

AR4ReClothing Training Guide development – Module 4 Soft Skills for clothing manufacturers

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KEK KEM

Authored by: Your name

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2	PR1/T1.3	Set Up AR4ReClothing Training Guide structure & Training methodology

APPLICABLE DOCUMENTS

ID	Reference	Title
1	Validation Plan	Validation Plan
2		





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2. Introduction

The clothing industry is very dynamic and complex with very huge labor force. The need of clothing is increasing rapidly and thus everyone who is interested in the sector should have the skills to thrive in the industry. Most jobs, including the ones in the clothing industry requires a mix of skills. Soft skills are undervalued in favor of the more technical skills like finance, engineering or IT, while in practice a more balanced mix of these skills leads to optimum performance. This module discusses the significance of soft skills in the garment industry.

3. Learning Outcomes

Module 4: Soft Skills for clothing manufacturers	The AR4RECLOTHING Expert is able to ...	
<i>KNOWLEDGE</i>	<i>SKILLS</i>	<i>COMPETENCES</i>
a. Learn all about skills for business	a. Distinguish between soft and hard skills	a. Develop a proper skill set required for a job
b. Learn about the clothing industry today	b. Evaluate your skill set	b.
c. Learn about woman's position in the clothing industry	c. Find ways to develop new skills or strengthen existing	c.

4. Key words

Soft skills, Hard skills, Competences, Clothing, Fashion.

5. Estimated seat time to complete the Module

It is expected that this module [studying and implementation of practices] will take you around 20 hours to complete.





6. Soft Skills for clothing manufacturers

6.1 Theoretical Background

Every job ad or job description, nowadays, lists a whole bunch of *competences* that the ideal candidate should have. But what do we mean exactly when we're talking about competences? According to the Oxford Concise Dictionary *competence* is defined as the ability to do something successfully or efficiently (Stevenson & Waite, 2011). In literature there are different definitions for competences, mainly because it has been suggested that one broad definition is not suitable for all professions.

Competencies define the actions that successful employees exhibit on the job. Those actions are the outcome of an employee's different talents, skills, knowledge, motivations, and qualities. A competence therefore includes the elements:

- **Knowledge:** understanding of how our everyday world is constituted and how it works.
- **Skills:** highly developed physical and/or mental abilities and coordination required to perform a specific task.
- **Abilities:** a person's values as they define them as an individual and how they relate to and interact with their surroundings.

On a basic level a competency and a skill are similar since they both identify an ability do something well. Usually both terms are used interchangeably and their difference is not clear but there's a big difference. As mentioned before a competence is far broader than a skill. Skills tells us what types of abilities a person needs to perform a specific activity or job, but don't give us the *how*.

A skill, therefore, is just part of a competence. For example, as a competence, communicativeness requires several skills including listening, summarization, inquisitiveness, and persuasion.

Another method to define skills is in terms of an individual's degree of performance on a certain task, is to separate them into technical and behavioral elements (Noe, Hollenbeck, & & Gerhart, 2015). The technical elements are related to the *Hard skills* (Figure 1), while the communication elements to the *Soft skills* (Figure 2). Hard skills are job-related competences and abilities required to perform work, whereas Soft skills are personal characteristics and attributes that influence how you operate:

- **Hard Skills:** These skills are easily quantifiable and teachable and are usually applicable to a certain career/profession since they include specific technical knowledge and abilities required for the job. Examples of hard skills include weaving and knitting, sewing, styling, pattern cutting



etc. Basically, all the skills that are usually taught in schools and colleges classify under hard skills.

- **Soft Skills:** These skills are interpersonal or people skills and are transferable to any type of job. Soft skills are difficult to calibrate. They relate to your personality and the ability to work with others. These skills are in-demand and usually appear as requirements in job descriptions and mostly encompasses critical thinking, good communication, attention to detail, conflict resolution abilities, problem-solving approach, and a ton of other skills.



FIGURE 1: TECHNICAL SKILLS (HARD SKILLS) ARE ESSENTIAL TO COMPLETE TASKS

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To better understand the differences between soft skills and hard skills, it is preferable first to understand their importance for a particular job. Hard skills help a person to have a better understanding and an analytical approach to every task. Thus, with hard skills an employee will effectively complete a job task. As a result, the employee improves his attributes, while the corporation benefits by increasing revenues and at the same time foresting the employee's wellbeing within the corporation.



FIGURE 2: TEAM WORKING: SOFT SKILLS ARE CRUCIAL FOR EMPLOYEES TO WORK IN GROUPS

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Soft skills, on the other hand, improve one's overall competence and make the person more resilient. Soft skills help to cope with difficulties and do the task in a better way. This includes finding solutions to problems and therefore increase productivity. In addition, soft skills are related to managerial, communication and leadership skills, thus a person with strong soft skills can work in teams, maintain



alliances or even dissolve a dispute and ensure the smooth operation. Table 1 presents a short comparison on the crucial differences between hard skills and soft skills.

Hard Skills	Soft Skills
Rule Based	Experience based
Relates to tools and techniques	Behavioral
Job specific Skills	Applicable universally
Specific in nature	General in nature
Measurable	Hard to quantify/measure
Developed through education/on-the-job practice	Enhanced through life-long experiences

TABLE 1: HARD SKILLS VS SOFT SKILLS

Hard and Soft skills may appear to be on the opposite sides of the skill spectrum, but both are required for a successful career in any area. The complement of soft and hard (technical) skills is known as *employability skills*. Employability skills are the essential skills, personal qualities and values that enable any employee to thrive in any workplace. These are also called 'enterprise skills', 'communication skills' or 'workplace skills'.

In the competitive world that we are living in, the development of skills is essential. Considering that the modern corporate world is also very demanding, it is extremely crucial and important to develop a set of several skills. Fresh people just about to enter the corporate world must demonstrate a packet of skills to apply for a job opportunity. While educational qualification does play an important role in the application process for a new job it no longer holds the center stage. What truly matters is the holistic skill set possessed by the applicant. In addition, the development of skills is not something important for newcomers in the business world, mid-career professionals should also update their skill set to secure their position or even apply for a promotion.

It is important to understand that some skills could be developed only through working experience. For example, fashion designers can learn marketing techniques and tools by attending a marketing course, whereas they could grow their collaboration skills by participating in a sports team. This is also important for young persons who lack experience, they could work on their **employability skills** through participation in unpaid work or volunteering, sports and other hobbies and community or other group activities.



6.1.1 Hard Skills

Hard skills are the technical capabilities an individual has. These skills can be quantified and measured. Typically, these are the skills that a person has gained through:

- **Formal Training:** This includes the knowledge gained through any type of formal education gained from schools, theoretical courses, or vocational training.
- **Work experience:** Hard or technical skills can also be learned through practice or on-the-job experience. This is not only related on job experience but also on real-world experiences.

Hard skills are the abilities on a job description for an open position and are usually listed as “requirements”. Thus, hard skills should be emphasized on a resume or cover letter to be easily spotted by the recruiter or the hiring manager.

There are many hard skills. In **Error! Reference source not found.** a list of the most common skills required in our modern business world is presented:



FIGURE 3: HARD SKILLS EXAMPLES LIST

Computer Skills: For millennials computer literacy is a given. Most jobs require at least basic computer skills, while many positions require employees to possess more advanced hard computer skills. This type of skill set refers to a person’s ability to utilize hardware and software to perform a duty. In-demand



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computer skills in today's workplace include MS Office Suit (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook), Email, Google Drive etc.

Marketing Skills: Many organizations rely heavily on online and physical marketing, which can include design for products, websites, and advertisements. Marketers and designers must have a variety of hard skills to do their jobs effectively. Among these marketing and design abilities are: Digital marketing, Social media, Graphic design, SEO, SEM etc.

Computer programming: Computer programming is the ability to write code for software, programs and applications. Programming is a core component of many development positions, such as software, security and web development.

Data Analysis: Data analysis is the ability to research, observe, and comprehend various types of data to come to a viable solution. Analysis skills are needed in a variety of professions, particularly those that deal with large amounts of data on a regular basis.

Writing Skills: Being able to communicate effectively in writing is crucial. Writing skills are necessary if you work in numerous fields, and employers often consider them important for any role.

Project Management: Project management skills are the technical abilities professionals use to plan, implement, and complete projects. These skills can be beneficial if you lead or work on project teams to help you achieve successful project outcomes.

Foreign Language Skills: Knowing how to speak a second language can be an asset. If your company works with companies and consumers overseas, somebody in the company will have to speak another language. This is common in the globalized marketplace.

Job-Specific Skills: Ultimately, your hard skills need to be relevant to the job you're applying for. If that job is an auto mechanic, you'll want to list auto service and repair at the top of your resume.

As discussed, business is changing fast, and the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the digital transformation in many business sectors. This is reflected to the skills that are currently set to job requirements. LinkedIn¹ verifies that the skills that companies need most are constantly changing. Out of the 20 most in-demand skills identified, only two — cloud computing and sales — were included in the last LinkedIn analysis three years ago. Companies and employees that reskill and upskill in a timely manner will be the ones that come out ahead and then stay ahead. For 2023 the most in-demand hard skills for 2023 (Dewar, 2023) are presented **Error! Reference source not found.**

¹ [LinkedIn](#) is the world's largest professional network on the internet. It is used to find jobs or internships, connect and strengthen professional relationships, and also learn the skills you need to succeed in your career.

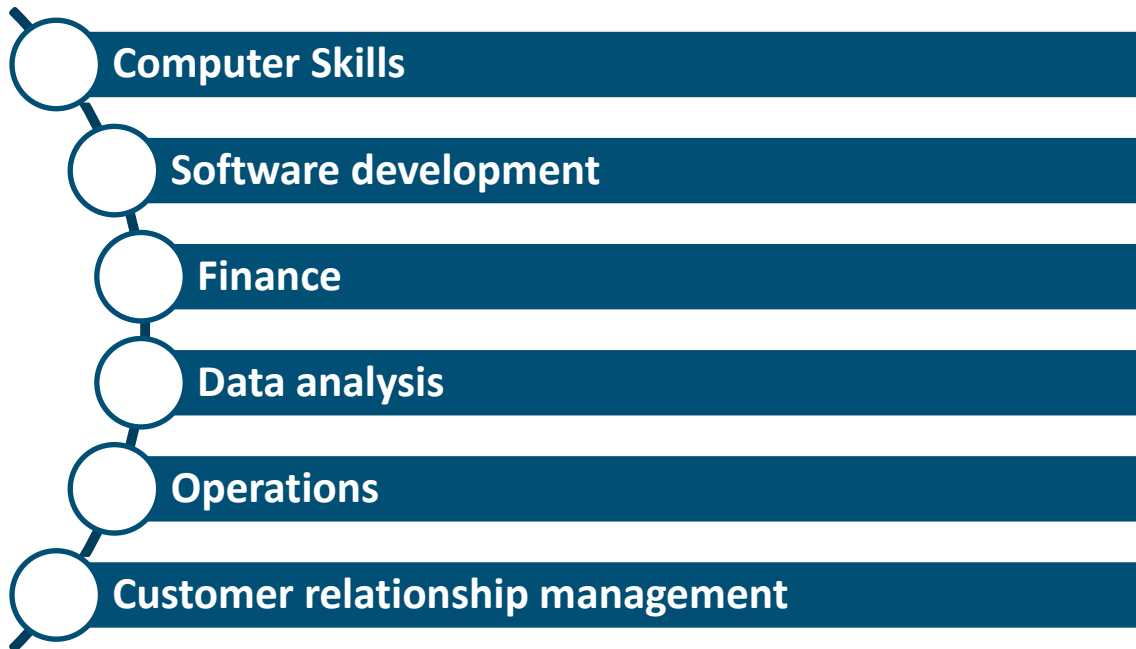


FIGURE 4: LINKEDIN – MOST IN-DEMAND HARD SKILLS

6.1.2 Soft Skills

Soft skills, sometimes called people skills or interpersonal skills, refer to how people collaborate and interact with others. Many people still believe that these abilities are intrinsic rather than learnt. Thankfully, this is not the case, and all the most in-demand soft talents can be learned and cultivated. However, these are more difficult to teach and learn individually but are just as important to master. In job ads, it's common to include requirements such as *communication skills* or *problem-solving attitudes*. All these are references to soft skills, indicating the importance of these skills to any job. For example, workplace communication show that most employees and executives cite the lack of effective collaboration and communication as the main causes for workplace failures. Although communication is not a job specific skill, without it collaborative activities are not effective. Therefore, soft skills like communication or problem-solving are crucial from entry-level status.



FIGURE 5: SOFT SKILLS EXAMPLES LIST

Soft skills development does not occur just magically occur over time. There are ways to learn soft skills and to develop a strong set of skills. You can find dedicated courses solely to soft skills, or you can add relevant soft skill sections to your existing course content. In terms of delivery methods, consider using some of the options outlined below:

Leadership: This skill enables people to guide others while fulfilling the goals and mission of the organization.

Communication: Communication skills can be oral or written and facilitate effective expression in the workplace.

Teamwork: Teamwork skills allow employees to operate well in a group setting.

Creativity: Creativity is a broad term that involves several sub-skills that target to transform new, innovative ideas into reality.

Time management: Time management skills demonstrate the ability to use the work time wisely – plan time as required and allocate it reasonably for various tasks. An employee with good time management skills knows how to prioritize tasks to meet deadlines.

Problem solving: Problem-solving abilities blend the use of analytical and creative thinking to find solutions.



Critical thinking: This is the ability to analyze information objectively, assess different perspectives, and reach logical conclusions without being influenced by emotion or personal biases.

Punctuality: Punctuality is the ability to be prompt, attend appointments on time and submit your assignments by the deadline.

Adaptability: Adaptability shows how well one can embrace change and adjust to it. In modern companies and work environments that are constantly changing, employees need to be able to adapt to different situations at your workplace.

For 2023 the most in-demand soft skills for 2023 (Dewar, 2023) are presented **Error! Reference source not found.:**

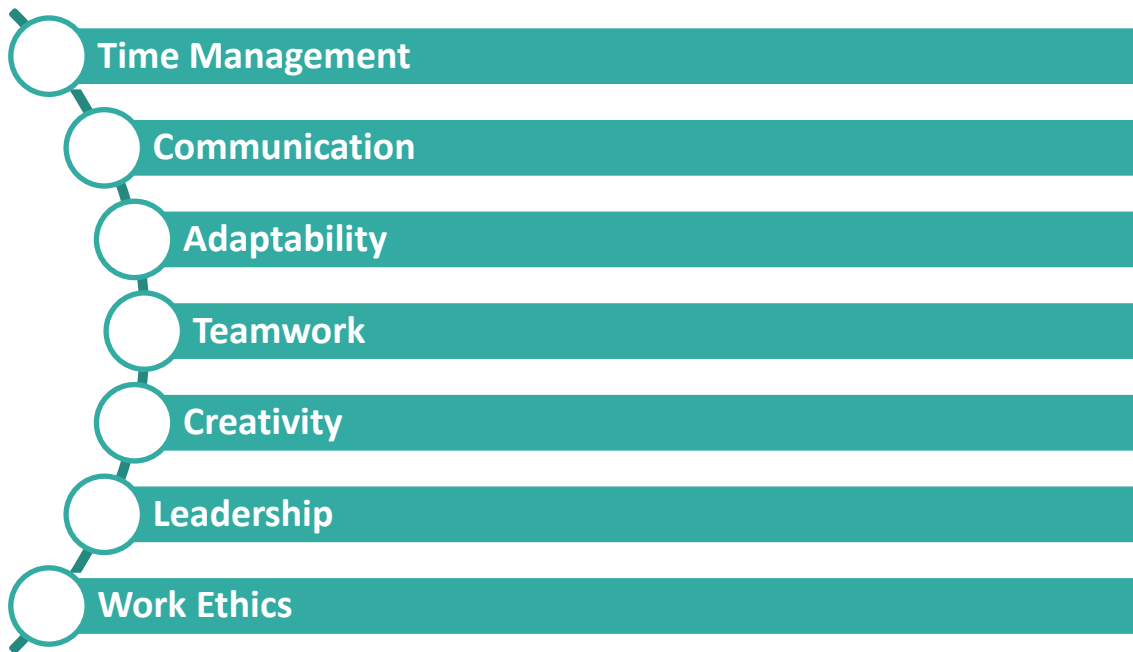


FIGURE 6: LINKEDIN – MOST IN-DEMAND SOFT SKILLS

6.2 Developing Skills

To remain relevant and employable in this modern world, one must be up to date. Technology changes the way things are done and thus past approaches are not applicable to today's activities. The rise in disruptive new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and automation changes the business world around us. There is the potential for many roles to be made obsolete in the coming years, while new openings will support these new innovations. Additionally, things like the gig economy are meaning a fundamental shift in the way people find work. This maybe be easy to understand for jobs directly related to technology but the digital transformation of the new era is so enormous that



practically all business sectors will be affected. In addition, the marketing arena is so dynamic, that most industries frequently are adapting by changing their strategies. All these changes require people with a broad range of skills and abilities.

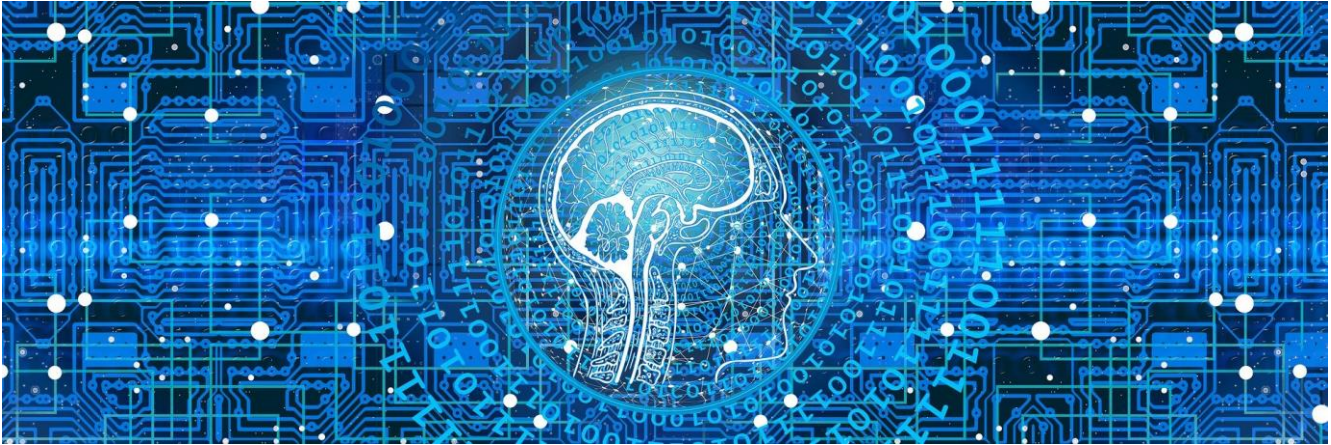


FIGURE 7: DISRUPTIVE NEW TECHNOLOGIES THAT AFFECT THE BUSINESS WORLD

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People who are considering developing a set of skills to enter the business world must first be aware of the current situation and needs. Then they should relate develop their abilities to meet the requirements set by the market. It is interesting to know that there is often a skills mismatch, meaning that some people don't have the right skills for the jobs available. This is defined "as the difference between the market need (demand) and the current skills supplied by local education institutes (supply)" (Alsafadi & Abunafesa, 2012). Right now, there is there is a significant skills mismatch in the market, which practically means that finding an appropriate job in a relevant industry is difficult. Moreover, there are estimations that by 2030 the 20% of the labor force will be significantly under-skilled for their jobs. As a result, many could find themselves being less productive in their work, less satisfied with it, or even out of work completely. Likely this could be reversed by developing new skills or strengthen the current ones. For example, in fashion, each role is completely different and requires a different set of skills. Although job applicants should be able to meet the current market requirements, they should always remember to carefully read the job description to know what skills are required for that specific position. This sometimes could be achieved by simple working on the CV presentation but for most cases this requires developing a more suitable set of hard and soft skills. Also note that having a good skill set also helps you grow as an individual.



6.2.1 Hard Skills

Individuals looking to develop hard skills may choose to take an online or in-person classes at a university or a vocational training center. For example, you could take a computer class to become more proficient in various computer hard skills. Depending on the job practicing skills and gaining hands on experience before applying them to a job may also be an option. Computer skills for example could be enhanced by buying a home computer and practicing on it regularly. Nowadays, there are many companies in various industries utilize tools to train employees on new skills with role-based modules that include videos, interactive content, and more. Individuals looking to develop skills may use technical skills development software for a unique learning experience. These tools usually come at a cost but there are many instructional video on YouTube that could help improving skills with no cost. In any case, improving skills needs regular practice and takes time.

Computer skills are important for jobs in the clothing industry. This includes basic skills for using a computer like searching the web or using emails or even more specialized knowledge like graphic designing or digital marketing. Knowing Photoshop, InDesign, and Illustrator is vital if you want to work in graphic design, advertising, art direction, photography, social media, or anything else that requires making graphics and fashion pictures. Clothing/textile designers may work on paper or by using computer-aided design (CAD) software, in either case the completed products are stored to digital media. As a result, if you want to work as a designer or something related, such as a pattern maker, you'll probably need computer software abilities on designing, drawing, pattern making, draping, illustration or other digital tools.

With digital magazines that create more material than print editions, fashion writers publish their articles on the websites of the world largest fashion and lifestyle magazines. To ensure that their articles rank high in search results, they must understand how to post an article online and use Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Thus, learn how to use Content Management Systems (CMS) systems like WordPress, which you'll use to publish articles online, as well as SEO best practices, to assist the magazine gain more traffic and readers.

One wants to work in fashion should also be familiar with social platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and TikTok. Having the correct social media strategy is critical for both new and existing companies today. Therefore, working in this business may require creating the full graphic for a social media post or something that appears on the website, the layout of a magazine, or retouch some pictures from fashion shows or lookbooks. Social networking has a significant impact on



the fashion business and working in digital promotion to boost sales may require to spend hours per day on social networks.

You might be surprised to learn that Microsoft Excel is becoming necessary when working in the clothing industry. It is a fact is that everyone in the fashion industry utilizes Excel, so that there are specialized excel courses online for the particular industry. Excel is used to assess but also organize all fashion activities, from evaluating sales, marketing tactics, and prior ready-to-wear collection performances to anticipating trends and sales predictions to managing samples tracking between PRs and stylists.

6.2.2 Soft Skills

Developing soft skills is important for personal and professional success. Soft skills, are personal attributes that can improve overall performance. Thus, we present some reasons why someone should work on developing soft skills:

Better communication: Soft skills help individuals to communicate effectively, which is essential for building relationships, resolving conflicts, and working effectively in teams.

Stronger relationships: Soft skills help individuals to build stronger relationships with colleagues, clients, and customers, which can lead to improved collaboration and higher job satisfaction.

Career advancement: Soft skills are often a key factor in career advancement. Employers are looking for candidates who not only possess the necessary technical skills but also have strong interpersonal skills.

Higher job satisfaction: When individuals develop their soft skills, they are better equipped to handle challenges, communicate effectively, and build positive relationships, which can lead to higher job satisfaction.

Improved leadership: Soft skills are essential for effective leadership. Leaders need to communicate effectively, build trust, and inspire others, all of which require strong interpersonal skills.

To work on your soft skill one could follow the next steps:

Step 1: Prioritize which skills to develop

All of us have room to grow in terms of soft skills. We all eventually encounter situations showing a need for more soft skills as long as we're in tune enough to notice. However, before one starts to develop soft skills must first prioritize which skills are more important to focus on. This is related to self-awareness which usually is not straightforward. A simple and effective way to find your weaknesses is to simply ask others who know you well. There are online self-awareness assessments (questionnaires) that could help someone learn more about himself. Since, we are not always our own best judges, it's recommended to also ask trusted friends or mentors to give their feedback by also completing the



questionnaire. This way a more objective assessment will be generated, highlighting our strengths and weaknesses.

Find resources!

Just like a hard skill, you can learn a soft skill through study, practice, and application. Nowadays, one can easily find all sorts of courses/workshops and various resources that will help him/her improve specific skills. With today's technology, one can get the best advice from the world's premier experts on any given topic in a variety of formats:

- **Books:** Books cover virtually any topic, fact or fiction. There is a whole category of self-help books including the development of skills.
- **Workshops:** Workshops will help you gain a better understanding of key soft skills and how they can complement your existing skill set. There are many organizations that offer soft skills workshops, including universities, community colleges, professional development organizations, and private training companies. These workshops may be delivered in-person, online, or a combination of both.
- **Curated content:** Curated content is material collected from a variety of sources that is shared to social media. If you want an expert to help you, consider studying his/her channel. There are virtual communities available that share content from influencers, respected individuals and to subscribers. This type of resource is growing fast and one can find all short of information and trend for fabric smocking to clothing upcycling.
- **Online courses:** Unlike curated content, courses have a start and end time, and you can either follow a dictated timeline or finish at your own pace. The best ones combine video and other media to teach specific skills and usually are organized into separate lessons. This multimedia format has been proven to increase comprehension.
- **Blogs:** The blogosphere is brimming with how-to tips. Look for in-depth recommendations on almost every subject. Although anybody may publish their ideas on the internet, it is recommended to stick with reputable sources. Many high-quality writers are available and provide data to support their statements.
- **Audio:** There are podcasts on practically every topic conceivable, including how to strengthen any soft skill. Most podcasts have guest speakers who offer fresh perspective, as well as analysis and information from the host.



- **Videos:** Unlike reading or listening, observing allows you to learn. Watch a video to show soft skills in action! On YouTube, Vimeo, and other sites, you may discover instructors from all over the world.
- **Join clubs and organizations:** Join clubs and organizations that provide opportunities to practice and develop soft skills. For example, joining a public speaking club can help you improve your communication skills.

Dedicate time to improve

Just as you should continue to develop hard skills relevant to your profession, one should also make continuous improvement on soft skills. In fact, some experts claim that with just 20 hours of purposeful practice, you may achieve an astonishing degree of skill in a subject. Thus, if someone focus on soft skills development for only five minutes every day, he/she have completed 20 hours in just one year - not including weekends and weeks off.

Practice intelligently

It is important and part of the learning process to put your newfound knowledge to action by practicing. It might be beneficial to seek out new techniques that push your current level of understanding. Try to keep the whole process interesting by avoiding long repetitions rather than focusing directly to your weakest areas. Don't forget to keep track of your development by having someone reviewing your abilities and provide feedback as frequently as possible. This method of active practice will result in quantifiable gains in your soft skills over time.

6.3 Skill Assessment

Skill assessment is a process of evaluating an individual's knowledge, abilities, and proficiency in a particular set of skills. It is typically used to measure a person's proficiency level in a specific skill or set of skills that are important for a particular job or career path.

Skill assessments can be conducted through a variety of methods, such as tests, interviews, or observation. The purpose of a skill assessment is to determine an individual's strengths and weaknesses and to identify areas where they may need further training or development.

6.3.1 Self-assessment

Skill assessment usually is used during the hiring process to find the best candidate for a job. However, self-assessment can be used for evaluating one's own soft skills, strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. Self-assessing soft skills is an important step in personal and professional development.



By identifying areas for improvement and setting goals for improvement, individuals can enhance their communication, teamwork, leadership, and adaptability skills, which can lead to better job performance, career advancement, and overall success.

Self-skill assessment can be done through a variety of methods. Here are some steps to help you conduct a self-skill assessment:

Reflect on your experiences: Take some time to reflect on your experiences in various situations, such as at work, school, or in social settings. Think about how you handled different scenarios and evaluate how effective your soft skills were in those situations.

Identify your strengths and weaknesses: Consider your strengths and weaknesses in areas such as communication, teamwork, leadership, adaptability, and problem-solving. Make a list of your strengths and weaknesses, and be honest with yourself about areas that need improvement.

Ask for feedback: Ask for feedback from colleagues, friends, or mentors to help you identify areas for improvement. Ask them to evaluate your communication, teamwork, or leadership skills, and provide honest feedback on areas where you can improve.

Take a self-assessment test: Take a self-assessment test for soft skills, which can help you evaluate your current level of skill and identify areas where you need improvement. There are many free online self-assessment tests available for various soft skills. You can use online tests, quizzes, or self-assessment surveys. These tools can help you identify your skill level, areas for improvement, and potential resources to help you develop your skills.

Set goals for improvement: Based on your self-assessment, set goals for improvement in areas where you need to enhance your soft skills. Develop a plan to achieve those goals, and track your progress over time.

6.3.2 Skill assessments (hiring process)

Skill assessments most commonly is used by employers to evaluate job candidates during the hiring process, by educators to evaluate student learning, or by individuals to evaluate their own skills and identify areas where they need to improve. Skill assessments are an important tool for ensuring that individuals have the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their job effectively and efficiently.

Technical skills are often the more tangible and can be quantifiable. It may be simple as checking for degrees or certificates to verify knowledge on a subject. However, this may not be enough. Most employers want to get the job done, to that end certifications are only an indication. For this reason, many hiring managers/recruiters assess skills by different ways:



Scenario-Based Writing Exercises: During the interview process, candidates are asked for their approach on real case scenario-based exercises. Candidates respond give a very good indication on their abilities.

Talk Specifics: The assessment of hard skills could be achieved by inviting a candidate to talk about the specifics. For example, a fashion designer could be asked to talk about his/her illustrations, fabric swatches, photos, and artwork or even to showcase portfolio.

Work samples and portfolios: Work samples and portfolios can provide evidence of an individual's proficiency in a particular hard skill. For example, a graphic designer may provide samples of their previous design work to demonstrate their skills.

Bring Them in for a Trial Run: The best way to assess a candidate's hard skills is actually a trial run day where you have the candidate perform tasks.

Assessing soft skills can be challenging since they are not as tangible or measurable as technical skills. However, here are some ways to assess soft skills:

Behavioral interview questions: Use behavioral interview questions that explore specific soft skills related to the job. For example, one can ask questions like "Can you describe a time when you had to work collaboratively with a team to solve a problem?" This type of question allows the candidate to demonstrate their communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills.

Role-play exercises: Use role-play exercises to assess a candidate's soft skills. For example, one can give a candidate a scenario and ask to role-play how they would handle a difficult customer. This exercise can assess their communication, empathy, and problem-solving skills.

Personality tests: Use personality tests to assess a candidate's soft skills. These tests can help understand how the candidate works with others, handles stress, and communicates.

Check References: Candidates tend to overly embellishing skills on their resumes/interview. A prospective employer may be impressed by the interview process, but still have some doubts about the candidate's suitability for the position. Taking up references may be one way in which the employer is seeking to find the answers to the questions they have. This can help understand how the candidate works in a team, communicates with others, and handles difficult situations.

Overall, assessing soft skills requires a combination of methods, including interviews, role-play exercises, reference checks, and personality tests. It's important to tailor your assessment methods to the specific soft skills required for the job.



7. Clothing Industry

The clothing industry, also known as the apparel industry, garment industry, or the fashion industry, began centuries ago in homes around the world. Clothing industry encompasses the various types of trade and industry that exist along the production and value chain of clothing and garments, beginning with the textile industry (producers of cotton, wool, fur, and synthetic fiber), continuing through the fashion industry to apparel retailers, and ending with trade with second-hand clothes and textile recycling. There are significant overlaps between the terms clothing/garment industry, textile industry, and fashion industry. The clothing sector is concerned with all types of clothes, from fashion to uniforms, e-textiles and workwear. The textile industry is less concerned with fashion and more concerned with producing the fabrics and fibers needed for tailoring, while the fashion industry closely follows - and sets - fashion trends to always supply the latest in non-functional clothing.

The producing sectors build upon a wealth of clothing technology some of which, like the loom, the cotton gin, and the sewing machine heralded industrialization not only of the previous textile manufacturing practices. The clothing industry is fraught with constant competition and largely ruled by ever changing fashion trends.



FIGURE 8: CLOTHING INDUSTRY

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The clothing industry is broad enough and includes a variety of roles that one can pursue. Besides a couple of skills that are common between different roles, each career in clothing industry has its own specific skillset. Not everyone in this business works with clothing and accessories every day. For the design process and product development, fashion designers and pattern makers require specialized technical skills. However, employees who don't want to work with design, technical skills like sewing or sketching are not required. Although, this module highlights the most important skills required in the



Stimulating gender-based innovative training methods to promote CLOTHING REcycling through Augmented Reality

clothing industry, one before applying for a specific job in the sector must carefully read the job description to verify the exact skills are required for that position.

The clothing industry is one of the biggest industries in the world. The industry, as most industries, was affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In addition, the cost of production rose, and consumer confidence fell. Nevertheless, the global revenue in 2022 as calculated to amount to 1.53 trillion U.S. dollars and estimated to increase to more than 1.7 trillion U.S. dollars in 2023 (Smith, 2023). It is clear that the clothing industry is very important and contributes significantly to the economies of many countries.

It's surprising to learn that the way the industry operates today hasn't changed that much in the past twenty years. However, labor advocates have criticized the Ready-Made Garment industry for its use of sweatshops, piece work, and child labor. In addition, working conditions in low-income countries have received extensive media scrutiny. To this end, the rising concerns about fair wages, pollution, as well as the need to satisfy the hyper-connected consumers of today, have given way to new exciting technologies. Moreover, nowadays customers have been trained to expect instant access to the latest trends as soon as they hit the catwalks. Younger generations are seeking to stand out from the crowd seeking products that can be tailored to their specific needs and preferences. It appears that mass-produced clothing is losing favor. As this trend continues, it becomes increasingly difficult for companies to continue creating big amounts of garments months in advance, with no certainty of how well it would sell. Brands that step up the pace and become more sensitive to market requirements are more likely to win in today's fast-changing modern world. In addition, customer's real lives become more intertwined with the digital world, thus many designers and brands embrace cutting-edge technologies for production but also to improve the shopping experience of their customers, analyze data, increase sales, forecast trends, and provide inventory-related guidance.

Technology can be implemented across the production to end-user consumption cycle from the nascent stages of material sourcing to the final stages of delivery, packaging and user-feedback. Top technological advancements introduced to fashion today, include water and energy consumption tracking, automation, 3-D and AI-assisted design, data analytics used for production and collection management are just a few examples. These examples are a clear indication that the industry is changing and people working in this sector must evaluate their profile and adapt their skill set to match the current but also future needs.



8. Women in the Clothing Industry

The fashion industry remains one of the most labor-intensive industries in the world. Most of that labor is carried out by women. Women are also the leading force at fashion schools and employees of apparel stores. Making women 70% of the total workforce in the apparel industry. Although there are more women in the labor market than ever before, these workers are systematically denied the same rights as men (FashionRevolution, 2021). Women continue to be undercut in the highest executive positions (pwc). Women hold less than 25% of the total leadership positions in the top companies of the fashion industry with fewer women CEOs and board members. Notwithstanding the obstacles in the sector, women are growing their volume. Women in senior management increased to 31% globally in 2021 (Catalyst, 2022). By 2021 90% of all global firms had at least one woman in senior management. Some female leaders utilize their position and voice to speak for others while opening doors for other women to eliminate this prevalent issue. But change takes time, and to see more women in positions of power, we must seek to reduce the barriers to advancement that women encounter. To this end women need to develop a powerful skill set to strengthen their position on the business. This way women will be ready to grasp any opportunity to lead the business.

9. Soft Skills for the Clothing Industry

Each role in Clothing industry is completely different and requires a different set of skills. However, a list of the most important soft skills in the industry is presented here below. However, one must always remember to carefully read the job description to know what skills are required for the specific position.

9.1 Communication skills

Effective communication is critical for managing relationships with employees, providers, customers, and stakeholders. Internally communication skills are needed between team members to operate efficiently. On the other hand, poor communication can ruin relationships, resulting in a bad workflow or even lost income and a tarnished reputation. While communication appears to be straightforward, often when we try to establish communication with others, there is always the possibility of misunderstanding that might cause conflicts and frustrations in personal or professional life. On the other hand, successful communication helps us better understand people and situations, overcome conflicts, build trust and respect, and in general create conditions for sharing creative ideas and solving problems. Therefore, communication skills are essential in almost every business or job position.



Many employers believe that proper internal communications can significantly increase employees' productivity. The McKinsey Global Institute highlights that productivity can increase by 20 to 25% in companies where employees are well connected. In other words, there's no business success without a great internal communication strategy in place. Thus, many organizations provide soft skills training to their employees and create an inspirational environment and encourage employees to improve their interpersonal skills.

For jobs that the main responsibility is to communicate with external audiences' communication skills are critical. Especially for those who work to build relationships with other professional outside the company or communicate to convey the company's message to clients excellent written and verbal communication skills are a must have.

9.2 Languages

Fashion is an international business, and you will meet individuals from all cultures and nations. The majority of multinational fashion businesses have offices all over the world. Depending on the job it is possible to end up speaking with the designer in Milan and the publicist in New York on the same day. This is why businesses usually insist on at least one other language. English, Italian and French are the most popular languages to speak if you want to work in fashion as most of the companies are based in Italy, France, UK and the US. Start learning a new language today: download an app on your smartphone, watch movies and videos, read books. Have a daily practice and become proficient as soon as possible.

9.3 Organizational skills

Fashion interns and assistants spend the most of their time organizing magazine closets, keeping track of and organizing samples that stylists will use at photoshoots, and assisting the supervisor with any assignments. Any work successfully done requires organizational abilities. An organized individual knows what is important, what to prioritize and how to be efficient to give the best result on time (or even earlier). Organizational abilities demonstrate accountability and ensure you have the trust of your supervisor and the entire team. Being well organized is essential for any job in the clothing industry.

9.4 Industry knowledge

While having a fashion degree is not required to operate in this field, having the basic knowledge about the business is important and usually highly appreciated. There are currently many webpages and



online courses to keep you updated on news, trends but also teach you about its history. To be successful in your career, you must always be eager to learn and to stay up to speed on industry news. For example, it is critical to know all about natural and synthetic fibers when working in textile industry or who the major fashion actors are when working in fashion. Learn about the current trends as well as understand the global challenges of the business. As mentioned before the sector is competitive, so one must show proven interest and never stop learning.

9.5 Confidence + Passion

Self-confidence in the workplace will help you in any challenging situation. Several people consider that they are not qualified to get a job or work at the industry's top businesses. Even for people working in the business, many of them believe that they are not enough to work in fashion. As result, people's performance plunges when they work with these perceptions. Moreover, self-confidence may fuel your ambition to learn whatever you need for your profession.

Another essential component of success is passion, which serves as the fuel that keeps you going. Companies, when recruiting new people usually looking for people who are excited about the job and the organization. Recruiters see those who are driven by passion to be eager and fast learners.

10. Additional materials and resources

This section aims to make your life easier!

It provides a variety of resources to foster your understanding of the topics scrutinized in the previous section. Each of the resources serves as material for further reading and more practical implementation of the AR4Reclothing practices and ideas.

Module 4: Soft Skills for clothing manufacturers			
<i>Type of resource</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Link</i>
Online article	The Most In-Demand Skills for 2023	Topic: 6.2 Developing Skills	Click here
Dissertation	Soft Skills Perceived by Students and Employers as Relevant Employability Skills	Topic: 6.2 Developing Skills	Click here



Online article	Skills Required To Become A Fashion Designer	Topic: 6.2 Developing Skills	Click here
Online article	Improving Productivity Through Soft Skills Training for Female Workers in the Ready-made Garment Industry in India	Topic: 6.2 Developing Skills	Click here

11. Wrap-Up

The clothing industry is constantly evolving and requires skilled individuals who can adapt to these changes and perform tasks efficiently. Technical skills are certainly important in the industry, but they are often not enough on their own. Soft skills, which refer to personal qualities and interpersonal abilities and are also highly valued in the business world. Therefore, it is important for professionals in the clothing industry to develop both technical and soft skills in order to thrive in their careers.

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13. Assessment

13.1 Introduction

The current quiz-like assessment aims at testing learners' understanding on the soft skills required today in the clothing industry. There are three types of questions: Multiple choice, true/false, and matching.

Estimated time to complete: **2 hours**

13.2 Knowledge assessment

Quiz-like assessment based on the main content. Please mark the correct answer with bold when required. Include 10 questions for your module. Increase gradually the level of difficulty.

1. Question 1 (multiple choice or true/false): To be a successful and remain in the industry, a fashion designer often develops both technical and creative abilities.

[True] [False]

2. Question 2 (multiple choice or true/false): Employers are looking employees mainly with role-specific knowledge and abilities to perform their job duties.

[True] [False]

3. Question 3 (multiple choice or true/false): Identifying and assessing hard skills is no easy task.

[True] [False]

4. Question 4 (multiple choice or true/false): Soft skills are interpersonal abilities that are innate rather than acquired.

[True] [False]

5. Question 5 (multiple answers correct): Computer skills that are in demand when working in the fashion industry i:

[programming in Java] [MS Excel] [Adobe premiere] [Wordpress]

6. Question 6 (multiple answers correct): Clothing Industry includes:

[Fashion] [Photography] [Textile industry] [Apparel retailers]



7. Question 7 (multiple answers correct): New technologies that are being implemented in fashion today are:

[Artificial intelligence] [Voice recognition] [Augmented Reality] [Blockchain]

8. Question 8 (matching): Match the terms with their definitions.

Term 1 Competences: The ability to do something successfully or efficiently.

Term 2 Soft Skills: Personal characteristics and attributes that influence how you operate.

Term 3 Hard Skills: Technical knowledge and abilities required for the job.

Term 4 Employability skills: Personal qualities and values that enable any employee to thrive in any workplace.

Term 5 Formal Training: Knowledge gained through any type of formal education gained from schools, theoretical courses, or vocational training.

9. Question 9 (matching): Match the skills explanations.

Concept 1 Communication: Effective expression in the workplace.

Concept 2 Time management: Prioritize tasks to meet deadlines.

Concept 3 Problem solving: Creative thinking to find solutions.

Concept 4 Punctuality: Be prompt, on time and respect deadlines.

Concept 5 Adaptability: Embrace change and adjust to it.

10. Question 10 (matching): Match the problems with their solutions.

Problem 1 A job position requires collaboration skills which are missing from your skill set:
Start practicing in a sport team.

Problem 2 You want to change career and follow your dream job in fashion but you have to experience in this industry:
Find an online course and start by getting the basic knowledge.

Problem 3 As a hiring manager you are down to 5 resumes that all have the same technical background:
Use soft skills assessment.

Problem 4 You are an experienced employee in a textile factory and want to secure your position:
Strengthen your soft skills to demonstrate your value.

Problem 5 You are an owner of a textile industry. The industry is undergoing significant technological advancements, including automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence:



Step up the pace and adjust.

13.3 Skills assessment

You are looking for a job in textile design. You have just found a job ad in a big fashion brand. This is what you were looking and you are excited. What do you do?

Solutions: There are specific steps that one can follow if he/she wants to apply for a textile design position in a big fashion brand:

1. Read the job description carefully: Take some time to carefully read through the job description and requirements to ensure that the position aligns with your skills, experience, and career goals.
2. Customize your resume and cover letter: Tailor your resume and cover letter to highlight your relevant skills and experiences that match the job requirements. Use specific examples of your textile design work and any related achievements.
3. Submit your application: Follow the instructions provided in the job ad to submit your application. Make sure to include all the required documents and information.
4. Follow up: If you don't hear back from the company within a week or two, consider following up with a polite email to inquire about the status of your application.
5. Prepare for an interview: If you are invited for an interview, prepare by researching the company and practicing your answers to common interview questions. Also, be prepared to showcase your portfolio and discuss your design process.

Thank you!
AR4RECLTHING Team

