

# Impact of Soft Skills Training Versus Technical Skills Training on Work Efficiency of Professionals - Comparative Analysis

Ravi B. Achaliya

*Corporate Trainer, India*

Dr. Preeti Agarwal

*G. H. Raisoni Institute of Business Management, India*

**Abstract:** - Emphasis has been rising over past few years for organizations to be able to more stringently cross-examine the return on investment of the training and development they offer to employees. Soft skills training such as public speaking can be seen as a 'good to have' rather than an essential element, and hard / technical skills like programming & quality check are often seen as a box ticking exercise, not always followed up in the workplace to assess effectiveness.

Approach of companies is changing. Companies certainly realize the employees training & development is an essential part of organization development. Possibly this is the reason, like budget for recruitment, branding, marketing, maintenance etc., there is something called "Training budget". This budget needs to be divided into categories of skills, considered to be mandatory, for employees to function effectively in that company.

Major challenge is to evaluate where to focus more – Soft skill or Hard / technical skill.

This research paper lists down 100s of soft & technical skills that various organizations demand. It aims to bring comparison between tangible and non-tangible gain via soft skill training versus technical training. Also, it puts across certain points about how & why trend is shifting from soft skills to technical skills.

Researcher wants to convey his some of the ideas that can increase companies' productivity by remarkable percentage without any hefty investments. This is a remedy especially for those companies (SMEs, Start-up, etc.) that are running on threshold income and always want to reduce cost.

**Key words:** Employee Training, Soft Skills, Technical Skills, Efficiency, Efficacy, Productivity.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Even if job seeker qualifies for particular job profile based on education criteria, there is high chance that he disqualifies because of lower P-Value (Score on Presentation & Performance Evaluation). When we say P-evaluation, it include dozens of qualities that various companies are assessing. On many occasions it has been observed that, a Mechanic solves problem more efficiently compared to a Mechanical Engineer. Ideally, it should be reverse! Similarly, another observation is that people from village are more hard-working compared to "citizen".

There are certain companies that prefer employees from remote locations instead of cosmopolitan cities. Justification is that there is less chance of absenteeism, lower salary expectations and readiness to continue for longer working hours. All of this doesn't come from any specific degree. It comes with experiences, life style and real time involvement in "active life". Active life itself means "Skilled Life"! It may be a soft skill or a technical skill.

## II. WHY SOFT SKILL OR TECHNICAL SKILL TRAINING TO "EDUCATED RECRUITS"?

Even if candidate is qualified MBA or BE or any other degree demanded by job, he might not have witnessed "professional" atmosphere. In professional atmosphere, many times employees breathe "O<sub>2</sub>" which means **Overload & Overtime**. Human behavior always changes in such stressed situation, especially if person (like fresher, aggressive / overambitious people etc.) is not used to it. Also, we have diversified workforce now a days. Employees with versatile qualification, background, demographic situations are coming together in same team / department. If each one of them present their culture in their own ways, it is impossible build long lasting productive efficient team.

These are some of the key reasons for need of trained workforce with complementary soft / technical skills.

## III. SOFT SKILLS TRAINING VS. TECHNICAL SKILLS TRAINING

Both soft & technical (also referred to as "Hard") skills differ in their grasping method and application method. Three major differences identified by Lei Han (Han, n.d.) are put here across:

## IV. SOFT SKILLS TRAINING

Mostly, such training programs are outsourced. One of the important reasons of outsourcing is unbiased approach of both trainer & participants. These can be focused, experimental & built on case studies from same, similar or different organizations. (Henville, 2012) This is one of the best platform to resolve mental blocks and behavioral differences.

The structure of training is on grasping techniques rather than thumb rules to handle situations.

Such training is done usually in small groups as everyone needs enough attention & query solving time. Training methods are participative, activity based, group discussion, case solving etc. This offer participants to see same situation & multiple solutions from different perspective. LEOs method of solving tends to be more aggressive as compared to LIBRAs! Thus, moral of training becomes that small alteration & adaptability (depending upon situation) can just turn around the case / discussion.

There are remarkable pitfalls in soft skills training. Case studies, even if derived from real time scenarios, remain case studies only! Participants may outperform during training but may fail to apply in real life situations. Soft skills training output cannot be quantified. It can just be observed. These skills are mostly useful when there are two or more people involved. For an individual, his technical skills are going to play vital role in his career. Many times scientists are found to be less social. But they are the ones who are bringing innovations that change the world!

These training programs are many times in-house either by internal or sometimes by external trainer. Internal trainer will always talk in boundary / limits of companies' policies, infrastructure, financials & overall framework. Participants tend to be less receptive as the attitude is "...I know that." External trainer brings his experience from different companies. Same things are done with which other methods / technologies; TPM / Kaizen / Toyota systems are helping which companies & how; Efficacy of new features that are added to the revised version of same technology; e.g. compared to MS Excel 2007, what is new in MS Excel 2013?

Thus, hard skills training give opportunities to learn new & faster methods of doing same work with much higher efficiency. Actual merit of such training is that it is consistent & refined based on number of years of training with variety of participants. It can be split into Novice, Intermediate & Advance.

Certain limitations of technical training include continuously changing technology, production methods / standards, customer requirements etc. Every time concerned people in the team needs to be updated.

V. Technical Skills Training

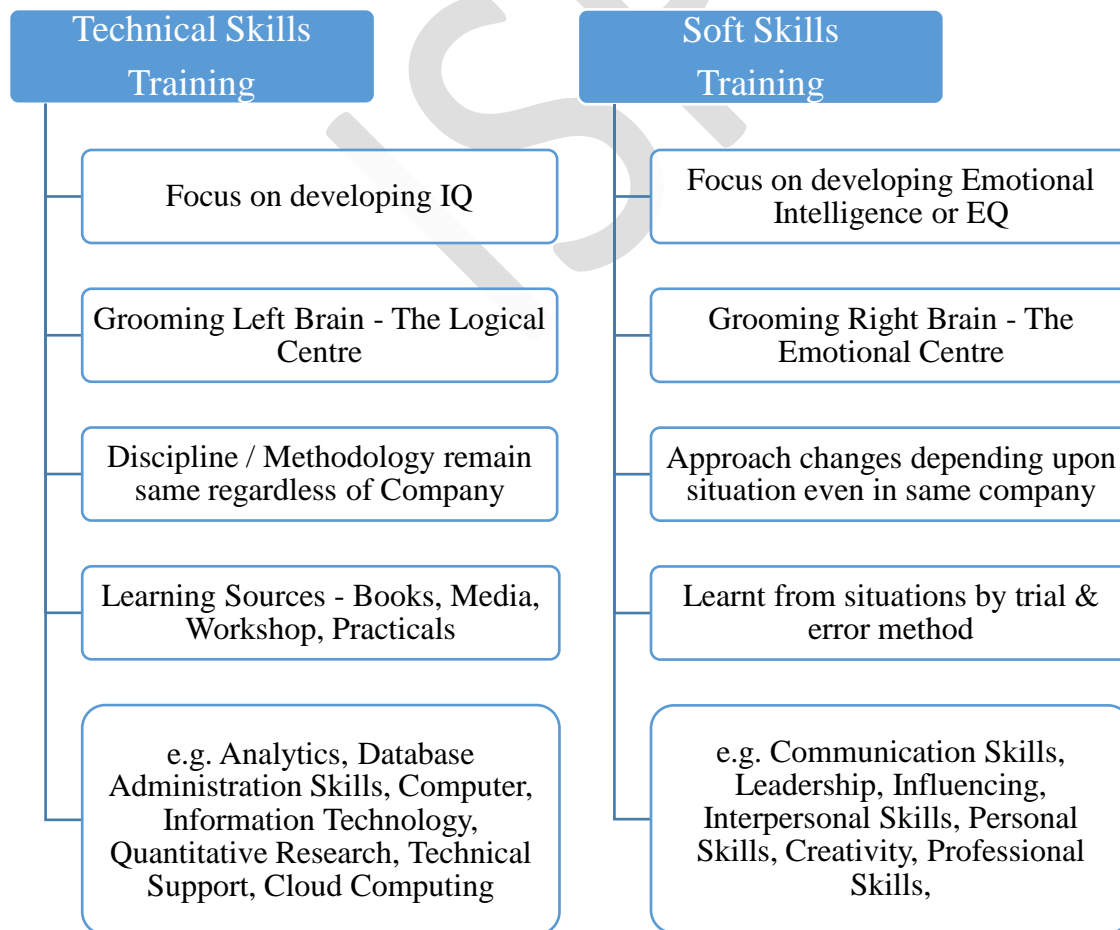


Figure 1 Key differences between Soft skills & Technical skills Training

## VI. CAREER CHOICES

It is not that every job profile needs both soft and hard skills training. It depends on what you have chosen.

- *More hard skills; less soft skills*

Doctors need to be best in their work. A dentist not good at dentistry but with excellent communication cannot sustain for longer time. Software developer not knowing coding cannot complete task only with his good manners. Such person may not jell with others very easily but can be extremely successful in his career.

- *Both hard skills & soft skills*

Many professions like accountancy, lawyer, TV news reporter etc. need to be very good in his profession and communication as well. Such professions need to know what to do and how to do. Thus both skills play vital role in their career.

- *Less hard skills & more Soft skills*

Bike salesman may not be knowing how to clean carburetor of two wheeler. It is enough to speak about mileage, cost, fuel efficiency etc. More important how he presents information to client & method of follow up. That is what is going to bring more business.

## VII. WHY LESSER BUDGET FOR SOFT SKILLS TRAINING?

If soft skills impact behavioral / psychometric aspect of participant, why is it scoring low on preference? There are many reasons for this changing approach.

Soft skills training rarely have immediate impact on Productivity, Quality, Cost reduction, Headcount reduction etc. Thus, it is difficult to calculate return on investment.

Soft skill trainer may give many examples about sitting, gestures, postures, communication skills etc. But many times responses / soft skills are driven by opponents' method of communication. If boss initiates discussion with "Non-Sense" during first meet of day, rare chance that employee will greet him "Good Morning" with a smile!

Even if 25% of the organization's managerial strength undergoes Leadership training, all of them will not be promoted as a Leader of any team / department / function.

Neither the training intends it. Main intention is identification of leadership potential and realization of improvement areas. When a Leader is chosen from this group, automatically "soft skills" of others are hurt. This is one of the biggest loop hole in such types of trainings.

In Time Management workshop, many custom exercises are designed from the perspective of introspection by all participants. But situations are always changing. On many occasions, production schedule is challenged by customer requirements, raw material / manpower / machine / tool / power availability & so on.

## VIII. WHY IS INVESTMENT IN TECHNICAL SKILLS TRAINING RISING?

With increase in online marketing, purchase, sale of products & services, customers' patience is reducing drastically. Hence, the entire focus is on ensuring minimum time requirement to deliver well packaged, quality product to customer with minimum cost. There is hardly any time to check with online sale greets customer for the day or not. Neither customer expects it.

## IX. CONCLUSION

Employee efficiency is always measured periodically to monitor internal growth of an organization in terms of increase in productivity, quality, output and reduction in accidents, errors, faulty products etc. This is possible only if employees are empowered with updated technology, efficient methods of operations and development.

Manual operation & automation have huge impact on productivity and accuracy compared to that of soft skills. Increase in automation will lead to reduction in need of automation. Lesser the human intervention with machine or any other person, lesser the psychological friction and higher the work focus – work efficiency.

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