



**NEED FOR SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS  
MANAGERIAL EFFICIENCY**

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**ABSTRACT**

Soft skills are personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance and career development. Unlike hard skills, which are about a person's skill set and ability to perform a certain type of task or activity, soft skills are interpersonal and broadly applicable. Soft skills plays vital role in all the streams. Communication Skills, Leadership Skills and Analytical skills are some of the essential skills that an organization looks in to the employees that it is keen to hire. Soft skills play a vital role for professional especially for managerial success; they help one to excel in the workplace and their importance cannot be denied in this age of information and knowledge. Good soft skills which are in fact scarce in the highly competitive corporate world will help them stand out in a milieu of routine job seekers with mediocre skills and talent. The introduction of soft skills will enhance the oral and written skills of the students, and they would learn the concepts of Leadership, Time Management etc. In fulfilling the training needs of the managers, a new concept of Management Development Programme (MDPs), in which the managers are taught new concept of soft skills is being introduced. However the soft skill development programmes will enhance the growth and promotion of personal and professional life.

**Keywords:** Job performance, Hard skills, Analytical skills, Mediocre skills, Management Development Programme and Competitive corporate.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

In recent scenario, 'soft skills' has become one area where corporate employee and a new entrant want to improve upon so as to be at par with the demands of a highly competitive environment. Possession of these skills helps one to strike a chord with colleagues, clients, and bosses. A soft skill is an important course work in educational and non-educational institutions. It is a sociological term relating to a person's EQ (Emotional Intelligence Quotient), the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness and optimism that characterize with other people.<sup>1</sup> A person's soft skill EQ is an important part of their individual contribution to the success of an organization. Particularly those organizations dealing with customers face-to-face are generally more successful, if they train their staff to use these skills. Screening or training for personal habits

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or traits such as dependability and conscientiousness can yield significant return on investment for an organization,<sup>2</sup> for this reason, soft skills are increasingly sought out by employers in addition to standard qualifications. Soft Skills are behavioral competencies. Also known as Interpersonal Skills, or people skills, they include proficiencies such as communication skills, conflict resolution and negotiation, personal effectiveness, creative problem solving, strategic thinking, team building, influencing skills and selling skills, to name a few.

### 1.1. OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze how soft skills training can significantly improve the managerial skills.
2. To find out the difference between soft skills and hard skills.
3. To examine how the soft and hard skills programme enhance the employability of Professional students.
4. To describe the need and importance of soft skills towards managerial success.

### 1.2 ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY THROUGH SOFT SKILLS AND HARD SKILLS

Hard skills are known as technical skills and Soft skills known as intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Soft skills complement hard skills (part of a person's IQ), which are the occupational requirements of a job and many other activities. Soft skills are personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance and career prospects. Unlike hard skills, which are about a person's skill set and ability to perform a certain type of task or activity, soft skills relate to a person's ability to interact effectively with coworkers and customers and are broadly applicable both in and outside the workplace.

**Hard skills** are skills where the **rules stay the same** regardless of which company, circumstance or people you work with. In contrast, **soft skills** are self management skills and people skills where **the rules changes** depending on the company culture and people you work with. For example, programming is a hard skill. The rules for how you can be good at creating the best code to do a function are the same regardless of where you work. Communication skills are a set of soft skills. The rules for how to be effective at communication changes and depend on your audience or the content you are communicating. You may communicate well to fellow programmers about technical details while struggle significant to communicate clearly too senior manager about your project progress and support needed.

**Hard skills can be learned in school** and from books. There are usually designated level of competency and a direct path as to how to excel with each hard skill. For example, accounting is a hard skill. We can take basic accounting and then advanced accounting courses. We can then work to get experience and then take an exam for certificate. In contrast, there is no simple path to learn soft skills. **Most soft skills are not taught well in some institutions and have to be learned on the job by trial and error.** Of late engineering and arts and science colleges giving more importance to soft skill development

programmes to enhance the student's knowledge. There are number of softskill training institutions have major link with educational institutions at school and college level to improve their performance. It has been suggested that in a number of professions soft skills may be more important over the long term than occupational skills. The legal profession is one example where the ability to deal with people effectively and politely, more than their mere occupational skills, can determine the professional success of a lawyer.<sup>3</sup> **soft skills are more important in most business careers than hard skills.** We all know or have worked for senior a person that doesn't seem that smart (limited hard skills). The fact remains that they are in senior positions because they have exceptional soft skills (e.g., know how to leverage politics for further their careers, leadership skills, management skills and self-promotion skills). Soft Skills are all the skills other than technical skills that are required for a successful career. Research states that technical skills account for only 15% and Soft Skills 85% of a person's productivity especially in today's environment. The study of the lives and careers of successful businessmen, managers, professionals, salespeople etc points that there are some key skills that are required for each profession.

India's demographic dividend - its young population is in danger of becoming a liability. By a conservative estimate, more than one-third of the millions that graduate each year are unemployable. A survey of 303 employers across the country by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in 2010 found a majority of graduates lacked adequate "soft skills" to be employed in the industry. Only about one-third employers were satisfied with the communication ability of their employees and about 26 per cent with their employees' writing ability. If this trend continues, the prospects for the 1.4 billion youth estimated to enter the work force by 2020, and consequently for the economy, look anything but promising. An April 6 report in the Wall Street Journal highlighted this growing mismatch between the labour force and the skill set available. "India graduates millions but too few are fit to hire," the report says. "Engineering colleges in India now have seats for 1.5 million students, nearly four times the 39,000 available in 2000. But 75 per cent of technical graduates and more than 85 per cent of general students are unemployable." Narendra Jadhav, Planning Commission member in-charge of education and former vice-chancellor of Pune University, agrees. "Survey after survey has shown that 33 per cent of our graduates are unemployable," he said. "The quality of teaching on our campuses is outdated. They do not follow the latest market demands. Added to that is the student's level of learning, but most crucial is the lack of communication skills," he added.

The FICCI survey found that only 26 per cent employers are satisfied with their employees' ability to communicate in English, "the most widely used professionally communicated language". According to the survey of decision-makers in the country, which included top CEOs, MDs and human resource directors, the importance of "soft skills" in today's employment landscape cannot be overemphasized. Though of late, the human resource development ministry appears to have woken up to the fact that 'skill development' is an area that needs urgent attention in our education system. But experts say the focus of the programme is still skewed - it still focuses only on vocational education, missing out 'soft skills' training.<sup>4</sup>

Unemployability is today a greater issue than unemployment. As APJ Abdul Kalam, Former President of India said, "It is not unemployment that is the major problem; it is the question of unemployability that is the major crisis in this competitive arena..."

According to a NASSCOM-McKinsey report, The Indian Industry will face its biggest challenge ever: a talent shortage of 3.1 million knowledge workers, across Industry, by 2010 compounded by the fact that only 25 per cent of fresh engineers; and a mere 10% of fresh graduates are actually employable! The situation is grave, but it can be addressed through a solution that empowers the youth. Empower these youngsters with the requisite skills they will need to get employment and to grow in a corporate environment. And this skill development must start early: even while the student is pursuing his graduation. Graduates come out of college, polished in academic skills. But as we all know working for a Corporate is a different ball game altogether. While their academic skills definitely count, various other skills such as spoken and written English, interpersonal skills, the art of communication, situational behavior, and so on play a pivotal role in helping the student or candidate fit into the workplace. Lack of these skills may hamper the candidate's prospects at the interview stage itself<sup>5</sup>. So a powerful program that aims to impart these skills in a candidate, implemented while the student is pursuing his graduation should make him/her completely employable by the time he is out of college and into the job hunt.

## 2. NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

In the current scenario whether an individual is an MBA, Engineer, Graduate or Undergraduate, everybody needs to communicate in either English or Hindi or in their respective regional language domestic as well as global. A technical skill holder or a professional in any field will find it difficult to communicate his knowledge base and ability with lack of Communication and Interpersonal Skills.

Soft skills play a vital role for professional success; they help one to excel in the workplace and their importance cannot be denied in this age of information and knowledge. Good soft skills which are in fact scarce in the highly competitive corporate world will help them stand out in a milieu of routine job seekers with mediocre skills and talent.

The Smyth County Industry Council, a governing body based in the US, conducted a survey recently. The results of the survey were called the Workforce Profile which found "an across-the-board unanimous profile of skills and characteristics needed to make a good employee." The people most likely to be hired for available jobs have what employers call "soft skills".

Here were some of the findings according to the workforce study:

The most common traits, mentioned by virtually every employer, were:

- Positive work ethic.
- Good attitude.
- Desire to learn and be trained.

Mohan Rao, a technical director with Emmellen Biotech Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Mumbai defines a 'good attitude': "It is a behavioural skill, which cannot be taught. However it can be developed through continuous training. It represents the reactive nature of the individual and is about looking at things with the right perspective. You must be ready to solve problems proactively and create win-win situations. And you must be able to take ownership ie responsibility for your actions and lead from the front without calling it quits at the most critical.movement"

Most of the business leaders observed that they could find workers who have "hard skills" ie the capability to operate machinery or fulfill other tasks, but many potential hires lack the "soft skills" that a company needs.

Soft skill programmes have a significant role to play in the current business environment and considering the future professional requirements. If we go back to the 90's there was very low requirement for a professional to communicate. Today people to people contact has taken a quantum leap; hence Soft Skills are directly related to productivity. Soft Skills training will ensure that a professional is equipped with tools to handle challenging work situations and pressure. Soft Skills equipped individuals turn out to be good relationship managers. At present awareness for soft skills programmes are very important. Corporate are troubled by untrained manpower and attrition. Reason again is lack of Soft Skills training. With India's booming economy and new opportunities, a strong urge exists in the young manpower for knowledge that is most essential for their professional boost, enhancement and career growth. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN put it well when he said, "An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest".

## **2.1 MOST ESSENTIAL SOFT SKILLS FOR PROSPECTIVE PROFESSIONAL**

Superior soft skills play a very important role in this spirited commercial era. If one has advanced soft skills, then definitely, he/she would be marked as distinct amongst the other graduate job seekers. Regarding the importance of soft skills in higher education, Thacker and Yost (2002) noted that students required training to be effective team members. It is because employers often find that "graduates" who are giving interviews for acquiring a job "lack good team leadership skills". Similarly, Mayur kumar Gadewar, an ERP consultant with Price Waterhouse Coopers, said, "It is essential to be technically sound, but one should also have the ability to convey the technical knowledge to the masses in the simplest possible manner"<sup>6</sup>. KPMG International (a Swiss Cooperation) and UKIERI (UK-India Education and Research Initiative) conducted a research survey, which stated, "A 'skills gap' is making itself increasingly apparent"<sup>7</sup>. The important qualities of soft skills for professionals are,

1. Communication Skills (Verbal and Non-Verbal) including Business Communication
2. Interpersonal Skills
3. Emotional Quotient
4. Professional Etiquette
5. Leading and Managing People

Now-a-days, nobody wishes to gain knowledge to be a scholar as in previous ages. In fact, knowledge has become a stepping stone to land up a good paying job, and to get a reputed position in the society. Because of these reasons, higher education now demands a transformation to meet the elevated desires of the students. Irrespective of the professional qualification, today's professionals need to possess a high soft skill quotient, apart from domain knowledge in order to succeed in this competitive era.

### 3. CONCLUSION

**Hard skills** are usually related to professional knowledge, tools, or techniques that allow us to work within our profession. Examples of hard skills are designing a bridge; developing software; applying taxation laws; and injecting a vaccine. Effective language, Basic numeracy skills and Basic computer skills are the important pre-requisite for Hard Skills. **Soft skills** are the complete collection of our social, communication, and self-management behaviours. These are the skills that enable us to work effectively and "fit in" at the workplace. Examples of soft skills are: demonstrating integrity and ethical behaviour; being motivated and having a positive attitude; and critically analyzing information. **Professional communication skills** are an integral part of soft skills, focusing mostly on effective exchange of information. Examples for professional communication skills (as part of overall soft skills) are negotiating and influencing; interviewing and counseling; working in a team; and delivering presentations.

Skill Bridge is a program that aims at making Indian youth employable. The skills imparted through Skill Bridge will make them confident, and help them face the corporate with more than just an academic degree. The Skill Bridge curriculum covers written and spoken English, business communication, resume writing and interview skills, pronunciation, etiquette, leadership skills and more, making it a comprehensive training on employable skills. The introduction of soft skills will enhance the oral and written skills of the students, and they would learn the concepts of Leadership, Time Management etc. In fulfilling the training needs of the managers, a new concept of Management Development Programme (MDPs), in which the managers are taught new concept of soft skills is being introduced. However, introduction of soft skills in the curriculum of higher education is need of the hour, as this will contribute in holistic development of student's career as well as enhancing the managerial efficiency and employability of professional students.

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