

Article

Understanding Soft Skills the Hard Way – The Making of a True Professional

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Rukmini Devi Institute of Advanced Studies

E-mail : effulgence@rdias.ac.in, Website : www.rdias.ac.in

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Mr. Deepak Chhabra¹✉

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the corporate world has witnessed a plethora of changes both in terms of how the work is approached and the people i.e. the workforce that makes it possible. Organisations nowadays are putting their best foot forward towards understanding the bigger picture in terms of the environment they fundamentally are a part of and how is it that they can make sense of what they do and their why behind the same.

Quintessential to this is the way the organisation communicates with its stakeholders, be it internal and/or external. How this communication boils down to everyday conversations is where it speaks of the organisational ideology.

This is where the demand for professionals who can cut the clutter and can make sense out of seemingly

complex situations, has been on the rise. Professionals who understand the nitty-gritty of the world of work, the associated challenges and how to manoeuvre the same have redefined the talent any organisation looks for nowadays.

Aspiring professionals leave no stone unturned in making sure that they are industry ready and have the necessary skill set that's in-line with what companies expect, given the talent they wish to hire.

One key aspect central to being skilled has to do with how any professional fairs well on the soft-skills front. Beyond your industry experience, domain expertise and your fundamentals is the manner in which you deal with people i.e. soft skills or to put this in a more refined way – people skills.

If one was to agree, we all have a fair understanding of the relevance of soft skills in the corporate world,

1. Assistant Professor, Rukmini Devi Institute of Advanced Studies, deepak.chhabra@rdias.ac.in

however, how we establish a relational connection with soft skills at an individual level is where it eventually matters.

From a professional standpoint, we should definitely be working on soft skills that we believe can aid us in our professional pursuits but before that, we ought to understand what it takes to gain, so to say, the necessary command over soft skills.

In a world where change happens to be the only constant, what the industry looks for in a candidate has to do with the right kind of attitude – something that acts as the building block for acquiring the requisite soft skills.

If we were to put this in a word, having the right attitude begins with – Discomfort. As a pertinent observation, when in an organisation, we are supposed to be dealing with deal with different sets of people, different perspectives, and conflicting priorities and at the core of it happens to be the organisational purpose that remains central to whatever we put our hands onto. This is where soft skills can allow us to ensure a meaningful contribution by way of how we approach work and ensuring that our contribution is meaningful and altogether purposeful.

Towards actualising the same, we ought to understand that gaining command over soft skills is where we surround ourselves in an environment, wherein, we are more or less process oriented as compared to having an outcome orientation i.e. we take a keen interest in what we experience and not necessarily paying heed to the intended outcome – this is where we build clarity on what is it that we are up for.

How many of us are clear on why we are working towards particular soft skills or skills?

This so happens because we have eventually distanced ourselves from our present-moment awareness to the extent that we seldom enjoy being in the moment and eventually fail to take advantage

of it, irrespective of the outcome.

Our consciousness should allow us to transition from the limitations we surround ourselves with [within that moment] towards the possibilities that have the power to shape our stories for the better.

Case In Point – Being Approachable?

As a professional trainer, I have come across many occasions where people are advised that being approachable is one soft skill they should particularly be working upon.

Imagine this; you shape your conduct in such a way that you are approachable to others – sounds good, right?

Well, perhaps, not. Herein you are doing the right thing but necessarily for the right reason!

True professionalism is where your conduct is or should be at its natural best so that others find you approachable as compared to you working toward it – you are now doing the right thing and for the right reasons.

This is where I feel we need to be there for ourselves. At times the expectations we surround ourselves with can take a toll on our consciousness and can eventually distance us from who we really are as we work towards whom we want to be.

If we want soft skills to work for us, we need to understand that the magic, pretty much lies within ourselves and this is what we ought to be pretty clear about.

If we can make sense of it, the world is all ours and we now have the right mindset to let all the soft skills work in our favour.

Are we all in?