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Power of Soft skills over the Hard

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Abstract:

Observation reveals that the most successful people in the world are not the most qualified one, but they are the smart ones, possessing different skills. Thus, skills play an important role in determining success. Importance of skill development is being acknowledged by honourable Prime Minister, Narendra Modi which resulted in the launch of Skill India Mission.

Skill is an umbrella term covering various abilities underneath. Skills broadly classified under two heads-Hard skills and soft skills. Hard skills are directly visible and helps in getting selected for some profession. They are measurable and can be acquired through learning while soft skills are not quantifiable. They help in retaining the jobs and excel in the arena. In nut shell soft skills are incredibly important to attain success in life. Despite of having great significance less attention is paid towards the development of these traits in the individual. One hardly encounters any institution that is training the learners in soft skills. Although soft skills cannot be learned but they can be developed through experience. So efforts should be made to provide such experiences to the learner at early stage which may result in the development of these traits.

Key words: Hard skills, Soft skills, Stress Management, Time Management, Emotional Intelligence.

Introduction

“A winner is someone who recognises his God given talents, works his tail-off to develop them into skills and uses these skills to accomplish his goals” (Larry Bird). These words by Larry Bird signifies the importance of skills to attain a successful life or to be a winner. Thus in order to be successful one must possess certain skills. Now the question arises what actually the skill is and what kind of skills are required to attain success? Skills are set of learned abilities, expertise or talent that is required to carry a task effectively and in right direction. The skills that are required to be successful can be broadly classified under two heads- Hard skills and Soft skills. Both of these are required to be a winner. But the percentage to which these skills contributes in attaining success varies significantly.

Hard Skills

Set of skill that is required for particular task or a job are termed as hard skills. They includes technical skills, skills acquired through apprenticeship, training programs, short term training classes, books, certification programs as well as job training. They are typically listed as **essential qualification** in job descriptions and can be directly noticed through the certificates acquired by the individual. In short they help the individual to get into the job. Some hard skills are typing speed, proficiency in spoken language, data analysis and so on. These skills are easily measurable and can be easily acquired through learning.

Soft Skills

In contrast to hard skills, soft skills are those qualities or attributes of an individual that enhances her abilities to accomplish the task. These are non-technical skills which relates to **how** the work is done rather than what is done. It's often said that hard skills enable the person to get in interview while soft skills helps to get and sustain the job. Soft skills are less quantifiable but these are something that is incredibly important.

These skills includes interpersonal skills, communication skills, adaptability, critical thinking, listening skills, empathy, emotional intelligence, time management and many such skills which enhances the productivity of the person. Top hiring managers look for the people with soft skills because they bring better results. Soft skills may be considered as the key to success because someone may be very good at technical skills but lacks time management, adaptability, communication skills and emotional intelligence then they will not be able to achieve the goal.

Soft skills are generally the part of one's personality but they can be developed. Though there are less chances to develop these traits through education or training but still they can be developed through experience. This is a gradual process thus takes long time so one have to be patient.

Some soft skills that are typically required to be successful in life are-

1. **Adaptability**

Adaptability is one of the top five soft skills, employers are seeking in the year 2022. It is the individual's ability to adjust oneself to the prevailing environment or changing situations easily. It enables the person to adapt quickly and comfortably to the moving priorities, changing colleagues, clients, tools and technologies. In a nutshell they are always ready to deal with the changes at the work place, working conditions and their surroundings.

2. **Critical thinking**

Logical thinking to find out the solution of certain problem or issue is termed as critical thinking. It includes five steps in all starting from minute observation of facts, collection of relevant information and data available, drawing inferences on the basis of personal experiences, communicating with others to finally getting the problem solved (Iyer,2019). Here best solution is applied after comparing all the available ones.

Sometimes idea of rushing towards the immediate solution might storms one's mind due to scarcity of time and resources but the solution thus found would be less productive in comparison to the one derived by thinking critically.

3. **Communication skills**

Saying that Communicating effectively wins half the battle would not be a hyperbole. If a person knows to communicate the experiences, ideas, thoughts and feelings in an effective manner than no one can defeat her. Effective Communication is desirable irrespective of the nature of the work place.

Communication is not only giving expression to the thoughts by speaking rather it is an umbrella term which includes non- verbal communication, listening, clarity and concision, open mindedness, respect, friendliness and many other skills.

Listening

One must be a good listener in order to be a good communicator. Every one wants to talk but very few people are ready to listen. Nobody likes to talk to

a person who doesn't want to listen. If one doesn't listen carefully she will not be able to comprehend what is said and thus resulting in inappropriate response. So listening carefully is must.

Non-verbal Communication

Bodily gestures, facial expressions and eye contact convey more cues about the real feeling of the individual rather than the verbal communication.

Clarity and concision

Saying too much or too little doesn't comes under good communication. One must say 'just enough' with clarity and directly to avoid confusion.

Thinking before saying is good idea, as it helps one to be precise and to the point.

Confidence

It occupies important place in the communication. When the speaker is confident then only the audience, students, co-workers or other staff believes in the words spoken.

Open-mindedness

A good communicator always enter the discussion with open mind i.e. readiness to listen and understand other's view point rather then convincing others to agree with her. Then only the communication will lead to fruitful result.

4. Empathy

It is the ability to comprehend the feelings and emotions of the other person. In nutshell empathy is putting oneself at other's place and think accordingly, thus helping the individual to respond appropriately. Empathy enables the individual to think positively about each and every decision taken by the authorities of the organisation. Research reveals that the greater the level of empathy the more helpful an individual will be.

5. Time Management

Every person has 24 hours in a day then how some people get all the work done at proper time and can spare time for other activities too while others find it difficult to manage. For getting all the things done at right time one needs to learn the skill of time management. Time Management includes creation of schedule, prioritisation, delegation, goal setting and so on. This enhances the efficacy of the person and increases self confidence as well. Research reveals that good time management lower down the stress and anxiety amongst the students (Kearns, 2007).

6. Public speaking

It is an ability to engage, coax and induce the audience. It helps in developing confidence, increases job opportunities, problem solving, critical thinking, and leadership skills in the person.

7. Stress Management

Stress is one of the biggest problem faced by almost every person in the entire world. It may be defined as mental pressure on particular person due to some contradictions, disagreement or maladjustment with the prevailing environment. It harms people physically as well as psychologically (Bhargava, 2018). Thus its management becomes more important. The techniques employed for this purpose are termed as stress management technique. This technique is like a panacea to the mankind, as it opens the door of health, happiness and success.

8. Conflict Management

This is an ability through which the person can handle the conflicts effectively, that arises due to disaccord among the co-workers (Madalina, 2015). Conflicts are unavoidable part of every work place as the people hold diverge opinions so it becomes important to learn conflict management skill.

9. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence enables the person to comprehend and manage her own emotions as well the emotions of the people in her surroundings. It helps in maintaining positive attitude amidst hardships. EQ 80% in determining success of any individual (Goleman, 1995). Unlike IQ, EQ can be improved with practice. So one must try to work on her EQ to attain success in life.

10. Leadership

Leadership could be defined as the ability to influence others to accomplish certain goals. Leadership qualities are made up of a blend of several soft skills such as decision-making, integrity, problem-solving and the ability to teach and mentor. Undoubtedly these skills are essential for the people associated with administrative jobs but employees can also show leadership, this will turn them into self-reliant, productive and influential person.

All these soft skills overlap with each other. There is no clear-cut distinction amongst all of them. One needs a good blend of the soft skills to attain success.

Importance of Soft skills

The ability to deal affably with others is termed as soft skills. The personal traits of the individual affects communication, transaction and relationship with others. These skills are priceless for any kind of profession, be it a job or business. It is arduous to develop these skills as this process requires considerable period of time.

Report says that by the year 2025 certain soft skills like problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity and emotional intelligence would be among the most important skills required in the workplace (The world Economic Forum). The arrival of Artificial intelligence at work place has resulted in increased requirement of soft skills amongst the employees. Study predicts that, “Soft skill-intensive occupations will account for two-thirds of all jobs by 2030” (Deloitte report) as these skills are difficult to be automated thus they are likely to become more desirable in near future.

Benefits of soft skills

Soft skills are beneficial to everyone irrespective of the job they are engaged in. These skills imparts the ability to adjust oneself to the existing situation and handling them in best possible way. There are numerous benefits of soft skills some of them are discussed here-

- **Increased productivity**

Soft skills helps in increasing the efficiency and sense of shouldering responsibility of the employees. The employees trained in the skills like time management and communication tends to have better work place outcome (Adhvaryu, 2017).

- **Stronger team work**

Training in soft skills enables the individual to collaborate and work with team effectively. Soft skills like empathy, emotional Intelligence and relationship building helps the employees to connect with each other and forming a positive bond amongst them. This collaboration helps in fulfilment of the goal of the organisation.

- **Improve problem solving**

Whenever a person encounters a problem s/he tries to get it resolved as quickly as possible. This quick solution may give invitation to other problems as well. Soft skills like creative and critical thinking, stress management helps the individual to

find out a logical solution without getting stressed. They can also go for some alternative fixes to handle the situation.

- **Managing emotions**

Every individual has emotions. Even a child is born with certain emotions. The overflow of the emotions may result in reduced efficacy both physically and mentally. So in order to be socially acceptable and mentally healthy one needs to control and manage the emotions. Training in soft skills enables people to manage their emotions. A person who knows the skill of controlling her emotions contribute significantly towards the success of the organisation.

- **Managing Time**

There is a famous saying that “time and tide waits for none”. So one needs to be very careful while planning her day to day activities. Prior schedule provides great help in managing the time properly. Time management enhances confidence on one hand and helps in realisation of the desired goal within the prescribed period of time. Lack of time management skills leads to chaos and stress in life thus resulting in lower efficiency and productivity

Conclusion

Skill is the ability which enables the individual to perform any task with perfection. They are innate capabilities that can be polished by training as well as they can be acquired through learning. The importance of skills in human life is deeply recognised by the honourable Prime Minister of India Mr. Narendra Modi, he emphasized on skill acquisition specifically to train youth in different skills thus empowering the country. Skill India mission was launched on 15th July 2015 to train Indian citizens in hard skills. This will increase their employability but the soft skills that plays miraculous role in retaining job and attaining success are being ignored. Considerable attention and strong determination is required to develop soft skills amongst the people at early stage, because these skills are not easy to acquire like hard skills.

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