

3. Soft Skills: Importance and Benefits for a Better Life

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Abstract:

With the growth of technology, many things have changed the approach and lifestyle of a person. One has to move according to the trends of the period. The need of the hour is to capitalize on the skills and get updated. This era witnessed the need for more skills, and soft skills are one of them. When the world has become mostly materialistic, there is a need to have a corner for personality development. Today, everyone is rushing to get as many technical skills as possible because they think that achieving a degree is much sufficient to secure a good job in a company. Considering the outlook of majority, most of the people still follow tedious approach but at the same time there are certain companies which have started demanding soft skills to work in a multinational company or small-scale organization. So, by observing this demand many colleges and educational institutions are adapting this change and developing such skills in their students. Soft skills are personal attributes that influence how well you can work or interact with others. These skills make it easier to form relationships with people, create trust and dependability, and lead teams. In essence, they are essential for your success in the workplace, your company's success and your personal life. Many people are strong in certain soft skills, while weaker in others. For example, someone might be a great public speaker and able to command a room full of people while on stage, but struggle to interact with people at a busy networking event. It's common to either underestimate the importance of soft skills or overestimate your own abilities. Here are a few scenarios that may be improved with stronger soft skills. Communication skill is an important soft skills element and plays an important task in the business world. No matter how well versed an individual think he is with respect to the technical skills he will not get success in the corporate world. In this review paper we have tried to project a reflection of importance of soft skills which will create a better society and a career as well.



Figure 3.1: Enhancing Soft Sills

3.1 Introduction:

Soft skills¹⁻⁵ has drawn the attention of people in all sectors in modern times as it was never before. Soft skills are the positive traits expected in a good and sincere person and have to be developed as a habit. Soft skills refer to both character traits and interpersonal skills (Figure 3.1) that will influence how well a person can work or interact with others. The term soft skills cover a wide range of skills as diverse as teamwork, time management and delegation. The importance of soft skills development is increasing with every day. Soft skills are personal traits, suggesting how cordially and effectively you interact with others. Soft skills are the more intangible abilities that are need of the hour. For example:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Problem-solving
- Leadership
- Responsibility



Figure 3.2: The Most Pleasing Personality

- **Problem Solving:**

The skill of problem solving⁶⁻⁸ will help one in managing any circumstances (Figure 3.2) that may arise many difficulties. This skill strengthens one to withstand students should be prepared to overcome circumstances problems in their growing stage itself.

- **Creative Thinking:**

We always see students as the future of our society so it is very important that they possess a creative approach in their every aspect of life. This creative approach will help them in understanding the high society in a better way and with that they may end up with such outcome that might provide the rest of the society a new outlook.

- **Teamwork:**

The productivity standards can only be achieved by working together in a team (Figure 3.3). The significance of unity is something that every student must understand. To achieve a big task, it is important for people to work together.



Figure 3.3: Think Big, Dream Big

- **Decision Making:**

Right from the initial stage of the career students must acquire the capability to make decisions within the provided time frame. By this they no longer be dependent on others and can take their own stand in life. The people they select as friends or the groups they get associated with also support them, develop their personality (Figure 3.4). Even there, decision making plays important role⁹⁻¹¹.



Figure 3.4: The Most Influencing Personality

3.2 Communication Skills:

The communication skills are the one that holds the power to bridge the gap between mankind. This is a principal skill that everyone should inculcate to communicate. One should have the potential of dealing with all temperament people whether argumentative or empathetic. This is a skill that everyone must possess be it a student or a working professional. For students this may turn very helpful if they manage to cultivate communication skills rightly at correct time as it will be beneficial for them in all the sphere of life¹²⁻¹⁴.

- **Positive Attitude:**

If we talk about today's scenario where each individual leads a hectic lifestyle which has all the way changed each person's approach into a negative way. Keeping this in mind one should be capable of acquiring place in others heart with positive approach. When we talk about academics whether it be a student or a teacher each would want to get someone with that approach which can drive with positive attitude. For the maintenance of friendly environment at any academic institutions, it becomes the utmost responsibility of all the students to inculcate skill of positive attitude in themselves. The surrounding in which students grow, plays a very important role in deciding what kind of attitude they will develop. We should make sure they receive an environment where they can develop positive attitude. So, this responsibility of creating a positive atmosphere around to the students where they get the chance to grow with positive approach lies over the shoulder of parents and teachers.

- **Listening Skills:**

The fact is if one wants to be a good speaker, he has to be a good listener first. The art of listening lets a person express himself better in front of others with that it also allows one to understand what the other person is trying to say. For a student it is very much important to develop the art of listening in themselves as active listening encourage sensible thinking that can help in bringing down the anxiety.

- **Enhancing Personality Skills:**

Personality refers to an individual's characteristics, style, behaviour, mindset, attitude, his own unique way of perceiving things and seeing the world. Genetic factors, family backgrounds, varied cultures, environment, current situations play an imperative role in shaping one's personality. The way you behave with others reflects your personality. An individual with a pleasing personality is appreciated and respected by all. Personality development is defined as a process of developing and enhancing one's personality.

Personality development helps an individual to gain confidence and high self-esteem. Individuals need to have a style of their own for others to follow them. You need to set an example for people around. Personality development not only makes you look good and presentable but also helps you face the world with a smile. Personality development helps you develop a positive attitude in life.

- **For Enhancing Personality:**

Smile a lot- Nothing works better than a big smile when it comes to interacting with people around you. Believe me, it works! A smiling face wins even the toughest soul. Smile not only helps in enhancing an individual's personality (Figure 3.5) but also winning other's heart.



Figure 3.5: Impossible Becomes Possible

3.3 Positive Thinking:

Positive thinking is a mental and emotional attitude that focuses on optimistic and positive thoughts and expects positive results. People with positive thinking mentality look at the bright side of life and happiness, health and success. Such people, are confident that they can overcome any difficulties they might face. Positive thinking is the idea that you can change your life by thinking positively (Figure 3.6) about things. You can't change the world, but you can change how you perceive it and how you react to it. And that can change the way that you feel about yourself and others.



Figure 3.6: Enhancing Personality Positive Thinking Attitude

3.3.1 Developing Habits of Positive Thinking:

Three very good ways to build positive thinking skills are:

1. **Meditation:** People who meditate every day show more positive thinking than those who do not.
2. **Writing:** Write about an intensely positive experience every day for three days.
3. **Play:** It's important to make time for yourself to have fun.
4. **Dress Sensibly:** Dressing sensibly and smartly go a long way in one's personality. One needs to dress according to the occasion. Price has nothing to do with smart dressing. An individual who is well dressed is respected and liked by all. Do take care of the fit of the dress as well.
5. **Be soft-spoken:** Do not always find faults in others. Fighting lead to no solution. Be polite with others. Be very careful of what you speak.
6. **Leave your ego behind:** An individual need to hide his ego everywhere he goes. Be it office or workplace you need to leave your ego behind if you wish to win appreciation from others. An individual who is good from within is loved by all.
7. **Help others:** Do not always think of harming others. Share whatever you know. Remember no one can steal your knowledge. Always help others.
8. **Confidence:** Confidence is the key to a positive personality. Spread confidence and positive aura wherever you go.
9. **Patient listener:** Be a patient listener. Never interrupt when others are speaking.
10. **Networking Skills:** The bigger and stronger the network helps to get things done more easily (e.g., find a job, get advice, find business partners, find customers, etc.,)
11. **Communication Skills:** Communication skills are the abilities you use when giving and receiving different kinds of information. Communication skills involve listening, speaking and observing. It is also helpful to understand the differences in how to communicate through face-to-face interactions, phone conversations and digital communications like email and social media.

3.4 Types of communication:

There are four main types of communication you might use on a daily basis which you can learn and practice to help you become an effective communicator. Many of these skills work together making it important to practice communication skills in different contexts whenever possible including:

1. **Verbal:** Communicating by way of a spoken language.
2. **Nonverbal:** Communicating by way of body language and facial expressions.
3. **Written:** Communicating by way of written language, symbols and numbers.
4. **Visual:** Communication by way of photography, drawings, sketches, charts and graphs (Figure 3.7).



Figure 3.7: Change The World with Powerful Communication

There are Different Types of Communication Skills:

- **Active listening:** Active listening means paying close attention to the person who is speaking to you. People who are active listeners are well-regarded by their co-workers because of the attention and respect they offer others. While it seems simple, this is a skill that can be hard to develop and improve. You can be an active listener by focusing on the speaker, avoiding distractions like cell phones, laptops or other projects and by preparing questions, comments or ideas to thoughtfully respond.
- **Friendliness:** In friendships, characteristics such as honesty and kindness often foster trust and understanding. The same characteristics are important in workplace relationships. When you're working with others, approach your interactions with a positive attitude, keep an open mind and ask questions to help you understand where they're coming from. Small gestures such as asking someone how they're doing, smiling as they speak or offering praise for work well done can help you foster productive relationships with both colleagues and managers.
- **Confidence:** In the workplace, people are more likely to respond to ideas that are presented with confidence. There are many ways to appear confident such as making eye contact when you're addressing someone, sitting up straight with your shoulders open and preparing ahead of time so your thoughts are polished. You'll find confident communication comes in handy not just on the job but during the job interview process as well.
- **Giving and receiving feedback:** Strong communicators can accept critical feedback and provide constructive input to others. Feedback should answer questions, provide solutions or help strengthen the project or topic at hand.
- **Volume and clarity:** When you're speaking, it's important to be clear and audible. Adjusting your speaking voice so you can be heard in a variety of settings is a skill and it's critical to communicating effectively. Speaking too loudly may be disrespectful or awkward in certain settings. If you're unsure, read the room to see how others are communicating.

- **Empathy:** Empathy means that you can understand and share the emotions of others. This communication skill is important in both team and one-on-one settings. In both cases, you will need to understand other people's emotions and select an appropriate response. For example, if someone is expressing anger or frustration, empathy can help you acknowledge and diffuse their emotion. At the same time, being able to understand when someone is feeling positive and enthusiastic can help you get support for your ideas and projects.
- **Respect:** A key aspect of respect is knowing when to initiate communication and respond. In a team or group setting, allowing others to speak without interruption is seen as a necessary communication skill. Respectfully communicating also means using your time with someone else wisely—staying on topic, asking clear questions and responding fully to any questions you've been asked.
- **Understanding nonverbal cues:** A great deal of communication happens through nonverbal cues such as body language, facial expressions and eye contact. When you're listening to someone, you should be paying attention to what they're saying as well as their nonverbal language. By the same measure, you should be conscious of your body language when you're communicating to ensure you're sending appropriate cues to others.

3.5 Non-Verbal Communication:

The **Non-Verbal Communication** is the process of conveying meaning without the use of words either written or spoken. In other words, any communication made between two or more persons through the use of facial expressions, hand movements, body language, postures, and gestures is called as non-verbal communication.

The Non-Verbal Communication, unlike the verbal communication, helps in establishing and maintaining the interpersonal relationships while the verbal's only help in communicating the external events. People use non-verbal's to express emotions and interpersonal attitudes, conduct rituals such as greetings and bring forward one's personality.

3.5.1 Types of Nonverbal Communication are:

1. **Eye contact:** Eye contact with audiences increases the speaker's credibility. Teachers who make eye contact open the flow of communication and convey interest, concern, warmth, and credibility.
2. **Facial expressions:** The face is an important communicator. It is commonly said that the face is the index of the mind. It expresses the type of emotions or feelings such as joy, love, interest, sorrow, anger, annoyance, confusion, enthusiasm, fear, hatred, surprise, and uncertainty.
3. **Movement:** The way you move your arms and legs such as walking quickly or slowly, standing, or sitting can all convey different messages to lookers.
4. **Posture:** The way you sit or stand can also communicate your comfort level.
5. **Gestures:** While gestures vary widely across communities, they are generally used both intentionally and unintentionally to convey information to others.

6. **Space:** Creating or closing distance between yourself and the people around you can also convey messages about your comfort level, the importance of the conversation, your desire to support or connect with others.
7. **Facial expressions:** One of the most common forms of nonverbal communication is facial expressions. Using the eyebrows, mouth, eyes and facial muscles to convey can be very effective when communicating both emotion and information.
8. **Eye contact:** Using eye contact is an extremely effective way to communicate and get attention with interest.
9. **Touch:** Some people also use touch as a form of communication. Most commonly, it is used to communicate support or comfort. This form of communication should be used sparingly and only when you know the receiving party is okay with it. It should never be used to convey anger, frustration or any other negative emotions.



Benefits of Effective Communication (Figure 3.8) in Personal and Professional Settings:

- It increases your chances of getting the job you want on your terms. Combination of ‘Soft-skills’ and ‘Education’ results in a better career opportunities and employ ability.
- It helps with developing your leadership skills and getting a better position among your friends, co-workers, or any other team members.
- It brings you new networking and career opportunities and eases your daily teamwork.
- It lets you understand people way better and also be more understandable.
- It shows you how to remain good relationships with people all the time even during an argument.
- It boosts your grades by making both your studies and your interactions with others easier.
- It saves your time and energy.
- Personal growth and development
- Increased knowledge & understanding of local industry



Figure 3.8: Developing Soft Skills

3.6 Developing Soft Skills:

The time you spend developing your soft skills will never be wasted. Even if you change careers six times, the soft skills you learn today can always be used to set you apart in whatever you do with your life. If you want to learn some soft skills, these are the starting points that you must follow in your life¹²⁻¹⁵.

- 1. Priorities the thing that you should do:** You know many of the things you should be doing to develop better relationships, increase your productivity and be more responsible with prioritizing the activity.
- 2. Observe others frequently:** Sometimes you come across many people who impress you. When you are drawn to someone, ask yourself the reason. If you received excellent service from someone, think about what this person did that impressed you. There is a lot that you can learn by watching others.
- 3. Updating and awareness:** Positive change begins with awareness. So be aware about the surroundings. Be a student to learn the things and never stop learning as every new day comes with a challenge.
- 4. Be intentional every day:** Every day make efforts to achieve your goals realistically. Success doesn't come naturally. You have to make an investment of long hours on it. Getting better won't come without effort. While some of the things will come naturally to you, others will require good effort.

3.7 The Four fundamentals of Effective Listening:

1. Attending to Nonverbal Behaviour:

Your nonverbal behaviour tell the speaker you are either interested and comprehending what is being said. Are you smiling and nodding in understanding or are you yawning, scowling, or staring the person down? Is your body position leaning in to the conversation to show you are engaged or are you leaning back with your arms folded indicating you're feeling defensive? Your body language should communicate "Go ahead, I care, I'm listening."

2. Asking Questions:

The best way asks questions – lots of them. But not all questions are created equal and different types of questions serve different purposes. Clarifying questions help you understand the full context of what is being shared whereas prompting questions encourage the speaker to reflect deeper on their own thoughts. Asking questions allow you to bring the conversation to a close.

3. Reflecting Feelings:

Reflecting feelings is the skill of capturing the speaker's feelings and restating them in non-judgmental terms. It demonstrates to the speaker that you are aware of the emotion behind the content of what is being shared (Figure 3.9).



Figure 3.9: Leadership Skills

4. Summarizing:

Summarizing is the skill of being able to concisely recap what the speaker said over a longer period of time. The exact words aren't as important as capturing the key ideas, feelings or action items that were shared. Don't act like a parrot and repeat the exact words shared or add your own conclusions to the summary. These four fundamentals, just like a professional athlete continuously practices the fundamentals of his/her sport, leaders should continually practice these fundamentals of listening.



Figure 3.10: Digital World Communication

3.8 Communicating Digital World:

Effective communication lies at the heart of a successful business. Without being able to communicate, a team will have more difficulty accomplishing goals. For this and many other reasons, communication management is an important area of study. Maintaining positive relationships with both employees and customers means keeping up with an ever-evolving digital world. Don't be afraid to talk to the person who sits at the desk next to you either. In this new digital world (Figure 3.10), you still need to connect with people through communication. You need to effectively communicate, which means you need to carefully choose tools and systems. In addition, assess, modify and improve communication in order to effectively communicate. Most importantly, remember that effective communication is based on mutual trust. According to **Helen Morris-Brown**; "Most successful connections happen when we meet face to face". However, in the digital world, we have less face-to-face communication (Figure 3.11). Therefore, manage digital and written communication in a similar way.



Figure 3.11: Strength Is Life

3.9 Conclusion:

Soft skills are considered as time management, communication skills, interaction skills, interpersonal skills, ability to work with others. Soft skills are broadly classified as a combination of personality traits, behaviors and social attitudes that allow people with good soft skills tend to have strong situational awareness and emotional intelligence that allows them to producing positive results. After observing the current scenario, we have seen that soft skills are most important aspect of professional life and people are getting trained in it so if students can be trained it will not be a tough situation for them in future. To obtain any designation in some organization we must have these soft skills. So, if we need a drastic change in society then this Soft skill can lead towards a better society with raised human values (Figure 3.12).



Figure 3.12: Human Life with Values

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