



Bharath

INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

(Declared as deemed to be university under section 3 of UGC Act 1956, vide notification No.F.9-5/2000-U.3)

Soft Skills



Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research
(Deemed to be University)
Chennai



INTRODUCTION

SOFT SKILLS

Soft skills get little respect but will make or break your career -Peggy klaus

Source: Google

Soft skills play an important role for achieving professional growth and employment. With the knowledge of soft skills, one stand out in a crowd of job seekers with even mediocre skill and talent. There is no doubt that hard skills i.e. knowledge and technical expertise are prime requirement, for employability but without soft skills it becomes difficult for even highly talented people to corner a job. The most common traits asked by every prospective employer are positive work ethics, good attitude, and desire to learn and be trained.



Good attitude being a behavioural skill cannot be taught. But consistent practice and training can instil that in a person. Right perspective and readiness to learn and turn the situation to a positive outcome, take responsibility of one's action with the capacity to take any challenge, so the job seekers must possess soft skill to attract the employer.

BIHER has separate placement cell which organizes soft skill training programs both periodically as well as specific needs during placement drive.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Skills Soft Training Manual are to give each student:

- A realistic perspective of work and work expectations
- To develop problem solving skills,
- To guide students in making appropriate and responsible decisions,
- To create a desire to fulfil individual goals,
- To educate students about unproductive thinking, self-defeating emotional impulses, and self-defeating behaviours.

This manual is designed to develop leadership skills, communication skills, and body language skills by having the student read aloud each page and discussing the content of the material



Soft Skills are the non-technical skills, abilities, traits that workers need to function for a specific employment and to adopt that environment. They include four sets of work place competencies:

1. Personal Qualities and Work Ethics
2. Problem Solving and Decision making skills
3. Oral Communication Skills
4. Impersonal and EQ skills



Source:Google

What are Soft Skills?

Soft skills are personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, career prospects and job performance. Unlike hard skills, which tend to be specific to a certain type of task or activity, soft skills are broadly applicable. Soft skills are personal attributes that describe an individual's ability to interact with others. Soft skills, also known as people skills, complement hard skills to enhance an individual's relationships, job performance and career prospects. Soft skills differ from field to field, mostly due to different career attributes requirement though the basic people and social skills remain the same. Soft skills are the basic requirement for today's employability.

Soft skills are a combination of interpersonal people skills, social skills, communication skills, character traits, attitudes, career attributes and emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) among others. Technical knowledge of any subject is considered hard skill. Soft skills are also called corporate skills. Soft skills can be more useful and practical. A definition based on review literature explains soft skills as a cluster of productive personality traits that characterize one's relationships in a social environment with other people and the key three abilities/elements are people skills, social skills and personal career attributes, in other words social skills is an umbrella term for skills under these functional elements.

Soft skills are related with insights, emotions, feelings, gut-instinct and (some would say) an inner knowing. Because of this they are not taught passively as in the way of "hard skills". Hence soft skills are associated with EQ (Emotional Quotient) and EI (Emotional Intelligence) rather than with IQ



Soft skills can be said to incorporate all aspects of generic skills that include the cognitive elements associated with non-academic skills. Soft skills are identified to be the most critical skills in the current global job market especially in a fast moved era of technology. The reorientation of education which is one trust of education for sustainability also relates the importance of these so-called - soft skills.

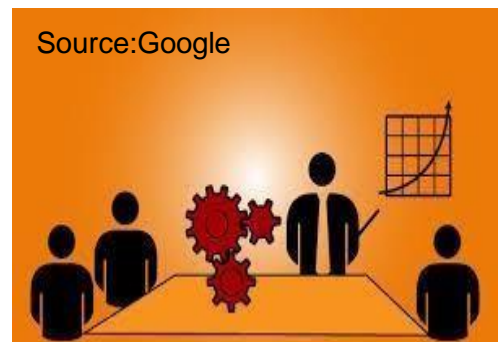
Importance of soft skill:

Soft skills are the skills concerned with working with other people, ensuring customer satisfaction, being a team player while delivering a high-quality product within budget and on time, and exceeding the expectations of stakeholders.

Soft skills, on the other hand, are subjective skills that are much harder to quantify. Also known as "people skills" or "interpersonal skills," soft skills relate to the way you relate to and interact with other people.

During our childhood days our parents probably correct us if behave in a rude or harsh way with our friends or siblings. But if in

workplace under similar situation no one will be there to correct us and the ultimate consequence will be fired off from the organization. There is a significant difference in the perception of soft skills for a student and an employer. Instructors teach the skills students need to get and keep a job, while employers are more concerned with the skills needed to perform the task at hand.



- Hard skills and soft skills are both important skills to have in the working world.
- Employers need employees who are reliable, responsible problem- solvers with good social skills who have the ability to work on a team so they seek graduates with soft skills obtained during study and work experience rather than degree-specific knowledge and often opt to hire graduates from any discipline.
- Soft skills are essential for those entering the working world because these workers are the business leaders of the future. Business leaders must obtain soft skills as well as hard skills in order to be viewed as effective leaders.



- The skills most demanded by today's employers are soft skills such as the ability to work with others, to communicate effectively, to demonstrate initiative and self-direction, to solve problems, and to demonstrate a positive work ethic.

Soft skills are very important as they help:

- To handle interpersonal relations
- To take appropriate decisions
- To communicate effectively
- To have good impression and impact to gain professional development.

Soft skills describe career attributes that individuals should possess, such as team skills, communication skills, ethics, time-management skills, and an appreciation for diversity. In the twenty-first century workforce, soft skills are important in every business sector. However, employers in business continuously report that new employees are deficient in these soft skills.

Soft skills are character traits and interpersonal skills that characterize a person's relationships with other people. In the workplace, soft skills are considered a complement to hard skills, which refer to a person's knowledge and occupational skills. Sociologists may use the term soft skills to describe a person's "EQ" or —Emotional Intelligence Quotient," as opposed to "IQ" or "Intelligence Quotient."



Source: Google

Types of Soft Skills

Expert opinions have been sought in the effort to determine the specific soft skills to be implemented and used in higher institutions of learning. Based on the research findings obtained, seven soft skills have been identified and chosen to be implemented in all institutions of higher learning here. They are:

- i. Communicative skills.
- ii. Thinking skills and Problem solving skills.
- iii. Team work force



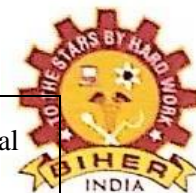
- iv. Life-long learning and Information Management
- v. Entrepreneur skill
- vi. Ethics, moral and professionalism
- vii. Leadership skills

Each of the above soft skills comprised of several sub-skills. These sub-skills are divided into two categories of implementation. The first category delineates the soft skills that every individual must have and the second category represents soft skills that are good to have. Despite the emphasis being put on the soft skills that must be present (must have), it is also encouraged to inculcate the soft skills that are good to have. All elements of soft skills must be acquired by each individual student and evaluated effectively and comprehensively. Table -1 shows the seven soft skills and the two categories of sub-skills respectively.

It can be observed that education is an essential tool for achieving sustainability. We all realized that the current economic development trends are not sustainable and that public awareness, education and training are the key elements to move our society towards sustainability. Only a quality future human capital can envision development of its nation to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Therefore, the inculcation of soft skills among the students will be two prongs, to produce quality human capital and to develop their knowledge, understanding, values and skills as well. How the two skills blend together will be discussed here.

Table -1 Type / Elements of Soft Skills “Must Have” and “Good To Have”

No.	Soft Skills	Must Have Elements (Sub-Skills)	Good To Have Elements (Sub-Skills)
1.	Communicative Skills	Ability to deliver idea clearly, effectively and with confidence either orally or in writing	Ability to use technology during presentation.
		Ability to practice active listening skill and respond.	Ability to discuss and arrive at a consensus.
		Ability to present clearly and confidently to the audience.	Ability to communicate with individual from a different cultural background. Ability to expand one’s own communicative skill.



		<p>Ability to identify and analyse problems in difficult situation and make Justifiable evaluation.</p>	<p>Ability to use non-oral skills.</p> <p>Ability to use non-oral skills.</p> <p>Ability to think beyond..</p> <p>Ability to make conclusion based on valid proof.</p> <p>Ability to withstand and give full responsibility.</p>
2.	Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Skills	<p>Ability to expand and improve thinking skills such as explanation, analysis and evaluate discussion.</p> <p>Ability to find ideas and look for alternative solutions.</p>	<p>Ability to understand and accommodate oneself to the varied working environment.</p>
3.	Team Work	<p>Ability to build a good rapport, interact and work effectively with others.</p> <p>Ability to understand and play the role of a leader and follower alternatively.</p> <p>Ability to recognize and respect other's attitude, behavior and beliefs.</p>	<p>Ability to give contribution to the planning and coordinate group work.</p> <p>Responsible towards group decision.</p>



4.	Life-Long Learning & Information Management Skill	<p>Ability to find and manage relevant information from various sources.</p> <p>Ability to receive new ideas performs autonomy learning.</p>	<p>Ability to develop an inquiry mind and seek knowledge.</p>
5.	Entrepreneurship skill	<p>Ability to identify job opportunities.</p>	<p>Ability to propose business opportunity.</p> <p>Ability to build, explore and seek business opportunities and job.</p> <p>Ability to be self-employed.</p>
6.	Ethics, Moral & Professional	<p>Ability to understand the Economy crisis, environment and social cultural aspects professionally.</p>	<p>Ability to practice ethical attitudes besides having the responsibility towards society.</p>
7.	Leadership skill	<p>Knowledge of the basic theories of leadership.</p> <p>Ability to lead a project.</p>	<p>Ability to understand and take turns as a leader and follower alternatively.</p> <p>Ability to understand and take turns as a leader and follower alternatively.</p>



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(1) Communicative Skills

The communicative skills involve effective communication in both the national language and English language in different contexts and with different people. There are eight sub-skills under communicative skills of which three are the must have skills and five are the good to have skills. Communicative skills are an integral part of any education system either in higher education or lower education. As mentioned earlier, in many countries, basic education or primary education is mandatory and it focuses on reading, writing and ciphering. People learn to read books, write letters, figure accounts and develop skills necessary to fulfil their expected roles in their households and community. At this very level, emphasis has been given to develop the communicative skills of individual so that by the time they leave college, they are able to participate in public and community activities and decision making. What is found to be missing in the nation's present human capital is the lack of communicative skills. The absence of good communicative skills somehow or rather has an influence on the poor presentation of their views and decisions made to gain other's confidence and respect. Communicative skills have also been greatly emphasized in the reorientation of basic education for ESD (Education for sustainable development) which is: the ability to communicate effectively (both orally and in writing). The communicative skill seemed to be one important component that lacks in the future human capital. The incompetence of the future graduates to master both languages will be a set-back to a lot of potential development and advancement of the country. Thus, this is a good time for reorientation of the curriculum of higher institutions to embed communicative skills.





Communication Lab

BIHER communication lab has facility to enhance reading, hearing and writing skills for employability and is used by the placement cell frequently during skill development sessions.



(1) Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Skills

This skill includes the ability to think critically, creatively, innovatively and analytically. It also involves the ability to apply knowledge and understanding to new and different problems as well. For ESD to be successful, it must give people practical skills that will enable them to continue learning after they leave school, to have a sustainable livelihood and to live sustainable lives. The critical thinking skills, skills to organize and interpret data and information, skills to formulate questions and the ability to analyze issues that confront communities are greatly addressed in the reorientation of basic education in ESD. The following are some examples of skills that comply with ESD and some of these skills are similar to the soft skills being emphasized in the curriculum of higher education. The ability to think about systems (both natural and social sciences).

- i. The ability to think in time-to forecast, to think ahead, and to plan.
- ii. The ability to think critically about value issues.
- iii. The ability to separate number, quantity, quality and values.



Placement cell offers aptitude training and test to enhance the student skill in above domain for employability.

All the above skills are important and students will require them as adults.

(2) The Skill of Team Work

The ability to work with people from different social cultural background to achieve a common goal, students are encouraged to play their role in the group and to respect opinions and attitudes of others in the group. They are also expected to contribute to the group's plan and coordinate the group's effort besides being responsible to the group's decision. This skill is also part of ESD as stated in the reorientation of basic education: the ability to work cooperatively with other people. If the future human capital can attain these skills, we can be rest assure that the future generation will collaborate ideas and cooperate a taskforce towards the well-being of the nation.

(3) Life-Long Learning and Management of Information

This skill involves an effort to learn to be independent or self-regulated learning in acquiring skills and new knowledge. The ability to find and manage relevant information from various sources is also a criterion of this soft skill.

Besides this, students are also expected to develop an inquiry mind and crave for knowledge. As mentioned earlier, these characteristics are equally important in ESD in order for an individual to be media literate and consumer knowledgeable. Life-long learning will enable individuals to accumulate as much knowledge and skills over the years. The ability to manage information well will allow an individual to distinguish between good and bad, to adopt the best practices and to make sound decisions.

Entrepreneurship skill

Entrepreneurial skill is the ability to seek business opportunity and develop risk awareness. It also involves being creative and innovative in activities related to business and tasks. To design and plan business propositions and the ability to be self-employed. This skill can in some ways contribute to the society if the training and practice is done for a good purpose.

Separate training for student to establish a startup in various domains are conducted by entrepreneurship of different sectors.



Training program on Becoming an Entrepreneur by Mr. Vasanth Lakshman, Co-Founder, Shreenidhi Solutions and Services(SSS) & Vice President-Urban Money



Ethics, Moral and Professional

The ability to practice a high moral standard in professional tasks and social interaction. This skill also includes the ability to analyze ethical problems and make problem solving decisions. Having a sense of responsibility towards society is another criterion of this soft skill.

Morality is definite requirement in industry and enhance the work ethics of environment. Specific training program to inculcate the soft skill are conducted frequently.





(4) Leadership skill

Leadership skill is the ability to lead various activities and tasks in an organization. This is an important criterion in ESD for planning and implementing ideas in a group. This skill is also important to lead in discussion and make decision.

Group discussion activities are conducted frequently to establish student idea in a forum by leadership discussion



Essential soft skills to be stressed upon

- **Communication Skills:** Effective Communication is a two-way process: sending the right message and to the right person. Effective communication is the communication which produces intended or desired result.

Body Language or grooming skills: Body language is controlled by your subconscious mind, so a reader can actually understand if there's a difference in what we are saying and thinking.

- **Points to remember:**
 - Never be up tied or stiff while making movements.
 - Avoid body language that may be misunderstood or look



- A consistent eye contact is a positive sign and must be used
 - Avoid fiddling with things around. It may distract the attention
 - Each body part movement signifies something and helps in interpreting. E.G. Standing with hands on hips signifies aggressions, nodding signifies agreement and active listening, biting nails signifies nervousness.
 - Unlike emails, body language does not give time to think. Hence they must be used appropriately.
- Etiquettes: Etiquette in simpler words is defined as good behaviour which distinguishes human beings from animals. Human Being is a social animal and it is really important for him to behave in an appropriate way. Etiquette refers to behaving in a socially responsible way.

Group discussion skill: Group discussions occur in many different formats – from very informal ones between friends to highly structured and challenging discussions included as part of a selection process. Developing group discussion skills is useful for everyday life as we regularly find ourselves having discussions amongst friends, family and colleagues. These may vary from very informal chats about day-to-day things, to more serious topics, for example a discussion about a recent news story or a problem that needs to be solved.

- Presentation skills: Presentations skills and public speaking skills are very useful in many aspects of work and life. Effective presentations and public speaking skills are important in business, sales and selling, training, teaching, lecturing, and generally feeling comfortable speaking to a group of people. Developing the confidence and capability to give good presentations, and to stand up in front of an audience and speak well, are also extremely helpful competencies for self-development and social situations.
- Interview skills: Interviewing skills are actions candidates take during job interviews that make them stand out. These actions can include proper interview behaviour, controlling nervousness or asking intelligent questions. If you have interviewing skills, you will probably receive more job offers than those without them. You are better at convincing interviewers you are the right candidate for the job. The best way to acquire interviewing skills is through practice. Hiring managers must also have interviewing skills so they choose the right candidates for jobs.



- Emotional Intelligence.: Emotional intelligence (EI) is the capability of individuals to recognize their own, and other people's emotions, to discern between different feelings and label them appropriately, to use emotional information to guide thinking and behavior, and to manage and/or adjust emotions to adapt environments or achieve one's goal
- Time Management: Time management is the process of planning and exercising conscious control over the amount of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness, efficiency or productivity.

The basis of time management is to take care of:

- Creating an environment conducive to effectiveness
- Setting of priorities
- Carrying out activity around prioritization.
- The related process of reduction of time spent on non-priorities
- Incentives to modify behavior to ensure compliance with time-related deadlines.

