



NEERAJ®

SOFT SKILLS

B.E.G.E.-145

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IGNOU.

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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2024

(Solved)

SOFT SKILLS

B.E.G.E.-145

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Attempt all questions. All questions carry equal marks.

Q. 1. Explain the importance of Soft Skills. Why do they prove to be significant in achieving personal and professional goals?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 2, 'Why are Soft Skills Important?'

Or

Discuss the importance of problem solving skills in the workplace. What are some strategies to develop effective problem solving skills?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 2, 'Problem Solving' and Chapter-15, Page No. 142, 'Problem Solving'.

Q. 2. How can we nurture interpersonal skills? Discuss the significance of SWOC analysis in that context.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 2, 'Interpersonal Skills', Page No. 4, 'Student-1, Conclusion' and Chapter-3, Page No. 23, 'SWOC Analysis'.

Or

Explain the concept of stress and its impact on individuals. Provide examples of effective stress management ways.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 36, Q. No. 10.

Q. 3. How can we communicate in a gender and race neutral manner in our professional communications? Give suitable examples.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 153, Q. No. 4 and Page No. 154, Q. No. 8.

Or

Write a detailed note on skills in strategic and creative thinking.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 54, 'Creative and Strategic Thinking Skills' and Page No. 58, 'Creative and Strategic Thinking Abilities'.

Q. 4. Discuss the most crucial values attached to leadership. Elaborate with suitable examples.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 156, Q. No. 13 and Q. No. 14.

Or

Discuss the role of cultural diversity and inclusion at the workplace with ways that organisations can adopt to promote that.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 152, Q. No. 2 and Page No. 153, Q. No. 3.

Q. 5. Discuss the importance of good listening. How does that play an important role in building effective teams?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 150, 'Active Listening', and Page No. 157, Q. No. 19.

Or

'Flexibility is a valuable attribute in the personality of an individual that helps to enhance leadership skills.' Discuss it.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 2, 'Adaptability/Flexibility', Chapter-12, Page No. 118, 'Enhance Flexibility and be Adaptable', Page No. 122, 'Enhance Flexibility and be Adoptable', and Chapter-15, Page No. 153, 'Lack of Flexibility'.

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QUESTION PAPER

December – 2023

(Solved)

SOFT SKILLS

B.E.G.E.-145

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Attempt all questions. All questions carry equal marks.

Q. 1. What are soft skills? Who are they important for personal and professional development?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 1, 'Defining Soft Skills', Page No. 2, 'Why are Soft Skills Important?'.
Or

Explain the importance of communication skills at the workplace. How can effective communication skill be developed?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 147, 'Introduction' and 'Managing Workforce through Proper Communication'.

Q. 2. "Every problem should be discussed in a multi-dimensional manner." Discuss it.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 83, 'What is Multiple Perspectives?' and 'Understanding Hurdles to Multiple Perspectives'.
Or

How can time management skills be useful in achieving personal and professional goals?

Ans. Time Management is the art of consciously managing your time to make the most of it. It is said that he who learns the art of managing time can do just about anything in life. Here is why it is essential to manage time and the importance it holds for people from different walks of life.

Time Management is essential for people belonging to different walks of life. Be it a student, homemaker, working professional, freelancer or a business professional – everyone must manage his/her time well in order to manage their tasks well. Here is a detailed look at the importance of time management for each of these groups of people:

Students need to juggle between several different activities throughout their day. From going to school/college to taking tuitions, from indulging in self studies to participating in sports activities, from taking part in extra-curricular activities to taking enough rest to stay fit and the list goes on. In such a situation, if you do

not schedule your time properly, you wouldn't be able to carry out any task efficiently.

Discipline is the first thing you require if you are planning to start with a business and the first step towards disciplining the self is to respect time. In business, you are your own boss and you have a lot more responsibilities compared to when you are working for someone else. In order to handle everything efficiently you must begin by managing your time resourcefully.

Home makers toil the entire day. Their list of tasks is endless and if not managed properly it can be quite taxing. Since they require doing different varieties of tasks each day, they should begin by preparing a to-do list in the morning. Prioritize the tasks and keep checking as you finish them one after the other. This would not only help you manage your time efficiently but also give you a sense of satisfaction.

Freelancers, particularly those who work from home, must ensure that they prepare a daily schedule and follow it diligently to manage their time efficiently. Most individuals who work from home choose this option because they have certain duties to fulfil at their home. Fulfilling your personal duties and managing your professional tasks simultaneously can be quite daunting. The key is to manage your time efficiently. It is suggested to identify those hours of the day when you can concentrate best and spare that time for your professional tasks.

With the growing competition, it is essential for working professionals to perform exceedingly well in their field. They are expected to do something out of the box in order to outperform their peers and stay in the good books of their seniors. It is thus essential for them to schedule their time in a way that they do not only get time for their usual work but also for doing something different/ new that can bring them recognition.

Sample Preview of The Chapter

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SOFT SKILLS

BLOCK-1 : UNDERSTANDING SOFT SKILLS



What are Soft Skills?

INTRODUCTION

Soft skills are interpersonal abilities which make a person effective as a leader, listener, negotiator, and conflict-mediator. They are interpersonal, managerial, professional, and cultural abilities. These interpersonal skills strengthen bonds between co-workers, enhancing performance and productivity. The inability to get along with people might stymie career advancement. People from all fields need these soft skills to present project work, engage with supervisors, clients, or professors, participate in group discussions or job interviews, or succeed in the real world.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

DEFINING SOFT SKILLS

Soft skills are non-technical abilities that influence our performance at work. Soft skills, as opposed to technical or 'hard' skills, are defined by the behaviours one exhibits in various situations rather than the knowledge one possesses. They are abilities needed for a successful career at one's workplace. They include how one interacts with co-workers, solves work-related problems, and manages one's workload in the office. Soft skills are also defined as a set of positive characteristics and competencies that can improve job performance and productivity, strengthen relationships, and make an individual more marketable in the workplace.

Besides, soft skills can be broadly defined as a combination of personality traits, behaviours, and social attitudes that enable people to effectively communicate, collaborate, and manage conflict. Soft skills are also known as transferable skills or professional skills. People with strong soft skills have strong situational awareness and emotional intelligence, which allows them to navigate difficult working environments while producing positive results.

Whether in a leadership position or not, the ability to communicate effectively during times of uncertainty or collaborate with others when solutions aren't immediately obvious is critical. Given their numerous applications, it's not surprising that companies are

doing more to assess a candidate's soft skills during the interview process. Soft skills are either impossible to acquire or notoriously difficult to acquire through traditional education. They are thought to be a supplement to hard skills, which refer to a person's knowledge and occupational abilities.

As a result, we can conclude that soft skills are characteristics and personality traits that help employees interact with others and succeed at work. Soft skills include the ability to communicate with prospective clients and co-workers, mentor co-workers, lead a team, negotiate a contract, follow instructions, and complete a task on time. Hard skills can be measured and are typically acquired through formal education and training programmes. Workers with strong soft skills can assist businesses in increasing their efficiency and productivity.

SOME OF THE MOST VALUED SOFT SKILLS INCLUDE

Effective communication skills, Leadership skills, Team work, Problem Solving, Interpersonal Skills, Adaptability/Flexibility and Work Ethics.

(a) Effective Communication Skills

Good communication conveys messages to the receiver with clarity and responsibility, without distortion or confusion. Employees learn what needs to be done and what more can be done to improve their performance when communication is clear. A variety of factors contribute to effective communication. Verbal communication, which refers to your ability to speak clearly and concisely, is one of them. This communication ability entails knowing how to speak to others in various situations or settings.

(b) Leadership Skills

Strong leadership abilities and the ability to inspire others are required for an organization's success. Employees with the ability to supervise and direct other workers are required by companies. Furthermore, organisations require employees who can cultivate relationships up, down, and across the organisational chain. Leaders must evaluate, motivate, encourage, and discipline employees, as well as build teams, resolve conflicts, and cultivate the organisational culture. Understanding how to influence people and

meet their needs is a critical component of leadership. Soft skill development is frequently an important component of leadership training. Good leaders must also have a positive attitude and outlook, be able to make quick and effective decisions, communicate effectively, and have exceptional problem-solving and conflict-management skills.

(c) Team Work

Team is an acronym that stands for Together Everyone Achieves More. Working with people in a team means bringing your best attitude, knowledge, and skills to the table. A team becomes an important place at work because it is a mixed bag of varying cultural backgrounds, perceptions, and ideas and opinions, but it still tends to bind its constituents together to work for a common purpose. As a result, teamwork entails collaborating with coworkers to achieve a specific goal.

(d) Problem Solving

Employers place a high value on employees who can solve problems quickly and effectively. The ability to apply your knowledge to solve pressing problems and devise workable solutions demonstrates that you can handle and excel at your job. This may entail utilising industry knowledge to resolve an issue as it arises, or taking the time to research and consult with colleagues to find a workable, long-term solution. Other skills that can be listed here are creativity, research, risk management, and teamwork. However, it is important to note that problem solving requires more than just analytical, creative, and critical skills; those who can approach a problem with a cool and level head will often reach a solution more efficiently than those who cannot. In addition, motivating the entire team to solve the problem is essential.

A systematic approach for problem solving involves four basic steps:

- Defining the problem
- Thinking of possible alternative or options
- Assessing and selecting a suitable alternative
- Applying this for resolving the problem

Time management, organisation, and problem prioritisation are also important skills. Meeting deadlines, achieving goals, delivering results, and completing assignments all within a given time frame is thus possible if we manage our time effectively.

(e) Interpersonal Skills

Your 'people skills' or interpersonal skills are among the most important of your soft skills. This includes developing rapport, building and maintaining relationships, and using diplomacy. Giving and receiving constructive criticism, being tolerant and respectful of others' opinions, and empathising with them are all part of it. This is one of the most important soft skills to have because it is essential for building teams with a strong foundation of trust and accountability, as well as for establishing good relationships with coworkers and others.

(f) Adaptability/Flexibility

Flexibility or adaptability is a valuable soft skill because it demonstrates the ability and willingness to accept new tasks and challenges calmly and without drama. Employers are constantly on the lookout for candidates who can demonstrate a willing and upbeat attitude and who are unfazed by change. Employees who are adaptable are willing to pitch in when needed, take on extra responsibilities, and adapt quickly when plans change. As a result, it is critical to be able to adapt to changes. Employees who can adapt to new situations and ways of working are valuable in a variety of jobs and industries.

(g) Work Ethics

Work ethics refers to the ability to complete tasks and duties on time without sacrificing quality. Even if you are still learning technical skills in a new job, a strong work ethic will ensure that you develop a positive relationship with your employer and colleagues. Companies expect you to be responsible and do the job for which you are paid, which includes arriving on time, meeting deadlines, and ensuring that your work is error-free. Going the extra mile also demonstrates your dedication to doing your job well. Many employers would rather hire someone with a strong work ethic and an eagerness to learn than a skilled worker who appears unmotivated.

WHY ARE SOFT SKILLS IMPORTANT?

Recruitment criteria in the job market are not limited to technical ability and specialist knowledge. Soft skills will be important to most employers because every job role requires some kind of interaction with others, whether they are colleagues or customers. Recruiters also look for individuals with the potential to become leaders. They will not expect you to have all of the qualifications and experience on the first day, but they will want to know that you have the qualities that will allow you to learn and grow in the role. When making hiring decisions, employers look for a balance of hard and soft skills. Employers, for example, value skilled workers who have a track record of completing tasks on time.

Employers also value employees who have excellent communication skills and a thorough understanding of the company's products and services. Workers with soft skills can create compelling presentations when communicating with prospective clients, even if their specific job is not in sales or marketing. Another important soft skill is the ability to train coworkers on new tasks. It has been observed that senior executives with strong soft skills are often the most effective.

When negotiating with employees, clients, or associates, leaders must be skilled at remaining mindful of what others want while pushing for what they want. Good leaders must also understand how to maximise the efficiency of their own work by strategically delegating tasks to employees.

Here are some examples of how soft skills can make a difference:

WHAT ARE SOFT SKILLS? / 3

(i) Even if a salesperson has unrivalled and exhaustive knowledge of their market, they will struggle to close a deal and retain clients if they lack the soft skills of interpersonal skills and negotiation.

(ii) A customer service professional with exceptional organisational skills will only succeed if they can also interact professionally with customers and demonstrate empathy and listening abilities.

How to Develop/Improve Your Soft Skills?

There are numerous ways to develop or improve any of the soft skills mentioned above. Before we can attempt to improve or develop ourselves, we must first understand and accept our shortcomings.

1. Practice: For example, if you feel you need to improve your time management skills, showing up on time or early for work or events, and starting projects at work earlier so that you can complete them ahead of schedule are some ways to do so. You can also volunteer to take on more responsibilities at work, which will allow you to gain valuable experience and improve your soft skills.

2. Take note: It is possible that your coworkers have strengths in a variety of soft skills. Pay close attention to the skill that they excel at. A co-worker may be exceptionally skilled at communicating. You may notice that he or she frequently takes notes when others are speaking during meetings. This allows them to organise their thoughts and prepare to ask and answer important questions. Incorporate this into your communication.

3. Set specific, measurable goals for yourself and solicit constructive criticism from trusted friends or colleagues: This can assist you in identifying key areas for improvement and areas of strength for goal setting. Based on the feedback, you can then prioritise which soft skills to work on and focus on those that will help you get a job or advance in your current career.

4. Online training or assistance: You can find a variety of resources to assist you in learning tactics for improving the soft skills you want to focus on, such as books, podcasts, or online classes. You could try out a few different types of resources to see which ones work best for your learning style.

WARM UP

Q. 1. What kind of work do you find boring and tiresome?

Ans. Maintaining an account at home for daily expenses is boring and tiresome for me. This is because I have to take note of every time you buy something. Sometimes I forget to take note of the expenses. After sometime when I recall that I have forgotten to note down, I do not remember what I had bought and how much I had spent. It is very boring and tiresome also.

Q. 2. Are you comfortable if there are other people who are willing to share some of this work with you? If yes why, if no why not?

Ans. Yes, I feel comfortable if there are other people who are willing to share some of this with me. It

is so because the responsibility becomes less and the work gets divided. If I forget to take note of the expenses, the other person will write it down. So the account will be properly maintained and nothing will be left.

Q. 3. What kind of work do you find interesting? Does this become better if you have people who are willing to share this work with you?

Ans. I like teamwork. Everyone in the team, in this case – family, will be contributing to carry out the task. So, everyone will be responsible and feel important.

ACTIVITIES

Q. 1. Identify two barriers to effective listening.

Ans. The barriers to effective listening are:

(a) Selective listening

We all listen selectively at some point in our lives. It is sometimes necessary to avoid distraction, but it can become a barrier if the listener has the following issues while selectively listening:

(i) Preconceived notions about the speaker

(ii) Topical biases

(b) External distractions

There may be background noises such as mobile phone ringing, people talking, or machines operating. Vehicle noise also has an impact on effective listening.

Q. 2. Suggest two ways to overcome barriers to listening.

Ans. We can overcome listening barriers in the following ways:

(i) Listen fully before advising: When someone discusses a problem or concern with you, it may be tempting to offer advice, especially if you want to help them resolve the issue. We should refrain from offering advice until the speaker expressly requests it.

(ii) Avoid distractions: To avoid being distracted, make sure you're facing the speaker and making frequent eye contact with them while they're speaking. Ascertain that you are seated or standing comfortably. Maintain the phone in silent mode.

Q. 3. Why is listening important for effective communication?

Ans. Listening to others is critical in communication. Effective listening entails decoding the message received. When the speaker and the listener are synchronised, this happens. The listener then forms an opinion about the message received. In the final step, we apply the knowledge and respond using verbal or nonverbal cues. This procedure improves communication effectiveness.

Q. 4. Each student in the class should write on a piece of paper the most important quality that a leader should possess. Each student can then share what he/she has written with the class and give reasons why they think this is the most important quality. The one quality which most students have written becomes the most desired quality of a leader. This will also help in discovering

uncommon and remarkable qualities one would like a leader to have.

Ans. The students in the class have the following views:

Student 1: The first leadership characteristic is interpersonal skills. Leaders who have earned the trust and respect of their followers can use this trust to propel the organisation toward its objectives. These leaders can work through difficult relationships and keep the peace in their departments by utilising their interpersonal skills. These people are skilled at both listening and providing constructive feedback.

Student 2: Leaders must be able to communicate effectively. They should be good speakers as well as listeners. They can help keep the workforce motivated and committed by using their words. They also listen to their followers and ask questions to ensure that they fully comprehend what is being expressed.

Student 3: Leaders must value workforce diversity and recognise that a diverse group of employees will bring a broader perspective to the organisation. They will treat followers with the utmost respect and will not show favouritism. They operate with high ethics, setting a good example for others to follow.

Student 4: Leadership qualities can extend beyond personal traits and touch on issues such as organisational consciousness or knowledge. These are the leaders who understand the organization's goals and know how to achieve them. They build networks within organisations to assist their groups in completing tasks and are equally adept at breaking down organisational barriers to progress.

Student 5: Leaders must project confidence and be willing to accept responsibility for both popular and unpopular decisions. They must be able to learn from criticism while also being acutely aware of their own flaws. Confident leaders can maintain a calm demeanour even during emergencies, which can be contagious when necessary.

Student 6: Another important trait of leaders is their ability to adapt their leadership style to meet the demands of the current work environment. They must be able to collaborate with others to achieve organisational goals and shift focus as needed.

Student 7: Leaders must project confidence and should not be afraid to accept responsibility for both popular and unpopular decisions. They must be able to learn from criticism and be acutely aware of their own shortcomings. Confident leaders can maintain a calm demeanour even during emergencies, and this can be contagious when necessary.

Student 8: Another important characteristic of leaders is their ability to remain flexible and adapt their leadership style to meet the demands of the current work environment. They must be able to collaborate with others to achieve organisational goals, as well as shift focus as needed.

Student 9: Leaders who exhibit creativity are capable of devising novel solutions to old problems.

The diversity they foster in their organisations enables them to provide more comprehensive responses to routine questions. Creative leaders can translate technical information into solutions that everyone can understand.

Student 10: Leaders do not simply set an example for others to follow. They also play an important role in achieving the organization's goals. They maintain a high level of performance in their organisations through their leadership skills, and they are able to keep their workforce motivated even when faced with a seemingly impossible situation. They can quickly identify and solve an organization's important objectives because they have a deep understanding of what it needs to accomplish.

Conclusion: All students agree that a leader must be able to communicate effectively and have effective interpersonal skills. He must value workforce diversity and recognise that a diverse group of employees will provide the organisation with a broader perspective. A leader must exude confidence while accepting responsibility for both popular and unpopular decisions. Another important characteristic of leaders is their ability to adapt their leadership style to the current work environment. Another important characteristic of leaders is their ability to adapt their leadership style to the demands of the current work environment. Leaders who are creative can come up with new solutions to old problems. Leaders do more than just set a good example for others to follow. They are also crucial in achieving the organization's objectives.

Q. 5. How do individual habits help or hinder the work in a team? Discuss this in groups of four students and share your views with the other groups.

Ans. The students have the following views:

Student 1: Personal habits do not always have a negative impact on teamwork. If you are a habitual goal setter, you will dedicate yourself to working from clear, written goals every day of your life. Every highly successful person is intensely goal oriented. They know exactly what they want, have it written down, have written plans to achieve it, and review and work on their plans on a daily basis.

Student 2: Yes, I agree that personal habits do not always hinder teamwork. If you are results-oriented, you will establish very clear priorities for what you do and then focus solely on the most valuable use of your time. All truly successful people are intensely focused on results.

Student 3: Certain personal habits have a negative impact on teamwork. A person's communication skills may impede teamwork. There will be communication breakdowns in such a situation, and the work will suffer as a result.

Student 4: Some people are never in agreement with others. There will be inter-personal conflict in such cases. When an idea or process conflict turns into a personal conflict, it is a major team killer.