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abilities in your job. As you collaborate more frequently across the business, you must focus on building solid relationships with non-finance colleagues.

Sep. 10, 2015

skilled

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Can you “learn” soft skills the way you can learn how to sew or play the guitar?

The answer is yes, but don't expect the learning ground to be a company-sponsored workshop. Even though many managers say it takes strong soft skills to move up the company ladder, few firms provide training in this area. In a recent [Accountemps survey](#) of chief financial officers, only one in five said their organization is likely to invest in soft skills training for accounting and finance staff in the next two years.

So you're on your own. So what? Well, if you're like many accountants, you've noticed the increasing need for interpersonal abilities in your job. As you collaborate

more frequently across the business, you must focus on building solid relationships

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communication, diplomacy and collaborative skills.

2. Keep an open mind in every conversation. Don't become so intent on getting your way that you fail to acknowledge other points of view. Demonstrate a sincere interest by listening carefully to your colleagues, minimizing interruptions and asking for clarification when necessary.

3. Ensure good e-etiquette. Soft skills don't only refer to interpersonal interactions. Maintain a professional tone in all the messages you send and voicemails you leave. Even the most informal communiqué requires common courtesies such as "please" and "thank you." You never know how far your messages will be forwarded.

4. Check your annoyance quotient. Are you quick to get irritated if people don't get what you're saying right away? Patience is also a soft skill. What's obvious to you might not be so clear to the person you're explaining it to.

5. Listen! Yes, you want to hold the floor at times to get your point across, but don't let this be your single objective when in a group setting. Instead of automatically blurting out something you want to say the minute it occurs to you, stop and listen more carefully to the larger conversation. By becoming a better listener, you'll not only **improve your likeability** and ability to influence others, but you'll also avoid misunderstandings and conflicts.

The bottom line is that soft skills can be learned. But it takes practice. If you have any additional tips, we welcome your comments.

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