



## SOFT SKILLS – VITAL ORGANS OF THE PROFESSIONAL LIFE!

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### ABSTRACT



It's a quite amazing fact to note that a school going child to a university student need to face a competition in the fast growing economic world. It is must for every individual to adapt themselves in the surroundings they need to live. They need to motivate themselves to equip with the modern techniques as the whole world is deviating from the age old traditions. So it is must that they need a weapon in their hands to protect them when they are at stake. Soft skills can clearly show them the way when they are at crossroads. Unlike other technical skills, soft skills cannot be acquired through their learning in class room, they also need a practical experience to use the skills meticulously in their working atmosphere. In today's world, it is must that people need to be social beings not isolated human beings. The traditional family structures of the past have to be incorporated in their Life as joint family system has paved its path giving way to nuclear families. So these skills should be practically encountered from learning.

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A day of an individual starts with tensions, pressures and negative attitudes. It is highly difficult for any individual to start the day with a free mind, which is free from tensions. A man hopes his life to be something great, but unfortunately they become cogs in a machine not having any special privilege to their status. Stephen Richards aptly says, "You are essentially who create yourself to be and all that occurs in your life is the result of your own making". It is the individual who makes up his life. It is one's own strength or weakness that decides their fate. To

lead a contended life in their profession or family they need to first adapt themselves to the surroundings. Gone were the days where the joint families used to teach how to mingle with people, control their emotions, lead a team as the head of the family and assert to the mind sets of the people around them. As the nuclear families have uprooted with strong roots, it is must for the youth of the day to cultivate these through learning. So, Soft skills play a vital role to mould the characters and attitudes.



To step ahead to work out for any task it is essential for an individual to identify his potentialities. First he or she should 'Know himself' or 'herself', then they will be able to adapt themselves to the new surroundings. This self-discovery is to know one's true identity. It is nothing other than being true to oneself and living for one's purpose. Knowing ourselves makes one to identify one's own strengths and weakness. As Mahatma Gandhi says it is true that "The only tyrant I accept in this world is the still voice within". When one identifies his own identity he will be able to control his emotions, which in turn helps him to reach the goal by taking proper decisions at the right time. So, discovering our own inner conscious is the vital element before we enter into the globalised world.

The second step is to develop positive attitude. As success includes 80% attitude and 20% aptitude, it is very important to develop attitude. Attitude is the common factor that is universally accepted to be capable of overcoming every possible disadvantage. Attitude is associated with physical neural state, verbal opinion, ideologies and integrated philosophy of life. Attitude gives the detailed description of human behaviour. It says how one feels about someone or something. As Fulton asserts, "The mind is alike a clock that is constantly running down, it has to be wound up daily with good thoughts". Individuals are not born with certain attitudes. They are not inherent characters. These can be either acquired or learned from the situations they face in their daily life.

Positive attitude helps to cope more easily with the daily situations. It makes a person optimistic and adopt a new mode of thinking bringing constructive changes in one's life. The following table shows the outcome of positive attitude

| Attitude in Action | Results      |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Optimistic         | Success      |
| Courage            | Recognition  |
| Enthusiasm         | Elevation    |
| Cheerful           | Happiness    |
| Considerate        | professional |

The following example gives how positive thinking brings about success. Srinivas and Lakshmi applied for the same job. Srinivas's self-esteem was

very low, he considered himself as a failure and unworthy. He started for the interview with a negative set of mind that he would not get the job. His mind filled with negative implications and fears. On the day of the interview he got up late and to his horror he discovered that the shirt which he planned to wear was dirty. As it was already late, he left wearing a wrinkled shirt. During the interview with his distracted mind it became difficult for him to focus on the interview, which created a bad impression and he failed to get a job.

On the other hand, Lakshmi's approach was different in this view. She was positive in her approach and visualised the whole week that she would get the job. On the day of the interview she woke up earlier and had ample time to eat breakfast and then attend the interview before the scheduled time. She got the job because she could make a good impression. It is crystal clear from the above two attitudes that when the attitude is positive we entertain pleasant feelings and constructive images, and see in our mind's eye what we really want to happen.

When the Individual identifies his calibre and potentialities it would be easy for him to experience the soft skills. A survey indicates that socially acceptable profile and skills are needed to make a good employee. The job seekers are expected to have soft skills which the employees feel are essential for the employer's performance. The ever changing impact of technology and the style of management consider soft skills as the prime requisite for the Organisations dealing with customers can prosper only if they can train their employees in soft skills as interaction is the key element involved in it. Soft skills complement hard skills. Employers are giving importance to the candidates who are ahead in soft skills than the applicants who are highly qualified.

Apart from the key competencies like analytical skills, reasoning skills and a proven ability to manage complex information that employers are looking for, desirable soft skills include

- Interpersonal skills
- Team work
- Negotiation skills
- Communication skills



- Time management
- Stress management

Negotiation is a technique that enables us to persuade and convince others to accept our way of thinking and doing things our way, without their feeling short-changed in the process. Negotiation is done at all levels including home, partners, children that require collective decision making. While preparing for negotiation it is important to note what the other person wants, why do they want? and so on. Committing to something is a big responsibility. Unless one has confidence that they can fulfil the task they should not commit for anything. Generosity is too dangerous. No doubt it is a virtue but it can also be accounted as a sign of weakness or cowardice.

Interpersonal skills are the life skills we use every day to communicate and interact with other people individually and in groups. They are also termed as people skills. They also involve skills such as active listening tone of voice, delegation and leadership, problem solving, decision making and personal stress management. Interpersonal skills make a person more successful in his personal as well as professional life. They are perceived as more calm, confident and charismatic –qualities that are often endearing to others. They also help to improve personal relations. The productivity in an organization can be increased with positive interpersonal skills. It also helps to control the emotional traits emerging in the people. The best way to improve interpersonal skills is

- By observing people who practise them
- By practising the skill by themselves
- Refining the skills until desired results are achieved

It is pertinent to remind Henry Ford's words when team work occupies the space in one's mind. He says, "Coming together is beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success". For an organization to be successful, the heart of the skills is the team work. Whether the focus of the organization is on service, quality, cost, value, speed, performance, efficiency or any other goal, teams are the basic units that help an organizations realize their goals. Team work is the secret behind the success of an organization. Today's world is driven by

innovation leading to a constant change and success of an organization depends entirely on its team. It has become mandatory to train the employees in all spheres of management. Projects require people to work together, so teamwork has become an important concept in organizations.

Though the following story is a familiar story, it serves a good example to team work. One day a hunter went out to catch birds. He spread out a net on the ground. He put rice all over the net and hid in a nearby bush. As expected some pigeons came flying and saw the rice, but couldn't see the net. They flew to the ground and began to eat rice. Luck fell into the laps of the hunter and he got the pigeons. The pigeons had a leader and he understood that they were trapped and he gave them an idea that together they will fly up in the sky. The pigeons obeyed their leader and were rescued from danger. The moral clearly conveys that unity is strength, obey your leader and you will be strong. Yes, together everyone achieves more.

Though it is quite amazing that a busy man has time for everything, it seems to be beyond the reach of ordinary persons. The life of great leaders teaches us a lesson that they have to do many things in spite of their busy schedule. The secret behind is the scientific management of time. Vilfredo Pareto, an Italian economist 80% of unfocussed effort generates 20% of the results. The remaining 80% of the results are achieved by 20% of the effort. Time is like an arrow, once it leaves the bow, it does not come back. A schedule is a tool that helps to plan and achieve the goals set. Time management is the act of or process of planning and exercising conscious control over the amount of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness, efficiency or productivity.

ABC analysis is the technique used in business management for a long time in the categorization of large data into groups. According to it, activities are ranked upon these general criteria:

- ❖ A – Tasks that are perceived as being urgent and important
- ❖ B- Tasks that are important but not urgent
- ❖ C- Tasks that are neither urgent nor important.



Each group is then rank-ordered in priority. To further refine priority, some individuals choose to then force-rank all "B" items as either "A" or "C". The following are the four steps that can be very useful for managing time more effectively. They are

1. Create a semester schedule
2. Assess and plan your work load each week
3. Adjust your plan each day
4. Evaluate your schedule.

As Charles Dickens mentions in his book "A Tale of Two Cities" in 18<sup>th</sup> century that it was the best of times and worst of times referring to college days, do the college students feel the same? Never before have college students been faced with such vast opportunities, such freedom of choice and such an array of information overload can be the factors that make one feel overwhelmed and stressed. Stress is defined by many people when they describe how the demands of their life seems to be becoming too great for them to cope up with. This ability varies from individual to individual. Stress is indeed a proxy killer as most of the time it goes unnoticed. In any spheres positive is always positive. Positive stress brings about thrill in life. A small example shows how stress makes one nervous and has its impact on their health.

A boss calls his sub ordinate to meet in his room after an hour. The response of the sub ordinate will immediately think - What have I done wrong? Am I going to be fired? And so on. The sub ordinate becomes concerned of the meeting that he cannot think of anything else. Consequently he wastes his one hour of time in increasing the blood pressure. But the positive approach can be that he might have called for giving a promotion. Who do you think is the reason for the stress and pressure? Yes, you are right, Yes it is you, you alone. The following tips help you to come out of the stress:

- Breathe easily
- Visualize calm
- Do some mathematics
- Check your chi
- Compose a mantra
- Be a fighter
- Count to 10
- Avoid coffee and tea

#### ▪ Just say 'No'

The above mentioned skills help a person a lot to attain success in his working place. He needs to put them in practise and enjoy the taste of success. Above all to express feelings or emotions in a right way language is very important. Communication through a proper channel acquires wonderful results. If the particular person fails to communicate properly he fails in his relations. Always everyone should remember a key point that opportunities are limited. So we need to be cautious to be first in the race. Time is very democratic in nature because it treats all persons absolutely impartially.

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