

Social Skills For Management Students

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ABSTRACT

Social skills are one of the most important skills a manager needs to have. It enables individuals to achieve success in their personal and professional lives. They study with the objective of identifying the important social skills, takes into consideration four skills that were found to contribute to improved relationships at the workplace – Attitude, Empathy, Communication and Problem Solving. Interviews were conducted with a few faculty members to identify the skills. 30 students enrolled in a communication club while pursuing the management programme were taken for the study. They filled in a questionnaire. It was found that many students are at a low level in Empathy and problem solving due to which they are not confident about their social skills. On the whole majority of the students were at the average level. Students need to demonstrate their social skills to recruiters because these are important soft skills. The study also provides indicators for students to assess their own skills.

Keywords: Empathy, Interact, Professional Success

INTRODUCTION

Social skills, also known as interpersonal skills are necessary for individuals to communicate and interact with each other. These skills may come naturally to some people and they become adept at it easily. Whereas some people need to put in more effort and work on their social skills. The process of using social skills and mixing with

others is called socialization. Social skills are important soft skills so they are gaining importance in every sphere. Therefore the time and effort spent in improving one's social skills pays dividends. Employers seek prospective employees who have good social skills because they are able to integrate into the team, are comfortable working with others, can cooperate and coordinate with others to get things done easily. Every single job requires social skills in varying degrees. And usually the highest paying jobs involve leading, managing and developing teams to achieve the organizational goals.

DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS

The first step towards having good social skills is being aware of how one communicates with others and recognizing the impact it has on others. This awareness translates in getting along with team members, working well with all types of people, building friendships, offering support when required and getting the job done well. Developing social skills is important because emotional support is an important element in achieving success in one's personal and professional life. It also benefits the organization and improves the work environment for everyone.

Attitude: People who have a great attitude, a generally positive outlook are considered more sociable by nature. A positive outlook is required to cope better with the pressures of work and not get overwhelmed with problems. It also increases creativity and flexibility. These people tend to look at, emphasize the positive aspects in other people and bring out the best in them.

Empathy: While communicating with anyone, one can interact well when he/she understands the other person. Employees need to show empathy, understand issues customers are facing and come up with possible solutions. When people feel heard, they respond better. Listening also helps an employee understand his colleagues', customer's requirements, respond appropriately and avoid miscommunication. Managers have to practise empathy on a day to day basis and this improves their rapport with their team and it increases cooperation thereby building a stronger morale.

Communication: According to Doyle (2019), Communication (both verbal and non verbal) forms an important part of social skills. Successful relationships are a result of

what one says and how one acts. Whether speaking over the phone / in person / by email, when a person takes care to communicate well, show respect and use manners, he can get the message across to other people in his team, organize and coordinate with others easily and build strong professional relationships at the workplace. People who communicate succinctly and are able to demonstrate their leadership skills by the way their confident manner and the way they speak are able to influence others. (Ann Hewlett, 2014). Managers have to convey important information concisely for people to carry out their work successfully. They have to empathize with people, encourage, motivate, appreciate and choose the right words to communicate the intended idea/message.

Problem Solving: Difficult situations crop up at work almost on a daily basis and they require a positive, logical and even a creative approach to be solved efficiently and in a timely manner. However there is no single way to solve all problems and the nature of each problem, urgency etc vary, problems need to be dealt with appropriately. Understanding causes, underlying issues while staying calm, polite, professional and exercising good judgment are required. Sometimes problems need to be solved after getting inputs from various team members. Hence it is important to get the perspectives of others and make a decision in order to arrive at a solution. Managers should be able to identify workable solutions from solutions suggested by team members and carry them out systematically.

OBJECTIVE

To identify the social skills needed in the workplace.

UNIVERSE AND SAMPLING

The students pursuing management education in a college and who had enrolled in the communication club of the department participated in the study. There were 30 students enrolled in the club and they regularly participated in the activities conducted to improve their communication skills. These students were taken for the study in order to find out the extent to which their social skills had developed.

DATA COLLECTION

Interviews were conducted with a few faculty members to identify the social skills that management students were expected to have. Based on this a questionnaire was developed to find out whether management students have these skills. The questions were based on the 4 dimensions shown below. The questionnaire was distributed to all the 30 students and they were briefed about the study

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**Table No. 1 Distribution of the respondents based on their Social Skills**

Dimensions	Low		Medium		High		Min.	Max.	Median	S.D.	Mean
	n	%	n	%	n	%					
Attitude	4	13	11	37	15	50	5	15	11.5	2.42	11.16
Empathy	17	57	6	20	7	23	7	14	9	2.29	9.83
Communication	11	37	15	50	4	13	8	14	12	1.69	10.96
Problem Solving	12	40	7	23	11	37	7	14	10	2.64	10.70
Overall Social Skills	6	20	14	47	10	33	32	50	43	4.32	42.66

From the above table, half of the respondents perceive that their attitude is very good and are confident that their great attitude will help them interact and communicate well with others. One third of them (37%) say that they display a positive attitude sometimes whereas 13% of the respondents have identified that their attitude is below average and they need to work on improving it. Nearly one fourth of the respondents have said they are very empathetic and considerate towards the feelings of others. This helps them build friendships and professional relationships. However the majority of the respondents (57%) feel that empathy is not one of their strong areas. This would definitely impact their overall social skills. Half of the respondents are average at communication and opine that they are able to communicate and maintain a good relationship with others. 13% of them were able to communicate effectively whereas

37% of them are not able to communicate in a manner that builds better relationships. A little over one third of the respondents (37%) feel that they are very good at solving problems. Others usually approach them for assistance with solving problems. But 40% of them find it difficult to solve problems especially when they have to coordinate with others. Overall 40% of the respondents have average social skills. It can be inferred that they have improved their social skills to some extent. However they will need to be excellent at these social skills and develop other important social skills such as leadership to excel in their careers.

Table No. 2: Indicators of Social skills

Attitude	people like being in my company people feel relaxed around me people appreciate my support
Empathy	others perceive that I am approachable people feel comfortable around me people open up and share their thoughts and feelings
Communication	people feel comfortable interacting with me people listen and express their views people feel understood and appreciated while interacting with me
Problem Solving	people ask me for suggestions people take my opinion people feel comfortable discussing issues with me

The above indicators can be used as a personal checklist to identify whether one has the basic social skills expected. If the individual has these skills and is experiencing the benefits of them then they can start working on other social skills such as leadership, conflict resolution, networking within and outside the organization. Social skills determine the level of influence a person has. So developing skills such as Empathy, Communication, Problem Solving and a good attitude can enhance a person's ability to interact well with others and enhance job success.

Putting social skills into practice**Table No. 3: Ways to practice one's social skills**

Attitude	look at the bright side of situation,
Empathy	focus on the what the person says and means, avoid distraction with phone etc, listen before speaking
Communication	maintain appropriate distance and respect personal space of others, maintain eye contact when someone is speaking, engage in small talk, set aside some time to spend interacting with others, talk to people outside one's present circle.
Problem Solving	staying calm, polite and professional, look for alternatives, learn from previous experience, think out of the box

Demonstrating Social Skills

During the interviews, management students can demonstrate their social skills by appearing alert, cheerful, confident and comfortable, listening, answering questions carefully, speaking clearly and confidently, providing examples of using these skills in the work context, coming up with creative and practical solutions to problems given. Students can give examples of demonstrating these skills during their internship, at college, in their hobbies etc. in this manner budding managers can show recruiters that they are able to interact well with others and will be a good team player.

CONCLUSION

Hence the study identifies the social skills needed for budding managers to start and build their careers. Students have to cultivate these all important skills while they are in college itself. By doing so they will find the transition to the workplace much easier and will enjoy working with others in the organization. It will also become part of their personality and will shine through while they perform in campus placements.

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