

book review: soft skills for success

Literature



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Author Information

GRK Murty, a postgraduate in Agricultural sciences with CAIIB, DM and PG Diploma in Personnel Management and Industrial Relations, is currently working for The ICFAI University, as Associate Dean. Earlier, he worked at AP Agricultural University, Hyderabad for six years and later with Bank of India for 27 years. He had a stint at Bank of India Management Development Institute, Mumbai as a faculty member and Vice-Principal. He took voluntary retirement as Asst. General Manager in the year 2000.

He has published around 45 papers in Science, Banking, Management and Insurance journals. He has also presented papers on Banking and Insurance at National and International seminars. He has published 100 articles in finance and HR magazines. He has to his credit two edited books: *Forex Markets: Exchange Rate Dynamics*; and *Derivatives Markets – Vol 1*. He is the Consulting Editor for the ICFAI Journal of Bank Management.

The Book

There is a popular belief that in today's fast-changing and challenging business environment, 'soft skills' are more critical for success than hard

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skills. This is a misconception. The reality is that it has always been that way! Nobody in history ever succeeded in delivering a great executive and business performance consistently through hard skills alone. General and widespread awareness of the tremendous importance of soft skills in management is, of course, a more recent phenomenon. As the world has become more and more competitive in recent decades, organizations are finding that under-productivity and incompetence of their personnel are becoming less and less affordable.

And when the factors determining employee effectiveness are analyzed, many organizations find glaring inadequacies in soft skills, undermining the effectiveness of their smartest, hardest working and most knowledgeable employees/executives. The managers concerned would not have been recruited in the first place for their soft skills; at the recruitment stage, their domain knowledge alone would have been comprehensively tested and retested. Nor would they have received any particularly meaningful training subsequently in soft skills improvement, because until recently, soft skills seldom received the attention they deserved. Most organizations worked on the premise that soft skills are inherited skills and they cannot be acquired.

At best, they can only be cultivated, honed, or fine-tuned along the way in a managerial or executive career through observation and experience. In the actual experience of many organizations, such hopes seem to have been significantly belied, inevitably warranting resort, in recent decades, to a more professional approach for the enrichment of this critically important managerial input within the organization. The imperatives of competitiveness pushed organizations to give increased attention to the soft

skills of their people, which seemed to really script the success of organizations better than mere hard skills. The problem has been extensively discussed and researched upon, resulting in the emergence of a whole lot of literature on the subject in the last couple of decades.

A lot of work has been done on the assessment of soft skills and on the various measures for improvements in the levels of such skills across the cadres in many progressive organizations. *Soft Skills for Success* by GRK Murty, discusses the whole gamut of soft skills in a lucid, persuasive and self-explanatory fashion, between the covers of a well-written, 200-page volume. The treatment is intended for the lay reader and is quite free from jargon. Even so, the book is comprehensive without being pedantic. By drawing generously upon the views, ideas and thoughts of a wide spectrum of management experts, academics and business magnates and matching them with the traditional wisdom of the prescriptions of oriental and occidental scriptures and classics, the book invests itself with credibility and authority. The author organizes the book in four sections.

The first section titled “ Know Thyself” introduces the reader to a definition and description of soft skills. The second section focuses on role, role perception and the management of role-conflicts in the work situation. It has a chapter exclusively dedicated to the discussion of creativity in the workplace. The third section on “ Communication and Personality Differentiation” offers cogent and well-argued essays on communication skills, listening skills and negotiating skills, in separate chapters. The fourth and final section is dedicated to interpersonal skills. The six interesting chapters in this section deal with issues like

assertiveness, handling of interpersonal conflicts, counseling, leadership, mentoring, etc.

Criticism

The author provides a systematic and uncomplicated treatment of the various topics taken up for coverage. The book is compact without being dense and takes the reader through a guided tour of the soft skills domain. It is an interesting and informative excursion. Given the importance of the subject matter of the book to the aspirants in the employment market as also to those already pursuing careers in management (adequately equipped with appropriate hard skills for jobs but looking out for reinforcement of soft skills), and given the orderly and stimulating manner in which the subject has been presented, it can fairly and safely be predicted that the book would see several reprints in the years to come.

Conclusion

Soft Skills are intangible, hard to define but that's what makes us a wholehuman being, a social individual. Successful people are always found to be not just professional but they also have these ' PLUS' qualities – ' soft skills' – that others do not possess