

Importance of Soft Skills for Professional Students

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Abstract: The professional world has undergone a tremendous change over a period of time. Thousands of graduates and post graduates are losing out in the market because of lack of soft skills. Having just hard skills is not enough today to make one's professional life complete, successful and satisfactory. At present, companies are looking for candidates who are smart and can present themselves well. Hence, an integrated and blended approach of subject know how with soft skills is necessary rather mandatory to be successful over others in the present arena. This paper tries to focus and highlight the importance of Soft Skills in making students employable for modern professions.

Key Words:- Soft Skills, Hard Skills .

I. INTRODUCTION

As the trend of education and courses are undergoing a dramatic change, there are a multitude of opportunity and career options which are available to students today. But getting a decent job in the present scenario has really become difficult as there is rise in competition for jobs . During the last decade the opinion on soft skills has changed considerably. In the past mastering a hard skills was rated first and soft skills were considered as "nice to have", the perception has changed upside down in the present times. Companies presently are looking for candidates those who are really possess excellent Soft Skills like communication skills, presentation skills , negotiation skills, listening skills group dynamics, team work ,Body language, Confidence and interpersonal skills to name a few. Soft Skills help students with strong conceptual and practical knowledge to build, develop and manage teams. Undoubtedly, they play a very important role in making the students employable. In today's world, where the survival of the fittest is the norm, it has become imperative to sharpen one's technical skills, and more importantly, one's soft skills. Technical skills can be learnt and measured to an established degree. But the same cannot be applied for soft skills. Soft Skills is a term for an individual's Emotional intelligence (EQ). It can be associated with personal attributes that enhance an individual interaction, career prospects.

II. 2. DEFINITION

Soft skills is a term often associated with a person's "EQ" (Emotional Intelligence Quotient), which is the cluster of personality traits that characterize one's relationships with other people. These skills can include social graces, communication abilities, language skills, personal habits, cognitive or emotional empathy, and leadership traits. These are essential at every level of the organisation. Soft skills contrast with hard skills, which are generally easily quantifiable and measurable (such as software knowledge or basic plumbing skills).

A person's soft skill EQ is an important part of their individual contribution to the success of an organization. Organizations which deal with customers face-to-face are generally more successful if they train their staff to use these skills. Screening or training for personal habits or traits such as dependability and conscientiousness can yield significant return on investment for an organization. For this reason, soft skills are increasingly sought out by employers in addition to standard qualifications.

III. 3 NEED FOR DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS

The importance of soft skills has been recently acknowledged by corporate. Technical and job related skills are a must , but they are not sufficient enough when it comes to progressing up the ladder. They play a very important role in this vigorous commercial epoch. Today there is a huge mass of qualified job seekers existing in the society and the competition within them for acquisition of jobs and job sustainability is becoming tougher. To get an edge over others they are left with no choice but to add worth to their hard skills with soft skills to showcase their full potential. If one has good soft skills then definitely he will be able to establish themselves as distinct amongst other job seekers.

Concerning the importance of including soft skills in colleges, Thacker and Yost (2002) noted that students require training to be effective team members. Employers often complain that present generation Business graduates lack good "team leadership skills". Similarly, according to Knell and et al (2007) employers are continually asking for workforce rich in creativity, communication skills and cultural understanding.

The National Employers Skills Survey 2014, reported that employers regard shortage in soft skills-including communication , teamwork, customer handling skills and responsiveness as far more crucial than hard or technical skills. Poor soft skills create negative impression with the employers during the recruitment phase and many exclude a graduate with good technical

skills from being selected for the employment (Pauw and et al, 2006)

A person who is having good soft skills can change the problems into opportunities and deal with the negatives in a more constructive and better way.

IV. SOFT SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM— PREREQUISITE

Lack of competence in soft skills is marked as one of the reason of poor employability rate of technical graduates. Though it is true that the soft skills must be inculcates at a very young age at home but the role of soft skills training in schools and colleges cannot be ignored. Soft Skills training programs aims to impart skills like assertiveness, negotiation skills , communication skills and to maintain and establish interpersonal skills. Soft skills are those capabilities that are inherent in an individual. They exit in every individual at a particular level . but if these skills are not used or the individual who adorns these skills is unaware of it then that individual will never be able to utilise his inherent skills. The aim of any soft skills training program is to remove these blocks and inhibitions that prevent the individual from utilising his skills. These program will make the individual aware of his hidden capabilities and to refine it for the overall development and success of the individual. Everyone can be benefited form such kind of programs irrespective of the skills they have inherited.

V. ROLE OF SOFT SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM

Soft Skills play the following important role in making the students employable for modern professions

- Soft Skills play a crucial role in making students employable as it makes them flexible, open to change, handle stress at work and to stay globally competitive.
- They enable students to understand and realize their potential and how best they can come out with flying colours in any situation.
- They enable students to tackle any adverse situation.
- They develop positive attitude with which they can influence the team members to achieve greater success in their professional life.
- They help students in decision making at the time of crisis.
- They encourage students to be ethical in their ways for long term success and to stick to work ethics and culture of he organisation.
- They teach student to manage Time and Stress, meet all the deadlines.
- They equip students with presentation skills which are necessary in the corporate world today.
- They make an individual work and perform better in teams.

- They develop communication skills – both written as well as oral forms. Both of these skills are indispensable for an individual's success.
- Develops good listening skills. As one cannot be good communicator, if he is not a good listener.
- Develop overall personality with mature outlook to function effectively in different circumstances.
- Develop broad career plans, evaluate the employment market, and identify the organisations to get good placement, match the job requirement and skills set.

VI. PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT AND SOFT SKILLS

Grooming of the students should begin with a preliminary test in the English language to determine their level of competence in the use of English for effective communication both oral and written. The idea is to ensure that a manager's job is to be able to express himself clearly, correctly and concisely.

Personality Development through Soft Skills training should be conducted in three modules:

1. Business Communication
2. Behavioural Skills
3. Training in Group Discussion and Personal Interview

I Business Communication : covers areas like communication skills, fluency in speaking, debates, language games, situational dialogues, précis writing, essay writing, presentation for small groups and large groups, Business Correspondence(email etiquette, telephone etiquette, report writing, preparation of agenda and minutes, memos , notices etc)

II Behavioral skills- This includes test like aptitude test and personality assessment, suggestion for improvement.

Team Skills- Team building and leadership, Evolution of groups into teams, group dynamics, emergence of leadership, conflict management.

Time Management- prioritization , goal setting, effective time management.

Interpersonal Skills – Concepts of leadership, leadership styles, insights from great leader.

III. Training in Group Discussion (GD) and Personal Interview (PI)

Before the student faces final interview they are given training in GD and PI as mock so that they get the experience . Feedback is given to them for a realistic understanding of industry expectations.

VII. TEACHING METHODS

The teaching methods include lectures, Role plays, GD, PI, quiz, case, simulation, projects and various other participatory sessions. The emphasis is on learning by doing. Since the method of training is experiential and highly interactive, the students imbibe the skills and

attributes in a gradual and subtle way over the duration of the program.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Soft Skills are very important to enhance employability. Soft Skills need to be enhanced in student to make them competent enough to meet the demands of the current job market. At college level they are a productive venture to incorporate these skills in the syllabus. This will surely help students in increasing their employability skills and it will make them execute the assigned works efficiently in any institution after the selection process. Mere academic abilities are not enough. What is essential is something beyond academics such as soft skills including communication skills, interpersonal skills, negotiation skills, problem solving skills. It is rightly said that you need to clap with both hands to get the results

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