

## **MODULE 5 -Professional Communication**

We define hard skills as the technical abilities that fit the job. Normally, you can acquire hard skills in the classroom, in an online course, through books and other materials, or on the job. For retail, hard skills are closing cash drawers or restocking shelves. In tech, they can be Java coding or network configuration, for accountants, they are asset management and account analysis and for nurses are patient education and phlebotomy.

You'd think hard skills matter most. But, you'd be wrong. The truth is that demand for soft skills has been growing since at least 1980. Another study, by LinkedIn, actually suggests that 57% of employers value soft skills more than hard skills.

Hard skills are teachable and measurable abilities, such as writing, reading, math or ability to use computer programs. By contrast, soft skills are the traits that make you a good employee, such as etiquette, communication and listening, getting along with other people.

### **1. INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS:**

To effectively communicate and interact with one another, human beings need interpersonal skills. These skills are vital when interacting with other people as an individual or at a group level. Developing your interpersonal skills enhances your success both personally and professionally. Since employers understand the importance of these skills in teamwork, they are constantly looking for employees with proper interpersonal skills. With these skills, an employee will be in a position to effectively communicate with his or her colleagues, clients and customers in the workplace.

#### **Why Interpersonal Skills?**

People with strong interpersonal skills are often more successful in both personal and professional lives. They are able to communicate effectively with others - whether family, friends, colleagues, customers or clients. Interpersonal skills are therefore vital in all areas of life at work, in education and socially.

#### **What Are Interpersonal Skills?**

Interpersonal skills are generally considered to include a wide range of skills, such as:

##### **A. Communication Skills – which in turn covers:**

- ☐ Verbal Communication – what we say and how we say it;

☐ Non-Verbal Communication - what we communicate without words, for example through body language, or tone of voice; and

☐ Listening Skills - how we interpret both the verbal and non-verbal messages sent by others.

B. Emotional Intelligence – being able to understand and manage your own and others' emotions.

C. Team Work - being able to work with others in groups and teams, both formal and informal.

D. Negotiation, Persuasion and Influencing Skills - working with others to find a mutually agreeable (Win/Win) outcome. This may be considered a subset of communication, but it is often treated separately.

E. Conflict Resolution and Mediation - working with others to resolve interpersonal conflict and disagreements in a positive way, which again may be considered a subset of communication.

F. Problem Solving and Decision Making - working with others to identify, define and solve problems, which includes making decisions about the best course of action.

How to Develop Interpersonal Skills?

1. Smile and Be Appreciative
2. Listen actively and pay attention to others
3. Resolving conflicts
4. Communicate clearly and use humor
5. Understand others and avoid complaining

How to improve Interpersonal skills?

1. Identify areas of improvement.
2. Plan and develop a SMART objective (Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic and Time-bound).
3. Focus on your basic communication.
4. Develop a self-image. It helps to improve self-confidence and self-esteem.
5. Self-promotion is equally important. It is not selfish to positively market your skills.
6. Be articulate, concise, enthusiastic, honest and frank.
7. Use language with which you are comfortable but make sure it is powerful.
8. Don't forget the other side of communicating: listening. This is as important as speaking.
9. Think creatively and solve problems and maximize opportunities with innovative ideas.
10. Organize yourself.
11. Learn to blend with new teams and new people. While working in a team you often learn more than you think you know.
12. Reflect on experiences and improve.

## 2. NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS (BODY LANGUAGE):

Face to face communication is of two fundamental types:

1. Verbal Communication
2. Nonverbal Communication

Verbal communication: is the use of words; Language.

Non-Verbal Communication: is made up of voice tone and body language.

You gain a lot of information about the other person from the way they look and how they sound, apart from the words they use.

Let us look at each category of non-verbal communication and see what benefits we might gain.

## 1. Posture

Posture is how you stand or sit.

“Are you upright or slouching?” or “Straight or bent?” Stand straight and more erect.

This implies that you have energy and good health and are awake. If you are leaning or slouching, this implies you are lacking in energy, sick or sleepy. So, learn to sit and stand with a straighter posture.

## 2. Personal Appearance and Dress

“How are you dressed?” or “Are you well-groomed and tidy or not?” Generally speaking, people do judge others on appearance.

Your brain says to itself "if it looks like a lion, it is probably a lion". "If she is dressed in police uniform, she is likely to be a police officer".

If you look well-groomed and "together"; you will be judged as "together" in other habits; whether that is true or not. If you are scruffy and shabby in appearance, you are likely to be judged as shabby in other habits, whether that is true or not.

So why risk it. Dress in clothes twice as good and buy half as many. Don't look sloppy.

## 3. Touch

Sometimes you have to touch people. Touch includes handshakes; you can judge a person from his/her handshake. Make your handshake firm and slightly longer than is normal. Always make eye contact when you shake hands

## 4. Gestures

By "gestures" we mean hand gestures. Avoid these at all costs, pointing with your finger and pointing with a pen. Instead, use open-handed gestures to emphasize points.

#### 5. Facial expression

Facial expression counts for a lot. Smile frequently. A smile will cause people to warm to you, emotionally. Smiling suggests confidence, friendliness, and success

#### 6. Eye contact

Should you look into the eyes of the other person or not?

The easiest rule is: give as much eye contact as the other is giving you. If they are not looking directly into your eyes, do not glare at them. Reflect their eye contact back. Don't evade the eye contact of another.

#### 7. Orientation

Orientation is the angle at which you stand or sit relative to the other person. Avoid the square-on position.

#### 8. Proximity

Proximity is the measure of how close you are to the other person. This varies considerably depending on various factors such as the context, the relationship, the activity, the gender of people involved, the age of people involved, the person's cultural norms, the person's character, etc. The best advice on distance is similar to that for eye contact. Over serve the response of the other person and react accordingly. If the other person is distant – don't crowd him. If the other person wants to get close – don't back away.

Notes for Voice Tone:

Voice tone refers to rate, pauses, pitch, volume and pace.

1. **Pauses:** Pauses are an essential part of all human interactions. We pause between different thought units. Therefore, if we do not pause while we speak in professional situations, it only makes our speech appear unnatural and hasty. Pauses lend credibility to the text of the speech and the speaker appears to be quite accomplished, poised and composed.

2. **Rate:** Rate refers to the number of words we utter per minute. When you speak in professional situations, try to assess whether you speak too fast or too slow. Speaking too fast is related to lack of comfort, intimidation by the audience and nervousness. It also makes it difficult for the audience to comprehend, assimilate and digest what is being said. Similarly, too slow a pace of your speech is most likely to cause monotony and boredom. The audience may lose interest. It may also suggest lack of preparedness. Studies show that a rate between 125 to 150 words per minute is ideal in professional situations.

3. Pitch: Pitch is the measure of how high or low your voice tone sounds. It is best to use the lower end of your voice range. Deeper tones imply more authority and confidence. High pitched squeaky voice suggests immaturity and lack of authority. So, use lower end of your voice range.

4. **Volume:** Volume relates to how loud your voice is, generally, it is better to speak slightly louder. A message delivered in a louder voice is judged to be more confident and more certain. A quiet voice is judged to be lacking in confidence.

5. **Pace:** The pace is the measure of the speed of delivery. The best general advice is to speak slightly slower. Slower speech delivery gives the listener time to think about what you are saying. It makes what you are saying seem well-thought-out.

3. **GROUP DISCUSSION:**

## What is a Group Discussion?

A GD is a methodology used by an organization to gauge whether the candidate has certain personality traits and/or skills that it desires in its members

In this methodology, the group of candidates are given a topic or a situation and then asked to discuss the same among themselves for 15-20 minutes

What does the GD test you in?

- Body language
- Communication skills
- Self confidence
- Leadership skills
- Listening ability
- Team work
- Time management

What happens in a GD?

- ☐ Initiation / Introduction
- ☐ Body of the Group Discussion
- ☐ Summarization

• Initiation/Introduction:

- ☐ Initiating a GD is a high profit-high loss strategy
- ☐ Initiate only if you have in-depth knowledge about the topic
- ☐ Do not stammer/ stutter/ quote wrong facts and figures
- ☐ Do not initiate just for the heck of it

• Body of the group discussion:

It is fine if you cannot initiate the discussion. Concentrate on continuing the topic either around the initiated idea or an idea of your own. Use statements that contain quotes, definition, questions, shock statements, facts, figures, statistics and also short stories. These convey a substantial thought process. They raise you to a higher spot. But make sure the points you

convey are legitimate and are not made upon your assumptions. False facts and theories can bring down your grades.

- Summarization:
  - ☐ Most GDs do not really have conclusions. A conclusion is where the whole group decides in favor or against the topic
  - ☐ But every GD is summarized. You can summarize what the group has discussed in the GD in a nutshell
  - ☐ Do not bring up new topics at this stage
  - ☐ Avoid stating only your point of view
  - ☐ Keep it brief and concise

### **Group Discussion Etiquette – Do's:**

- Speak pleasantly and politely
- Respect the contribution of every speaker
- Remember that a GD is not an argument. Learn to disagree politely
- Think about your contribution before you speak
- Try to stick to the discussion topic
- Do not introduce irrelevant information
- Be aware of your body language
- Agree with and acknowledge what you find interesting
- Make points appropriate to the issue
- Make only accurate statements
- Modulate the volume, pitch and tone
- Talk with confidence and self – assurance



### **Group Discussion Etiquette – Don'ts:**

- Do not lose your temper. A discussion is not an argument
- Do not Shout. Use a moderate tone and medium pitch
- Do not use too many gestures when you speak
- Don't try to dominate the discussion
- Do not draw too much on personal experience or anecdote
- Never interrupt. Wait for a speaker to finish before you speak
- Do not engage yourself in sub – group conversation
- Do not repeat and use irrelevant information
- Do not make fun of any participant even if his arguments are funny

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### **EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW:**

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A job interview is a process in which a potential employee is evaluated by an employer for prospective employment in their company, organization, or firm. During this process, the employer hopes to determine whether or not the applicant is suitable for the job

Preparing for the Interview:

- ☐ Research the Company
- ☐ Know the job requirements
- ☐ Prepare your resume

- ☐ Check all your documents

#### Typical Interview Questions:

- ☐ Tell me about yourself

Highlight your Skills, experience & abilities

- ☐ Why do you want to work for us

Explain your interest and motivation for wanting to work with this employer

- ☐ Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

Tests ambition. Align your goals to the position and the company

- ☐ Why should we hire you?

Sell your talents

- ☐ What are your strengths?

Communicate your strengths

- ☐ What are your weaknesses?

Know your weaknesses and try to turn them into strengths

### **Interview – Do's:**

- ☐ Be punctual
- ☐ Treat other people you encounter with courtesy and respect
- ☐ Phones switched off
- ☐ Offer a firm handshake, make eye contact, and have a friendly expression when you are greeted by your interviewer
- ☐ Maintain good eye contact during the interview
- ☐ Sit still in your seat; avoid fidgeting and slouching
- ☐ Exhibit a positive attitude
- ☐ Ask for clarification if you don't understand a question
- ☐ Be thorough in your responses, while being concise in your wordings
- ☐ When the interviewer concludes the interview, offer a firm handshake and make eye contact. Exit gracefully

### **Interview – Don'ts:**

- ☐ Don't make excuses. Take responsibility for your decisions and your actions
- ☐ Don't make negative comments about professors (or others)
- ☐ Don't falsify application materials or answers to interview questions
- ☐ Don't treat the interview casually, as if you are just shopping around or doing the interview for practice. This is an insult to the interviewer and to the organization
- ☐ Don't give the impression that you are only interested in an organization because of its geographic location/salary/ designation
- ☐ Don't ask about salary and benefits issues until the subject is brought up by your interviewer
- ☐ Don't be unprepared for typical interview questions
- ☐ No chewing gum or nail biting or knuckle cracking

## **PRESENTATION SKILLS:**

They are the skills you need in delivering effective and engaging presentations to a variety of audiences. These skills cover a variety of areas such as the structure of your presentation, the design of your slides, the tone of your voice and the body language you convey.

### **Structuring your presentation:**

What structure?

The structure is important because a well-organized presentation creates an impression on what you are talking about and you will gain the audience's trust and they will be more likely to listen to you. A structure provides a logical flow so that you can provide the information that the audience needs to follow your presentation. The structure will help you become more comfortable following this flow. There is a natural structure to presenting and following structure formalizes this process.

Purpose

To determine your purpose, ask "What are the main points I want my audience to take away from my presentation?" This provides a focus for you and the audience is clear on what they will gain listening to your presentation.

#### ☐ Audience pre-assessment

It is important to identify the characteristics, knowledge, and needs of your audience so that you are delivering the 'right' audience. Know who your audience is, what they want/ need to know and what their background is. This step is done before the presentation or throughout.

#### ☐ Opening your presentation/Bridge

This is also known as the hook. It is designed to grab the audience's attention and provide them with a reason to be interested in the presentation.

## ☐ Body of presentation

This is the major portion of the presentation. It is necessary that it connects directly to your purpose or bridge. Cover enough points to achieve your purpose (no more) and be sure to support your points clearly and concisely.

## ☐ Closing your presentation

This is the final impression that you will leave with your audience- make sure it is a strong one. Connect back to your purpose and let them know where you have been. Leave your audience with a clear understanding of your points.

## 10 – 20 – 30 Rule

In 2005, Guy Kawasaki, a venture capitalist in Silicon Valley wrote on his blog about a rule of thumb in making great presentations. Focusing on conciseness and visibility, he suggested the 10- 20- 30 rule of powerpoint presentations.

10 slides: By having a limit of slides, 10 slides, you will be managing the cognitive load for your audiences. They can easily follow the flow of your presentations and it also challenges you to design your presentations well: choose what's important and leave out what's unnecessary.

20 minutes: By giving yourself limited time on your presentation, you are challenging yourself to leave out unnecessary details and focus on the important stories that will convey your message. Even if your session has been allotted with more time, you can devote the remaining minutes to the discussion, questions or any technique that involves audiences with your presentation.

30 size front: Depending on the room and screen size, most audiences will be able to see text that is at least 30-size font. When designing your presentation, keep in mind that anything you show must be visible to every day in attendance, especially those in the back.

If you are concerned about fitting more text in a slide, always remember they do not necessarily make a better presentation.

Keep in mind that these rules are very subjective and each situation is unique. Apply them as a good rule of thumb to guide you in planning your presentations.

### **Importance of Presentation Skills:**

Interaction with others is a routine job of businesses in today's world. The importance of good presentation skills is established on the basis of following points:

- They help an individual in enhancing his own growth opportunities. In addition, it also grooms the personality of the presenter and his levels of confidence.
- In the case of striking deals and gaining clients, it is essential for business professionals to understand the audience. Good presentation skills enable an individual to mold his message according to the traits of the audience. This increases the probability of successful transmission of messages.
- Lastly, business professionals have to arrange seminars and give presentations almost every day. Having good presentation skills not only increases an individual's chances of success but also enable him to add greatly to the organization.

### **Tips to prepare effective Presentations:**

Plan: This is the first and the most crucial part of the whole presentation.

- a. Who is your audience?
- b. Why are they there?
- c. What is your goal?
- d. How long will it be?
- e. Where will it take place?

Keep these in mind while you prepare the presentation.

Prepare: Do not assume you can do a presentation without any preparation.

☐ Structure: The flow of the entire presentation should make sense. Do not jumble the slides and go back and forth.

☐ Objective

☐ Beginning or introduction

☐ Main content

☐ Summary, conclusion and recommendations

☐ Questions

☐ Prompt: Your speed matters the most because, if you go too fast, audience may not understand and if you are too slow, they might be bored. Either way you lose their attention.

☐ Visual aids: Be wise while choosing the pictures or videos. Make sure they are related to the topic and are enough to explain but not too much to distract.

☐ Voice: Your voice modulation is an important part too. You have to speak loud to be audible to the audience but not yell/shout to scare them.

☐ Appearance: You need to look neat and tidy as your appearance is the first thing that the audiences notice.

☐ Style: This relates to the way to present the topic. The gestures you use or the posture and your behavior.

☐ Questions: Be ready to both, ask and receive questions.

• Practice: As it is said, practice makes a man perfect. It sure is a good idea that you practice the entire presentation either in front of anyone or the mirror before you give the actual presentation.

• Present: Here comes the main part, the presentation.

☐ Make a strong start

☐ Engage the audience in first 2-3 minutes

☐ Show your passion through your movements and gestures

☐ Make eye contact and have a smile

