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SOFT SKILLS ARE THE PERSONAL QUALITIES THAT ENABLE ONE TO COMMUNICATE
WITH OTHERS

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ABSTRACT

“Soft skill” is a term often associated with a person’s emotional intelligence quotient (EIQ), which is the cluster of personality. Soft skills often contradict with hard skills. Success at the work place for professionals depends on these two giant skills. Soft skills are a combo of interpersonal and intra personal skills. Presentation skill such as public speaking is a leadership skill. Voice is the trademark of a person. Listening involves receiving, interpreting and reacting. Active listening leads to mental satisfaction. Non- Verbal communication plays a crucial role to judge a personality. Studies and surveys shows that the soft skills of a person always determine everything for the progress of a professional.

Key Words: Soft skills, Hard skills, trademark, work place, professional, Body language.

“Soft skill” is a term often associated with a person’s emotional intelligence quotient (EIQ), which is the cluster of personality traits that characterize one’s relationship with other people. These skills include communication abilities, language skills, personal habits, and cognitive emotional empathy and leadership traits.

Soft skills contrast with hard skills “Soft skill” is a term often associated with a person’s emotional intelligence quotient (EIQ), which is the cluster of personality traits that characterize one’s which are generally and easily quantifiable and measurable such as software knowledge or basic plumbing skills. Engineering education demands proficiency in English such as the soft skills. Its significance has acquired a global backup from all the institutes involved in technical education. Many engineering professionals are not able to cater to the requirements of their jobs simply because of the lack of soft skills also known as people’s skills. However, the trend has changed drastically in order to meet the demands of hiring companies. The present paper highlights the integration as well as teaching of soft skills to engineering students at the undergraduate level. Presentation skills, team work negotiations, emotional intelligence and leadership skills are some of the soft skills required at the work place to get through the duties to communicate persuasively, positive attitude towards work, team work etc. The practical approach of teaching soft skills such as Group Discussions emphasizing the learner Centric approach that the teachers should adapt to make the engineering students not only competitive but also as all-round professionals who also are excellent communicators.

Soft skills are a combo of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills that determine our ability to adjust in a particular socio-cultural frame work. These skills also include competences in areas such as emotional strength, communication, adaptability, leadership quality, self initiative, self – motivation decision making ability and conflict resolution. Various studies say that a combination of soft skills has a great impact on one's level of success.

A survey conducted among fortune 500 CEOs by the Stanford Research Institute inferred that 75 percent of long – term job success depended on people skills and only 25 percent on technical knowledge, Researches also show that the soft skills of a person always determine everything from getting promoted to being happy at the work place.

Hard Skills + Soft Skills = Success in interview and at the work place:

Success at the work place depends on two giant skills set – hard skills and soft skills, skills that you acquire through the cognitive aspect of your intelligence, i.e., through formal learning, training / coaching in areas as varied as finance, computers, engineering, sports etc., are known as hard skills where as the skills that you learn at home over a period of time through the non-cognitive aspect of intelligence, which is influenced by your upbringing environment day – to – day life experiences etc are known as soft skills.

Hard Skills	:	Soft Skills
Acquired through formal education	-	Informally imbibed
About techniques, Mechanisms and professional competence	-	About relationships and social competence
Subject – based skills	-	General attitude of life situations
Job – Specific	-	People, specific
Aptitude – Centric	-	Attitude Centric

Soft skills are an important element for the success of an organization. Employing soft skills effectively in the highly competitive corporate world would help you to stand out in a crowd of average employees who have mediocre skills and talent. Hence soft skills play a vital role in professional success which help one at the work place.

In public communication the onus of communication lies on one person, the speaker. The audience are expected to listen, be polite and applaud or laugh at the right time. The purpose of a speaker is to inform or persuade or to entertain the audience. A speaker who fails to address them, is not likely to succeed. Most important of all, the mastery of soft skills to regulate the vital basis of human interpersonal communication in order to ensure optimal – speaker audience involvement in listening and speaking. When you speak in public, it is necessary to have a thorough knowledge of the audience you are expected to address. Selection topic, choice of vocabulary, purpose of speech, type of speech, selection of strategies to maintain positive speaker and audience relationship and a lot more depend on the audience analysis. The speaker should choose the appropriate vocabulary which determines what type of vocabulary humour should be used and what is to be avoided in order to match the taste of the listener which also facilitates the determination of the appropriate topic duration of the speech and other details relevant to make the speech effective. The public speaker (presenter) may speak from a manuscript or an outline or from note cards.

Speaking at Placement Interview:

Another – Functional area of speech is that of an interview. Interviews assess the personality of the interviewee in depth. It is, therefore, obvious that both the interviewer and the interviewee evince display of soft skills as they join together in an effort to probe and understand each other for whatever set purpose they have for such as exploration. Interpersonal or smart skills are crucial and as said before, they rely heavily on critical thinking and creativity. There are two basic soft skills namely critical thinking and creativity.

Listening Skills; Types of Listening:

Effective Listening: Listening is a process of receiving, interpreting and reacting to a message received from a speaker. Listening requires a conscious effort to interpret the sounds, grasp the meaning of the words and react to the message.

1. **Appreciative Listening:** This is listening for deriving as aesthetic Spleasure, as we do when we listen to a comedian, musician or an entertainer.

2. **Empathetic Listening:** When we listen to a distressed friend who wants to express his feeling. We provide emotional and moral support in the form of empathetic listening.
3. **Comprehensive Listening:** This type of listening is needed in the class room when students have to listen to the lecturer to understand and comprehend the message. Similarly, when someone is giving you directions to find the location of a place, comprehensive listening is required to receive and interpret the message.
4. **Critical listening:** When we read a book with the objective of writing a book review, we use our critical abilities. Similarly listening to a sales person before making a purchase or listening to politicians involves critical listening. When we apply our intellect and intelligence to analyses objectively and to look for logic, expertise and emotion in a speech, in a dialogue, in a conversation, in a discussion, in a brain storming session listening is termed as critical.

We are being critical to say things like, 'he is no expert, 'she is excellent, what a brave child, etc.,

Discriminative: The discriminative listeners are sensitive to the changes in the speaker's volume, pitch, tone, rate, stress, when we are able to detect even nuances of communication (meaning difference speaker intention) when we are able to identify sound, among several occurrences at once, belonging to a specific mechanism.

Active versus passive listening: One becomes passive listener when the topic is of little interest to us, when we have no idea who the speaker is when we don't like the speaker, passive listening leads to distorted communication and results in time getting wasted for both the speaker and listener.

Active Listening: leads to mental satisfaction of having listened to a good speaker. Active listener decides to receive the sounds and understands what they mean

Hearing is different from listening. Hearing takes place automatically we can't stop hearing unless we are deaf. When we are travelling on a bus/ train, sounds from people/ vehicle reach our ears. Do all these sounds reach the brain and does the brain see meaning in them? If we are busy with our own thoughts (Mind is thinking) our ears will receive the sounds, but our mind will not register them. So, hearing is different from listening.

Implications of Effective listening:

1. Gaining understanding respects support emphasize, appreciate, positive attitude admiration, friendship from others.
2. Feeling the pulse of the other people how they think, what they believe in how they come to conclusions.
3. Gathering knowledge, experience and wisdom from others.
4. Experiencing satisfaction, growth, development, happiness.

The ability to listen effectively is a vital skill as most of our learning. Comes from listening. Research studies have proved that it is the most important link in the process of communication. Generally, we spend more time on listening than we spend on speaking, reading and writing. Students listen to lecturers, instructions, conversations, views expressed in group discussion and in other communication activities. As a professional you would have to listen to your boss, sub-ordinates, seminar presentations etc., whatever may be the situations if you don't listen with concentration. You are likely to face problems. Listening requires a positive attitude, concentration and willingness.

Effective Listening Skill:

- Make you understand concepts clearly
- Help you to understand the views on your co-workers
- Improve your intellectual ability to understand and evaluate the opinions of others
- Enable you to gather proper and accurate information.

For hearing you do not require any physical cues but for listening you consider physical cues – such as eye contact, gestures and body language in order to get the message across effectively. Listening skill involves this interpretation as follows:

Listening = Hearing + Relating + Comprehending + interpreting + Responding

Listening is a process of hearing with understanding interpreting and responding. The first stage is the reception of sound waves through ears, the second is relating the sound to sound system of language. The third stage is comprehending the message, the fourth stage is interpreting the message and the fifth stage is the reaction to the message. Due to some reasons, we fail to listen effectively.

Barriers to Listening:

- Lack of rapport between speaker and audience
- Inadequate physical condition such as noise/the location of the rooms.
- In appropriate use of language & In appropriate pronunciation of sounds and words
- Lack of perspective & Lack of knowledge on word stress.
- Lack of concentration taking extensive notes.

Overcoming Listening Barriers:

- Have a definite purpose of listening and have a background of the topic
- Pay attention to what is said and be effective on taking notes.
- Keep away the prejudice and personal opinions.
- Be emotionally stable & Be awarded non-verbal communication devices allowing the speaker to complete the speech.
- Be aware stress pattern of the English Language

While working in an organization, you will use your listening skills in a variety of situations. If you are effective in listening, you will be able to take right decisions.

Tips for Effective Listening:

- Be mentally prepared to listen
- Evaluate the speech, not the speaker
- Be open minded
- Ask questions to clarify doubts
- Send appropriate non-verbal signals

Paralinguistic's features non – verbal cues that help you to your voice; Your voice is your trade mark. It is the part of yourself that adds human touch to your words, voice gives extra life to your delivery. Therefore, you may find it useful to understand the characteristic nuances of voice, namely quality, volume, rate pitch, articulation, pronunciation and pauses.

Quality is the characteristic that distinguishes one voice from another. Each of us has a unique voice and its quality depends upon its reasoning mechanism. Everybody can improve the quality of the voice and develop. Lincoln and Churchill, for ex adapted the quality of their voices to become good speakers.

Volume is the loudness or the mildness of the tone (softness of the voice) that your voice should always project but need not always be loud. If the place you are speaking is large and open. The volume should be declamatory and if the place is small and enclosed, the volume should be low.

Pace / Rate is the number of words to deliver for minute. It varies from person to person and from 80 – 250 words per minute. The normal rate is 20-150 words. Cultivate your pace so as to fit in this reasonable limit. If a person speaks too slowly he will be considered a dull speaker. A fast speaker also causes discomfort because the listeners do not get time to grasp. Use pauses to create emphasis.

Pitch it refers to the number of vibrations per second of your voice. The rise and fall of voice conveys various emotions. A well-balanced pitch results in a clear and effective tone. Intonation refers to rise and falling of pitch of the voice.

Articulation Lazy articulation slurred sounds, or skipping over words will lower the credibility of the speaker we need to develop the ability to speak distinctly. Produce the sounds in a crisp and lucid manner.

Pronunciation Pronouncing all the sounds distinctly along with word stress according to the norms and of use of correct pronunciation consulting a good dictionary helps a lot to be an efficient speaker and given while speaking.

Voice modulation refers to the tonal variations and pauses. A pause is a short gap which let the listeners reflect on the message and allows the information to soak into the digestive pauses help the listener's mind also the and speaker.

Effective Body Language: A good listener is attentive, involved by maintaining eye, contact, smiles, nods, leans forward (non-verbal) Body language includes every aspect of your appearance from what you wear, how you stand look and move to your facial expressions, and physical habits such as nodding your head, jingling change in your pocket, or pulling your neck tie. Your use of space and gesture are other key concerns.

Personal Appearance includes clothes, hair, jewelry, cosmetics and soon.

Posture It refers to the way we hold ourselves when we stand sit, or walk.

- Lean forward – Open, honest and interested
- Lean backward – Defensive or disinterested
- Crossed Arms – Defensive and not ready to listen
- Uncrossed Arms – Willingness to listen.

Gesture. It is the movement made by hands, arms, shoulders, head and torso. Adroit gestures can add to the impact of a speech.

- Enumerative - numbers
- Descriptive - Size of the objects
- Symbolic - Abstract concepts
- Locative - Location of an object
- Emphatic - Emphasis

The following factors of body language Body Language plays a crucial role to be judged a person.

Facial Expression:

A smile stands for friendliness a frown for discontent, raised eyebrow for disbelief, tightened jaw muscles for antagonism.

- Frozen : No change in expression
- Blank : No expression at all
- Substitute : Happy with a long face
- Inhibited : restricted and solid stolid
- Uninhibited : Spontaneous and impetuses

Proxemics is the study of physical space in interpersonal relations. Space is related to behavioral norms. Moving closer to audience is useful to invite discussion, to express agreement or to emphasize a point.

Edward T. Hall in his book *The Hidden Dimension* divides space into four distinct zones.

- I. **Intimate:** This zone starts with personal touch and extends just to 18 inches (one and a half feet) Members of the family, lovers, spouses, relatives and parents fall under this zone. The best relationship that describes it is the mother child relationship. No words are spoken. If at all something is spoken it is just some whispering sounds. A handshake, a paton the back or a hug all come into this zone.
- II. **Personal** This zone stretches from 18 inches (one and half a feet) to 4 feet your close friends' colleagues, peers etc. fall under this tier. Instead whispering sounds or utter silence, normal talking takes place. Though this zone is personal it is quite a released and casual place. It permits spontaneous and unplanned communication.
- III. **Social:** Social events take place in this rating of 4 feet to 12 feet. In this layer relationships are more official. You tend to be become more formal people are more cautious in their movements. You should be smart enough to conduct it with less emotion and more planning.
- IV. **Public:** This zone starts from 12 feet and may extend to 30 feet or to the range of eye sight and hearing. Events that take place in this zone are formal. The degree of detachment is very high. Here the speaker has to raise his voice to communicate to others or use a microphone. Public figures like the P.M. of a country, for ex have to maintain the distance for security reasons.

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