

Influence of personality on success



The present paper attempts to examine the inherent connection between personality and success. The term personality is derived from Latin word *persona*, a mask worn by actors in classical dramas. Behaviorist psychologists feel that if a person has some kind of impact or makes a certain impression on others, it must be because of his actions. The simplest meaning of personality, therefore, is “ the pattern of responses” which characterizes the individual. An individual’s personality is invariably revealed through interactions in the personal, social and the professional arena, for the act of communication determines how one views and in return is viewed by the world around. In the modern world of professional rivalry and competitive business, obsessed with power and achievement, personality becomes the byword for success. There are qualities that enable one to evolve and grow into an empowered and well-balanced personality, a choice that proves to be a wise investment for long-term achievements. Such qualities along with the ability to effectively communicate and interact have become much sought after, with everyone trying to understand how one may acquire them. So much so that soft skills and personality development have become the new slogans for professional and career advancement. The paper examines a few such skills and also how one may cultivate them. The paper also takes a look at whether these should be/can be acquired merely for material success or else, these constitute an inherent part of a certain way of living having roots in time-tested and acknowledged cultural practices that leads one to peace, harmony and happiness.

Contrary to the general idea that good personality refers to good physical features or ‘ trendy’ looks, personality includes many other important

behavioral and mental features. Take the example of Mahatma Gandhi. Most people did not find him to be attractive or impressive as far as his physical make - up was concerned. Yet, this short, meek looking, bald, dhoti - clad old looking man moved and inspired the entire nation to stand up and demand freedom. Even today he is known for his ' Personality' which established everlasting impression on the people around him and made him the man of fame and world. There have been many others too, relatively recently being Barack Obama, the President of America, who electrified Americans, captured their imagination, inspired million viewers with his twenty minutes speech at the stage of 2004 Democratic National Convention. He, with his outstanding soft skills and emotional intelligence not only transcended race and historic barriers, but also conveyed his vision, inspired confidence, persuaded and motivated people and became America's first African American President.

Thus what makes the difference is the understanding of what is commonly called, the soft skills. Soft skills are essentially people skills- the non-technical, intangible, personality-specific skills that determine one's strengths as a leader, speaker, listener, negotiator, and conflict mediator. It means skills related to human attitude, team work, leadership qualities, over all human nature enhancements. Soft skills thus is a sociological term relating to a person's " EQ" (Emotional Intelligence Quotient), the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that characterize relationships with other people. They are, in many instances, complementary, and serve to unlock the

potential for highly effective performance in people qualified with the requisite hard skills.

In broader terms soft skills is a range of abilities including work ethics, courtesy, teamwork, self-discipline and self-confidence, professional presence, language proficiency, cultural sensitivity, communication skills, ability to accept and learn from criticism, ability to handle client relationships, networking, creativity, ability to motivate yourself and lead others, time management, leadership and interpersonal skills. Studies have shown that personality measures parameters like conscientiousness, dependability and agreeability and they are equally important predictors of work success as cognitive ability and work accuracy. These parameters or traits can yield significant return on investment for an organization. For this reason, soft skills are increasingly sought out by employers in addition to standard qualifications. The wide rivers of culture, language and environment can only be crossed with being proficient with soft skills. Also, today Indian companies are facing intense competition from MNCs who are offering identical services in their own backyard. The only way that Indian companies can continue to dominate this space is by up-skilling their employees in soft skills.

Importance of Soft Skills

There is an axiom in business circles which suggests “ hard skills will get a person an interview, but soft skills will land that person a job”. Thus, an applicant with years of education and experience in the field might have the hard skills necessary to fill the position, but lack of soft skills such as leadership ability or self-motivation will not allow one to accomplish the task

in the desired manner. Research in many fields such as sales and marketing, software development, engineering and law, has shown that to be successful in the workplace, knowledge alone is not enough. Soft skills play a vital role in dealings with the external world and help us to work in a collaborative manner with our colleagues. Studies by Stanford Research Institute and the Carnegie Mellon Foundation among Fortune 500 CEOs found that 75% of long term job success depended on people skills and only 25% on technical skills. This is true at other levels as well.

For effective performance in the workplace, companies need their employees to have not only domain knowledge, technical and analytical skills, but also the skills to deal with the clients, customers, vendors and to work in a collaborative manner with their colleagues. We manage and think with our head. Service learning, Critical thinking, problem solving, decision making are related to our thinking processes, which we manage with our mind.

Functions of the heart are related to people and caring. We relate to people by accepting differences, adopting conflict resolutions, putting into practice social skills, showing cooperation and keeping the channels of communication open. The second function we perform with our heart is caring. We care through nurturing relationships, sharing, empathizing and displaying genuine concern for others. This all constitutes Soft Skills.

Indiana Business Research Center (IBRC) has found that, while credentialing in the form of degrees and certificates is important, development of soft skills—skills that are more social than technical—are a crucial part of fostering a dynamic workforce. Skills projected to be in the highest demand include active listening, critical thinking, speaking, active learning, writing, time

management, and social perceptiveness. Hence, one must focus on learning and putting into practice various soft skills.

The Important soft skills and the ways one may perfect them are:

1 Positive Attitude

We have all heard that it's better to see the glass half full instead of half empty. And in the workplace, that type of positive thinking can go a long way. A person who focuses on the brighter side of things is definitely much sought after as compared to a fellow who wallows in negativity. An overall positive outlook leads to a positive attitude and that can be a valuable asset in work environments that typically breed cynicism and negativity. The key to having a winning attitude is readiness to face and tackle obstacles and challenges that come our way. For example, instead of complaining about a stressful workload, one may think about it as an opportunity to show off one's abilities and getting through it productively and efficiently. Shiv Khera rightly puts it, " Stick to the fight when you're the hardest hit" (68).

2. Effective Communication Skills.

Effective communication skills help in transforming a manager into an efficient leader. It includes both oral as well as written forms: oral skills for public speaking, presentations, negotiating, conflict resolutions, knowledge-sharing; writing skills for preparing reports, proposals, instruction manuals, writing memos, notices, official correspondence etc. As English for Indians is a second language, so for good communication skills, constant practice at home/school/college followed by language-lab sessions is need of the hour. While good oral skills inspire and motivate employees and win over

customers, the written communication helps in following it up at front and back office jobs, clinching deals and ensuring retention of valued employees and prized customers.

3. Confidence and Self-efficacy

In almost every situation where one is trying to impress others, confidence is the key. While it's important to accept our limitations and act humble when we receive praise, it's also important to acknowledge our strengths and embrace them. If one acts confident in some of one's job responsibilities – like at written communication, project management skills or leadership abilities, one must make sure that it is based on genuine, positive reinforcement. Confidence comes from preparation, which is nothing but planning and practice.

According to Albert Bandura, self-efficacy is “ the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required for managing prospective situations” (1977; 2). Thus self-efficacy is a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation. In other words it is confidence that Bandura believes can be developed in leaders and employees for specific tasks in given situations. Confidence is not only open to development, but the more confident the individual,

The more likely the choice will be made to really get into the task and welcome the challenge.

The more effort and motivation will be given to successfully accomplish the task; and

The more persistence there will be when obstacles are encountered or even when there is initial failure (2000; 42).

This profile of a highly confident leader or employee seems ideal for effectiveness and high-performance in today's workplace. In addition to performance outcomes, confidence has been shown to positively affect goal aspirations and attainment. This strength and positive attitude has also been shown to have an impact on strategy formulation, entrepreneurial start-ups and managing very difficult situations.

4. Creative Skills

Creativity and imaginative thinking are valued in any job. Even the most technical positions require the ability to think outside the box. Whenever handed a tedious task, one should try to tackle it in a way that allows it to be completed more efficiently. When a problem comes along that others are reluctant to take on, the one who dares to jump at the opportunity to find a creative solution is the ideal performer.

5. Accept and learn from criticism

This is one of the most challenging soft skills, which is why it is typically one of the most impressive to employers. Our ability to handle criticism says a lot about our willingness to improve. At the same time, being able to criticize the work of others in a constructive way is just as important. It requires enormous maturity to be aware of how defensive one gets when confronted by negative feedback and how not to reject a piece of constructive criticism completely without acknowledging that at least part of it is helpful. Hence how to offer criticism in a diplomatic manner is an important skill to work at.

6. Motivate yourself and lead others

It is important for an employer to know what type of person his employee is. If one is a self-starter who takes initiative, such an individual must be given space to carry out his/her activities. This means constantly seeking out new ways to keep the job interesting and motivational, even if at the surface it seems repetitive and mundane. Creativity plays a big role in this, but there's more to motivation than just that. It requires courage to pursue ideas one has had stuck in the back of the mind, and dedication to follow through with them and be successful. The important skill to work at is to be able to nudge others in the same direction to work towards a common goal. If you want to climb the echelons of success, you should show a personality with strong leadership skills. One must always remember that a good leader leads by example.

Proactive

Being proactive means thinking and acting ahead. Basically, this means using foresight. It is a great method for avoiding more work down the road and for averting disasters. By planning well for the future and instituting systems at work, makes life easier not just for oneself, but for others as well.

This can be done by following some procedures:

Try to prevent problems from ever arising. This means tackling possible failings in advance to prevent them from becoming a reality. Get into the habit of taking precautions and developing fallback plans

As Shel Leanne advises “ Sweep aside low-priority issues, and promote most assertively those ideas of greatest importance, and shine a light on them”.

So one should be aware of the tasks to be considered on priority basis and those which can wait.

Eliminate altogether any task that is truly unnecessary.

Evaluate procedures and processes while in use.

8. Wide Perspective

Looking at the larger picture in the work means being able to see the determining factors of the success. It also means recognizing a risk that's worth taking, and knowing when to take it. Thus for example, if one is in advertising and has to handle the task of creating a campaign for a brand of soap one must recognize that the goal is not just to sell soap, but also to satisfy the client and provide him with a quality service. Feeling pride in one's job and having a sense of accomplishment are necessary ingredients of a well-balanced personality.

9. Interpersonal and Teamwork Skills

Interpersonal and teamwork skills contribute to higher productivity and better environment as people work together to reach common goals. Some individuals are born leaders or intuitively adopt the traits required in team work. However, in general, these skills need to be taught or can be learnt through practice and awareness. As leader or as member of a team, a worker at times has to handle interpersonal conflicts, personality clashes and other issues related to the team. One should be able to analyze the differences in various persons in the team and take impartial decisions. For this a motivational leader is required who inspires a team to new levels of innovation and productivity by working with the following dimensions:

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Assertiveness is the quality necessary to learn so that one is able to get the point across in a forceful manner and show others that one will not back down. If the leader does not then he/she will get run over and ideas which are probably good will be thrown right out of the window. One must be able to persuade others to get the job done in a timely manner and also in an efficient one. Persuasion is a nice and more gentle way to motivate than assertiveness, but since there will be diversity within the group, we must understand that everyone is motivated in different ways. Empathy is important because we must not assume that everyone has the same background or same feelings about certain topics. Diplomacy is essential because negotiation between members is highly important. We have to bring ideas together not just say that one way is the best.

10. Presentation Skills

People, who are working in the corporate sector, need to be good presenters. Every area of corporate life requires presentation. It can be presenting before existing or prospective customers, suppliers, media or people within the organization. It is very important to have necessary presentation skills to present the service, plan or product before the audience. One should customize one's presentation according to the audience. It should be based on the level of education, interest, requirements and suitable time of the audience. Presentation in both forms; oral as well as written form, should be well taken care of by the managers.

Other Live skills required for improving Personality are:

Etiquette

Etiquette refers to the socially accepted behavior and manners to be followed in formal situations. It includes office manners, eating etiquette and procedures to be followed in different situations. Etiquette differs according to the cultures and nations. But there are certain common features which are generally accepted in the corporate world. For example; giving respect and being gentle with elderly people and ladies, taking care of the guests, being gentle and polite in our words and movements, eating without making loud noise, etc. Today's manager is a participative leader with the appropriate etiquette.

Personal Hygiene and Grooming

It is implicitly believed and expected that the employees should take care of their personal hygiene for their own, as well as for the sake of the organization. An employee must take care of the body odour, bad breath, unkempt and crumpled clothes, dirty finger nails, shoes and socks, unruly hair and unshaven face. Neat people are appreciated and accepted in all organizations

Grooming implies mainly the presentability of a person. It is about the right dressing sense of the people according to the situation. Men and women should be impeccably but comfortably turned out according to convention and the occasion. Dress code of the organization should be given due respect. People with right dressing sense are appreciated in all organizations.

Body Language

For achieving effective personality, proper body language is required. Body language is a non-verbal communication which is expressed through facial expressions, gestures, posture, and body movements. These gestures and postures say a lot about our personality. There are various body language movements and expressions you need to have to develop a positive personality:

Maintaining eye contact is a sign of respect and interest towards the other person. If someone is talking and you make sure you are keeping your eyes focused on them then this will make them feel that you are in fact interested in what they have to say.

Your facial expression is very important. If you are always frowning, this would indicate that you have a negative aura, and this will push others away. Whereas if you are constantly seen smiling, you are going to attract other sunny and happy people to you.

Posture is also very important. You need to sit properly, avoid slouching, and if you can, keep an open posture at all times, leaning towards the speaker whenever necessary, to show that you are interested.

Flexibility

Flexibility stands for the ability to be open to changes, new ideas and environment. It needs a lot of effort to accept, listen to and respect others opinions. A successful and efficient manager will show flexibility in listening to the opinions of the team and take every one into confidence while taking

important decisions. Management should accept new thoughts and ideas for its growth.

Time management

A stitch in time saves nine. A professional should be a good example to others by setting a high standard on time management. If things are not planned or completed on time, it will have adverse effect on the organization. In today's competitive age, everyone is running behind time. It has become a necessity for all companies to work on timely schedules to meet and surpass the competitors.

Work Ethics

Work ethics is a set of values based on the moral virtues of hard work and diligence. It is also a belief in moral benefit of work and its ability to enhance character of the employer or any individual. A work ethic may include being reliable, having initiative or maintaining social skills. Apart from that a sense of responsibility, honesty and commitment may also be included in it. Work without ethics will not give a long life to organizations as well as individuals. Adhering to the general principles and guidelines is mandatory for the company to function smoothly in the market. Each employee should stick to the work ethics and cultures of the company. In order to possess the above discussed skills one needs to be self-aware and cultivate positivism in thought and approach.

Common sense

What is lacking among most people is common sense. People are good in repeating what others do or what the boss says. Many people fail to think on

their own and take appropriate decisions at the time of crisis. The solutions to many of the problems are related to basic facts and minimum efforts. But people think much and work less towards the solutions. People at the managerial level are expected to have the knowledge of basic facts, simple solutions and common sense.

Conclusion

To conclude, the above mentioned skills are easy as well as difficult to incorporate in one's personality; easy, because these are simple values mostly already instilled in us right from childhood by parents, teachers, culture and religion, so just need to be reinforced, strengthened, and difficult, because these require constant and continuous effort, and a sense of deep-rooted commitment to certain ideals in life. The important thing to remember and realize is that these are skills; as such anyone anytime can learn them, put into practice to embellish one's personality. After all we determine what choices we make in life. Community service, volunteering, leadership, responsible citizenship and contributions to group effort are our way of giving back to the society. We work through our marketable skills, teamwork and self-motivation to get the things done. All the soft skills listed above are essentially choices that we make about the kind of life we want to lead. Healthy lifestyle choices, stress management, disease prevention and personal safety are our prime concerns for better living. Success at economic, social, professional as also personal levels actually is a natural and logical outcome of the efforts we put in to acquire these skills and subsequently put them into practice. In an increasingly competitive, globalized world, the practice of these soft skills may be the only way we

may lead peaceful, harmonious, satisfied, happy lives. Hence, self-esteem, self-responsibility, character, managing feelings and having self-discipline must be practiced without fail. In a nutshell, the essence of life skills is share well, care well and fare well.

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