



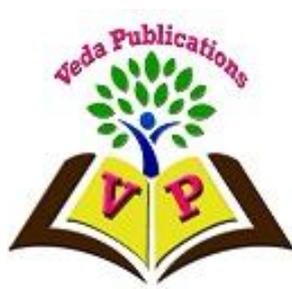
ENGLISH AND EMPLOYABILITY: THE SEED SOURCES OF MORSEL FOR ENGINEERING GRADUATES

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ABSTRACT



It is a well known fact that English, as a tool of communication has its niche in the world and it is being played a significant role at present though it is the language of science and technology, business and opportunities. One's employability depends on his/her ability to speak in English. Employers look for candidates with a command over the English language. A technically well-qualified with good English language skills progresses fast in career compared to an equally qualified technician without such skills. The employability skills include both soft skills and hard skills like communication skills, body language, personality development, positive attitude, team work, and problem solving skills, decision making, time management, stress management and certain IT skills. Thus the present paper aims at the importance of English and employability skills and strategies required to enhance them.

Keywords: *Job Interview, English Language and communication, Employability skills, Strategies.*



INTRODUCTION

Man has been using language as a tool of communication for many centuries which has enabled him to interact with the environment and to regulate his social behaviour. Though there are a number of means of communication, language is the most widely used instrument. Today, English language is one of the most prized possessions of man. It acts as a repository of wisdom, a propeller for the advancement of knowledge and a telescope to view the vision of the future. With rapid industrialisation and economic growth in the country there has been an enormous increase in the number and size of professional organisations. As communication plays a vital role for the smooth functioning of an organization, the need to impart communication skills has assumed greater importance. Life's a short journey needs no sword' But it needs the command over the language. As the world is being changed by modern science and technology, these two have become bragging fields of study throughout the world. All the engineering and science graduates must hone lucrative communication and employability skills to succeed in this cut throat competition. Bianca K.& Peter F. (2004) defined engineering as: "Engineering is a profession directed towards the skilled application of a distinctive body of knowledge based on mathematics, science and technology, integrated with business and management, which is acquired through education and professional formation in a particular engineering discipline. Engineering is directed to developing, providing and maintaining infrastructure, goods and services for industry and the community.' Therefore, engineering graduates obviously need to have good employability skills to help them applying and practicing the knowledge effectively in workplace."

MNCS EXPECTATIONS

One of biggest challenges that MNC's are facing is skills gap. In the present scenario, the concept of employability has become abstract and vague. In today's faced paced world, recruiters are demanding for the candidates who are highly productive from the day one. They always find mismatch between their requirements and

availability of skilled graduates. The Indian corporate industries say that the current generation is unemployable only because of the lack of required skills. Every organization treats its employees as tangible assets, who play an imperative role in the progress of any organization. According to surveys, MNC's are fetching lots on amount in exploring skilled engineering graduates for their organization. As a wealthy man who prefers a single worker who can manage all the works at home, MNC's also seeking for multi-skilled graduates who possess skills like, effective communication, ability to plan, smart working, creative thinking, team work, analytical skills, and prioritize work.

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Employability skills are often termed as 'Soft skills', 'Key competencies', 'core skills', 'Key skills', 'Life skills'. Though we call them with various names, it is true that these skills are like blood cells in a body, without them one can't survive. As a hunter with 'Arrow' fails in targeting the prey without a 'Bow', an engineering graduate with only 'Subject knowledge' fails in getting his targeted job without these 'Skills'. These generic skills are obligatory to apply technical and subject knowledge at the practical work place. In order to acquire an edge over the competitors, graduates are left with no choice but only to add values to their hard skills with soft skills to showcase their real potentiality.

The definition of these skills changes according to the work conditions and occupation at the work place. Binkley et al., 2005, p.51 rightly said "Skills or abilities are individuals need in order to achieve success in life, within the context of their socio-cultural milieu, through adaptation to, shaping of, and selection of environments". Robinson (2000) defined employability skills as "Those basic skills are necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job". Wikipedia gives a very broad definition of Soft skills, "Soft skills refer

To the cluster of personality traits, social graces, and facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark people to varying degrees. Soft skills complement hard skills, which are the technical requirements of a job."(Wikipedia, 2007). Technical acumen alone is not sufficient for



engineering career success, soft skills play an important role in the life of engineering graduates in getting employed and doing well at the work place.

1. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication is any behaviour that results in an exchange of meaning.

(American Management Association)

Communication is essential for the internal functioning of any organisation. By integrating the managerial functions and serving to influence the behaviour and attitudes of people through persuasion. It encourages them to perform in order to achieve organisational objectives. The interaction between the different individuals working in a company or organisation takes place through different channels. Particularly, English Communication Skills are crucial for all the professional engineers but inadequate skills only undermine the image of an engineer. Therefore, he/she should get command over the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

2. LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

Leadership in and of itself, is not one skills, but integration and combination of different skills. In an engineering context, leadership integrates number of abilities which are crucial and critical at work place. According to the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) "These capabilities include the ability to assess risk and take initiative, the willingness to make decisions in the face of uncertainty, a sense of urgency and the will to deliver on time in the face of constraints or obstacles, resourcefulness and flexibility, trust and loyalty in a team setting, and the ability to relate to others." So leadership skills are very important for engineering graduates to foster their personal and professional life.

3. PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

Engineering graduates who own very good problem solving skills will be more preferable at work places. Problem solving requires proper understanding, creative thinking and effective application of ideas. The process of problem solving includes a great deal of effective co-ordination among people and processes. These skills should be

imbibed by every engineering graduate to build up his professional career.

4. DECISION MAKING SKILLS

Decision making is the art of determining upon an opinion or a course of action to follow. In changing world, new problems demand new solutions. To be successful in decision making one must go beyond the willingness to accommodate to change – they must want to create change, to be action – oriented and want to do worthwhile things. Engineering graduates need to have good decision making skills to be succeeded in their personal and professional life.

5. POSITIVE THINKING

The candidate's answers should reflect a positive attitude. Interviewers may ask negative or sensitive questions to explore the negatives in the candidate's personality. Therefore, it is important to remain positive and answer even negative questions positively. It is the most important skill that one should develop to survive in one's own personal as well as professional life. Positive thinking makes engineering graduate to manage things and face all the circumstances courageously. Especially at work place employees should sport these skills when they face unpredicted situations.

6. IT AND COMPUTER SKILLS

One of the basic skills that are required now a day for every engineering graduate is basic computer and technical literacy. Almost all the companies, industries and even small organizations are expecting basic computer literacy in their job aspirants. But many job seekers lack these skills, because they think it's implied. Advanced skills in this area give competitive advantage and add credit to the resume.

7. ADAPTABILITY

Adaptability refers to the ability to adjust with other members of the group and get along with them. It is an important leadership quality that one needs in order to be an effective team player. A person who lacks the ability to get along with others will not succeed as a group leader because an effective leader has to rise above his personal likes and dislikes in order to accommodate the larger interests of the group. Graduates always underestimate the



ability to adapt to changes and managing various tasks. In the 21st century modern world technology and business environments are evolving rapidly, the ability to espouse to new technologies and adopting the changing business environments is important. As the MNC's and industries keep on changing their strategies and business policies, it has become mandatory for their employees to adopt them quickly and follow effectively. So engineering graduates should learn accepting the sudden changes took place in personal and professional lives.

8. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

No man is an island unto himself. We mean that people need other people. Man as a social being has to lead on with all the people personality characteristics, in a social group, there is conformity despite the identity, assertiveness and so on. Interpersonal behavior is interaction of two persons at a time. It could also imply interaction among more than two people, where the interaction is at personal level. Interpersonal skills build up qualities like loyalty, accountability, responsibility, persistence, self-control, fairness, caring, citizenship, value system, geniality, respecting, co-operating, sharing etc. Whatever Interpersonal skill includes ability to work in teams, mingling with people inside and outside the organization and manage conflicts effectively.

9. TEAM BUILDING

Team building is a very important skill that every engineering graduate should develop to extract the best out of their workforce. After entering into real work environment, they are expected to work smarter not only harder in order to discharge the desired results. Individual intelligence and hard work may not work all the time. Employees can achieve the assigned tasks when they have collaboration and joint efforts. It is the skill that decides the success and failure of a team. A job in an MNC company requires collaboration, mutual communication and support to achieve the desired tasks. So engineering graduates should learn working in teams.

10. TIME MANAGEMENT

Managing time effectively is a great skill that everyone should add to their life skills. As there is a saying "Time and tide waits for no man", intelligent

person is one who utilizes the time effectively and gets benefited more than others. It is mandatory for every employee to discharge the services within the target time. It is a great ability to utilize the opportunities, time, personal experience and skills to accomplish the responsibilities at work place.

11. SELF-MOTIVATION

Self motivation is something that encourages action/feelings. To motivate means to encourage and inspire. Motivation can also mean to turn on or ignite the feeling/action. Self motivation is powerful. It can persuade, convince and propel a person into action. Besides it is the driving force in one's life. It comes from a desire to succeed. Self motivation is the inner gratification, not for success or winning, but for the fulfillment that comes from having done it. It is a feeling of accomplishment, rather than just achieving a goal. Self-motivation plays an essential role in engineering graduate's personal and professional life. Even great leaders require a jump start time to time to achieve their goals with flying colors.

12. CREATIVITY

Creativity is a mental orientation of an individual to deal with complex, ambiguous and unclear world and to deal with problems by evolving better and original solutions. Creative skills help to do things differently. This skill helps an individual to create their identity at work places. Engineering graduates deemed creative thinking skill in their on duty. Especially the recruiters search for this skills at the time assessing the special skills. Creative thinking makes the students to actuate 'sideways' to try different concepts, different perceptions, and to think in a different point of view about problem and bring a proper solution.

STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP THE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS IN ENGINEERING GRADUATES

Multimedia language lab is the best platform for developing employability skills of the students. It consists of different technical tools which assist the language teachers in teaching these skills in effective way like role plays, group discussions, seminars, debates, dialogues etc. the following topics will be very helpful for the engineering graduates to enhance their skills in their career.



PAIR WORK/ROLE PLAY

Role play is a classroom activity which gives the students an opportunity to practice the language, the aspects of role behavior and the actual role he may need outside the classroom. Students can work in pairs. They can have a formal language exercise to discuss and complete, some questions to answer, a topic to discuss or some similar tasks to perform. In most cases they will have to select and formulate language appropriate to the task and monitor each other's speech. It is recommended that full freedom should be given to the students to play his role as he sees it and speak as he feels it appropriate and necessary.

The students will be formed into pairs and each one will play the allotted role. With the help of role plays we can make them involve in real time situation on role and enact accordingly. These types of role plays help them in understanding how to deal with different people in different situations.

SEMINAR SKILLS

Seminars can be used to present information. Candidates report of some research work or your opinion etc. in the ensuing discussion students ask the presenter questions using the language and conventions appropriate for agreeing and disagreeing.

According to *Lynch* and *Anderson*, seminar skills are divided into two categories.

1. Presentation skills
2. Participation skills

GROUP DISCUSSION

Besides being an excellent method of classroom learning, group discussions are now commonly used by educational institutions and employers to select candidates by finding out whether a candidate has the skills and qualities necessary to work in groups to achieve common goals or not. A group discussion is a formal discussion among ten to twelve participants, who can share information and opinion on a topic in order to test the knowledge of job aspirant(s). One or more experts will observe the discussion and evaluate the members of the group how the participants are engaged in the given topic and whether they are actively taking part or not. The following skills are developed through group

discussions. Subject knowledge, communication skills, the ability to work in a team, positive attitude, self confidence, initiative, decision making, problem solving skills, leadership skills, analytical and critical thinking skills, reasoning ability, assertiveness, creativity, flexibility, ability to think quickly independently etc.

CONCLUSION

The future generations are the architects of the 21st century. As the world is perpetually marching towards the future, the need of creative, innovative and highly skilled graduates are required to make this world as an elegant world with innovative ideas. So it has become mandatory to generate creative and skilled minds to reach the requirements of the global world. Most of the Indian engineering graduates are becoming unemployable because they are lagging these skills. Dr A.P.J Abdul Kalam has aptly said that India does not have a problem of unemployment but unemployability. Some of these skills are acquired by learning and some by practicing. Swami Vivekananda says that "Education is the manifestation of perfection already in men", "We are all powerful, and we can do everything". One should take this quote as an inspiration to upgrade oneself perpetually through solving real life problems and applying learned and adopted knowledge. Recruiters, professional bodies and universities agree that India needs to develop highly skilled graduates in order to meet the expectations and demands of the modern world. So Indian universities need to examine the engineering curriculum time to time and make sure that the education received by graduates is relevant and up to date.

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