

## [5 Soft Skills for Tech Pro success: Why You Need Them](#)

BY WYLIE BLANCHARD

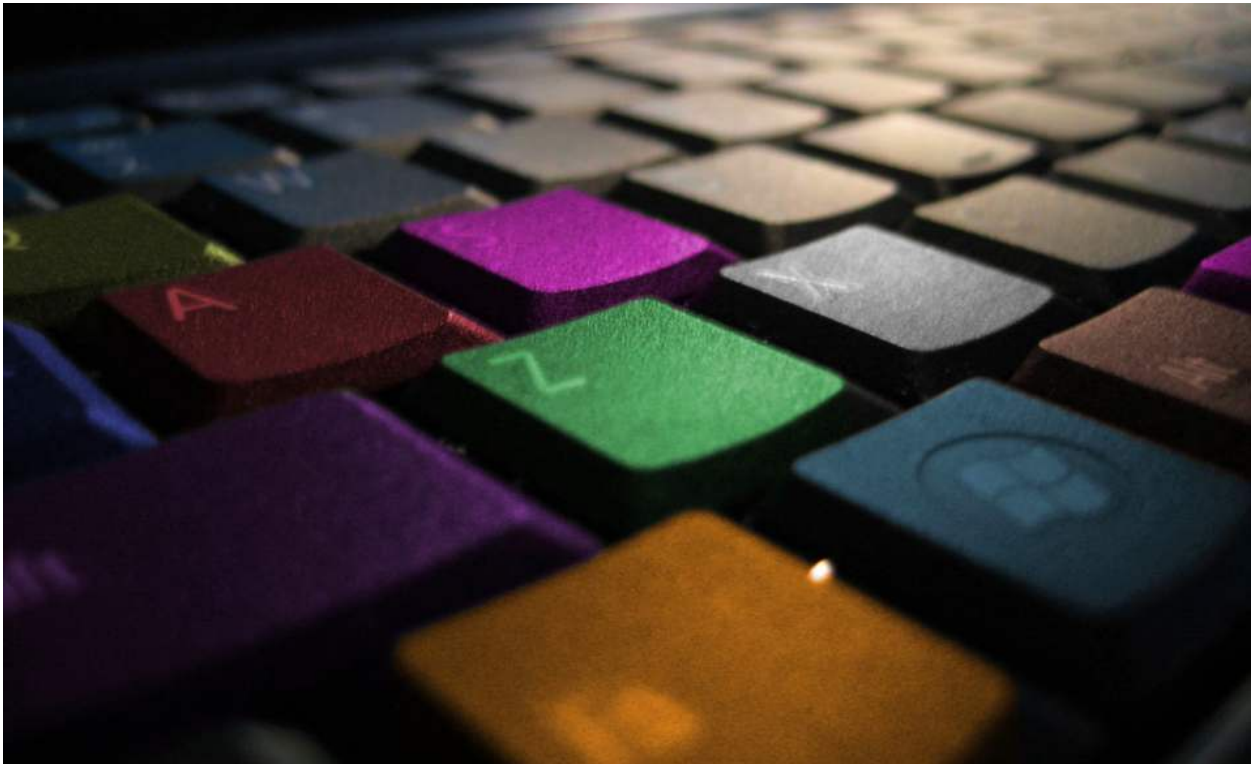


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So you've spent a large amount of your career building your technical knowledge. You now stand on a strong foundation of degrees, certifications, re-certifications and real world experience. The ability to get the job done and the know-how to solve the technical issues when they arrive is within your power.

However, now something has changed. Perhaps, your boss wants you in a higher position or maybe you've been asked to explain a project to a large group of senior leaders, all of whom are not tech savvy.

Let's be clear, none of this is covered in a course for SQL, .Net, Java and Cloud Computing. Those courses cover the hard skills, aka the technical stuff.

Here are five soft skills that will help you to become the Tech Pro who's highly valued.

## **Creative Yearning & Tech Passion**

It's that feeling that says "I would do this even if you didn't pay me." Employers look for signs of it in their IT professionals because they know that those individuals will give their all to deliver the best software. So the question is, why do "you" delivery software? Is it only for the money or do you create programs during your personal time? Do you stop coding to go home at a traditional time or do you voluntarily work longer hours to finish projects? When peers have challenges with software and you know the solution do you withhold the answer or do you jump at the opportunity to share your vast knowledge. Do you expect your employer to pay for your re-certifications and continuing education or do you regularly invest in staying abreast in current technology changes. If you chose the latter of each question then you have Tech Passion.

## **Strategic Thinking**

Being able to present a strategic analysis means that you have the ability to see the changes needed for a business to stay successful and employers are always looking for those who can strategically see the future success of the business and then take the company in that direction. One way to approach this is to do a SWOT analysis, where you create a strategic plan for the company by identifying 4 key principles: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Create a list indicating Strengths that the company has that make it strong in its market, potential Weaknesses that give the competition an edge, Opportunities that can make it stronger externally or internally and Threats that may be caused by it's weaknesses.

## **Displaying Adaptability**

Can you work with SQL and Oracle and are you willing to embrace platforms and programming languages that you're not familiar with? If you have the attitude of, "I'm a Linux person and I'm not willing to work with any other OS," then employers will perceive you as a closed-minded individual who's not a team player. Employers need individuals that are willing to go with the flow. That might mean that previously their data was managed via Oracle but now they're using Hadoop. Understand that employers normally use current staff members when making these types of transitions, placing them in the training needed to meet their goals. Therefore, your eagerness to jump on board can make you a key player that's on the list for that future team.

## **Effective Communication**

**Speak to the End User** – The ability to explain technical concepts in ways which non-tech audiences can make informed and timely decisions is a skill that stands out because it's very rare. When talking to non tech savvy individuals (the customer, a larger business group and/or senior leaders) talk to them as if you were talking to the end-user. Know that the end-user doesn't really know what html, VB and XML really is and, as long as everything works as it should, they don't care to know. The end-user only needs to "feel" that it meets their needs. Convey that feeling by visually and verbally walking them through the key steps of the process. Use metaphors and analogies in place of technical explanations to paint a picture that the audience can relate to. Also, visually navigate through the features of the software using an overhead projection. This will let the audience create a visual picture of themselves using tool which cements everything that you've told them.

# Project Leadership

The ability to bring people together to complete a project is highly valued in every industry. It's highly important in technology because many techies are accustomed to working with independent teams and may bump heads when asked to work with multiple teams to complete work. Therefore, when it comes time to bring teams together to deliver software it's important to have someone on the team with the social skills and the project management experience to solve the gray issues that arrive during the software delivery process.

## Why You need Soft Skills – Key Points

Technology Professionals can exercise these soft skills to set themselves apart from other technology employees and to show that they are ready for leadership opportunities. Remember that you can use soft skills to display your:

- passion for technology by emphasizing the importance of delivering the best software solutions,
- strategic thinking skills by using effective methods to determine and plan how a business can stay successful,
- ability to be an adaptive team player by always being ready to change with the needs of the business,
- communication skills by explaining technical ideas to non tech audiences
- and leadership ability by helping teams of people work together to complete projects timely.

As you develop these soft skills and combine them with your technical skills you'll become a stronger authority in your company and a Technical Pro who's in High Demand.



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Wylie Blanchard is an IT Consultant and Database Specialist. He enjoys helping individuals use technology as a tool to amplify their expertise. As a columnist, for Great Tech Pros, Wylie focuses his analysis and research on all things Business Technology. He is a father of twin-girls, gadget enthusiast and a self proclaimed pizza connoisseur.



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