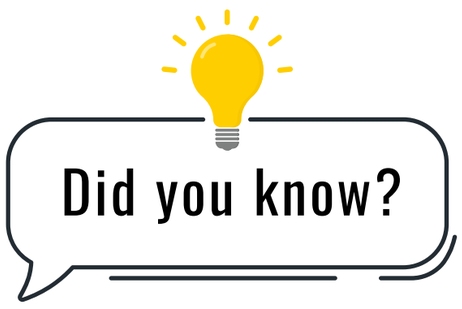
Bridging the Interpersonal Skill Gap

Step Up and Succeed

Interpersonal skills, also called **soft skills** or **social and emotional skills**, are essential for the success of any workforce. But apprentices don't always have these important foundational skills which are necessary to succeed in training and at work.



Research shows that investing in staff training is essential to reducing skills gaps and strengthening the workforce.

The Conference Board of Canada, 2024

Common Reasons for Interpersonal Skills Gaps

Different communication styles can mask interpersonal skills gaps. Gaps may go unnoticed until someone enters the workforce.

Interpersonal skills aren't a primary focus in most educational settings. This leaves many students underprepared for training and employment.

Some people have difficulty learning these skills - especially those who are neurodiverse, have a learning disability or come from different cultural backgrounds.

People learn interpersonal skills through work and life experience. These skills aren't 'proven' with formal certification.

Traditional apprenticeship programs prioritize hands-on technical skills and may overlook interpersonal skill development.

Strategies to Bridge the Gaps

Here are some **simple strategies** to consider to bridge this critical skills gap. Solutions can be as simple as finding free or low-cost short-term training for your apprentices!

- Provide mentorship opportunities from experienced apprentices and journey-persons with strong interpersonal skills.
- Include interpersonal skills training in regular workplace training.

  Tip! Employment services and learning networks offer free supports for employers and apprentices!
- Create open and trusting communication with apprentices, journeypersons and other employees.
- Talk with apprentices who show skills gaps to learn **why** they're having difficulties. Work with them to create a professional development plan to help them grow.

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