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NEWS
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Note: Highlights of soft skills research and “soft serve” parties are included at the end of this release. Led by Klaus herself, soft serve parties are an easy and fun way of serving up the soft skills so you don’t have to learn them the hard way. Klaus reveals essential but often-ignored soft skills lessons for the workplace interspersed with lively, experiential exercises. The program lasts about two hours—and, yes, soft serve ice cream tops off each event!

THE HARD TRUTH ABOUT SOFT SKILLS

WORKPLACE LESSONS SMART PEOPLE WISH THEY’D LEARNED SOONER

By Peggy Klaus



What’s the hard truth? Soft skills get little respect but can make or break your career. Yet unfortunately, most people learn them the hard way!

Peggy Klaus—the woman who busted bragging myths and made us rethink self promotion with the 2004 release of *BRAG! The Art of Tooting Your Horn Without Blowing It*—now brings us *The Hard Truth About Soft Skills—Workplace Lessons Smart People Wish They’d Learned Sooner* (Collins, February 1, 2008, Paperback). Klaus reveals why these core competencies are often ignored and brings their importance to life in 54 lessons that highlight how soft skills mastery can become the key to hard success.

A Fortune 500 communication and leadership coach, Klaus says the idea for the book grew out of a combination of tales from the office trenches, complaints from management, and an ever-growing body of research (highlighted at the end of this release) supporting the need for soft skills competency.

During both one-to-one and group training sessions, Klaus continually encountered people who weren’t getting where they wanted to go at work. “Whether young or old, experienced or inexperienced, what struck me most about their stories of missed opportunities and derailed careers was this: Their problems rarely stemmed from a shortfall in technical or professional expertise, rather from a shortcoming in the soft skills arena with their personal, social, communication and self-management behaviors.”

“As well, I kept hearing from managers and HR folks about employees—both those entering the workforce and those already on board—who were sorely lacking when it came to their soft skills,” notes Klaus.

But if these soft skills are really that important, why do so many people learn them the hard way?

Klaus says part of the problem is semantics. After all, she writes, “How could anything described as soft be valued in the hard-charging, results-driven business world or impact the bottom line?”

Yet as she often puts it to her corporate audiences with blunt force, “What’s so soft about pitching an investor for his multi-million dollar portfolio? Or inspiring and motivating people after your company has laid off thousands? Or having the foresight and guts to suggest new or more efficient ways of doing things that your boss might be too distracted to think about? Soft skills are some of the hardest skills you’ll ever learn!”

Another obstacle when it comes to taking soft skills seriously is that most of us think they are just about touchy-feely people skills. Although they do encompass people skills, that's just for starters. Klaus's book covers a much wider spectrum of soft skills abilities and traits from self-awareness to attitude, initiative to problem solving, leadership to time management, political astuteness to integrity, and then some.

In *The Hard Truth About Soft Skills* Klaus distills 54 important workplace lessons based on stories of struggles and triumphs she has collected from thousands of hours training, coaching and interviewing people at all levels on the corporate ladder. Readers will not only walk away with a much better understanding and awareness of soft skills and how they are woven throughout their careers, but also gain practical insights, strategies, tools, and techniques for learning or improving a particular soft skills area. The lessons are organized into eight chapters, each covering an aspect in which soft skills play an especially significant role: career management, getting the job done, communication, handling critics, office politics, self-promotion, dealing with differences, and leadership.

An online "Take 24" automated self-assessment quiz that tests and tallies an individual's soft skills savvy in a number of key areas will also be available at www.peggyklaus.com in conjunction with the book's launch. People respond to 24 items online and receive instant feedback on which soft skills areas they need to improve, along with customized advice from Klaus.

Among Klaus's favorite workplace lessons are the following:

Page numbers below apply to the galley only:

- Knowing yourself is as important as knowing how to do the job (page 9).
- Learn when to stick and when to shift or the details will hang you (page 34).
- Your procrastination is trying to tell you something (page 38).
- Get smart about asking dumb questions (page 61).
- You don't need to be everyone's best friend—that's what dogs are for (page 80).
- Know where to draw the line between self-improvement and self-destruction (page 85).
- When it comes to gossip, learn the art of deflection (page 100).
- Keep your visibility when you're not face-to-face (page 124).
- Don't take it personally (page 132).
- Stop stereotypes from sinking you (page 146).
- You're the boss, stupid, that's why they hang on your every word (page 162).

And, perhaps, most favorite of all: Get out of your own way (page 23).

About The Author



Peggy Klaus trains professionals world-wide at leading companies which include Credit Suisse, Disney, UNICEF, and Kaiser Permanente. Author of *BRAG! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It*, she has been featured in a wide range of media including the *Today Show*, *20/20*, *The Early Show*, *BusinessWeek*, *Fortune*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, *Investors Business Daily*, *O Magazine*, *Working Mother*, *Pink*, *Glamour*, *Allure*, *Self*, *Woman's Day*, and *Family Circle*. Klaus has lectured at Harvard; the University of California, Berkeley; and Wharton. She lives in Berkeley, CA.

The Hard Truth About Soft Skills: Workplace Lessons Smart People Wish They'd Learned Sooner

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Soft Skills Research: The Hard Facts

- A survey conducted by the Graduate Management Admission Council found that although MBA's were strong in analytical aptitude, quantitative expertise, and information-gathering ability, they were sorely lacking in other critical areas that employers find equally attractive: strategic thinking, written and oral communication, leadership, and adaptability.
- Research at DePaul University concluded that recruiters want business schools to pay more attention to people-oriented skills like leadership and communication. Students, however, frequently complain that those "soft skills" won't get them jobs, and they're pressuring their business schools to focus instead on functional or technical content, the researchers say.
- A study of head hunters hiring CEOs ranked the ability to communicate and motivate as necessary attributes for positively affecting the bottom line. Another study found traits like conscientiousness and agreeability to be equally accurate predictors of work success as cognitive ability and work accuracy.
- Research conducted with Fortune 500 CEOs by the Stanford Research Institute International and the Carnegie Melon Foundation, found that 75 percent of long-term job success depends on people skills, while only 25 percent on technical knowledge.
- In a survey of 100 human resources executives conducted by Challenger, Gray & Christmas, the outplacement firm, nearly half said that entry workers lacked writing skills and 27 percent said that they were deficient in critical thinking. "It appears that young employees are writing company e-mails as if they were texting cellphone messages with their thumbs," noted the Wall Street Journal (Phyllis Korkki), adding, "in response employers a sending a message of their own: When you're in the office, put on those dress shoes and start spelling your words correctly, and in full."

Soft Serve Parties

Soft Serve Parties are an easy and fun way of serving up the soft skills so you don't have to learn them the hard way. The parties are led by Peggy Klaus, who offers up essential but often-ignored soft skills lessons for the workplace. Interspersed with lively, experiential exercises, the program lasts about two hours—and, yes, soft serve ice cream tops off each event! While **Soft Serve Parties** can be customized to meet the needs of any audience, a typical agenda includes the following components:

I. Opening: What's The Hard Truth About Soft Skills?

With her engaging and entertaining style, Klaus opens the program talking about how soft skills get little respect but will make or break a career. And how unfortunately, most people learn them the hard way! She explains how soft skills are not just about those touchy-feely people skills, but also cover a wide range of abilities and traits from self-awareness to attitude, initiative to problem solving, handling criticism to communicating your agenda, leadership to time management, political astuteness to integrity, and then some.

Throughout the program, Klaus cites a combination of tales from the office trenches, complaints from management about employee deficiencies in the soft skills arena, and an ever-growing body of research that supports the need for improving soft skills competency.

II. Group Play: Four Workplace Lessons For Soft Skills Savvy

If you've ever been to a Peggy Klaus event, you know there's not a whole lot of sitting around. Participants are on their feet as Klaus pairs them up for interactive exercises and mini-makeovers in a particular soft skills area. With these activities, she brings alive some of her favorite lessons, including:

Don't take it personally. Klaus highlights why you need to get used to being judged (all the time, not just during performance reviews) and teaches how to handle critics without getting overly emotional.

Your procrastination is trying to tell you something. What does being perpetually behind on your projects say about you and your time management skills? Klaus offers words of wisdom and practical advice that will surprise you.

Adjust your communication accordingly. Though we're more connected than ever, our communication skills have reached an all-time low. Klaus provides critical tips for communicating with everyone from your boss on down.

Know the unspoken rules of the workplace. No matter how distasteful, office politics are an unavoidable part of every job. Klaus shows why organizational astuteness is one soft skills area you can't afford to miss.

III. We All Scream For ICE CREAM!

Soft serve ice cream in a cone or cup with all the toppings is served at the end of the party. Hosting organizations utilize the ice cream machines in their own cafeterias or we help to find a local caterer or other provider. For events in the greater New York City area, the Mr. Softee franchise is available for onsite service at a reasonable cost. Contact us for more details.