

Soft Skills Competencies for Hospitality Industry - A Review

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Abstract: *The hospitality sector, which places a strong focus on guest satisfaction and customer service, depends significantly on its workforce's ability to effectively use soft skills. This paper explores the essential soft skills required in the Hospitality industry, including teamwork, communication, empathy, adaptability, problem-solving, time management etc. It draws attention to how important these abilities are in guest interaction, handling conflict, and providing high-quality service in general. Furthermore, the study looks into the techniques and approaches used by successful institutions in the sector to teach and develop these abilities in their students. It demonstrates how improving soft skills affects client happiness, recurring business, and the reputation of hospitality organizations..*

Keywords: Soft Skills, Hospitality Industry, Interpersonal skills, Communication, Empathy

I. INTRODUCTION

In the fast-paced and people-centric world of hospitality, success is not solely dependent on technical know-how but also on a diverse set of interpersonal skills known as "soft skills."

The article "Soft Skills Competencies for Hospitality Industry", delves into the essential qualities and abilities that elevate hospitality professionals, making them not just service providers but creators of memorable moments and loyal patrons. From communication and empathy to adaptability and leadership, these skills are the foundation upon which the hospitality industry builds its reputation for excellence.

Hospitality Industry-

The hospitality sector places a great emphasis on providing visitors with memorable and pleasurable experiences. It depends on both tangible and intangible services, thus interpersonal relationships and soft skills are essential. success in this field is often determined by the quality of customer service, guest satisfaction and reputation management.

Overview of Soft Skills-

Soft skills are character attributes that are applicable to all jobs and enable workers to succeed in any environment. They include what are commonly referred to as interpersonal or transferable skills communication, teamwork, and flexibility. They are necessary for success in the workplace.

To carry out their jobs, employees must, at the very least, possess the knowledge and skills unique to their roles. However, those who consistently demonstrate themselves as top performers also need certain other attributes, such the capacity for clear communication, good interpersonal skills, and efficient time management. These are a few examples of soft skills.

According to the World Economic Forum's "FUTURE OF JOBS REPORT", "suggested that by 2025 complex problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, people management, and emotional intelligence would be among the most important skills required in the workplace.

Compared to hard talents like coding, the usefulness of these soft skills is frequently underestimated, and they receive significantly less training. Companies seem to believe that employees understand appropriate workplace behavior as well as the value of soft skills like initiative, good communication, and listening, which often is not the case.

Most social interactions include some degree of soft skills. Networking for a new job, presenting concepts to colleagues, negotiating for a new contract, providing service to the guest and so on. The use of soft skills on a daily basis at work and developing these abilities can help to close more deals and accelerate career progression.

Developing soft skills can benefit greatly in variety of aspects of our life, including a career in hospitality and other professions. For example, communication is one of the most crucial soft skills. Having effective communication skills has benefits not just at the workplace but also in relationships.

Objective

To study soft skill competency and its importance in the hospitality industry.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To study this article referred the Secondary data like research articles, websites, periodicals, videos and interviews.

SOFT SKILLS IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Hospitality is all about dealing with people and helping make sure that they have a good time when they are at the hotel, resort, restaurant etc. There are still plenty of times that there is a need of soft skills for interacting with members of the public, handling complaints, and dealing with special requests. It provides good experience in time management, team management, and other soft skills to help to make sure that the establishment runs smoothly.

Hospitality is all about dealing with people and ensuring their satisfaction while visiting a hotel, resort, restaurant, etc. Soft skills are still required in many situations when communicating with the public, responding to complaints, or dealing with specific requests. It requires strong teamwork, time management, and other soft skill experience to ensure the smooth operation of the establishment.

EXAMPLES OF SOFT SKILLS IN HOSPITALITY

Communication- It is essential to have good communication skills in hospitality industry. It is important to communicate well with customers, in order to ensure they have a great experience.

Problem-solving skills- Problems will always crop up in hospitality. The ability to diagnose an issue and find a speedy solution is essential. This calls for rapid thinking and the ability to identify potential answers to issues as they arise.

Creativity- It is significant because it fosters the creation of original problem-solving techniques. It demands mental flexibility and an open mind to new ideas.

Adaptability- Adapting to current trends is essential. It's necessary to modify the work style to the demands of the profession because hospitality never stays the same for long.

Work Ethic- Possessing a good work ethic is crucial, particularly in the hospitality industry where staff members may be required to work extended shifts during peak times or handle peculiar client requirements. Maintaining a strong work ethic is crucial to ensuring that guests enjoy the hospitality establishment. The team will be motivated to keep up their hard work by it.

Empathy- Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feeling of others. In hospitality, this means recognizing and addressing the emotions and needs of the guests.

Time Management- Efficient time management is essential for ensuring timely services.

These soft skills are instrumental in the hospitality Industry, enabling professionals to build strong relationships with guest, provide outstanding service and contribute to the success and reputation of their establishments.

Types of Soft Skills-

Personality traits- This encompasses an individual's perspective and cognitive processes. These characteristics are typically ones that a person has had since they were young and are essential to who they are.

Behaviour- Although we often believe that these things are beyond learning, this is untrue. It's simple to change our perspective and approach people, tasks, and other situations and make situations better. This can include our capacity for stress management, our ability to quickly adapt to new circumstances, and our quick-thinking speed.

Interpersonal skills- These include your ability to deal with people, your emotional intelligence, your level of personability, and your communication skills with coworkers, the general public, and other individuals.

Organisational skills- Being organised is essential to completing your task quickly and effectively. This can involve a wide range of abilities, including time management, workload management, and maintaining paperwork organization a talent that is necessary in every business. Beyond the workplace, organisational abilities are beneficial in all facets of your life.

IMPROVING SOFT SKILLS

Be open to feedback- A significant aspect of enhancing your soft skills involves remaining receptive to criticism from managers, colleagues, and supervisors. Being receptive to feedback enhances your ability to take constructive criticism and utilizes it to enhance your soft skills and overall performance in your role at work.

Communicate often-Effective communication is a soft skill that benefits everyone in the workplace. Although you may have tasks and responsibilities that don't require the help of anyone else in your office, take the opportunities you have to form relationships with those around you.

Get outside of your comfort zone- It is crucial to venture outside of your comfort zone and do something new, just like with anything you wish to get better at. This could be a new environment, new responsibilities, or a leadership position.

Observe others- Observing those around you is one of the best methods to hone your soft skills. This can mean paying attention to managers, supervisors, coworkers, and personnel in different departments. Observe how they complete a task, paying attention to their interactions with others and their unique approach, which may incorporate a variety of soft skills. Since every employee has a unique blend of hard and soft abilities to bring to the job, it's critical to be receptive to learning from others.

Take on leadership role - Consider assuming a real leadership position at work to hone your soft skills in leadership. Consider how you can motivate your team to perform at their highest level in this capacity.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Michael Hartmann in his article-

“What is the Importance of Soft Skills in Hospitality? Critical!” has suggested that Soft skills can be viewed as character traits or interpersonal aptitudes that affect one’s ability to work and interact with others. Soft skills relate more to emotional intelligence and are abilities that help to facilitate personal interaction – either with colleagues or clients. Furthermore, they are useful across all industries and job types. They are capabilities that are difficult to train in a formal academic setting. They also usually don’t appear as a standard feature on curriculum vitae, but they can be highlighted in a section devoted to ‘professional experience’. A key gauge of soft skill is emotional intelligence (EI), which relates to recognizing and managing one’s emotions and those of others. Emotional Intelligence can be broken down into four components, they are as follows-

- **Self-awareness**
- **Self-management**
- **Social awareness**
- **Managing relationships**

Michael Hartmann in his article has spoken about the important relation of soft skills with tourism and hospitality industry.

Tourism and hospitality are first and foremost a ‘people’ business, both from the internal business point of view and from the external customer perspective. To be successful in the field it is essential to be able to function as a member of a team – either as a leader or as a participant. Every team member has a contribution to make, and each individual’s role is critical to the ability of a team to achieve its objectives. Many jobs in the sector involve direct customer contact, such as waiting on tables, working at reception, or managing an in-house spa. So here again, personal interaction skills are essential to the success of the business.

Michael Hartmann in his article suggests ways to improve/sharpen the soft skills in hotel management colleges.

The overall training and education process in the best hotel management schools puts a lot of emphasis on group work and internships, as well as working in on-campus hospitality outlets, all of which afford ample opportunity for students to sharpen their interpersonal skills.

EHL Swiss School of Tourism and Hospitality in Passugg, goes one step further by not only teaching social skills, but also strengthening their student’s self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation and social awareness.

Only hotel managers who can create emotions and truly unique experiences will be able to succeed.

Frank Giannotti in his article “Top 10 Hospitality and Tourism Soft Skills” suggests 10 most essential soft skills required in the industry.

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Soft skills are of paramount importance for succeeding in what is first and foremost a 'people businesses. These hospitality soft skills involve not only direct interaction with clients, but also the management of teams whose goal is to satisfy customers in what is most decidedly a labour-intensive industry

According to Frank Giannotti top 10 soft skills are –

Customer service skills -It is essential to succeed in satisfying customers. Being able to provide a great customer experience and comprehending the demands of the customer are the cornerstones of excellent customer service skills.

Networking skills -Effective networking is one of the most important abilities in the hospitality sector. In this industry, networking is more about encouraging repeat business from clients. Over time, developing a devoted customer base that wants to visit the hotel, restaurant, or tour will also help one's career.

Communication skills-Working in the hospitality and tourism industry, one may come into contact with people from a wide range of ages, nationalities, and temperaments on a daily basis. As a result, it's critical to be able to speak to clients in a language they can comprehend and relate to while also representing the company in communication.

Flexibility skills- In contrast to other occupations, positions in hospitality and tourism frequently require workers to work at odd hours, such as on the weekends and at night. Additionally, it's essential to be able to quickly transition between tasks as needed. Thus, the ability to be flexible is crucial for success in the hotel and tourism industries.

Organizational Skills -Having an organisational structure is essential for efficiently completing everyday tasks since it allows one to multitask and respond to last-minute demands.

Language skills- In the hospitality industry, having language abilities is very advantageous since it adds to an employee's worth. By communicating with clients in their native tongue, one can build a closer bond with them that fosters loyalty and customer satisfaction.

Commitment- It should be highlighted that a lot of young people enter the hospitality industry with a positive attitude but rapidly get bored due to the hard nature of the labour. Those who don't get that their responsibility is to satisfy customers at all costs will never be able to move past entry-level positions.

Can-do Attitude-It is essential that hospitality professionals be prepared to accept challenges in the workplace no matter how difficult the task may appear.

Multitasking skills- It's critical to have the ability to multitask while finishing all of your allotted tasks. Multitasking ability may therefore rank among the most crucial abilities in this field.

Cultural awareness- Businesses in the hospitality and tourism industries are more likely than others to work with clients from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. To succeed in this field, one must be able to transcend one's own cultural conventions and be culturally conscious.

Georgia Ntaratana in her article "The Power of soft skills in hospitality: Investing in Potential" talks about the importance of soft skills and to identify and invest in potential employees in her article.

In the hospitality industry, we interact daily with guests from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and expectations. This makes soft skills, such as communication, empathy, adaptability, and problem-solving, invaluable assets.

Here's why they matter:

Exceptional Customer Service

Teamwork and Collaboration

Guest Experience

Georgia Ntaratana mentions how to identify potential and invest in employees-

Recruitment:

Conduct Behavioural interviews.

Utilize assessment tools.

Training and Development:

Conduct Soft Skills Workshops

Mentoring and Coaching the employees

Recognition and Promotion:

Monitor performances through Performance Metrics.

Provide Promotion Opportunities.

Feedback and Communication:

Encourage open and honest communication between employees

Establish regular feedback loops where employees can receive constructive feedback.

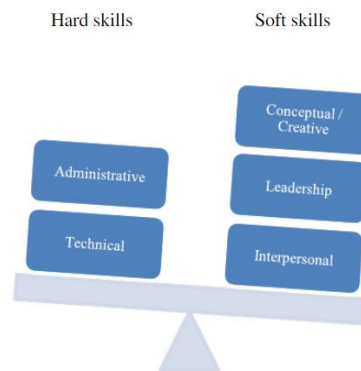
4. According to Ljudevit Pranić, Smiljana Pivcevic and Daniela Garbin Praničević article “Top 30 soft skills in tourism and hospitality graduates: A Systematic literature review” explains about the requirement of Soft Skills and Hard skills in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry.

Both hard and soft skills are required for a successful career in T&H, soft skills are typically seen as being more significant because of their broad applicability to a variety of occupations and their projected continued growth in importance.

Sandwith's (1993) CDM (Figure 1) is frequently used as a descriptive tool to identify, define, and summarize pertinent competencies for a particular profession, according to a review of T&H scholarly literature. It divides competencies into

- (1) Creative/Conceptual;
- (2) Leadership
- (3) Interpersonal
- (4) Administrative
- (5) Technical domains

Figure 1: Sandwith's Competency Domain Model



Source: Author’s elaboration based on Sandwith (1993)

5. MBO Partners on their page “What are soft skills and why they are important in the workplace” explain the need/ importance in the workplace.

Soft skills can help you advance in your job and are crucial for enhancing your capacity to collaborate with others. Soft skills are beneficial for small business owners, independent contractors and hospitality business owners in attracting, acquiring, and keeping customers/ guests. Excellent networking skills, etiquette knowledge, and presentation skills will help you attract new business and increase your volume of business with current clients. Building deeper bonds with co-workers, suppliers, and other business contacts can result from honing your dispute resolution, problem-solving, and customer service skills. Finally, having good soft skills can help you develop confidence, which is a highly valued quality in the business sector.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, soft skills are the heart and soul of the hospitality industry. They are the intangible elements that breathe life into a guest's experience and turn an ordinary transaction into an unforgettable memory. From emotional intelligence to leadership and problem-solving to communication and empathy.

These abilities are essential for opening doors to long-lasting guest's satisfaction as well as the continuous expansion and prosperity of the hotel industry in a world where unforgettable experiences are the currency of success.

Soft skills are important for leadership, resolving conflicts, and advancing one's career in addition to being useful in daily encounters. They serve as the cornerstone for creating a healthy work environment, solidifying relationships, and

raising production levels all around. Soft skills are highly valued by employers due to their ability to enhance collaboration, minimize disputes, and stimulate creative problem-solving.

Soft skills are not optional in the workplace; rather, they are necessary. They improve teamwork, foster personal and professional development, and make the workplace happier, make the teams more productive and enhance guest's experience. In order to prosper in the dynamic and linked workplace of today, both individuals and organizations should make investments in the development of soft skills.

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