

KENJI MATSUSHITA: LISTENING ACTIVITY #1: SOFT SKILLS

PRE-LISTENING

A. Understanding expressions. The following expressions are used in the audio clip you will hear. Match the expression to the meaning by writing the correct number in each space.

EXPRESSION	MEANING
1. to lay someone off	___ to do something that helps someone
2. to let someone down	___ to fire someone from a job
3. to have an effect or impact on someone	___ to disappoint someone
4. to do something to the advantage of someone	___ to influence someone

B. Predicting. Discuss or answer on your own:

1. How do people usually react to being laid off?

2. Have you heard the term soft skills before? “Hard skills” refers to the technical or occupational skills you need in a specific job. What do you think the term soft skills might refer to?

LISTENING

A. Listen to the entire interview. Try to catch the following main ideas:

1. Who is Kenji?

2. What are soft skills? (answer with a synonym or example)

3. What is Kenji good at doing?

B. The following table includes a list of conclusions that can (or cannot) be drawn from the listening. Read each statement. Do you think it is a reasonable conclusion to draw?

Listen to the audio again. If the conclusion is reasonable, mark the TRUE column. If it is not true, mark the FALSE column. If it is impossible to say, based on the listening, mark the last column. Explain your answers. (Note: You may need to listen again to note down details to explain your answer).

	I know this is TRUE because...	I know this is FALSE because...	?
1. Kenji is a successful business man.			
2. Kenji enjoyed being the president of a large company.			
3. Kenji is self-motivated.			
4. Kenji is good at managing people.			
5. Soft skills help you communicate with people			
6. Kenji likes laying people off.			
7. Kenji gets along well with people.			
8. People were angry when Kenji laid them off.			
9. Kenji doesn't care about his personal success.			
10. Kenji thinks it is important to be able to influence people.			

POST LISTENING:

A. Focus on language:

The interviewer had two questions for Kenji:

Question #1: Why are soft skills important for a leader?

Question #2: What is an example of a time when your communication had an impact on people?

However, the interviewer didn't just ask these questions. Instead, he worded his questions in a way that made them seem friendlier and less demanding.

1. Can you remember what the interviewer actually said? Try to complete the sentences below:

Question #1: _____ why _____ soft skills _____ important for a leader?

Question #2: _____ an example of a time when _____ your communication had an impact on people?

2. Now listen to the podcast to check your answers and complete the sentences.

- **Modals** are used to soften direct statements and requests. For instance, people might use "would you mind" when asking someone to do something. Circle the two modals that are used to soften the questions.
- Underline the two phrases that say "We want your opinion because you are an expert" not "This is a test. We want to see if you have the right answer!"
- An **intensifier** is a word that makes another word stronger. For instance, someone might say "I'm **very** sorry" or "I'm **incredibly** excited" to intensify their feelings. Put a + beside an intensifier.
- A **minimizer** is a word that makes a word or statement less strong or less direct. For instance, a Canadian might say "I'm a **tad** tired" or "Could you maybe come a **little** earlier". Put a - beside a minimizer.

3. Think of two questions you would like to ask Kenji. Make the questions sound friendly and less demanding. (Or with a partner: Role-play asking Kenji the questions, and answering the questions the way you think Kenji might.)

B. **Think:** Look at the list of soft skills in the text box. List 3 other soft skills that you think are important in any work environment.

1. Which of those soft skills do you think played an important role in Kenji's success?

2. Check off the 5-6 soft skills you think are most important in your occupation.

3. Circle two or three of the soft skills that you are particularly good at.

C. **Discuss:** Role-play a job interview. The interviewer should ask the job-seeker to describe his or her strengths (*Remember to make the question sound friendly!*). The job-seeker should choose 2-3 soft skills, and give examples to show that he or she has those skills.

D. **Write:** Imagine you are writing a job description for your occupation, and you've already written a paragraph describing the qualifications and hard skills a person in that job would need. Now write a short paragraph describing the **soft skills** a candidate would need. Use words like **must, should, needs to** and **it is important**. You could begin with the following topic sentence:

The _____ candidate must have certain soft skills.

SOFT SKILLS FOR WORK

- Good listening skills
- Good communication skills
- A good work ethic
- An ability to manage your time well
- An optimistic attitude
- Problem solving skills
- Self confidence
- An ability to learn from criticism
- Flexibility
- An ability to work well under pressure
- Being a team player
- Resourcefulness
- An ability to make small talk and network
- Creativity
- An ability to organize people
- _____
- _____
- _____