Leveling up your career with soft skills

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The problem with lone wolves
The value of soft skills
Software engineering is about people
We often debate the importance of more technical vs more human skills for “senior” technical roles. I think juxtaposing them against each other creates a strange dynamic where you’re supposed to pick a side. But both are kinda important and relevant?
Over time, I've learned that the biggest source of failure is people and teams.

A lack of communication and coordination can cause serious problems.

— Laurie Barth (@laurieontech), “How Architecture Improved My Coding Skills”
Why don’t we focus on our soft skills?
Because they’re hard.
They’re hard in different ways for different people.
Detritivore Biome means DOMAIN OF THE WORMS
@noahsussman

The best engineers are not only good at listening but they are good at explaining as well.

If you have been overwhelmed and intimidated by a senior engineer please consider the Dunning-Kruger effect. It's likely that person knows less than they think they do. A lot less.
“Failure is an opportunity to grow”

**GROWTH MINDSET**

“I can learn to do anything I want”

“Challenges help me to grow”

“My effort and attitude determine my abilities”

“Feedback is constructive”

“I am inspired by the success of others”

“I like to try new things”

“Failure is the limit of my abilities”

**FIXED MINDSET**

“Either good at it or I’m not”

“My abilities are unchanging”

“I don’t like to be challenged”

“My potential is predetermined”

“When frustrated, I give up”

“Feedback and criticism are personal”

“I stick to what I know”
“Empathy is much harder than we think. To build empathy, we need to slow down.”

— “The Empathy Delusion”, Tenzer & Murray, 2019
Four attributes of empathy

- Perspective taking
- Non-Judgemental
- Recognizing emotions
- Communicate understanding

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When responding, avoid...

- Changing the subject
- Looking for silver linings
- Jumping straight to problem solving mode
- Talking about your experiences in a detractive way
Not sure what to say? How about...

- Acknowledging their feelings
- Thanking them for letting you know
- Asking...
  - what they’re feeling
  - what they need
Practice and Practices
Me, talking a writer down from imposter syndrome: How long have you been writing?

Them: Three years.

Me: And how old are you?


Me: Okay. So you're a level 28 human and a level 3 writer. How good were you as a level 3 human?

Them: Ooooooooh.
Schedule time for practice
Practices: Measurement

**Users: Last 7 Days Using Median**

- **Load Time vs Bounce Rate**
  - Median Page Load (LUX): 2.056s
  - Bounce Rate: 7% 57.1%

- **Start Render vs Bounce Rate**
  - Median Start Render (LUX): 1.031s

**Page Views vs Onload**

- **Page Load (LUX):** 0.7s
- **Page Views (LUX):** 2.7Mpv
- **Bounce Rate (LUX):** 40.6%

**Sessions**

- **Sessions (LUX):** 479K
- **Session Length (LUX):** 17min
- **PVs Per Session (LUX):** 2pv

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Practices
(which you can practice)

Pay Attention

Listen

Ask Questions
Types of listening

- Passive - worse
  - Jump to solution early
  - Used by: task-oriented developers

- Active - better
  - Seeking to deeply understand
  - Used by: Product managers, UX researchers
Top 5 tips to be a better human

- Seek first to understand
- Listen twice as much as you speak
- Be open to feedback
- Have a growth mindset
- Practice doesn’t make perfect; practice makes better
Resources


https://firstround.com/review/empathy-driven-development-how-engineers-can-tap-into-this-critical-skill/

https://qz.com/1016900/

https://www.cio.com/article/3206166/3-steps-to-reduce-bias.html

https://slack.engineering/technical-leadership-getting-started-e5161b1bf85c
Thank you, Dawn!

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