

‘EMPOWER’ - Employability Orientation With Enriched Results for increasing employability skills of youth

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Abstract

*Employability is one of the important aspects of skill development. The biggest challenge today is the increasing unemployment. The present education system, though undergoing a dynamic change, is not able to complement the employability skills required, to a large extent. The paper describes a unique program ‘EMPOWER’ – i.e. **Employability Orientation With Enriched Results** developed by Gokhale's Advanced Training Institute, Jalgaon based on two surveys conducted in the North Maharashtra region to assess the employability skills of the students. Two need-based trainings to improve the behavioral and business English skills of students are also discussed at the end. These will help to bridge the skill gap and increase the employability opportunities for fresh graduates.*

Keywords: Behavioral skills, EMPOWER, Smart Professional

1. Introduction

Employability skills comprise of hard (technical) and soft (behavioral) skills. Technical skills are addressed during induction and various other programmes. However, development of attitude and soft skills continues to be a challenge for employers. The same is true for language in general and English in particular; which is widely used in business and corporate communication. Two surveys were carried out to understand the requirements of industries. Based on the outcome of these surveys, a unique program called ‘EMPOWER’ was developed. This programme is discussed in detail. This programme assesses the behavioral skills of students. After assessment, need-based training programs can be offered. This increases the effectiveness of the trainings. Two such programs are also discussed.

2. Training Needs Analysis of behavioral skills required in industries ^[1]

Employability is closely related to behavioral (soft) skills. It has been found that learner's attitude is most important, even before any specific training is imparted. Hence, initially a survey was conducted to understand the behavioral requirements of industries. The outcome of this survey was quite interesting. 107 industries situated in Jalgaon MIDC, were covered. The industries belonged to 21 different types. The purpose was to understand the behavioral (soft) skills expected from fresh graduates during recruitment. After data collection, a detailed analysis was conducted. The skill sets included in survey were work culture, communication, presentation, etiquette, leadership, business skills and team building. The outcome of this survey is interesting.

The top ten soft skills identified by the industries are reflected in the graph below, in descending order:

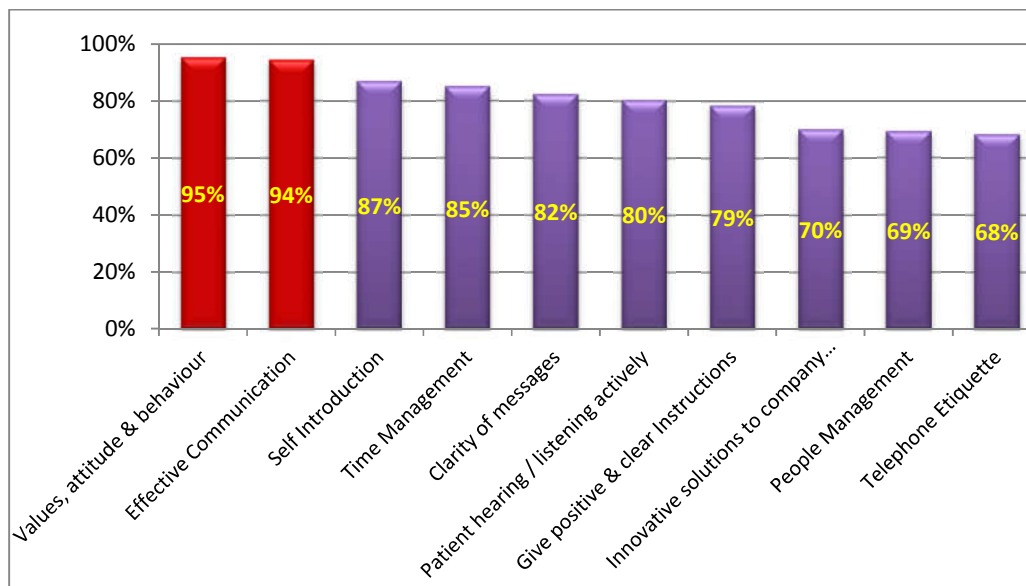


Figure 1. Top ten soft skills expected during recruitment

As is clear from the above graph, values, attitude and behavior is the most preferred skill set, with 95% ranking, while telephone etiquette is the least important with 68% weightage. In addition to this, it is important to note that, the skills that need to be focussed on priority at workplace include manners and etiquette, willingness to learn, reading, creativity and teamwork.

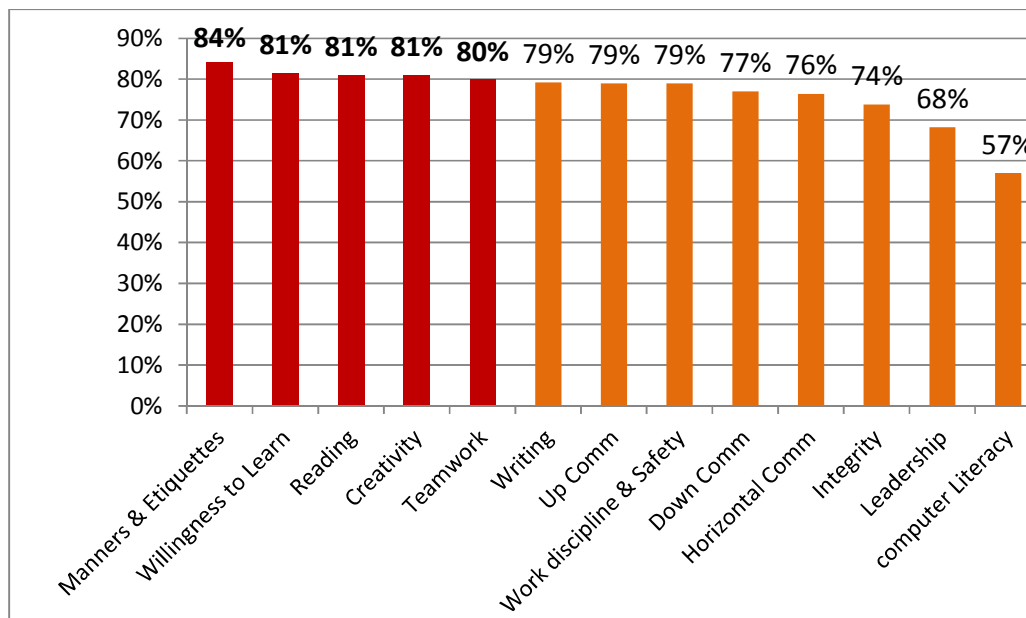


Figure 2. Skills that need to be focussed on priority at workplace

3. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) survey ^[2]

Second survey was conducted to understand the business English communication (BEC) skills expected from fresh graduates during recruitment. This survey was carried out in three different target groups: students, teachers and industries.

The focus areas are as under:

- Ability to listen to and understand English
- Use of correct tenses
- Writing correct English in applications and emails
- Writing effectively in English

4. 'EMPOWER' – Employability Orientation With Enriched Results

Based on the outcome of the surveys and discussion with HR representatives, a unique program was developed and launched in 2018. **The basic objective of this programme is to assess the behavioral skills of students on a 5-point scale.** Afterwards, need-based trainings can be delivered. This increases the effectiveness of the trainings. The assessment parameters are selected in such a way that they reflect various personality traits of an individual. These include communication skills, presentation skills, time management, confidence and body language. The features of this program are:

- Strengths & weaknesses of individuals can be identified.
- Detailed behavioural analysis report is prepared.
- Career choice of students may be judged from this assessment
- The assessment can be a foundation for SWOT analysis.

5. Need-based trainings

Two modules were identified, basis on the experience of 'EMPOWER' program. Some of the important points in the survey were also included in these modules. These modules are discussed hereafter.

5.1 Smart Professional Module

This module is designed considering the behavioral requirements of industries. **This module comprises 4 levels, each of 25 hours.**

- Level 1: Communication & presentation skills
- Level 2: Employability and aptitude skills
- Level 3: Work culture and etiquette
- Level 4: Business English, team work, leadership and time management

More emphasis is on the specially designed **follow-up sessions**, which are expected to be conducted after completion of every level. This module is suitable for diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate students.

5.2 English for Engineers (EFE)

This module covers the important business English communication (BEC) skills rated by students, teachers and industries. Since, engineering is one of the most preferred fields, a special module 'English for Engineers' is developed by English Language Teaching Institute of Symbiosis, Pune. GATI is assigned the task to execute this module in North Maharashtra region. The module has 10 power packed workshops to shape career and increase employability of graduate engineers.

The focus areas of these workshops are:

- Tenses
- Impressive Presentations
- Writing Step by Step
- Email Writing & Group Discussions
- Graphic Communication and its Interpretation
- Report Writing
- Prepositions and Linkers
- Resume Writing & Interview Techniques

The duration of each workshop is of 8 hours. These workshops are suitable for diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate students, teachers and professionals.

6. Conclusion

Employability enhancement is of concern today. The scenario is even more challenging in rural areas. Though students are talented, skills like willingness to learn, readiness to accept change and goal setting need to be given due importance. Before students are trained in language skills, grooming them on these behavioral skills is equally important. In business English communication, writing emails and applications, use of correct tenses, effective listening skills are important. Implementation of these training modules should be done in an effective manner. Students and teachers should also be convinced of the importance of these modules, in relation to increasing the employability of students.

Appendix

1. The behavioral Training Needs Analysis (TNA) survey and English for Specific Purpose (ESP) survey referred were conducted by Gokhale's Advanced Training Institute, Jalgaon (GATI) as a part of their mission to support National Skills Development.
2. TNA survey covered 107 industries in Jalgaon MIDC. The types of industries covered were Polymer, Plastics, Electrical, Manufacturing / Fabrication, Automobile, Food, Chemical, Tool making, Cold storage, Printing, Solar, PP mats, Rubber, Oil, Paper, Tiles, Irrigation, Paint, Pharma, Media and Textile.
3. The TNA survey report was presented to Hon. Prof. (Dr.) P. P. Patil, Vice Chancellor, North Maharashtra University, Jalgaon on 14th November 2017.
4. ESP survey was carried out in Jalgaon and Nashik districts. The respondents included 115 teachers, 240 students and 25 industries. The data collection for Jalgaon district was carried out jointly by GATI and K. C. E. Society's Institute of Management & Research (IMR), Jalgaon. For Nashik district, the data collection was carried out individually by GATI.
5. The ESP survey report was presented to Hon. Prof. (Dr.) S. B. Mujumdar, Chancellor, Symbiosis International (Deemed) University, Pune on 09th February 2018.
6. The data analysis for TNA and ESP surveys were conducted in association with K. C. E. Society's Institute of Management & Research (IMR), Jalgaon.

References

8.1. Survey reports

- [1] "Training Need Analysis of Industries in Jalgaon MIDC", Gokhale's Advanced Training Institute, Jalgaon (2017)
- [2] "Understanding requirements of English for Specific Purpose (ESP) in North Maharashtra region", Gokhale's Advanced Training Institute, Jalgaon (2018)