

Michelle Price on Soft Skills ANSWER KEY

Pre-listening activities

1. Answers will vary.
2. Identify the soft skill(s) you could use in each of the situations below.

Sample answers are listed below.

1. You've been asked to work with a web developer to create a website for your organization.
Skill(s): creativity, teamwork, organization, time management

2. You want to create a presentation to introduce a new idea to your co-workers.
Skill(s): creativity, speaking, confidence

3. You have promised to pay for your employees to attend a conference, but you realize you don't have enough money in the budget.
Skill(s): problem solving, decision making

4. You and a co-worker are asked to organize a bowling night for your department.
Skill(s): organization, teamwork, leadership

5. Your boss asks you to help to decide on the location of the next office party.
Skill(s): decision-making, teamwork

6. Your co-worker calls in sick and your boss asks you to take her shift.
Skill(s): flexibility, decision-making

7. You and your co-workers disagree about the best way to market a new product to your customers.
Skill(s): problem-solving, decision-making, teamwork, speaking, confidence

8. You have 4 projects to complete in the next month.
Skill(s): time management, organization, flexibility

Vocabulary Building Activity

Here are some words you will hear in the interview. **Match each word to its correct definition.**

Letter	Vocabulary Word	Definition
e	impacted (verb)	a. questions that a speaker asks to get more information about a topic
i	responsive (adj)	b. special skill or knowledge that an expert has
f	diversity (noun)	c. being able to adjust or change to fit different situations
k	sincere (adj)	d. able to be applied easily to another situation
a	probing questions (plural compound noun)	e. to have affected or changed
g	soft skills (pl. noun)	f. the many different types of people in one group
b	expertise (noun)	g. communication skills that make someone a good employee and easy to work with
j	align (verb)	h. to put into effect; carry out; start
l	operational reliability (noun)	i. reacting in a desired or positive way
d	transferable (adj)	j. to match; to fit with
h	Implement (verb)	k. honest; real
c	adaptive (adjective)	l. how well a process works

Using your new vocabulary in context

Choose the correct vocabulary word to complete each of the sentences below.

1. **Soft skills** are just as important in the Canadian workplace as your technical skills.
2. A good manager must be **responsive** to the needs of his or her staff.
3. If you are **sincere** in your relationships with others, you will get along with your colleagues.
4. If you are planning to change jobs, it's important that you can be **adaptive** to a new work environment.
5. To be a good listener, you must sometimes ask **probing questions** to learn more about the person you are interacting with.
6. Many people want the issues they care about to **align** with the job they have.
7. Michelle is in charge of **operational reliability** for her company; she has to make sure the workplace safety processes work well.

8. Managers in the oil and gas industry need to hire employees with **expertise** in a variety of different fields.
9. Cultural **diversity** is increasing in the Canadian workplace.
10. All the complaints the business received on its Facebook page negatively **impacted** its sales.
11. The leadership skills that he had developed during his career in the banking industry were **transferable** to his new position.
12. With the support of her colleagues, she was able to **implement** many changes that created a more effective workplace.

Listening for the main idea and details:

Instructions: Read the following questions and then answer them as you listen to the recording.

1. What is the main idea of this interview?

Soft skills, such as strong communication and the ability to be adaptive, are very important in Canadian workplace culture.

2. In what 2 ways does Michelle mention that she has changed over time?

She is more patient

She has improved listening skills to be more responsive to the people she interacts with

4. List 2 ways that Michelle suggests that you may have to adapt your communication to the individual you are speaking to.

To ask probing questions,

To repeat points that have been made to confirm understanding

5. Does her background align with her current job? Explain.

No. She has a commerce degree and has been a chartered accountant.

Now, she is leading safety culture and operational reliability.

6. What does Michelle mean by “the ability to deliver results”?

To have strong communication skills and the ability to be adaptive

Post-listening Discussion Questions

1. For each of the job pairs listed below, choose which job you think requires more soft skills and explain why?

Job pair	Choice (more soft skills)	Reason
Architect or teacher		
Store clerk or bus driver		
Accountant or chef		
Bank teller or security guard		
Hotel manager or day care worker		

Answers may vary

2. If you were a business owner or manager, would you prefer to hire someone who has *strong technical skills but weak soft skills* OR has *strong soft skills but weak technical skills*? Why?

Answers may vary

Interviewer: So we're here with Michelle Price, who is a Vice President with one of Alberta's leading Oil and Gas companies, and she's agreed to talk to us a little bit about communication and leadership today so thank you for coming, Michelle.

Michelle: Oh, you're very welcome.

Interviewer: So could you tell us a bit about how communication has **impacted** your work?

Michelle: I believe that over time I've become hopefully more patient and improved on my listening skills so that I am more **responsive** to the wide **diversity** of people that I interact with and communicate with. You have to be **sincere** in your interactions. So you need to let people know you're interested in what they're saying. And that generally means that if you're speaking to someone one-on-one, you have appropriate eye contact with them, that you allow enough time for individuals to answer questions you have, or to give input. That will vary with individuals. Some will speak very freely and some will not. You have to adapt to the individual you are talking to. You may need to ask **probing** questions. You may need to repeat points that have been made so you can confirm your understanding of what's been said. And it depends as well what type of interaction you're having. If it's a social interaction, or if it's a technical interaction, you have to adjust your listening skills.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's a great point. And speaking of technical skills and soft skills, so do you think that throughout your career it has been more the **soft skills** side of your skills set that has given you more leadership opportunities or do you think it's more the technical side or are they equal?

Michelle: It wouldn't necessarily be the technical side because my technical **expertise** doesn't **align** with the role that I have right now. I have a commerce degree and I'm a chartered accountant but right now I'm leading safety culture and **operational reliability** for our company. But there are a lot of leadership skills that are directly **transferable** as you manage people, set goals, plan and **implement**. To me, I think it's a combination of having the ability to deliver results, but the only way you can be effective and deliver results is if you have those strong communication skills and the ability to be **adaptive**.

Interviewer: Great stuff. Thank you very much for your time today, Michelle.

Michelle: Oh, my pleasure. Thank you very much.