Sysadministrivia

Linux, Lagers, and Late Nights

S4E15: "More Human Than Human"

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Format	SHA256	GPG	Audio File
MP3	a8549c14b5da0a6106f5dd1b045ff78e31adc18fb8a81cd021c5399f95758495	click	click
OGG	ea36ff1ceab1052c39c18e37690ba6f9cbc0f60bc23d4762c63791c05169d8c9	click	click

Quicklisten:

We talk about "soft skills" – are they REALLY necessary for Operations?

- Just the Tip
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Just the Tip

- Paden brings back some memories with lpq, which currently is actually lpq-cups.
  - But most people probably don't use it, since CUPS has a web interface (along with various desktop GUI programs) which has a section that list print jobs (the queue). It looks like this.

Notes

Starts at **13m52s**.

I was drinking The Kraken Black Spiced Rum. Paden was drinking water. Jthan was drinking Breckenridge Vodka with Schweppes club soda and a lime.

- "Soft skills" in Operations
  - What are they?
    - "Human-interaction facilitators" – things like empathy and shit.
  - Are they necessary in Operations? Why or why not?
    - Paden and Jthan say yes. I say no. (They didn't even let me finish saying "in Operations", lol. I am very clear that I don't think they're necessary **in Operations**.)
    - Paden thinks you need them for people outside your role so they feel "their issue is resolved".
      - I think that's good for **Support**, but Operations shouldn't be dealing with end-users. That's what the Helpdesk is for.
    - Jthan thinks it's necessary for co-workers – even in Operations.
    - I think our team needs to communicate to convey **information/data**, not **feelings**. Suggestions, criticism, and "doin' shit" deals with **data, processes, and ideas**, not people and feelings. Communicate clearly, directly, and neutrally. Fuck empathy, I don't care if you think your misunderstood idea is right. I expect the same in kind.
      - "Soft skills have been weaponized." They do not facilitate progress in projects, now; they **hinder** it in favor of glib and meaningless communication that only serves as a distraction. Kind of like how we're discovering that open floor plans now HINDER collaboration (which was born out of the same hippy-dippy workplace philosophy that soft skill idolization comes from).
      - RTFM or GTFO
  - Why are soft skills not expected of e.g. emergency responders – who DO work with people – but are for Operations (even though we deal first and foremost with machines)?
    - I didn't get a good answer.
  - Persistently, Paden (and Jthan) think I've never experienced a similar environment than them (I have) simply because I disagree with them.
  - How does one develop soft skills (if they ARE necessary)?
    - Per Jthan, be a "manager"; interact with someone your junior and communicate with them how you would have wanted someone to communicate with you when you were in that position.
      - This, obviously, would not work for me apparently.
    - Jthan says you should "approach things in a more positive attitude". And say good morning to everyone (otherwise you'll get a harassment lawsuit).
    - They don't give any further advice. Bit lackluster for something so "necessary".

15 Clams

In this segment, Jthan shares with you a little slice of life. The title is a reference to this video. (2m16s in)

Starts at **1h11m52s**.

Jthan talks about ducks on Dawn bottles, and then unrelatedly talks about a video series he did on YouTube for his router build. He'll give me links to these when he makes them public (he still hasn't).

He's on the warpath about the AUR maintainer for the unifi package. (I recommended he used customizepkg-scripting.) I tell him that he can just build it and create a repo with his pre-built repo packages (I even have it scripted).

The scripts that I wrote that he talks about are BootSync and SSHSecure. He should also probably deploy mdadm status (if he has an MD RAID, which I think he does) and BorgExtend for backups (along with the server configuration).

Errata

- Jthan says that the Raspberry Pi 4 is out and it's awesome.
- The reference to "Alot" is here.
- I talk about what I call a "Black Christmas" – 3 parts Zeigler's Apple Cider and 1 part Kraken. **Yum.**
- Paden talks about the Castle Doctrine in PA. If Jthan attempts to break into my residency, boom.
- Paden at first **very** cleary says "intromiNTent", which is definitively not a word. However, colour me surprised: intromiTTent is.
- Gorramit, Jthan.
- All 50 states are, indeed, at-will employment states (but there are **some** protections).
- Asperger's is not "waking up a grumpy gus", Paden.
- We do indeed have a photo of Jthan in a shirt that says I am a douche on his Bio page.
- I don't think @nixcraft uses MongoDB, he just fixes deploys of them.

Music

Music Credits

Track	Title	Artist	Link	Copyright/License
Intro	El dub del Bar Uno	C/VVV	click	CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0
Outro	Poison Form2	Floating Mind	click	CC-BY-SA 4.0

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Categories Season Four

Comments

1. ## Matthew

   2019-09-17 15:24 (836 days ago)

   All this podcast taught me about soft skills is that Brent has no idea what soft skills are. If you can't get the facts across without being a dick, you are doing soft skills wrong.
   Soft skills aren't about making friends, they are about doing your part to ensure a non-hostile work environment.

   You can be good at what you do, and bad at soft skills. Soft skills won't get you fired until you stop caring so much that you start effecting those around you.

   Soft skills are about respect, not pussyfooting around issues and leaving out facts.

   Soft skills aren't about political correctness, or being "nice". It's about treating people with dignity and recognizing when you are creating a hostile work environment.

   It's hard, but to dismiss it so easily is detrimental to the company as a whole. All the research is pointing to Brent being wrong. And not just a little wrong.

   https://www.amanet.org/articles/the-hard-truth-about-soft-skills/
   https://www.fastcompany.com/90298828/linkedin-research-reveals-the-value-of-soft-skills
   https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228136153_Study_on_the_Nature_of_Impact_of_Soft_Skills_Training_Programme_on_the_Soft_Skills_Development_of_Management_Students

   The fact that Patton and jthon are able to so easily work around Brent's obstinacy shows how much better they are with soft skills.

2.

And as predicted, here it comes, lol.

"…they are about doing your part to ensure a non-hostile work environment"
I consider unnecessary interruption and forced pointless interaction hostile.

"You can be good at what you do, and bad at soft skills."
Agreed! Which is why I don't care about them.

"Soft skills won't get you fired until you stop caring so much that you start effecting those around you."
Affecting; effect is a noun. Who decides how much of that effect is the responsibility of the "receiver" vs. the "transgressor"? I can't help but notice that the people most in favor of avoiding "start[ing to] [a]ffect those around you" are the same who will gladly take neutral words and tone and personalize them. Your feelings are your responsibility.

"Soft skills are about respect, not pussyfooting around issues and leaving out facts."
I don't know why people consistently seem to equalize "I don't care about the feelings of those around me" with "Be rude to everyone". I never said that, and further, **multiple** times throughout the episode clarify that I keep it neutral and assertive. You can hear my examples of this throughout this very episode itself, but I presume you were too preoccupied with experiencing a knee-jerk reaction to my message because you disagree with it rather than actually examining what it actually means. Feel free to demonstrate how I'm wrong in this if I am.
Respect has nothing to do with the examples they presented, nor does it have anything to do with the words you use. It has to do with how you use those words.

"Soft skills aren't about political correctness, or being 'nice'. It's about treating people with dignity and recognizing when you are creating a hostile work environment."
Define a "hostile work environment". I'll wait. It's entirely subjective to the individual. Good luck applying that as a company culture or policy.

"It's hard, but to dismiss it so easily is detrimental to the company as a whole."
You'll notice again the entire discussion was about soft skills **in Operations**. It's in the shownotes, the summary, and stressed explicitly multiple times throughout the episode. Operations are invisible to the company as a whole assuming they're competent. Anyone in Operations will confirm this, by sheer nature of the purpose of Operations.

https://www.amanet.org/articles/the-hard-truth-about-soft-skills/
This is an opinion presented by a people-resource oriented publication, is geared towards **managers**, and heavily quotes a professional who is paid to **teach** "soft skills" to organizations. Further, the "research" they quote contains no actual sources – only "some people said some things".

https://www.fastcompany.com/90298828/linkedin-research-reveals-the-value-of-soft-skills
Again, not an academic source with no real sources cited. Further, it suggests that AI can be used to apply metrics and determine a potential employee's soft skills. Because having a computer determine distinctly human characteristics of a human is a REALLY good idea, I'm sure.
Lines like "Eighty percent of the Global Talent Trends respondents said soft skills are increasingly important to their company's success" don't prove anything significant – they say it's important because they were **told** it was important. I'd be more interested in seeing how many of the respondents would actually hire one candidate over another, given one candidate with high technical/hard skills but with no focus of soft skills (**again**, not being rude or inflammatory. Just no effort on "fostering a non-hostile work environment" or whatever the phrasing used today is.) opposed to one in low technical/hard skills but with **extremely** high levels of soft skills. And hey, for fun determine the levels of satisfaction in those employees 2 years down the line. I guarantee you it will NOT match the poll results that you seem to rely on so heavily for "evidence".

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228136153_Study_on_the_Nature_of_Impact_of_Soft_Skills_Training_Programme_on_the_Soft_Skills_Development_of_Management_Students
Ah, finally! An actual academic source.
This paper's entire premise was determining the effectiveness of **a soft-skills training program** on **the soft-skills of participants**. It literally measures the effectiveness of the program itself, not the effectiveness of soft skills as they play into productivity and stability – the primary concerns of any company, and **especially** that of Operations. Sure, it FRAMES soft skills as necessary, and operates under that entire premise, but it does not and makes no attempt to prove or disprove this claim/conjecture since it's not the purpose of the paper. "This article intends to give an insight to these management colleges on the importance of incorporating soft skills in their curriculum, to ensure commendable placements." Notice that the emphasis is on the "management colleges", NOT the soft skills' importance or lack thereof. Specifically, it has an overwhelming emphasis on team **leadership and management** positions, not team members themselves. In which case duh, soft skills will be more important becuase the resource you are primarily managing are people, not data/software/hardware.

Take a look at the paper's stated objectives:

1. To find out the nature of impact of the soft skills training on the soft skills levels of management students.
2. To find out the major soft skills components that can be improved after the exposure to soft skills training.

As I stated above, it focuses highly on **management** position students, and to the effectiveness of the training itself. This podcast is not "Managementistrivia".

I don't have the time currently, but some day I'd love to examine their source for the 85%/15% success rate of soft/hard skills (Watts M and Watts R. K, 2008). I'm sure the conclusions it draws are not what entirely what this paper supposes. Scope of research papers is **incredibly** small, and more often than not they're extrapolated out to have a much more significant application than intended or able.

Did you actually read any of these?

"The fact that Patton and jthon are able to so easily work around Brent's obstinacy shows how much better they are with soft skills."
It's "Paden" and "Jthan". They're in the shownotes above where you typed your comment.
Further, if you'll actually listen, you'll notice their go-to when they disagree with my perspective is they insult me. I prefer to criticize their actual ideas and methodologies rather than their character. I don't think that's exactly in line with "soft skills". If you interviewed me, you'd have no idea I had this opinion. Do you know why? Because they don't matter as much as the zeitgeist says they do. You'd find me pleasant, polite, and knowledgeable. My coworkers of past and present will say the same. Your reaction to my opinion speaks more about your own level and understanding of "soft skills" than they do of mine.
Thanks for the attempted character assassination, though!