

AUDIO LESSON MATERIAL

Comparing Skills With Attributes

Vocabulary

1. **Grounded** (adj.) - To be balanced and sensible.

- Example: "He showed how well grounded he was when he didn't panic and make any rash decisions during the client's emergency."

2. **Bring to the table** (idiom) - To Contribute a benefit to a group effort.

- Example: "She is a valued member of our team because she always has a good idea to bring to the table."

3. **Vice versa** (adv.) - The reverse of what was stated is also true.

- Example: "People can perform tasks better than machines and vice versa."

4. **Unravel** (v.) - To become undone or to fall apart.

- Example: "His plans for the project started to unravel when his team abandoned him and the suppliers refused to deliver."

5. **Span** (v. or n.) - To extend over the length of something.

- Example: "The company's market share spans over six continents."

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Article Text

Whenever we judge the potential of ourselves or others based on skills, we are making a mistake. It's a bit like judging the performance of a car based on how it looks, versus how it performs in different road conditions. The bottom line is that when we are measuring performance in ourselves or our teams, skills tell us only part of the story – and maybe not the most important part.

Every time we are thrown into any type of uncertainty, our ability to move through and continue to perform optimally during these times is **grounded** in the attributes that we **bring to the table** – not necessarily our skills.

Trust is built on attributes, not skills

Any team or business that wants to perform optimally even when things are going poorly must have a foundation of trust. If you stew on it for a moment, you will realize that all the behaviors that lead to trust are almost all attributes. Empathy, accountability and authenticity are not skills that we are taught and learn; they are attributes that we develop. While a lot of the skills that we define as performance can be seen, measured, tested and scored, the attributes that build trust are hidden and hard to see. It's very difficult to assess someone's ability to build trust, or to decide to trust someone simply by looking at stats or reading a resume.

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Skills can be taught, but attributes must be developed

If someone wanted to learn how to use a certain computer program, that person can pick up an instruction manual, take a course or watch a few videos and acquire the needed knowledge and skills to operate the application. However, if that same person wanted to be patient and adaptable, well, that's not same. You can't learn and develop attributes the same way that you do a skill. To develop an attribute takes self-motivation, self-direction and a willingness by that person to develop that attribute. If the person has the right attributes, you can always teach them the skill, but it doesn't necessarily work **vice versa**.

High performance relies on attributes

When the plan changes, the environment shifts, everything starts to **unravel**. This is how we judge our best performers. And the ability to still perform in these situations is not just about the skills. It's very difficult, if not impossible, to apply a known skill to an unknown situation. This is when we lean on our attributes. Things like adaptability, perseverance, open-mindedness, and patience are what get us through when we are trying to perform in uncertainty. It's certainly true that high performance requires some skills in whatever discipline one is operating. But to perform all the time, regardless of what happens around you, is about the attributes that you bring to the table.

Potential hides in attributes, not skills

We are always looking to explore and discover our potential, as well as those in our **span** of care. What we must remember, however, is that potential always lies in the future. Potential is about what could be, not about what is. Skills only tell us what is, while attributes tell us what could be.