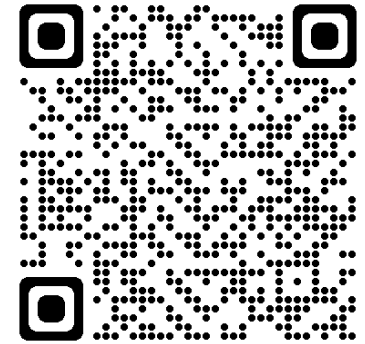
KEY CAREER RESPONSIBILITIES:

Sleep technologists are responsible for the care, comfort and safety of patients, while performing sleep studies and documenting the results. Communicate effectively with patients, members of the patient's family, the sleep medicine physician, colleagues, and other medical professionals.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Board of Registered Polysomnographic Technologists (BRPT): www.brpt.org
American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM): www.aasmnet.org
American Association of Sleep Technologists (AAST): www.aastweb.org

UpSkillMyLife.org     @UpSkillHouston #MyLifeAs

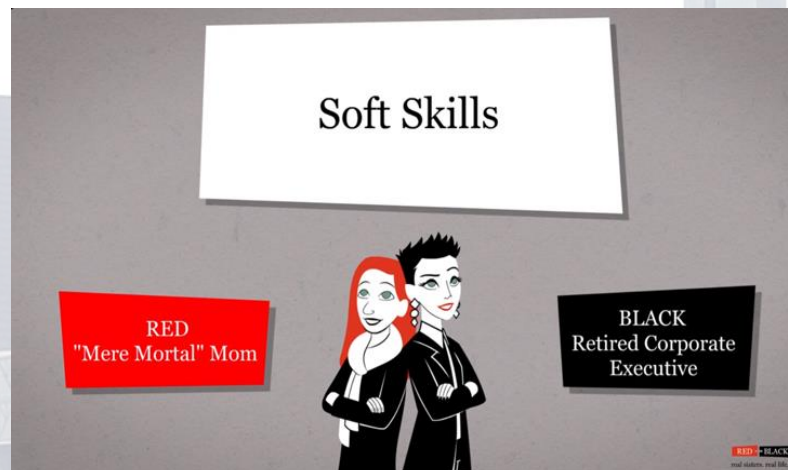




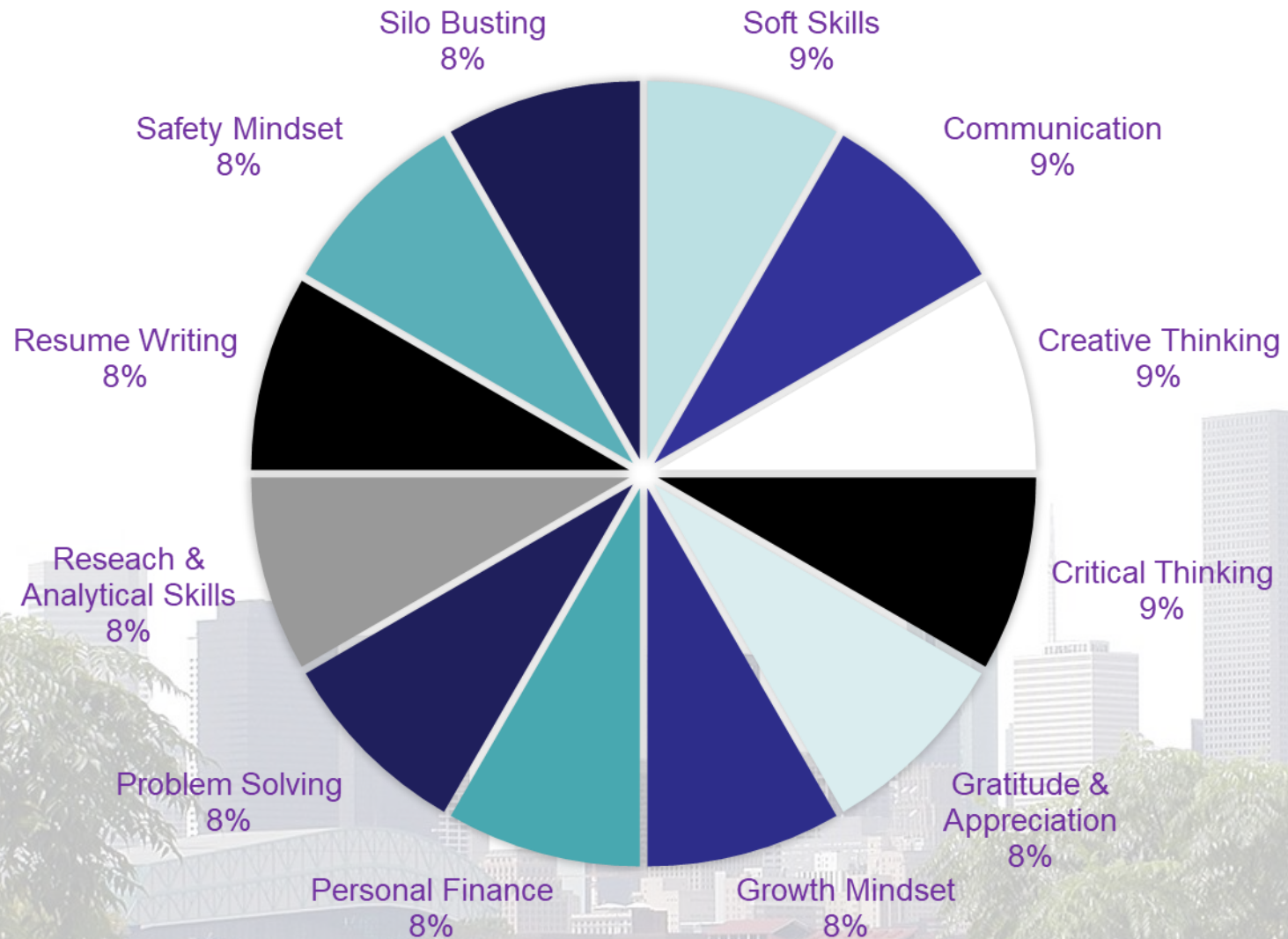
Peter Beard
Sr. Vice President
GHP

UpSkill Houston & Red & Black <https://upskillmylife.org/softskills/>

The Product: an animated “Soft Skills” series developed with direct feedback from one of Houston’s most influential business leaders.



Executive Input: 12 Power Skills





REFLECTION 1

- What “employability skills” (aka soft skills) do employers need and want?
- What is the “value add” of understanding soft skills through the employer POV?

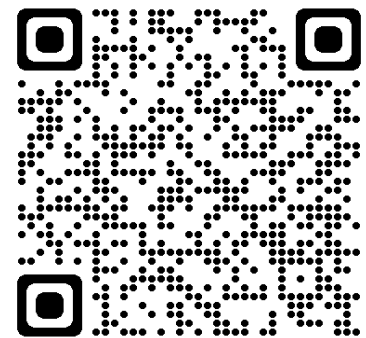
CASE STUDY 2: The Blueprint.

(the answer to *What can an office for adult literacy do during a pandemic?*)

The Blueprint

<http://houstontx.gov/adultliteracyblueprint/>

- City's and Nation's first Adult Literacy Blueprint in partnership with the **Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation**
- The 15-year strategic plan dedicated to advancing adult literacy in Houston
- Currently 1 in 3 adults in Harris County (Greater Houston Area) function at the lowest levels of literacy.



Seven Strategic Blueprint Goals

GOAL 1
AWARENESS & ACTION

GOAL 2
A COMPREHENSIVE
SYSTEM

GOAL 3
MULTI-GENERATIONAL
LEARNING

GOAL 4
WORKFORCE SKILLS &
OPPORTUNITIES

GOAL 5
DIGITAL RESOURCES
& SKILLS

GOAL 6
A COMMON DATA
SYSTEM & PRACTICES

GOAL 7
SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES FOR PROGRESS

Goal 4: *Workforce Skills and Opportunities.* Improve employability skills and increase access to career and entrepreneurship opportunities for adult learners

Strategy 1:

Promote the inclusion of employability skills, career awareness, and entrepreneurship training and workshops in all literacy programs throughout the city.

Strategy 2:

Encourage & support employers to implement or expand inclusive employer-based literacy programs tailored for their employees.

Strategy 3:

Collaborate with cross-sector partners to increase the number of adult learners enrolled in workforce preparation activities (e.g., Integrated Education and Training models, Career Pathways, etc.) and improve learning outcomes.

Strategy 4 :

Partner with employers to connect adult learners with employers, apprenticeships, and entrepreneurship opportunities.

CASE STUDY 3: HLAGH



1. ***What soft skills are most desired in your hotel?***

- Customer Service, Writing, Reading and Computer Skills
- Adaptability
- English
- Self awareness
- Problem solving, multi-tasking, positive communication skills, empathy, leadership, kindness, sales, the ability to understand a bigger picture and what needs to be done to get there.
- Friendly, attentive, teamwork, reliable, time management.
- Communication, PROBLEM SOLVING
- Effective communication, adaptability, time management, critical thinking
- Communication, teamwork, function in a diverse work environment
- Service/hospitable/willing to provide service
- customer service and empathy

Soft Skills within Industry



2. How can adult education providers best approach a partnership with your hotel or management company?

- Just call or email me (HR). We are always looking to partner education providers.
- Flexibility and being able to communicate/connect with different ethnic groups and languages
- Teach self awareness and collaboration
- Bring in students who are looking for careers in hospitality and not just a stop on the way to what they want to really do.
- Bringing in people with the core understanding of what hospitality is and the rest can grow and be taught with the right mentors.
- Networking events, linkedin, referrals
- "Via our HR department. Courses ideally offered online"
- Internships / High School Junior Year experience/
Apprenticeships
- Asking our needs.

Soft Skills within Industry

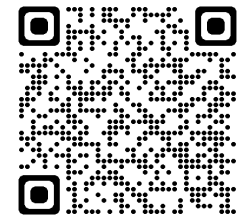


3. What skills training best prepares the developing or current talent pool for the hotel industry?

- *Restaurant and Food management skills*
- *Adaptability and Interpersonal Communication*
- *Culinary, Service , Engineering trades / Building Maintenance*
- *Self awareness and working with others*
- *Basic understanding of the sales process at the front desk, how to problem solve guest issues and taking ownership, general professionalism*
- *Customer service, Time Management, problem solving.*
- *Hands on training*
- *Leadership, negotiation, critical thinking*
- *English literacy, basic computer knowledge, being able to work in a diverse work environment*
- *Hospitality Credit - It's hard to find people that want to work nights and weekends*
- *Reading and writing*

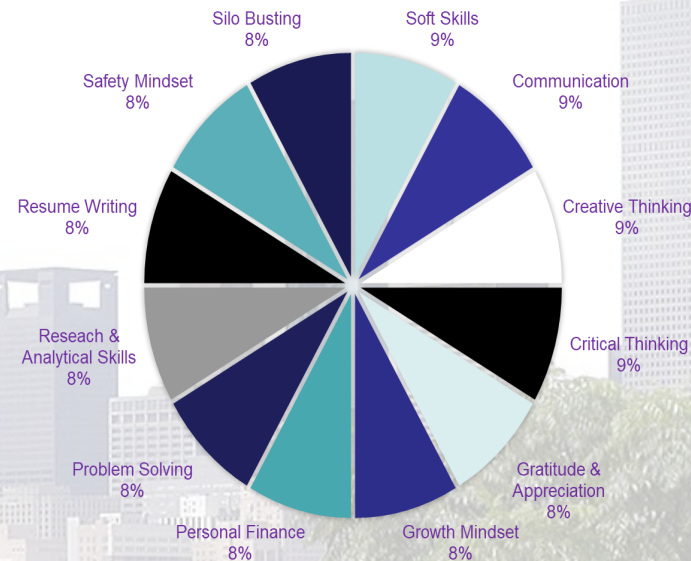
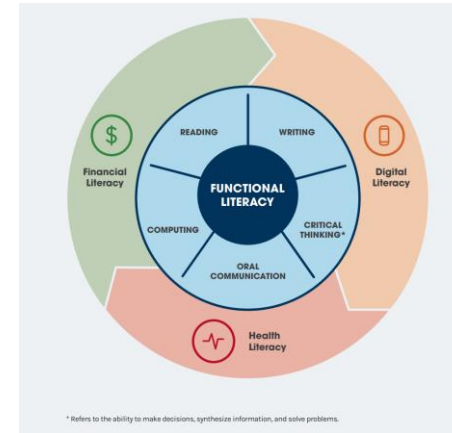


REFLECTION 2



Go back to Reflection 1
Add the following:

- What soft skills do you currently offer to fill employer criteria?
- What lessons or programs can you develop that include contextualized soft skills?



Case Study 4: English@Work

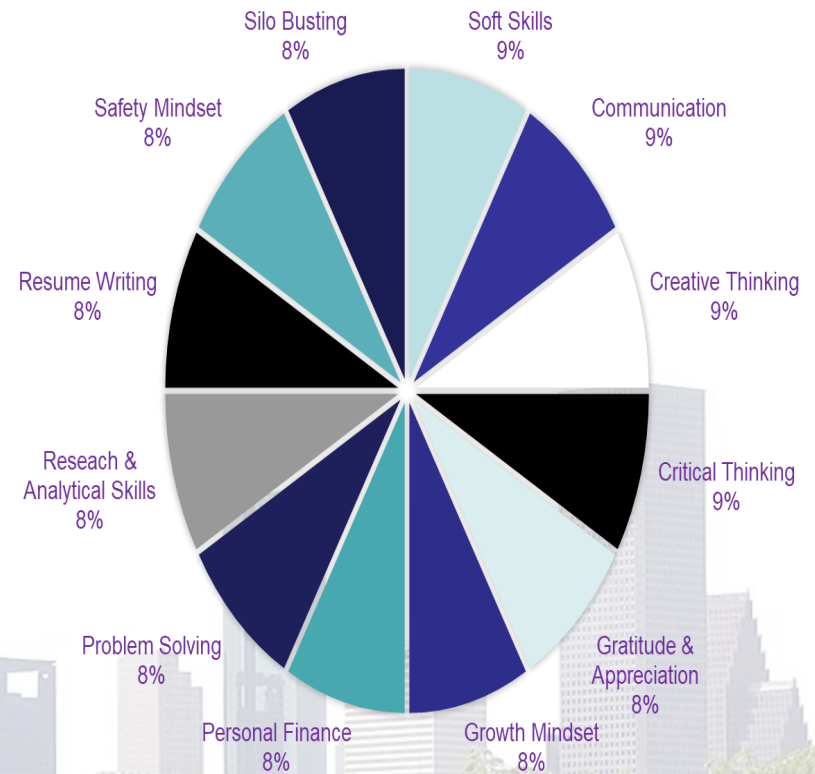
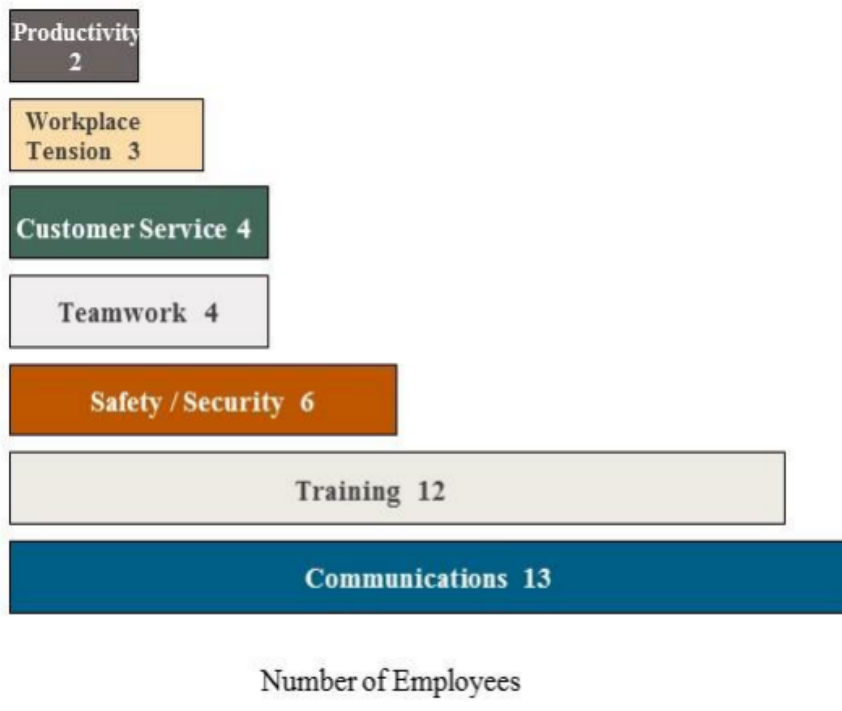
Case Study 1 : English@Work, HTX 2017

- Premise: English language speaking skills are learned more effectively in the context of the workplace a person functions.
- Curriculum customized to the workplace and to students' job descriptions, and delivered in the workplace.



Findings: Soft & Hard Skills

Figure 1. Lack of English Skills Impact on Workplace



Findings

Table 1. *English @ Work* Effects on Communication and Workplace Comfort, n=17

o what extent have you observed:	1 not at all	2	3 somewhat	4	5 a lot	unk*	n/a	Total
a. Improved Communication Among Coworkers	0	0	6	5	5	1	0	17
b. Improved Communication with Supervisors	0	2	4	5	5	1	0	17
c. Resentment Among English-Speaking Coworkers who are not Eligible for Comparable Training	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
d. Improved Customer Communication	0	2	4	5	2	1	3**	17
e. Limited-English-Speakers More at Ease at work	0	0	4	6	7	0	0	17

*The interviewed individuals had not had an opportunity to observe or receive reports on these effects.

**Employees working in jobs without any customer communication.

Findings

Table 2. Improvements in Workplace Safety, n=15

In which of the following areas do you feel safety has improved in your workplace?	Reported Improvements
a. Better handling of potentially hazardous chemicals or other materials	4
b. Improved ability of workers to understand/follow safety procedures	10
c. Fewer on-the-job accidents	1
d. Improved ability of workers to express safety concerns or ask questions	10

Findings

Table 3. Other Benefits or Effects of *English @ Work* Services, n=17

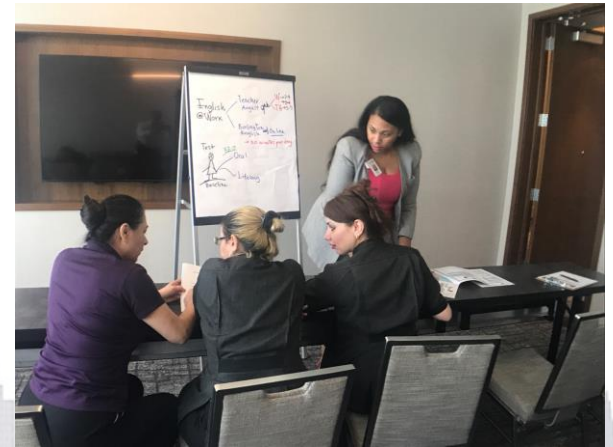
Benefits or effects experienced as a result of <i>English @ Work</i> services for limited-English-speaking workers.	1 not at all	2	3 somewhat	4	5 a lot	unk	Total
Employee Timeliness and Retention: a. Have you experienced reductions in absenteeism by limited-English-speaking workers since accessing <i>English @ Work</i> services?	9	2	3	1	0	2	17
b. Have you observed improvements in employee retention among limited-English-speaking workers since accessing <i>English @ Work</i> services?	7	1	4	3	1	1	17
Cost Savings: To what extent has your business experienced cost savings or greater efficiency as a result of <i>English @ Work</i> services?	3	5	3	2	3	1	17
Meeting Business Expectations/Goals: To what extent have <i>English @ Work</i> services for your workers helped you in meeting your expectations or goals for your business?	0	0	5	5	7	0	17
Personal and Professional Development: a. To what extent have <i>English @ Work</i> services helped your workers expand their personal or professional development by enrolling in classes or other actions?	0	1	4	8	4	0	17
b. To what extent have <i>English @ Work</i> services increased your or your supervisors' awareness of the personal or professional goals, aspirations and capabilities of your workforce?	2	2	1	9	2	1	17
c. To what extent has participation in <i>English @ Work</i> improved employees' opportunities for promotion?	1	2	3	9	2	0	17

Soft Skills Should Have Measurable Skills Gains (Outcomes)

- **Company A:** Implemented a soft skills class program that resulted in a 20% increase in employee productivity and 79% reported satisfaction and confidence increase with management.
- **Company B:** Customized the soft skills curriculum resulted in a 15% increase in employee satisfaction and a 21% increase in family satisfaction.
- **Company C:** Incorporation of a contextualized soft skills unit in a welding class resulted in a 25% increase in learner participation and retention and a 32% increase in employment.

Customize Study Skills for Each Career Pathway

- ❖ *Industry Standards*
- ❖ *Industry Knowledge*
- ❖ *Industry Marketing*
- ❖ *Industry Image & Brand*
- ❖ *Mirror the Culture*





REFLECTION 3

Go back to Reflections 1 & 2

Add the following:

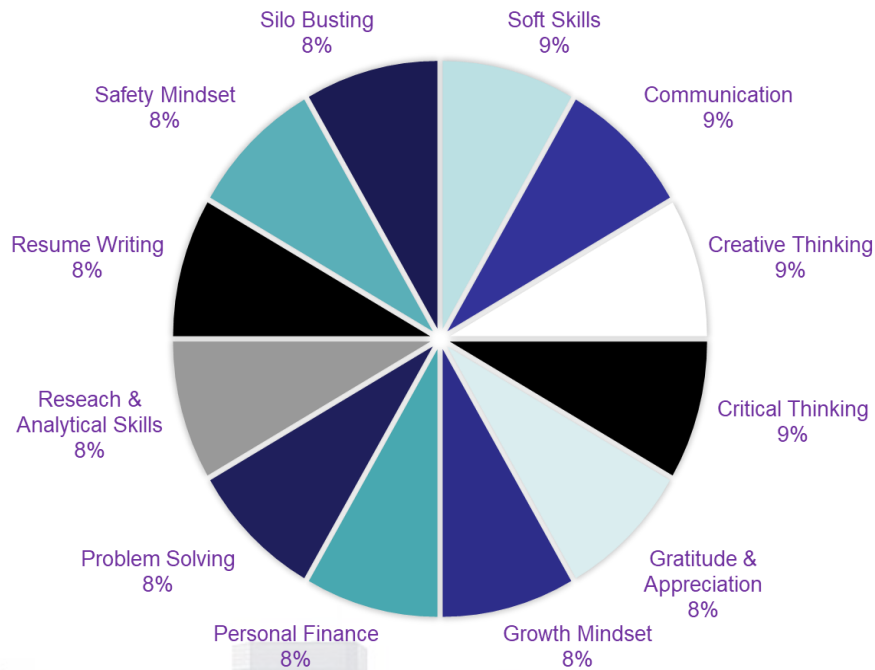
- What are the effects of contextualized soft skills on the workforce?
- What is the ROI of soft skills for participating employers?
- What is the impact of soft skills models on the field of AEL as “Talent Pool Development”?

Strategy Rubric

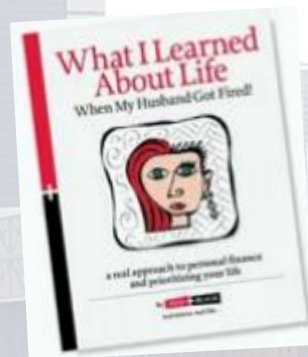
Desired Soft Skills from Your Employer or Workforce Development Partners

	Silo Busting	Safety	Growth Mindset
<i>What you do or can offer to support those needs</i>	Collaborative learning Pair Share	Serve Safe cert OSHA On the Job English	Project based learning Vision Board

Case Study 4: HCC WELDING IET



- **Contextualized the Classroom**
- **Class became a manufacturing plant**
- **Instructor experienced safety trainer in O&G**
- **Students chose roles and duties in the mock plant**
 - **Fridays were Soft Skills Development Day with real world contextualization role play**
- **Included UpSkill Houston Soft Skills animation and curriculum plus “Fired” book study**



Soft Skills Are Not Soft

- Soft skills affect the employability and retention of your clients / learners.
- Contextualized Soft Skills provide partner based ROI (return on investment)
- Hard skills get you hired. Soft skills keep you employed.

Questions & Comments

The Question is NOT “What if we train them and they leave?” BUT “What if we DON’T train them and they STAY?”



Jackie Aguilera, MLA

