Abstract:
The business scenario is becoming more and more competitive and it is difficult to survive without soft skills. More and more people are getting equipped with traditional degrees and certificates and one important point which differentiates raw talent from skilled talent is soft skills i.e. the presence or absence of them. What distinguishes a person at the workplace is how he/she applies talent in day-to-day activities, achieving the organizational goals. An employee with good soft skills will get preference over another in recruitment if both have similar educational qualifications and experience.

Introduction:
Many people ask the question: Is there any sure-shot formula or mantra for success? But there is really no definite answer for this. Does the magic prescription lie in a company’s band of talented people or in the company’s innovative products? Or is it something else that is missing from the equation for success?

An increasing number of companies are recognizing the fact that in order to get some competitive advantage, they will have to make sure that their people know how to handle themselves at work and how to relate to their customers outside their organization and with their peers inside. From showing empathy and optimism and self awareness to knowing what is going on around them, there are some competencies that make up an integral part of a progressive organization. These and more fall under the umbrella of soft skills.

Soft Skills:
Soft skills are crucial not just for a person’s growth but also that of the company’s. Otherwise, how could you explain the differential growth curves of two people with...
the same qualifications working for the same company, yet one is very successful and the other only moderately so? For example, you must have seen two shopkeepers selling the same product. But one of them is able to do a better business than the other because of the dignified way he invites his customers, gives them respect, listens to them and caters to their requirements while the other shopkeeper tells his customers that if they don’t find his goods any good, they can move ahead. It matters a lot what you say from your heart than what you say with your mouth. Another example can be taken of two doctors, of which one of them is more qualified but does not treat patients with compassion while the other doctor, though less qualified is more humane and considerate towards his/her patients. You will find that there will be more patients in the second doctor’s clinic than in the first one.

The answer lies in their different hold over their soft skills. In a constantly changing and challenging work environment, to gain a competitive advantage, employees need to know how to handle themselves at work and how to relate with their customers and peers. These skills are vital not only for a front-office job, say as a receptionist, who is expected to wear a smile and be polite at all times, but also in the back-office environment, as well. After all, front-office jobs are more people-centric and they require you to be at your best always—even in terms of your appearance.

It always helps if you are well-groomed and project a positive image to the world. In the service industry, in particular, where the back-office team has to cater to all types of customers, a person always has to be at his/her best. In an industry where you are involved with relocating people, including foreigners, you just cannot afford to lose your cool. Administration officers at help desks are virtually swamped by calls from aggrieved customers, requesting a new telephone connection or complaining about their malfunctioning generators or even gyms that charge exorbitant fees. The team of officers has to learn to be patient with such customers. There are no two ways about it.

Significance of Soft Skills:

The importance of soft skills can also be gauged from the following incident, wherein an HR manager refused to take a person on board because he was impolite on the phone. Even while this person was making inquiries about one of the job postings, it became apparent that he had little interest in the job. He had preconceived notions about employers being bad and short-sighted and the HR manager got completely put off by his caustic remarks and verbal tirade. In his mind, he was convinced he would never call this man for an interview as his ‘soft skills’ needed a lot of polish.

These soft skills should be inculcated in an individual right from childhood. At home, the child should be taught how to behave in a decent way with not just his/her parents, siblings and elders but also with the people around like neighbours and friends. Children should be made aware of their responsibilities towards their society. Here the role of the school is very important. Qualities of team work, empathizing with others, working together to achieve a goal etc. should be developed and efforts for overall development of personality of the
individual should be made. Even while grading of the students, emphasis should be given to development of soft skills.

**Business and Soft Skills :**

In business, your management theories alone will not help you to increase your reach to your customers or increase your market share. They will not be adequate to deal with a difficult situation or fix an unexpected problem. Yet you get maximum accolades when you deal with someone with a soft touch than with your extensive knowledge about a particular subject.

While most American companies invest at least one to two per cent of their budget on soft-skills training, in India the spending is much lower at 0.5 to one per cent. Yet it has been estimated that the soft-skills training is a Rs. 800 crore market in India and ancillary support services like management videos are worth Rs. 340 crore. This sort of training can be built into vocational training, management case studies, mentor talk, whatever, but it does need to be incorporated. Some managers believe that companies should plough back at least 10 per cent of their profits into soft-skills training. At Pipal Research, a Chicago-based company engaged in research resources, the focus is primarily on “professional development and mentoring”. When analysts start at Pipal, they are assigned a mentor who tracks their overall professional development. Later, the HR manager uses the mentor’s observations, other research managers’ feedback to create a development agenda for the analyst and the system has worked well.

Thus, while an employee’s domain knowledge and job experience are relevant to career growth, no less important are the soft skills. It is these soft skills that will finally make the difference between an effective and an ineffective employee / organization.

**Important Soft Skills :**

We all know that the business scenario is becoming more and more competitive and it is difficult to survive without soft skills. More and more people are getting equipped with traditional degrees and certificates and one important point which differentiates raw talent from skilled talent is soft skills i.e. the presence or absence of them. What distinguishes a person at the workplace is how he/she applies talent in day-to-day activities, achieving the organizational goals. The important soft skills are leadership skills, time management, presentation skills, communication skills, etiquette, telephone speaking skills, business writing skills etc. Soft skills represent a combination of skills that makes us user-friendly to the context under consideration. The context could be a part of our job or outside it. These are skills which we already have, but possibly need to enhance them a bit. For instance, we have been communicating since we started speaking and writing, but we need to know how communication can be used to make a difference in our organization. Similarly, we have been told by our parents and teachers about the importance of managing time properly, which are nothing but prioritizing one’s tasks and optimizing performance.

**Personality Skills :**

Personality skills are those that define an individual’s personality. Personality is the sum total of one’s physical, social,
emotional and spiritual characteristics that identify a person. It includes one’s attitudes, beliefs, values and character. These are the most difficult ones to be trained in as belief systems and habits are acquired over a life time. Knowledge skills constitute knowledge in action, as applied to your organization or to any life situation. They include knowledge, competence and technical know-how. These can be learnt in classrooms, applied to real life situations and also learnt from the experience of one’s seniors and colleagues. Soft skills already exist in all of us. It is only that we don’t update them quite often. We don’t use enough creativity in our lives to get things done. Hard skills influence our decisions so much that soft skills are not paid attention.

Soft Skills and Success:

A professionally qualified person cannot fit into an organization without soft skills in the same way that we cannot run MS Office without the operating system loaded on the computer. People are able to do their jobs effectively only because of soft skills. Without soft skills, there are very little chances of achieving success even with the best academic qualifications. What we learn in the classroom is hard skills which have to be complemented by soft skills in order to take us ahead. The business world does not operate in ideal conditions. To take care of such difficult and uncertain situations, we require soft skills also. Today, business is not just about planning and organizing alone. To take the business ahead effectively, we need to identify innovative solutions which are not taught to us in classrooms. Executives need to move out from a compartmentalized thinking which pertains to only their domain or specialization. In the real world, there is dissolution of traditional boundaries. Soft skills help us to look beyond these boundaries and look at the bigger picture. Knowledge skills can help you to start your career but soft skills will help you to sustain the growth. Soft skills are what make the difference between an ordinary employee and a successful employee.

You need to identify what skills you need to develop and then look at appropriate training sessions for the same. Before embarking on this route, you need to make some points very clear in your mind:

(i) You need to be clear about the outcome or result you want to achieve. Your expectations should be realistic. You can improve on your communication skills but you cannot become a powerful communicator overnight by going through a two day training session. These training programs make us aware of our shortcomings and then we need to work on them on a continuous basis in order to improve.

(ii) You need to be clear about what you want to learn. Going through a training session just because your company is sponsoring it will not serve your purpose. Take up something which suits your requirements.

(iii) It is important to keep an open mind and a learner’s attitude rather than a ‘know all’ attitude otherwise the chance of learning anything new is rare.

(iv) Once you have learned something in a training session, it is important to practice it. Otherwise you will not feel...
the impact and will forget it in due course of time.

Conclusion:

We have seen how important soft skills are for the growth and development of any individual. Today, all companies are realizing the importance of soft skills for their employees and hence organize special training programs so that they can update themselves. They are investing time and money so that their employees can realize their full potential by looking at things creatively, which not only leads to their overall development but also the sustained development of the organization. Such an organization becomes a proactive organization which can take up the day to day challenges head on.