

Soft Skills -- The Key to Career Success

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Abstract

Today's working environment is highly competitive all over the world. People may not get success in their working place using only hard skills. So, this paper attempts to explore the necessities of soft skills for the people to make their career successful in the organizations. As it is a chapter review paper, the authors have used descriptive analysis techniques to interpret the data/information effectively and efficiently. The review findings show that soft skills are highly essential for people to get success in the workplace. The review findings also show that there is a close relationship between soft skills and personality development of the people. Thus, the authors have provided some recommendations to strengthen the soft skills of the people and make their career shine in the highly competitive working environment.

Keywords: *Soft Skills, Job Market, Competitive Environment, Career Success.*

Introduction

Business today doesn't have national boundaries, it reaches around the world. So, the competition among the job applicants is not located within the particular nation/country. As a result, the current human resources must obtain various types of skills. Otherwise they can't compete with various types of competitors successfully to get the job in the competitive environment. In addition to that, the business world is now changing drastically due to the influence of sophisticated technology. Technology is creating a major impact on the performance of the human resources and it gives instant access to all information. In this case, the human resources must be bound to upgrade their skills. Rahim (2017) identified that skill is the ability to perform the assigned tasks and duties effectively and efficiently.

The world has now undergone COVID-19 problem. The whole world has been changed due to it. At present, we have to work

from home through the soft and hard skills. Akkas (2019) said that soft skills include leadership traits, attitudes, character, behaviours, technical know-how, etc. But Robles (2012) identified that soft skills are a combination of character traits, attitudes, and behaviours rather than technical aptitude or knowledge. Kaipa & Milus (2005) explored that soft skills help the people tremendously to achieve success in the job market. They also explored that soft skills facilitate the employees to enhance their qualifications including leadership, presentation skills, commitment, cooperation, decision making, conflict resolution, communication, creativity, humanity and self-confidence, intelligence, emotional and integrity.

Everyone must understand the meaning of soft skill. The reason behind this is that one can take the proper initiative to enhance his/her soft skills without knowing the meaning properly. Kacamakovic & Lokaj (2021) explored that soft skills encompass personal traits, attitudes, habits, common sense etc. that make someone more valuable in the company/society. Collins English Dictionary (2021) pointed out that soft skills are desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge: it includes common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive flexible attitude. Pratt (2019) mentioned that soft skill is a personal attribute that supports situational awareness and enhances an individual's ability to get a job done.

If a person wants to employ himself/herself in the job market properly and quickly, then he/she must develop soft skills. Vasanthakumari (2019) said that soft skills help the job incumbents to get the jobs quickly and rightly in the competitive job market. Soft skills not only help the incumbents to employ themselves in the job market easily and properly but also it helps them to perform their jobs smartly and contribute a lot to make the company successful (Lahope, Wrong & Gunawan (2020). In this regard, they have suggested the authority of the companies to provide soft skills training to their employees so that they can accomplish their assigned tasks and duties effectively and efficiently. They explored that there is a significant relationship between the soft skills training and the performance of the company. They also explored that if an employee wants to get success in his/her career, then he/she must develop the soft skills. Otherwise it is not possible for him/her to reach the top-level position in the organization.

Types of Soft Skills

Vasanthakumari (2019) identified the following types of soft skills which must be obtained by the employees if they want to get success in their career:

- i) Communication skill
- ii) Teamwork
- iii) Professional ethics
- iv) Interpersonal skills
- v) Time management
- vi) Leadership
- vii) Critical thinking
- viii) Creativity
- ix) Conflict resolution
- x) Negotiation
- xi) Decision making
- xii) Self-motivation
- xiii) Self-confidence
- xiv) Self-awareness
- xv) Emotional intelligence

Necessities of Soft Skill

Soft skill is highly essential for every job applicant. The reason behind is that employers emphasize soft skills during the hiring of the new employees. So, the job applicant must mention their soft skills at the top of the job applications very clearly. In addition to that, soft skills help the employees to work with diversified people in the workplace. When an employee successfully could apply his/her job skills in organization, then he/she gets success in his/her job. Rahim (2017) explored the following reasons for importance of soft skills for the employees when finding jobs and growing careers in the organizations:

- i) To work long-time in the company
- ii) To measure team work properly
- iii) To maintain a good relationship with colleagues
- iv) To grow an effective network
- v) To facilitate the growth of the employees
- vi) To stay organized in the workplace
- vii) To prove initiative the organization
- viii) To develop sustainable leadership in the company
- ix) To gain confidence
- x) To establish a good reputation in the organization

Process of Soft Skills Training

All people are not the same. Every person is different with regard to culture, customs, norms, values, beliefs, choice, fashion, style etc. In an organization, many people are working. They are responsible to perform their assigned tasks and duties effectively and efficiently. Someone

can do their jobs upto the level and some one cannot do their jobs properly. But an organization's success depends on the collective performance of the employees. In this regard, the management of the organizations may arrange the soft skills training for their employees by following a systematic process which is shown below:

Figure 1: Process of Soft Skill Training



Source: Authors' Calculation

At the first step, the HR manager should conduct the soft skill training needs assessment program to find out the actual necessity of this training for the employees. In this case, he/she may use observation method, questionnaire method, performance analysis, and contents analysis techniques for successfully accomplishing the soft skill training needs assessment program. At the second step, the HR manager should set the soft skill training objective considering the employees and organization objective. At the third step, the HR manager should set the appropriate method to provide the soft skill training to the employees properly. In this regard, he/she may use coaching/ mentoring, live interactive workshops, peer (social) learning, online learning, and AR/VR methods. At the final step, the HR manager of the organization should conduct the evaluation program for assessing the outcomes of the soft skill training program. In this case, he/she may use reaction, learning, behaviour and results measurement techniques to find out the actual outcomes of a soft skill training program.

Soft Skills Vs. Hard Skills

Soft skills refer to the personal habits and traits that shape the work of the employees, how they work on their own and with others in the organization. It is essential for the employees to successfully build up their career in the company. It also helps the job applicants to find out the right jobs quickly. Since the soft skills are highly essential to search for a proper job and build up the career successfully, the incumbents must carefully highlight their soft skills in front of the employers in the interview board. In this case, they may follow the following systematic process:

- i) Coming to the interview board within the specified time
- ii) Showing punctuality
- iii) Avoiding dependability
- iv) Showing to be active listener and maintaining eye contact
- v) Speaking correctly and clearly
- vi) Avoiding local language
- vii) Explaining information honestly which the incumbents mentioned in their CV
- viii) Maintaining integrity
- ix) Understanding the follow-up questions

Hard skills refer to the technical knowledge or training that the employees have gained through life experience, including in their career or education. Every job requires certain hard skills. That is why, the people must obtain essential hard skills. Otherwise they may not be suitable for their jobs and they also may not be able to establish their career successfully in the organization. Since the hard skills are required to get the jobs and it is also required to get success in the job of the company, the incumbents may highlight their hard skills in the CV through a systematic process which is shown below:

- i. Explaining the training and experiences clearly
- ii. Mentioning an attractive portfolio
- iii. Elaborating technical knowledge and competency
- iv. Understanding the follow-up questions related to job
- v. Effectively working through skills tests, if required at the interview

Patacsil & Tablatin (2017) said that both soft and hard skills are required

to the employees to get success in the organizations. So, they must give emphasis on the development of their soft and hard skills.

Relationship between Soft Skills and Personality

Every person needs to obtain a certain level of soft skills. The reason behind this is that there is a relationship between soft skills and personality. If a person wants to develop a strong personality, then he /she must earn various types of soft skills. Hamid, M.B.B, Mohamed, R.K. M.H., Devarajoo, A.R., Mani, R.& Lazim, C.S.L.M.(2020) explored that soft skills are highly associated with individual personality traits. Soft skills help the incumbent to enhance their networking capability, individual interaction with others, job performance, career prospects, negotiation capability etc. An employee needs to develop soft skills to get and keep going with the job in the company. When several people with similar technical expertise do make competition for a position or a promotion in the organization, then the people need soft skills to get success in this case.

A person's personality may indicate what job he/she likes to do but his/her soft skills define how good he/she is at it. Soft skills are the transferable professional skills that the employees need for problem solving in their roles or professions. The better they get at these, the more complex problems they can solve. It comprises pleasant and appealing personality traits and it helps the people to develop their self-confidence, positive attitude, emotional intelligence, social grace, flexibility, friendliness, effective communication and motivational power. A study found that the people who have more soft skills, their personalities are stronger. It is related to the people's personal attributes that influence how well they can work with others in the organization/society. By using these skills, they can easily maintain good relationships with other people, create trust and dependency, and lead teams successfully.

Soft Skills and Career Success

Soft skills are really very crucial for the career success of every employee. Today's jobs are very challenging which require more soft skills to be successful. In the present diversified workplace, most jobs require teamwork. If a manager wants to manage the teams effectively and efficiently, he/she needs to obtain more soft skills. Otherwise it is not possible to manage the teams properly and reach the target destination. Soft skills facilitate an employee to build good relationships and solve problems to use his/her hard skills to the full extent. So, the incumbents should list their soft skills on the resume clearly which will demonstrate them in the interview and

develop them quickly in the workplace. It also provides strong support to their career and opens them new-new opportunities in the organization. Practically, we have seen that the people who have outstanding soft skills, they can easily establish themselves in the competitive environment. In the teaching profession, we are frequently observing the students who have outstanding academic results but they may not be good teachers. On the other hand, the students who have poor academic results but they strongly established themselves in the profession. It is only possible because they have earned various soft skills and by using these skills they can easily manage all stakeholders properly. Not only in the teaching profession but also soft skills are highly essential to success in other professions.

Ways to Improve Soft Skills

There is no alternative way to enhance soft skills. Development of soft skills for every person is a must in the organization. In this regard, the people may use the following techniques to improve their softskills:

- i. To collect feedback regularly
- ii. To communicate with others frequently
- iii. To emphasize on teamwork
- iv. To build positive and friendly relationships with others
- v. To step outside of the comfort zone
- vi. To get ready to learn new things
- vii. To observe others carefully
- viii. To manage emotion properly

Soft skills are remarkably powerful and it can definitely play a vital role in the career development of the employees. It not only affects their careers, they can also impact their ability to successfully navigate through life. So, every employee must develop his/her soft skills on a regular basis.

Conclusions

The U.S. Army developed the term 'Soft Skills' in the late 1960s. They realized that soft skills help them to lead groups, motivate soldiers and manage their work properly which will bring success in the wars. The present job market of the world is more than a battlefield. It requires more skills, specifically soft skills. That's why people need to obtain various soft skills to get the jobs and also to successfully perform the jobs in the company.

The present study has explored that the soft skills are highly essential for the people to employ themselves and also to establish their career quickly in the highly competitive job market. The study has also explored that there is a close relationship between soft skills and personality development of the people. Thus, it is recommended that the people should attend the training programs to enhance their soft skills. It is also recommended that the management of the organizations should arrange various training programs so that the people may get the opportunity to upgrade their soft skills. As a result, they can contribute a lot to the continuous growth and development of the organization.

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