



The Significance of Soft Skills: An Overview

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Abstract

As a result of the rapid changes in the structure of employment and organisational work, skilled man power is highly recognising. Companies are looking for candidates who are smart and can present themselves well. 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. These types of skills are reported to be of increasing importance to employers as they relate to a person's ability to run effectively in the workplace either alone or with others. Thus, soft' skills are occupying vital role in work and human life. The present paper summarily analysed regarding definition of soft skills, need for soft skills, and importance of IQ, EQ, SQ, Soft skills and hard skills.

Key words: *Soft skills, hard skills, Intelligent Quotient, Emotional Quotient, Spiritual Quotient*

Introduction

Traditionally, the word "skill" has been associated with a range of technical, job-specific abilities which require training and instruction for a worker to become proficient or skilled within a particular job reference. In later times, there has grown interest in a range of abilities which are variously called 'generic', 'personal', and 'behavioural' or 'soft'. These skills relate to a person's ability to use in the workplace, either alone or with others. The need for these types of skills is not new, but contemporary changes in the organisation of work, the focus on team-working, and the growth in the services sector have increased their importance and they are now emerging as a critical feature for organisational success. Other skills, which at times overlap, yet are

distinguishable from soft skills in their use, are basic skills, core skills, and key skills.

Defining Soft Skills

The literature review conducted for this study indicates that there is no common definition for the term 'soft skills'. There is a general recognition of the importance of "soft skills" in improving the productivity of the workforce, but there is still quite a degree of ambiguity in defining their boundaries. In general, throughout the research, soft skills are as people-oriented skills and self-management skills. "Soft skills" refer to a cluster of personal qualities, habits, attitudes and social graces that make someone a good employee and compatible to work with. Companies value soft skills because research suggests and experience shows



that they can be just as important an indicator of job performance as hard skills.

➤ **Oxford Dictionary**

- Personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people.

➤ **Collins Dictionary**

- Desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge: they include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive flexible attitude.

While hard skills are passport for one's career, Soft Skills are the VISA. Hard skills take you to the country whereas Visa is needed to enter it. While hard skills are mere uniforms to wear for a particular time, soft skills are the very dress needed at all times. Hard skills are needed for living and soft skills are needed for life. Courtesy, basic Etiquettes, Interpersonal Relationship, Time Management, Body Language Skills, Positive Attitude, Leadership Qualities, Communication Skills are the few soft skills to mention in particular. Soft skill is when you have just one bite going to your mouth and suddenly stops half way makes you turn and offers to the other person who is equally hungry.

The need for soft skills

Recent studies by Stanford Research Institute and the Carnegie Mellon Foundation among Fortune 500 CEOs found that 75% of long term job success depended on people skills and only 25% on technical skills. This is true at other

levels as well. For effective performance in the workplace, companies need their employees to have not only domain knowledge, technical and analytical skills, but also the skills to deal with the external world of clients, customers, vendors, the government and public; and to work in a collaborative manner with their colleagues.

The annual rankings of MBA colleges often place communication and interpersonal skills as the most critical skills needed for success in the corporate world. Noted academician Prof. Henry Mintzberg while speaking on the importance of soft skills for MBAs, refers to the crucial "soft" skills - leadership, teamwork, communication, and the ability to think "outside the box" of a discipline - that separate the best from the rest in the management world."

It is widely acknowledged that India will soon be facing a serious manpower shortage. The phenomenal growth that the Indian economy has witnessed in the last decade was largely driven by the growth in the service sector and particularly fuelled by industries such as IT Services, Retail, Hospitality, Travel, and Financial Services. This growth is now threatened because the effectiveness and growth of India's talent pool has been seriously constrained due to a deepening soft skills crisis. As the employee base gets larger every year, the number of new hires required to sustain this growth rate has increased sharply, further exacerbating this situation.



There is an axiom in business circles, which suggests that hard skills will get a person an interview, but soft skills will land that person a job. This means an applicant with years of education and experience in the field might have the hard skills necessary to fill the position, but lack soft skills such as leadership ability or self-motivation necessary to perform well on the job. An ideal candidate for many job openings has a combination of both hard and soft skills, with a number of human resource directors preferring to see soft skills such as time management and a willingness to be trained. Soft skills are qualities, personality traits and social skills, which everyone possesses in varying degrees. Some people make friends easily, for example, which would be considered a valuable soft skill in the world of sales. Others are extremely punctual, or able to make rational decisions under pressure. A person may also have the innate ability to work with co-workers from other cultures, or learn a new language quickly. These would all be considered valuable soft skills.

For years, the widespread belief has been that technical knowledge and technical certification contributes most to career and success for professionals. According to recent surveys however, soft skills are far more important than technical skills to reach the top of career ladder. Research has indicated that, 96% of survey respondents judged communication skills and interpersonal skills (i.e. soft skills) as the most important contributor to achieving career success.

Importance of IQ, EQ, SQ:

Soft skills is a sociological term relating to a person's "EQ" (Emotional Intelligence Quotient), the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that characterize relationships with other people. Soft skills complement hard skills (part of a person's IQ), which are the occupational requirements of a job and many other activities.

A person's soft skill EQ is an important part of his/her individual contribution to the success of an organisation, particularly an organisation dealing with customers face-to-face. Such organisations are generally more successful if they train their staff to use these skills. Screening or training for personal habits or traits such as dependability and conscientiousness can yield significant return on investment for an organisation. For this reason, soft skills, in addition to standard qualifications are increasingly sought by employers.

It has been suggested that in a number of professions soft skills may be more important over the long term than occupational skills. The legal profession is one example where the ability to deal with people effectively and politely, more than their occupational skills, can determine the professional success of a lawyer. A growing number of organisations are now convinced that people's ability to understand and to manage their emotions can improve performance, collaboration with



colleagues, and interaction with customers. After decades of businesses seeing "hard stuff" and "soft stuff" as separate domains, emotional competence may now be a way to close that breach and to produce a unified view of workplace performance. Too many corporate managers are well trained in "hard", quantifiable, technical skills, but very poorly trained in "soft" skills, such as empathy, communication, validation, conflict management, and community building. Soft skills then are personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance and career prospects. Unlike hard skills, which tend to be specific to a certain type of task or activity, soft skills are transferable across all types of employment.

Hard Skills

Hard skills are specific, teachable abilities that are based in fact. Some examples include:

- Speaking a foreign language
- Typing speed
- A degree or a certificate
- Proficiency in computer programming
- 10 years of customer service experience
- Operating machinery
- Public speaking experience

Soft Skills

Soft skills are subjective and may or may not be true. They are often associated with personal attributes and character. Some examples include:

- Motivated team player
- Strong communication skills
- Time management
- Organizational skills
- Good with children
- Reliable, responsible, committed

From IQ to EQ, we have travelled this far. The new Buzzword most of the organisation is speaking about now is SQ- Spiritual Quotient. In today's fast-changing world, materialism and stress have become part of our everyday lives. We are constantly looking for answers: How to live a successful and happy life? One way of finding out answers to this question could be to explore the Spiritual Quotient (SQ), relating to our ability to understand and comprehend the spiritual aspects of life. Spiritual quotient (SQ) is described as a measure that looks at a person's spiritual intelligence in the same way as intelligence quotient (IQ) looks at cognitive intelligence.

In the mid '90s, Daniel Goleman started talking about Emotional Quotient. Danah Zoher and Ian Marshal in their recent work SQ: Connecting with our Spiritual Intelligence observe that "While computers have IQ and animals can have EQ, it is essentially an SQ that sets



human beings apart". Therefore, for the 'Wheel of Life' to roll smoothly, all the spokes of the wheel - IQ, EQ and SQ - have to be equally developed. The journey from IQ to SQ represents moving from gross to subtle, finite to infinite and from tangible to intangible.

Apart from God, human beings follow Adam and Eve's mistake in thinking. In order to solve this inherent problem, we need to reconcile with God. This empowers us to understand the things of God, to discern good and evil and the difference between the holy and the profane. God wants people to learn the way of life that produces peace and joy for all. A person is often the most miserable when consumed solely with self-interest and when he shuns contact with others. God made us to enjoy relationships, including an eternal relationship with Him.

We human beings can only reach our full potential when SQ, IQ and EQ all work in harmony. The parable of the talents (Matthew 25) demonstrates that developing our talents is worthwhile, but the goal must be to also follow the laws of God and understand His purpose for our lives. We must remember that when we die, we don't get to take any physical things with us, only our hopefully well-developed mind. God then promises to raise us up as immortal beings in this world with name and fame as we remember so many persons today.

Conclusion:

Considering the fact that during the last decades in society the perceived

importance of soft skills has increased significantly, it is of high importance for everyone to acquire adequate skills beyond academic or technical knowledge. This is not particularly difficult. Once a shortcoming in a certain area of soft skills has been identified at oneself, there are many ways of rectifying such a deficiency. This is because of the skills gaps between the demand of the employers and supply of the academic institutions. However, education and training systems can supply the soft skills but they must be effectively deployed in the curriculum. After effectively deployed the soft skills in the curriculum, most of the cases it seems very difficult to teach and access those soft skills. But it is the technology that can makes it possible to teach and evaluate the soft skills of the students to some extent. In order to fill the skills gaps, educational institutions must develop their specific strengths considering the characteristics of the local market and specialize their role to meet the local industry's needs. Soft skills development is not easy to achieve in the short time but it could serve as the main solution to cultivate students who possess employability skills. These soft skills make possible to assist healthy mindset for young workers to conduct social justices to the society. By drilling soft skills one could thrill his life. Drill the skill and thrill the life.



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