Inculcating Soft Skills: A Significant Need Of The Hour In 21st Century Workforce

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ABSTRACT: A career is an integral part of human life. It pictures one's personality to the society. In this current scenario, a successful career demands a variety of skills. A person's education, training, and work define one's career. It is significant to acquire soft skills to build a productive career. Soft skills play an imperative role in chiseling a personality. It guides every individual in shaping the character or refining one's personality on the whole. Soft skills can be mastered by acquiring and through implementing them in daily life. Recruiters and company professionals are looking for candidates with good soft skills in the work environment. The industrialized global market demands employers with practical soft skills in the workspace. To promote a healthy and excellent workplace, people with efficient soft skills become mandatory, and it has become a critically vital factor for the smooth flow of the function.

KEYWORDS: Career, soft skills, efficiency, indispensable factor, life spirit

OBJECTIVES:
- To trace the factors that are essential in one's career
- To understand the importance of soft skills in the workplace
- To comprehend the need for soft skills
- To analysis the essential factors in the workplace

1. INTRODUCTION:

Choosing the right career and excelling in it is a challenging task. An individual's career reflects one's lifestyle, and indeed it will have a more significant impact on society. One's career determines the lifestyle and the status of an individual. Increasing one's social status can boost one's quality of life. The urge to experience it kindles the spirit of choosing an excellent career. This can be achieved by practicing some of the typical traits, including being a self-evaluator, openness in learning new things, goal-setting, anticipating things, etc.

Career development becomes an untiring process in the journey of human life. Practical career skills become the need of the hour to achieve progress in the journey of life. One should enhance the career skills for effective management of one's life.

Samuel Tieku Gyansah and Hellen Kiende Guantai (2018, p. 44) state their view regarding the importance of career development in their research article is worth mentioning here,

Career development is an essential exercise that cannot be ignored. Current technological advancement and globalization have made the world of work excessively active, requiring up-to-date attitudes, expertise, knowledge, and skills, owing to prevailing rivalry among corporate organizations.

A clear vision with proper planning, goal setting, and planning will foster in achieving a better career. This twenty-first-century workforce demands highly qualified and well-equipped candidates for the work environment. Apart from the skillsets mentioned above, one must also excel in exhibiting other skills to witness progress in the career. To witness career

advancement, one has to excel in career advancement. It is an essential element in one's career, leading to greater satisfaction and retention in a company.

To achieve career advancement, one has to excel in both hard skills and soft skills. Meenu Wats and et al. (2009, p. 1) put forth the importance of soft skills as "literature suggest that hard skills contribute to only 15% of one's success while remaining 85% is made by soft skills". One should focus on work goals and approach them technically as well as intelligibly. In career advancement, one has to use the skill sets and determination in achieving the new career goals. To meet the various challenges and compete for job opportunities, one needs to excel in soft skills.

Soft skills comprise both personality traits and interpersonal skills essential in the workspace and interactive skills required to work with people around us. In recent times, soft skills with good efficiency have become a major important trait at the workplace— which is indeed the demand of the hour. Wheeler (2016, p. 29) rightly opines the preset context in a nutshell as, "Employers hire people for their hard skills, but they end up firing people for their lack of soft skills." Currently, it has become the hardened ground reality.

Today's job walkway demands the following soft skills from every employee, which includes:
- ❖ Communication
- ❖ Innovative thinking
- ❖ Teamwork
- ❖ Interpersonal communication
- ❖ Intrapersonal skills
- ❖ Adaptability
- ❖ Problem-solving
- ❖ Work ethics

2. COMMUNICATION

Workplace highly demands dynamic interpersonal environment which cannot be ignored. The importance of communication is brought out aptly by Tamer A. Awad and Suhaila E. Alhashemi (2012, p. 135) quoted in (Goleman, 1998) in the following words,

Communication is essential to create and maintain relationships as well as the ability to communicate effectively. Sharing ideas, giving opinions, finding out what one needs to know, explaining what one wants, working out differences with others, expressing one's feelings can be regarded as essential elements concerning work with other people.

The work environment anticipates good listening, responding, problem-solving, resolving conflicts, etc., among the workforce. Communication becomes a crucial factor in meeting the demands of the workplace. Effective listening becomes a crucial factor. Effective listening demands understanding or comprehending the speakers' words and understanding the speaker's emotions in communicating the message. Excellent communication needs to meet the following criteria: clear, concise, concrete, correct, coherent, complete, and courteous.

Innovative thinking

The creative problem-solving technique is a much essential factor. A logical thinker is someone who can generalize concepts, possibilities, and behavior to fit the situation. One can turn out to be a critical thinker by analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating reasons and procedures in solving an issue. Further identifying and exploring ideas also reflects creative thinking capabilities to a wider extend. Innovative thinking in the workspace helps in making prominent core features by incorporating abductive reasoning techniques. They hold multiple reasoning as an essential tool before analyzing any issues.

Teamwork

Interdependent individuals work together to meet or fulfill common goals. When people from different backgrounds or diverse groups of people unite together in solving a problem, it will result in new and fresh ideas. The flow of new ideas and perceptions will lead to a better situation or progress on a large scale. Efficient teamwork will increase the greater efficacy of the workspace, wherein the difficult or problematic situations are shared or split into manageable chunks, which may foster them in completing the task more effectively. A strong working relationship is always an indispensable factor in a workspace. Tinuke Fapohunda, M (2013, p. 1) express aptly,

Team building is an essential factor in any environment; its focus is to bring out the best in a team to ensure self-development, leadership skills, positive communication, and the ability to work closely and effectively together as a team to solve problems.

Interpersonal communication

Interpersonal communication will create a good and effective team by sharing ideas, thoughts, and feelings among two or more people. It may be through verbal or non-verbal means of communication. Interpersonal communication comes in handy in meeting social goals and helps in fostering career advancement. One's ability to work well with others becomes an integral part of a working scenario. A group with strong interpersonal skills will exhibit a strong workforce with innovative ideas and thoughts.

Adaptability

Adaptability— one of the sub-skills of soft skills— means the rapid ability to learn and exhibit new things. This becomes a fundamental part of the working scenario because of changing circumstances due to varied reasons. Staying acquainted with the changes in the working environment, acknowledging the differences, and accepting the changes with a broader mindset will enhance one's adaptability. The twenty-first century demands the workforce to be more adaptive in nature to meet everyday challenges because people with great adaptability will be inclined to think in advance. This paves the way for a consistent focus on achieving the goals, which may increase the chances of succeeding. Adaptability becomes a buoyant factor in filling the market's needs, and it becomes a critical factor in experiencing success.

Problem-solving

Problem-solving is a key factor in developing one's career. It involves defining a particular problem, identifying the cause of a problem, finding a better solution by implementing innovative techniques. Employers look for candidates with greater efficiency in solving a problem. The efficiency lies in a greater understanding of the problem, generating numerous possible solutions, evaluating better ideas, and implementing them in solving it. In this current scenario, the person with more incredible problem-solving skills is considered an asset for an organization. The problem has become an inevitable thing in the human life cycle, be it a personal or a professional one. So, solving the problem aids in having reasonable control over the environment, both personally and professionally.

Work ethics

Understanding ethics form an integral part of the workplace in this modern world. To achieve professional development, understanding work ethics is critical. Proper understanding of work ethics promotes setting professional standards which lead to growth, namely efficient work, self-control, loyalty, career advancement, co-operation, etc.

Intrapersonal skills

In this regard, Susi Hardjati and Roziana Febrianita opine as (2019, p. 3192) "soft interpersonal skill has been reliably positioned as greater as a significant prerequisite for steering successful performance in the division of every work unit." Intrapersonal skills are required to introspect and regularly evaluate oneself in academic, personal, and professional fields. This leads to a better, healthy, and prosperous lifestyle. Self-esteem plays a vital role in developing intrapersonal skills. It may be shaped both by internal as well as by external factors. Self-esteem can be achieved by enhancing the internal factors which are present in every individual. External factors can also improve it through verbal messages from parents, family members, friends, teachers, organizations, etc. It may also be enriched through varied experiences in one's life by accepting the ground reality and willingness to accept the changes. Other desire to stand up for ourselves will stimulate more significant achievements.

Conflict management

Conflict management is considered an essential skill in the management sector. Lim Jin Huan and Rashad Yazdanifard (2012, p. 141) express the importance of managing conflict in the workplace as,

For any organization, conflict is an unavoidable reality. To form good relationships with subordinates, leaders should understand and apply different conflict management approaches and conflict resolution styles. A situation in which normally two or more parties are at odds is referred to as a conflict. An unresolved dispute may have a negative effect on an organization's growth.

Conflict with others in the workplace may result in spoiling the entire mood of the working atmosphere; further, it may lead to greater disaster. Conflict with others can be solved intelligently by adopting few strategies. Firstly, one needs to identify the points of agreement and disagreement. Prioritizing the areas of conflict also plays an essential role in managing people. Initiate a plan to work on the conflict by adhering to the proposed method in accomplishing success. Adopting the best way to solve a conflict is very important in managing people. Open communication becomes a predominant factor in solving a problem or conflict among peers. Besides, giving space for others' views in active listening without interrupting, reviewing the opinion, and opting for a better solution are some of the strategies to manage conflict. A win-win solution will promote a healthy working atmosphere. In the context of managing context, Afzalur Rahim (2000, p.5) states, "Managing conflict involves in designing effective strategies as to minimize the dysfunctions of the conflict and maximize the constructive functions of conflict to enhance learning effectiveness in an organization."

Team building

Social relationships can be enhanced through an effective team. Ghulam Abbas expresses the importance of team spirit in the article as,

The creation of a teamwork spirit is an essential requirement in every organization where groups perform various functions of their organization in their workplace. Organizations are always looking for workers who can work in groups with members who can participate in every activity with interest and devotion.

Building a team spirit becomes an important task to accomplish the purpose and goal of an organization. A shift in prototype from a single individual to a team, with a creative working environment, healthy and stress-free workspace helps foster a good team spirit. A team leader should be a caretaker, facilitator, trainer, goal setter, motivator, and conflict solver in shouldering the responsibilities. Besides, a good team leader should help the team identify the plans for achieving the goals or targets. Here, the individual plans are used collectively for achieving the common goals.

One can meet the challenges in career opportunities by excelling technically along with specific soft skills. One can meet the challenges that are popping up in career advancement by exhibiting soft skills and technical knowledge. Identifying professional goals is very important, and it is the foremost important task in tasting the success of career advancement. Further, it can be witnessed with persistent effort and constant pruning. TinukeFapohunda, (2013, p. 5) states the benefit of teamwork in the following words,

Successful teams are usually made up of a collection of influential individuals who are experienced, have the problem-solving ability, are open to addressing the problem, and are action-oriented.

Mastering soft skills result in experiencing numerous benefits, namely:
- It enhances the better work environment
- It fosters a healthy workspace ambiance by enhancing career opportunities.
- It promotes individuality by demarking the unique feature to the limelight
- It enhances the inner spirit of an individual as well as the team
- It helps in refining a better human being
- It stimulates cordial relationships among the peers
- It nurtures and aids in achieving the more significant common goals
- It adds significantly in experiencing the growth in the world of corporate scenario
- It aids in progressing and climbing the successful business ladder with greater confidence and strength
- It helps in strengthening the social interaction
- It increases the timeliness of the work, which indeed promotes the reputation of the organization and the individual.
- It helps in easy integration in a new workplace environment
- It is critical in enhancing a healthy personal and professional network
- It determines the success of a person in the working environment
- It bridges a healthy relationship among the masses
- It aids in creating a solid emotional balance
- Lack of soft skills also has some of the drawbacks, namely,
- Exhibiting poor interpersonal relationships will affect the dynamic of a company very severely.
- The absence of soft skills in the students is seldom given less priority by the corporate world.
- True potentials remain hidden without any outlets
- Less exposure to practical business correspondence
- It makes less competent to meet the real-time challenges
- Challenges in meeting the current job market
- Less chance of enhancing career opportunities
- More chances of getting out of the job
- One becomes inefficient in facing the highly competitive work environment
- More chances of involving in interpersonal conflicts
- Lack of soft skills seldom helps in finding out the strengths and weakness of an individual
- Hard to face the infinite challenges both personally as well as professionally
- Lack of soft skills becomes a hindrance in creating a better work culture and success at the workplace

- *Tips for developing soft skills*

- Work with a tutor or a mentor— who can give a suggestion or feedback for the betterment of an individual.
- Focus on improving the communication skills
- Courses like practical group discussion, public speaking may help in improving one's ability.
- Soft skills coach could help in developing the skills required for effective communication.
- Set a positive and vibrant mindset towards mastering soft skills
- Look for opportunities and participate effectively in training programs
- Collecting feedbacks and constant improvement will lead to better development
- Identify the critical skills needed for the future.
- Evaluate or measure the current skills strategy to trace the effective gap analysis
- Put your finding into action by concentrating on exploring the skills required.
- Develop a 'can-do' attitude which may enhance positivity

If one cultivates or follows these tips in a personal or professional relationship acquiring soft skills becomes a piece of cake.

Mastering soft skills have become the need of the hour, a milestone for experiencing career development. So many advantages are there in exploring soft skills in the workplace. It leads to better opportunities which in turn opens broader future development in the career.

A person with good soft skills can work stress-free from an occupational standpoint, bringing greater laurels to one's life journey. Beyond technical skills to cherish in one's career and excel in the work environment, soft skills are highly demanded. In actuality, these soft skills are undervalued with less importance in human life. Hard skills are related to technical skills, whereas soft skills are related to personality traits. Thus, both are important to excel and successfully perform in academic endeavors.

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