

THE TOOTHPICK FACTORY[®]

The simulation game
for soft skills



Facilitator Guide II

(to be used with [Soft Skills Presentation](#) - available online at madeinflorida.org/toothpick-factory)



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ABSTRACT

Manufacturers across the nation, including the State of Florida, consistently have a demand for qualified employees. By “qualified” they mean individuals with specialized technical training and with relevant work experience. However, such requirements are often waived for entry-level positions, as long as a potential employee is willing to learn. Despite these concessions, manufacturers are not filling all of their job vacancies. As difficult as finding and hiring new employees might be, it’s likely that retaining them becomes a greater challenge, not only because of lack of technical skills or aptitude, but due to inadequate “soft skills”.

The FLATE Center for Manufacturing Education designed *The Toothpick Factory*® in response to such competency gap. The hands-on simulation intends to allow participants to become aware, exercise and reflect upon a set of soft skills affecting teamwork.

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FACILITATOR INFORMATION

Overview and objective:

This facilitator's guide is intended to be used in conjunction with [Soft Skills Presentation](#) (available online at madeinflorida.org/toothpick-factory). These resources (Facilitator Guide II and the SS Presentation) will assist you in facilitating a discussion about soft skills with students who are enrolled in a Manufacturing Technology Program course. It is designed to raise awareness of the importance of soft skills in the workplace. More specifically, participants are expected to rehearse, become aware, identify and reflect on a set of soft skills affecting their performance in teams (e.g. communicating effectively, leading, listening, problem solving, and being flexible). The objectives of the activity are:

- To assist the student in assessing their own soft skills: listening, leading, adapting, speaking, problem solving, and working in teams.
- To identify and reflect on the soft skills that affect performance.
- To address issues and challenges each team faced.
- To raise awareness of the importance of soft skills in the workplace.

What is required:

In order to effectively facilitate the Toothpick Factory® activity you must have a thorough knowledge of soft skills and how they affect the workplace.

Materials:

- Toothpick Factory Kit® for each team
- Flipchart/white board and markers
- Computer (with PowerPoint)
- Timer/clock
- Pencils
- Items for custom order (if applicable for MRC)
- * Markers, stickers, glue, paperclips, etc
- Large envelope (to keep SS Scorecards)

Tips for facilitators:

- The activity consists of two (2) lessons, each 45-55 minutes (not including the Optional Extended Lesson).
- These lessons can be set up "back to back or "Day 1 – Day 2".
- The activity is intended to be played in teams of **four students**, each assuming a **primary job function**.
- Be flexible. Plan your process in advance, but be ready to change or adapt to meet the needs of the group.
- Don't make the activity too complex. You do not want the activity to get in the way of learning and discussion.
- Don't try to cram too much into the time you have. Allow time for meaningful discussion. Often, the sharing of ideas and discussion has the most value for students.
- There is a balance to strike between giving students time to express themselves and keeping the activity on track.






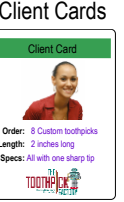


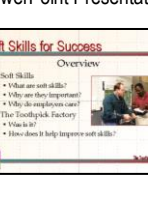



LESSONS

1. Lesson One Overview – Soft Skills Introduction (45 minutes)		
Activities/Task	Slide number	Time
Introductions	1-2	2 minutes
What are Soft Skills? Listening Speaking Adapting to change Leading Working in teams	3-8	10 minutes
Why are these skills important? Increase promotion potential Empowerment Creates opportunity	9	10 minutes
Why do employers care about soft skills? Team oriented employees Company reputation Morale Well-rounded employees	10	8 minutes
The Toothpick Factory “Company” overview Team overview (Production and Client) Create teams	11-12	15 minutes
2. Lesson Two Overview – Toothpick Factory® Activity (55 minutes)		
Activities/Task	Slide number	Time
Introduce Toothpick Factory® Activity Review Soft Skills (if you are doing these are separate days) TF kit contents Record Keeping Game rules	13 -15	5 minutes
START ACTIVITY		
<i>During the activity</i> <i>Monitor students interactions</i> <i>Observe problem solving techniques</i> <i>Keep notes of positive and negative processes</i> <i>Keep track of teams completions (on the board)</i>		30 minutes
Reflect Students complete SS Scorecard Assess raw materials – used and wasted What did we learn? Share your observations Students share their experience What would they do different? Team Results	18-22	15 minutes
Review and Wrap-up What was the purpose of the activity? What did they learn about teamwork? How does all this affect the workplace?	22-24	5 minutes

3. Optional Lesson Overview – Implementing Market Response Cards (MRC) (45 minutes)		
<p>Objective: The objective of this lesson is to introduce some “real world” scenarios that happen everyday in the workplace. This will allow the students to be introduced to these different “market responses” that occur.</p> <p>Instructions: 1. The “Toothpick Factory – Optional Lesson” presentation will guide you through implementing a Market Response Card. This PowerPoint is for facilitators ONLY (Train the Trainer). This is not something that you would present to students/participants. 2. Rotating the Client Team (CT) members - Ask for X number of volunteers (depending on how many CT members you need) from the PT, and have them switch places with the CT members. For example, “I need 1 volunteer from each PT to be a member of the new CT.”</p>		
Activity/Task	Slide Number	Time
Introduction of Market Response Card	25	2 minutes
Start game – observation	26	15 minutes
What did we learn?	28	15 minutes
Review and Wrap-up - Team Results - What was the impact of the MRCs? - Round 1 vs. Round 2 - Improving Soft Skills	29-30	13 minutes

APPENDICES:

The Toothpick Factory® kits contents

Additional Resources:

Use any of the following headlines from online content as data points that might be relevant to your audience.

1. *'Soft Skills' a key to employment today* - Today's competitive job market means that minimum acceptable skills are being replaced with higher standards. And among the higher standards are what many call "soft skills."
Source: <https://www.cco.purdue.edu/Articles/Article-SoftSkills.shtml>
2. *Focus on Soft Skills: A Leadership Wake-up Call* - More and more corporations around the world recognize that, in order to gain a competitive advantage, they also need to make sure their people know how to handle themselves at work and how to relate with their customers and peers.
Source: <http://www.businessknowhow.com/growth/softskills.htm>
3. *Soft Skills for Information Architecture*- While much of one's success or failure depends on the skills specific to information architecture—like diagramming, documenting, organizing—an even greater indicator is soft skills: dealing with conflict, negotiating, and communicating.
Source: http://www.digital-eb.com/articles/soft_skills_for_information_architecture/
4. *The Soft Skills of Global Managers*- While top performance usually is what gets global managers their international assignments, soft skills may be more important.
Source: <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/5370.html>
5. *'Soft skills' all part of the mix: Graduates need to engage, build trust* - After years of intensive study, high-pressure examinations and the critique of their peers, MBA graduates understandably feel able to face just about anything the business world can throw at them. But sometimes, say experts, their "soft skills" need work. Source: <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/BUSINESS/09/19/execed.softskills/>
6. *The Hard Truth: Soft Skills Matter*: Many companies offer non-IT training to IT pros - It's not enough anymore to be a crack programmer or a nimble network administrator. Source: http://www.cio.com/archive/011505/tl_numbers.html

Online Soft Skills Training Resources:

1. *Measure Your Soft Skills Smarts* – 25 item quiz
Source: <http://content.monstertrak.monster.com/resources/archive/>
2. *Soft Skills Interview Questions*
Source: <http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/ucce50/aq-labor/7labor/b003.htm>
3. *Soft Skills Training*
Source: <http://www.enterprisefoundation.org/resources/WSS/section3/sst.asp>
4. *Sample One-Week Soft Skills Curriculum*
Source: <http://www.enterprisefoundation.org/model%20documents/1187.htm>
5. *Life skills for vocational success*
Source: <http://www.workshopsinc.com/manual/index.html>
6. *Neighborhood Networks Personal Management Skills Soft Skills Training Curriculum*
Source: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/mfh/nnw/resourcesforcenters>