

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF SOFT SKILLS IN STUDENTS

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Soft skills are learned behaviours which require training and focussed application. Soft skills will enable students with a strong conceptual and practical framework to build, develop and manage teams. They play an important role in the development of the students' overall personality, thereby enhancing their career prospects. Training in soft skills provides strong practical orientation to the students and help them in building and improving their skills in communication, the effective use of English, business correspondence, presentations, team-building, leadership, time management, group discussions, interviews and interpersonal skills. It also helps students in career visioning and planning, effective resume writing and dealing with placement consultants and head hunters.

In an age when relationships between individuals and organizations are getting more and more complex, it is not enough to only have an excellent IQ. Being good at number crunching and scoring high marks in subjects are not the only criteria for success in professional or personal life. The ability to deal with one's feelings and understand the feelings of others in any given situation helps one to complement academic intelligence/ cognitive capacities (IQ) with a humane understanding of issues. This ability is known as Emotional Intelligence or Soft Skills.

Soft Skills are imparted to fine-tune the student's attitudes, values, beliefs, motivation, desires, feelings, eagerness to learn,

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willingness to share and embrace new ideas, goal orientation, flexibility, persuasion, futuristic thinking, comparison, diplomacy and various skills sets of communication, manners and etiquette so that they will be able to deal with different situations diligently and responsibly. Soft skills or Emotional intelligence skills strengthen them from within. These skills empower them to understand "Who They are" and how best they can come across as competent individuals in any given situation.

Soft Skills have two parts. One part involves developing attitudes and attributes, and the other part involves fine-tuning communication skills to express attitudes, ideas and thoughts well. Crucial to successful work is the perfect integration of ideas and attitudes, with appropriate communication skills in oral, written and non-verbal areas. Attitudes and skills are integral to soft skills. Each one influences and complements the other.

Companies are looking for candidates who are smart and can present themselves well. Soft Skills training has become a must for the students who want to go for job or higher studies. Soft skill is not a visible skill like the domain subject content in a student but it helps in improving the personality of the person. It gives finishing touch to the personality. It includes communication skills, interpersonal skills, group dynamics, team work, body language, etiquettes, selling skills, presentation skills, confidence building etc. Soft skills along with grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary exercises will boost the confidence of students.

Hard skills are academic skills, experience and level of expertise while soft skills are self-developed, interactive, communicative, human and transferable skills. Literature suggests that hard skills contribute to only 15% of one's skills success while remaining 85% is made by soft skills. Most employers these days want to hire, retain and promote persons who are dependable, resourceful, ethical, self-directed having effective communication,

willing to work and learn and having positive attitude. With the onset of economic liberalisation the Indian market is also becoming global, so the attributes of soft skills are to be imbibed by Indian youths to show their real potential at international levels. Soft skills include positive attitude, good interpersonal skills, effective listening, time management, communication skills, and self-confidence coupled with enthusiasm, would make the youth achieve greater success in a competitive environment.

Instead of just focusing on meeting academic requirements and earning their diplomas, students would do well to strive towards mastering soft skills, too, such as good time management, being accountable and having a strong work ethics. Soft skills will help the students increase their employability potential and face the challenges of the present time. The students will develop diverse range of abilities such as communication skills, strategic-planning skills, self-awareness, analytical thinking, leadership skills, team-building skills etc.

Students are not able to catch up with the pace of employment opportunity as they lack employability skills or soft skills. Hard skills are technical skills whereas soft skills are at the surface providing finishing touches for success. The blend of both skills is essential for personal, professional and social success. The significance and relevance of soft skills equip the students with adequate ammunition to face corporate battles and challenges. Soft skills are required at each of the three levels of interaction such as (i) with self, (ii) the internal business environment and (iii) the external environment.

Newest and highest quality soft skills in the area of leadership, sales, customer service and core skills should be delivered to the students. Such trainings should motivate individuals' behaviour and maximize their development and growth. With such designed and dynamic soft skill resources the students will positively

be refreshed and even the most improbable dream can be achieved. With the changing educational trends, versatility in educational courses, the competition for job acquisition and job sustainability has become a huge challenge for students today. To get an edge over the competitors, students need to add values to their hard skills with soft skills to reveal their true potential, soft skills are self - developed communication, human and transferable skills. Soft skills have become imperative to be imbibed by every student to show their real potential.

Soft skills are the skills of learning, how to be nice, how to play together, when and where to use our manners, the development of social graces, how to resolve conflict, how to express appreciation by learning to say 'please' and 'thank you,' developing attitudes of friendliness and optimism, learning how to use language in a way that persuades others. Soft skills can lead students to grow up better, prepared for the world that awaits them.

Soft skills help in improving human potential. Soft skills for students increase their comfort level. It is the acronym for situational awareness, presence, authenticity, clarity and empathy. Team debates, team presentations and self-reflections are essential for developing soft skills. Soft skills play a crucial role in making students employable as it enables them to be flexible, positive to change, handle ever-increasing expectations of employers and to stay globally competitive.

Soft skills training include lectures, projects, role plays, quizzes and various other participatory sessions. The emphasis will be on learning by doing. As the training should be experiential and highly interactive, the students will imbibe the skills and attributes in a gradual and subtle way and also internalise them over a period of time. Internalization ensures that the skills and attributes become part of the students' nature, making them more self-assured and confident. Soft skills are about enabling and empowering.

The nuances of English for business purposes, like business letter writing, memos, reports and e-mails are the core of soft skills. Oral communication through different modules like presentation skills, face-to-face dialogues, telephone etiquette, business and social etiquette and conversational skills are the requisites of soft skills. Principles of clear writing, often misused words, applications and requests, positive and negative responses to requests, routine messages, memos, report writing, organizing meetings, preparation of agenda and minutes, business etiquette, telephone etiquette, e-mail etiquette are all soft skills modules.

Whether a student is planning for that all important job interview or looking to make a success of his / her working life, or focusing to achieve the best of all that life has to offer, the student should be given a soft skill training for addressing these needs. The programme module can be customized according to the following required schedule:

1. Customer care course
2. Supervisory skills
3. Minute taking courses
4. Project management
5. Telephone technique
6. Letter-writing courses
7. Media public speaking
8. Assertiveness course
9. Data protection training
10. Report writing course
11. Proof reading course
12. Confidence building training
13. Time management training
14. Speed writing courses
15. Management skills

Such a programme will provide an excellent life and personality skills to the students for an effective transition from college to corporate.

Soft skills include concepts such as problem solving, team work and adaptability to change. These skills are not necessarily graded in a traditional sense but might be assessed with analytical rubrics. The workforce profile defines 'Soft skills' as personal traits and skills that employers seek in employees for jobs of any type. Soft skills are intangible qualities required for full development of an individual. Grooming of the students with soft skills will enable them to successfully take part effectively in various selection procedures, and very many situations they are likely to come across in their professional careers and make them ready to get a head start in the corporate world.

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