

New Focus on Soft Skills

The topic of skills development is a fundamental, and non-negotiable issue and action is needed now. Investing in the skills, for transition to a sustainable economy is the best preparation for a successful future. Businesses need to ensure a policy for a new skills framework is in place to develop the flexibility and resilience to succeed. Skills policy and support needs to address the skill gaps at all levels.

National Skill Development Corporation was set up as a public private partnership by Govt. of India on 2013, for relevant skill training for better livelihood. The National Skill Development Forum (NSDF) recently set up by Govt. of India plays an active role in the area of skill enhancement, capacity building, quality training in emerging, evolving, and cutting edge technologies.

However, according to a recent survey, 44 percent of executives said that lack of 'soft skills' was the biggest proficiency gap, they saw in the workforce today. Those who refuse to be agile, would soon find themselves on the path of extinction. Soft skills are needed to ensure that disagreements, disharmonic's, and disenchantments are addressed at the right hour.

Soft skills are a cluster of productive personality traits that characterise one's relationship in a milieu. These include, social graces, communication abilities, language skills, personal habits, cognitive or emotional empathy, time management, team work, and leadership traits. Soft skills include people skills; social communicational skills; leadership skills; social and emotional skills that help to navigate the environment and understand other people, while managing one's own behaviour, to move for accomplishing goals. Soft skills are really how you interact with the ecosystem, both internal and external.

Skills matter, behaviour matters more. After all, a business is by the people and for the people. Soft skills are becoming important as more and more technical skills are being transferred to machines. In the age of automation, those with a higher ability to communicate, collaborate, and convince have an advantage over those with only hard business skills.

The basic soft skills required in most business environments include politeness effective articulation, accommodation of contrary opinions, consensus building decision-making, and taking responsibility. Training is required to



develop critical thinking, social interaction, empathy, expression, and teamwork.

In a world where job roles are changing rapidly, soft skills will be one of the few constants. It is soft skills that lead to a manager's actual effectiveness, and not just the job title. In this fast-changing world, transformation and the pursuit of opportunities are not solo efforts; they require teams full of experts in soft skills. Teams need higher performance in persuasion, innovation, and negotiation.

Tasks are being automated at a rapid pace, making work more efficient, already a host of jobs in which robots or automation have replaced humans. Humans can understand thoughts, ideas, and emotions, come up with solutions based on subjective information, and reach out to other humans and help them grow. Clarity and consistency of behaviour expectations are the keys to soft skills adoption. What separates humans from machines is the attribute of empathy.

Soft skills help creative work, thinking outside the box. Soft skills are psychological and emotional competence, enabling a person to deal effectively with challenges. Soft skill requirements may change, depending on the situation and culture of the place. Soft skills are not job specific or tangible, and cannot be measured or certified. Soft skills can't be acquired overnight, they are complete personality make-over.

Persuasion is changing the attitude or behaviour of others, while negotiating is to resolve differences to reach an agreement. We start by using persuasion, using logic and emotion. Persuading with logic means getting your point across, using facts and arguments. When persuasion is not enough, we need to use our negotiating skills to resolve the differences.

Negotiating requires parties to interact and communicate. There is a dramatic difference

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between how parties in a negotiation interact and communicate. High-powered teams and complex negotiations have a bigger need for a great leader. To achieve greatness in a negotiation, you need to find a way to create value, so that each side has a win. Point of win-win negotiations is not a divide value equally, but to increase value for everyone. Value comes from creatively combining different sources of value, to make packages that for both sides create a win.

The top ten soft skills or life skills identified by WHO are decision making, problem solving, creative thinking, effective communication, interpersonal relationship skills, self awareness, empathy, coping with emotions and coping with stress.

Whether it is creativity, emotional intelligence, good communication, or effective and strong leadership, most organisations call for a variety of soft skills, and it is important to remember that no one person will possess all of them. Building a team is almost like completing a jigsaw puzzle. Every individual brings something different to the table, and that is why, while recruiting it is best to see how potential employees can complete the bigger picture, which is the organisation.

Soft skills are paramount to getting ahead in the work place. Your worth is not only in what you know, but about how you can learn & adapt. Soft skills are becoming important, as more and more technical skills are being transferred to machines. As machines take over work, people skills would finally decide the winners.

J. S. Ahluwalia
President

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