Chapter V

Soft Skills for Management and Engineering Institutions
5. A Few Soft Skills in Detail:

Soft skills are a collection and reflection of many skills and abilities. A few basic skills are – Communication skills, Interpersonal skills, Time management, Motivation, Leadership, Negotiation skills, Stress management, Change management, Conflict management, Goal setting, Problem solving, Listening skills, Self awareness, Analytical thinking, Flexibility, Creativity, Diplomacy, Social grace, Business etiquette, etc. All these are essential in order to survive and succeed in one's professional career. Emotional quotient is one of the major factors in soft skills.

5.1 Communication Skills:

The ability or the skill to transfer one's thoughts, ideas and information from the sender to the receiver with the latter being understood the same effectively and efficiently is known as communication skills. It is one of the greatest skills of the soft skills and its importance is growing rapidly due to the rising complexities as a result of technological inventions.

In corporate terminology, communication is the process of exchange of information from the sender to the receiver and vice versa. There are different types of communication such as downward communication, upward communication, horizontal communication, crosswise communication, verbal communication; written communication etc. In downward communication, the flow of information is from the people at the superior level to the people at the subordinate level. On the other hand, in upward communication, the flow of information is from the subordinate level to the superior level. In horizontal information, the flow of information is from the people of
same level to that of their counterparts at the same level. In crosswise communication, the flow of information is from one level to any other level which is either diagonal or crosswise without any reporting relationship. In verbal communication, the flow of communication, which is transferred orally to any level and it, is the most effective one as one can communicate effectively with one’s body language so as to have profound impact on the receiver. Whenever, there is a need to record the information in black and white, and then people go for written communication in which the communication is through mass mailing in written form.

Any communication has seven elements, apart from the noise, which is known as the barrier in communication and also can be treated as the eight element of communication. The first element being the thought or an idea, the second is encoding the same, third is the transmission of the message or the channel, fourth being the reception of the message and the decoding the same is the fifth element, understanding of the decoded idea or thought is the sixth element and the last and final element i.e. seventh element is the feedback of the receiver to the sender as a sign of confirmation of the communication. Any effective communication must possess the seven elements and the communication is complete with the combination of these seven elements. In case, if there is any gap between the sender and receiver or vice versa then there is communication gap or miscommunication or which is technically called as noise. The so-called eighth element is the culprit of communication and all efforts must be made to eliminate it. Every leader or manager must have great command over communication skills as communication takes major portion of time in any organization. It is aptly said, ‘Communication is the life blood of an organization’. It is through communication all the people are connected in the organization and all the activities are coordinated to achieve their goals and objectives.
The media of communication is divided into verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Both the oral and written communication falls in the fold of verbal communication. The non-verbal communication is divided into body language and sign language and the latter is further divided into visual signs and audio signs. As it is quite obvious, oral communication is the exchange of ideas, thoughts and information in oral form and if it is in written mode, it is known as written communication. Individuals must be strong at both oral and written forms. When they work in the capacity of managers, they will be required to give presentations frequently and must be in a position to deliver the same effectively. Similarly, they may be asked to write reports on various projects or tasks and possession of written communication is sine qua non.

It is said that 93 per cent of our communication belongs to body language and the systematic study of body language is known as kinesics. It shows the impact of our body language. It is the combination of facial expressions, eye movements, gestures, posture, tone control and our over all physical features. The oral language is always supported by body language and there has to be consistency in both oral and body language, otherwise, it will give rise to credibility crisis. For instance, when an autocratic manager of an industry talks about the application of participative type of management hereafter by thumping his desk physically with force is an indication of inconsistency in his body language with that of his oral language. In a nutshell, our body language conveys our true intentions unconsciously although we may consciously speak orally different. Body movements and gestures contain 55 per cent, voice tone and inflection contains 38 per cent and the combination of the both is 93 per cent, which conveys our body language. While the rest seven per cent belongs to verbal communication. The combination all the percentages becomes 100 per cent which becomes the media of communication.
Communication skill is one of the top ten soft skills without which soft skills are irrelevant. Those who look for placement, the interviewing officers emphasizes more on this ability. Weak communicators create problems for themselves and others. The interviewing officer cannot afford to take a risk by accommodating a poor communicator. Good communication is a feature of effective personality development. Thus it is imperative to possess good communication skills.

5.2 Interpersonal Skills:

According to WIKIPEDA, “Interpersonal skills refer to mental and communicative algorithms applied during social communications and interactions in order to reach certain effects or results”.

Interpersonal skills (IS), which are also called as social skills, or human skills and these refer to the ability of a person to get along well with other members in a group. It can also be defined as the skills involved in understanding the relations between the people. It is treated as the first and foremost skill of all soft skills. Animals and human beings always move in groups and it is the human beings who are blessed with the ability to talk, reason and memorize many things. Since man cannot live alone as he needs security, he has strong inherent motive to talk with fellow human beings. And it is through IS he builds relationships with other human beings and finds himself safe, secure and comfortable. Succinctly, the objective of IS are to communicate effectively so as to build relationships amongst the people.

Mintzberg cited studies, which indicated that managers spend 45 per cent of their contact time with peers, about 45 per cent with people outside their units and only about 10 per cent with their superiors. This study obviously indicates the importance of IS in every organization. It also highlights that communications and IS are two sides of the same coin and one without the other has no meaning. The noted business schools in
India teach everything about the technical skills and conceptual skills and not about interpersonal skills which needs to be emphasized. Those who are good at these skills become highly successful in their careers and lives.

It is fundamentally the process of hearing and listening which play a pivotal role in interpersonal skills. Hearing is involuntary and it means picking up of sound vibrations. Whereas listening is voluntary and must be attentive and it is the process of generating sense out of sound vibrations so received by way of hearing. For instance, when a pedestrian walks on the road s/he picks many sounds and that is hearing and when s/he finds the sound of horn suddenly then it is listening. The listening is classified into active listening and passive listening. In active listening the listener is highly attentive and alert and there is a sense of responsibility, involvement and concentration. In passive listening the listener just listens like a tape recorder for the sake of listening.

5.2.1 How to Build Interpersonal Skills?

Never condemn, never criticize and never complain. Always radiate energy and enthusiasm to talk and converse with people by way of your body gestures, facial expressions, tone control and smile. Empathy is a great quality and it teaches us to be open, flexible and helps us to see others' point of view also. Meet the people especially when they are in sorrow as it provides a great source of strength and in turn strengthening long-term relations.

Never badmouth and blab out as truth is very strong and powerful and it will come out one day and puts the individual in a negative light. Provide proper care and attention. Always appreciate the good and great things in the other person. Try to see at the bright side of the character and highlight the same. When one does good things then good things will bounce back. Smile as and when required as per the situation and occasion. Good communication paves the way for good interpersonal relations.
Resolving the conflicts rather than promoting will help ease the situation thus leading to better results and performance. Active listening helps and builds skills. Right and good sense of humor will prove to be handy. In organizations, conducting regular get together is a welcome sign. Consistency in what one speaks with that of his body language conveys right signals. Setting personal examples rather than theoretical teachings would help sympathizing when somebody is ill or at the death of their relatives quickly builds relations. As the saying goes, 'Helping hands are better than the praying lips'. Always using the words like ‘we’ rather ‘I’ will not only promote togetherness but also demonstrates strong leadership qualities.

5.2.2 During Interview:

A great emphasis is laid on interpersonal skills during the interview. The employer looks for soft skills and especially communication and interpersonal skills because recruiting a social inept person will prove to be costly for the organization. The interviewer poses several questions of open ended ones to find out the depth of communication skill. At the time of group discussions and again at the time of series of interviews the psychologist analyzes the candidates from all dimensions to see the suitability. To sum up, having excellent command over interpersonal skills and maintaining sound relationships either in our personal or professional life is essential. We all interact with many people in our day-to-day life from dawn to dusk and possession of interpersonal skills will prove to be highly productive and fruitful.

5.3 Time Management Skills:

"Time is like a river. You cannot touch the same water twice because the flow that has passed will never come again. Enjoy every moment in your life". Anonymous.

Time management as a skill is fast catching up due to the growing complexities in the society. Every one finds it very difficult to manage the available time and
demands more time as though it were in their hands. Especially when one gets more opportunities for growth, one often blames the destiny for not giving more time. It is a well admitted fact that time is irreplaceable, and treated as money. In fact, time is to be treated more than money because when one loses money one can get back but not the time as the popular saying goes, 'Time and tide waits for none'.

Time management is the process of doing multiples tasks with in the stipulated time frame judiciously. For example, when one goes to a vegetable market, one can also do many tasks on the way although it may consume little more time but it avoids recurrent visits to the market. Such as one can meet one's friend for an official work or to shopping center also to fetch groceries etc., It is totally different from multi-tasking.

Pareto principle highlights about the time management skills in numerical form, which cannot be taken as the most accurate but is considered to be an approximate method. According to this principle, most of the people spend 80 per cent of their time on activities that gives out 20 per cent results and the 20 per cent of their time give rise to 80 per cent of the results. It is also known as 80: 20 principles. It is obvious that people focus their energies on unproductive, irrelevant, things resulting in wastage of their precious time.

Procrastination is an evil where people delay or postpone their tasks as they are not able to plan and organize the things properly since they lack time management skills. When the things are delayed or postponed, they pile up and one finds a great difficulty to finish the pending tasks resulting into stress and strain. It also gives rise to tensions and irritations in their minds. In a nutshell, procrastination is the thief of time.

In order to overcome these difficulties everyone must research his or her past 24 hours keenly and evaluate impartially to find out the areas where they wasted their precious time. It gives a clear picture how one spends one's time for sleep, and for
executing their routine essential tasks at home and again at work place. This work place needs to be focused keenly step by step like post mortem with the further break of each task finding out how much time it consumed.

5.4 Negotiation Skills:

Negotiation can be defined as the process of involving the different groups with different interests across the negotiating table through dialogue and discussion in order to resolve conflicts amicably. Great nations resolve their long-standing issues by way of effective negotiations. Many an industrial dispute is resolved amicably through these means to achieve their goals and objectives, which would have been hampered otherwise. It is the process, which takes place in our day-to-day life in the families, work places and everywhere either consciously or unconsciously.

Negotiations are of three types such as integrative process, distribution process or lose–win process. Integrative process is the one where both the parties sit together and negotiate amicably by finding out new solutions to a particular problem and agreeing to it. It is also known as win-win situation because both parties are getting benefit by resolving their conflicts amicably. One of the world’s richest men, Mr. Lakshmi Niwas Mittal is a great negotiator as he acquired Arcelator another steel giant across the globe by this integration process. Initially he failed to integrate horizontally but due to his patience, perseverance and persistence, he succeeded in integrating and made Arcelor Mittal a global steel giant. On the other hand, distributive process is the one where one party wants to win at the cost of the other party by inflicting maximum losses, which is also popularly known as win-lose situation or zero sum situation. It reminds the proverb, ‘One man’s food is another man’s poison’. The third one is the lose-win situation where one party loses and the other wins.
Negotiator is a person who takes active part in the negotiation process and negotiation is an essential skill to become a successful negotiator. Any one who is good at negotiation skills can succeed in any field of life. A skilled negotiator is born through continuous preparation and series of strenuous efforts, which may culminate either in success, or failure of talks. It is aptly said, “A smooth sea never made a skillful mariner”. If required, a skilled negotiator may apply all types of tact ness and diplomacy so as to make the negotiation process a successful one.

As a skill, negotiation in the industrial level plays a pivotal role at the purchase level. If the purchase manager negotiates effectively and purchases the raw material then the cost of the production can be brought down. When the input cost is reduced then the cost of the production comes down resulting in higher profits for the company. One who goes for a placement as a purchase manager, this ability is tested vigorously.

Everyone must get equipped with the negotiation skills and it is not inborn but can be cultivated over a period of time by way of training and continuous practice. It is imperative to possess the skill to succeed in this cut throat competitive world.

5.5 Motivation Skills:

"Man's greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising up every time he falls", Oliver Goldsmith.

He failed in business at 21 years. He was defeated in elections at 22 years. Again he failed in business at 24 years. He lost his wife at 26 years and had nervous breakdown at 27 years. He lost senatorial elections at 45 years, lost elections as Vice-President at 47 and again at 49 years. Ultimately he became the President of USA at 52 years. By this time, it is obvious to every reader that he was none other than Abraham Lincoln. What do we call his spirit? Can we call it as motivation? Certainly, Yes. Success is product of successive setbacks. The ability to move from one failure to
another without losing energy and enthusiasm is known as motivation. If someone achieves success after a success without any setbacks, can we call it as motivation? Of course,

Not motivation is built on the bricks of optimism and confidence. These two fundamental factors are the driving forces towards higher motivational levels. Problems are part of life and each problem will teach many lessons and makes an individual tough. When the going gets tough, the tough gets going. It is a well-admitted fact that a smooth sea never makes a skillful mariner. And success touches to the toes of skillful mariners only.

5.6 Writing Skills:

When people are encouraged to speak, they feel comfortable. When they are asked to write something they find it difficult to write. Is it because man, by nature, is more interested to speak than to write? Or is there any discomfort in writing? Or is it because of these both factors and forces besides not having adequate practice?

In fact, writing is an easy skill and any one can cultivate. Why because for both speaking and writing the thoughts have to flow from human mind. When we speak we apply mind and get the information and when we write also we tap mind to retrieve the data. That means the basic source of inputs for both writing and speaking comes from human mind. In fact, writing is as easy as speaking when one knows the tools and techniques and secrets and strategies. For writing on any topic or subject the script can be divided into three sections such as pre-writing stage, during writing stage and post-writing stage.

5.6.1 Pre-Writing Stage:

Select the topic that interests you the most. Once the topic is clear, then collect relevant information from various sources like magazines, books publications, and
journals. Surfing various websites lot of stuff can be generated. Besides, it provides wider dimension and different shades of opinions and angle of approach towards the topic. If you plan to complete the script with in a week, be prepared mentally to stay with in the purview of the topic. By doing so all of your energies will be focused solely on the topic and as a result you can expect miracle results. Write down the related points that flow naturally from your mind. Get relevant quotations and statistical information. Talk to various friends about the topic. If pre-work is done then the half of the battle is won. Lot of research is essential in this regard. There are 5W’s you have to take care in collection of material i.e. whom, what, when, where, and why. What is to be presented, whom to present and from when to start and from where to break and why to present. All 5Ws play a crucial and critical role to play in gathering information about the topic.

5.6.2 During Writing Stage:

- Having known 5Ws during pre writing stage it is equally essential to know 1H. That is how to present the contents creatively and constructively to the readers.
- If pre-writing stage provides the skeleton this stage provides the flesh and blood and becomes the body for the skeleton.
- Divide the script into introduction, body and conclusion. In the introduction briefly state what you are going to write. In the body part write what you intended to write. In the conclusion write what you want to restate.
- Expand and elaborate each idea in each paragraph in a simple, precise and concise manner by taking from the already prepared skeleton stuff. Wherever possible, provide examples to each concept and idea.

5.6.3 Writing Tips:

- Maintain conversational tone.
• Write it in simple and straight language. The intention of writing is to communicate but not to confuse with heavily loaded vocabulary.

• Convey each idea in each paragraph. If required give examples to support and substantiate your ideas. And if required, use suitable and relevant quotations to prove your point. But do not overdose with too many quotations.

• There has to be natural connectivity from one paragraph to another and the transition must be smooth.

• Don’t lose links and ensure that the enthusiasm of the reader is maintained throughout the script. Simultaneously develop curiosity so that the reader reads with a curious and open mind.

• Use active voice most of the times and use passive voice only when it is unavoidable.

• Motivate and inspire the reader with your writing skills to have long-term impact and effect on the contents.

• Keep both the contents and contexts specific and objective.

• When you are giving tips, tools and techniques or points present it in a bulleted format.

• Maintain personalized style of approach and use second person like ‘you’. And avoid using first person ‘I’.

• Avoid using platitudes.

• Knowing the basic psychology of human beings prove highly beneficial.

• While writing, the presentation must be polite and never be harsh. For instance, instead of saying harshly as ‘Don’t smoke’, say politely ‘Thanks for not smoking’.

• Never keep unrelated ideas in one sentence.
• Make the script convenient to read and easy to understand.

• Avoid repetition of ideas.

• Create emotional bonding with the reader by using like “All of us feel like
greater, bigger, better . . . “

• Strictly stick to the word count. If the script becomes bigger then chop it and if it
becomes smaller incorporate more productive, efficient and effective stuff. Your
script will go to trash if you make either bigger or smaller than the word count.

• Leave margin aside so as to add any new ideas, points or information.

• Don’t plagiarize. Give due credit to the authors by acknowledging the source.

5.6.4 Post-Writing Stage:

Having created skeleton stuff and provided with flesh and body now it is the time
to provide life to it in this stage. After writing the script, do not read it immediately as
you tend to have same flow. Give time gap and read the draft for syntax, grammar and
for spelling mistakes. Check if there are any errors and inaccuracies in information.
Add new information and ideas. Then again leave the script for another day. On the
next day with fresh mind, read the script so that you will have provision to incorporate
new ideas and also you may find a few mistakes here and there. Redraft the script and
again leave it for another day for revision. Continue the same process two or three times
and by this time you will have modified and remodeled script ready for publication.

Writing is a skill. Talents are inborn where as skills can be developed by
training. By tapping inner talents the writing skill can be acquired by passion, practice,
patience and perseverance. You will appreciate that great writers are not born but made.

5.7 Listening Skills:

"Listening is a powerful means of communication and influences to talk well",
John Marshall. Listening is subset of any communication. Every person should know the
art of listening so as to make the communication process complete and meaningful. Listening is a conscious effort while hearing is an unconscious one. Listening is a vital skill for the development of any personality. The success rate of an individual depends on the efficiency and efficacy of listening skills one employs in his personal and professional life.

Every human being spends considerable amount of time to listening everyday. But how far the listening is qualitative is a moot point. Few people listen for a long time and at the same time they think about something else in their mind. Can we call it as a listening skill? Of course, not.

5.7.1 Listening Modes:

There are three basic listening modes such as competitive or combative listening, passive or attentive listening and active or reflective listening.

In competitive or combative listening, the listener is unmindful of the contents delivered by the speaker and is continuously on toes to open floor to offer his viewpoints. Instead of listening s/he waits impatiently for opportunity to strike like a combatant and thrusts his/her viewpoints. In passive or attentive listening, the listener is a cool headed. He listens to everything patiently and passively to the speaker and takes the things for granted without verifying for facts or figures. Rather the listener lacks his independent thinking and approach towards the contents.

In active or reflective listening, the listener attends actively and carefully towards the speaker, he paraphrases and summarizes what the speaker says, processes and forms his own viewpoint and reciprocates responsibly. This is the best and the most effective listening skill amongst the three modes mentioned above.

5.7.2 Listening Skills for Students:

The skills need to be cultivated and inculcated right from the childhood itself.
This is the right age to instill and educate amongst the children about the importance and impact of this skill. The students can improve themselves by various means such as

- Note taking is an excellent tool where the concentration on the speaker can be sustained for a longer time. It is also effective for those students who have short memory span.

- Constantly questioning the speaker as and when if there are any doubts or queries will enhance the skills.

- The students can practice the power of paraphrasing. Conversion from the language of the speaker to the listener and restating in the own words of the listener is known as paraphrasing.

- Nodding the head affirmatively as and when needed towards the speaker can also enhance this skill.

- At times the close friends in the class will divert or disturb the listener. So it is advisable to keep away from close friends in the class to maintain concentration in the class towards the speaker.

- Doing meditation or yoga daily will improve concentration powers and will become a boon towards attentive listening.

- Students need to demonstrate passion to listen and learn. If such zeal and enthusiasm exists then it is easy to develop this skill.

- Students should shed the 'I know everything' attitude.

- Exhibiting the right postures like sitting straight, leaning forward will convey positive cues to the speaker.

- If there is respect towards the teacher and interest towards the topic then students can develop interest to listen.
5.7.3 Listening Skills for Professionals:

Employees spend most of the day at the work place itself. They spend considerable degree of their time in communication and in interpersonal relations. Listening plays a crucial role in their business communication. Failure to do so will result in communication gap and professional setbacks. People tend to develop ill feelings due to the barriers and filters in communication. Barriers are physical and physiological by nature and are external. Where as the filters are internal and are psychological and are internal. If some one says, 'I don't like him' then it becomes psychological filter. However it is easier to remove barriers than filters.

5.7.4 Role of Speaker for Effective Listening:

The role of the speaker is, in fact, more important than that of the listener as it is the speaker who influences the listener to pay attention towards the content. Speaker should arouse interest in the subject and should make it lively and lovely to catch the attention of the listener. He can adopt tools and techniques like posing open ended questions like 'Tell me what you understood from my lecture?' rather than close ended questions like 'Is it clear?' 'Did you understand?' 'Is it alright?' etc., By shooting the open-ended questions the listener will be forced to pay more attention towards the speaker. And the speaker will also get accurate feedback from the listener.

5.7.5 Tips for Effective Listening:

- Avoid preconceived notions about the speaker and about the topic.
- Don't jump into conclusions.
- Maintain eye contact with the speaker.
- Lean forward and exhibit curiosity by projecting positive body language.
- Allow the speaker to complete his speech, fully process the same in your mind coolly and respond accordingly.
Focus on contents not on delivery.

Be empathetic and non-judgmental.

Be motivated and prepared to listen.

Be objective, specific and clear.

Utilize feedback up to the hilt.

Be alert to all cues.

Don't let your mind drift.

Ask relevant questions and encourage the speaker to deliver effectively.

Summarize topic so as to minimize the speaking time and thinking speed gap.

Don't get preoccupied with other activities or worries.

You can take the horse up to the pond but you can't force to drink. You can't thrust upon the listener. The listener should have passion to listen, respect towards the speaker, interest towards the topic to make the listening process as interesting, encouraging and enlightening one.

5.8 Reading Skills:

"The writer creates half the text, the reader creates the other half", Author unknown.

Man learns by various sources and means such as by observation, conversation, experience and reading. Right from the stage of Stone Age to space age the man has evolved himself by reading the scripts which he himself has created and passed on the baton to his next generation. No one knows how one reads with in oneself. Everyone has unique way of reading and yet a few styles which are common among all human beings. Let us look at the different dimensions of reading skills.
5.8.1 Techniques of Reading:

Although there are number of tools and techniques in reading there are three tools by which you can improve reading skills. In brief, they are scanning, skimming and concept mapping techniques. All these can be deployed depending upon the context and also on the purpose of reading. Initially it is better to have cursory look on the contents by scanning, and then switch over to skimming strategy and at last reading by applying the techniques of concept mapping. Concept mapping is nothing but drawing a two dimensional picture of a concept either mentally or physically. It is very important technique for noting information and connecting ideas. Since concept maps are pictures they can be easily retained in the memory. To substantiate these three strategies let us recall what Francis Bacon said, “Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed and some few are to be chewed and digested”.

SQRRR is another popular technique, which is the acronym for Survey, Question, Read, Recall and Review. According to this technique, while reading one has to examine and then question oneself for the contents that are read. Whatever has been read is to be recalled with in the mind and ultimately the contents are to be reviewed.

The layered method of reading is yet another approach towards reading which is accepted and adopted by the majority of readers. As per this, you have to overview the entire material very fast and form an opinion on it. Subsequently focus little more on the important portions, which deserve to be addressed such as introduction, headings and summary. It is a prelude to read the book and hence it is called as preview. It provides proper judgment and direction whether to go ahead with reading or not. After passing through this phase if the book or the material is worth reading then you can go ahead with reading. It is in fact the semi final. And the final phase is the review. Whatever
has been read has to be reviewed for better comprehension and effective memory retention. Below are the tools and techniques for developing effective reading skills.

**5.8.2 Tips for Effective Reading:**

- Find out what you want to know and for that you need to cut through the clutter. At the same time assess what is to be skipped from reading.
- Question yourself whether you are reading for any specific purpose or for pleasure because at times intention is more important than action.
- Always emphasize on contents and contexts but not on the style or flow or delivery of the material.
- It is always important to stress on qualitative not quantitative reading.
- Cultivate positive attitude towards reading. The more you read and the more love you develop towards reading. Nancy Collin aptly said, “The only way to improve reading skills is to read”.
- Before you read, find out 2Ws i.e. why you are reading and what you are reading.
- Check your biological clock and read so that the degree of absorbability and assimilation of the material is higher.
- Keep the dictionary beside when you read. If the meaning of a word is not known it will help you to know instantly.
- In every sentence there are key words to be focused. When the meaning of the key words is known then it becomes easier to understand and assimilate the material.
- If you get boredom, give a break and restart reading so that you can grasp better.
- Surround yourself with various kinds of books.
- Learn to underline the key parts/words/concepts for further references.
- Develop the habit of paraphrasing the contents.
• Transfer the material from textbook to note book so that the best part of the material is with you. By this, you can separate chaff from the grain. Besides, when you write then the degree of retentivity is higher.

• Create your own short hand stuff from the material.

• While reading, new ideas and concepts will flash in the mind and the same may be added on the margin side of book. Failure to do will lead to missing the important ideas.

• Don’t focus on filler words in the sentences. The words like is’s and the’s can be avoided while reading as these take longer time and not of much significance for understanding the contents.

• Try to recall the contents repeatedly which are in your mind and summarize the same and write down either on the margin of the textbook or in the notebook. If you are able to generate a few examples from the textbook in a given context it will help you to enhance retentivity. And also link the contents of the material with real life events, examples and accidents.

• By using different colored pencils the importance level of the contents will be realized for further readings. You can keep your style based on the degree of significance and the priority levels. Rather you can create your own mythology, style and coding as per the convenience.

• If you find it boring to read, keep the book upside down and read you will be able to apply more pressure to read with this.

• There is no fixed formula for reading and the methodology changes when you read text books, newspapers, magazines, journals and more so when you surf online content.
• Average readers read about 200 to 250 words per minute. And the speed can be enhanced without affecting the quality with faster eyeball movement and with longer breaks and pauses.

• You can make sense of sentence by omitting articles, conjunctions, prepositions etc., by this you can focus more on the contents and also you can save time.

• Try to convert the written information into pictorial format while reading for effective comprehension of contents.

• If the meaning of a key word is not clear then try to look at it from different dimensions of the origin of the word to get the closer or accurate meaning. Also if possible look at the prefix or the suffix of the key word for easier and faster understanding.

• Daily fix some amount of time exclusively for reading and over a period of time it will become a practice.

• Train your eyes to take in words in larger gulps.

• Avoid confusing material and don’t get stuck. Such contents can be referred later on. Learn to skip unwanted and unproductive stuff. William James aptly quoted, “The art of becoming wise is the art of knowing what to overlook”.

There are four skills that are essential for all viz-speaking skills, writing skills, listening skills and reading skills. If speaking and writing skills become one side of the coin, then listening and reading skills become the other side of the coin. And the coin possesses value when it has two sides. To sum up, all four skills are like the four pillars for evolving as a successful personality.

5.9 Presentation Skills:

“Half of the world is composed of people who have something to say and can’t; the other half have nothing to say and keep saying it”. That is the kind of problem for
the half of the people and again that is the kind of prospects for the other half of the people who know the art and power of presentation skills.

We all present our ideas, views and opinions when we talk with people in general. And when it is to be presented for a longer time it requires lot of energy, effort and enthusiasm. Besides, it requires lot of information, ideas, and material to format and organize the same mentally. The majority of the people fail at this level and a very few succeed. And those who succeed are those who are good at presentation skills.

In every day professional life, every one has to deliver presentations. In many educational institutions paper presentations are encouraged so that students gradually develop the attitude and the art of presentation skills. Because of the growing significance and importance attached to internet search engines the students are able to generate a lot of important information at the click of a mouse. It is indeed a healthy, positive and progressive sign for students to gradually cultivate the habit of presentation skills. When they join the corporate world they would be in a comfortable position to present confidently.

While giving any kind of presentation it is ideal to divide the process into pre-session, during session and post session. By breaking into three parts they can get into the process of presentation very easily.

5.9.1 Pre-Session:

It is ideal to consider 4W's in this context. That is who the audience is, what to deliver, where to deliver and why to deliver the presentation. Knowing profile of the audience before the presentation will make things easier. Profile is nothing but finding out the age pattern, sex, geographical and cultural background of the audience. This information will provide insights about the maturity level of the audience for catering the content effectively.
Secondly, analyzing what kind of topic is to be presented is necessary as the entire presentation revolves around the topic. Thirdly, find out the place where it is to be delivered. Knowing this, will help us to physically verify the place and space of the room where it is to be provided. It is essential at least just before the day of the presentation to go physically and check for compatibility, suitability and accessibility of the video or audio equipment to prevent last minute disasters. Several presenters resort to this exercise to ensure effectiveness of the presentation. It also provides a sense of comfort and confidence. Fourthly and lastly, why the presentation is to be delivered. What are the goals and objectives behind delivering presentation? If all the 4 W’s are kept in view then the real presentation can be executed at ease.

5.9.2 Preparation:

"He who fails to plan is planning for failure".

Do lot of research related to the topic, discuss with friends and family members and also the like-minded people related to the topic. Refer and read number of books, publications, magazines and journals and collect the relevant material. Surf number of search engines in the website and gather lot of information. After reading the entire material, create your own views and opinions and jot down the same. Select the important information by narrowing down and by keeping the duration of the presentation in view. Get the best of the best ideas and concepts based on the priority level of importance. This is indeed an Herculean task and once it is prepared and created half of the battle is won.

Prepare the entire script on index cards in key words. Prepare it chronologically, coherently and logically with an impressive introduction. You can start with a shocking statement or a wonderful quotation or with astonishing statistical information, which must provoke the audience to think and concentrate. Keep the body part, which must be in bulleted format in short hand format so that you can explain each idea by elaborating with
your own examples. The conclusion should leave a mark in the minds of the audience. Over all, the entire script should be like a skeleton stuff.

5.9.3 Practice:

After the completion of the skeleton stuff, the next stage is to practice speaking aloud. You will be able to hear your voice and then you learn to organize thoroughly in logical order. And also practice in front of friends and family members and take feedback. The feedback must be from the people who are honest and unbiased as it will help overcoming from weaknesses and strengthening the strengths. You can also practice in front of mirror at home so that you can analyze yourself as you are true to your conscience. You can also tape record your speech and rewind and replay number of times so that you can objectively and specifically correct your weaknesses. And the process should never be continuously at the same time. Once you listened to your tape and took the feedback, leave some gap or in the next day replay the tape again then you may find more areas where improvement is needed. The process must continue number of times till you find that you acquired perfection and confidence.

Look for your visual distractions for corrections by the below procedure:

You may videotape your practice of presentation and take feedback in three different methods. Firstly replay the videotape and list out your strengths and weaknesses by observing both your oral and body language. If there is any inconsistency between the both the same may be written for rectification and improvement. This is the usual procedure everybody does. Secondly, keep the videotape in muted mode and observe only your body language. There are many mistakes we make without our knowledge and those areas can be jotted down for improvement. Some people make some unusual gestures unconsciously which may distract the attention of audience or at times it creates inconvenience and discomfort for audience. Out of the total communication the body
language alone accounts for maximum percent of the communication. Hence sincere efforts should be made to fine-tune body language by this methodology. Thirdly play your videotape and do not look at it all but hear your voice for modulation, accent, pronunciations, pace and pause etc. With this, you will be able to know if any drawbacks in your oral language. The repetition of all these three stages independently number of times provides the correct feedback for rectification...

5.9.4 Significance:

The presentation skills will help you tremendously at the corporate world. In case if some stuff is created then it needs to be presented effectively and efficiently. Then only the stuff will get noticed. If a new project is prepared then it is essential to present the same to prospective clients or customers. It helps in displaying your skills and abilities. It also helps in triggering your passion. It is a well-admitted fact that all great leaders are great presenters.

5.9.5 During Session:

“First you tell ‘em what you are going to tell ‘em, then you tell ‘em, then you tell ‘em what you told ‘em”, quoted Sergeant Major.

The above quotation complements the presentation in three different modes and that become the 1H i.e. how to present yourself. Having known 4W’s in the pre-session and when it is clubbed with 1H in the during session besides supplementing with the Q&A (Question and Answer) session the presentation process becomes complete.

Define clearly the introduction part in short and precise manner. Ensure that the audience is connected to the topic immediately. You may do so by posing a question or by narrating an anecdote or a small story which is easily understandable to all. Having drawn their attention then highlight the features, significance and importance of the audience. Try to explain the benefits the audiences are going to get out of the presentation and
having done that go to the body part which you might have written in short hand format and try to explain each concept, idea and point with simple examples and with facts and figures.

In fact, you will find three segments of listeners in every audience. First segment are those who don’t know the topic at all. Second segment are those who know the topic superficially and the third segment are the experts in the topic. Try to focus your introduction and summary part to the first and second segment of people and focus the body part of your presentation to the experts in the field. For experienced presenters, it becomes easy to segment these three kinds of audience just after some time of the presentation by their body language and learn to focus all the three segments equally. Knowing the psychology of the audience will also help deliver the presentation effectively and efficiently.

Another way of making the presentation effective is by knowing how to centre the topic on three aspects like the first one being the self (speaker), second one being the topic and the third one being the audience. Some presenters think too much about themselves and neglect the topic and also the audience. Some presenters are too much conscious about the topic and pay least attention to themselves and also on the audience. And some presenters worry too much about the audience and fail to focus on themselves and also on the topic. The effective and efficient way of any presentation is to bring synergy and synchronization and coordination amongst self, topic and the audience. This is a difficult task but can be achieved by regular preparation and practice.

Globally well-known concept in any kind of presentation be it in written or oral is the concept of KISS. This is the acronym for ‘Keep It Simple Sweetheart’ or ‘Keep It Short and Simple’. Don’t confuse the audience with loaded vocabulary or with slang or professional jargon. The objective of any presentation is to ensure that the message
reaches the audience accurately. And the best way to reach them is to keep the process of presentation as simple, compact, concise and crisp as possible.

During presentation it is essential to lay stress on three kinds of animation – body animation, facial animation and vocal animation. Any communication constitutes 93 per cent non-verbal language and only 7 per cent verbal language. Again the non-verbal language is divided into 55 per cent body language, which is also known as kinesics and 38 per cent modulation. Unless there is right marriage between oral and body language the communication becomes incomplete and ineffective.

There has to be all round healthy movement of body with positive gestures by way of hand, leg and body motion. The body animation can be utilized fully so as to convey your ideas. At the same time avoid any excessive body movement as it will distract the attention of the audience. Coupled with this, there is a need to maintain facial animation. Learn to smile wholeheartedly from the core of your heart and change your facial feelings as per the situation. Don’t be too serious or smiley. You can effectively make use of eyes by maintaining right contact with audience. There is an adage, “The eyes are the mirror of the soul”. You can communicate a lot through your eyes effectively. It helps to build right rapport with audience. Coming to vocal animation avoid monotone speech. Vary your pitch to signify the importance depending on the importance of the contents. If there is effective combination and synchronization in body, facial and vocal animation the presentation can become more effective and efficient.

The body part of the presentation is the core of the entire speech and it tries to present the topic from different dimensions so that the audience can understand the topic properly.

After completion of the body part, then slowly transfer to the final stage that is summary. And never declare that it is summary as people tend to lose interest at it.
Restate the main points and ideas with greater emphasis leaving a wonderful satisfactory impact in the minds of the audience. You can make a clarion call to do something, which is motivational and inspirational.

5.9.6 Techniques During Presentation:

- Find out the aspirations and expectations of the audience so as to tailor your talk as per their needs.
- Involve yourself totally on the topic.
- Be confident and radiate energy and enthusiasm.
- Smile at appropriate occasions as it warms up your voice.
- If required pose a few questions to the audience so that they will be challenged to think and will develop curiosity and interest towards the topic.
- There has to be smooth transition from one idea to another.
- If you are not good at humor, it is better to avoid because not cracking jokes is better than cracking bad jokes.
- The delivery of the flow should be natural.
- Avoid cluttering the content and keep the content relevant to the topic.
- Avoid over connectors such as ‘and’, ‘because’, ‘so on’ etc.,
- Never gaze at a particular individual for not more than 3 seconds as it creates discomfort.
- Do lay stress on qualitative presentation not quantitative.
- Even if there is disturbance in the audiovisual equipment, be prepared mentally to continue the presentation by trusting on memory.
- Don’t stand dumbstruck. If you find it difficult to retrieve information keep a few filler words like Ok, right, actually, like and sentences like ‘It is like, . . .’, do you know?’, ‘you see’ . . . and so on. By keeping such ready-made words and
sentences in mind you can overcome from any delay in accessing information from your mind.

- Never comment or joke on any of the members of the audience.

- If necessary you can crack jokes on yourself. And if there is excessive humor on yourself then you will become a clown.

- Learn to maintain proper pace and pause. The flow of your delivery should neither be too slow nor too fast. The flow has to be natural and effective. There has to be pause as and when required. Learn to emphasize on key words, ideas and catchy phrases. Proper pause will help audience to focus on your key ideas and contents.

- Visualize that you are talking to each and every individual not to the audience. Maintain a personal and conversational tone. Maintaining proper and equal contact with the entire audience will make the presentation more effective and efficient. Learn to speak one sentence by looking at one person and then shift to the second person with second sentence and so on if there is small audience. It creates a feeling of intimacy with the entire audience and the audience will reciprocate your presentation with interest. If the audience happens to be big, you can also fix a few persons at each corner of the room and regularly look at those individuals in all directions and it creates strong feeling that you are talking to them.

- Create an emotional bonding with the audience by telling ‘we feel greater, bigger, better etc.’

- Never get freezeed in larger audience.

- Be mentally prepared for interruptions.

- If you have made mistake while speaking correct it and proceed further and do not apologize.

- Never be oversensitive to the audience.
• Never overload the stuff.

• Learn to repeat the key ideas, concepts and points in different ways to drive home your point.

• Remove your mask and be natural.

• Connect to the audience wholeheartedly.

• Avoid usage of technical or professional jargon.

• If you find that the audience is bored use humor.

• If you want to convey a joke, it is desirable to practice number of times to make it effective.

• If you want to deliver a punch line look at the individuals whose body language is favorable to you and deliver for effectiveness and applause.

• Budget your time judiciously and deliver within the stipulated time.

• Involve with the participants closely and actively. And learn to mix with them as it creates bonding.

• Don’t prolong any presentation for a longer time as it loses its impact.

• Usually the practice presentation takes 20 per cent faster than the real presentation. Knowing this research report will help you budget your time properly on the D-day.

• Trust in your gut feelings.

• Don’t lose your links. Learn to pick up thread immediately where you have left. Usually it happens when there is interruption from audience.

• Present only what you know not what you don’t know. Don’t try to be a perfectionist.
• If you are a professional presenter maintain a separate files for quotations, anecdotes, case studies, examples etc., You can make use of the same depending upon the topic.

• If you want to become a professional presenter read the books and surf the websites of international professional speakers like Lenny Laskowski, Brian Tracy etc.,

• Avoid visual distractions if any.

• Always smile when leaving a message.

5.9.7 Post-Session:

After the successful completion of the presentation, it is the time to proceed to question and answer (Q&A) session where you invite a few questions for clarification. It is a very delicate and sensitive session as you must be fully prepared for any kind of questions. You need to encourage individually each participant and then clearly after understanding the question, handle it carefully, tactfully and patiently. Tell them to keep the questions with in the purview of the topic and if anyone goes out of the topic tell them the same clearly. If the answer is not known to you, say clearly and frankly and proceed further smartly and sharply. Don’t exceed the given time frame as it will upset other activities. We are not expected to know everything under the sun in the earth. Q & A session is, in fact, a crucial one where you can leave a wonderful everlasting impression by handling it successfully.

Select an interesting topic, collect relevant material from all sources, organize it logically and practice the same thoroughly. After analyzing your strengths and weaknesses, rectify your weaknesses and then proceed for the real presentation. At the forecast stage, state what you are going to state, at the body stage simply state and at the conclusion stage, state what you have stated with a thought provoking one so that the
audience will think on it for a longer time. At the end attend the Q&A session carefully, tactfully and diplomatically.

Having explained various soft skills in details let us look at the issue from the below perspective:

In the current global scenario, progress and development of any nation is distinctly, dependent on the texture and quality of its 'educational parameters and paradigms', particularly higher education. It is now being increasingly realized that training students in communication skills, hitherto considered insignificant if not unnecessary as compared to the main curriculum, has come to occupy a cardinal and essentially significant position in the echelons of higher education. Though each of the various stakeholders, involved in grooming the students into effective communicators, has a distinct as well as significant role to play, the faculty in our educational institutions is the most critical link in the chain. However, even now, in most institutions both the communication skills training and the concerned teacher are usually treated as subsidiary to the mainline courses and their respective areas. If India has to emerge as a knowledge-based and eventually an economic superpower, grooming students, particularly those pursuing higher education, in soft skills should assume importance as never before and hence, serve the need for well-trained faculty.