

SOFT SKILLS FOR ENGINEERS

**(A Pragmatic Book To Improve Professional,
Social And Personal Life)**

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(A Pragmatic Book To Improve Professional, Social And Personal Life)

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Mr. Sikandar D. Patil

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Preface

“Soft skills get little respect but will make or break your career.”
-- Peggy Klaus

‘Soft skills’ as a term in the world of work is associated with a person’s emotional intelligence, the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language proficiency, personal habits, feelings, optimism and teamwork that characterize relationships with other people. Though soft skills are hard to quantify or measure, they are needed for everyday life as well as for work. Soft skills provide an important complement to ‘hard skills’ which are the occupational requirements of a job and many other activities. They are easy to observe, quantify and measure. They include items such as certifications, degrees, job titles, technical know-how, and technical and administrative procedures in general. They are the soft skills which empower higher education institutions and workforce in advancing career development and personal growth. They also create new opportunities and go beyond financial motivation. It has been suggested that in a number of professions, soft skills may be more important over the long term than specialized occupational skills. In legal, educational or even in technical professions the ability to deal with people effectively and politely can determine the professional success of an individual which may lead to the overall success of an organization or institution. For this reason, soft skills are increasingly sought out by employers in addition to standard (technical) qualifications and may play an indispensable role in a number of professions.

In the present book, the principal areas relevant to the soft skills are covered in the all the chapters included in the book; for example, Interpersonal Communicative Skills; Time Management Skills; Problem Solving Skills;

Managerial Skills; Report Writing Skills; Presentation Skills, etc. The purpose of the book is to help to develop soft and communicative skills based on life skills, to design individual plans of effective time management, to prepare the budding engineers to effectively solve problems and perform roles of managers/ supervisors/ administrators/ experts, etc. by using empathic components and critical thinking, and to improve the ability to create professionally written reports and oral presentations. Besides, the lectures containing basic information on the stated skills, a practical part is also included providing space for discussions and practicing the acquired knowledge by completing tasks and exercises relevant to the given topics. In short, Soft skills training forms an important part of training (future) engineers in developing their own personality to succeed in their private, social and professional life.

The book will guide and motivate the readers to believe in oneself. Believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities! Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own powers you cannot be successful or happy. But with self-confidence you can succeed. A sense of inadequacy interferes with the attainment of your hopes, but self- confidence leads to self-realization and achievement. Because of the Importance of this mental attitude, this book will help you believe in yourself and release your inner powers and skills to the outer world.

**Your beliefs become your thoughts,
Your thoughts become your words,
Your words become your actions,
Your actions become your habits,
Your habits become your values,
Your values become your destiny."**

__Mahatma Gandhi

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Acknowledgement

In today's restless and competition ridden world, students in all courses and wings of studies are baffled to get better and raise above the competition. The post-covid situation made the aspiring students even more panic and struggled for career and the employees more unsafe and unstable. The only remedy which can help in this time of crisis to rise from the panic situation is our mental attitude. The present book with its chief highlights on key career skills will definitely prove to be guiding mentors for the engineering graduates who want lift their career skills to their expectations.

The present book is a sincere and modest attempt to present the value of soft skills for budding rural engineers, who are always good at their domain knowledge and hard skills required for the career building. Now a day, these skills are given prime and prominence in the board of corporate recruiter and academicians. The book is result of our long standing in engineering and public school academia. We acknowledge the use of excerpts and material either in their original forms or as adaptations taken from the following the printed and online sources.

The book will not be complete without a critical record of our sweet and bitter experiences taken in our entire teaching span till now. We are thankful all staff members, management of Vidya Pratishthan, Indapur and Fabtech Educational Campus, Sangola, for providing us persistent motivation.

We wish to dedicate the book to the creative and budding technocrats who have been the strength, shield and rock of support of our nation. They empowered the nation to face life in all its entire vicissitude. Last but not least, we are sincerely thankful to the publishers for accepting the manuscript, and all those staff members, our

previous colleagues and students who directly or indirectly helped us to accomplish this task. We hope that the book will definitely come out as an eye opener and as a guide book for those rural and untrained emerging engineers who want to build their successful career on the rocks of their self-study and self-motivation. Any suggestion for the improvement of the content of the book is always welcome.

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Chapter I

Introduction to Soft Skills



“A man is a matter of age but a gentleman is always a matter of soft skills; no doubt.”

Soft skills is a term often associated with a person's Emotional Intelligence Quotient, the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, managing people, leadership, etc. that characterize relationships with other people. Soft skills, also known as people skills, complement hard skills to enhance an individual's relationships, job performance and career prospects. It's often said that hard skills will get you an interview but you need soft skills to get—and keep the job.

Unlike hard skills, which comprise a person's technical skill set and ability to perform certain functional tasks, soft skills are interpersonal and broadly applicable across job titles and industries. Many soft skills are tied to individuals' personalities rather than any formal training, and are thus considered more difficult to develop than hard skills. Soft skills are often described in terms of personality traits, such as optimism, integrity and a sense of humor. These skills are also defined by abilities that can be practiced, such as leadership, empathy, communication and sociability.

Soft skills could be defined as life skills which are behaviors used appropriately and responsibly in the management of personal affairs. They are a set of human skills acquired via teaching or direct experience that are used to handle problems and questions commonly encountered in daily human life.

The subject varies greatly depending on social norms and community expectations. Life skills have been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as “abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”. They represent the psycho-social skills that determine valued behavior and include reflective skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking, to personal

skills such as self-awareness, and to interpersonal skills. Practicing life skills leads to qualities such as self-esteem, sociability and tolerance, to action competencies to take action and generate change, and to capabilities to have the freedom to decide what to do and who to be.

Life Skills-Based Education has a long history of supporting human development. Life skills based education is now recognized as a methodology to address a variety of issues of youth development and thematic responses including as expressed in World Youth Report (2003), World Program for Human Rights Education (2004), UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (2005), the World Development Report (2007), and so on. Expected learning outcomes include a combination of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills with a particular emphasis on those skills that related to critical thinking and problem solving, self-management and communication and interpersonal skills. Social skills are any skills facilitating interaction and communication with others. Social rule sand relations are created, communicated, and changed in verbal and nonverbal ways. The process of learning these skills is called socialization.

According to researchers conducted in Harvard and Stanford Universities only 15% of your career success is provided by your hard skills, whilst other 85% by so called soft skills. Generally, soft skills may be subdivided into three basic categories:

1. Personal qualities
2. Interpersonal skills
3. Additional skills/knowledge

Soft Skills:

Critical thinking Communication Skills

Listening to others Reflective Practice

Group Work/working with others CV and Applications

Self-assessment

- Professional practice
- Assertiveness
- Creative problem solving
- Mentoring and peer support
- Information Literacy
- Digital Literacy
- Portfolio management

Soft skills complement hard skills to enhance an individual's relationships, job performance and career prospects. Unlike hard skills, which tend to be specific to a certain type of task or activity, soft skills are broadly applicable. While your technical skills may get your foot in the door, your people skills are what open most of the doors to come. Your work ethic, your attitude, your communication skills, your emotional intelligence and a whole host of other personal attributes are the soft skills that are crucial for career success.

“Hard skills include technical or administrative competence”. Soft skills are commonly used to “refer to the “emotional side” of human beings in opposition to the IQ (Intelligent Quotient) component related to hard skills”. Hard and soft skills are usually defined as similar concepts or complements. This fact demonstrates how these two different types of abilities are strictly related.

Hard skills were the only skills necessary for career employment and were generally quantifiable and measurable from an educational background, work experience or through interview. Success at work seemed to be related solely to the technical ability of completing tasks. For this reason, employer and companies used to hire new people based only on their objective competencies. This clarifies why nowadays people with good soft skills are in such shorter supply than workers with good hard skills.

The trend has changed in the last years. Hard skills still represent a fundamental aspect, but soft skills equaled them for importance. According to the leadership professor Robert Lavasseur, most of the researchers he interviewed in this field “rated soft skills higher than technical skills”. Studies by Stanford Research Institute and the Carnegie Mellon Foundation among Fortune 500 CEOs confirm this idea establishing that 75% of long term job success resulted from soft skills and only 25% from technical skills (Sinha, 2008). Another study found that 80% of achievements in career are determined by soft skills and only 20% by hard skills.

In employment sectors that have seen rapid growth, employers have stated that newly graduated employees possess a skill gap. This skill gap resides between soft and hard skills, these newly graduated employees possess the hard skills required and expected, but are lacking the soft skills.

Research by ICIMS found that 58% of recruiters believe that soft skills are of more importance for senior-level positions as compared to entry-level positions. Furthermore, the research highlighted that 94% of recruiters believed that employees possessing stronger soft skills were more likely to be promoted to a leadership position compared to those who had weaker soft skills although they had more years’ worth of experience. Showing you possess soft skills will help in your career, these skills will set you apart in interviews, and while you are performing jobs.

Chapter II

The Power of Positive Thinking



“Be positive, patient and persistent, till the goal is reached”

Positive thinking is a mental attitude in which you expect good and favorable results. A positive mind waits for happiness, health and a happy ending in any situation. However, positive thinking actually means approaching life's challenges with a positive outlook. It does not necessarily mean avoiding or ignoring the bad things; instead, it involves making the most of the potentially bad situations, trying to see the best in other people, and viewing yourself and your abilities in a positive light.

Thinking often starts with self-talk. Self-talk is the endless stream of unspoken thoughts that run through your head. These automatic thoughts can be positive or negative. Some of your self-talk comes from logic and reason. Other self-talk may arise from misconceptions that you create because of lack of information. If your thoughts are mostly positive, you're likely an optimist - someone who practices positive thinking. If the thoughts that run through your head are mostly negative, your outlook on life is more likely pessimistic.

We have around 60,000 thoughts a day, many of which come and go so quickly that we're not aware of them. And how many of these prevent us from fulfilling our potential?

- **Quality of thoughts:**

Thinking about the Past:

Thinking about the past is one kind of waste thoughts. Imagine how much time we spent thinking about past events and life. There are very few times we think about the sweetness of past. Most of these thoughts are about the past mistakes or decisions. It is all right to learn from the past but it is totally wastage of time to think about the sad and bad memories of past again and again. It may be hard to believe that 80% of your thoughts are about the past.

Worrying about the Future:

Another part of waste thoughts is thinking too much about tomorrow. We forget to live in the present while

worrying about the future. An average person spent 15% of the time thinking too much about future. What portion of thoughts left for positive, negative and necessary thoughts? It is only 5%.

Thinking about Present:

Only 5% of our thoughts are about the present. Let us divide these thoughts into Positive, Negative and Necessary. What do you think that how much of these thoughts are positive? It is just 1 or 2%. This is the volume of positive thinking of the average human being. This is the quality of our thoughts and our life. You know very well that our happiness, peace and love purely depend on the positive thoughts. Therefore, it is important to have healthy thoughts in our mind.

- Positive thoughts: These are thoughts related to peace, affirmations, happiness, love and purity.
- Negative thoughts: Feelings related to ego, anger, grudge and fear comes into Negative thoughts.
- Necessary thoughts: Thoughts related to daily activities and planning comes into necessary thoughts.
- Waste thoughts: Even if we have no power on circumstances, we still keep thinking about them. Thoughts about these situations are called waste thoughts.

Practice these simple exercises and suggestions to keep your thoughts on the positive side.

1. Only use positive words while talking. If you're constantly telling yourself "I can't you may convince yourself that's the truth. Replace these negative words with positive ones instead. Tell yourself you will do your best or that you will try your hardest instead.

2. Direct your thoughts. This technique, used by psychotherapists, can help you to control your thoughts when you start to feel down or anxious. Create a happy thought, a positive image, or give yourself positive feedback to keep bad feelings in check.

3. Believe you will succeed. There is nothing like believing in yourself to create a successful reality. Give yourself the benefit of the doubt and believe that you will succeed in fulfilling your goals.

4. Analyze what went wrong. Thinking positively doesn't mean denying that there is anything wrong. Instead, give yourself some time to think about the things that led up to your current situation so you can avoid future mistakes and look toward a more positive tomorrow.

5. Give yourself credit. Often when we feel frustrated or upset we only concentrate on the bad things or the mistakes we've made instead of giving ourselves credit for what we do right. Allow yourself to feel confident about the things you have accomplished, even if you've messed up in other areas.

6. Forgive yourself. Constantly beating yourself up about things that have gone wrong won't change them. Tell yourself that you're forgiven for your mistakes and allow yourself to move on.

7. Learn from the past. The past is behind you and no matter how badly things went there is nothing you can do to change them. Whenever you feel negative thoughts about the past come up, replace them with positive thoughts about the future.

8. Remember things could be worse. No matter how bad things get to, remember that they could be worse and be grateful for all the good things that are in your life, even when it seems there's more bad than good.

9. Look for opportunity. In every failure, there's an opportunity to improve. Spend time thinking of ways you can turn your setbacks at work into ways you can get ahead in the future.

10. Stop making excuses. There are always a million excuses for any person not to do something even if that something can make them feel happier. Stop putting up

obstacles to your happiness and ditch those lame excuses when you hear yourself making them.

11. Don't play the victim. Bad things happen to everyone from time to time. Pitying yourself and wanting others to feel sorry for you isn't going to make things better. Pick yourself up and start working towards a happier future.

12. Associate yourself with those who think positively. Positivity is contagious, so find friends and family members who look on the bright side to surround you with.

13. Come up with ideas of how to turn negative thoughts into positive ones. If you find yourself thinking you should have done this or that differently, try changing your thoughts around. Instead give yourself credit for what you did. Do remember that you are not perfect or that you can do better next time.

14. Visualize a successful outcome. Sometimes it can be helpful to picture yourself completing a project successfully or getting the promotion you desire. This can encourage you and make you feel better about the situation.

15. Think of ways to turn visualization into action. The next natural step of this is to think of just how you're going to get to where you see yourself. Just picturing it isn't going to make it happen, so create a plan to take it one step at a time until you've made it.

16. Take control of your decisions. You're the boss of what is going on in your life, even when you feel like you don't have a choice. Take back control of your decisions and make the choice to be happier and more positive.

17. Smile; Sometimes all it takes to feel good is to put a smile on your face.

• The health benefits of positive thinking:

Researchers continue to explore the effects of positive thinking and optimism on health. Health benefits that positive thinking may provide include:

- Increased life span
- Lower rates of depression
- Lower levels of distress
- Greater resistance to the common cold
- Better psychological and physical well-being
- Reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease
- Better coping skills during hardships and times of stress

Chapter III

Interpersonal Communicative Skills



“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”
-- Stephen Covey

Soft skills are primarily related to communication. Effective communication is one of the most important life skills we can learn. The term interpersonal skills (also called people skills or communication skills) is often used in business contexts to refer to the skills a person uses to communicate and interact with others. It means how people relate to one another. Interpersonal communication is the process by which people exchange information, feelings, and meaning through face-to-face communication. The first step in the communication process involves the sender sending the message to the receiver.

To avoid misunderstanding, the message must be clearly communicated by the sender through his/her communication skills. The second step includes the receiver both hearing and responding to the message. If the receiver is not a good listener, s/he will be a less effective communicator. The communication process is made up of four key components: encoding, medium of transmission, decoding, and feedback. From a business perspective, effective communication is an absolute must because it commonly accounts for the difference between success and failure or profit and loss.

The manner in which individuals perceive and talk to each other at work about different issues is a major determinant of the business success. Interpersonal communication skills refer to the ability to speak competently and effectively to groups of people, e.g. in the classroom, or in public, the ability to make persuasive and convincing speeches, to communicate messages and impart information in a clear and understandable manner. This builds the self-confidence in people and allows them to create a relevant impact.

In many interpersonal encounters, the first few minutes are extremely important as first impressions have a significant impact on the success of further

communication. Everyone has expectations and norms as to how initial meetings should proceed and people tend to behave according to these expectations. If these expectations are mismatched, communication will not be effective or run smoothly, and some form of negotiation will be needed if relations are to continue. At a first meeting, formalities and appropriate greetings are usually expected. Such formalities could include a handshake, introducing yourself, or eye contact. Discussions around a neutral subject such as the weather or your journey may also be useful. A friendly disposition and a smiling face are much more likely to encourage communication than a blank face, inattention or disinterested reception.

The way a communication is closed will, at least in part, determine the way a conversation is remembered. A range of subtle, or sometimes not so subtle, signals are used to end an interaction. For example, some people may avoid eye contact, stand up, turn their body away, or use behavior such as looking at a watch or closing notepads or books.

All of these non-verbal actions indicate to the other person that the initiator wishes to end the communication. Closing an interaction too abruptly may not allow the other person to 'round off' what he or she is saying so you should ensure there is time for windingup. The closure of an interaction is a good time to make any future arrangements. Last, but not least, this time will no doubt be accompanied by a number of socially acceptable parting gestures. The use of encouraging words alongside non-verbal gestures such as head nods, a warm facial expression and maintaining eye contact, are more likely to reinforce openness in others. The use of encouragement and positive reinforcement can:

1. encourage others to participate in discussion
2. signify interest in what other people have to say

3.pave the way for development or maintenance of a relationship

4.allay fears and give reassurance

5.show warmth and openness

6.Reduce shyness or nervousness in ourselves and others.

When you prepare for an important meeting, you have to overcome fears and nervousness. Otherwise it is impossible to think clearly when you experience symptoms such as: shortness of breath, accelerated heart rate, sweating palms, digestive problems, trembling, headaches, neck pain, hot or cold flashes, and others. Even if a conversation goes horribly wrong, do not panic, it will be the worst.

The goal is to help the mind get used to coping with panic, which takes the fear of fear away. Whatever you fear, if you face it, it should start to fade. Fears tend to be much worse than reality. People sometimes tell themselves they are a failure because they blush when they feel self-conscious. This then makes them more upset. But blushing in stressful situations is normal. By remembering this, the anxiety goes away. You will feel better if you physically calm down, take a 15-minute walk, make a cup of tea or have a bath. Exercise as a tool for reducing nervousness is more than just something you do for your own physical fitness.

It allows you to easily reduce your nervousness because it increases production of relaxing neurotransmitters while simultaneously burning hormones caused by stress and tiring the muscles so that anxiety symptoms are less severe. If you do nothing else for your nervousness, you still need to start exercising. Sharing fears takes away a lot of their scariness. Talk about it to your partner, friend or a family member.

You can refer people for counseling. Many people turn to alcohol or drugs to self-treat anxiety with the idea that it will make them feel better, but these only make nervousness worse. Life is full of stresses, yet many of us feel that our lives must be perfect. Bad days and setbacks will always happen, we should not expect perfection.

Your thoughts are your enemy when you are nervous often. You need to make sure that you do not let yourself get taken over by these thoughts. As soon as you are about to give the activity that makes you nervous, like a speech, get busy and stay busy. Keep your mind distracted and occupied. You will find that as long as you are engaging in healthy activities, the break you get mentally will reduce your anxiety in the future. Concentrating on interpersonal communicative skills applied both in everyday social interaction and in professional environment, it is necessary to recognize and transform barriers to effective public speaking and to handle partners in conversation with confidence.

A successful two-way communication process depends on carefully conveying your message so that your listener understands exactly what you mean. On the contrary, poor communication may reduce quality, weaken productivity, and eventually may lead to anger and a lack of trust among individuals within the company or organization.

• **Voice Controlling and Careful Listening:**

Interpersonal communication is not just about what is actually said but how it is said. When you speak, your tone of voice speaks in ways that go beyond words. It will tell people whether you feel elated or sad, excited or bored. Often, how you say things conveys more meaning than what you say. In fact, voice quality is said to convey about 38% of your meaning. Tone of voice may alter significantly the meaning of speech. For example the sentences “Are you

here?” or “I am here” can have different connotations if spoken with a different tone of voice - high, low, quick, slow, rising, falling, whispering, whining, yelling, or sighing.

Some people naturally have more vocal strengths; the others need to warm up their voice every day, especially before public speaking. When your voice is affected by excitement or stress, practice your speech out loud. Learn to breathe properly and apply that technique to your public speaking. It happens that we impute strength and confidence to the person who speaks with a low-pitched, well-modulated voice. When the voice rises to a high pitch, we sense excitement, panic, and lack of control. That means that each of us should use the lower end of the voice range when we want to communicate calmness, confidence and competence.

It is a good idea to vary the pace – the speed at which you talk. Some simple but telling points of a message can be made effectively in a rapid-fire sequence. Quickening up at times and then slowing down will help to maintain interest. Pauses can be used for effect to highlight the preceding statement or to gain attention before an important message.

Pauses mean silence for a few seconds. Listeners interpret meaning during pauses so have the courage to stay silent for up to five seconds – dramatic pauses like this convey authority and confidence.

Volume should always be great enough that you can be heard by everyone you are trying to reach with your voice. When you do not address people through a microphone, keep checking them for signs that they are straining to hear, or indications that their attention is straying. By developing a strong voice, as opposed to a loud voice, you will be seen as someone positive.

Intonation and stress are other important elements of paralanguage. The range between high and low intonations

varies from individual to individual. The way you emphasize words can change the meaning of your sentences. As you speak, be conscious of the effects of sense stress on the meaning you are trying to convey. Use stress to show your listener which words you consider to be important.

Some people tend to speak through clenched teeth and with little movement of their lips. It is this inability to open mouths and failure to make speech sounds with precision that is the root cause of inaudibility. The sound is locked into the mouth and not let out.

To have good articulation it is important to unclench the jaw, open the mouth and give full benefit to each sound you make, paying particular attention to the ends of words. This will also help your audience as a certain amount of lip-reading will be possible. Before any important speaking situation, whether it is an appointment, meeting or talk, it is beneficial to have a voice warm-up. Effective verbal or spoken communication is dependent on a number of factors and cannot be fully isolated from other important interpersonal skills such as non-verbal communication and listening skills.

The best thing you can do to improve your communication skills is to learn to really listen, i.e. to pay attention and let the other person talk without interrupting. It is hard work, but as it is said: "A good conversation is a bunch of words elegantly connected with listening".

Statistics present that we spend approximately 70% of our total waking time communicating with others. Of this communication time, we spend: 9% writing, 16% reading, 30% talking, and 45% listening. It has to be pointed out that these percentages may vary from person to person, e.g. some people may spend much more than 30% of their communications time talking and much less time listening.

Active listening is an important skill and yet, as communicators, people tend to spend far more energy considering what they are going to say rather than listening to what the other person is trying to say. The following points are essential for effective and active listening:

- Arrange a comfortable environment conducive to the purpose of the communication (a warm light room with minimal background noise). Be prepared to listen, avoid distractions.
- Keep an open mind and concentrate on what the speaker is saying, both with his/her words as well as with voice inflections, rate of speech, body language etc.
- Try not to think about how you are going to respond to the speaker while s/he is speaking to you. Delay judgment until you have heard everything.
- Do not be trying to think of your next question while the other person is giving information.
- Interact nonverbally with small gestures or verbal affirmations, such as nodding your head or saying very brief comments, e.g. "I see" and other words that would not interrupt the speaker. This tells the speaker that you are fully engaged in listening and also keeps you involved in the communication process.
- Do not interrupt or finish the speaker's sentences. This takes your concentration completely away from what the speaker is saying and focuses your attention on your own words. When other people talk, the mind has an opportunity to wander because it does not have to process any specific actions thus you may not listen intently when people speak to you.

Try to force and present yourself to listen to the words you are hearing. Consider the speaker's motivation behind what he is saying. If you lack an ability to listen well and you want to change and concentrate on what people say, use a few tricks which can help you out, e.g. people

who listen well communicate listening mode with body language that covers their mouth (a hand placed gently in front of it). You want to make a constant eye contact, but do not give the speaker a death stare. If you cannot make it, just look at the bridge of their nose or a little below. You can also get away with looking at their mouth because they are talking. Eyes move naturally all the time, so look at them for most of the conversation but feel free to momentarily break contact now and again.

Feedback, the final link of communication, consists of messages the listener returns, which allows the speaker to know how accurately the message has been received, as well as the listener's reaction. The listener may also respond to the unintentional message as well as the intentional message.

The types of feedback range from direct verbal statements, for example "Say that again, I don't understand", to subtle facial expressions or changes in posture that might indicate to the speaker that the listener feels uncomfortable with the message. Feedback allows the speaker to regulate, adapt or repeat the message in order to improve communication. 11 Keep an open mind, and avoid making or expressing assumptions about your listener. You cannot know whether he will be angry, bored, or interested before he has replied. Find out how your listener thinks. The listener gives you clues with his eyes. If you notice that he often looks up, he may think in pictures. He prefers sound if he usually looks to the side and feelings if he glances down. Once you start to act like a good listener, you will come to believe you are a good listener. You should strive to constantly become better communicators and become more aware and prepared to deal effectively with many types of communication challenges you face every day. Your communication skills play an important part in your success and even happiness in life.

- **Non-verbal Communication:**

Basic communication skills using words alone may not be enough to get your full meaning across. When communicating face-to-face with others, you receive messages on three levels: verbal, Para-verbal and non-verbal.

Verbal messages (vocabulary) are the words you choose and arrange in your communication. They consist of the actual words you communicate with others.

1. Para-verbal messages (voice inflections) mean the way how you say the words. They can include tone, speed, emotions, intonation, pace, and volume of your voice.

2. Non-verbal messages support your words through your body language, facial expressions, gestures, etc. They are the primary way that we communicate emotions.

As words have limitations, non-verbal communication is more effective in situations where you have to explain shapes, directions, inner feelings and personalities. Non-verbal signals serve to make the message more powerful and convincing. If a message is too emotional or too complex, a separate non-verbal communication channel is needed to transmit this message correctly. Non-verbal communication helps clarify misunderstanding and avoid possible communication barriers.

Your non-verbal behavior may carry more meanings than your words, e.g. a handshake and a smile convey a friendly message. Frowning or using a loud voice may intimidate your listener. Lean close for an intimate conversation, but stay back in formal situations. Use eye contact and a warm approach to encourage rapport as you begin to speak.

Through verbal communication, people learn about your thoughts and ideas. Through non-verbal communication, they learn about your feelings. Much of it is unconscious, but you can bring a great deal of your

wordless communication under conscious control. If you want to get your ideas across better at work, you should also watch your body language while having communication.

The most important thing in communication is hearing what is not said. It can be picking up by interpreting body language, e.g. you tell your partner you are open to discussion but your arms are crossed or you say you are listening but have not looked up from your phone yet. Do not forget that you are constantly communicating even when you are not saying a word. Skills of non-verbal communication are rarely taught at schools, though they are very important for effective interactions with others. They are obviously (and often unconsciously) acquired in natural cultural environment by observing others and imitating them.

Body language, for example, includes gestures (e.g. shaking a fist, using the middle finger), facial expressions (smile, scowl), body posture (slouching, sitting upright), eye contact (winking, staring), body contact (kissing, hand shake). To express various meanings the following non-verbal elements are used:

1. arms and hands to say good-bye, point, count, express
2. Excitement, beckons, warn away, threaten, insult, etc.
3. Head to say yes or no, to smile, frown, etc.
4. head and shoulders in combination mean not knowing something
5. a nod to reinforce a positive message
6. a wink may contradict a stated positive message
7. finger to lips to indicate need for quiet
8. Tapping fingers or jiggling coins to show emotional state.

Non-verbal communication is especially significant in intercultural situations. Communication with people from other societies or ethnic groups is fraught with the danger

of misunderstanding if their culture and non-verbal communication is unknown or ignored. What is acceptable in one country, may be criticized or rude in others, e.g. bowing, hands in pockets, sitting with legs crossed, interaction distance, or cultural use of time.

Not only in private life but also at work it is important to recognize if your partner in communication tells the truth or lies. The most common signs of lying are signs of nervousness, stress, anxiety, defense, or discomfort. These little things will show up in different gestures, facial expressions, actions, or mannerisms. And among these are self-touching, speech errors and hesitations, eye movements, discrepancies in the posture, and more.

People who are lying touch or rub their nose, scratch their forehead, play with their hair, wring or twist their fingers, cover their mouth, and the like. The need to use frequent self-touching can indicate extreme nervousness and increasing tension.

If people lie, they often stumble over their speech, stutter, or even mispronounce. Voice pitch will go up and pacing will usually get a bit faster. Eye movements of a lying person include lateral movement, squinting, frequent blinking, or looking away. A person may cover up lies through confident facial expressions and voice pitch and volume; however their body may still reveal hints of dishonesty. Fidgeting, shakiness, trembling of the hands, body stiffness, shuffling of the feet, and jitters are typical indicators of lying, but these should never be considered absolutely definitive or reliable.

Gestures showing the palm often indicate sincerity. But in lying, the palms are rarely visible, and are often hidden inside pockets. As a defensive posture and protection, people often cross their arms across their chest.

People lying are also prone to sweating, increasing heart rate, breathing deeper, and being pale.

There are several more indicators of lying, such as forced smiles, slight tightening of the forehead between the eyebrows, lip biting, hand shrugs, flaring of nostrils, tighter lips, elbows pulled to the sides, and others. There is an art to understanding body language. Even though they may seem sometimes unreliable, several different gestures can help clue you into how sincere and honest a person is being with you.

Chapter IV

Time Management Skills



“Time is the rider that breaks youth. “
– George Herbert

Time management skills are the abilities to recognize and solve personal time management problems. Time is the most democratic commodity that there is, everybody has exactly the same amount of it: 24 hours a day, 60 minutes in an hour and 60 seconds in a minute. If you never seem to have enough, the skill to manage your time effectively will become an asset rather than an obstacle for you.

Time management skills will remove barriers to being organized and in control. Regardless of the type of your profession, your work is usually composed of thoughts, conversations and actions. It depends on you how much time you will spend on these three items that will lead you to success. When you are sure that you understand your own role and responsibilities and those of your colleagues in the workplace, then you know what expertise are expected of you.

However, do not overwhelm yourself with a too long to-do list but do the important and urgent first. Allocate an estimated time to complete each task, otherwise the list of to-do things will become a source of stress at the end of the day. It is wrong to assume that the more you complete at work, the better it is for you. This is not necessarily so. Too long a to-do list may cause you to procrastinate on starting the work. Do not waste your working time by taking long coffee breaks, long smoking breaks, chatting on the phone, or surfing on the Internet. Try to avoid these time robbers in your workplace.

Whatever you do, get it right the first time. Have a high personal standard that says nothing leaves your hand unless you know you have done your best. Do not rush through your work assuming that speed is a surrogate measurement of efficiency. Not so, quality of work is important too. With good time management skills you are in control of your time and your life, of your stress and energy levels. You make progress at work. You are able to

make balance between your work, personal and family lives. All time management skills are learnable.

The ability to beat procrastination and laziness belongs to the most important management skills to be learnt. You should identify your causes of procrastination and start fighting it now. Though time management is not the only issue of what causes procrastination but you cannot underestimate the importance of time management in your pursuit for career success.

Time management is aided by a range of skills, tools, and techniques used to manage time when accomplishing specific tasks, projects and goals. This set encompasses a wide scope of activities which include planning, allocating, setting goals, delegation, analysis of spent time, monitoring, organizing, scheduling, and prioritizing. Initially, time management referred to just business or work activities, but eventually the term has broadened and includes personal activities as well.

A time management system is a designed combination of processes, tools, techniques, and methods. It is a necessity in any project development as it determines the project completion time and scope. One quick and simple way of time management in the workplace is to do a task immediately.

Do not over rationalize and craft a perfect plan. A good plan executed today is better than an excellent plan not executed at all. A couple of techniques below may help you improve your personal time management and overcome psychological obstacles hidden behind your personality. You should be conscious of them if you want to increase efficiency in your workplace.

- **The Basic Techniques to Master Your Own Time**

The instructions on basic techniques to master your own time are defined as follows:

Create your own personal system for managing time. Carry a schedule and record all your thoughts, conversations and activities for a week. This helps you understand how much time is actually spent on producing results and how much time is wasted on unproductive thoughts, talks and actions.

Prioritize high value-adding tasks. Learn to set priorities wisely, and you will achieve more and will have more of personal or family time. Any activity or conversation that is important to your success should have a time assigned to it. Schedule, when it will begin and end and have the discipline to keep these appointments.

Cope with interruptions and change. Plan time to be pulled away from what you are doing. Use breaks effectively to recharge. Plan with flexibility.

Efficient planning as an important time management technique optimizes your efforts of achieving goals. Take the first 30 minutes of every day to plan your day efficiently. The most important time of your day is the time you schedule to schedule time.

Good decision making is the foundation for life and time management skills. Take five minutes before every call and task to decide what result you want to attain. Take five minutes after each call and activity to determine whether your desired result was achieved. If not, what was missing? Put it in your next call or activity.

Practice not answering the phone just because it's ringing and e-mails just because they show up. Disconnect instant messaging. Instead, schedule a time to answer email and return phone calls.

Seek support and learn to delegate assertively. Delegation skill is important for personal time management. That is why you should learn how to choose delegate and how to delegate.

Well-developed coping skills help you maintain control and do the best that could be done when faced with outstanding challenges. Build coping skills to withstanding challenges of life.

Time log is a very effective time management learning tool with which you can analyze and improve personal time management skills. Your minimal effort and a few tips and techniques can eliminate much of wasted time and help you reach balance.

A personal digital assistant outperforms other time management tools. When you use this portable hand held personal digital assistant, you will experience its advantages compared to paper notes or other personal time management tools.

Recognize the risks and causes of burnout syndrome. You are much better of preventing burnout now than putting your life back together later.

Self-motivate and reward. Remember however that it is impossible to get everything done. Odds are good that 20 percent of your thoughts, conversations and activities produce 80 percent of your results.

We all have time to either spend or waste and it is our decision what to do with it. But once passed, it is gone forever (B. Lee). To realize the value of the time:

- One year, ask a student who failed a grade.
- One month, ask a mother who gave birth to a premature baby.
- One week, ask the editor of a weekly newspaper.
- One day, ask the lovers who are waiting to meet.
- One minute, ask a person who missed the train.
- One second, ask a person who just avoided an accident.
- One millisecond, ask the person who won a silver medal in the Olympics.

Time management is the act or process of exercising conscious control over the amount of time spent on specific

activities, especially to increase efficiency or productivity. Delivering tasks on time is one of the biggest challenges of a company or an organization because schedule problems often cause more conflict than other issues. That is why the main monitoring and controlling task performed as part of time management is schedule control.

• **Time Management Strategies as Study Habits:**

The following time management strategies having been proven as effective study habits can be accompanied by the relevant questions:

How long is your best time block you can study? What makes for a good break for you? Can you control the activity and return to your studies? A recommended strategy: Developing and planning blocks of study time and breaks in a typical week. Place blocks of time when you are most productive, e.g. early in the morning. Blocks are around 50 minutes but you can shorten them when difficult material requires more frequent breaks. During breaks you may have a snack, relax or otherwise refresh yourself.

What is the best study space you can think of? What is another one? A recommended strategy: Dedicated study spaces. You should determine a place where you can maximize your concentration and be free of the distractions that friends or hobbies can bring. You should also have a backup space that you can escape to, like the library, study center, or any place where you can be anonymous.

What subject has always caused you problems? A recommended strategy: Prioritize your assignments. During your study time, begin with the most difficult subject or task as you are fresh and have more energy to take them on.

How would you review lecture notes? Is there free time you can use? A recommended strategy: Review the lecture material immediately after class. The first 24 hours are

critical. Forgetting is greatest within 24 hours without review.

What is one example of applying free time to your studies? A recommended strategy: Use your free time wisely. Think of times when you can study bits as when walking, riding the bus, waiting in a line, etc.

What is one distraction that causes you stop studying? A recommended strategy: Postpone unnecessary activities until the work is done. Meeting unexpected opportunities looks appealing but then results in poor study performance. Distracting activities will be more enjoyable later without the study pressure hanging over your head.

What is the best time in a week you can review? A recommended strategy: Weekly reviews and updates. Each week, like a Sunday evening, review your assignments, notes, and your calendar. Be mindful that as deadlines and exams approach, your weekly routine must adapt to them.

The fact that all of us have certain habits is a great obstacle to improving our time management. The problem seems to be getting out of our routines and changing them for better ones. In this respect it is important to change our behavior in order to improve time management. You do not really manage time, you manage behavior. So, master you time, you will automatically master your life.

Chapter V

Conflict Management (Problem Solving Skills)



"Peace is not absence of conflict; it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means."

-Ronald Reagan

A problem is generally defined as an obstacle which makes impossible to achieve a goal or an objective. Usually, the nature of a problem is such that an answer or solution is needed. The problem could also be defined as a deflection of the present state from optimum. The problem solving is a cognitive process directed at finding solutions to well-defined problems.

Being a confident problem solver is important to manager's success. Much of that confidence comes from having a good process to use when approaching a problem. When your problem is simple, the solution is usually obvious. In case the problem is complex and difficult to understand, then numerous tools and techniques may help you create a clear visual representation of the situation, so that you can better understand what is going on, e.g. you can use the affinity diagrams, the cause-and-effect diagram, create a flow chart, or a systems diagram. For a more comprehensive process, you can use systems providing detailed steps that you can use to solve a problem effectively, e.g. simplex, appreciative inquiry, or soft systems methodology.

Difficult decisions typically involve issues like: uncertainty (many facts may not be known), complexity (necessity to consider many interrelated factors), high-risk consequences (the impact of the decision may be significant), alternatives (each has its own set of uncertainties and consequences), interpersonal issues (it can be difficult to predict how other people will react). With these difficulties in mind, the best way to make a complex decision is to use an effective process leading to consistent, high-quality results.

Without a well-defined process, you risk making decisions that are based on insufficient information and analysis. Many variables affect the final impact of your decision. However, if you establish strong foundations for

decision making, generate good alternatives, evaluate these alternatives rigorously, then check your decision-making process, you will improve the quality of your decision.

Involving the right people is important in making an effective decision. Allow opinions to be heard and encourage participants to contribute to the discussions and debates. The basis of creativity is thinking from a different perspective. Do this when you first set out the problem, and then continue it while generating alternatives.

Using established tools and techniques will help you improve your approach to solving the problems that your team and your organization face. You will be more successful at solving problems and more successful at what you do. What is more, you will begin to build a reputation as someone who can handle tough situations in a wise and positive way.

Communication has a big role to play in problem and conflict management. It has been observed that poor communication results in misunderstanding and eventually conflicts. Conflict is a form of relating or interacting where you find yourself under some sort of threat to your personal or company goals. The following Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument may help you to identify which style of dealing with conflict you prefer when it comes to conflict resolution:

- **Compromising style:**

It means negotiations, looking for deals and trade-offs, and finding (at least partially) satisfactory or acceptable solutions for everybody. It is useful when opponents with equal power under time pressure are committed to mutually exclusive goals to achieve temporary settlements.

- **Competitive style:**

It creates win-lose situations from a position of power. It is used by people who take a firm stand and

know what they want. This style is used when emergency occurs and a decision needs to be made fast, against people who take advantage of noncompetitive behaviour, or when defending against someone who is trying to selfishly exploit the situation.

- **Accommodating style:**

This style indicates a willingness to meet the needs of others at the expense of the person's own needs. The accommodator is not assertive but highly cooperative, and tries to build social credits for later on (though people may not return favour. This style is appropriate when the issues matter more to the other party and harmony and stability are important.

- **Collaborative style:**

It shares ideas and information to meet the needs of all people involved. Problems and conflicts are seen as challenges. People involved cooperate effectively and acknowledge that everyone is important. This style is used when there were previous conflicts in the group or when the situation is too important for a simple trade-off.

It has been proven that emotional awareness (consciousness of your moment-to-moment emotional experience) and the ability to manage all of your feelings appropriately is the basis of a communication process that can resolve conflict. It is the key to understanding yourself and others. If you do not know how you feel or why you feel that way, you will not be able to communicate effectively or smooth over disagreements. If you are afraid of strong emotions or if you insist on finding solutions that are strictly rational, your ability to face and resolve differences may be impaired. In this respect emotional awareness is one of the conflict resolution skills.

How effectively you listen is at least as important as how effectively you express yourself. If you are to come to a resolution, it is vital to understand the other person's

perspectives, rather than just your own. Unfortunately, active listening is a skill that not everybody knows, and it is common for people to be so defensive and entrenched in their own perspective that they literally cannot hear the other person's point of view. However, helping the other person feel heard and understood can lead toward the resolution of a conflict.

- **The Steps in Conflict Management:**

The following steps may help you ask the right questions, and work through the layers of a problem to uncover what is really going on.

- **Identifying a problem:**

At this stage, goals are set and obstacles are recognized. It is also important to ensure that you look at the issue from a variety of perspectives, at many elements that may contribute to the problem, and to expand your thinking around it. There are asked questions like: What is the problem? When and where does the problem occur? Whose is the problem? The definitions have to be precise enough, otherwise the solution will hardly be found.

- **Generating alternatives:**

This strategy consists of an analysis and synthesis, the convergent and divergent kinds of thinking. No universal "readymade" strategy exists which could be used for all kinds of difficulties. When you generate alternatives, you look at the problem from different angles, and you are more likely to make the best decision possible. The most popular method of generating ideas is brainstorming.

- **Evaluating and selecting alternatives.**

The purpose is not to get new information but to sort it and create a helpful tool. When you are satisfied that you have a good selection of realistic alternatives, then you will need to evaluate the feasibility, risks, threats, and implications (considering the potential consequences) of each choice by applying the most popular and effective

analytical tools. Make it clear what kind and what amount of resources as time, equipment, money, space, etc. is available. Global and partial planning comes in the progress at this stage.

- **Implementing solutions:**

Once you have made your decision, it is important to explain it to those affected by it, and involved in implementing it. Talk about why you chose the alternative you did. The more information you provide about risks and projected benefits, the more likely people are to support the decision.

A lot of techniques can be considered useful in resolving a problem, e.g. divide and conquer (breaking down complex problems into smaller, solvable ones), trial and error, hypothesis testing (assuming a possible explanation of the problem and trying to prove the assumption), means ends analysis, cause analysis, lateral thinking, attempts of solution analysis (suggested as the main way to solve communication problems).

However, as a well-known statement says: “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.”

- **Critical Thinking:**

Any techniques used, critical and creative thinking is mainly involved in all your problem solving. In creative thinking, you reject standardized formats for solving a problem; you have an interest in a wide range of fields, take multiple perspectives of the problems, and have self-confidence and trust in your own judgment.

The critical thinking involves judging ideas, scrutinizing arguments, judging the rationality of a solution, selecting solutions and activities that seem the most satisfactory and congruent, providing positive and negative appraisal.

In general, critical thinking is the study of clear and unclear thinking. It is the process of active and skill-full

conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information to reach an answer or conclusion.

The list of core critical thinking skills includes observation, interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation, and met cognition. An individual or a group engaged in a strong way of critical thinking gives due consideration to establish for instance:

- Evidence through reality.
- Context skills to isolate the problem from context.
- Relevant criteria for making the judgment well.
- Applicable methods or techniques for forming the judgment.
- Applicable theoretical constructs for understanding the problem and the question at hand.

In addition to possessing strong critical-thinking skills, you must be disposed to engage problems and decisions using those skills.

Critical thinking employs not only logic but broad intellectual features, such as clarity, credibility, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, significance, and fairness.

Critical thinking includes a complex combination of skills, such as:

- Rationality:** relying on reason rather than on emotion, requiring evidence.
- Self-awareness: recognizing our own assumptions, prejudices and biases.
- Honesty:** recognizing emotional impulses and selfish motives.
- Open-mindedness:** evaluating all reasonable inferences, considering a variety of possible viewpoints or perspectives, remaining open to alternative interpretations, and accepting a new explanation, model, or paradigm.

- **Discipline:** being precise, meticulous, comprehensive, and exhaustive, resisting manipulation and irrational appeals, avoiding snap judgments.
- **Judgment:** recognizing the relevance and merit of alternative assumptions and perspectives, recognizing the extent and weight of evidence.

Critical thinking calls for the ability to recognize problems, to find workable means for meeting those problems, to understand the importance of prioritization and order of precedence in problem solving, to gather and marshal relevant information, to recognize unstated assumptions and values, to comprehend and use language with accuracy, clarity, and discernment, to interpret data, to appraise evidence and evaluate arguments, to recognize the (non)existence of logical relationships between propositions, to draw warranted conclusions and generalizations.

Thus, in a nutshell, Critical thinking enables you to recognize a wide range of subjective analyses of otherwise objective data, and to evaluate how well each analysis might meet your needs.

Chapter VI

Managerial Skills



“Management is doing things right, leadership is doing the right things.”

-- Peter F. Drucker

Simply, managerial skills are the knowledge and ability of the individuals in a managerial position to fulfill some specific management activities or tasks. This knowledge and ability can be learned and practiced. However, they also can be acquired through practical implementation of required activities and tasks. Therefore, you can develop each skill through learning and practical experience as a manager.

Strategic management aims at leading, driving and helping people, to focus on the organization's identity and image, to question its worth in a new environment, to fix its longer term growth, while using its present capacity and fostering its potential for development. In this respect making the move into a management job can be demanding. It needs build and develop new skills and have the confidence to put them into practice and begin the process of effective, professional managerial control, of the organization's most important resource – its people.

• **Managerial skills:**

It means the ability to make business decisions and lead subordinate within a company. Not everyone can be a manager. Certain skills to translate knowledge into actions that results in desired performance are required to help other employees become more productive. The three most common skills include:

• **Human skills:**

The ability to interact and motivate. A manager with good human skills has a high degree of self-awareness and a capacity to understand or empathize with the feelings of others, to cooperate well with others.

• **Technical skills:**

The knowledge and proficiency in the trade. These skills require the ability to use a special expertise to perform particular tasks. Managers acquire technical skills

initially through formal education and then further develop them through training and job experience.

• **Conceptual skills:**

The ability to understand concepts, develop ideas, implement strategies, and think analytically. Analytical skills enable managers to break down problems into smaller parts, to see the relations among the parts, to recognize implications of any problem for others.

Although all three above mentioned categories contain skills essential for managers, their relative importance tends to vary by level of managerial responsibility - from a lower level of management to the higher one.

The management and leadership of a workforce with the goal of encouraging productive and mutually beneficial interactions among the employees of an organization.

Managing diversity aims at providing employees with backgrounds, needs, and skill sets that may vary widely with the opportunity to engage with the company and their co-workers in a manner that produces an optimal work environment and the best possible business results for the company.

It is recommended to organize (business) meetings during which managers can communicate the intention to take an action or the results of the action, and administer a plan of the action, or decide among alternative actions. Like any other business activity, advanced preparation is required. The better prepared you are, the more effective the meeting will be.

A clear agenda announcing all the relevant data, such as date, place, and time is obviously circulated beforehand. It should also contain the proposed topics of the meeting what enables participants to prepare in advance and will not veer off a meeting in a different direction. Scheduled meetings that are conducted according to the stated time

frame and are task oriented generally receive significantly more active participation.

Managers should provide complete and accurate information to ensure effective communication during a meeting. It may, however, happen that views of some employees will not match, but it is crucial that at the end of the meeting all participants agree on a common decision. As there may still be some space for improvement, managers should request feedback from the participants. A couple of additional commandments are recommended to be applied during a business meeting:

- Praise in public, criticize in private.
- Keep the personal and the business distinct.
- Do not use meetings to destroy others' career.
- The best model for meetings is democracy, not monarchy.
- Organize meetings of normal business hours, do not schedule them for evenings and weekends.
- Terminate regularly scheduled meetings if they lost their reason and purpose for taking place.

A commandment: "Do not use group pressure to logroll conclusions" means that it is wrong to use meetings to pressure employees into agreeing to immoral or illegal actions in order to promote the business of the company. If a code of ethics and the rule of law are to be broken, try to change the values or find somewhere else to work.

Think that, you have already experienced both good and bad business meetings. When meetings have no focus and participants are not prepared, then most meeting time is wasted. When they are well run, meeting time is not wasted. In that case meetings are empowering and a great way to communicate and to develop work skills thus being beneficial for employees in several ways.

It is also recommended to include team building games and activities in serious business project meetings, workshops, and training, as they help participants to see

things differently and use different thinking styles. Games and activities also help stimulate the brain, improve retention of ideas, and increase enjoyment. Employee motivation commonly benefits from suitable and well run team building games, exercises, and activities, which are effective for serious learning as well as for personal development. (Some of the games and activities see in the section 4.3).

• **Functions and Roles of a Manager:**

Successful managers value differences. They understand that in order to achieve significant accomplishments, a variety of skills, viewpoints, personality styles and motivations can come into play. If you can lead only those who are like you (who view situations the way you do or with similar motivations), then you are significantly limited in what you can accomplish. Good managers are able to master the following five basic functions:

- Planning involves mapping out exactly how to achieve a particular goal.
- Organizing, including assigning work and granting authority, means to organize the team and materials according to the stated plan.
- After discerning the company needs, a manager may start staffing by recruiting, selecting, training, and developing employees. Besides it, a manager must lead.
- Leading involves motivating, communicating, guiding, encouraging. It requires a manager to coach, assist, and problem solve with employees.
- Controlling is one of the basic functions of a manager, as he needs to continuously check results against goals and take any corrective actions. Planning as one of the functions of management involves setting objectives and determining (alternative) courses of actions for achieving them.

• Planning:

It requires the managers to make decisions based on what the company or organization wants to happen in the future. Managers as good decision makers must formulate necessary steps and ensure effective implementation of plans. They must constantly evaluate the success of their plans and take corrective actions when necessary. Planning is the initiation function in management that embodies the other four functions.

Strategic planning is often based on the company's mission which is its fundamental reason for existence. It generally includes the entire company or organization and contains formulation of objectives for a long term, obviously for three or more years. All communication requires strategic planning: what to communicate, to whom, when and how.

A useful type of planning includes a SWOT analysis – to analyze competitive opportunities and threats as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the company or organization. Afterwards, it determines how to position the company or organization to compete effectively in their environment.

To improve the flow of information in the workplace alongside planning (market research, target audience, content) it is necessary to explain the value of information and knowledge, to define outcomes (results) that appeal to both employer and employees needs and purpose, to determine simple directions of what to do or where to start, and find sources for the identification and capture of relevant management information (books, research reports, best practices, seminars, etc. The roles that a manager has to fill may fall into three categories. These roles help managers carry out the five functions mentioned above.

- Interpersonal role involves human interaction. The activities include e.g. performing ceremonial and symbolic duties (greeting visitors, signing legal documents), directing and motivating subordinates, counseling and communication with subordinates, maintaining information links both inside and outside organization via mail, e-mail, phone calls, and meetings.
- Informational role involves sharing and analyzing information. Activities include, e.g. seeking and receiving information, scanning periodicals and reports, maintaining personal contact with stakeholders, forwarding information to organization members via memos, reports, and phone calls, transmitting information to outsiders through reports, and speeches.
- Decisional role involves decision making. Activities include, e.g. initiating improvement projects, identifying new ideas and delegating responsibility to others, taking corrective action during disputes or crises, resolving conflicts among subordinates, adapting to environments, preparing budgets, setting schedules and determining priorities, representing department during negotiations of contracts, sales, purchases, and budgets.

There are defined some other skills and personal characteristics that may contribute to high managerial performance, such as:

- Leadership (ability to influence others to perform tasks);
- Self-objectivity (ability to evaluate yourself realistically);
- Behavioral flexibility (ability to modify personal behavior to react objectively rather than subjectively);
- Oral and written communication (ability to express ideas clearly in words and in writing);
- Personal impact (ability to create good impression and still confidence). Responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity and honesty being classified as

personal qualities may successfully determine people's own career and their employment enhancement.

• **Using Empathy in Managing Various People:**

It encompasses a broad range of emotional states, including caring for other people and having a desire to help them; experiencing emotions matching another person's emotions; discerning what another person thinks or feels; making less distinct the differences between the self and the other.

An empathic interaction involves a person communicating an accurate recognition of the significance of another person's ongoing intentional actions, associated emotional states or personal characteristics in a manner that the recognized person can tolerate. Accurate and tolerable recognitions are central features of empathy. Positive emotions (empathy or gratitude) are linked to a more positive continual state and these people are far more likely to help others than those not experiencing a positive emotional state. Here are the basic hints for using empathy in managing people:

- Make sure you agree to clear, common goals. This is the starting point for success. A lack of shared vision and direction makes all other effort fruitless.
- Understand, accept and rely on the fact that each team member is unique. If you try to treat everyone the same way and expect each person to think and be motivated in the same ways you are, then you will struggle to work together well, to achieve the potential you have as a team.
- Get to know the people you work with. Understand how they think and approach problems, what motivates them and how they feel supported and encouraged.

Getting to know your colleagues takes time and effort. But the results are well worth the investment. Spend time interacting with them, listening to them and explore the

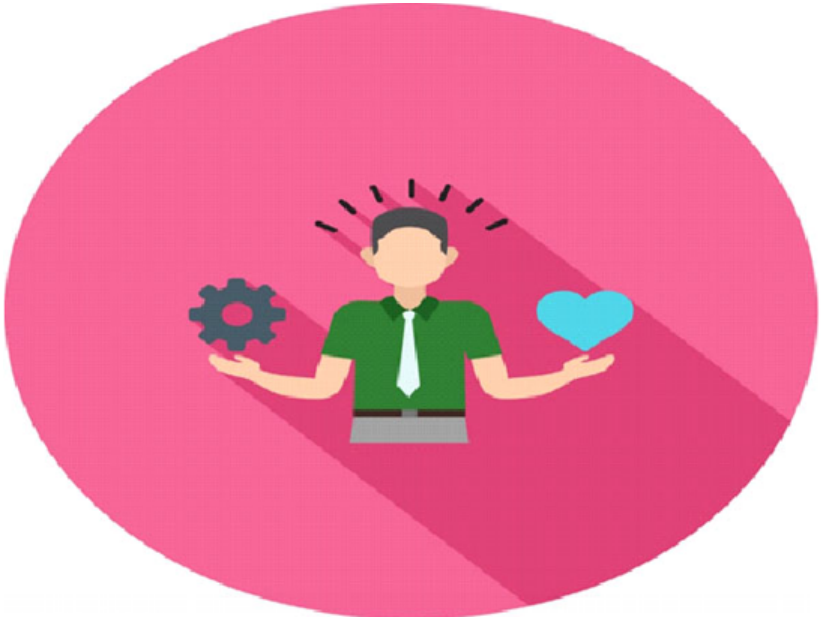
wealth of tools available to become acquainted at a deeper level.

When managing teams of diverse individuals you need to know your individual team members and their unique characteristics, e.g. not everyone is motivated in the same way. Some people are inspired by potential financial gain, others value recognition and praise. Some members do not want public attention but appreciate a personal note or comment.

Unfortunately, a number of managers fall into the trap of thinking everyone likes X because they do. This approach can lead to annoyance when team members do not seem appreciate what these leaders have done. And it leads to frustration among colleagues when supervisors keep doing things that do not hit the mark for them and they continue to feel unvalued. While a power-play approach (threatening consequences) can work to get one's way in the short term, this style of leadership has significant negative repercussions for long-term working relationships, including resentment and revenge. It does not go well, when managers resort to heavy-handed tactics as a consequence that they are unsuccessful or frustrated about not being able to manage their team successfully.

Chapter VII

Stress Management Skills



“It’s not stress that kills us, it is our reaction to it.”
-- Hans Selye

Stress affects us in a number of ways, both physically and emotionally, and in varying intensities. Research has shown that stress can some times be positive. It makes us more alert and helps us perform better in certain situations. However, stress has only been found to be beneficial if it is short-lived. Excessive or prolonged stress can lead to illness such as heart disease and mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. During situations that make you feel threatened or upset, your body creates a stress response. This can cause a variety of physical symptoms, change the way you behave, and lead you to experience more intense emotions.

Time Magazine (June, 1983) called stress “The Epidemic of the Eighties,” and regarded it as the leading health problem. There can be little doubt that the situation has progressively worsened since then. Contemporary stress tends to be even more pervasive, persistent and insidious. Recent statistics reveal that:

- Stress is now the number one reason behind sickness from work.” (Gee Publishing Survey)
- “More than two-thirds of people are suffering from work related stress.” (ICM Research)
- “Stress in the workplace is undermining performance and productivity in 9 out of 10 organizations.” (Industrial Society)

Stress is defined as the emotional and physical strain caused by a person’s response to pressure from the outside world. It occurs when there is a mismatch between what the people aspire to do what they are capable of doing. In other words, stress results when the pressure to perform a certain task is greater than the resources available to perform it.

Stress is not altogether a modern phenomenon. Stress has been of concern in the medical profession since the days of

Hippocrates. Walter Cannon, a physiologist at Harvard, however, formalized the modern notion of stress, at the beginning of the twentieth century. Cannon described the “flight or fight response”, a heightened arousal state that prepares an organism to deal with threats. When under threat, one’s body releases a rush of adrenaline in order to allow a ‘fight or flight’ response (i.e. to give Soft Skills for Public Managers the push one needs to fight the threat or to run away from it).

Medical research suggests that some thirty hormones are released as part of the body’s automatic and innate “fight or flight” stress response. These hormones provide quick energy to cope with emergencies and exigencies. Stress hormones often build and, without release, contribute to wear and tear. Excessive stress can inhibit the body’s immune system functioning and directly impair the functioning of key body systems.

This is the reason why stress can increase one’s susceptibility to illness, exacerbate an illness, or protract recovery from an illness. Unrelieved stress, over time, can take the form of:

- Tense muscles that lead to headache, neck-ache, jaw-ache, back-ache
- Stomach pain, indigestion, bowel upset, ulcers
- Feelings of anxiety, nervousness, tension, helplessness
- Increasing anger or irritability, chest pain
- Depression, exhaustion, lack of concentration, insomnia
- Restlessness, boredom, confusion, the impulse to run and hide

Persons who are stressed may “take out” their frustration on those around them. Others may keep their feelings to themselves and experience a sullen gloomy feeling or a sense of isolation.

Everyone experiences stress. However, when it is affecting your life, health and wellbeing, it is important to tackle it as

soon as possible. While stress affects everyone differently, there are common signs and symptoms you can look out for:

- Feelings of constant worry or anxiety
- Feelings of being overwhelmed
- Difficulty concentrating
- Mood swings or changes in mood
- Irritability or having a short temper
- Difficulty relaxing
- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Eating more or less than usual
- Changes in sleeping habits
- Using alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs to relax
- Aches and pains, particularly muscle tension
- Diarrhea and constipation
- Feelings of nausea or dizziness
- Loss of sex drive

If you experience these symptoms for a prolonged period of time, and feel they are affecting your everyday life or making you feel unwell, you should control yourself. Tips for stress management:

1. Meeting a friend
2. Setting aside 10 minutes a day to relax and collect my thoughts
3. Watching late night TV debates that deal with the realities of the world
4. Listening to relaxing music
5. Watching funny movies
6. Taking a walk in the countryside
7. Going to the gym
8. Soaking in the bath with lavender oil
9. Meditating
10. Talking to someone just to vent a little
11. Walking the dog

12. Getting more sleep
13. Praying
14. Reading a book to distract yourself from stressful thoughts
15. Do something good for someone else
16. Writing a letter to someone to get your feelings across and vent, but not actually sending it
17. Painting or drawing
18. Book a massage or spend time in a spa with a friend
19. Write a list of things to do and cross them off as you do them
20. Try putting things into perspective
21. Unplug the phone and get some time to yourself
22. Do something you like with family or friend slice going to a show
23. Dancing around in your room to your favorites music
24. Going to your friend's house with another friend and putting the world to rights
25. Have a change of scenery
26. Go out and meet new people
27. Go to a yoga class
28. Express your feelings and emotions
29. Spend time with positive people around you
30. A hot cup of something wonderful, a journal and a pen
31. Eat a healthy meal and avoid caffeine
32. Getting closer with nature e.g. have a walk on the beach, observing the sunset
33. Watch your favorites program me on TV
34. Give yourself 'me time' just a few minutes to think about pleasant things
35. Ask yourself what other people would do
36. Thinking of the work you HAVE achieved in a day, rather than what you haven't done
37. Relaxing with reflexology

38. Go to uplifting plays, operas and concerts that make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up
39. Go to bed with a great book
40. Host a dinner party
41. Cheer up someone who is feeling down
42. Spend some time doing something you enjoy, like gardening
43. Writing down my thoughts
44. Play games on the computer
45. Avoid putting things off
46. Find a quiet place and try to visualize a happy memory
47. Do something creative like knitting
48. Play a musical instrument
49. Play with your pet
50. Get some fresh air
51. Be gentle to yourself
52. Laugh!
53. Go window shopping
54. Write short stories
55. Call a loved one
56. Talk to a stranger
57. Practice CBT
58. Chat to your friends on Skype or Face book
59. Take a nap
60. Take a break, even a short one can make a difference
61. Going for a walk at lunchtime
62. Write poetry
63. Eat or drink something you enjoy
64. Cuddle a baby (ideally one you know -cuddles with my niece or nephew are amazing for distressing)
65. Spend time with children – they really put things in perspective, like ‘Wow there’s a cool cloud’, and remind you of simple things that used to amaze you
66. Go out to a Karaoke night

67. Imagine living in a different era, may be wartime or before cars and trains were invented and how much harder life would be
68. Bake a cake
69. Sitting in a café with a cup of tea and a magazine
70. Go for a relaxing swim
71. Sit on a park bench and watch the world go by
72. Tidy a room or cupboard (other people might find this stressful, but I find it relaxing!)
73. Challenge a friend to a game of Scrabble
74. Breathe deeply for two minutes, and focus on your breaths
75. Bake something – knit a scarf, build an Air fix model
76. Write a list of the reasons you have to be happy with life
77. Take a minute to stretch your body
78. Use a relaxing room fragrance or scented candle to create a sense of sanctuary
79. Practicing Tai Chi
80. Looking at photos of happy memories.
81. Have a cup of tea
82. Thinking of something you're looking forward to or something that was fun
83. Go to the cinema
84. A quafit classes at lunchtime
85. Go for a bike ride
86. Listen to the birds singing
87. Reminding yourself it could be worse and count your blessings
88. Playing board games with your family
89. Playing my favorite song and singing it out loud
90. Cleaning!
91. Practicing calligraphy
92. I find moving furniture around the house very soothing
93. Write a letter to a loved one
94. Play with my children

- 95. Watch some programs on TV
- 96. Go out for a run in the park
- 97. Volunteer at the local homeless shelter, it helps put my worries into perspective
- 98. Play Sudoku or crosswords
- 99. Read some gossip magazines
- 100. Go to a salsa class .
- 101. Get a cuddle

Chapter VIII

Report Writing Skills



"Good writing is clear thinking made visible."
--William Wheeler

A report is written for a clear purpose and to a particular audience. Specific information and evidence are presented, analyzed and applied to a particular problem or issue. The information is presented in a clearly structured format making use of sections and headings so that the information is easy to locate and follow.

The style of writing a report is usually less discursive than in an essay, with a more direct and economic use of language. The key to writing an effective report is to allocate time for careful planning and preparation. It is also necessary to leave enough time for final reading and checking. Within proof-reading you may use spell and grammar checkers, however, make sure that the changes will not affect what you wanted to say.

Many report types are classified as technical reports. You should always determine what information you need to convey and who your audience is before you start writing. Technical reports present facts and conclusions about your designs and other projects.

Typically, a technical report includes research about technical concepts as well as graphical depictions of designs and data. When you write a report, use paragraphs which have one main point that you introduce, expand on, and summarize. Using shorter sentences avoids over-complexity. Use appropriate technical terms, and avoid using colloquialisms and informality in academic writing.

Writing academically means writing in such a way that your information sounds credible and authoritative. Be objective; do not present personal or unsupported opinions. Give clear non-subjective descriptions and definite figures such as: 80% of the participants, and avoid vague terms (most of the participants). Be direct; put the emphasis on a strong verb which can help readers to see the important points. Be critical, evaluate your own work as well as that of others. Be appropriate, identify the purpose

of your report, give readers the information they need to understand your work.

In your report explain the purpose of the research and ask questions that help you see how to interpret and analyse your findings, e.g. what questions you are seeking to answer, how they arose, why they are worth investigating, and others.

Reports are written to describe work completed, so write in the past tense. You may use different styles of writing in separate sections. It depends on the purpose of the section, e.g. introduction of the report will be explanatory, sections like methods and results will be descriptive, literature review and discussion sections will be analytical. A good piece of advice when writing a professional report is: to write to express, not to impress.

- **The Essential Stages of Report Writing :**

- **Gathering, selecting and evaluating relevant information:**

You can use a variety of sources, but how much information you need depend on how much detail is required in the report. You need to assess the relevance of information to your report and select accordingly.

- **Structuring material in a logical and coherent order:**

To decide what will be included and in what sequence, you may start by grouping together points that are related and may form sections or chapters.

- **Present your report in a consistent manner:**

According to the instructions of the report brief this provides you with instructions and guidelines. The report brief may outline the purpose, audience and problem or issue that your report must address, together with any specific requirements for format or structure.

- **Make appropriate conclusions:**

The conclusions you prepare should be supported by the evidence and analysis of the report. Before writing

your first draft, take notes on the points you will make using the facts and evidence you have gathered. Check if there are not any limitations or flaws in the evidence, if certain conclusions can be drawn from the material, etc.

Finally, check if the wording of each chapter is clear and accurate. Proof read your report for errors of spelling and grammar. Make thoughtful and practical recommendations where required.

In writing the first draft of your report, the structure below can be applied to chapters, sections and even paragraphs:

Introduce the main idea of the chapter, section or paragraph.

Explain and expand the idea, defining any key terms.

Present relevant evidence to support your points.

Comment on each piece of evidence showing how it relates to the points.

Conclude the chapter, section, or paragraph by either showing its significance to the report as whole or making a link to the next chapter, section, or paragraph.

Before you review your first draft, you should leave time to take a break, and then read it from the perspective of a reader. Once you are satisfied with the content and structure of your redrafted report, you can concentrate on its presentation.

• Structuring a Report :

Instructions or guidelines for writing a report may differ to a certain measure but in general the main features of a report can be described as follows:

Title page gives the title of the work, the author's name and the date. It may briefly explain the purpose of the report and for whom it is written.

Abstract briefly - about half a page in length - presents the content of the report, the aims of the report and what

was found. It is outlined in the main points avoiding detail or discussion.

In Acknowledgements you may wish to acknowledge the assistance of particular organizations or individuals who provided information or advice.

It is useful to provide a glossary of technical terms with a brief description of each term, as well as explanations of used abbreviations and acronyms.

Table of contents lists the different chapters and headings/subheadings together with the page numbers.

Introduction sets the scene for the main body of the report. The aims and objectives of the report are explained in detail. Any problems or limitations in the scope of the report are identified, and a thesis statement, a description of research methods, the parameters of the research and any necessary background history are included.

In the body of a report, strong supporting arguments, accurate and up-to date information are presented.

In the heading Methods you explain preparation and procedures applied, list the equipment used, give relevant information on materials used.

The section Results includes a summary of the results of the investigation together with any necessary diagrams, graphs or tables of gathered data that support the results. They are presented in a logical order without comment.

Discussion is the main body of the report where you discuss and comment your material. The facts and evidence you have gathered are analyzed and discussed with specific reference to the problem or issue.

In the conclusion you show the overall significance of what has been covered, you re-state the thesis and give a summary, including a logical conclusion. You may highlight what you consider to be the most central issues or findings. However, no new material is introduced in the conclusion.

Appendices include all the supporting information you have used, such as tables, graphs, questionnaires, surveys or transcripts.

Bibliography lists - in alphabetical order by author, all sources referred to in your report. Remember: all sources used in the report have to be acknowledged and referenced throughout in order to avoid plagiarism.

Plagiarism is the wrongly appropriation and stealing and publication of another author's language, thoughts, ideas, or expressions and the representation of them as one's own original work. The idea remains problematic with unclear definitions and unclear rules. The modern concept of plagiarism as immoral and originality as an ideal emerged in Europe only in the 18th century, particularly with the Romantic Movement. Plagiarism is considered academic dishonesty and or academic fraud. It is subject to sanctions like penalties, suspension, and even expulsion. Plagiarism is not a crime per se but in academia and industry, it is a serious ethical offense, and cases of plagiarism can constitute copyright infringement. Many institutions use plagiarism detection software to uncover potential plagiarism and to deter students from plagiarism.

Chapter IX

Job Interviews



"I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and
90% of how I react to it."

—Charles Swindoll

The Interview Process:

Scores of people get worried at the very idea of a job interview. For most job applicants, job interviews are fear-provoking simply due to the fear of being rejected. Even if a person is self-assured, with a good grasp of the subject of his/her specialization, he/she is most likely to be tense and nervous before and during the interview. However, we can overcome our fear of the interview process by understanding the process and making ourselves ready and prepared for it.

The interviewing process is a composite means of gathering the relevant data about a candidate for a particular job position, promotion, or making a selection panel. It is a structured mechanism for professional evaluation for employment as well as promotion. Although interviewing may be practiced along with other screening methods such as group discussions and oral presentations, recruitment experts believe that a job interview provides the best opportunity to examine the relevance of an applicant's knowledge and experience and is an effective technique used for evaluating the suitability of a candidate for a particular position through a question-answer oral session. It could be either a face-to face meeting or a formal conversation through telephone, or videoconferencing between a candidate and the members of the selection committee or representatives of the concerned employers.

Job interviews in today's technologically advanced world are more challenging than they used to be a few years ago. As the selection committee faces the challenges of getting the right person into the job, the members of the committee are interested in a correct evaluation of the candidate's personal qualities, qualifications, talents, traits and suitability for the position to be filled in. However, it is not an easy task for any selection committee to judge a candidate's abilities and personal qualities on the basis of a

half hour conversation with the candidate. Therefore, new and more effective interviewing techniques have been devised for the correct evaluation of a candidate. Some organizations prefer to conduct preliminary and screening interviews before the final interview. In fact, there are several factors responsible for making job interviews more challenging today. They includes:-

- **Growing competition in the job market:**

There is more competition in the job market today due to the availability for more competent and veteran candidates. The fast increase in population, the availability of sophisticated specialized education and training, the trend of 'hire and fire' by most organizations, and globalization of the world economy have increased the number of job seekers. If there is one job, there are hundreds of applicants,

- **Changing demands of the job market**

The job market is not the same. There are more opportunities but at the same time there are more challenges, more demands and more expectations. There are more job positions but these are less stable than they used to be. Moreover, the positions are more demanding and often include a broader range of responsibilities than did positions in the past.

- **Growing professionalism of the business world**

The business world has become more professional. With the expansion of multinational companies and worldwide business operations, the world has become a global village. As only the best can survive, most companies have to struggle to survive and grow. They need very efficient, competent and highly dynamic personnel to run the show and achieve the desired success.

- **Increasing focus on the candidate's personal qualities**

There is an increasing focus on the candidate's personal qualities rather than on qualification, experience,

and job skills. Most recruitment experts believe that proper training can easily develop these skills but it is not easy to develop personal motivations and qualities.

• **Changes in the interviewing techniques**

The interviewing process has become more complex. Most organizations have their own recruitment departments with highly competent people who receive appropriate training so that they can make valid selection decisions. Moreover, there are specialized recruitment agencies to help companies get the right people for the right jobs. These agencies have developed new and effective interviewing techniques for evaluating a candidate's suitability for a particular position.

A candidate may have knowledge, confidence, and speaking skills to face a job interview but he/she still needs proper orientation and guidance to face a job interview effectively and confidently and improve his/her chances of success. The candidate should be familiar with the types of interviews, interview formats, and appropriate interviewing strategies. He/she should know how to plan and prepare for a job interview, how to develop interview file, how to project to success during the interview, how to reflect confidence while answering questions and how to uphold his/her personality and overcome interviewing hazards.

• **FEATURES Of The Career INTERVIEWS:**

As noted earlier, job interview is pre-arranged and planned conversation characterized by a defined purpose and some level of informality. Let us discuss these aspects in some detail.

• **Planning:**

A job interview is prearranged and planned. Despite flexibility during an interview, the basic structure of most job interviews is planned for effective results. Several factors such as the time, the venue, the number of experts,

the areas to be covered in the interview, the papers and materials needed, and so on are decided much before the interview. The interviewers may also consider the best ways of opening and concluding interviews. However, no job interview is just a mechanical process of asking and answering questions. The interviewer may plan and generate specific questions of each candidate with modifications in the planned interview design.

• **Purpose:**

A job interview is purposefully designed to achieve certain objectives. Organizations invest both time and money on the job interviews to ensure correct selection. Thus there may be HR interviews to test the personality traits of candidates, technical interviews to generate information in response to specific questions for testing subject knowledge situational interviews to test problem-solving skills and assess how candidates will behave in certain conditions, the criterion based interviews to judge knowledge and abilities in a tightly focused way to evaluate how well a candidate fits a particular position. Whatever may be the format of a job interview, the purpose is predefined so that the predictive capabilities of job interviews are enhanced.

• **Conversation:**

A job interview is a conversation between a job aspirant and the member/s of a selection committee or employer/s or their representatives. It is basically a question-answer session involving specific questions and appropriate answers. As it includes both listening and speaking, the candidate has to listen actively during a job interview and speak clearly and precisely using simple words, short sentences, correct articulation, and appropriate pronunciation. It also requires certain flexibility in the usage of tenses.

•Two-Way Interaction:

The job interview is a two-way interaction that may take place between the candidate and one interviewer (one-to-one interviews) or the candidate and more than one interviewer (panel interviews). In order to ensure uniformity, one-to-one interviews are generally structured and each candidate may be asked exactly the same kind of questions in the same style. Some one-to-one interviews may involve unstructured questions too. Panel interviews are more common. They may include two to twenty people but most selection committees normally consist of three to six persons. Each member of the committee may focus on a particular aspect of evaluation to ensure effective decision making.

•Informality:

Although a job interview is a planned conversation, it is less formal than many public speech situations. The success of any job interview depends on its informal and friendly atmosphere wherein the candidates get opportunities to reveal their potentiality and feel free to present their best. Not many people enjoy facing a job interview. So, an interview will not be able to achieve its goals if the tension is not reduced by developing a friendly relation between the candidate and the interviewer/s.

•Pre-Interview Preparation Techniques :

When a candidate has applied for a job and is getting ready for that important moment in his/her life, the job interview, he needs to prepare for it systematically, even if it is not the first job interview for the person. Preparing well is the key to success during an interview. Facing a job interview – whether a face-to-face personal interview, a telephone interview, or an interview through videoconferencing—is easier when one prepares for it in a systematic way.

A job interview is formal, structured and systematic interaction between the candidate and a group of persons who want to hire him/her for a particular job position. He/she has to establish a relationship, impress the interviewer/ interview panel and convince them that he/she is the best candidate for the job, for all of which he/she will get hardly more than thirty minutes. If sound an impossible task but it is not if proper preparation is done in the planned and systematic way.

Planned preparation for the job interview will help the candidate

- develop the needed confidence;
- enter the job interview with information and understanding;
- strongly support his/her candidature;
- deal with interview anxiety effectively;
- be sensitive to the needs and expectations of the interviewers;
- know his/her strengths and weaknesses;
- strike up a positive interaction with the interviewers;
- know his/her job and the organization that he/she wants to join; and
- Adapt his background, knowledge and skills to fit the job.

Thus, preparing for the job interview involves:

- analyzing yourself;
- identifying your skills;
- researching the organization;
- analyzing the job position;
- revising your subject knowledge and brushing up your general awareness; and
- developing the interview file.
- **Self-Analysis :**

We cannot project ourselves successfully unless we know our strengths and weakness properly. It may sound foolish but it is true that most of us really do not know

ourselves. That is why a simple question like “Tell us something about yourself” unnerves many candidates during job interviews. Self-analysis is the first step towards effective planning for a job interview. It includes analyzing our surroundings, identifying our major accomplishments, achievements, our special interests and hobbies, and analyzing our profession goals in term of the involvement we can make the job we desire for.

• **Analyse your Background:**

We should begin self analysis with a critical examination of our educational and professional background. Do we have the right background for the job? This is the first question that we should ask ourselves. Some of the questions that ask you to talk about your background include “Tell us something about yourself”, “How would you describe yourself?”, and “If you had to live your life again, what would you change?” “Describe yourself in a few sentences”, “Tell us your about your education and background”, and so on. The purpose of these questions is to identify the match between the candidate’s surroundings and the requirements of the job.

The candidate may have extraordinary qualifications and experiences but the interviewers would be more interest in knowing whether he/she has the right background for the job in question. If a person has Bachelor of Technology degree in Electronics and he wants to join the sales and marketing division of an electronics company, be must he prepared to answer the question, “What makes you fit for a sales position?” If the candidate has the right background, he/she should highlight this during the interview. He/she should be able to talk about his/her surroundings briefly. In fact, he/she must always be ready with a two-minute bio, presenting his/her surroundings in a positive manner.

• Identify Your Accomplishments:

An accomplishment can be defined as the completion of a particular task with the help of one's skills. It may be a successfully organized college trip or cultural programmers, the completion of an academic project, or solving a difficult problem or situation. Each of these can be an accomplishment that the candidate may be proud of. You should identify and make a list of such accomplishments. You may start from your school life. Anything you did during your school life that showed a positive dimension of your personality could be the first entry in the list. Next, you may explore your college life to identify instances that you did well in despite constraints and problems. If you have professional experience, you should identify problem situations that you could handle effectively.

The list need not be very long. Four to eight accomplishments are more than sufficient to make one confident while answer questions relating to his aspect of one's personality. Some questions that might ask you to reflect on your accomplishments include:

- What are your accomplishments?
- Describe a situation in which you were successful.
- Have you ever solved a problem?
- What makes you stand out from the rest of applicants?
- Tell us about a problem you have faced and solved.

• Identify your Achievements:

An achievement is different from an accomplishment. While accomplishments reflect special skills, achievements show our academic and professional success and distinguish a successful person from the non-achievers. They convince the employer that the candidate is an achiever and therefore worth hiring. You should make a list of scholarships, fellowships, awards, prizes, distinctions, commendations, certificates or anything that

shows achievement or recognition. The interviewers may ask you straight question like “What are your achievements?”, or “Have you ever done anything that has given you a sense of achievement?”, “Do you consider yourself an self-starter?” and so on.

Learned Skills	Intuitive Skills
✓ computer programming	✓ adaptability
✓ data processing	✓ analysis
✓ marketing	✓ assertiveness
✓ driving	✓ boldness
✓ managing a product line	✓ broad- mindedness
✓ administration	✓ courage
✓ consulting	✓ creativity
✓ foreign languages	✓ decision making
✓ business writing	✓ diplomacy
✓ interpersonal skills	✓ discretion
✓ negotiation skills	✓ efficiency
✓ public relations	✓ foresight
✓ professional speaking	✓ imagination
✓ listening	✓ initiative
✓ management	✓ leadership
✓ planning	✓ motivating
✓ coordinating	✓ objectivity
✓ public speaking	✓ patience
✓ selling	✓ perseverance
✓ supervising	✓ resourcefulness
✓ time management	✓ sincerity
✓ teaching	✓ stamina
✓ training	✓ team building

• **Identify your Special Interests and Hobbies:**

The third aspect of self analysis is identifying special interests and hobbies. A list of such activities should be made. As your curriculum vitae may also include your hobbies, interests, and activities, you should be ready to

justify them during an interview. You should identify and list your extra-curricular, co-curricular and professional activities as well as your hobbies and interests. As most organizations prefer self-motivated and energetic employees, special interests and activities may show the candidate as a self-motivated and energetic person who can accept all challenges.

• **Analyse Your Career Goals:**

You should analyse your career goals – what you want to do in life, your career objectives, your long-term goals in life, where you see yourself in five/ten years, your short term career objectives. These are some aspects regarding which questions are frequently asked in job interviews. You should have clarity about your objectives. If you are facing a job interview for the position of an executive in a multinational company and you mention that your career goal is to become a teacher, you will weaken your case. So, it is important that you analyse your career goals in terms of the job position you have applied for.

• **Analyse your skills:**

Every job has a set of functions and requires certain skills to perform it. The main purpose of a job interview is to find out whether the candidate possesses the skills and knowledge required to carry out the functions associated with the job. Thus, analyzing skills is an integral part of preparation for an interview. You should assess the skills that you possess and try to find out techniques for adapting these skills to fit the job desired. Most employers would like to see the match between the candidate's skills and the requirement for the job and may ask you the following questions.

- How will you rate yourself for this position on a scale of one to ten?
- Why should we hire you?
- What makes you suitable for this position?

- What are your strengths?
- What is your greatest strength?

A candidate may have extraordinary skills and abilities but the employers would be more interested in knowing whether he/she has the right skills and abilities. Relating skills to the needs of the organization and requirements of the job is essential

There are two types of skills that might be assessed during an interview, that is, learned skills and intuitive skills. Learned skills are the ones that might have been taught or have been learned while intuitive skills are a part of one's personality. For example, we learn oral

communication skills while we do not need to learn to be honest is innate. Study the following list of learned and intuitive skills given in table.

In order to analyse your skills, a systematic approach should be adopted. First, a list of all skills should be made. Then, list the skills required for the job. Finally examine how many of your skills match with the job requirements. During the interview, you may use appropriate adjectives to describe your special skills, abilities, and aptitudes that are of significance and of direct relevance to the job applied for.

In order to sell yourself at a right price tag, you should use precise words to make the best impression possible. These are examples of a few such adjectives.

active, competent, conscientious, creative, dependable, determined, diplomatic, discreet, efficient, energetic, enterprising, enthusiastic, experienced, fair, firm, innovative, logical, mature, methodical, motivated, objective, pleasant, positive, practical, reliable, resourceful, self-disciplined, sensitive, sincere, successful, tactful, trustworthy.

• Research the Organization:

You must thoroughly research the organization you want to join before the interview. Interviewers may ask a few questions to test your knowledge about the organization and your interest in them. Some of these questions may include, “Why do you want to join us?”, “What do you know about our company?”, “What made you interested in our organization?”, “How do you rate our company?”, “Tell us why you are interested in our company?”, “Our company was recently in the news. Can you tell why?” and so on. Unless you research the company you will not be able to answer any of these questions.

The candidate should have some basic information about the organization, which may include:

- major areas of operation
- products/services of the organization
- focus of the activities of the organization
- growth rate
- hierarchical structure of the organization
- work culture
- the financial standing and turnover of the organization
- corporate culture
- recent developments in the organization
- new products, services and projects
- factors making the organization successful.
- There are many ways to research the organization. The first and the most obvious is visiting the website of the organization. Nowadays every organization has its website with key information about it. You should note down important points that might help you during the interview. In addition, you can visit the library to look for relevant information about the organization. You may refer to company directories, quarterly publications, magazines, company reports and relevant business and professional publications. You may also read the company’s brochures

and recent annual report. Finally, you may talk to concerned people to get first hand information about the organization.

• **Job Analysis:**

You should know what the job is all about. You cannot adapt your skills to fit the job desired unless you know about the job. Moreover, without sufficient knowledge about the job position, you may be able to answer the questions like “Why are you interested in this job?”, “What makes you fit for this position?”, “What do you know about this position?”, “What makes you think you are fit for this job?”, “How will you rate yourself for this position?”. With little preparation, you can answer these questions confidently.

• You should have broad information about the position so that you can respond to the questions testing your suitability for the job. You should try to answer the following questions before you actually face the interview:

- What does this job involve?
- What are the responsibilities associated with this job?
- What are the special duties?
- How is this position different from similar positions at the other organizations?
- What are the challenges of this position?
- What are the skills and abilities needed for this job?
- What is the level of professional knowledge needed?
- What are the areas of expertise/areas of specialization of micro- specializations related to the job?
- What are the prospects?
- What are the chances of career enhancement?

In order to research the job, you may use several available resources such as the internet, the library, the organization’s public relations office, people working in the organization, particularly alumni of your institution.

• Revise Your Subject Knowledge:

A job interview is to assess the candidates' level of knowledge and technical expertise as it relates to the job at hand. Although a good grade is an indicator of one's command over the subject, many organizations focus on evaluating the subject competence of candidates. They may conduct special technical interviews where a group of subject experts might ask probing questions to judge the depth and scope of the candidate's subject knowledge. It is, therefore, advisable to revise one's subject knowledge before the interview. Subject basics must be clear because the experts might test your grasp of the subject. They may ask you a few exploring questions to find out your level of understanding. It is important to be thoroughly prepared and if there is time, revise the last course and read up on the latest developments in the subject. Discussing relevant topics with friends, classmates, or colleagues would also be helpful.

You should also brush up your general awareness. The interviewers may test your knowledge on a wide range of topics related to burning social, political, economic, scientific and environmental issues, national and international affairs, controversial topics, key newsmakers, and much more. As an educated person, you are expected to be aware of such matters. Therefore, reading newspapers, watching news on television and visiting informative websites to brush up your knowledge about recent developments in different areas is essential.

• Develop the Interview File:

Preparing for an interview demands a skilled approach. Therefore, you should develop an interview file that may contain the following papers and documents:

1. Interview letter.
2. Original degrees, certificates, and transcripts.
3. Experience certificates

4. References and Testimonials
5. Certificates of merits.
6. Copies of your resume.
7. Your visiting cards.
8. Other relevant papers that might be needed during the interview.

An index of all the papers and documents in the file makes for easy reference and location. You should also keep photocopies of essential papers like degrees and experience certificates, as you might be asked to submit these. Keeping everything ready in order will help in projecting yourself as an organized and systematic person.

• **Interview Questions:**

As mentioned before, the suitability of a candidate for a particular position is evaluated during a job interview through an oral question-answer session. Thus, the interview contains specific questions and appropriate answers. The candidate should understand the nature of different types of interview questions, analyse expected questions in order to devise answering strategies, and practice these answers. Some tips on job interview questions and answers are discussed below.

• **Types of Interview Questions:**

You should be familiar with the nature and type of questions being asked during job interviews so that you are ready to answer them confidently. There are seven different types of questions that are asked to elicit certain responses from candidates. They include open, closed, probing, reflective, loaded, hypothetical, and leading questions.

• **Open Questions:**

An open question asks the candidates to 'talk about' something. Its main purpose is to encourage the candidates to talk broadly about a topic or subject. It broadens the scope of the response by forcing the

candidates to engage in deeper thinking. Following are some of the examples of open questions:

- Tell us something about yourself.
- Talk about your interests and activities
- Describe the most difficult situation that you recently faced.
- What are the advantages of a mixed economy?
- What do you think about the impact of multinational companies on the Indian economy?

• **Closed Questions:**

Unlike open questions, closed questions limit the scope of the response by asking the candidates to provide specific information or facts. It permits the candidate no freedom of selection as they are required to give very specific answers. Following are some such examples:

- When did you complete your graduation?
- What was your major subject in the college?
- Where did you receive your first professional training?
- Do you know data processing?

• **Probing Questions**

The main purpose of a probing question is to probe more deeply or ask for an explanation or clarification of a statement just made. Probing questions encourage the candidate to talk in greater depth about a topic or subject. For example, after the response, "I believe that students should be allowed in academic decision making", the interviewer might ask the probing question, "Do you think that this should include all academic decisions?"

• **Reflective Questions**

Reflective questions are asked to confirm the statements given by the candidate. The purpose is to check that the interviewer understands what the candidate has said. Following are some examples of reflections questions:

- That means you want the public sector companies to be totally privatized?

- Am I right in thinking that you are against economic liberalization in India?
- Does that mean that you favour a total ban on any type of violence in movies?

• **Loaded Questions:**

Loaded questions assess the candidate's response to a sensitive issue, subject or point. The main purpose of loaded questions is to judge then candidate's ability to handle difficult and sensitive situations. There may not be any right or wrong answer to a loaded question; rather, it would be a reasonable or unreasonable response. The following are some examples:

- You are too short. Don't you think this is going to be a handicap for you?
- Your GPA in the first semester of your B. Tech. is too low. How do you justify that?
- Do you think that a Ram Temple should be constructed at the sight of Babri Masjid?

• **Theoretical Questions:**

A theoretical question may involve an imaginary situation. It may be asked to test the possible reactions of the candidate to certain situation. The candidate may be asked the question, "What would you do if....?", or the candidate may be given a situation and asked how he/she will deal with it. Some examples are given here:

- What would you do if you face a group of angry employees who want to harm company vehicles because one of the workers has been hurt by a company lorry?
- One of your staff has been involved in activities negative to your organization. He has been doing this for money that he needs for the performance of his sick mother. What would you do?

• **Primary Questions:**

A leading question is asked to obtain a desired response. It leads the candidate to a particular answer.

Such questions generally suggest a point of view on the part of the interviewer and call for agreement with a 'yes' answer. Given below are some examples.

- Don't you agree that our company is a market leader in electronics products?
- Don't you think that MNCs have boosted the Indian economy?
- Don't you agree that our economy needs more privatization?

• **Answering Strategies:**

• **Keys to Answering Questions**

How a question is answered is sometimes more important than the answer itself. The way a question is answered reflects a person's communicative ability. The following suggestions will help in improving the quality of answers:

• **Thoughtfulness:**

When a person attends a job interview, he/she cannot answer the interviewer's questions correctly unless he/she is listening properly. Many candidates start answering before they have heard the complete question. This is wrong. The candidate should listen to the interviewer attentively in order to understand the question and then respond to it. Moreover, the interviewer should not be interrupted while he or she is speaking. This constitutes rude behavior and is against the norms of any formal interaction.

• **Exactness:**

The candidate should give particular attention to dates, timelines, persons, places and other details. If he/she cannot remember a date or time, it should not be mentioned. Giving an incorrect or incomplete answer will reduce the chances of success. The candidate should not try to bluff the interviewer; it is better to accept that he/she does not know an answer rather than give an incorrect

answer. No one is expected to know everything and there is nothing wrong in accepting one's lack of knowledge.

• **Conciseness:**

The candidate should be brief and to the point particularly in open questions, where he/she has the scope to speak as much as he/she can. He/she should listen to the question carefully and answer only what is asked, not taking more than one minute to answer any question, irrespective of its nature and complexity. A long answer does not necessarily mean a better answer, it is usually otherwise.

• **Center of Attention:**

The candidate should be focused and specific. Very often, candidates deviate from the question asked and do not answer specifically. Trying to impress interviewers by giving information that is not asked for should be avoided. The more specific the answer, the more convinced the interviewers are likely to be of a candidate's suitability for the position. Concrete and specific words and phrases should be used, and obscure, abstract, and vague words that may confuse the interviewers should be avoided.

• **Lucidity & Simplicity:**

Candidates should answer directly and clearly. The candidate should not give the interviewers a chance to ask for an answer to be repeated or classified. Clarity of expression generally reflects clarity and thought and professionalism.

• **Constructive Approach:**

The candidates' answers should reflect a positive attitude. Interviewers may ask negative or sensitive questions to explore the negatives in the candidate's personality. Therefore, it is important to remain positive and answer even negative questions positively.

• Rational Judgment:

The ability to think reasonably is always an asset during an interview. Answers should always be rational and logical because illogical answers reflect a disorganized personality. Reasonable arguments and illustrations should be used when answering questions that demand careful thinking (that is, probing and hypothetical questions).

• Frequently Asked Interview Questions:

Several popular questions repeatedly appear in job interviews. Twenty basic interview questions with their possible answers are given here. Practicing replies to these questions and rehearsing mock interviews to develop confidence will help in improving job interviewing skills.

1. Tell us something about yourself.

This may be the opening question of an interview. Without focusing on any specific area, a brief description highlighting the relevance of one's background, education, skills and experience may be given.

Example: I am a B.Tech. in Chemical Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi. For the last six years I have been working as a sales and application engineer at the Filtration Division of TAPCOM Limited, Singapore. I have experience in selling filtrations and fluid purification products and equipment, covering applications such as hydraulic fluids and process fluids. I enjoy travelling and visiting new places. I am resourceful, self-disciplined and energetic.

2. What are your career objectives? /What type of position are you looking for? /What do you want to do? /What are your short term and long-standing career goals?

All these questions are similar as the interviewers would like to know whether working in their company falls within the candidate's objectives. A positive answer to this question would include a focused statement expressing the

candidate's career goals in relation to the targeted position and conveying the candidate's motivation and interest in the job.

Example: I want to obtain a challenging position in a large software consulting organization, where I should be able to use my specialized qualification, understanding and experience in business process modeling and organizational change management to suit customer needs.

3. Tell us something about your interests and activities.

This is a straight question. The interviewers want to know if the candidate's interests and activities match the key components of the job. The candidate should mention his/her activities, projecting himself/ herself as a self-motivated and energetic person who accepts challenges.

Example: I am an extrovert and love to interact with all kinds of people. I am a member of the Institution of Engineers, New Delhi and the International Society of Mechanical Engineers, Mumbai. I am also the Secretary of the Delhi chapter of the Society for Promotion of Science. I enjoy playing badminton and lawn tennis in my free time. I also like classical music and ghazals.

4. Why should we employ you? /What makes you well for this position?

The interviewer wants to know the candidate's understanding of the job and his/her estimation of his/her aptness for the position. The candidate should be able to set up how well his/her qualification, knowledge and skills match the needs of their organization and job condition.

Example: As you are looking for someone with experience in automobile sales, with a technical background, my specialized qualification and extensive experience in automobile sales in an expanding company makes me the best candidate for the job. My twelve years as sales manager in Topsel Toyota, Kolkata have provided me with sufficient experience in motivating and leading a dynamic

sales team, planning and implementing sales promotion, activities, and setting and achieving targets. With the qualifications and skills you are seeking, I am sure I would be able to get desired results for your company.

5. Why do you want to join our company? /What makes you interested in our organization? /Why are you attracted in our company?

Interviewers would like to test the candidate's knowledge about their organization and his/her interest and motivation to work with them. This question should be answered in the light of the company analysis that the candidate has done, projecting the strengths of the company.

Example: The Professional excellence maintained and pursued by your company has impressed me. Your company's experience and innovation, combined with the user-friendliness, reliability and quality of its products and solutions have made it a world leader in mobile communications. Working with such a growing organization has been one of my career objectives since the very beginning.

6. What according to you would be an ideal company to join?

This question is similar to No. 5. The Interviewers want to know the candidate's opinion of their company. The candidate should answer the question by conveying his/her interest and motivation to work with the organization, which he/she feels is the ideal one for him/her.

Example: I think that the best companies create jobs and roles where employees feel they have some control over what they do, where professional relationships are valued, and where more than lip service is paid to the work-life balance. I believe your company is one of them and I would like to be a part of such a company.

7. Tell us something about your work experience.

This is a straight question asking the candidate to describe his experiences. The answer should be brief and specific, describing the candidate's experiences and mentioning how they improved his/her skills.

Example: During the past six years, I have gained valuable marketing experience as Manager (Sales and Marketing) at Dharmapal Premchand Limited, Noida, at DPL, I was responsible for creating a building up a strong dealer/distribution network within the North- Eastern Region and Eastern States of India, as well as Institutional sales on all-India basis. Before joining DPL, I worked in National Trade Corporation, New Delhi as a sales trainee. With excellent communication and presentation skills and the ability to understand and articulate key opportunities for maximizing profitability, I have been able to prove myself as an outstanding sales professional.

8. Tell us something about your academic achievements.

This is a straight question asking the candidate to list his/her academic achievements. The candidate should give a direct answer mentioning his/her achievements and enlisting his/her skills and personal qualities.

Example: My academic record reflects my sincerity, strong determination and ability to achieve excellence. In 2004, I graduated as a Bachelor of Technology in Electronics from IIT, Bombay, with an overall grade point average of 4.46. I won Best Student Award in 3rd Year for getting a high GPA of 4.8. I also received the IIT Merit Scholarship during 2002-2003 for my academic performance. As a dynamic, extroverted student, I took active interest and participation in extra-curricular as well as co-curricular activities in the college. I won first position in the Inter-University Debate Competition in March 2003, and second position in the IIT Elocution Competition, 2004.

As a member of National Cadet Corps, I won the best IITB cadet award in 2002.

9. Where do you see yourself in five years?

Interviewers would like to know if the candidate's ambitions and career goals are realistic. The candidate should answer this question in the light of his/her self-analysis; explicitly express his/her intention to stay with the organization for a long period.

Example: I would be working as a senior executive in your company.

10. Why are you interested in this job? /What interests you most about this position?

Interviewers would like to assess the candidate's interest and motivation to join the position and see if his/her interest areas match the job. This question should be answered in the light of the job analysis, highlighting his/her interest in the job as well as his/her suitability for it.

Example: As a high caliber IT professional, I have been looking for an opening like this one, which provides a fast moving, dynamic work environment and accelerated and challenging growth opportunities. I am sure in this position I will have opportunities to utilize my exposure and experience in software and functional and system level testing policies and procedures.

11. Can you tell us about your responsibilities at your present job?/What are you doing right now?/What are your duties at your present position?

This is a straight question asking the candidate to list his responsibilities at his/her present job. Be specific and tell what you do and how you do it.

Example: As a product specialist at Pfizer Limited, I develop market strategies and programmes to address key issues; analyse the market competition; and conduct market research to identify opportunities, threats, and key issue.

Moreover, I develop marketing plans for new products, plan line extension, and execute the launch.

12. What are your strengths?

Interviewers would like to know if the candidate's strength matches the needs of the job. This question should be answered in the light of the candidate's self-analysis highlighting his/her strong points as well as his/her suitability for the job.

Example: I have strong communication and interpersonal skills and the ability to get along with others. I have been able to achieve company targets and live up to commitments with a sense of urgency. Last year my company wanted me to convince the government authorities in the industry department to approve starting a new manufacturing unit in Gurgaon and I was successful in getting the project approved.

13. Tell us about a problem you have faced and the strategy you used to handle it?

Interviewers want to know how the candidate handles a problem. In order to illustrate one's problem solving skills, brief description of a problem situation and the strategy to solve it should be outlined.

Example: Last month, the work supervisors at our factory suddenly stopped working as the personnel manager misbehaved with one of them. They were demanding the removal of the personnel manager, who was very senior as well as very efficient. The General Manager was desperate and called me in to get them back on work. I met the angry supervisors and convinced them that the personnel manager is very senior and the company needs his services, but that he would personally apologize to them for his behavior. Then, I convinced the erring manager to apologize to the supervisors. Finally, I invited both the angry supervisors and the personnel manager to a meeting where we solved the problem together.

14. What is your greatest weakness?

Interviewers want to know how the candidate would handle a question like this. It is best of mention a mild weakness or a weakness that is actually strength and also tell them how one attempt to improve the weakness.

Example: I aim at and call for nothing short to perfection, and become nervous when I am not able to do something up to my satisfaction. However, I know that this may sometimes delay a work and try to compensate with very hard work.

15. How will you rate yourself on a scale from one to ten?

Interviewers want to check the candidate's level for confidence. An indirect answer that shows the candidate's confidence and belief in himself would be the best approach.

Example: I always strive to be the best in whatever I do. I believe in being the best.

16. Are you a leader or a follower?

Interviewers want to know how the candidate handles a question like this. The best approach is to take a middle path, mentioning how one is capable of taking on both roles.

Example: I am both a leader and a follower. I have successfully completed several projects as a leader but at the same time I have worked in cross-functional teams as a member and have done well.

17. How long do you want to stay with us?/ How long do you plan to work for us?

This question should be answered directly by conveying the candidate's interest and motivation to work with the organization for a long period.

Example: I would like to be a part of your organization for a long period.

18. Are you interested in a full-time or part-time position?

Interviewers would like to check the candidate's willingness to work. The candidate should leave open as many possibilities as possible and express his/her willingness to accept any responsibility.

Example: Although I would prefer a full time position, I can also consider a part-time position.

19. Will you accept a lower position for the time being?

Unless one is very desperate to join somewhere, this question should be answered with a polite refusal.

Example: Although I want to be part of your company, I am afraid I would not be able to accept a lower position.

20. When can you join us?/When can you begin?/How long will you take to join us?

Interviewers would like to check the candidate's willingness to work. The candidate should give a very positive response to this query.

Example: As soon as I am released from my present job.

• Practice:

After analyzing expected questions and planning how to answer them, the candidate is ready to face the interview. He/she should then practice the probable answers in order to develop the required confidence as well as to experience the actual interview. The main purpose of the practice is to help one learn how to answer questions with confidence in a natural and spontaneous way. The candidate should mimic the real interview and try to be his/her natural self while practicing. Practice should be continued until one is sure of confidently answer all the questions. The following are some suggestions for practicing.

• Mock Interviews:

Mock interviews should be conducted with the help of friends, classmates, colleagues, or relatives. Two or

three people may form a mock interview panel and poses the questions. The candidate can ask them for their feedback regarding the answers and comments on his/her self-confidence, accuracy, communicative effectiveness, assertiveness, and other personality traits. Although they may not give him/her very perfect comments, their views will help in making appropriate changes in the answers or in the ways of answering them.

- **Audio/Video Practice:**

The candidate may record his/her answers to expected interview questions on an audio/video recorder and listen to them after sometime. He/she can judge the quality of answers in the light of prefixed parameters. He/she may also ask others to listen to the answers and suggest improvements. This will help the candidate in assessing his/her preparation and make appropriate modification.

- **Rehearse Open Questions:**

The candidate should rehearse answers to open questions such as “Tell us something about yourself.” before a group of friends, classmates, colleagues, or roommates. They should be invited to comment on his/her answers, gestures, body movements, and mannerisms, and point out weaknesses. Analyzing their reactions, comments, and suggestions will help the candidate to improve the quality of his/her answers and his/her body language.

- **Projecting A Positive Image:**

When a person has prepared for the job interview well, analyzed expected questions and devised answering strategies, he/she may feel confident to face the interview. The success of a job interview largely depends on a person's ability to project a positive professional image before the interviewers. Although one cannot develop such an image overnight as it takes time to groom one's

personality, one can project success during the interview by following some basic tips.

A job interview provides the meeting place where the interviewers personally interact with the candidate to explore the relevance of his/her knowledge and experience by posing questions directly to him/her. Apart from assessing the candidate's knowledge and experience the interviewers also examine his/her appearance, mannerisms, non-verbal communications skills, and personal traits. In order to ensure an impressive performance in a job interview, one has to take care of each of these factors. These are discussed below in detail.

• **Look Your Best:**

As visual impact plays an important role during a face-to-face interview, the candidate should strive hard to look his/her best by giving his/her outward appearance the needed polish and grooming. An impressive personality is always a positive factor. Some candidates ignore this aspect during interview and they are rejected just because they give a poor visual impart. In order to convey the image of a dynamic, energetic and well-groomed professional, the following points should be borne in mind.

• **Dress Formally:**

The interviewee should wear a formal dress and try to look presentable. Some organizations follow strict dress norms. Therefore, it may be a good idea to find out the dress norm of the organization and appear at the interview dressed to conform to that norm. Alternatively, the candidate should choose a dress that fits his/her body and personality and gives him/her a polished look. It should be simple, sober, dignified, and conventional, and shoes should be well polished.

• **Prepare your Person:**

Although a job interview is not a fashion show or a date with the boy or girl one want to marry, one should

thoroughly prepare oneself because it is an important meeting. On the day of interview, the interviewee should appear well groomed and smartly turned out. Using mouthwash, breath freshener, a good perfume, and appropriate jewellery in the case of ladies helps in creating a positive impression on the interview panel.

• **Relax:**

The candidate should not overstress himself/herself on the interview day. He/she should be relaxed, eat a good but light breakfast or lunch, watch television, and participate in light conversations with family members. He/she should not read serious books or exercise rigorously. It is important that he/she keeps himself/herself mentally free so that he/she is able to appear fresh.

• **Speak Carefully:**

The candidate's style of speaking is very important because the way he/she speaks forms his/her image during a personal interview. Expert interviewers can read a person's personality by analyzing his/her style of speaking.

• **Speak Clearly:**

The interviewee should speak clearly and effectively. He/she should use effective speaking techniques, be articulate and speak distinctly, focusing attention on his/her message. Care should be taken to regulate voice quality, accent, and intonation.

• **Speak Confidently:**

The interviewee should not be shaky and confused while he/she speaks and should instead speak confidently and with a smile.

• **Speak Slowly with Appropriate Pauses:**

Interviewees should not speak in a hurry. Inexperienced speakers may often try to control their nervousness by speaking too fast. This should be avoided as speaking too quickly exposes one's nervousness and the

interviewers will not be able to follow what is being said properly. Effort should be made to speak slowly and take appropriate pauses.

- **Good Manners And Positive Behaviour**

A major part of projecting oneself as a well-behaved dynamic professional is one's conduct during the interview. It is important that one takes care of one's mannerisms and behavior patterns during the interview. The conduct of most candidates is not positive during an interview. Some interviewers might use a friendly tone and try to create an informal atmosphere to make the interviewee comfortable but the candidate should always remember that a job interview is a formal situation and he/she cannot behave the way he/she behaves when he/she is with friends. The interviewee must behave formally and try to impress the interviewers with good manners and a positive behaviour pattern.

- **Be Polite:**

Being polite, pleasant, and courteous is the key to a successful job interview. The candidate should never be rude and impolite, but should instead be courteous and use polite expressions and phrases. If he/she is dogmatic and unfriendly during interview, interviewers might find it difficult to continue the interview. By being cheerful he/she should put interviewers at ease. The candidate should also avoid making remarks that might show that he/she is a snob and should try honestly to understand the point of view of the interviewers.

- **Be Flexible:**

The candidate should express flexibility during the interview and not be rigid on anything. An ideal employee is always flexible. One is likely to work in the team environment and should be a team player who can go along with people. Obstinate people are not successful team

players because rigidity goes against team spirit. So it is important to be flexible in approach, attitude, and style.

• **Be Tactful:**

It is important to be very tactful during a job interview. It is better to think before speaking than to suffer afterwards. Words and phrases should be chosen carefully, and controversial issues that may lead to unnecessary arguments should be avoided.

• **Do not Argue:**

The interviewee should never argue with the interviewers. He/she may disagree with the interviewers but should not press the point too hard. Expressing disagreements and reservations in the negative way that might offend the interviewers should be avoided, instead, he/she should express respect for the views expressed by them.

• **Be Interested:**

The candidate should express interest in the process of interviewing because interviewers will prefer a more interested but less qualified candidate to a less interested and more qualified one. The interviewee should be interested in what the interviewer is asking and his/her behaviour and attitude should reflect this interest. The interviewee should maintain eye contact with each interviewer and respond to their questions in a lively manner. Some candidates remain lifeless during an interview. This shows a lack of interest and may lead to rejection.

• **Control Nervousness:**

Most people are scared of job interviews and feel nervous before and during the interview. It is quite natural because whenever faced with a difficult situation, the body responds by releasing extra energy to deal with the situation. As a result, the heartbeat quickens, breathing becomes more rapid, and the mouth becomes dry. It is

important to control nervousness, be practical and identify one's shortcomings. Candidates should never entertain negative thoughts such as "I can't face this interview", "I come from poor background", "I am going to be rejected", "I am not ready", and so on. Instead positive self-talk such as, "I am going to make it", "I am well prepared and confident", "I am going to succeed", and so forth are more useful in creating a feeling of confidence about oneself.

• **Alternative Interview Formats:**

As mentioned above, job interviews have become more complex and sophisticated today. Gone are the days when a job interview was a simple exchange of information during a face-to-face conversation in a conventional office setting. Although face to face interviews are still the most common interview format, interviews also take place in non-conventional settings and there are several alternative interview formats, which include interviews through telephone, and videoconferencing.

• **Telephone Interviews:**

Telephone interviews have become very common today due to compelling reasons of time and distance. Unlike a face-to-face interview, which generally takes place in an office with the focus on a traditional structure of questions and answers in a conventional setting, a telephone interview takes place in a non-conventional setting. Although the telephone interview has certain inherent weaknesses as an interview format, its popularity is increasing, especially for recruitment to senior positions. Moreover, it is less cumbersome for both the interviewers as well as the candidates.

The telephone interview generally has a fixed structure. The number of interviewers may vary from one to eight. The chairperson on the selection committee introduces the members of the committee to the candidate. Then each expert introduces himself/herself and asks questions. This

goes on till each member has talked to the candidate. Each of them may form an opinion about the candidate and then a final decision is made on the basis of consensus.

The following suggestions will help improve telephone **interview skills** :

Candidates should plan and prepare for the interview in a manner similar to that for a face-to-face interview. All the relevant interview techniques and strategies discussed earlier can be applied here too. The interviewers may ask the candidate to give a date and time for the interview or may fix it themselves.

- The candidate should ensure that there are no distractions during the telephone interview.
- The names of all the members of the interview panel should be written down at the beginning of the call and they should be referred to by name throughout the interview. It is important for the candidate to know who is speaking in order to establish rapport with them. Each member of the panel should be greeted when he/she asks the first question.
- The interviewee must organize his/her papers and documents and keep them close so that he/she may easily refer to them.
- He/she must also keep a pen and paper to take notes.
- When an interviewer passes on the telephone to other members of the interview board, the candidate must thank him/her.
- As in a face to face interview, it is best to answer briefly in telephone interviews too.
- The interviewee should speak clearly and distinctly, keeping his/her voice level up to reveal a high energy level.
- **Interview through Video-conferencing:**

Interviews may also be held through videoconferencing. This is very similar to a face-to-face job interview because the Interviewers can watch the

candidate answering questions and can assess his/her behavior and non-verbal gestures. Some organizations might prefer to have a screening interview through videoconferencing. Situational interviews may also be conducted through videoconferencing.

The videoconferencing interview also has a fixed structure. The number of interviewers may vary from one to eight, as in a face-to-face or telephone interview. The chairperson of the selection committee may introduce the members of the committee to the candidate. Then, each expert may talk to the candidate asking him/her a few questions. This may go on till each member has talked to the candidate. As the form and structure of a videoconferencing interview is similar to a traditional face-to-face personal interview, candidates may apply the same techniques and strategies on interviewing here.

Chapter X

Presentation Skills



“Rhetoric is the art of ruling the minds of men.”
-- Plato

Nature of Oral Presentation:

An oral presentation is a form of oral communication. It is a participative two-way communication process characterized by the formal and structured presentation of a message using visual aids. It is purposeful and goal-oriented, and communicates a message to an audience in a way that brings about the desired change in their understanding or opinion. It is flexible, changing, as well as complex and varied. Thus, an oral presentation is:

- Purposeful – The presentation will be made with a definite purpose
- Interactive – It involves both the speaker as well as the listeners.
- Formal – It is a formal situation.
- Audience oriented – The topic will have to be dealt with from the listener's perspective.

There are several forms of oral presentation, such as seminars, workshops, symposia, student presentations, industry conferences, product launches, press conferences, team presentations, annual general meetings, departmental presentations, and company profile presentations. Whatever may be the form of presentation, they all seek to achieve certain objectives. These objectives may range from exploring a new area of information to introducing a new product by a company.

Oral presentations differ from other forms of oral communication such as speeches and debates. Although speeches and presentations share several common features, there is a thin dividing line between the two. Speeches are intended to celebrate an occasion, to felicitate a person, to welcome or bid farewell to someone, or to inaugurate a function, while oral presentations raise a particular issue for discussion.

• Importance of Presentation Skills:

We may not all be professional public speakers but we may have to make a presentation at some point of time or the other. Whether one is a student, a professional engineer, an academician, or a business executive, one may have to make oral presentations in front of one's colleagues or professional peers. A professional student may be required to make presentations in the form of progress reports, student seminars, research presentations, and so on. Professionals in different fields, including scientists and engineers have also to make oral reports, present seminars, deliver project presentations, or present a proposal orally. Similarly, business executives may have to introduce a new product that their company has launched, to present a new sales plan that they want others to know about, or they may just have a brilliant idea that they would like to share with their colleagues.

Thus, of the many skills that contribute to professional success, none is more important than the ability to communicate orally in front of a group of people. Business people rank oral presentation skills among the most important factors responsible for their success. Oral presentation is a tool of professional and business interaction. In fact, in some organizations, institution, or universities, recruitment is made on the basis of a selection process, which involves oral presentation in the form of seminar presentation, short lectures, business presentations or some other form of oral presentation.

A good presentation can do wonders for a person, it may help in getting a lucrative job offer from the company he/she always wanted to join, and he/she may get a big business deal or the promotion he/she had been waiting for. The list is long. On the other hand, a poor presentation of ideas not only reduces the professional image of the

person presenting it, but may result in major business or personal loss.

Therefore, the ability to deliver an effective presentation is essential for all of us. We should know how to present our ideas in a persuasive way, how to make our audience interested in our presentation, how to use appropriate visuals during our presentation, and how to reflect confidence while speaking. A person making a presentation should have the ability to begin his presentation in an effective way, develop his/her ideas logically and conclude his/her presentation with something memorable. He/she needs to understand the basic elements of an effective presentation – the 4 Ps, that is, Plan, Prepare, Practice, and Perform.

• **Planning The Presentation:**

An oral presentation is the formal, structured, and systematic presentation of a message to an audience and it involves conveying a lot of information in a limited time. It should, therefore, be planned well in advance so that the material is delivered effectively. Planning the presentation is, thus, the most important element. It helps the presenter

- know the audience
- stimulate the interest of the audience
- be sensitive to the needs and expectations of the audience
- strike up interaction with his/her immediate audience in as many ways as possible
- know his/her purpose
- analyse the occasion
- fit the material to the time at his/her disposal; and
- Select and narrow a topic for his/her presentation.

Planning an oral presentation, thus, involves purpose identification, audience analysis, analyzing the occasion, and the process of selecting and narrowing the topic of presentation. The following suggestions will help in planning well:

1. Define the Purpose :

Planning a presentation should start by defining its purpose. What is the purpose of this presentation? This is the most important question that needs to be answered in order to make a presentation focused, with clear objectives. A general purpose as well as a specific purpose should be identified. General purposes include:

- To inform – to share information
- To persuade – to change behavior, attitude, belief, values, and so on
- To demonstrate – to help listeners know how to do something

Identifying the specific purpose of a presentation involves identifying an observable measurable action that the audience should be able to take, and using one idea that matches audience needs, knowledge, expectations and interests. It should focus on audience behavior and restate the speech topic.

Study the following examples:

- At the end of my presentation, the audience will be able to describe three advantages of using HP Precision Scan LT software.
- At the end of my presentation, the audience will believe that the HP Precisions can LT is the best scanning software. (Persuasive presentation)
- At the end of my presentation, the audience will be able to use HP Precisions can LT software. (Demonstrative presentation)

2. Analyse the Audience

The desired results cannot be achieved from a presentation unless the person making the presentation knows his/her audience will. Audience analysis is an integral part of the process of oral presentation. It includes identifying audience characteristics, analyzing audience

needs and expectations, and identifying factors for getting and maintaining audience attention.

Lenny Laskowski, an international professional speaker and an expert on presentation skills, has used the word A-U-D-I-E-N-C-E as an acronym, and has defined some general audience analysis categories that all surveys should include. The 'acronym' is reproduced below.

Audience – Who are the members? How many will be at the event?

Understanding – What is their knowledge about the topic I will be addressing?

Demographic – What is their age, sex, educational background, and so forth?

Interest – Why will they be at this event? Who asked them to be there?

Environment – where will I stand when I speak? Will everyone be able to see me?

Needs – What are the listener's needs? What are my needs as a speaker? What are the needs of the person who wants me to speak?

Customised – How can I custom fit my message to this audience?

Expectations – What do the listeners expect to learn from me?

• Identify Audience Characteristics:

In order to know the audience, the presenter needs to identify their basic characteristics. He/she should try to gather as much background information about his/her listeners as he/she can-their age, gender, social, economic and educational background, religion, political affiliations, profession, attitudes (like and dislikes), beliefs (true and false), and values (good and bad). If these audience characteristics are identified, he/she will be much better

equipped to plan and prepare his/her presentation effectively.

• **Analyse Audience Needs and Expectations:**

Those who will attend and listen to the presentation have their needs and expectations. They will be there for a reason. If the presenter wants them to listen to him/her, he/she has to understand and respond to their needs and expectations. For this he/she should ask the following questions:

- Why will they listen to me?
- Who asked them to be there?
- Is their attendance compulsory?
- What are their interests?
- What ideas or experience do I have that the audience may like to hear?
- What are their needs?
- What do they expect?
- How do my objectives meet audience needs?

Answers to these questions will help him/her make appropriate modification in his/her presentation to suit his/her audience. The presentation must be audience oriented, dealing with the topic from their perspective. The presenter may not change his/her ideas and facts for his/her audience but he/she may change the way he/she conveys them. He/she may tell them what he/she wants to tell by in a way that appeals to them.

Recognise Factors for Getting and Maintaining Audience Attention: Once the characteristics, needs and expectations of the audience have been identified, factors that meet the needs of the listeners should be determined. Listeners will be more interested in the presentation if it meets their requirements. As a result, they will listen more attentively, understand what is said, and remember the key points of the presentation. The presenter needs to consider the following specific questions in this context:

- How can I relate my presentation to the needs and expectations of my audience?
- What should I do to ensure that my audience remembers my main points?
- What style will appeal to my audience?
- What are the changes that I should make?
- Have I incorporated ways of encouraging my listeners to give feedback and share information that will make my presentation more effective?
- Have I planned strategies for dealing with listeners' communication apprehensions?
- How will I handle hostile listeners or those who are disruptive?

Moreover, more informed decisions can be made about how to best adapt to the varying moods listeners and how to tap their curiosity, interest, and motivation. Perhaps the best rule to remember identifying factors for getting and keeping audience attention is to remain flexible. A blend of method and alternatives to accommodate listeners' perceptions may be the best approach to audience analysis.

3. Analyse the Occasion

The occasion on which the presentation is to be made should be analysed in order to understand the nature of the event or communicative situation. Several aspects of the event like its background, the people involved, the organizations or associations linked to the event, and so on need to be considered. Here are some relevant questions.

- Is my presentation part of a larger event like a national/international seminar with a central theme, or just an internal conference where I am supposed to present my views on a particular topic?
- Am I familiar with the procedures of the event?
- Who are the sponsors?
- Who are the other speakers?

- What is the venue?
- What is the duration of my presentation?

In fact, thinking through the answers to some of these questions ahead of time may ensure that the presentation is effective.

4. Choose a Suitable Title:

Generally, a title has to be chosen for the presentation. The title gives the audience the first glimpse of the presentation and they form their first impressions. Therefore, it is essential that the title is appropriate and conveys the essence of the message. A vague, misleading, and fussy title may confuse the audience.

The process of choosing a title may begin by first identifying a topic. The choice of the topic depends on the occasion, the audience, the type, and purpose of the presentation. A list of topics may be compiled, including potential topics like social, economic, political, technological and environmental problems (for example, poverty, unemployment, overpopulation, corruption, crime, inflation, AIDS epidemic, and so on.); ideas regarding society, education, business and economy, government, technological systems, and so forth, and reactions to debatable issues (for example, universal civil code, Article 370, politics and religion, and abortion). When all the possible topics have been noted, the choices can be evaluated and an appropriate topic may be chosen.

After a suitable topic has been selected for the presentation, it should be narrowed down as per the focus of the presentation in order to phrase a clear, complete, specific, and focused title. In this process, the nature of the general and specific purposes of the presentation as well as audience expectations and rhetorical sensitivity may be considered. For example, if the selected topic is 'pollution', it may be narrowed to any of the following :

- Vehicular pollution hazards in New Delhi (local focus)

- Pollution of the Ganges (national focus)
- CFC's and ozone depletion (international focus)
- **Perparing The Presentation:**

Once the presentation has been planned, it is time to begin preparing for it. Preparing well is the key to success. Making an oral presentation—whether a seminar presentation, an oral report a project presentation, or a business presentation— is easier when it is prepared in a systematic manner. Being prepared helps the presenter.

- deal with speech anxiety effectively;
- develop the required confidence;
- seek precise and relevant examples and illustrations; and
- Check for accuracy, redundancies and clichés.

Preparing for a presentation involves developing the central idea and main points, gathering relevant supporting material, and planning visual aids.

- **Develop the Central Idea:**

The central idea of the presentation is its core idea or thesis statement. It should be a complete declarative sentence that captures the essence of the message. The following are the characteristics of a central idea:

- It restates the presentation topic.
- It is a simple audience-centered idea.
- It is a one-sentence summary of the presentation.
- It focuses on the content of the speech.
- It uses specific language.

- **Develop the Main Ideas:**

Develop the main ideas for the presentation. The presenter may make a logical division of the central idea, establish reasons for the idea being true, or support the central idea with a series of steps. Choosing one of these techniques will largely depend on the topic of the presentation as well as its objectives. Study the following examples :

- Logical division of the central idea

Example: Central idea: Unemployment in India

Logical divisions: A. Types B. Causes C. Solutions

- Establishing reasons for the central idea being true

Example: Central idea: Education in India needs to be restructured

Establishing reasons: A. Reason 1 B. Reason 2 C. Reason 3

- Supporting the central idea with a series of steps

Example: Central idea: Indo-Pak Relations can be improved

Series of steps: A Strategy 1 B. Strategy 2 C. Strategy 3

- **Gather Supporting Material:**

One of the most difficult aspects of preparing a presentation is gathering relevant supporting information. Information that will be used in the presentation should be carefully selected. This will depend on the scope and length of the presentation.

While gathering supporting information a systematic approach should be adopted. First, the presenter should gather all his/her thoughts on the subject and then recall related information from his/her personal knowledge and experience. Thereafter, several research resources such as the Internet, library resources, personal interviews and discussion with experts, colleagues, and special interest groups should be consulted. A list of material to be included in your presentation should be made. The supporting material gathered may include facts, examples, definitions, quotations, and so on.

An outline of the collected material is developed, and reworked until it is good order. After that, the first draft is written and revised as required. It is important to check for accuracy, redundancies, and clichés. The style of the presentation should be informal, preferably using everyday language and avoiding technical terms and statistics.

• Plain Visual Aids:

Using appropriate visual aids will increase the effectiveness of presentations. Good visuals may serve the following purpose.

• They Serve as Speech Notes: Visual aids may be used as notes to emphasise and clarify the main points of the presentation. Each visual aid may contain a main idea. Effective titles may be used to convey the main message of the visual aid.

• They Give Confidence: Using good visual might increase the presenter's self-confidence because they refresh his/her memory, establish his/her credibility, and show that he/she has planned, is well-prepared, and is professional.

• They Help Focus on the Theme of the Presentation: Visuals help the presenter to focus on the theme of the presentation and concentrate on the objectives of his/her presentation. He/she may use effective visuals to highlight the central idea of his/her presentation.

• They Increase Audience Interest: Interesting and relevant visual aids make the audience more interested in what is being said. They may force even a hostile and demotivated audience to pay attention.

• They Give Clarity and Precision: Visuals make the presentation easy to understand and remember.

Any of the following types of visual aids may be used.

A. Three-Dimensional Visual Aids

- (a) Objects
- (b) Models
- (c) People

B. Two-Dimensional Visual Aids

- (a) Drawings
- (b) Photographs
- (c) Slides
- (d) Maps

(e) Graphs

- Bar graphs
- Pie graphs
- Line graphs
- Picture graphs

(f) Charts

(g) Overhead transparencies

(h) Computer generated presentations

(i) Chalkboard

The following suggestions will help in planning and using visual aids effectively:

- Relevant visual aids must be chosen. The visual aids should match the message. Using a visual that does not match with what is being said is distracting and may confuse the audience.
- The presenter must be familiar with his/her visual aids and rehearse his/her presentation with using the visual aids.
- Computer software programs such as Power Point and Corel Presentations may be used to enhance the effectiveness of the presentation. However, special care must be taken while designing electronic presentations or multimedia presentations because making the presentation overly dependent on electronic visuals may create certain handicaps.
- Handouts may be distributed, that is charts, presentation abstracts, summaries, brochures, pamphlets, outlines and so on, in order to complement the presentation.
- While using overhead transparencies, eye contact should be maintained with the audience.
- Visual aids must be introduced before actually showing them.
- **Organising Your Presentation:**

After the central idea as well as the main ideas has been developed, relevant supporting material has been

gathered, and appropriate visual aids have been planned, the message has to be organized and structured. Good organization is essential for effective presentation. The key to good organization is the repetition of the main ideas of your message.

Just remember the three Ts:

Tell the audience what you are going to tell

Tell it.

Tell them what you have told.

Divide the presentation into three distinct parts: the introduction body, and conclusion.

Introduction

The opening of the presentation should convince the audience to listen to it. It has five functions:

- Get the audience's attention
- Introduce the subject
- Give the audience a reason to listen
- Establish the credibility
- Preview the main ideas

Get Audience Attention :The speaker needs to get the attention of his/her audience and hold it until the end of his/her talk. Listeners form their first impression of the presentation quickly, and first impressions matter. Therefore, the opening should capture their attention. Audience attention may be captured in several ways. These techniques include using any one of the following:

- **Startling Statement/Statistics:** Say something surprising or unexpected, or give statistics that surprises the audience.
- **Anecdote:** Tell a short entertaining account of an event, a short story.
- **Question:** Ask some interesting questions. The question should be rhetorical with an obvious answer.

- **Quotations:** Start the presentation with a relevant quotation that throws lights on the central idea is the presentation.
- **Humour:** Start the presentation with a humorous reference.
- **Introduce the Subject:** A statement of the central idea should be included in the introduction. In simple and direct language the audience has to know what the presentation is about.
- **Give the Audience a Reason to Listen:** Audience attention should be drawn to the topic of the presentation by showing them how the topic affects them directly. Giving relevant statistics can motivate the audience.
- **Establish the Credibility:** The speaker's credibility should be established early in a speech. He/she should be able to convince the audience that he/she is worth listening to. The speaker should be well prepared, appear confident, and strike a rapport with the audience by narrating personal experiences relevant to the topic.
- **Preview the Main Ideas:** The audience should be told what they are going to listen to. The preview to the presentation should be given towards the end of the introduction. The preview should include a statement of the central idea and mention the main points of the presentation.

-

Remember the acronym Kiss

(Keep It Simple Ans Short)

Your audience will understand a simple message easily
Short

Your audience may concentrate better if your message is
short.

•Body :

The body contains the main content of the presentation. Most people fail to make an effective presentation simply because they try to convey so much information and include so many ideas. The speaker may be tempted to include so many points in his/her presentation but it is advisable to focus on a few main ideas, two to four. Each main point should be supported by appropriate details but not excessive data. This will spoil the presentation because it may confuse the audience. In short, the *mantra* is to use a few main points with relevant supporting details. The speaker should concentrate on each main point and use appropriate transitions to indicate a change of point as the audience may not be able to differentiate between the main points and minor points. He/she should ensure that his/her information is accurate, complete, and relevant.

As the body of the presentation is structured, the speaker should choose the sequence he/she will follow from among any of the following organizational patterns :

- Sequential
- General to specific
- Specific to general
- More important to less important
- Less important to more important
- Categorical
- Problem and solution
- Contrast and comparison

In developing the sequence of a presentation, transitions between sections, illustrations that will be used, and points of emphasis should also be decided.

• Conclusion:

The conclusion of your presentation should accomplish the following four specific objectives:

- (i) Summarise the presentation

- (ii) Reemphasize the central idea
- (iii) Focus on a goal
- (vi) Motivate the audience to respond
- (v) Provide closure

• **Summaries Your Presentation:** The conclusion gives the speaker the last chance to present his/her key ideas. The main ideas should be repeated.

• **Reemphasize the Central Idea:** The central idea of the presentation should be restated in a memorable way.

• **Focus on a Goal:** The speaker should focus on the specific objective of the presentation and concentrate on what he/she wants his audience to do, think, change, remember, and so on.

• **Motivate the Audience to Respond:** The audience should be motivated to give feedback. They may be encouraged to ask questions.

• **Provide Closure:** Verbal techniques may be used to let the audience know that the speech has ended. Appropriate words and phrases such as “in conclusion” “lastly” “finally” and “as my last point” may be used. The speaker may thank the audience for their patient listening. Nonverbal cues may also be used to signal closure.

• **Rehearsing The Presentation:**

The speaker, having planned, prepared, and organized a presentation well, may feel confident about delivering it without any rehearsal. However, it is important to rehearse the presentation properly because it will give him/her more confidence and avoid any distraction and deviation during actual presentation. Moreover, it will make him/her familiar with his/her message and will give sufficient time to make positive changes in the presentation. Therefore, before giving a presentation, it should be practiced several times.

Before rehearsing a presentation it is necessary to answer a few pertinent questions. Who will the audience

be? How many rehearsals are necessary? What would the methods of rehearsal be? Where rehearsals should be held? Should delivery notes be used while rehearsing? What should the duration of each rehearsal be? The answers to these questions depend on the topic, the speaker's familiarity with the topic, his/her oral communication skills, and objectives.

Specific computer software designed to help with rehearsal of presentations may be used. The presentation graphics package will help concentrate on key points, which may be displayed on the screen. There would be timing and pacing indicators that would help in maintaining an appropriate delivery rate and pauses for effectiveness. However, using computer software for rehearsals may make one computer dependent.

The following suggestions will help in rehearsing the presentation in a proper and planned way.

- **Plan the Rehearsal:**

Rehearsals should be planned well in advance, leaving sufficient time between the rehearsal and the actual presentation so that there is enough time to make the required modifications in the presentation. A rehearsal is an opportunity to review and revise the presentation. Hearing oneself speak may also give some new ideas to make the presentation more effective.

- **Rehearse Before a Live Audience:**

Rehearsals should be held before a live audience, involving them in the presentation. This helps in analyzing their reactions and responding to them appropriately, in preparation for the actual presentation. Friends, classmates, colleagues, or roommates can make up the audience. Their responses, comments, and suggestions on your presentation help point out weaknesses and improve the presentation.

- **Timing During Rehearsal:**

While rehearsing a presentation, particular attention should be paid to timing. Although the rate of delivering the presentation may vary according to the communicative situation, delivery technique and style of speaking, a rate that varies between 120 to 180 words per minute is ideal. The speaker may be tempted to talk too quickly in presentation. However, to be effective he/she should speak slowly and pause appropriately between important points. This speed should be maintained during rehearsal too.

- **Recreate the Presentation Environment:**

Rehearsal is essential in order to experience the actual presentation. The main purpose of rehearsals is to help learn to make the presentation with confidence in a natural and spontaneous way. The speaker should be his/her natural self while doing rehearsing, and keep practicing until he/she is confident of delivering the presentation smoothly.

- **Improving Delivery:**

Once the presentation has been planned, prepared, organized and rehearsed properly and systematically, it can be delivered. What is important is said in a presentation but how it is said is more important. It is essential to improve delivery in order to give effective presentations. Improving delivery involves understanding several delivery methods, choosing an appropriate method, and controlling and reducing stage fear.

The way a presentation is delivered does influence the way listeners will respond to the message. Thus, the most important element of a presentation is the speaker's performance. It involves choosing an appropriate delivery technique, using speech notes, and deciding the non-verbal behavior.

• Choosing Delivery Methods:

There are three basic methods of delivery: the memorizing method, reading method, and the outlining method. A speaker may choose a method of delivery that suits his/her content, style, and objectives.

• Memorising Method:

Some people prefer the memorizing method, that is, they memorise the entire presentation and present it from memory. This method may be used if the speaker has stage fear and is very nervous about giving the presentation. Learning what one intends to say word for word may develop the required confidence in the person. However, this method has its disadvantages. First, the speaker may forget something in the middle of his/her talk preventing him/her from continuing his presentation. This could be disastrous. Moreover, if the entire presentation is memorized, it may not sound spontaneous and natural creating monotony in the presentation. Finally, if the speaker concentrates more on what he/she is saying, he/she may not be able to involve the audience in his/her presentation.

The following are some suggestions to use the memorizing method effectively:

- Plan, prepare, and write out the presentation.
 - Do not memorise that entire presentation. Instead, the significant parts of the presentation, such as the opening part, the attention-catching statements, central idea, the main points, and important illustrations should be memorized.
 - Rehearse thoroughly before giving the presentation and keep a set of notes ready for reference.
 - Try to be flexible and spontaneous.
- Reading Method:**

The reading method may be used to deliver presentations, that is, the presentation is written out and

delivered by reading from the manuscript. This method is useful while presenting a technical paper or report that may contain complex technical information or statistical data. This method of delivery helps control nervousness during presentation because there is no danger of forgetting anything in the middle of the talk. This gives the speaker confidence. However, specific techniques will have to be used to involve the audience and avoid monotony.

The following suggestions will be helpful in using the reading method effectively :

- Plan, prepare, and write out the presentation.
- Do not memorise the entire presentation, Instead, the significant parts of the presentation, such as the opening part, the attention-catching statements, central idea, the main points, and important illustrations should be memorized.
- Rehearse thoroughly before giving the presentation and keep a set of notes ready for reference.
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The following suggestions will be helpful in using the reading method effectively:

- Prepare a full script of the presentation. Use capitals, spacing, and underlining to break out important parts and highlight significant points.

- Before giving the presentation, rehearse it before a live audience. Learn to look at long stretches of your presentation so that you may establish eye contact with the audience.
- Use non-verbal signals (that is, facial expressions, gestures, body movements and so on) and voice modulation in order to maintain the interest of the audience.
- Adopt a conversational tone. Use personal expressions and short sentences.
- **Outlining Method:**

Presentations may also be given with the help of delivery notes. This is the most effective delivery method as the notes will make the speaker familiar with his/her message and give him/her confidence. He/she is able to establish eye contact with his/her audience because he/she only has to glance at his/her notes for a while and can then concentrate on his/her audience. Moreover, he/she can afford to be flexible and spontaneous. However, the notes should be prepared carefully because the success of the presentation largely depends on the quality and type of delivery notes.

The following suggestions will help use the “notes” method effectively:

- Plan and prepare the presentation carefully and write notes or outlines that contain all the important points, transitions, and illustrations. Use capitals, spacing, and underlining to show important transitions.
- Rehearse the presentation using the outlines. Systematic practice helps develop the required confidence.
- While delivering the presentation notes, the speaker should glance down at each main point, look up at his/her audience, maintain eye contact with them, pause for a moment and then explain the point.

- The speaker should try to be comfortable with the way he/she phrases his/her ideas. He/she may look at the examples and illustrations, but should not pick up the word from his/her notes and just repeat them.
- In order to sound spontaneous and natural, he/she should use the notes just as starting points.

- **Handling Stage Fright:**

Everyone who has faced an audience and has made a speech or presentation must have experienced stage fright. Perhaps one of the most difficult things that need to be handled during a presentation is one's first encounter with stage fright. Whenever we are faced with a frightening situation we find difficult to handle, our body responds. This response is in terms of extra energy to deal with the situation. As a result, the heartbeat quickens, breathing becomes more rapid, the mouth becomes dry, blushing occurs, palms sweat, and several other physiological changes occur. We become nervous or anxious and suffer from stage fright. Infact, even very good speakers experience some degree of stage of stage fright when they have to give a presentation before an audience. So, some degree of stage fright is quite normal. However, it is important to learn to handle stage fright and use the extra energy positively to improve presentation delivery.

Do you know that

- You feel more nervous than you appear.
- The more you think that you are nervous, the more nervous you will feel.
- Your audience cannot easily detect your stage fright.
- Even the most experienced presenters get nervous before an important presentation.
- Even great speakers like Kennedy and Churchill were extremely fearful of speaking in public.

The following strategies can be used to control and reduce stage fright.

- **Concentrate on the Three Ps: Planning, Preparation and Practice:**

As discussed earlier, presentations should be well planned, thoroughly prepared, and rehearsed repeatedly. Knowing the purpose, audience, and occasion helps to reduce speech anxiety. Effective preparation familiarizes the speaker with his/her message and thus reduces stage fear. Knowing the introduction, body and conclusion well in advance gives the speaker the confidence to control his/her speech anxiety. Finally, practice makes one perfect, if the presentation is well rehearsed. There is nothing to fear and there may be little or no stage fright at the time of presentation because the speaker is familiar with the situation.

- **Set Realistic Goals:**

Set objectives that are realistic. If goals are unrealistic and beyond one's capabilities, it will unnecessarily create nervousness. In fact, the normal stress of the speaking situation is heightened by unrealistic ambitions. The speaker should be practical and identify his/her shortcomings. If he/she is not a very effective oral communicator, he/she should set humble goals. Moreover, he/she may set himself up to feel nervous by putting undue emphasis on a presentation.

- **Avoid Negative Thoughts:**

Entertaining negative thoughts may sometimes create more anxiety. Avoid thoughts such as "I am going to fail", "I can't speak", "My topic is boring", "I didn't prepare well", "I am not ready", "My audience don't like me", "I am not fluent", and so on. Instead, positive self-talk such as, "I really know this presentation and believe in what I'm saying", "The topic is very interesting", "I am well planned and confident", and so on. The speaker should feel

confident about his/her planning and preparation, have faith in himself/herself, tell himself/herself that everything is fine and that his/her listeners are positively disposed towards him/her.

• **Begin the Presentation with a Pause:**

Beginning presentations is accompanied by feelings of excitement and nervousness. This can be controlled by taking a few moments to make one self comfortable. The speaker should not be in a hurry to start rather he should approach his/her audience calmly with a smile, adjusting his/her delivery notes, establish eye contact with the audience, and then begin his/her presentation.

• **Speak slowly:**

Inexperienced speakers often try to control their nervousness and stage fright by speaking too fast. This should be avoided as speaking too quickly exposes one's nervousness. The audience will recognize this and they will moreover find it difficult to understand the talk. Therefore, it is important to speak slowly and take appropriate pauses.

• **Learn and Practise Stress Reduction Techniques:**

Learn effective stress reduction techniques such as deep breathing, isometrics, progressive relaxation mental relaxation, and so on. They are useful in reducing stage fright. Usually stage fear is expressed by discomfort, which may range from mild embarrassment to outright panic. The key in dealing with stage fear is to maximize one's performance by coping with the obstacles that prevent positive performance.

• **Checklist For Making An Oral Presentation**

Start with Confidence:

A startling statement/ quotation/ anecdote /question/ joke are good options for starting a presentation. The speaker must make sure that the technique used to start the presentation helps emphasize or support his/her point. It must match his/her message. Examples from personal

and professional life can be used to stress points. The speaker must be willing to give of himself/herself by sharing his/her experiences and insights with the audience. It is useful to practice the opening of one's speech and plan exactly how it should be said.

- **Be Organized:** Presentations should be organized properly with an introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction should provide an overview of the main points of the presentation. The speaker should make the purpose of the presentation clear, use transitions and signposts to clarify its organization, and incorporate credible and interesting supporting material.

- **Stay Relaxed:** Advance planning and preparation help in staying relaxed and tension free during the presentation. Focusing on the message rather than the audience also helps in staying calm and confident.

- **Pay attention to Body Language:** Effective gestures, body movements, and walking patterns make an impression on the audience. The speaker should, at all times, maintain eye contact with the audience. These aspects should be borne in mind while rehearsing the presentation.

- **Use Appropriate Visual Aids:** Visuals should be chosen with a view to creating maximum effect. They should focus on the main points of the presentation and help in retaining audience attention.

- **Pay Attention to all Details:** The speaker should pay attention to even the smallest details, making sure to organize all his/her papers, speaking notes, handouts, and visual aids, before the starting the presentation.

- **Close in a Memorable Way:** The presentation should be concluded in a memorable way, with a summary of the key points. The audience should leave with a positive impression of the speaker and his/her presentation.

• Oral Presentation Matrix

- (i) Title of the Presentation _____
- (ii) Audience _____
- (iii) Type of audience: Captive/ Voluntary/ Interested /
Uninterested/ Neutral
- (iv) Audience attitude to you: Positive/ Negative/
Neutral
- (v) Purpose

General Purpose

To inform _____

To persuade _____

To entertain _____

Specific Purpose

At the end of my speech, the audience will be able to

(vi) Central idea _____

(vii) Main ideas _____

(viii) Supporting material _____

(ix) Organization

Introduction

Attention-catching opening line : _____

Introduce the subject. _____

Give the audience a reason to listen. _____

Preview your main ideas: Today I'd like to ____

Body

Main idea + Supporting detail

Main idea + Supporting detail

Main idea + Supporting detail

Conclusion

Today I've _____

3. Use the internet to find out more about making oral presentations. Check at least three to four websites and make appropriate notes. Discuss the material with your communication teacher and your friends.

Chapter XI

Group Discussions



“Our best comes out when we have honest discussions.”

-- Fernando Flores

What is Group Discussion?

We often find people discussing various social economic and political issues. These discussions might be both informal and formal. Informal private discussions can take place at a restaurant, at a recreation club, at a college, canteen, at a bus stop, at a coffee shop, or even at home. On the other hand, formal discussions may take place at an office, at a meeting place, at a conference hall, or at a recruitment center. Why do people discuss? The most obvious answer is that we involve in discussion in order to develop a better perspective on key issues by bringing out various viewpoints. Then we exchange differing views on an issue, we get a clear picture of the problem and are able to understand it. This understanding makes us better equipped to deal with the problem. This is precisely the main purpose of a discussion.

Let us now try to understand the term 'group discussion'. The literal meaning of the word 'discuss' is 'to talk about a subject in detail'. So, group discussion may refer to a communicative situation that allows its participants to express views and opinions to other participants. It is a systematic oral exchange of information, views, and opinions about a topic, issue, problem, or situation among members of group who share certain common objectives.

Group discussion (GD) is basically an interactive oral process. Here, the exchange of ideas, thoughts and feelings takes place through oral communication. Each member of the group listens to other members as well as gives his or her views orally. He or she has to use clear language, persuasive style, and has to use voice and gesture effectively. This means that participants need to be proficient in oral communication in order to take effective part in a group discussion.

GD is a group process, that is, it involves both person-to-person as well as person-to-group interactions. Every group member has to develop goal-oriented or group oriented interaction. Effective interactions in discussion should lead to unification between the Activities of individual as a work team, and towards the achievement of common group goals. A participant should be concerned with the ego needs of other participants, unity of the group, and the overall objective of the discussion.

GD is systematic. Each participant knows the topic in advance and has the opportunity to use his/her experience and knowledge to understand and analyse the topic. The exchange of ideas in GD takes place in a systematic and structured way. The participants are seated face-to-face and h participant gets an opportunity to express his/her views and comment on the views expressed by other members of the group. A formal speech making or group procedure may follow in order to ensure optimal participation.

GD is a purposeful and goal-oriented activity. The goals or objectives of a discussion are generally decided before the discussion takes place. This means that each participant is usually aware of the purpose or purposes of the discussion in advance. A GD may help achieve group goals as well as individual needs. Group goals are common and shared by each participant whereas individual needs may be the personal goals of the members of the group.

To conclude, we may define group discussion as a form of systematic and purposeful oral process characterized by the formal and structured exchange of views on a particular topic, issue, problem, or situation for developing information and understanding essential for decision making or problem solving.

• Group Discussion and Debate:

Group discussion differs from debate in nature, approach and procedure. Debates are intended to advocate a particular point of view while GDs raise a particular issue for a positive exchange of views. Unlike debate, which is competitive in nature, GD is basically a cooperative group process. A debate follows a limited approach because the speaker must argue either in favour or against a given point of view. On the other hand, in GD the approach is not limited to the support of a single point of view.

Although both debate and GD are formal situations debate is more formal in procedure than GD. In order to ensure that all facts, viewpoints, suggestions, or solutions are considered before a decision is taken, a flexible procedure is followed in GD. Moreover, decision in debate depends on voting while a GD is designed to reach group consensus.

• Importance of Group Discussion Skills:

The ability to take effective part in GD is one of the most important skills that contribute to professional success. Whether one is a student, a job seeker, a professional engineer, or a company executive, one needs effective GD skills. A student may have to take part in academic discussions, student meetings, group deliberation, interactive classroom sessions, or selection GDs for admission to professional courses. A job seeker may be required to face selection GDs as part of the selection process. Professionals in different fields also have to take part in professional meeting and discussions. All these situations require the ability to make a significant contribution to group deliberation and help the group in the process of decision making.

The importance of GD has increased in recent times due to its increasing role as an effective tool in (a) problem solving, (b) decision making and (c) personality

assessment. In most of the organizations, companies, and institutions, group discussion aids in problem solving and decision making. When a problem situation arises, the concerned people discuss it. They exchange their perceptions about the problem and its possible solutions. The alternative solutions are discussed and analysed and the best option is chosen by the group. Similarly, whenever there is a need to take a decision in a particular case, the matter is first discussed by a group of people and the different aspects are analysed, interpreted, and evaluated. This leads to effective decisions.

GD is also used as a technique for personality assessment of candidates for job selection or admission to professional courses. Groups of six to eight members are formed, and are given a topic to discuss within a limited time (generally 30 to 45 minutes). The given topic may be an opinion, a problem or a case. The members of the selection committee closely evaluate the different skills reflected by the candidates and those who reflect leadership qualities and emerge as natural group leaders are normally shortlisted for a personal interview.

Thus, all of us need effective GD skills. It can do wonders for us and may ensure academic success, popularity and power in our organization, a job offer that we always waited for, or admission to a course that is going to change our life. Therefore, it is important to be able to take part in a GD effectively and confidently. Participants should know how to persuade their group members, how to reflect confidence while speaking, how to reflect leadership qualities, and how to make the group achieve its goals. They should have the ability to take initiatives during a discussion, present their personal views in an effective way, develop their ideas logically, analyse and respond to the views expressed by other members, and emerge as the natural leader of the group.

- **Characteristics Of Successful Group Discussions:**

Effective group discussions achieve group goals and aid in decision making. However, a large number of group discussions end without a group consensus. It is therefore, important to know the characteristics that make a group discussion successful. Successful group discussions share some or all of the following features.

- **Agreement on Group Goals:**

An effective GD begins with a purpose, which is shared and understood by all the group members. As the participants know why they are taking part in the discussion, they can concentrate better and can be more active in realizing the group goals. They can smoothly work from a general purpose to specific goals. Moreover, the agreement on group goals brings clarity and provides direction to the group.

- **Goal Oriented Interaction:**

Successful discussions motivate group members to have goal oriented interaction. Effective GD members are not only aware of the group goals but also work towards the attainment of these goals. As they are more interested in achieving these group goals than promoting their personal interests, they develop and promote meaningful interactions that aid in implementing the purpose of the discussion.

- **Agreement on Procedures:**

Participants of a successful GD develop procedures to guide them. They decide how they will organize the presentation of individual views, how an exchange of the views will take place, and how they will reach a group consensus. In order to ensure attainment of group goals, they may develop norms of interaction. If the participants of a GD fail to do so, there may be anarchy and the more assertive and aggressive members might dominate and

monopolise the entire discussion. This may make the entire process meaningless.

- **Cooperative and Friendly Atmosphere:**

An important characteristic of successful GDs is the development of a cooperative, friendly, and cordial atmosphere where disagreements do exist but they do not lead to serious conflicts. Members cooperate with each other as they understand and appreciate different points of views and try to pool them together in order to develop group consensus. There may be direct but goal oriented confrontation as each member presents his/her points of view as well as reservations and differences. However, these different positions, opinions, ideas and approaches enrich the process of discussion and broaden the horizon of the group.

- **Use of Effective Communication Techniques:**

The success of a GD depends on an effective use of communication techniques. Effective GD members keep the channels of communication open and speak clearly and precisely using simple words, short sentences, correct articulation and appropriate pronunciation. They are direct and specific and try to avoid and check barriers to group communication. Moreover, they use non-verbal communication tactfully and interpret the body language of other participants. As they are active team listeners, they encourage other to speak.

- **Equitable Distribution of Participation:**

An effective GD ensures an equitable distribution of participation by all. Each member is important and no one is allowed to dominate or monopolise the discussion. As optimal participation by all is the group-goal, members encourage each other to participate. Reluctant and shy members are drawn into the discussion.

• Shared Leadership:

There is generally no elected or formal leader in a GD. The leadership functions are shared and performed by the various members of the group. As there is a willingness on the part of each participant to reach to a group consensus, they come forward to perform leadership tasks such as starting the discussion, keeping the discussion going, encouraging non-participants to speak, making periodic summaries, checking the group progress, and so on.

• Selection Of Group Discussions:

Group discussion has emerged as an effective and potentially powerful technique for evaluating personality traits of candidates for job selection or admission to professional courses. The GD test occupies a major position in the employment procedure or nearly all industrial concerns, public limited organizations, and multinational companies. More than any other selection method, GD tests are the relied upon for making hiring decisions. These selection GDs may vary from a brief discussion on a simple topic to an exhaustive interactive discussion of a controversial issue or an actual company problem. However, they all intend to evaluate the depth and range of the candidate's knowledge, his or her ability to orally present that knowledge in a convincing manner, and his/her effective group communication, leadership, and team management skills.

• Subject Knowledge:

As all participants must possess a thorough understanding of the topic on which they are supposed to speak, subject knowledge is the first requirement of effective participation in a group discussion. Participants need to have a fair amount of knowledge on a wide range of subjects. They should know all about national and international affairs, burning social and economic topics, scientific and environmental issues, key newsmakers,

controversial topics, and a lot more. Although a GD test is not designed to assess the ability of the candidate's general awareness of the environment around him or to test his knowledge of current events, he/she is expected to be aware of such matters of everyday observation or experience as may be expected of an educated person. People with depth and range of knowledge are always sought after in dynamic companies and organizations.

The topics for GD test may include interesting and relevant ideas pertaining to society, culture, polity, economy, scientific and technical research; social, economic, political or environmental problems; controversial issues, or case studies. The best way to keep one abreast of latest events and national as well as international developments is to read daily newspapers, good magazines and periodicals, watch news bulletins and informative programmes on television. Moreover, we should use the Internet to improve our knowledge about recent developments in different areas. The World Wide Web is a vast database of current authentic materials that presents information in multimedia form and reacts instantly to a user's input.

Subject knowledge also implies the ability to analyse facts or information in a systematic way to correlate them with personal experiences and exposure. It is this ability to analyse existing knowledge and assimilate new ideas that can give birth to bright and brilliant ideas and schemes. In all group discussions, people with ideas carry the day. A person putting forward new ideas that may work, will be accepted as the natural leadership of the group. During a selection, GD, participants are supposed to analyse the topic and give their interpretation of it. Examiners will evaluate each person's contribution to the discussion or the ideas put forward by them based on its relevance to the topic, original approach, and wide perspective.

• Oral Communication Skills:

The participants in a group discussion must possess not only subject knowledge but also the ability to present that knowledge in an effective way. As the exchange of ideas in a group discussion takes place through speech, one of the prerequisites of success in group discussion is the ability to speak confidently and convincingly. In fact, a vital part of every successful group discussion is high quality oral communication. The members of the selection committee closely evaluate the oral communication skills of the candidates. They generally assess the oral competence of a candidate in terms of team listening, appropriate language, clarity of expression. Positive speech attitudes and adjustments, clear articulation, and effective non-verbal communication.

• Listening Skills:

As all comments during a group discussion must be heard and understood, listening skills are probably one of the most important communication skills that one needs in order to be successful in a GD. When a person takes part in a group discussion, he/she cannot contribute to the stated purposes of the communication unless he/she is listening properly. By participating as an active listener, he/she may he/she may contribute effectively to the groups deliberations. Moreover, active participation as a listener in a group and its discussions and deliberations make a person a successful leader because a good leader is a good listener.

• Appropriateness of Language:

During a GD, the selection panel judges a candidate's grasp of language and ability to use appropriate words and expressions. Appropriateness of language demands that there should be no errors of grammar, or usage and there is precision in the use of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. Participants must be certain that they are

expressing their ideas precisely and exactly so that their listener is able to understand them without confusion and misunderstanding. They should be simple and concise, avoiding difficult words, unfamiliar phrases, or flowery language.

• **Clarity of Expression:**

Clarity is the art of making your meaning clear to your audience. The secret of clear expression is clear thinking. Sloppy, illogical, incomplete thinking may cause lack of clarity during a GD. A confused person is likely to confuse others. So, it is essential to think clearly and positively. In addition, direct, clear and specific language should be used during a GD, rather than round about constructions, indirect expressions, exaggeration, artificial eloquence, and ornamentation in speech.

• **Positive Speech Attitudes:**

The selection panel also evaluates speech attitudes and adjustments. Is the participant a responsible group communicator or a careless speaker? Is he/she mature and dignified or immature and apologetic? Is he/she positive towards his/her listeners or antagonistic to them? Is he/she a relaxed speaker or a tense one? Is he/she sincere to other speakers or just indifferent? The examiners closely watch these aspects. So, it is important to reflect positive speech attitudes and adjustments during a GD.

• **Clear Articulation:**

The quality of a person's voice and articulation plays an important role during a GD. A participant can easily impress the other members of the discussion group as well as the selection panel if he/she has a cheerful voice with good articulation. Avoid a slow or weak voice, a monotonous tone, and indistinct articulation. Do not speak too fast. Be slow, clear, and distinct.

• Non-verbal Clues:

As non-verbal clues such as eye contact, body movements, gestures, facial expressions, and so on can speak louder than words, examiners closely watch the non-verbal behavior of candidates. They generally evaluate the body language cues of candidates to determine personality factors such as nervousness, cooperation, frustration, weakness, insecurity, self-confidence, defensiveness, and so forth. So, it is important to be careful while using non-verbal messages. However, one should recognize the power of non-verbal messages and use them effectively. A person's body language must reflect his/her self-confidence, cooperation, positive attitude, openness of mind, and sincerity.

• Leadership Skills:

A candidate's success in a GD test will depend not only on his/her subject knowledge and oral skills but also on his/her ability to provide leadership to the group. The examiners evaluate a candidate's unique set of personal skills, which allow him/her to prove himself/herself as a natural leader in a GD. Thus, it is necessary to reflect the qualities of leadership in order to create the right impression on one's examiners. Adaptability, analysis, assertiveness, composure, self-confidence, decision making, discretion, initiative, objectivity, patience, and persuasiveness are some of the leadership skills that are tremendously useful in proving oneself as a natural leader in a GD.

In every group discussion, there is an element of leadership. We can define leadership in GD on a functional basis. Thus, anything that contributes to goal achievement can be considered a leadership function. Although leadership functions are shared in GD, each participant should try to be the first one to perform the function

whenever a need arises. Leadership functions during a GD include the following :

• **Initiative** is a vital element that forms the basis of leadership during a GD. As there is no formal leader to conduct the discussion, someone in the group has to take the initiative to perform the required leadership function. A person can display his/her ability to take appropriate initiative by performing the following leadership functions:

- initiate the proceedings of the discussion;
- create an atmosphere in which members feel free to participate;
- promote positive group interactions;
- point out areas of agreement and disagreement;
- clarify points when required;
- keep the discussion on the right track; and
- Lead the discussion to a positive and successful conclusion within the time allotted.

• **Analysis:**

The ability to analyse a situation, a problem, or a condition is the mark of a successful leader. Those who lack an analytical bent of mind and rational thinking cannot be successful in a GD. A leader should be able to analyse the given topic for discussion in order to develop his/her own point of view. His/her capacity to analyse the subject in a convincing manner and present all the facts logically can help in carrying the rest of the group with him/her. Moreover, the leader should listen carefully to each participant in order to analyse his or her opinions and views. A positive analysis of all the views, suggestions, proposals, and solutions exchanged during the discussion can lead to the identification of common elements that may form the basis of group consensus.

• **Assertiveness:**

A leader has to be bold and assertive without being offensive, aggressive, and rigid. If a person is mild and

weak, he/she will be too eager to give up in the face of opposition and obstacles. In fact, a weak, submissive, and passive person can never be successful as a group leader. Assertiveness is a desirable leadership quality that can make a person successful during a GD. If one of is assertive, one can tackle obstacles and handicaps effectively. Assertiveness can help in bringing order to a chaotic group, encourage balanced participation, deal with conflict effectively, and lead the discussion to a positive end. By taking a firm stand, an assertive leader can control members of the group who are more interested in sabotaging the discussion rather than contributing to its success. It is always desirable that the leader does not take a rigid stand by he/she must be able to assert himself during a GD.

• **Self-confidence:**

is the hallmark of a leader. Selection experts and examiners always look for a candidate with a strong but realistic level of confidence. So, it is important to remember to talk with confidence and self-assurance. A participant's confidence will not only impress the examiners but also help him/her lead the group and instill confidence in each of its members. A leader can tackle problems with confidence and find workable solutions with ease. However, he/she should avoid being boastful and pretending that he/she knows everything and has a solution for every problem. He/she should not forget that overconfidence causes failures whereas under-confidence leads to lack of productivity.

• **Objectivity:**

is the quality of being impartial, rational, and factual. In order to be successful as a group leader, one needs to view a situation or a problem dispassionately and objectively. In other words the leader's approach should be systematic, scientific, and realistic. As group discussion is

an exchange of views and opinions on a specific topic, there would be conflicting views and heated arguments. The leader should not become sentimental because if he/she gets emotional and excited, his/her ideas may get jumbled and arguments will become dogmatic and self-appointed. The leader can over-come opposition by adopting logical, rational, and practical viewpoint, and utilizing concrete and foolproof illustrations and examples. As he/she should be rational rather than emotional, irrational ideas and emotional bias should not influence him/her. A leader's ideas and arguments should be fully backed by relevant facts and figures; this will give validity and appeal to his/her arguments.

•Patience and Composure:

Patience is the key to successful leadership in GD. A successful lead never loses his cool and is not easily provoked. Even in the face of extreme provocation, the leader keeps a patient profile. So, during the GD it is essential to keep ones cool and not get provoked. Handling a group of heterogeneous elements requires a lot of patience and composure. It is always difficult to bring a group of people together to discuss an issue amicably because a few in the group would try to monopolise the group and create problems. In such a condition, if the leader wants to bring the discussion to a successful conclusion, he/she has to tackle the situation with tact and patience. His/her ability to keep cool and maintain his/her composure despite provocation will help bring together people with different temperaments and strike a consensus in the GD.

•Persuasiveness:

One of the vital prerequisites for success in group discussion is the ability to persuade other members of the group to accept and believe in what one says. Persuasion is an art that requires an ample amount of convincing power.

This art can be acquired by consistent practice. In GD, participants can make a favorable and forceful impact on the group by being persuasive and convincing. In order to be persuasive, one has to advance strong, convincing, and logical arguments properly supported by factual data and forceful illustrations. A firm tone and a sober voice would also help in establishing superiority. Listeners should immediately realize that the speaker means business. A leader's ability to convince others and make them accept his/her views and suggestions will establish his/her credentials for leadership.

• **Motivation:**

Those determined to win are highly motivated and have the ability to motivate others. Motivation constitutes the base on which group leadership can grow. All organizations look for candidates who are motivated and can accept challenges. A person with motivation can work hard to do the best job possible and can achieve targets. Examiners can easily evaluate a participant's level of motivation during a GD. A leader can display the quality of motivation by being an active and positive contributor to the process of discussion. By clarifying the topic of the discussion, explaining its different aspects, and providing enough material for other members to follow and discuss, a leader can motivate them to take an active part in the group deliberations. Moreover, by encouraging the shy ones to speak and promoting optimal participation, he/she can involve everyone in the group to bring the discussion to a successful conclusion.

• **Team Management:**

A part from subject knowledge, oral communication, and leadership skills, every participant needs team management skills in order to be successful in a GD test. The leader in a group discussion should be able to manage the group despite differences of opinion and steer the

discussion to a logical conclusion within the fixed time limit. The examiners will assess whether each participant is a team player who can get along with people or an individualist who is always fighting to save his/her ego. Employers today look for candidates who can work in a team-oriented environment. GD participants need a number of team management skills in order to function effectively in a team. Some of the skills needed to manage a group effectively include adaptability, positive attitude, cooperation, and coordination,

• **Adaptability:**

Adaptability refers to the ability to adjust with other members of the group and get along with them. It is an important leadership quality that one needs to be an effective team player. A person who lacks the ability to get along with others will not succeed as a group leader because an effective leader has to rise above his personal likes and dislike in order to accommodate the larger interests of the group. In most group discussions there are several categories of social participants who might differ from each other in temperament. IQ, social attitudes, personal preferences, points of view, and other aspects. In order to emerge as the natural leader of a group, one has to adjust oneself suitably with others in the group. In fact, by being adaptable and flexible the leader will be able to carry the entire group with him/her.

• **Positive Attitude:**

A team player should have a positive attitude because no one would like to work with a person who always complains and is negative towards everything and everyone. In a GD, each participant should get an opportunity to offer his/her valuable viewpoint to the enrichment of the discussion. Therefore, every participant should encourage other members to contribute effectively to the group process. Sometimes one may have to face

aggressive, rigid, authoritarian, obstinate, and quarrelsome people, but a cheerful approach and a positive attitude will help in dealing with them tactfully. If a team mate shows respect for their ideas and handles them with tact and understanding, they will automatically look up to him/her for help and support. Thus, if a person has a positive attitude, he/she can bind the team and get along well with his/her teammates, including the difficult ones.

• **Cooperation:**

The very idea of group discussion is based on the concept of cooperation, where all members are expected to work as a team. A team derives its success from the inherent factor of cooperation. Each member supports the other member because the success of each member depends on the success of the team. On the other hand, a hostile approach by any member will go against the spirit of cooperation and will result in either delaying or sabotaging the entire process of discussion. It is, therefore, very important that every group member subordinates his/her ego as well as his/her individual interest to the larger group interest of the group working together in order to achieve the group goal within the time allotted.

• **Coordination:**

Group discussion is a group activity wherein the success of the group depends on the involvement of each member of the group. It is important that each participant reflects team spirit by developing coordination during the discussion. As a group cannot function as an effective team and accomplish a task without a coordinator, an assertive team member should come forward to accept the leadership by coordinating its activities. A person can emerge the natural leader and coordinator of a group with a positive approach, a tactful handling of difficult situations, resourcefulness, and objective behavior.

- **Group Discussion Strategies:**

As group discussion is a systematic and purposeful oral process characterized by the formal and structured exchange of views on a particular topic, issue, problem, or situation, it should be well planned and well conducted. Seven strategies have been described here for participating in group discussions.

- **Getting the GD Started:**

As mentioned before, there is generally no elected or formal leader in a GD. So there is no one to get the GD started. In a selection GD, the group, which may consist of six to ten persons, is given a topic to discuss within 30 to 45 minutes. After announcing the topic, the total GD time, and explaining the general guidelines and procedures governing the GD, the examiner withdraws to the background leaving the group completely free to carry on with the discussion on its own without any outside interference.

In the absence of a designated leader to initiate the proceedings of the discussion, the group is likely to waste time in cross talks, low-key conversations, cross-consultations, asides, and so on. The confusion may last until someone in the group takes an assertive position and restores the chaos into order. It could be you.

In order to get the GD started, the assertive, natural leader will have to remind the group of its goal and request them to start the discussion without wasting time. A few examples of the opening lines are given below:

- Well friends, may I request your kind attention? I am sure all of us are keen to begin the GD and complete it within the allotted time. Let me remind you that we have only thirty minutes to complete the task. So let us get started.
- My dear friends, may I have your attention please? As you all know, we have to complete the discussion in 45 minutes

and we have already used up five minutes. I think we should start the discussion now.

- Hello everybody, I am sorry to interrupt but I have something very important to say. We are here to discuss the topic – “Reduction of IIM fees is a retrograde step” – and the time given to us is just 30 minutes. Let us begin, shall we?

- Hello friends! may I have your kind attention for a few seconds, please? I am sure you will agree that we are here to exchange our views on the reservation policy of the government and we have to complete the discussion within 35 minutes. As we have already used up more than five minutes, we should begin the discussion now. Shall we start?

Once the GD has been successfully initiated, the leader should propose the procedures to be followed during the discussion. The procedures may include time management, order of speaking, length and nature of individual contributions, and nature of group interactions. It is very important to follow the plan that includes time for every individual speaker as well as for the exchange of views, suggestions, and solutions. All members of the group should be in agreement on these pertinent items. While trying to get the GD started, the leader should attempt to create an atmosphere in which all members feel free to participate.

- **Contributing Systematically:**

The success of a group discussion depends on systematic contribution by each member of the group. In order to make systematic contributions to the group deliberations, all the group members should understand the process of reflective thinking. They should be able to identify the stage of the discussion (that is, individual stage, where each member has to systematically present his or her views without any disturbance, or group interaction

stage, where members have to exchange views and opinions in order to reach a group consensus) and contribute accordingly. When a participant makes a contribution, he/she should ensure that his/her contribution

- relates to what has previously been said by the other members,
- focused on the theme of the discussion,
- deals with the specific point under consideration
- is directed towards the overall objective of the GD, and
- is as per the requirement of the particular stage of discussion.

Moreover, contribution must reflect the depth of understanding and knowledge of the subject as well as the participant's ability to analyse it. Each participant must see the topic from his/her perspective so that his/her background and personal experiences give it a new interpretation, which may prove valuable to the group for taking a decision.

• **Creating a Friendly Cooperative Atmosphere:**

Creating an atmosphere conducive to positive discussion is the responsibility of each member of the group. A friendly, cooperative atmosphere encourages effective and positive deliberations that lead to successful conclusion. Although a GD is a serious and formal occasion, there is no need to make it too serious and boring. It is desirable to make it an enjoyable experience for all. Members of a group discussion can do much to create a conducive and friendly atmosphere. The following suggestions may be helpful in this regard:

- All participants should help the group to make the discussion lively and pleasurable.
- Participants should develop a consensus regarding group standards early in the discussion.

- In order to maintain friendly attitudes, participants should demonstrate a sense of fair play by treating others as they would like themselves to be treated.
- All participants must show interest in what others say.
- Every participant should make sure that other members feel free to express their views, opinions, comments, and feelings.
- Members must be kept informed of their own progress and they should be appreciated for contributing effectively to the group goals.
- Participants should avoid being too formal with each other.

• **Moving the Discussion Along:**

A GD without a leader may drift without a proper direction. A leader should ensure that the GD moves along the right direction so that it is able to complete the task within the fixed time limit. He/she should make sure that every member of the group gets some time to present his/her views and no one member monopolises the discussion. No one should be allowed to do all the talking because the purpose of a GD is to exchange views, and not to hear just one person. If someone tries to take too much time, the leader may politely thank the aggressive member but firmly ask him/her to give the next person a chance to speak.

It is very important to avoid any digression that may sidetrack the group. The leader may volunteer to avoid digressions and bring order out of chaos by requesting the members to see reason and come to the point. The following are some examples of how to do this:

- I do understand your point but I think we should stick to main subject at hand.
- I see what you mean but it would be better if we limit our discussion to the given subject.

- That is all well said but I do not find a link between what you want to say and the subject in hand. Could you please return to the main point?
- That is not the main point under discussion. Let us come to the main subject.

The leader may use other techniques to keep the GD on the right track. He/she can emphasize the point that everyone has to keep the objective of the GD in mind and adhere to the time schedule. He/she may summarise or clarify the points already put forward by the group members and thereby focus their attention on the main objective of the GD and keep the discussion from slowing down.

• Prompting Optimal Participation:

As the success of a GD largely depends on the involvement of each member of the group, the leader should promote optimal participation. As every member has a resource potential that can be used to make the discussion successful, the leader should encourage non-participants to speak. With patience, restraint, and proper motivation, he/she can inspire even the shy and reluctant members to give their views on the given subject. It will not only reflect his/her leadership qualities but also lead the discussion to a successful conclusion. Leaders may find the following suggestions quite helpful in this regard:

- Make each member feel that his or her contribution is necessary to make the discussion successful.
- Encourage each member to make his or her maximum contribution.
- Recognise members of the group who have not talked and request them to express their views.
- Direct some relevant questions related to the topic to reticent members.
- Try to control talkative members.

- Make talkative members take responsibility for getting non-participants to speak.
- Avoid pushing the GD too fast, and take care of slow speakers.

- **Handling Conflict:**

One important aspect of participating in any group discussion is dealing with conflict. As a group always tends to be heterogeneous, conflict is natural in any group activity and may sometimes be desirable for the success of a group process. Expect differences of opinions during a GD but do not let these conflicting opinions go against the basic purpose of a GD. Do not be a silent spectator when two or more people are in conflict. Although conflict resolution is a complex art, a leader needs to remember just a few simple tips in order to handle conflict during a GD. The following suggestions will help leaders deal with conflict during a GD :

- Maintain a friendly attitude and try to create an atmosphere in which people respect conflicting opinions as they feel free to express their opinions and expect others to talk freely. This will generate goodwill and take care of conflicts within the group.
- Strictly follow the discussion procedure that has been decided earlier in the discussion.
- Avoid conflicts between persons and not conflict between ideas.
- Clarify conflicting statements given by group members so that they do not lead to personal differences.
- When two people are in conflict, they should both be encouraged to express themselves completely and then their views can be summarized. This will satisfy the egos of both the group members.
- Help establish an attitude of critical objectivity.

• Effecting Closure:

In the absence of a designated leader to close the discussion formally, the group is likely to continue until the examiner announces that the time is over. Every member has to see that the GD ends with positive conclusions with the given time limit. In order to complete the GD within the allotted time, the leader has to remind the group of its goal and request them to reach to the group consensus. He/she should do the following himself/herself or get them done by other group members in order to develop group consensus:

- Summarise the progress made by the group.
- Put forward the common points of agreement
- Indicate the differences that need to be resolved.
- Review decisions/suggestions/views already decided.

Once the closure of a GD is successfully initiated, the leader may propose the consensus views, if any. It is not essential that every GD ends with a consensus but every GD must end with some positive conclusion. The leader must emphasize the points of agreement in order to indicate a common viewpoint regarding the topic.

• Techniques For Individual Contribution:

As indicated before, every GD should have two distinct sections, an individual section where each member of the group presents his/her views and a group interaction section where members exchange their views and try to reach to a group consensus. Sometimes the two sections are mixed up and the group is not able to develop a procedure to conduct the discussion because no one emerges as the natural leader of the group. This is a very difficult situation and might lead to confusion and chaos. Members of a group discussion should not let this happen. All participants should ensure that the group follows certain norms regarding individual contribution and group interaction.

•Topic Analysis:

Speaking in a GD involves no planning, preparation, or practice. Participants have to speak on the spur of the moment. As they do not have any aids to help them know what to say, their presentation depends on their reading, knowledge, experience, and background. Participants should think about the topic with on their reading, knowledge, experience, and background. Participants should think about the topic with a cool and open mind in order to analyse what they know about the topic. All the aspects of the topic should be examined and related to their personal experiences; this will give them fresh ideas. In order to understand the topic and analyse it, participants need to ask themselves the following questions:

- What is this topic all about?
- What do I know about it?
- What do I personally think about it?
- Does it require a judgment from me?
- What should my point of view be?
- What should my approach to the topic be?

The first speaker has the extra responsibility of introducing the topic to the group members. The rest, however, should refer to the earlier speakers. It is generally a good idea to begin your presentation with an expression of gratitude to the earlier speakers for their ideas. Participants should express their agreement/disagreement with others politely.

While analyzing a given topic, participants should identify the nature of the topic. Topics given in group discussions can be classified into three types, that is, opinions, problems or issues, and case studies. Different strategies should be followed to express views on these different types of topics. The following suggestions will help participants make their contribution valuable to the group:

The topic of a group discussion could be a one-sentence opinion. These opinions may relate to any of the following:

- a) Social issues (Example : There should be no reservation in jobs)
- b) Economic conditions (Example : Sick public sector companies should be privatized)
- c) Moral issues (Example : Human cloning should be banned)
- d) Political concepts (Example : Parliamentary democracy has failed in India)
- e) Ongoing issues and debates in society (Example : Uniform civil code is essential for social harmony in India)

When an opinion has to be discussed, the participants should begin his/her individual presentation by interpreting the opinion and making his/her stand clear. For example, if the topic is “Reduction of IIM fees is a retrograde step”, the participant should begin by clearly stating his/her point of view, that is, “I strongly feel that reduction of IIM fees is a retrograde step” or “The decision of the Government of India to reduce IIM fees is a positive step” Next, he/she must state why he/she thinks so, supporting his/her point of view with examples and illustration. As every participant’s purpose is to influence the group member’s choices by shaping, reinforcing, or changing their responses to the idea being discussed, views must be presented in a logical and convincing manner. No member will accept a point of view if that is not supported with sufficient data. Finally, the talk should be concluded with a thesis statement that restates the point of view. One needs to be concise, to the point, and direct.

• **Discussing Problems:**

If the topic is a ‘problem’ or an ‘issue’, GD participants must try to understand the nature of the problem. There are three types of problems, problems of fact, problems of value and problems of policy. In a problems of fact, one is

concerned with the truth of a statement (Example: Inflation is inevitable in a developing country), or an explanation of a fact (Example: Glorification of violence and crimes in Indian films accounts for the high crime rate today.) However, with a problem of value one is concerned with certain questions related to value judgments or the desirability of some actions, concepts, persons, processes, or things (Example : Has the American war against Iraq helped Iraqis?). Finally, a problem of policy is concerned with certain questions related to policy decisions (Example: What should the government do to control corruption at high place?). The participant may decide his/her approach as per the nature of the problem.

If the topic is a 'problems of fact', participants should begin their presentation with a definition and interpretation of the 'problem'. It is important to see the problem from one's own point of view, which could be different from those of other group members because of one's unique background and experience. Once the problem is defined, the next step is an analysis and examination of available facts, supporting the given conclusion, explanation, or statement about the problem. The analysis may involve a brief review of its history or background, its causes, its effects, attempts to solve it, or the present state of the problems. The participant may decide the amount of information to be included and the focus of his/her contribution according to the particular statement to be discussed. Finally, one may conclude one's talk with a thesis statement that restates one's point of view. If the topic demands, the conclusion may reflect the speaker understands of the possible solutions to the problem.

While expressing an opinion on a 'problem of value' or 'problem of policy', GD participants should begin their presentation with an interpretation of the given question

from their point of view. Once the question is interpreted, the next step is an examination of the question according to their perceptions of what is desirable and proper in the given situation. The point of view may be supported with facts, examples and illustrations. Finally, the presentation must be concluded by restating the point of view.

• **Discussing Case studies:**

Companies, big or small, face many challenges in order to survive in the competitive business environment. Similarly, institutions and government organizations have to face difficult situations due to the bitter reality of the 'survival of the fittest'. Thus, the recruitment process in many organizations may focus on evaluating the candidate's analytical and problem-solving skills and they can ask students to discuss a case study. We may define a 'case study' as an actual problem situation in an organization, demanding immediate attention and solution.

To discuss a case study, GD participants need to follow an entirely different strategy. They should begin their presentation with a brief summary of the case and their interpretation of the situation, emphasizing the need to solve the problem immediately. Next, they can suggest ways and means to solve the problem situation. They may propose and examine several possible solutions or alternative courses of action and then choose the most effective one, giving reasons for their choice. Participants may use persuasive language while making other members accept the solution/s proposed by them. Finally, they may conclude by summarizing their plan to solve the case.

• **Group Interaction Strategies:**

Group discussion is a forum that provides opportunities for interaction. This interaction is possible only if every member of the group contributes and demonstrates his/her level of understanding on the given topic for discussion. However, there are several

unpredictable factors involved in a GD. These include the setting, the examiners, other group discussion participants, the requirements of the selection procedure, etc. You hardly know anything about them. You need several skills and micro-skills in order to emerge successful in a GD test. In order to ensure an impressive performance in a GD test, you should know how to exchange opinions and suggestions in group discussions.

• **Exchanging Opinions:**

GD is a cooperative exercise where opinions and views of each member of the group are important for developing consensus and reaching to a conclusion. So, you have to ask for opinions, give opinions, support opinions, balance points of view, or express agreements and disagreements.

• **Asking for Opinions:**

You may ask one person to give his or her opinion on any point or your request might be directed at a group of people in general.

Directed at one person	Directed at a group of people
What is your opinion about this?	What is the general view on this?
What do you feel about it?	What is the general feeling about this?
What do you think about that?	Any reaction to that?
Have you any strong view on this?	Does anyone have strong views on this?
Have you any strong feelings about that?	Does anyone have strong feelings about that?
Do you want to make any comments?	Does anybody have any comments to make?
Do you have anything to say?	Does anybody have anything to say?

• Giving Opinions:

During a GD you may have to give your opinions about the subject being discussed. You also have to react to the views given by other members. You may express opinions in a strong way, neutral way, or in a tentative way. It is very important to make other members aware of the nature of your opinion. If the other members know that you have strong views on something, they may not like to argue with you or ask you to change your views whereas they might like to convince a person whose views are neutral or tentative.

Strong opinions	Neutral opinions	Tentative opinions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have no doubt that . • I'm pretty sure that • I'm quite convinced that... • It's perfectly clear to me that • I'm convinced that • I'm sure that • There's no doubt that ... • I strongly believe that.. • As far as I am concerned ... • I'm totally convinced that... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think that • I feel that • I believe that • From a social point of view • The way I find it is that • As I see it ... • As I find it • According to me. • The way I see it is that • Personally, I think 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It appears to me that • It seems to me that • I'm inclined to think that • I tend to favour the view that • As it appears to me • I can reconcile to the view that • I might accept the view that

Supporting Your Opinions:

In order to make your views acceptable to the other group members, you need to support them with facts, examples, illustrations, or arguments. Sometimes you may

feel that giving one reason or consequence for your point of view is sufficient to convince the listeners. This is illustrated by the following examples:

- I have no doubt that capital punishment should be abolished because it promotes barbarism, which is no longer valid to our modern ideas, times, and values.
- I'm convinced that our company must open new branches because our business has expanded.
- I think we should go ahead with the project as it will help us establish the name of our company in India.
- I'm pretty sure that reducing the prices will improve our sales.

However, in many cases during a discussion, more than one reason may be needed to support your opinions. In order to develop your opinions by giving a series of causes or consequences, you may have to use connectives or transitional words. Some examples are given below.

- I think implementing uniform civil code in India is out of question. First of all, it would be impossible to develop a civil code that is acceptable to all the religious groups in India, and what's more, forcing any civil code on an unwilling group would go against the democratic spirit and lead to social unrest.
- I think we should go ahead with the plan to reduce the price of our car. This will help us clear the old stock and apart from that it will pose tough competition to other cars in this segment and improve our sales.
- Capital punishment should not be abolished. First, if we abolish death sentence, there won't be fear in the minds of the criminals because it serves as a deterrent, and in addition, absence of the death sentence will encourage personal vendettas, as the relatives of the victim might take law in their hands to punish the killer.

• We must reduce our energy consumption. First, there's the high price of oil and electricity. Secondly, there's the long term danger of using up oil stocks.

- **Balancing Points of View:**

In order to be reasonable and rational, GD participants may have to balance points of view by trying to look at both sides of a given opinion. They need to balance advantages and disadvantages. The following are some examples:

- The fall in interest rates is good for industry as it makes borrowing cheaper. However, it might adversely affect the balance of payments situation in India by affecting the exchange rates and making essential imports like oil more expensive.
- Of course, reducing the prices of our car will help us clear the old stock and improve our sales, but it will adversely affect the company profits and can damage the company's image in the long run.
- Although capital punishment serves as a deterrent by instilling fear of the law in the minds of the criminals, it promotes barbarism, which is no longer acceptable to our modern ideas, times, and values.

- **Agreeing and Disagreeing:**

Agreeing and disagreeing are the two aspects of interaction in a GD. When a participant agrees or disagrees to someone or accepts or rejects the suggestions and proposals given by the other members, he/she should clearly express his/her agreement/disagreement. When you agree with someone your expression of agreement should indicate to the listener and strength of your agreement, which might be strong or neutral. Look at the following examples, given in Table.

Strong Agreement	Neutral Agreement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I strongly agree. • I quite agree. • I completely agree • I'm in complete agreement. • Of course, yes. • Yes, certainly. • Yes, definitely. • Exactly. • Precisely. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I agree. • Yes. • Of course. • Right. • That's true. • You are right. • OK • That's fine. • I think you are right.

Similarly, our expression of disagreement should indicate to the listener the strength of our disagreement. Read the examples in the table below :

Strong Disagreement	Neutral Disagreement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I strongly disagree. • I disagree completely. • This is totally unacceptable. • That is out of question. • Definitely not. • Of course not! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I disagree. • I don't agree. • No. • That's not true. • That's not right. • I think you are mistaken.

• **Exchanging Suggestions and Proposals:**

During a group discussion, participants need to get the suggestions of other members of the group in order to conduct the discussion, and to explore possible solutions to actual problem situations. There is a difference between an opinion and a suggestion. An opinion is what seems to one be probably true while a suggestion is a proposal to do something.

• **Requesting Suggestions:**

Your request for suggesting might be directed at one person or it may be an open request for the group. Look at the following table.

Strong Agreement	Neutral Agreement
•What do you suggest?	•Any suggestions?
•What is your suggestion?	•Any recommendations?
•What would you suggest?	•Do any of you have any suggestions?
•What should we do?	•I'd like to have some of your recommendations.
•What do you recommend?	•Do any of you want to make any suggestion/ recommendation?
•Do you think we should?	

• Making Suggestions :

During a case study discussion, participants, particularly leaders, may have to make suggestions or present various alternatives to solve the problem situation. Like opinions, suggestions may also be strong, neutral, or tentative. Study the following examples in the Table.

Strong Suggestion	Neutral Suggestion	Tentative Suggestion
•There's no way but to....	•I suggest that.....	•One alternative could be.....
•There's no alternative but to	•I would suggest that	•One way would be to
•The only way is to	•We should.....	•The solution could be.
•The only alternative is to.	•M suggestion is that	•How about ----ing ...
•The only solution is to	•My recommendation is that	• What about -- --ing ...

Several phrases may also be used to put forward alternatives. The following are some examples:

- There are at least three different ways to deal with this situation. The first solution is to Another possibility could be The third alternative can be.....
- There appears to be at least two solutions to this problem. One solution could be to Another alternative is to

• **Accepting and Rejecting Proposals:**

While discussing a problem or a case, proposals put forward by other members of the group may need to be accepted or rejected. As the leader's acceptance will show his/her support to the concerned member, the expression he/she chooses should indicate the strength of his/her support. Strong phrases may be used to indicate a strong acceptance while the use of weak phrases or informal expressions might show neutral or weak support. Some examples are given in Table below :

Strong Support	Weak Support
• I'm sure that is the best option	• Good idea.
• It is the best solution.	• It appears to be a good idea.
• It is an excellent idea	• It may be tried
• I strongly favour this.	• Sounds OK
• I'm strongly in favour of that.	• Sounds fine.
• That's a great idea.	• OK
• I'm completely in favour of that	• Fine.

Similarly, the expression of rejection of a proposal put forward by other members must indicate the strength of the rejection. Strong, standard or diplomatic rejections

may be used according to the need of the situation. Some examples are given in Table

Strong rejections	Standard rejections	Diplomatic rejections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not possible feasible. • It's not possible to accept that. • I can't accept it. • I'm completely against this. • I really find it unacceptable. • I'm absolutely against this proposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm sorry, but that is not possible/feasible • I'm sorry I can't accept that • I'm afraid I am against that • I'm sorry, but that is not acceptable • I'm afraid that is not practical. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I appreciate your view but • That's a good idea but I still feel that • I can see your point but • That sounds interesting but • That's a good point but I still think that

• **below :**

When a leader supports or rejects proposals or solutions given by other members, he/she has to give reasons for doing so. Look at the following examples :

- I'm sure that is the best option. My first reason is that My second
- It is the best solution. Firstly because..... Secondly.....
- It is an excellent idea. First, due to and secondly .
- I'm strongly in favour of this solution. One reason is Another is ...
- I'm sorry, but this is not practical. Firstly because Secondly....
- I'm absolutely against this proposal. First, due to and secondly.

Chapter XII

Conclusion: A Final Word



“Soft skills get little respect but will make or break your career.

--Peggy Klaus

In order to successfully cope with demands of today's society, from the individual is expected to adopt and develop a wide variety of competences that allow him to rapid adaptation to new social and professional requirements. The rapid development of technology and globalization processes make demands for the development of those competences of individuals that will provide them individual success, but also contribute to the success of society in general. If you want to be recognized in the competitive environment, it is necessary to possess skills that will make you stand out from other candidates.

These skills are called soft skills, and are necessary for quality management of our own business and personal development. Exactly these skills, employers estimate as core skills, and when hiring, these particular skills can be crucial when selecting person who would complement, and well incorporate in their business environment. Employers believe that soft skills are highly desirable qualities of employees for effective business interaction among co-workers, and if you do not possess of these skills (regardless of the acquired professional knowledge), they consider that the presentation of your hard skills may not be adequate.

Soft skills create the new possibilities and opportunities of career improving, because today is necessary rise not only as a specialist but also as a person. Soft skills vs. hard skills Hard skills are technical procedures which are easy to observe, quantify and measure, while soft skills provides a holistic approach for technical education. Hard skills are skills acquired by learning and through the practical work, while soft skills including interaction with other people. Soft skills is much harder to measure (evaluate) and it is more difficult to acquire, but once acquired, significantly facilitate the application of the hard skills in practice. Soft skills, as

opposed to hard skills related to the professional knowledge acquired with education, are developing through the constant self-development and are applicable in various fields of life. For improving the soft skills it is necessary to manage of motivation/self-motivation, develop and improve personal efficiency when performing tasks and achieving the objectives, develop methods and techniques to improve working methods and the effectiveness of the time using, adopt the methods and communicating techniques and presentation skills, understand the importance of stress management, daily and in business life, improve negotiation skills and the basics of teamwork.

Due to the competition of global markets, soft skills no longer just nice to have, but it is necessary to have, and development of the same skills sets more like imperative to engineers, because those skills are contributing to a more successful business. Universities are mostly focused on teaching professional information prior than soft skills such as creativity, problem solving, personal communication, writing and the ability to speak. Students generally learn how to become an engineer, and less focus is on the soft skills. Without soft skills, each graduate engineer is faced with too many problems in their professional life, because he can't communicate effectively, team work and solve problems – thus, students should acquire soft skills prior that they graduate. The term, social interaction in heterogeneous groups refers to an individual's ability to cooperate with others and well-managed relationships for personal well-being but also for the establishment of new forms of cooperation. This competence shares common features with the so-called "social competence", "social skills" or "soft skills".

Thus, in a nutshell, Soft skills are personal attributes that drive an individual's interactions, increase job

performance and brighten their career prospects. Demotivation, insubordination, unpredictable behavior, deception, conflicts and dis-trust are generally the output from the absence of soft skills and values. Soft skills are learned behavior which require training and focused application in that particular area. Soft skills will enable performers with a strong conceptual and practical framework to build, develop and manage teams at workplaces. They play an important role in the development of the people's overall personality, thereby enhancing their career prospects. For effective performance in the workplace, companies need their employees to have not only technical knowledge, analytical skills, but the skills to deal with the external world of clients, customers, vendors, the government and public and to work in a collaborative manner with their colleagues. Soft skills make up that we are, generally encompassing our attitudes, habits and how we interact with other people. They are much less tangible than hard or technical skills. These skills can't be learnt by enrolling in a training program. However, they can be acquired through educational, work and life experiences.

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