

15 essential skills – for every role and every learner

No matter the department or job title, these 15 foundational skills are what fuel long-term career success. By weaving them into your training programs, you’re equipping your people not just to do their current jobs better—but to grow, adapt, and lead in the face of whatever’s next. They’re the kind of skills that quietly power high-performing teams—and help you prove L&D’s real impact.

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Skill	Why it matters	TED Talk	Book Summary	Podcast	Course
Communication	Clear communication helps employees connect, collaborate, and share ideas—building trust, productivity, and a strong culture.	10 ways to have a better conversation <i>CELESTE HEADLEE</i>	Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When the Stakes Are High <i>JOSEPH GRENNY, KERRY PATTERSON, RON MCMILLAN, AL SWITZLER, EMILY GREGORY</i>	Communication and collaboration	7 Barriers to Effective Communication
Teamwork	Few roles stand alone. Teamwork helps people collaborate across functions and time zones—driving shared goals and better outcomes.	Build a tower, build a team <i>TOM WUJEC</i>	The Power of a Positive Team: Proven Principles and Practices that Make Great Teams Great <i>JON GORDON</i>	Efficient Teamwork – Better Together Than Alone	Team Players: The Importance of Unselfish Teamwork
Emotional Intelligence	Recognizing and managing emotions—and understanding others’—builds more empathetic, effective teams, especially in fast-paced or high-stress environments.	How to embrace emotions at work <i>LIZ FOSSLIEN</i>	Working with Emotional Intelligence <i>DANIEL GOLEMAN</i>	The 4 Pillars of Emotional Relisilience to Build Inner Strength and Emotional Intelligence	Emotional Intelligence
Decision-making	Good decisions move business forward. Teaching this skill reduces bottlenecks and builds ownership.	How to make big decisions in challenging circumstances <i>JONATHAN REIMER</i>	Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking <i>MALCOLM GLADWELL</i>	Making Decisions & Managing Risk: Self-Made Billionaire’s Guide to Success	Decision making excellence
Problem solving	People with problem-solving skills don’t just surface challenges—they offer ideas, experiment, and move work forward.	You don’t have to be an expert to solve big problems <i>TAPIWA CHIWWEWE</i>	Sprint: How to Solve Big Problems and Test New Ideas in Just Five Days <i>JAKE KNAPP, JOHN ZERATSKY, AND BRADEN KOWITZ</i>	Problem Solving: The Basics	Problem Solving and Innovation: Effective Problem Solving – Asking The 5 Why’s
Growth mindset	Employees who believe they can grow are more adaptable, resilient, and open to feedback. It all starts with mindset.	The power of believing that you can improve <i>CAROL DWECK</i>	The 15 Invaluable Laws of Growth: Live Them and Reach Your Potential <i>JOHN C. MAXWELL</i>	Stuck Mindset to Growth Mindset	Affirmations for a Growth Mindset
Time management	With deadlines, shifting priorities, and limited hours in the day, strong time management helps employees stay focused and deliver work that matters.	Forget multitasking, try monotasking <i>PAOLO CARDINI</i>	Time Management Ninja: 21 Rules for More Time and Less Stress in Your Life <i>CRAIG JARROW</i>	Control the Clock by Managing Your Time	Time Management
Innovation	Innovation fuels progress. Encouraging creativity across teams can lead to big results.	Ask dumb questions, embrace mistakes — and other lessons on innovation <i>DAVE RAGGIO</i>	The Innovator’s DNA: Mastering the Five Skills of Disruptive Innovators <i>JEFF DYER, HAL GREGERSEN, AND CLAYTON M. CHRISTENSEN</i>	Authenticity and Innovation: Ja Rule’s Blueprint for Breaking Barriers	Jumpstart Innovation
Relationship-building	Strong relationships—across teams, customers, and stakeholders—lead to smoother collaboration, more trust, and better communication.	5 ways to create stronger connections <i>ROBERT REFFKIN</i>	How to Talk to Anyone: 92 Little Tricks for Big Success in Relationships <i>LEIL LOWNDES</i>	Building Work Relationships Up, Down and Across	Develop a Relationship Building Mindset
Adaptability	Adaptability is no longer a nice-to-have. It’s what allows people to thrive amid shifting tools, teams, and strategies.	3 ways to measure your adaptability -- and how to improve it <i>NATALIE FRATTO</i>	Who Moved My Cheese? An Amazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and in Your Life <i>SPENCER JOHNSON, M.D.</i>	Embracing Change Through Mindfulness	Adaptability and Flexibility
Motivation	Self-motivated employees take initiative, stay engaged, and inspire others—building a healthier culture.	The puzzle of motivation <i>DAN PINK</i>	Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us <i>DANIEL H. PINK</i>	The Importance of Purpose	Fostering And Maintaining Motivation
Leadership	Teaching leadership skills across the org builds a pipeline of future-ready talent—and encourages accountability at every level.	Everyday leadership <i>DREW DUDLEY</i>	The 5 Levels of Leadership: Proven Steps to Maximize Your Potential <i>JOHN C. MAXWELL</i>	Know Thyself: The Personal Leadership Journey with Laurent Therivel	Making Leadership Happen
Conflict resolution	Conflicts are inevitable. Teaching employees how to handle them effectively reduces friction, builds psychological safety, and protects productivity.	How to disagree productively and find common ground <i>JULIA DHAR</i>	Reality-Based Leadership: Ditch the Drama, Restore Sanity to the Workplace, and Turn Excuses into Results <i>CY WAKEMAN</i>	Managing Conflict in Your Team	Turn Conflict Into Collaboration
Organization	From juggling tasks to managing priorities, organization keeps work on track and helps employees stay in control—even when it’s busy.	How to gain control of your free time <i>LAURA VANDERKAM</i>	Joy at Work: Organizing Your Professional Life <i>MARIE KONDO AND SCOTT SONENSHEIN</i>	Power Up Your To-Do List	Prioritize and Organize
Presentation skills	Whether pitching ideas, sharing updates, or leading meetings, strong presentation skills help employees communicate clearly and confidently.	TED’s secret to great public speaking <i>CHRIS ANDERSON</i>	The Power Presenter: Technique, Style, and Strategy from America’s Top Speaking Coach <i>JERRY WEISSMAN</i>	Mastering Public Speaking by Embracing Your Authentic Self	Impactful Presentation Skills