

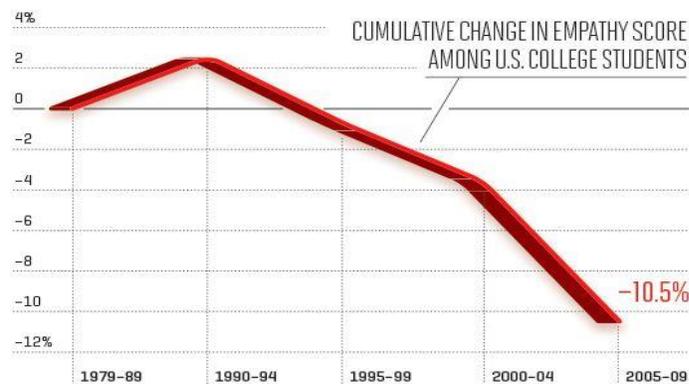
Got tech? Tech got you?

By Larry Kendall, Chairman of The Group, Inc. and Author of Ninja Selling

“Empathy is the critical 21st Century skill.” – Meg Bear, Vice-President of Cloud Computing, Oracle

What?! Meg Bear, the vice-president of a major technology is saying a “soft” skill like empathy is the critical business skill of the future? Tell us more. First, empathy is defined as *the ability to understand and share the feelings of another*.

A study by Oxford Economics of hiring managers at Fortune 500 companies finds the top 3 critical work place skills they are looking for are: 1) Empathy; 2) Communication/relationship skills; and 3) Collaboration skills. The study also found that our colleges and business schools are not turning out students with these skills. Instead the schools are focused on technology and analytical skills with little or any focus on *people skills*. This challenge is beautifully documented by Geoff Colvin in his latest book, *Humans Are Underrated*. Check out this chart.



Notice the sharp decline in empathy started in the 90's and has accelerated since 2000. What caused this? When did the internet and email become popular? In the 90's. Today, it's social media. Many young people are spending more time with their device than they are with another human being. They are losing the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

I see this in my college classes. Ten years ago when I entered the classroom the students were out of their seats, visiting and making noise. My challenge was to restore order and have them take their seats so we could start class. Today when I walk in the classroom it is stone silent. Everyone is in their seats absorbed in their device. The technology has them hypnotized. Now my challenge is to get them away from their device and get them engaged in learning and interacting with their classmates. It's no wonder top companies are struggling to find people who can also communicate with another human being "live"!

How does this relate to our real estate companies and our people? Is our technology making our sales teams more productive or is it a distraction to them and an escape from fully engaging the customer? In our study of very high producing real estate sales associates we see them using the telephone and face-to-face as their primary communication modes with a little text, email, and Facebook thrown in on the side. They are not spending a lot of time on electronic communication. Why? Because they know that empathy is a key to their success and empathy comes through live interaction. Here's some of the science in favor of face-to-face and voice-to-voice.

- **Faster.** The average person can talk at 150 – 180 words a minute and only type/text at 30 to 40 words per minute.
- **Better.** Empathy happens with the eyes. Face-to-face is the most powerful form of communication. Fifty-five percent of communication is non-verbal (body language).
- **Quality.** 82% of all emails are misunderstood as far as tone. (Source: Harris Interactive Study) Have some fun at your next sales meeting by having the group repeat this statement 7 times, each time accenting a different word: "I didn't say he shot his wife." It will be hilarious and you quickly realize this statement could easily be misunderstood via email.
- **Attention:** Tony Hsieh, President of Zappos says, "The telephone is the most amazing device ever invented. I recommend my people use the phone versus email. By phone you have the customer's undivided attention."

Are we saying scrap the technology? No! We are saying properly use your technology. Use it as a tool to build relationships and empathy rather than as a tool to isolate and buffer. We are still a sales business. Empathy, communication and relationships are still at the core of what we do – even in a high-tech world. Control your technology rather than letting it control you. Got tech? Or, tech got you?