

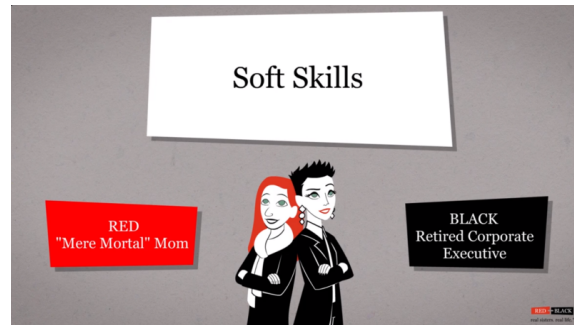


# UPSKILL UPDATE

APRIL 2020

## CRUCIAL SOFT SKILLS COME ALIVE IN NEW ANIMATED SERIES

Over the last several weeks, the landscape and nature of work in Houston and across the globe has changed dramatically. Seemingly overnight, business needs and models have been transformed, and new technologies have been adopted that may well change forever how people work and learn. Amid these rapid changes, soft skills – skills that transfer across industry, career choice and work environment – will become more crucial than ever for students and working adults to possess.



*New animated series on [UpSkillMyLife.org](http://UpSkillMyLife.org) highlights crucial career readiness skills*

At this critical time, **UpSkill Houston** and **Red & Black** – a “mere mortal” mom and her retired corporate executive sister – are excited to launch a new series of 13 short animations that demonstrate how an array of soft skills can drive success. Each minute-long episode introduces a different skill and provides a specific example of how the skill applies on-the-job – and in personal, everyday life – in a variety of settings.

The animations were developed as companions to UpSkill Houston's “**My Life As ...**” career awareness series and are featured at [UpSkillMyLife.org/softskills](http://UpSkillMyLife.org/softskills). The site now links existing “My Life As ...” content with “Soft Skills” content to help reinforce for young viewers how these skills apply in real-life settings. The animations are also available on [Red & Black's YouTube channel](#).

The new “**Soft Skills**” series will be shared with school districts, educators and youth-serving career coaches as tools to help Greater Houston's students prepare for their entry into the workforce or college.

*Red & Black Managing Partner Mandy Williams, aka “Black,” will join Fred Oswald, professor and director of Graduate Studies at Rice University School of Social Science, and Greg Hambrick, co-founder and CEO of Fast Forward Works, as guests in our [UpSkill Works Forum Series](#) on Wednesday, May 6.*

## SURVEY: PARTNERS MEET CHALLENGES, SEE OPPORTUNITIES

Taking safe work measures. Moves to online, remote work and education. Layoffs. Reductions in hours. Childcare shortfalls. These are just some of the effects the COVID-19 pandemic has had on UpSkill Houston partners and stakeholders, as well as on their workforce, students and clients.

We surveyed in March and in April a blend of employers, educators and representatives of community-based organizations to help us understand the effects of COVID-19 on the greater community.

Responses didn't just show how employers and school systems are working to maintain operations and the needs that clients of community-based organizations are experiencing, but they also offer insights into how UpSkill Houston can support employers, students, counselors and Greater Houston's workforce to aid recovery from the effects of COVID-19.

[Read full story here.](#)

## LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The following webinars and discussions are designed to help employers, educators and community partners understand the current climate and plan for the future.

**UpSkill Works Forum Series:** UpSkill Houston's new weekly series engages subject matter experts on a variety of workforce and skills issues to help stakeholders and partners develop Houston's path forward out of the COVID-19 crisis.



- **April 30:** [Insight into Current & Future Workforce Challenges](#) with Parker Harvey, Principal Economist with the Gulf Coast Workforce Board
- **May 6:** [Understanding Skills to Navigate the Changing Nature of Work](#) with Fred Oswald, professor and director of Graduate Studies at Rice University School of Social Science; Greg Hambrick, co-founder and CEO of Fast Forward Works; and Mandy Williams, managing partner, aka "Black," of Red & Black

**Greater Houston Partnership's COVID-19 Houston Business Forum Series:** In this bi-weekly series, local experts offer the latest information and analysis on the COVID-19 crisis and its regional economic impacts.

- **April 30:** [President's Address from Partnership President and CEO Bob Harvey](#).

**U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Path Forward Series:** This bi-weekly series of broad discussions and deeper dives with national subject matter experts is designed to help business and community leaders find the answers they need to develop a responsible reopening strategy.

- **April 30:** [Deep Dive: How is the Pandemic Influencing Consumers?](#)

## RESOURCES & READINGS

The following resources and articles offer guidance, tools and insights to help navigate the current challenges brought on by COVID-19 and plan for the future.

- **[Greater Houston Partnership Business Recovery Center:](#)** The GHPBRC features guidance and financing related to business recovery programs.
- **[Workforce Solutions: Jobs Now:](#)** Workforce Solutions provides this list of immediate job openings in the Gulf Coast region. It is updated daily.

- [Middle Skills Matter to Greater Houston](#): UpSkill Houston published this labor market report highlighting research by TEconomy Partners, LLC, in April 2020.
- [Education & Labor Policy Response to COVID-19](#): On Thursday, the Strada Education Network will convene federal and state policymakers to discuss how education and workforce policy leaders are responding to the crisis and planning for recovery.
- [How the Coronavirus Crisis is Redefining Jobs](#) (Harvard Business Review)
- [Four steps to writing a skills-based job posting](#) (Skillful Initiative)

Led by and for employers, UpSkill Houston builds the pipeline of skilled workers to grow the regional economy and provide opportunity for all Houstonians.

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