In a world where AI and tech rule, we need the ability to be human. We need the skills to help us thrive in the workplace. We need "soft" skills. In this book, learn the framework to master the skills we need to work with humans.

Hardcore Soft Skills: A Guide to Work with Humans
By Yadira "Yadi" Caro

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HARDCORE

Soft Skills

A Guide to Work with Humans

YADIRA "YADI" CARO

Table of Contents

Introduction:
Skills for the Present and Why You Should Care

Hardcore:
Relating or being part of a hard core. Marked by or involving a persistent state or circumstance.
Very active and enthusiastic, dedicated, die-hard.
Serious or intense in nature or degree.

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Merriam-Webster's Dictionary

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"Your soft skills are like sandpaper," my husband said to me one day as I was giving him feedback on a project he was working on. I was trying to tell him how he was focusing on the wrong priorities and that he needed to reassess. I think the exact words I used were "You are being lazy." It was well-intended. I knew he could do more. But the tone of my voice and the words I chose reflected my frustration. His response? To reject entirely what I had said.

You may encounter similar challenges at work. If you are the project or product manager, you ask the developer how long it will take to complete the feature they promised. Yet the developer resents your tone and gets defensive. "He does not understand how urgent this is!" or "She needs to stop being a perfectionist!" If you are the developer, you resent how out of touch the project manager is. "What exactly do they do anyway?" You think. "You do not understand how complex this project is!"

As an agile coach, business analyst, project manager, and many other titles I have held as a consultant working with multiple organizations working in defense and technology, these scenarios are very common. As a manager, our day-to-day is focused on presenting progress reports, holding daily meetings that have become repetitive status reports, and

constantly frustrating one another to get the work done. Yet, amidst this obsession with process, we neglect the most fundamental aspect of making stuff happen: how to deal with people.

My greatest challenges have not been about following the processes. As a manager of various teams, I found myself stumbling when it came to managing personalities, understanding motivations, and helping people share and trust one another. The lean processes and agile frameworks didn't teach me how to read the room or empathize with a team member who was struggling. I began to realize that without these skills, even the most perfectly executed processes were missing something crucial.

What were these skills that were not specifically job-related? I realized I was referring to the so-called "soft" skills. While there is no single authoritative definition of soft skills, they can be generally defined as the skills that enable us to collaborate effectively with others. They range from collaboration and communication to time management, emotional intelligence, creativity, and conflict management… You get the idea. The problem may be that these are perceived as "soft."

Why "Soft" Skills?
The word "soft" is used in opposition to hard skills, which are job-specific skills such as programming, engineering, mechanics, or learning a foreign language. The origin of the word "soft" is unclear. However, early references to it appeared in the context of military use.

In the early 1970s, the United States Continental Army Command (CONARC) published three papers by organizational psychologists Dr. John P. Fry and Dr. Paul Whitmore on assessing troops' skill sets. The first paper was titled "What are Soft Skills?;" the second, "The Behavioral Model as Tool for Analyzing Soft Skills"; and the third, "Procedures for Implementing Soft Skills in CONARC Schools."

In the papers, soft skills were defined as "job-related skills involving actions affecting people and paper." They characterized these skills by

the level of interaction a person had with a machine: there were the "machine ascendant" jobs that required knowledge of operating machines and specific, measurable knowledge. On the other hand, the "man-ascendant jobs" required dealing with people. These jobs included facilitation, teaching, managing subordinates, and roles with a lot of uncertainty. It was difficult to measure these skills effectively too, because no clear metric could be assigned to them.

A key point of these papers was that these "soft" skills primarily concerned a person's ability to create an environment with motivated workers. This person was in a managerial role, as the authors of the papers indicated, and needed soft skills rather than the machine skills reserved for workers. This assumption persists today. However, as many roles are automated by Artificial Intelligence, we all need to manage "machines" while still being able to work with others. A 2025 report from software company Workday revealed that as AI usage grows, most people agree it will enable them to focus on higher-level responsibilities, such as strategy and problem-solving, thereby driving "human capacity for meaningful and innovative collaboration."

There has been a trend to rename these skills as human skills, power skills, core skills, and essential skills. Why? Because the word "soft" removes its seriousness: these are not skills about being nice or getting along with others. These skills require courage. We need to be tough to break the silence and speak up to make a point, to manage our emotions effectively when things around us seem out of control, and to collaborate well and deliver results with multiple people we may not always agree with. Mastering these skills in the workplace is where the real work begins. We must be committed to learn and practicing them. We must be hardcore.

These skills are not the ones you learn in school. Author Rich Sheridan called them the kindergarten skills. You know, the ones you learn in the playground where they teach you to share with others, use kind words, and put your listening ears. These are the ones we need to

practice constantly and oftentimes, fail at regularly as we learn our lesson.

Hardcore Soft Skills

There are some definitions of what hardcore is, so let's focus on the ones applicable to this book. Hardcore is defined as "serious or intense in nature or degree" or "very active and enthusiastic." I am both enthusiastic and intense about these skills.

In 2020, as the world shut down in response to the coronavirus threat, I was living in Germany with my husband and two young kids, supporting a military organization as a technical product owner. We had a big project ahead to develop and transition to a new software. Yet a week into my job in an office, we were ordered to stay home. The work, though, had to continue. So here I was, having to join a new team, engage with customers, and communicate with developers remotely, all while learning to use Microsoft Teams.

As we were going through these challenges, I realized the success of our project was not a matter of having the technical expertise in the team or even the right processes. We were all having a difficult time in the new way of working, adapting, and figuring out ways to make stuff happen. We could not apply the same approaches we had working side by side, while also dealing with the emotional turmoil of disease around us and the fear of an uncertain future.

Contemplating how everything around us was shifting, and to find some sanity, I decided it was time to finally act on ideas I had put on hold. That year, I decided to enroll in another Master's, this time I would study Organizational Psychology. Since the future was uncertain, I decided to go to Harvard University, since they offered a completely remote program —because why the heck not?

If you are wondering what Organizational Psychology is about, it involves applying scientific principles to improve the workplace. This includes making people satisfied with their jobs, boosting productivity,

developing leaders, and improving the culture. This book relied heavily on scientific principles to support the practices and tools I described.

I also went back to my journalism roots and decided to launch an interview podcast focused on the new topic that was fascinating me: soft skills. While looking for a name, I could not stop thinking about how intense these skills made us. Speaking up in meetings, standing up for ourselves in negotiations, having the courage to make decisions, taking ownership of mistakes, and delegating are actions that require courage. This is why I called them hardcore. Aside from the fact that it was a catchy name, they continue to take on significant meaning the more I learn and practice them.

Through my podcast, I reached out to 60+ experts in a specific skill, asking for practical advice on how we can improve each one. I reached out to famed authors, Navy SEALs, Harvard scholars, and many other experts, each of whom provided actionable advice to improve a specific skill. A lot of these lessons are included in this book.

The Importance of Soft Skills in a World of Artificial Intelligence
In a world increasingly driven by artificial intelligence, automation, and machine learning, it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that technology alone will solve our problems. We get so caught up in optimizing systems and perfecting algorithms that we forget what makes us human: the ability to connect with one another, to communicate, to collaborate effectively. At least, we need to collaborate well to develop better AI.

The need for soft skills is more critical than ever, particularly for tech workers and managers. From 2018 to 2023, consulting company Deloitte and *The Wall Street Journal* conducted a job analysis of executive-level roles (e.g., Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer) and found that to occupy a lead role, you need to develop a deep understanding of AI and data analytics. You also need the ability to inspire and guide teams to create a culture of collaboration, to

communicate clearly and persuasively, and to solve problems. You need soft skills.

Failing to develop these skills will widen the gap between workers with specialized expertise and those without, according to a survey by the World Economic Forum. The survey conducted among 54,000 workers in 46 countries showed that the less specialized workers with special expertise are those with roles requiring extensive preparation, usually demanding graduate school education and extensive job training. The workers who were not part of that group were less likely to believe that soft (or human) skills, such as adaptability, critical thinking, and collaboration, would be important to their careers. This was not the view of employers, who saw these skills as increasingly important, leaving less specialized workers struggling to adapt and left behind, according to the report.

But the challenge is that many of us are not trained to think about these skills in a structured way. We're great at mastering the technical aspects of our jobs, but when it comes to interacting with others, we often fall short.

Why Soft Skills Matter for Teams
We assume the team's responsibility to work together is a responsibility of management. In the current work landscape, we all need the skills we presume only managers should have. We can train on these skills and think of them in the same way we do for technical skills by practicing together and giving each other feedback.

Please note that this is not a leadership book with a grandiose message about finding your purpose, transforming weak players into strong, unstoppable humans, climbing the high mountains of an uncertain future, or any other promise found in traditional leadership books. This book is a practical guide that provides the tools and tips we need to master our skills in the situations we encounter as managers, team leads, or individual contributors within a team.

The skills are defined in the context of educating in a team setting. Practicing and coaching together help the team share the experience of learning and discussing challenges. According to Harvard researcher Richard Hackman, teams with shared experiences are more successful than those made up of brilliant individuals.

First, let's define what a team is. A team is an organized task focus group, not a group of individuals under the same umbrella. Also, making a team work together requires some growing pains and stages as defined by psychologist Bruce Tuckman in the 1960s. These stages are: forming or getting together; storming or figuring out how we can get along (which, like a storm, can be chaotic); norming or setting rules; and performing or producing results, and dare I say, thriving as a team. The last stage is adjourning, in which a team completes its work and disbands, hopefully reflecting on the great work it has accomplished.

As a team member or manager, you know that going from one stage to another is not a natural evolution. You may have been part of teams that are constantly "storming." It is not a natural evolution. To get from one stage to the other, we do not need to be technically skilled; we need the soft skills.

These skills will equip us to perform better. In this book, I'll explore the critical role that soft skills play in shaping successful teams. But more importantly, I'll show you how to develop these skills. You don't need to be a naturally empathetic person or a great communicator to start improving in these areas. All it takes is intention, practice, and a willingness to step into discomfort.

The 5Cs Approach to Developing Soft Skills
In this book, I introduce you to a simple yet powerful framework I developed to help you and your team improve your soft skills: the 5Cs.

These are five steps that will guide you through the journey of forming into a team and becoming a high-performing one. Let's take a look.

Connect

Building relationships is the foundation of any successful team. But to truly connect, you must go beyond superficial interactions and establish trust. By connecting with yourself, you can enter the team, being able to express what you have to offer, but also willing to learn. We'll dive deep into the skills you need to build genuine connections with your team members, understand their needs, and create an environment where everyone feels safe to contribute. You will also learn how to build relationships beyond your team through networking.

Communicate

Being a great communicator is not just about speaking clearly. It's about understanding and being understood. Effective communication is a key component of collaboration, and in that Communicate section, we'll dive into the importance of listening, clarity in spoken and written communication, and persuasion that doesn't make you feel uncomfortable.

Collaborate and Create

As you connect and communicate, you will start collaborating and creating. True collaboration doesn't just happen because people are in the same room or on the same team. It requires conscious effort, goal alignment, and a shared understanding of roles. I'll show you how to create a team dynamic that encourages open sharing, creative problem-solving, and mutual support. This section will explore how to foster a culture of creativity and innovation within your team and create space for new ideas to flourish. This section will also provide frameworks for bringing those ideas to fruition by showing how to make decisions, prioritize, and maximize productivity.

Correct

Correcting is not about penalizing yourself or people for not completing the work. Correcting is about learning and setting up the team's infrastructure to manage conflict and to give and receive feedback. The best teams don't shy away from conflict or failure; they embrace them as opportunities to grow. In this section, we'll explore

how to develop the resilience and adaptability needed to correct course when things go wrong, and how to learn from every setback.

This 5Cs model complements Tuckman's team stage model. When you form, you need to put into practice skills for connecting with others. As you storm, norm, and perform, you need to practice communicating, creating, and collaborating effectively. As we adjourn and throughout the team's cycle, we must be continually correcting to improve and develop the team.

So, let's get started. Together, we'll move from sandpaper to something less abrasive.

A Note for Neurodiverse Readers
As a mother of a son with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), a trained ADHD coach, and co-worker of many neurodiverse individuals, I recognize we have individual differences. While I integrated exercises I learned through my ADHD coaching education journey, I recognize that some of you may not feel completely comfortable trying them.

This book is meant to give you tools to try and serve as a starting point for developing these skills. You will find many more tools as you continue searching, and you can even use AI as an engine to guide your ideation of new exercises and techniques. Let this be a guide to inspire your learning journey, not a book you must follow carefully. Think of it as a recipe book. Use the framework, try some techniques, and pick the ones that satisfy your preferences and comfort.

1.1: What Are You Good At?
(Self-Awareness Skills)

Leadership is not a noun. It's a verb. It's behaviors. So the way you behave causes people to choose you as a leader. You don't get to call yourself a leader. You don't get to self-designate. That'd be like calling yourself good-looking or funny, right? Other people decide whether or not you are good-looking, funny, or a leader.

Rich Diviney

A significant milestone in becoming a Navy SEAL is completing BUDS, or Basic Underwater Demolition SEAL training. This requires several weeks of physical challenges amidst extreme conditions. Think lots of swimming, diving, lifting heavy stuff, and doing so in extreme cold, heat, or lack of sleep. As Rich Diviney described during a conversation for my podcast, only about 10% make it through.

While your job role may not require you to face extreme conditions or training to see if you have what it takes, you need to know what you will bring to a team. You will fill a specific organizational role —either manager or contributor —but you will also bring your personality, your way of interacting with others, and your own habits to the team. This is why we need to be self-aware.

Research from the Association of Talent Development suggests that when we become more self-aware, we not only feel more confident but also more creative. We make better decisions, communicate effectively, build stronger relationships, and ultimately become better leaders. To become more self-aware, we can get started by doing a self-assessment.

Self-assessment also fulfills a human need to categorize ourselves into social groups. In psychology, this is known as the self-categorization theory. The use of these categories influences our feelings and behaviors. We find comfort in tests, personality assessments, or even horoscopes, which can tell us the type of person we are. By the way, I am a Capricorn and take pride in my work ethic.

This chapter is not about finding your "type," or trying to determine how accurate these tests (or astrological signs) may be. It is about recognizing who you are and what you bring to a team. Self-awareness refers to our capacity to recognize and understand our own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This includes how these impact us and others.

The exercises in this chapter provide various alternatives to conduct self-assessment. While some may prefer using business astrologers or resort to personality assessments to build a team, the exercises in this chapter focus on becoming self-aware of our skills. These will help us define how we show up at work and what we bring to the table.

As we evaluate ourselves, we must be aware of biases. For example, negativity bias refers to our tendency to focus on negative aspects of ourselves, leading to a pessimistic view shaped by the feedback we receive. This impacts our well-being and motivation to complete any task because we'll think we are not good enough. On the other hand, there is an overconfidence bias, where we overestimate our abilities and think we are better than our performance reflects. How do we know we are being biased? There is no easy answer to that. This is why this self-awareness skill requires regular practice.

When we evaluate ourselves and others, we tend to focus on what we need to improve, not on what we are already good at. We believe focusing on our weaknesses will help us grow. However, defining our strengths —what we naturally excel at— can create better opportunities for growth and fulfillment. This is the main premise of the Clifton Strengths Assessment: helping people identify the areas in which they are strong and capitalize on them to define their next career or role. On

the positive side, this approach is the one I invite you to follow with yourself and your team.

As a reminder, self-assessments and personality tests can provide valuable information, but they are only the beginning of the journey to self-awareness. Our unique perspective and individuality can bring a fresh approach that others may not.

Exercises

Hardcore Soft Skills Self-Assessment

Here is a self-assessment template you can use to evaluate the skills you may be good at and others you may need to improve.

1) Answer the assessment chart below.

2) Ask two people to fill it out, evaluating you. One of these people should be a willing colleague, and the other should be someone close to you (e.g., a friend or spouse).

3) See how the results differ. They may point out strengths you didn't know you had. They will help you notice if you show up differently at work or at home.

4) Identify which skills you excel at, then those you need to improve upon.

Skills	That seems like me	That is not me at all	It depends on the situation
Adaptability I can easily adapt to changes at work, even if these are not chosen by me.			

Skills	That seems like me	That is not me at all	It depends on the situation
Communication (Listening) I ask clarifying questions when I listen to people. I avoid interrupting them.			
Communication (Speaking) I feel comfortable speaking to audiences to provide a presentation or training.			
Communication (Storytelling) I can convey work-related ideas in a story-telling format.			
Communication (Writing) I am praised for my writing style. Others look for my writing advice.			
Confidence I use positive self-talk and usually feel confident about my work			
Conflict Resolution If there is a conflict, I do not ignore it. Instead, I find a way to get it resolved constructively.			
Creativity When I need to solve a problem, I find unconventional ways to solve it.			

Skills	That seems like me	That is not me at all	It depends on the situation
Curiosity I am always curious about a variety of topics and find ways to learn more about them.			
Diversity Awareness When resolving a problem, I seek out feedback from people with different perspectives than mine.			
Decision-Making I have a well-defined criterion to make decisions.			
Empathy I can put myself in the shoes of a customer or team member who does not think like me.			
Grit If I am working on a difficult task I do not master, I keep going until I complete it.			
Humor I usually try to find the humorous side to a situation or lighten up the mood in a place.			
Initiative			

Skills	That seems like me	That is not me at all	It depends on the situation
I usually take initiative to resolve problems, even if they are not directly part of my responsibility.			
Learning I dedicate time each week to learn new things about my field and about other fields I am interested in.			
Managing Change I have a process or framework to enable my team to adopt and adapt to changes.			
Managing Meetings (Facilitation) I have a clear agenda for each meeting and get people together to participate to solve an issue, not just to give status updates.			
Mentorship I seek opportunities to share my knowledge with others. Others know I can help them learn something new.			
Motivation I can motivate others to get work done, especially when morale is low.			
Negotiation			

Skills	That seems like me	That is not me at all	It depends on the situation
I feel comfortable in any negotiation. I frequently feel satisfied with the results.			
Networking I have people outside my workplace and my industry who I can reach out to anytime for questions or help.			
Persuasion I can convince others to change their perspective or decision on an issue or agree to a commitment.			
Productivity I know the difference between what is urgent and what is important.			
Self-Awareness I frequently pause to look at my behavior and assess how I am doing in various aspects of life (work, family, relationships).			
Team Coaching I can identify the strengths and weaknesses of my team. I can lead them to resources they need to succeed.			
Team Management			

Skills	That seems like me	That is not me at all	It depends on the situation
I can give clear guidelines to my team about priorities and allow them to get work done.			
Teamwork If I am placed on any team, I can work with everyone to get the task done.			
Time Management I have a clear schedule for my day, yet I am able to adapt if necessary.			

Current and Future Self Review

In this exercise, you get to map your future and guide yourself to define which skills you need or have.

1) Describe your future self, five years from now. Answer the following questions:
   a. What is that person working on?
   b. How does that person conduct themselves?
   c. What does a normal day of work look like?
   d. Is that person a manager? What do their employees say about that person?
   e. What expertise are people seeking from that person?
   f. When describing that person, what is the main skill for which people praise that person?

2) Now answer the questions above describing your current self.

3) Compare the results and ask yourself: how can I become that future self? What skills am I missing?

4) Read on to get started mastering skills for your future self!

Let's be Nice (for Once)

Even if your team seems to be currently at each other's throats, try this exercise to help identify each other's strengths.

1) Use a virtual online form or sticky notes to allow team members to add specific positive feedback about other team members.

2) Allocate a specific timeframe (perhaps one week) for team members to add a descriptive statement about a team member's ability. Contributors should be specific and, if possible, provide an example. For example: Do not say "Mary is a great communicator." Instead, say "Mary explains complex concepts very easily."

3) At the end of the allocated time, unveil the results to all team members. You may discover skills you are good at that you have been taking for granted.

Conclusion:
The Seven Deadly Sins of Teams

If you have reached the end of this book, you should have enough tools to guide you against common mistakes made in teams and organizations. This chapter will provide you with a summary to refer to and read the exercises. If you have not done the reading and are just looking for a quick summary to avoid mess-ups and get you to what you need to know now, this chapter is for you.

Working in a team can be a source of great satisfaction or great pain. Think of the reasons you may have not loved a job you had before. Was it a toxic environment? Was it too much stress due to the workload? Or not enough? Were people working together to support one another? Or were they in competition, throwing each other under the bus? If you are experiencing a situation like this, I feel for you. I was once a member of such a team, and the resulting stress had a significant impact on my life at home. It even affected my perception of myself and my ability to complete the work.

According to research done by Revelio Labs and MIT, the top reason people leave their jobs is due to a toxic culture. While many company factors are involved in creating a toxic work environment, a team's dynamic can make or break your job experience. In times when a lot of people are looking for jobs, you may feel that you have to stay in a toxic job because you have no other choice.

If you are the manager and this is happening, shame on you. As a manager, you create the conditions for your team to thrive. Conversely, if you are a team member and the toxic behavior has gotten to the level of impacting people's personal lives, you need to speak up. I know this is tough because you have to make a living, but let's not be cowards, letting people be mistreated or insulted.

Now, just like in classic theology, the Seven Deadly Sins represent the human tendencies that lead to moral failure. Here are the Seven Deadly Sins, which can lead to your team's demise. You'd want to avoid these as much as possible if you want to help contribute to a positive work environment. While no team is perfect, recognizing these dangers early can make a difference.

1. Pride: The Ego That Blocks Progress

In a team, pride often manifests as arrogance or the belief that one person's ideas are superior to those of others. It's the belief that "my ideas are better," or "I'm the smartest one here." This often leads to dismissiveness of other people's ideas, and therefore, team members are afraid to speak up because they are afraid of being considered stupid. This stifles diversity and team innovation.

Ego-driven teammates dominate conversations, often taking credit for team efforts or discrediting people's contributions. Teams with this behavior resist feedback and are unwilling to learn new things because, well, they believe they already know it all.

Antidote:

Foster humility. Encourage a growth mindset where mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities. Team Leaders should model humility by admitting when they're wrong and actively seeking diverse perspectives. If you see a team member who presents the symptoms, you must point it out and ask the members at hand something along the lines of "I see you believe you have skills others may lack. Are you interested in advancing their growth or have some recommendations to guarantee our team's success?"

2. Envy: The Silent Erosion of Trust

Envy arises when one team member resents another's success, position, recognition, or perceived favoritism. Instead of collaborating, envious team members may engage in competition or try to "level the playing field" by diminishing others. It leads to comparisons and often passive-aggressive behavior. It can be evident when team members compare

each other's skills or start asking, "Why did they get picked and not me?"

This can also be perceived when team members withhold praise or support or undermine someone's effort. The worst occurs when someone sabotages a colleague's effort or attempts to take credit for it. Another common occurrence of this is gossip or malicious talk about a coworker. While I am guilty of enjoying some juicy gossip, gossiping does not create a positive work environment.

Antidote:
Foster transparency and appreciation by celebrating accomplishments publicly. Use existing meetings or regular sessions where team members must praise one another for an action they have taken or work they have completed.

As a manager, you can also implement evaluation systems based on team contributions rather than individual effort. Promote shared goals that emphasize interdependence, rather than competition.

3. Wrath: The Breakdown of Emotional Control
Wrath is uncontrolled anger that manifests as hostility, resentment, or aggression. However, in teams, it doesn't always come as shouting or overt aggression, where team members end up arguing and even insulting one another. Sometimes it can be passive-aggressive, and it's expressed through coldness, exclusion in meetings or emails, or retaliatory behavior. It also results in a refusal to collaborate with certain team members.

When anger is unchecked, it can lead to emotional outbursts or simmering tension that disrupts collaboration and productivity. Wrath poisons the emotional climate of a team. People walk on eggshells, conversations become guarded, and productivity suffers as a result. Teams become risk-averse, and creativity declines.

Antidote:
As a manager or team member, controlling your wrath starts with you. If anyone is aggressive towards you, instead of reacting, you recognize it and address it directly to resolve the issue. As a team lead or manager, you should strive to de-escalate conflicts early and mediate when necessary. Instead of taking a reactive approach, you must create a framework to address conflict, which could be defined via a contract agreed upon by the team. Be clear about the team's behavior expectations and have zero tolerance for aggressive behavior. If the situation has reached a point where it appears there is a point of no return, seek coaching from an external provider on managing team conflict.

4. Sloth: The Slow Death of Initiative
Greed in a team setting refers to an excessive desire for power, credit, resources, or control. It occurs when individuals prioritize personal gain over team success, particularly among team managers. Managers have no interest in the development of team members, as they are happy to leave them where they are and maintain control. They would take over any meeting with external customers or leadership to limit access to information or important decisions.

Access to external opportunities is also limited. These traits can also manifest in team members who would hoard their expertise and contacts to make themselves indispensable to a team.
Greed kills the team's collaboration and morale. It creates power imbalances and weakens trust. Other team members may feel used or undervalued. Members of a team where greed exists are either actively looking for a new role or feel trapped and unable to exit.

Antidote:
To eradicate greed, we must be radically transparent with a team. Identify ways to reduce barriers to information. For example, make work tasks transparent by displaying them on a team shared space, or invite team members to meetings with customers and external

stakeholders if the information is relevant to them. Seek opportunities where the team can demonstrate their work and receive direct feedback.

It is essential to establish knowledge-sharing opportunities within the team to prevent knowledge hoarding. As a team member who has a greedy manager or colleague, you should be able to confront them and express your discomfort with the behavior. If the manager insists they are trying to protect your time, you must be able to demonstrate whether this is indeed a benefit or impediment to doing your work effectively. If nothing changes, it is time to seek other pastures.

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6. Gluttony: Overconsumption of Resources

In a team, gluttony refers to overconsumption of time, attention, and labor. It often comes from a desire to control or micromanage. This is manifested through long and unnecessary meetings. During meetings, one person may dominate the conversation excessively. It also involves over-planning for an event or meeting with a customer (meeting before the meeting, anyone?), over-documenting processes, or conducting redundant reviews under the guise of quality control.

As a result, talented individuals spend more time navigating bureaucracy than creating value through their work. This leads to team burnout and frustration. The "well-intended" checks for quality become a hindrance where teams would focus more on process than on outcomes.

Antidote:

This is where adopting lean and agile principles shines. Streamline processes, delegate effectively, and eliminate redundant procedures. Managers should set the example by being time-conscious, setting meeting management guidelines to ensure the team can have productive discussions, and balancing participation. Shift increases attention in the following processes, leading the team to focus on the value delivered instead. Promote the light version of process documentation.

7. Lust: The Misguided Obsession

While this can take different directions, which may not be applicable to this book, the context we are exploring here is the obsessive pursuit
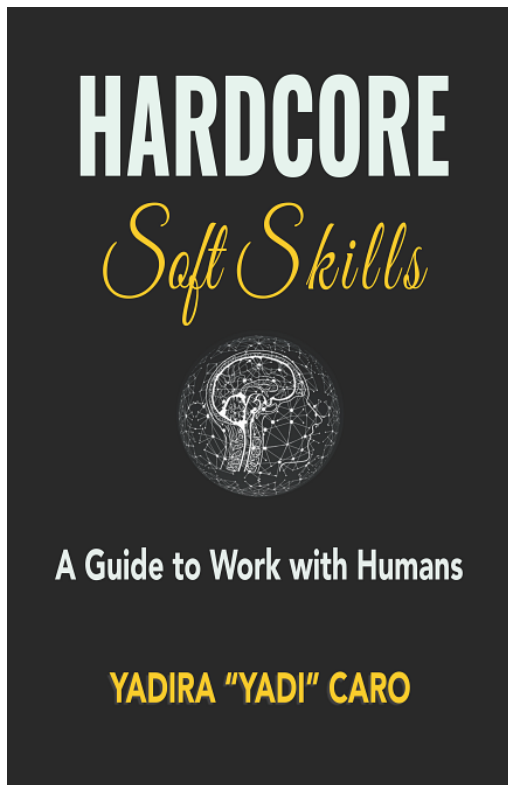
of status, personal ambition, or external validation. The problem is when it comes at the team's cost. This is evident in the prioritization of personal projects over team objectives, seeking external visibility or promotions without contributing, or building alliances within a team or externally for personal gain.

A lust for recognition or advancement can derail a team, as they often lack the attention needed, especially if the individual seeking it is the manager. It can even result in betrayal.

Antidote:
Encourage team-driven goals to promote team goals vs personal goals. Managers should recognize and reward behavior that supports long-term, team-oriented success. Encourage self-awareness and purpose-driven work.

Align personal and team goals from the start. Ensure that every member understands how their contribution relates to the broader context. Keep regular check-ins focused on aligning effort with outcomes that matter to the whole team.

In a world where AI and tech rule, we need the ability to be human. We need the skills to help us thrive in the workplace. We need "soft" skills. In this book, learn the framework to master the skills we need to work with humans.

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