Chapter: 3

SOFT-SKILLS - AN OVERVIEW
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3.1 Introduction

A skill is the ability, talent or competence to perform a task well or better than average. There are essentially two types of skills: soft skills and hard skills. Hard skills are defined as mechanical skills or technical skills that are the level of technical expertise such as anatomy for a doctor, programming language for a computer programmer, legal expertise for a lawyer, subject knowledge for a teacher etc. Soft skills are essentially the skills that make an individual smart in dealing with the self and others; they are the non-technical, personality-specific skills that determine one’s strengths such as a leader, manager, communicator, listener, negotiator, conflict mediator etc. Every professional must have a proper blend of hard skills and soft skills for effective discharge of their duties and responsibilities in various roles.

Soft skills can be defined as a combination of good self management skills, interpersonal skills and generic competencies such as technology skills. Interpersonal skills means the skill-sets required to understand others and influence them. Self management skills refer to the ability to manage one’s own self, thought process, attitude and emotions to best suit the situation and improve one’s performance. Soft skills also refer to as a combination of impressive behaviour, positive attitude, effective communication skills, leadership abilities and the ability to get along with and influence others. Some of the phrases closely related to describe the concepts of soft skills include "People skills" "life skills" "social skills”, “HR skills”, and interpersonal skills." Soft skills are those skills that are crucial to employee’s ability to project oneself smarter, work better and also impress others. Business and industry representatives have expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the general level of preparedness of candidates who seeks executive appointments. It has been sad to note that more than half of our young people leave school/college without the knowledge and skills required
to be positioned in a good job. This shows the significance of this study as soft skills represents the most of generic competencies required not just to find an executive position in various organisations but also to enhance individual performance and career advancement prospects.

To excel in executive positions, one needs to learn how to effectively project oneself, deal with people in the best possible way, and take a holistic view of things. Soft skills focus on how one interacts and react to others when he/she comes into contact with them; they enable one to interact with others in an impressive and convincing manner. The most frequently mentioned soft skills also include technology skills such as comfortably handling the usual features of technological gadgets like mobile phones, computers, internet, multimedia and presentation tools; minimum acceptable competence in reading, writing, and computation; effective listening and oral communication skills; adaptability through creative thinking and problem solving; strong self-esteem and initiative; the ability to work in teams or groups and effective leadership. Mastering these skills is often termed as personality development.

In modern business, soft skills are critical to the success of any organisation. They are as important to the modern economy as knowledge and technical skills. Anyone who has good soft skills can communicate and listen more effectively; extremely skilled at building rapport, showing empathy, resolving conflicts, and negotiating leading to a mutually beneficial solution for the company and the customers. Soft skills are essential to be a good leader and to be a successful professional. One must know how to manage people well so that competition remains healthy and ego clashes are avoided. He also must have a better understanding about people's personalities to build better interpersonal relationships. The best part of mastering soft skills is that the application of these skills is not limited to one's profession, but their scope reaches all walks of one’s life. Technical skills may teach one how to meet the expectations of the job, but soft skills teach one to exceed expectations of the job, superiors, subordinates and customers. It is surprising that most of the education system spend their time educating exclusively on technical skills. Both technical and soft skills complement each other and the balance between these two is what makes one a complete professional at work and outside.
3.2 Components of Soft skills

Soft skills can be summarised as the skills to understand one’s self and people, influence them and communicate better. The major components of soft skills are self-management skills (intra-personal skills) for personal effectiveness; people skills aimed for influencing people and Technology Skills. The components of soft skills are summarised in table 3.1.

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A. Self management skills

It refers to one’s ability to manage oneself for better personal effectiveness. This would mean being aware of one’s own personality features, ability to monitor own thinking and mental process, controlling instincts and sharpening oneself for improved performance. Persons with exceptional self-management skill exhibit high levels of self-understanding such as self-control, self-monitoring, self-discipline, self-evaluation, and the ability to motivate themselves positively to reach their potential. These individuals have a high degree of emotional self-awareness and recognize the source of various feelings. They harness their emotions productively, displaying personal responsibility and personal leadership. They have a high level of emotional intelligence, are better able to manage their emotions such as anger and frustration effectively and are assertive and skilled at communication. Effective people recognize their strengths and weaknesses and are positively motivated to create and implement plans to develop their skills and to improve their personal relationships. A brief explanation of the major components of self-management skills is given below.

- Acceptance

It refers to the willingness to experience a situation, mostly unpleasant, without an intention to resist that situation. Indeed, acceptance is often suggested when a situation is both disliked and unchangeable, or when change may be possible only at great cost or risk. Acceptance may imply only a lack
of outward, behavioural attempts at possible change, but the word is also used more specifically for a felt or hypothesized cognitive or emotional state. Thus someone may decide to take no action against a situation and yet be said to have not accepted it.

- **Adaptability/Flexibility to change**

  A stubborn mindset will harm self effectiveness. But the ability to shift one’s views to smoothen the situation and people is a real life component of soft skills. To be a good leader and professional, one should have the flexibility to change and tune oneself according to various changes in the environment. It is the ability to match oneself with the people, things, ideas etc. One need to remember that what's best for an individual might not necessarily be best for the company or team.

- **Assertiveness**

  Assertive style of behaviour is to express one’s own feelings in an honest and respectful way that does not hurt people and to stand up for one’s own rights while he knows what he says is not the only valid truth. Being assertive is to one's benefit most of the time but it does not mean that one always gets what he/she wants. The result of being assertive is that one feels good about himself and other people and knowhow to deal with him and there is nothing vague about dealing with him.

- **Conformity to trends/norms**

  It is the ability to tune one’s dress, grooming, body language, tone of voice, and vocabulary according to the accepted trends and norms of the context. One needs to constantly monitor himself to check his conformity to factors in the surroundings.

- **Control over temper**

  It is a universally accepted skill essential personal effectiveness. If one feels his blood pressure rising when he disagrees on a topic, he is at risk with regard to soft skills. Temper may clutter logical brain of thought and may lead to loss of control on one’s own behaviour.
• **Creative Thinking**

  It is the desire and habit to find newer and improved ways of doing things. It is the ability to generate new ideas by combining, changing, or reapplying existing ideas. Everyone has substantial creative ability, but it has been too often suppressed through education and experience, and need to take efforts to reawaken it. Often all that is needed to be creative is to make a commitment to creativity and make it a habit by consciously finding time for it. Creativity is also an attitude, the ability to accept change and newness, a willingness to play with ideas and possibilities, a flexibility of outlook, a habit of enjoying the good while looking for ways to improvise it. A creative thinking person realizes that there are other possibilities and always seeks better ways of doing things.

• **Decision making/Problem solving**

  The ability to make better decision is a critical skill, especially when other people are involved in decision process and also decision implementation has an influence on others. It needs a skill to arrive at a decision by sorting it out to a win-win approach. This is a basic soft-skill and demands a better understanding of the self and people. Implementing a decision in a group of individuals is also another area which needs considerable skill.

• **Emotional Consciousness**

  Our emotional level often plays an important role in our pattern of behaviour. Emotional consciousness refers to an individual’s ability to consciously monitor one’s own emotions and be aware of his/her emotional stage. This may help him to reduce the potential abnormality in his behaviour and avoid its impact on performance.

• **Initiative**

  Initiative is one of the most wanted skills in business organisations. This refers to willingness and readiness to take up the tasks and responsibilities and when it is demanded by the situation.
• **Managing non-verbal behaviour**

   Non-verbal behaviour is very important as they are difficult to suppress and they are more accessible to the people who observe them than to the people who produce them. The intention to produce a particular nonverbal expression cannot always be successfully translated into the actual production of that expression. The issue of whether people's deliberate attempts to regulate their nonverbal behaviours can be detected by others is also considered. The ability to closely observe, understand and manage one’s own body language will enable us to have a better control over our non-verbal behaviour and also to enhance our interpersonal relationship.

• **Managing own perception**

   Perception refers to the process of receiving, selecting organising, interpreting and reacting to stimuli. An untrained mind tends to make lots of errors in perceiving things. Managing one’s own perception is a skill as it gives a clearer picture of the stimuli and reduces faulty judgments and thus improves self effectiveness.

• **Motivating self**

   Motivation is the power behind our performance. Motivated people do tend to perform better. Usually, one gets motivated by an external stimulus, but the limitation of this kind of motivation is that it does not last long. The motivation gets faded as the time passes. This necessitates the frequent external intervention for employee motivation. Here is the importance of the skill called ‘self motivation’. It means the ability of a person to be consciously aware of once own motivational level and to take efforts to keep oneself at higher levels of motivation to the maximum possible frequency.

• **Positive attitude**

   A positive attitude is not accidental. It is something that is developed by training one's self. Attitude is a matter of choice. Every situation we face offers us choices to make either to react positively or negatively. Our attitude reflects on our behaviour in every situation. Positive attitude is an important soft-skill, and a central cause in an individual’s ability to develop other
effective performance enhancement skills. Performing a regular attitude check-up will help one to build a positive attitude.

- **Presence of mind**

  Presence of mind refers to ability to think and act calmly and efficiently, especially in an emergency. This involves self-control in a crisis; ability to say or do the right thing in an emergency, and the trait of resolutely controlling your own behaviour.

- **Self awareness**

  Self-awareness includes recognition of our personality, strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognize when we are stressed or under pressure. It is also often a prerequisite for self effectiveness and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy for others.

- **Self-confidence**

  Usually, when someone is referred to as 'confident' they are referring to self-confidence. Self-confidence is a feeling of trust and faith in one’s own abilities, qualities and judgment. It is a self-assurance arising from an appreciation of own abilities and also having confidence in oneself when considering a capability. People with high self-confidence typically have little fear of the unknown, ability to stand up for what they believe in, and have the courage to risk embarrassment.

- **Self-discipline**

  It refers to the training that one gives to oneself to accomplish a certain task or to adopt a particular pattern of behaviour. It is the denial of self’s extravagant pleasure in order to accomplish more priorities. Thus, self-discipline is the assertion of willpower over basic instincts and desires, and usually understood to be a close to the term ‘self control'. Self-discipline to some extent is a substitute for motivation, when one uses reason to determine a best course of action that opposes one's desires. It ensures the ability to arrange one’s own tasks for best performance, to learn from experience, to ask questions and correct mistakes, and to absorb criticism and direction without feeling defeated, resentful, or insulted.
• **Self esteem**

  Self-esteem reflects a person's overall self-appraisal and a self rating of their worth. Self-esteem encompasses both beliefs and emotions. Self esteem is reflected in one’s behaviour. Appropriate level of self esteem is necessary to become a better individual at workplace and outside.

• **Stress management:**

  Stress is an integral part of today’s work life. Ability to meet the deadlines and beat the stress is the area where companies pay a lot of attention. Effective stress management is crucial since the continuous exposure to stress may lead to burnout which will in turn result in a worst organisation climate. Stressed employees will lead to poor organisational performance in the long run, as it reduces their productivity and well being.

• **Time Management & Punctuality**

  It is said that time is eternity and one can never manage time. It is true in the sense that we need to manage our activities so that time is in your control. Time management means the skill to manage time in order to make the most out of it. This skill includes all of the practices that individuals follow to make better use of their time. It refers to principles and systems that individuals use to make conscious decisions about the activities that occupy their time. Punctuality is a visible sign of better time management. Punctuality is the characteristic of being able to complete a required task or fulfil an obligation before or at a previously-designated time. Today’s corporate cultures value punctuality and being late means showing disrespect for another's time and may be considered as an insult.

• **Work ethics & values**

  Work ethics imply a set of values based on the moral virtues of hard work and diligence. It is also a belief in moral benefit of work and its ability to enhance the character part of one’s personality. Work ethics may include being reliable, having initiative or maintaining social skills that are more work specific. People exhibiting good work ethics tend to be accepted more among others, selected for better positions, given more responsibility and ultimately they have more access to higher organisational ladder promotion. Those who
fail to exhibit good work ethics and values may not be placed in positions of greater responsibility. Good work ethics and values can foster the relationship among the peer group, superiors, subordinates and most importantly with customers.

B. People Skills

This term is used often in business contexts to refer the measure of a person's ability to operate within business organisations through social communication and interactions. It is how a person relates and influences others. Good interpersonal skills will enable one to reduce conflict and increase participation in teams for completing tasks. This would help to improve the productivity in organisations with least conflicts. Productive, successful, fulfilled people in careers that encompass all intellectual disciplines and majors have the ability to nurture and develop successful and satisfying relationships. Effective people are skilled in understanding other people and they are curious about the issues such as; what motivates individuals, how they think, how they feel, and prepares themselves to work cooperatively and productively with people inside and outside organisation. Successful people are excellent communicators and possess effective relationship skills such as active listening, empathic communication and assertive responding. The important components of soft skills are explained below.

- **Affectionate Behaviour**

  Affection is an emotion derives from the recognition of one's own values in the character of another. It is popularly used to denote a feeling or type of loving and friendly behaviour, resulting to more than goodwill or friendship. Numerous behaviours are used by people to express affection. Being affectionate is a basic task in relationship management.

- **Agreeableness**

  Individuals who are agreeable have more tendency to trust others, to be frank and straight forward with others, to have an altruistic pint of view, to cooperate with others especially in conflict situations, to demonstrate social humility and to be tender hearted and sympathetic to others.
• **Appropriate use of power**

  Power needs to be used appropriately; otherwise it will destroy the harmony in organisations and would lead to interpersonal conflicts. Thus, inappropriate use of power will hamper the smooth performance of an organisation. This is a skill that can be inculcated by conscious practice.

• **Building trust and rapport**

  In today’s high pressure and chaotic work place, the skills to build rapport is very important. Rapport results from trust and consistency boosts trust. Accept responsibilities for one’s own actions and behaviour. Trust grows when one accept accountability for their actions. Also, one needs to be more open with information to demonstrate his trust and relationships are always reciprocal. Perhaps the most important and simplest way to build trust is to tell the truth. The most essential human tasks are sensing, judging, creating and building relationships.

• **Conflict Management**

  Conflict can be a very good thing if managed well as it can win respect and find better solutions to problems. If it is managed badly, it can engender resistance or even become opposition to the organisational performance. The parties to conflict may be the employees or customers.

• **Counselling skills**

  This skill is a hard to find skill. This is important in organisation as tool to overcome personal emergencies. It is like a sports trainer running onto the pitch in the middle of the game to help an injured player to get back into game as soon as possible. Some project managers take the view that ‘personal problems should be left at home’, but at extreme this attitude is both unrealistic and detrimental to the performance of the organisation as personal problems will have an impact on one’s performance at work.

• **Courtesy and good manners**

  This is another component of soft skills. It is about being nice to others. It is the skill to listen, to smile, and make better dealings with each other. It is treating other people in the same way as we expect them to treat us. Even a small advance in courtesy would create a great feeling in other’s mind,
which will lead to a group of people more productive, healthier and happier. Among others it also includes the habitual use of nice words while dealing with customers, supervisors, and colleagues such as ‘please’, ‘thank you’, ‘excuse me’, ‘may I help you?’, etc.

- **Creating positive relationship**

  Creating positive relationship needs a special skill. More than a skill useful at work, it is important in every walks of human life. This skill helps to create a positive impression in the minds of everybody whom we contact or interact. In business organisation, it is more about creating positive relations with peers, superiors, subordinates and customers.

- **Decision making in group**

  The ability to take decision is a crucial skill for team leaders, especially when other people are involved in the decision making process or the decision has an influence on others. The skill to arrive at a decision by sorting it out to a win-win approach is a basic people skill. This requires a better understanding of the people. Implementing a decision in a group also requires considerable skill.

- **Delegation with respect**

  This is a basic management skill, but a vital one while dealing with the people dimension of an organisation. Effective delegation empowers people in an organisation, which leads to a better organisational performance. Skilled managers do the delegation by ensuring respect and dignity of their subordinates, which resulting in better acceptance of the delegated assignments.

- **Empathy**

  Empathy is commonly defined as the ability to recognize, perceive and feel directly the emotion of another. A person good at this skill will be able to define another's mode of thought and sense their mood more effectively and will also be sensitive to other’s state of mind, beliefs, and desires of Empathy is often characterized as the ability to ‘put oneself into another's shoes’, or experiencing the outlook or emotions of another being within oneself, a sort of emotional resonance.
• **Forgiveness**

  This skill is often termed as a divine feature of a human being. Forgiveness is the mental, emotional and/or spiritual process of ceasing to feel resentment, indignation or anger against another person for a real or perceived offence, difference or mistake, and ceasing to demand punishment or restitution. Forgiveness may be considered simply in terms of the person who forgives, in terms of the person forgiven and/or in terms of the relationship between the forgiver and the person forgiven. This skill is an output of a considerable practice and training of the self.

• **Generosity**

  Generosity is the habit of giving, often equated with charity, that is widely accepted in society as a desirable habit which can be inculcated by practice and training. Generosity can also be spending time, money, or labour, for others, without expecting rewards in return. Generosity is not solely based on one's economic status, but instead, includes the individual's pure intentions of looking out for society's common good and giving from the heart. Generosity is a reflection of an individual's passion to help others.

• **Impressive Speaking skill**

  Impressive speaking skill is one of the universally accepted skills to influence others and acts as a necessary ingredient for success in any profession. Speaking is a very basic human skill and one cannot live without it and is very important in our personal lives as well as professional life. Though most of the people agree that these skills are important, very few give a high enough priority on it. People always have different opinions about matters, but this doesn't mean that nothing positive will come to them. One has to learn how to adapt to people and play with the dynamics of the conversation.

• **Leadership skills**

  A team is the most important constituent of any organisation. Periodical interventions, benchmarking and performance enhancement initiatives are necessary from a leader to ensure the effectiveness of any team performance. Effective leaders assume the roles of a trainer, coach and mentor
continuously by empowering their team members to shoulder higher roles and responsibilities. In addition, leaders should institutionalize leadership development in their organisation and build a second line leader who would eventually be able to assume the role of first line team leadership.

- **Listening and comprehension**

  Listening is a vital skill at all times. Effective listening is crucial for in communication and it is a luxury to be fully understood. It indicates that listener is interested and understands the speaker. Listening also demonstrates respect and helps one to respond more accurately. Team members are attracted to those who listen actively. A host of techniques like proper eye contact, asking for additional information, restating or paraphrasing key points and distraction free environment, etc., fosters active listening which is a critical component of soft skills.

- **Maintaining relationships**

  Many individuals are good at creating relationships, but only few take efforts to maintain such them, which need conscious efforts. Remembering personal information and updating contacts in regular intervals ensures the closeness of a relationship. Respect for individuals, personal dignity, personal space for creativity and autonomy, good and timely feedback and a genuine interest in others will maintain and strengthen the interpersonal relationship.

- **Managing expectation**

  Satisfaction is a function of expectation. The level of expectation from people and products ultimately determine the level of satisfaction. So sensing the level of expectation and tuning the performance accordingly is a skill today’s business world is looking for. This is not just limited to the customers; as this is true in managing the subordinates, peers and even the superiors.

- **Managing other’s perception**

  Many problems and conflicts occur because of the mistakes in sensing, interpreting or reacting to other’s perception. Thus, understanding how another person has perceived your idea, behaviour, etc., would help you to clarify their perception and solve the possibility of conflicts. This is better
possible by being more empathetic and also by conscious reading of other’s perception.

- **Managing remote relationships**

  Remote relationship management refers to building rapport with those not in the immediate environment. It is an additional challenge for the global business organisations with multiple units and geographically distributed work locations. The soft-skilled persons is good at building ‘remote rapport’ through innovative use of technology, process and other channels of communication.

- **Mentoring/coaching skills**

  Mentoring is a relatively recent concept as a business leadership style. A mentor might use a variety of approaches, e.g., coaching, training, discussion, counselling, etc in order to help another person to perform more effectively and/or to progress in his career. Being less of a boss and more of a mentor is accepted as an effective leadership style while dealing with the new generation workforce.

- **Motivating others**

  This skill is essential for team leaders in any business organisation. It is one of the most paid skills in business. Motivating people requires a clear, unbiased understanding of the situation and a deep insight into the complexities of the human nature both individual and team levels. It requires establishment of appropriate and reasonable expectations and goals, and a balance between tangible and intangible incentives. The ability to motivate oneself even without any external intervention should be inculcated as a valuable skill in today’s corporate world.

- **Negotiation skill**

  Negotiation is required at various levels of business organisation. It requires special skills to effectively deal with the process of negotiation. Negotiation involves various steps such as identifying common goals among different parties in conflict; clearly present the facts and arguments; listen to and understand other party’s position; create possible ways to resolve conflict; make reasonable compromises. This can instil harmony in relationships.
• **Persuasiveness**

   Persuading people effectively demands expert skills, tact and cunning, and a great deal of interpersonal smarts. But most of all persuasion is an art, not a science. It takes just as much practice as any sport, and can only be mastered after real world practice and training.

• **Presentation skill**

   Presentation is an essential function for executives in almost all the stages of one’s career. A dynamic and confident presentation will help to achieve the goal of the organisation in an easy way. Through effective presentation one can sell his ideas and product in a convincing manner, and also can be used to influence people in organisations.

• **Promoting change**

   Change is one of the basic features of modern business. Change is usually resisted by people associated with it. Any change can be implemented effectively if people component associated with it can be managed. Any change is possible if one has the strategy to implement the change and convince the people concerned. This is a core skill contributes to soft-skill sets. This skill is a combination of various other skills like, persuasiveness, listening, motivating, effective communication, leadership and relationship management.

• **Sensing other’s nonverbal behaviour**

   The ability to read other’s body language could be acquired through training or conscious practice. Understanding body language is a skill that can enhance one’s interpersonal effectiveness. One can understand what a person thinks and feels by examining their subconscious body language. An understanding of nonverbal clues is essential to get a better idea about the other person’s emotions, feeling, mental state, interest, intention etc. It helps to tune oneself to another person’s frequency, thus ensuring a better deal. Body language is more accessible to the people who observe them than to the people who produce them. The skill to detect people's deliberate attempts to regulate their nonverbal behaviours is also considered. The ability to closely
observe and understand other’s body language will help to enable better interpersonal relationship.

- **Sensitivity to Cultural/Gender Diversity**

  Most of the business context demands its executives to work along with people having different ethnic, social, or educational backgrounds; understand the concerns of members of other ethnic and gender groups; base impressions on a person's behaviour, understand one's own culture and those of others and how they differ; respectfully help people in these groups and make cultural/gender matching adjustments whenever necessary.

- **Socialising skills**

  This is an important skill which includes the ability to exhibit understanding, friendliness, and respect for one’s feelings; assert oneself when appropriate; take an interest to what people say and how they think and act as they do. Socialising skill shows one’s interest in people.

- **Team player skills**

  By being a good team player one can get a lot more done. Compliment others on their good work, and they will likely to produce better performance. This is a good technique for maintaining a positive work environment and maintaining clear communication channels. Work cooperatively with others; contribute to group with ideas and effort; help other to achieve their results; encourage team members; resolve differences for the benefit of the team; responsibly challenge existing procedures, policies, or authorities. The ability to share responsibilities, confer with others, honour commitments, and seek help when needed could be listed as essential soft skills for effective team performance.

- **Tolerance to criticism**

  It is said that criticism is the best source for improvement, as it help one to correct mistakes and perform better. When one is criticized for fair or unfair reasons, it needs a very good mental control and practice to handle such situation and to avoid disturbing further performance.
C. Technology Skills

- **Computers skills**
  
  Computer skills refer to one's ability to use the software and hardware of a computer. Computer skills are treated as a part of basic literacy. It becomes an important skill for business executives as modern business management depends on computer for discharging many of its functions. There are few software that are of frequent use for the executives such as word processor, spread sheet and presentation software.

- **Mobile Phone skills**
  
  Today mobile phone is more than just a telephonic instrument. It has evolved to almost a full computer and a crucial instrument for executives and professional for improving the efficiency. Some of the regular functions frequently used by the executives include personal data processing, sending and receiving emails, internet browsing, managing schedules and calendar, reminder, and many more. It often acts as a personal data assistant and a basic competency is expected from every professional.

- **Email etiquette**
  
  According to the reports published by UCLA Centre for Communication Policy, of all Internet activities, email is the most popular. Almost 88 percent of all Internet users use email and approximately 90 percent of those who use the Internet at work use it to access business email. We use email to communicate with others, including superiors, colleagues, clients, or prospective employers. Because our correspondence style, response time, and the related manners say a lot about us, we should be aware of some basic email etiquette, sometimes known as netiquette.

To summarise, the whole idea of ‘being soft-skilled’ is to understand or find how to bring out the best in self and others in any situation. Mastering these skills dramatically increase one’s chances of achieving the best outcomes out of professional interactions and business challenges. The ideal executive is someone who is strong in hard skills and soft skills. Soft skills helps to communicate effectively, promote teamwork within one’s organisation, effectively present ideas, efficiently manage projects and people,
creatively solve problems, and ensure excellent customer care. They're critical to the success of any individual or business organisation. Regardless of career level, they're also absolutely essential skills for fostering career development.

3.3 Importance of Soft skills

Soft skills are a key to employment and growth today. In today’s competitive job market and business minimum acceptable skills are being replaced with higher standards. Soft skills refer to the cluster of personality traits, social graces, and facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark each of us to varying degrees. Persons who rank high in soft skills are generally the people whom most employers want to hire. Soft skills complement hard skills, which are the technical requirements of a job. The ideal blend is to have a strong competence in both job related skills and personal skills. True success is a team effort and one can get ahead faster and enjoy the journey much more with a good team of people. Exceptional soft skills lead to the ability to start and maintain a good relationship with anyone in contact. One’s success and happiness are mostly related to the development of these skills. These skills are not optional unless someone wants to be excluded from what is going on in the world. In an increasingly competitive world, it is the skill with people that determines whether one moves ahead.

There is a plentiful supply of qualified professionals but very few have good generic employability skills or soft skills. In one’s social life; popularity, acceptance by others and the extent to which one feel valued and appreciated depends on how well he present himself and influence others. The failure to connect with people leads to loneliness and an uncomfortable sense of being excluded. Degree of job satisfaction is very closely tied to the quality of the relationships at the workplace. The more close relationships one has with people, the better is the work life. It requires good soft skills to connect with people. Personal and professional life will have its ups and downs but, all lasting relationships depend on good soft skills. The good times are nicer when we are with people who like us and the bad days are easier to handle when others turn to us to support and encouragement. Research demonstrates that top executives better understands the importance of how to get people to support them and put time into fostering good working relationships with people of influence.
In today's competitive world, effective soft skills are critical. They can mean the difference between success and mediocrity. Companies can no longer ignore the soft skills and have now started linking soft skills to their employees’ appraisals, reward management. They are considered as important criteria during recruitment. According to recent surveys however, soft skills are more important than technical skills to reach the top of the career ladder. Improving one’s soft skills can not only benefit one’s career but also help the organisational performance. Improving interaction and soft skills leads to better assignments down the road and bad interpersonal skills will hamper prospects of corporate ladder. Soft skills help to deal more proficiently with the people around us and also helps to project a more powerful, dynamic and professional image. It will help to manage people more effectively while dealing with colleagues, team, customers and other stakeholders. The application of soft skills is not only limited to work, but also in daily life. A soft-skilled person will have an increased awareness of own interpersonal style and ability to ensure it works for better results. One will also have opportunity to practice different skills that will equip the confidence and ability to adopt a flexible approach suitable to the situation.

Soft skills are high in the list of requirements for global business. Doing business with clients from across the world demands not just a high degree of technical skills but greater sensitivity and awareness of culture specific behaviours, variety of business situation vis-à-vis the geography specific issues that may arise. Increasingly, people are ranked by their ability to deal with others effectively and as one raises the corporate ladder, soft skills become crucial. It is soft skills that differentiate winners from also-rans. According to IT Training magazine recent survey, 96% of survey respondents judged components of soft skills such as communication skills and interpersonal skills as the most important contributor to achieving career success.

Soft skills training is no longer considered just a matter of self-development; they're recognised to be critical to the success of business. Regardless of career level, development of soft skills adds balance and interpersonal skills savvy to technical talents. Technical skills and technical certifications don't necessarily translate into the ability to effectively and
efficiently manage one self and interact with others. With the increasing competition companies are facing, they are compelled to ensure that their employees acquire the necessary skills to influence others. With the proven technical superiority of Indians, this additional competency can truly enable them to reach the heights. It is this compelling need that training houses are leveraging on to create a sizeable market for soft skills training in India. Many organisations have incorporated soft skills into their training agenda and now insist on a mix of technical and soft skills training for its employees. Training programmes provide exercises designed to improve the soft skills.