



Stanford eCorner

The Soft Skills Matter

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The skills that matter most when you move up in an organization are not actually taught in schools, says GE healthmagination CEO Sue Siegel. Here Siegel describes why the soft skills of working with and sharing credit with others, and being able to express empathy, are critical to personal and professional success.



Transcript

When I think about skills, you learn a ton as it relates to skills in school, and you get taught how to do certain things, methodologies, processes, what not, tools if you'd like. But there are some skills you actually never really get taught, and those are things that are the soft skills and the higher you get in organizations, the bigger you get in organizations, actually those soft skills mean a bunch. And what are some of those soft skills. So when you think about it, the whole notion of just being able to work with other people, again it sound so obvious, but, yeah, I have to tell you and a number of the companies I have been in it's not so obvious, and in fact, when people get their reviews one of the things that actually get said is they need to learn to work with people more, they need to learn to work as part of the team, they have to realize that other people should get credit too that you are not the center of attention all the time that - and it just goes on and on. So that notion of team and that notion of the soft skills are actually pretty important. The other thing I will say in terms of some of the skill sets is, and again, you've probably learned this, is the notion of empathy. What am I talking about? You probably are going through it as you are going through classes, some of you are stronger in some classes, some of you are stronger in other classes. And so to be able to actually understand this, the whole notion of empathizing with other person when they, in fact, are part of the team, they bring a skill set, they are going to do something for you that's actually going to get your project done. But still being able to actually empathize with them in terms of the parts they don't understand is pretty important. In the corporation, it's actually the same.

And people want to know. And again, it sound so simple. But I will tell you that actually, it's not. People get mechanical about things and then realize that it is this personal empathy that actually people relate to and want to help you become successful. Having people want to help you by you also empathizing is a big deal, try it sometime, you'll actually surprise yourself, and you'll probably surprise the person too.