

8 Essential Soft Skills for Collective Impact Leadership

This tool is designed to help collective impact leaders (emerging and re-trenching) to “upskill” in soft skills that are essential in the design and deployment of collective impact initiatives.

Soft Skills	Functionally, this means...	When this is relevant...
Stand as an equal among alphas & A-types	<i>Value everyone else’s perspective and contribution as equally important; enable shared decision-making (even when your opinion is not at the fore); share space in dialogue and decisions; and embrace the possibilities of what can be achieved by a group of highly-productive people contributing their energy to a big goal.</i>	All the time! <i>This skill will require intentional and continual investment by collective impact leaders</i>
Fade to black as easily as they rise to the fore	<i>Give way to allow someone else to occupy the lead-role or spotlight; serve in a support role that may not receive external recognition and that may limit your influence on key decisions.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a partner needs to be elevated for strategic reasons • When things you wanted to do are being done well by others
Weave win-wins	<i>Consciously look for what partners need to “get out of” an initiative in order to have a “win;” cultivate opportunities to meet partners’ needs; help all parties concerned to secure victories, whenever possible; and help partners exit gracefully, if needed.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When competing for resources • When integrating work of multiple orgs. • When people aren’t capable of a win-win
Cut to the chase, without cutting to the bone	<i>Practice being “direct” without being derisive, disrespectful or disdainful; speak “hard truths” with gentleness and reverence; and offer criticism in ways that would be palatable to you, if you were the one on the receiving end.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When things aren’t working • When partners aren’t living up to their professed values or commitment to the whole
Follow the leaders who get things done	<i>Spot the chance for a fellow leader to get something done without you or without you in the lead; allow space for others’ leadership to take flight or strengthen; learn to “lead from the rear;” and subdue your instinct or desire to be “out front.”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you are over-capacity • When a partner needs to be elevated for strategic reasons
Sense the way of the wind, seize opportunities	<i>Discern those times when things may not go as planned, but new and sometimes better opportunities are possible; grow your ability to see and cultivate new opportunities that get you closer to your goals.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the ideas of others are better than yours • When things are deviating from plans
Roll with the punches	<i>Take the good with the bad, and take it in stride; discern opportunities in set-backs; position as winners, not sore losers; practice rapid regrouping to stay on course.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When things go wrong or fail • When you fail to win resources
Above all—keep eyes on the prize!	<i>Especially essential for times when egos are bruised, hopes are dashed or adversities arise, which is often(!), focus, focus, focus on the goals!</i>	All the time!

Self-Awareness Exercise: My Greatest Gifts & Biggest Weaknesses

Your challenge is to be as gut-wrenchingly honest as you can be. No one will see your answers except you! So please be as transparent (with yourself) as possible. Fill out this form and once done, group members will voluntarily share what they choose to share.

Homework: Following this session, a) remain conscious of areas where you believe you need improvement, b) remember that in order to lead change, you must be capable of change, and c) retain this sheet to review six months from now to see how you've grown.

Soft Skills	How good are you at this (scale of 1 to 10, for all)?	What are your greatest 3 weaknesses? (rank 1, 2 & 3 only)	Do others perceive you as weak in these areas? (Yes or No, for all)	What can you do to grow and improve?
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