

Soft skills and hard skills: the differences



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Overview: As I have stated in the first chapter, hard skills are technical skills that need to carry on your professional work. They are indeed important for the success of the organization's core mission. Where as soft skills are interpersonal skills. Hard skills deal ' lifeless' objects. To excel in hard skills, we need to excel in IQ (use of left brain- your logical center). Hard skills may include machine operation, computer programming, safety standards, financial procedures and sales administration and etc. If you observe these skills, you can find these skills are manual in nature, quantifiable, trainable, and measurable. The rules and procedures of hard skills remain the same regardless of the companies, circumstances, the people you work with and regardless of the number of employees and the kind of background that each one comes from. However, if you look at the soft skills, they relate to Emotional Intelligence or EQ (use of your right brain-the emotional center). Soft skills are people's skills or life skills. They are also called interpersonal skills and intra-personal skills. Soft skills are molded and designed and expected to be ' fit' into the culture and circumstances of the people and the company where one works with.

The nature and the learning methods/ procedure of hard skills remain the same irrespective of the circumstances or people involved in or the kind of companies you work with. If you take computer programming or writing a computer - to be more simple, take for example, designing a website, the tools followed maybe differ from each other, but the basis of creating the code is same for any website. The rules for creating even the best code remains the same for anyone working on website development anywhere in the world. However, it is not the same with soft skills. Take communication

skills for an example; the way of communicating, tone, choices of words, expressions and etc all changes according to the person(s), place and circumstances. Soft skills are to be adapted according to the 'other' person with whom we communicate or relate to. That's the reason, soft skills are also called 'peoples' skills/ or life skills'.

Careers that demands hard skills and soft skills

Hard skills are skills that you learn in a classroom and equip yourself with technical skills. Hard skills are quantifiable and learned at schools or by way of doing a particular work over a period. If you want to work on a machine for producing an end product, you need to have professional skills in working on the machine and what you have to do on the machine in order to get the end product. Knowing a particular hard skill makes you in demand. If you are a skilled worker, you can be sure many works are coming on their way to you. Because, only a technically qualified person is needed to put back a malfunctioning machine back to its functioning mode.

On the other hand, soft skills are those that deals with the emotions of people. It is the kind of feeling that you create in the listener going to make your profession successful and sustaining. One of the most commonly used soft skills is communication skills. It is an important skill, which any employee looks for in his/her employee. However, it becomes the essential skill for people who are in the field of marketing, MC/hosting, counselling and etc. The success of a counselor depends on his/her capacity to persuade clients within a stimulated time period. The same goes with those who are involved in the marketing profession. The salesman, though it is essential that he knows some basic ideas about the product he wants to sell, has to

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have convincing communication skills so that he is able to win over potential customers while retaining the existing customers of his company.

Classification of Careers:

Careers can be classified based on the necessity of both hard skills and soft skills.

A Career that needs more of hard skills and less of soft skills: People who are in professions such as mathematics, statistics, and physics. Their job does not necessarily require to work directly with people who mean much to their business. You find many brilliant people involved in this kind of profession. This profession is suitable for scientists.

Careers that need both hard skills and soft skills: Many professions fall under this category. Professions that require technical skills to excel in the particular field of production and the same time requires the person to master soft skills since he/she has to deal directly with people. Professions such as accounting, lawyers/attorneys, home repairman and etc come under this category. A home repairman is expected to be technically qualified and acquired with professional knowledge of his work, at the same time, he also needs to be professionally feel at home with soft skills since he deals with people on a regular basis. The success of his profession is based as much on his technical knowledge as his soft skills.

Careers that need more of soft skills and less of hard skills: People working in the marketing category such as salesman, MC (a master of ceremony/ or Compère) and so on. A person who hosts an event on a stage need not have much of technical skills whereas it is imperative that he/she is a professional

in soft skills especially in the communication skills which is an essential to become successful in this profession.

Know the fact! While it is necessary to be a professional in both hard skills and soft skills, soft skills are more important in many professions than hard skills.

Do you have the desire to advance in your career? Think of ways to improve your soft skills, in particular the following skills; People's skills (communication skills, networking skills, leadership skills and Team working skills) and Self-Management Skills (Self-awareness, emotional control, confidence, patience and etc)

Difference between hard skills and soft skills

Many people are of the opinion that it is enough to know the particular technical knowledge of their chosen careers. Nonetheless, you need both skills to excel in your profession irrespective of its nature of engaging with people. However the degree of engaging these skills in your life varies given to the nature of the profession. You need to remember always that the success or failure of your career affects nearly all parts of your life.

Hard skills are taught in a classroom environment. They are measurable and quantifiable. Hard skills are specific in nature and can be taught easily with an assigned duration. They depict the minimum skills necessary to do a particular job. The product of hard skills is tangible and visible to anyone to see. Employers look for specific hard skills at the time of recruitment and if the applicant happens to be not having the specific hard skills at the expected level of degree, such applicant is rejected in the first place itself

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irrespective of his/her professionalism in soft skills. Hard skills are essential to get a job but not sufficient to keep the job or advance your career.

Hard skills can be defined as 'The knowledge to perform a particular job' that are essential to qualify for a job.

Whereas, soft skills are more elusive, intangible and hard to quantify. Soft skills are the progressive skills that an employer looks for in an employee in the long run. Soft skills are necessary and imperative for everyday life as much as they are vital for work. Soft skills describe the ways to develop relationships among people both at home and at work place. Soft skills are meant to build relationships with each other. Employers look for at least one essential soft skill from the applicant at the time of interview,; people skills such as setting an example, team building, empathy, acceptance, problem solving, ability to take decisions with less risk factor, delegating and motivating.

Soft skills are not taught in a classroom environment as hard skills are taught. Soft skills are learned as part of capacity building. By way of attending training programs, feedbacks received from other colleagues and supervisors, Soft skills are learned.

One career consultant puts it, " having hard skills gets you hired; lacking soft skills gets you fired."

In early 1990s, the Secretary of Labor of the United States asked a blue-ribbon panel to determine what makes an employee successful in his/her work environment. This panel published a report called the Secretary's

Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). The report recommends strongly the employees to learn and develop the same kind of soft skills that asked for in the employment ads that the recruiter looks for in reference letters and interviews.

The SCANS report identifies the following soft skills as necessary for work and career success:

- Taking responsibility
- Making effective decisions
- Setting goals
- Managing time
- Prioritizing tasks
- Persevering
- Giving strong efforts
- Working well in teams
- Communicating effectively
- Having empathy
- Knowing how to learn
- Exhibiting self-control
- Believing in one's own self worth

This is an indication what the corporate world looks for in an employee.

These are definitely possible for you to equip yourself with soft skills which would be of much help in improving your rank in your working environment.

Always look for the reason for climbing up your career ladder, this will give you the reason for learning something new. Even if you happen to change

your career and join in a new job, you may need to learn the hard skills of the job but your soft skills remain always the same and it is going to be an added advantage to you in your new working environment. It won't be surprising that you might soon face promotion on account of your polished soft skills.

Keep in mind, the knowledge of soft skills can change your career for good or bad. Know them how to use to your advantage