"Management Works in the System; Leadership Works on the System" The Interpersonal Skills on Corporate Threshold

Dr. Deepika Nelson

Abstract

In today's business world, it is not enough to be an erudite on economics, design, planning or any other sectors in which you may have some educational background. It takes more than technical skills to achieve success in a project, program or any career. In recent years, the focus in management has shifted from technical aspects of the profession (the skills of managing the project budget, planning, scheduling, and resources, etc., have been viewed as the key to delivering successful projects) to people-oriented factors such as interpersonal skills. These skills are professional competences, soft skills, management abilities or whatever you name it. It is just as important to focus on the soft skills of management—skills such as relationship building and communication—that can make or break your results. Soft skills (also called "people skills") are typically hard to observe, quantify and measure.

In this paper the focus is on Interpersonal soft skill, hard skill, leadership skill and how beneficial are these skills for an individual and how these soft skills are becoming the key factor to differentiate a normal employee, from an outstanding one apart from this workplace communication relationship will be discussed.

Key words: Soft skill, hard skill, leadership, communication,

Introduction

> "Work is a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well
> as cash….in short, for a life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying." -
> -- Studs Terkel

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A rapidly accelerating trend in recent years has seen management play a major role in everyone's life. The increasing competitive pressure on organization to delegate responsibility to the employees has given rise to a need where everyone has to develop certain skills to survive. We understand from a personal, professional and global perspective how critical is to do our part to make communication work without the soft skills. Through this paper an effort is made to fill the void between the corporate expectations and the actual skill level of the individuals to be employed. In today's era of cut throat competition, one cannot deny the importance of skills, soft as well as hard. People skills are needed for everyday life as much as they are needed for work, they show how people relate to each other communicating, listening, engaging in dialogue, giving feedback, cooperating as a team member, solving problems, making decisions, planning, and resolving conflict.

Growing Importance of Skills

The skills are of growing importance in a world where business is marked by 'hot' buzzwords, such as globalization; decentralization; and management. Of course in real life soft and hard skills (such as subject competence, resource handling, and market knowledge) go hand in hand. In the future of work, soft skills are fast becoming the deal breaker in many of today's hiring decisions. Executives, after all, are rarely measured according to how well they can re-iterate the technical specifications of their products and services, but rather on their ability to motivate an organization, to assess the performance of their staff, to make clear and well-balanced decisions, and, first and foremost, their ability to develop and communicate ideas and visions. Soft skills (also called "people skills") are typically hard to observe, quantify and measure.

Soft Skills in Mechanical World

Soft skills are essentially people skills defined in scholarly literature are nontechnical skills, abilities, intangible, personality-specific skills that determine your strengths as a leader, listener, negotiator, and conflict mediator required to function in a specific employment environment to: deliver information or services to customers and co-workers; work effectively as a member of a

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team; learn or acquire the technical skills necessary to perform a task; inspire the confidence of supervisors and management; and understand and adapt to the cultural norms of the workplace. *Soft skill* is a sociological term which refers to the cluster of personality traits, social graces, and facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark people to varying degrees. Soft skills complement hard skills, which are the technical requirements of a job.

It is difficult to define what soft skill is and so it is worthwhile to enumerate the basic features of soft-skills. Soft-skills refer to a cluster of personal qualities, habits, attitudes and social graces that make someone a good employee and a compatible co-worker. Companies value soft skills because research suggests and experience shows that they can be just as important an indicator of job performance as hard skills.
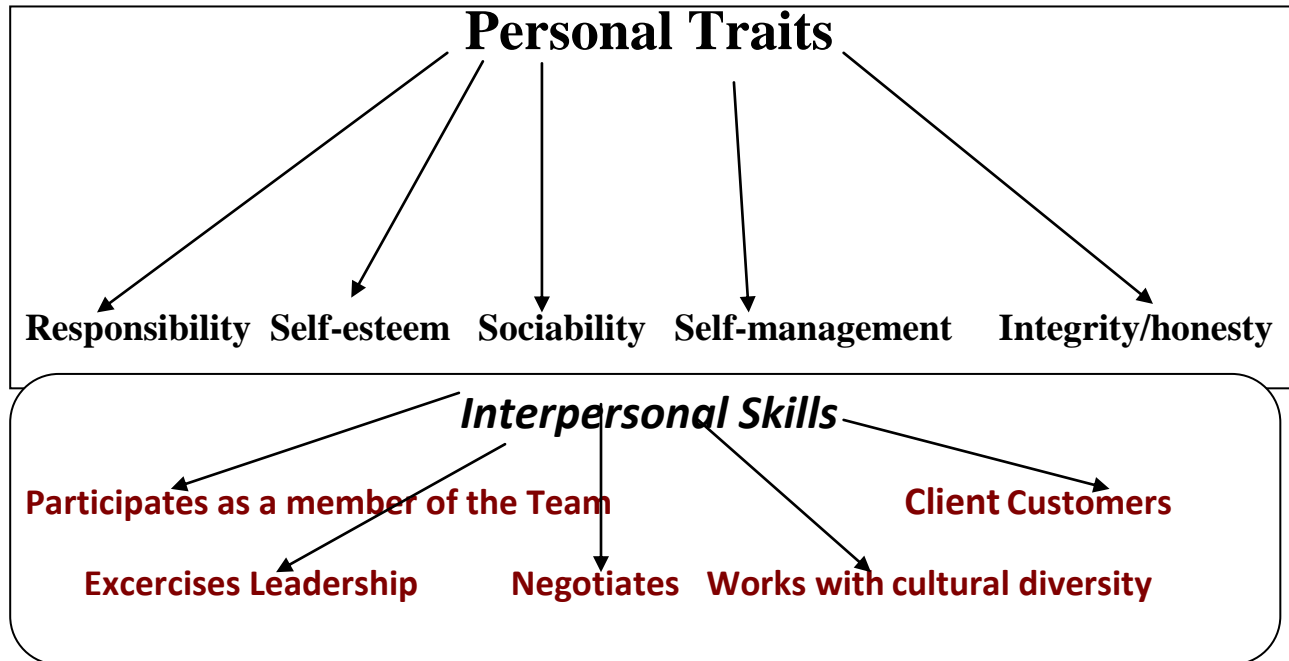
Today's service economy and the ascendance of work teams in large organizations put a new premium on people skills and relationship-building. Portland-based human resources expert Lori Kocon says. *"And with business being done at an increasingly fast pace, employers also want people who are agile, adaptable and creative at solving problems*." He advises all job candidates -- especially those who aspire to managerial positions -- to get in touch with their soft side.

Not normally found on a CV, soft skills are those personal values and interpersonal skills that determine a person's ability to fit into a particular structure, such as a project team, a rock group, or a company. The skills include personality traits like emotional maturity, eagerness to learn, and willingness to share and embrace new ideas.

Examples of Soft Skills

Soft skills refer to a collection of social grace, personal habit and personality traits, and friendliness, facility with language and optimism that usually marks people to varying degrees. Examples of soft skills are Personal qualities like self-management, integrity, sociability, self-esteem, responsibility and Interpersonal Skills like negotiation, working with cultural diversity, service to clients and customers, leadership and participating as a member of a team etc.

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The examples of soft skills can also be presented as follows:

Measuring Soft Skills

Soft skills are difficult to measure. Most pre-employment tests are of little value in assessing interpersonal or teamwork skills. Soft skills are behaviors and attitudes displayed in interactions among individuals that affect the outcomes of such encounters. They must be internalized as a natural aspect of a person's repertoire of social skills and character attributes. These differ from hard skills, which are the technical knowledge and abilities required to perform specific job-related tasks more formally stated in job descriptions. In the past, it was felt that managers and employees did not need soft skills as long as they could do their work, but now even positions in hard, task-oriented areas such as accounting and information systems require **soft skills** as well as technical skills.

Hard Skills and Soft Skills

In the today's world of occupation, while professional skills may open the door of opportunity, soft skills keep you in the driver's seat. "hard skills" are technical or administrative procedures related to an organization's core business. Hard skills are specific, easy to observe, quantify,

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measure, can be easily taught because most of the time the skill sets are brand new to the learner and no unlearning is involved and are the minimum skills necessary to do a job... Most people with the same level of education and experience should have roughly the same level of hard skills. Hard skills are the first screen used to weed out applicants who are obviously not qualified for a job. In the work field, "hard skills" are technical or administrative procedures related to an organization's core business. Examples include machine operation, computer protocols, safety standards, financial procedures and sales administration. These skills are typically easy to examine, reckon and evaluate. They're also easy to train, because most of the time the skill sets are brand new to the learner and no unlearning is involved.

Soft skills, are often intangible and, therefore, not easily taught. People come to organizations with interpersonal behavior patterns already thoroughly ingrained, and they weren't learned in a classroom. Instead, individuals learn how to deal with relationships and other life challenges "on the street" at a very early age. They observe how the people around them do things, they experiment, and they stick with what works for them. So everyone ends up with a unique portfolio of people skills; some behaviors may be effective, but others cause problems. People skills are needed for everyday life as much as they're needed for work. They have to do with how people relate to each other: communicating, listening, engaging in dialogue, giving feedback, cooperating as a team member, solving problems, contributing in meetings and resolving conflict.

Employability and Soft Skill

Many entrepreneurial ventures fail even though they have great ideas and great talent because they lack the appropriate structures and processes to move forward. In addition, when the focus is too much on 'hard technical skills,' the dynamics in the workplace become difficult to manage and many companies never see their first anniversary because they lack soft skills. Nearly one-quarter of executives in high-tech positions are "in trouble" due to poor people skills, says Hagberg Consulting Group, a management consulting firm.

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What skills do employers want? How do these skills match those that youth and adults are developing through their college studies and experiences? How can education and training programs prepare individuals to enter a rapidly changing workplace? Therefore with the changing education trends, versatility in courses, availability of qualified personnel, the competition for job acquisition and job sustainability is becoming tougher.

Highly skilled, adaptive blend of technical and human relations ability are recognized by employers as the primary competitive edge. Job-specific technical skills in a given field are no longer sufficient as employers scramble to fill an increasing number of interdependent jobs. Many experts point out the importance of continuously developing skills beyond those required for a specific job, and they identify employability skills that enable individuals to prove their value to an organization as the key to job survival.

Employability skills are transferable core skill groups that represent essential functional and enabling knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by the 21st century workplace. They are necessary for career success at all levels of employment and for all levels of education. People's ability to handle the soft skills side of business Influencing, Communication, Team Management, Delegating, Appraising, Presenting, Motivating recognized as key to making businesses more profitable and better places to work. Increasingly, companies aren't just assessing their current staff and future recruits on their business skills. They are now assessing them on a whole host of soft skill competencies around how well they relate and communicate to others.

Measuring these soft skills is no easy thing. But in the most progressive companies, managers are looking for people's ability to communicate clearly and openly, and to listen and respond empathetically. They also want them to have equally well-honed written skills so that their correspondence (including emails) doesn't undo all the good work their face-to-face communication creates. Good soft skills also include the ability of people to balance the commercial needs of their company with the individual needs of their staff. Being flexible and able to adapt to the changing needs of an organization also qualify as soft skills, as do being able to collaborate with others and influence situations through lateral and more creative thinking. The ability to deal with differences, multiculturalism and diversity is needed more than ever. Technical skills get you in the door, but soft skills keep you in the job. Companies sink or swim

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based on soft skills regardless whether their technologies keep them afloat temporarily. Great technology and mediocre management leads to sure failure! Leadership is the key.

Leadership and Management

Sampson (2007)writes, "The skills required for project management are now often divided 50/50 into traditional 'hard' skills, such as risk management and scheduling, and 'soft', people oriented skills, such as interpersonal communication"(p.14).Soft skills are the keystones to success. Leadership is one of the key soft skills along with communication, creativity, learning and teamwork. A leader is responsible for managing resources like people and finances and information in the form of decision-making, problem solving, meeting management, and persuasion. Many of these require presentation skills. In other words, good leadership presupposes refined 'soft skills.' Stephen Covey(2004) said: "Management works in the system, leadership works on the system". In other words, management is the ability to manage with complexity, to create structures and systems that produce order and harmony. Leadership is the ability to cope with change, to establish a new direction, and to get institutions and individuals to move in that direction.

According to Northouse (2004), when managers are involved in influencing a group to meet its goals, they are involved in leadership. When leaders are involved in planning, organizing, staffing, and controlling, they are involved in management. Both processes involve influencing a group of individuals toward goal attainment. Leadership and management are two distinctive and complementary systems of actions. Each has its own function and are necessary for success in an increasingly complex and volatile business environment. While the responsibilities and functions of management and leadership are exceptional, there is a link between them. Leaders seek to bring their organization more in line with the realities of their environment, which often necessitates changing the very structures, resources, and relationships of their organization which they have worked so long and so hard to manage. Lewin (1936) stated, "Success in organizations requires a balance of both leadership and management. The manager is the stone and the leader

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the fire. Both elements are necessary to forge a successful business. … the notion of leadership over management is being overemphasized".

Management is more of a science than an art, where process and practice are both significant and reasonable fulfillment of the management role is highly reliant upon calculation, statistics, methods, and routines. Therefore the art of management starts where the science of management ends. As "*Manage*" comes from the Latin word meaning "*hand*" in the context of handling something. Management usually implies the handling or carrying out of policies and plans laid down by someone else. Management is about the "hard skills." Management focuses on the business of the organization; it involves planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, and controlling and measuring. As Drucker (1988) said, "Management is not just getting things done. It involves the variety of activities aimed at achieving organizational goals. "Managers translate the strategic vision of the leaders into the tactics necessary to achieve the goals. "The senior managers in many organizations are often and correctly acknowledged as remarkably talented pioneers. The integrated structures emerging under their guidance, however, are typically so new and so dynamic that even the seasoned executives in this movement are still learning to create and operate highly integrated systems or networks".(p.45)

Leadership defines what the future should look like, aligns people with that vision, and inspires them to make it happen despite the obstacles". Leadership is a set of processes that creates organizations in the first place or adapts them to significantly changing circumstances. Leadership is different. Achieving grand visions always require energy. Good leaders motivate people in a number of ways apart from recognizing and rewarding success. They always articulate the organizations vision that stresses the values of the audience they are addressing. They regularly enhance the self-esteem of the people by involving them in decision making to achieve the organizations vision. Just as the need for more people to provide leadership in the complex organizations that dominate our world today, we also need more people with right skills to develop the cultures that will create that leadership. Institutionalizing a leadership culture is the ultimate act of leadership. Leadership takes some fundamental understanding of the elements of leadership vs. the elements of management, which is as much a function of personality as it is

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learning the elements that make good leadership. The best managers tend to become good leaders because they develop leadership abilities and skills through practicing good management techniques.

Zielinski (2005), however, points out that "If you had asked management gurus five years ago to name the most important competencies project managers should have, most would have said technical skills. Today they'd be more inclined to place communications or negotiations acumen at the top of their lists … There's no denying the importance of technical expertise to successfully orchestrating a project. Managing an initiative's scope, cost, risk, resources and schedule are all essential skills. Indeed, the quality of up-front planning--and a project leader's skill at re-planning as project conditions change--can determine a project's fate all on its own. But in rethinking skill hierarchies, many companies have come to view these more as baseline competencies. Now they regard soft skills … such as communication, negotiation, conflict management and persuasion, as higher-order skills." (p. 22)

Conclusions

Today, the need to coach new hires about soft skills is an accepted fact among employers and those who prepare individuals for the workforce. Technical skills are being recognized as one of the minimal requirements for a manager. The need for excellent interpersonal, or soft skills, are necessary requisites for success. While skills are good to develop by themselves, integrating them into a systemic practice makes you develop new competencies for success. Soft skills as defined in scholarly literature are nontechnical skills, abilities, and traits required to function in a specific employment environment to: deliver information or services to customers and co-workers; work effectively as a member of a team; learn or acquire the technical skills necessary to perform a task; inspire the confidence of supervisors and management; and understand and adapt to the cultural norms of the workplace.

Leadership is one of the key soft skills along with communication, creativity, learning and teamwork. . Institutionalizing a leadership culture is the ultimate act of leadership. When leaders

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are involved in planning, organizing, staffing, and controlling, they are involved in management. The best managers tend to become good leaders because they develop leadership abilities and skills through practicing good management techniques. Therefore the skills are of growing importance in the globalized world and Soft skills are the keystones to success.

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