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The Social Farmer's Skills

Soft Skills

PART 2



The Social Farmer's Skills



Module Objectives:



- To define **Soft Skills**;
- To explain the difference between **Hard Skills** and **Soft Skills**;
- To list and provide examples of **Soft Skills**.

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Module Summary:

- ***Definition*** of **Soft Skills** and **Hard/Technical Skills**.
- ***Importance*** of **Soft Skills**.
- A **Social Farmer's** main **Soft Skills *definition*** and ***presentation***: **Creativity, Integrity, Openness to Diversity, Passion & Self-Motivation, Positive Attitude, for Others.**



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Soft Skills are “personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people” (*Oxford Dictionary*).

Hard / Technical Skills (computer technology, marketing, project management) are industry specific, are learned through training, and are based on technical knowledge, while **Soft Skills** (slides 4-10 below) are useful across all industries, are natural abilities, and are related to emotional intelligence (Jackson, 2019).



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Soft Skills are important in **Social Farming** because the latter:

- Includes activities that use both plant and animal resources to generate / promote **education, rehabilitation, social inclusion, social services and therapy;**
- Is related to farm activities where **groups of people can participate in meaningful farming activities together with family farmers and support staff;**
- Addresses **diverse needs for different groups of disadvantaged people** (persons with intellectual or physical disabilities; recovery from mental ill-health or alcohol/drug/other addictions; elderly/elderly with specific support needs; long-term unemployed; prisoners or ex-offenders; youth; persons suffering from burnout; persons with a terminal diagnosis) (Di Iacovo, 2009).



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Creativity – a *creative Social Farmer* is able to:

- Allow time for participants to explore all possibilities, moving from popular to more original ideas;
- Apply more than one way to accomplish a task, experiment with options and try out other approaches;
- Ask stimulating questions and encourage participants to think out of the box, norms, values, procedures or practical limitations;
- Come up with real new concepts or solutions;
- Emphasise process rather than product.



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Integrity – a *Social Farmer of integrity* is able to:

- Openly admit his/her mistakes and take responsibility;
- Prevent / dissolve conflict of interests in time;
- Stick to his/her values and moral principles consistently, even under pressure;
- Stick to truthfulness in his/her communication, actions and sharing of information;
- Treat confidential or sensitive information about participants discretely and with care
(**Case Study no. 1, PL**);
- Treat confidential or sensitive information about the organisation discretely and with care.



Openness to Diversity – a *Social Farmer open to diversity* is able to:

- Accept similarities / dissimilarities between individuals;
- Be open to new perspectives and diversity of others;
- Identify the values important to members from diverse backgrounds;
- Initiate and develop relationships with people of different age, cultural background, educational background, etc.;
- Interact respectfully and appropriately with people from diverse backgrounds;
- Recognise and critically reflect upon one's own (conscious and unconscious) biases in relation to age, gender, etc.;
- Understand how people differ in their beliefs, values.



Passion & Self-Motivation – a *self-motivated Social Farmer* (just like Viorel Crenicean, the Social Farmer running Deborah House – see Case Study no. 2, Romania) is able to:

- Find the shift lever;
- Reward himself/herself when he/she thinks he/she has done things well;
- See that first you have to act, and then the desire will generate itself;
- Set realistic objectives, so as to be able to effectively assess the desired goal.



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Positive Attitude – a *Social Farmer with a positive attitude* is able to:

- Accept his/her mistakes, and know how to improve them through introspection;
- Always act with a purpose;
- Be aware of the present;
- Control his/her thoughts in various situations.



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Respect for Others – a *Social Farmer who respects others* is able to:

- Address disagreements with others in a diplomatic way, avoiding conflict;
- Exhibit an interest in and appreciation of others' perspectives, knowledge, skills and abilities;
- Express recognition and gratitude for the efforts and contributions of others;
- Listen to others and value their message / opinion;
- React to other people's ideas in a constructive way during conflicts and accept others as they are (**Case Study no. 1, UK**).





Soft Skills are believed to outweigh **Hard / Technical Skills**: a farmer may be good at practicing farming (i.e. the cultivation of the soil for the growing of crops and the rearing of animals to provide food, wool, and other products) but, without the proper **Soft Skills**, he/she will never be a **Social Farmer**.



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Further Reading:

1. 2010. *Effective Communication Skills*. Available at:
 2. *A Guide to Soft Skills*. Available at:
 3. *Skills to Pay the Bills. Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success*. Available at:
 4. *Soft Skills Checklist + Definitions*. Available at:
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