Importance Of Soft Skills Training In Ethiopia

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Abstract: *Ethiopia* is one of the under developed country having a lot of manpower resources but it is not being properly utilized. The young generation is having enough qualification and an appreciable percentage of youth are getting good job opportunities also. Employers prefer to hire and promote those persons who are resourceful, ethical and self directed with good soft skills. In spite of such great significance of soft skills many institutions are reluctant to include soft skills training in the curriculum. The issue of employability of graduates has become very serious and critical.

Keywords: soft skills, training program, personality development, module, methods
Introduction

Introduction

In this competitive world, where only the fittest survive, it has important to sharpen one's technical skills, and also one's soft skills. Technical skills can be learnt, applied and measured by obtaining a degree from any reputed institution. But the same is not true for soft skills. Soft skill is a behavioral term of an individual's Emotional Intelligence (EQ). It can be broadly defined as personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, job and career prospects. Whether it involves face to face customer interaction or even indirect correspondence, employees adept at soft skills will achieve both individual as well as organizational success. Hence soft skills is critical to showcasing one's hard skills. According to Serby Richard (2003) modern corporate requirements are such that they look specifically for those candidates who can add value to their organization with their soft skills and the ability to develop and use soft skills which can make the difference between a job offer and enjoyment of new employment. This requirement of soft skills in a job has made the competition for job acquisition and job sustainability tougher. All those candidates who wish to get an edge over their competitor are expected to refine their soft skills This view point is substantiated by Hewitt Sean (2008) that, employers value soft skills because they are just as good as indicator of job performance as traditional job qualifications. So today's professionals need to encompass a high soft skills quotient, apart from the domain knowledge in order to succeed in this competitive era. For inculcating soft skills in them they have to be provided with trainings as a part of their curriculum. This in turn will help them to improve their complete personality and compatibility therefore enabling them to secure a respectable position in the corporate world. Irrespective of the professional qualification and apart from the domain knowledge, today's professionals need to possess a high Soft Skills quotient in

order to succeed in this competitive era. Hard skills contribute to only 15% of one's success while remaining 85% is made by soft skill (Watts M and Watts R. K, 2008). In spite of such great relevance of soft skills in the present corporate world some of the institutions are yet to introduce soft skills in their curriculum. There is a dire need of incorporating soft skills trainings in their curriculum, to ensure commendable placements.

Definition

According to Hewitt Sean (2008) soft skills are "non-technical, intangible, personality specific skills" which determines an individual's strength as "a leader, listener and negotiator, or as a conflict mediator". Soft skills are the traits and abilities of attitude and behavior rather than of knowledge or technical aptitude (Tobin, 2006).The Center for Career Opportunities at Purdue University defines soft skills as "the cluster of personality traits, social graces, facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark each of us to varying degrees." Their list of soft skills includes work ethic, courtesy, teamwork, self discipline, self -confidence, conformity to prevailing norms, and language proficiency. Soft skills are different and distinct from Hard Skills. Soft skills are those skills that add more value to the hard skills adorned by an individual. Martin Carole (2008) comments that hard skills are more "along the lines of what might appear on your resume" whereas soft skills are "cluster of personality traits, social graces, personal habits, friendliness and optimism." Soft skills are not a substitute for hard or technical skills, but they act as harmonizing skills that serve up to unlock the prospective for highly effective performance in people even with good hard skills.

Need Of Developing Soft Skills

Technical and job-related skills are a must, but they are not sufficient when it comes to progressing up the ladder. Soft skills play a very important role in this vigorous commercial epoch. Today there is a huge mass of qualified job seekers existing in the society and the competition within them for job acquisition and job sustainability is becoming tougher. To get an edge over the competitors they are left with no other choice but to add worth to their hard skills with soft skills to exhibit their true potential. If one has got advanced soft skills then definitely he will be able to establish themselves as distinct amongst other job seekers and also a best manager.Concerning the importance of including soft skills in colleges, Thacker and Yost (2002) noted that students require training to be effective team members. Employers often come across that "business graduates lack good team leadership skills". Similarly, according to Knell and et.al. (2007) employers are continually asking for a work force rich in creativity, communication skills and cultural understanding.The National Employers Skills Survey 2003, reported that employers regard shortages in soft skills, including communication, teamwork, and customer focus and responsiveness as far more crucial than hard or technical skills (Watkins, 2004).Poor soft skills like communication skills create a negative impression with employers during the recruitment phase and may exclude a graduate with good technical skills from being selected for employment (Pauw and et al, 2006).

Soft Skills Training Programs- A Basic Need

Today lack of competence in soft skill is marked as one of the reasons of poor rate of employability of technical graduates Irrespective of the target group or the institution where it is imparted, soft skills training programs aims to improve a whole range of skills, like assertiveness, negotiation skills, communication skills and the skill to establish and maintain

interpersonal relationships. Soft skills are perceived as those capabilities that are inherent in an individual. These competencies exist in every individual to a particular level. The aim of any soft skills training program is to remove these blocks or the barriers that prevent the individual from utilizing his/ her skills. Soft skills training will make the individual aware of his / her hidden capabilities and to refine it for the overall development and success of the individual.

Objectives Of Soft Skills Training Program

Aim of such programs is that the students should be able to:

- ➢ Develop effective communication skills
- ➢ Develop effective presentation skills.
- ➢ Conduct effective business correspondence and prepare business reports which produce results.
- ➢ Become self-confident individuals by mastering inter-personal, team management, and leadership skills.
- ➢ Develop all-round personality with a mature outlook to function effectively in different circumstances.
- ➢ Take part effectively in various selection procedures adopted by the recruiters.

Personality Development And Soft Skills

At the Soft Skills training programs training should be imparted to fine-tune the students' attitudes, values, beliefs, motivation, desires, feelings, eagerness to learn, willingness to share and embrace new ideas, goal orientation, flexibility, persuasion, futuristic thinking, diplomacy, and various skill sets of communication, manners, and etiquette so that they will be able to deal with different situations diligently and responsibly. Soft skills strengthen them from within. These skills empower them to understand "who they are" and how best they can come across as competent individuals in any given situation.

Grooming of the students should begin with a preliminary test in the English language to determine their level of competence in the use of English for effective communication both oral and written. The idea is to ensure that students are oriented to understand that a manager's key job is to be able to express himself clearly, correctly, and concisely. To achieve optimum results module has to be made for training programs giving stress on language, communication skills and behavioral skills.

Personality Development through Soft Skills Training should be conducted in three modules:
1) Business communication
2) Behavioral Skills
3) Training in Group Discussion and Personal Interview

I . **Business Communication** : covers the following areas: Communications skills, current English usage, debates, language games, situational dialogues, précis writing, essay writing,

presentations.(Preparing for effective presentations, presentation for small groups and large groups, marketing and business presentations.)Business Correspondence(Principles of clear writing, often misused words, applications and requests, routine messages, memos, report writing, organizing meetings, preparation of agenda and minutes, business etiquette, telephone etiquette, e-mail etiquette).As a result the students will soon realize that fluency and command over speaking and writing gives them an edge while interacting with people at all levels.

II. Behavioral skills: An array of skills related to personal growth for efficient functioning constitutes the training. Students are made to realize their strengths and weaknesses so that they are able to grasp the true essence of development. This module must cover Psychological Tests , Team Skills, Interpersonal Skills and Leadership Skills.As a result student realize that punctuality, goal management, collaborative team skills, and listening skills, are important facets of a well-rounded personality. Self-awareness programs enhance the students' personality These soft skills are enormously valued in business organizations. As employment conditions become tougher, potential recruiters look for personal attributes like attitude and values.

III . Training in Group Discussion (GD) and Personal Interview (PI)

Before the students go through real job interviews, they are made to go through a series of practice sessions on Group Discussion and Personnel Interview. Feedback is given to the students later for a realistic understanding of industry expectations. As a result Students aspire to obtain fulfilling and rewarding campus placements. How the students fare in the campus placement interviews depends on how well they are able to internalize the personality development techniques. If they internalize the techniques thoroughly, they have a good chance of getting great placements.

Teaching Methods

The teaching methods in the soft skills training should include lectures, projects, role plays, quizzes, and various other participatory sessions. The emphasis will be on learning by doing. Since the method of training is experiential and highly interactive, the students imbibe the skills and attributes in a gradual and subtle way over the duration of the program. The students will not only learn the skills and attributes but also internalize them over a period of time.

Method Of Evaluation

The Soft Skills training program is a credit course and the evaluation of the students takes place on a continuous basis. Active participation in activities, interest displayed by the students in acquiring the necessary attributes and skills, and the commitment shown by them to improve in terms of attitudes are the main criteria for evaluation. The effectiveness of the training session is enhanced through a two-way feedback. Wherever necessary, the trainer gives feedback to individual students on their performance and to the class in general. In turn, the students also give feedback on the training sessions. They are encouraged to give

suggestions regarding the content and the delivery of the training sessions so that improvements can be made in the modules from time to time if necessary. The counselors will also give a feedback to the students on their strengths and the areas where development is needed.

Conclusion

Effective communication and interpersonal skills are crucial to increase employment opportunities and to compete successfully in the business environment .The real key to the effectiveness of professionals is their ability to put their domain knowledge into effective practice. To enhance or to hone soft skill traits among students some training modules has to be made at college level.To conclude, the soft skills program is about enabling and empowerment. With these training programs students' have a smooth transition from aspiring students to young successful managers.

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