



Q1:2026

Beyond the Resume: The Power of Soft Skills

Introduction

In the age of AI, competition for entry level jobs is intensifying - even for university graduates. Youth unemployment remains stubbornly high and many in-demand jobs such as Business Intelligence Analysts - a skill that drives the use of AI in many organizations - are increasingly a purview of those with prior work experience and understanding of internal organizational operations.

In this environment, in fact in any environment, soft skills distinguish candidates and gives them an edge in a tough labour market. Yet, they are undervalued despite employers consistently seeking candidates with strong soft skills.

A majority of employers consider soft skills “essential” when making a hiring decision, and they are increasingly focused on these skills with 60% saying soft skills matter more today than they did five years ago. But what do we actually mean by soft skills?



Soft skills are the personal qualities and social competencies that enable individuals to collaborate effectively, adapt to change, and succeed across diverse work environments.

Soft Skills

Jobseekers often hear the term but rarely receive a clear definition. Clients need to be clear on what is meant by the term that is in such demand yet short in supply. Soft skills are the personal qualities and social competencies that enable individuals to collaborate effectively, adapt to change, and succeed across diverse work environments. Above is a wheel of qualities and abilities that make up soft skills. Examples are, how to communicate, solve problems, manage your time, and adapt to challenges. These skills show employers you can *thrive* in the workplace, not just do the work. To complete the wheel, we add, leadership, teamwork, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking.



Unlike technical skills -which focus on *what* you know - soft skills reflect *how* you work with people and navigate situations.

The Challenge - Measuring Soft Skills

While this list is not exhaustive, clients who consistently demonstrate these behaviours are likely strong in soft skills. The challenge is how to measure these skills objectively and consistently? A well crafted résumé—often supported by a counsellor - can mask soft-skill gaps and can help a client reach the interview stage. A seasoned HR professional or hiring manager may detect soft-skill strengths or weaknesses during a short interview, but more often these abilities (or the lack thereof) become apparent only after the candidate is hired.

This is where the Employment Readiness Scale (ERS) can support practitioners. The ERS provides a structured approach to identifying soft-skill strengths and challenges *before* employment, offering a valuable proxy for evaluating workplace behaviours and attitudes. There is a strong correlation between ERS factors and soft skills, helping practitioners guide clients more effectively. The Infograph below

provides a concise overview of how ERS factors connect to soft skills and employer needs. A full, detailed version is available on our website [Soft Skills and ERS Factors](#)

ERS Factor	Soft Skill	Employer Value
Career Decision-Making	Critical Thinking	Chooses suitable roles; lowers turnover
Skills Enhancement	Learning Agility	Learns quickly; adapts to change
Job Search	Communication	Presents well; communicates clearly
Ongoing Career Management	Planning & Adaptability	Sets goals; stays engaged long-term
Self-Efficacy	Confidence & Initiative	Works independently; persists through challenges
Outcome Expectancy	Motivation & Accountability	Reliable effort; strong work ethic
Social Support	Help-Seeking & Relationship Skills	Uses resources; builds positive workplace relationships
Work History	Professionalism	Understands workplace norms; smooth onboarding
Job Maintenance	Reliability & Emotional Regulation	Consistent performance; manages stress

Conclusion

To improve employment outcomes for clients and graduating students, we must elevate the importance of soft skills alongside technical competencies. A strong résumé is no longer enough—employers want candidates who can communicate, adapt, problem-solve, and collaborate.

Clients who strengthen their soft skills significantly increase their chances of not only finding employment but keeping it.



[Cannexus 2026 - Conference](#)

Visit us at the Cannexus Conference from **Jan 26 -28, 2026 in Ottawa, Ontario**. Stop by our booth to try out the ERS assessment and learn more about using the tool in your practice.

Articles you may find of interest

1. [Resilient by Design: The Skills Canadians Need Now and for the Future - Future Skills Centre](#)
2. [10 Tips for Integrating Assessment Results Into Career Conversations - Life Strategies](#)
3. [Forget Exams. Let's Test Soft Skills Instead. Macleans Magazine](#)

4. [Social and Emotional Skills in the Workplace: Insights From Canadian Employers - Conference Board of Canada](#)

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ERS Scale Inc., 3328 Kingsway Ave, Vancouver, British Columbia V5R 0A4, Canada, 1-877-600-7737

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