Interpersonal skills essay 1

Definition:

Interpersonal skills are defined as everyday skills employed for communication and interaction with individuals. These skills include all methods of communication, behavior, attitude, effective listening, deportment, self-awareness, questioning, oral communication, helping or facilitating, reflecting, assertiveness etc. Good interpersonal skills form the basis of every day exchange and interaction. They are a prerequisite for attaining a position in any organization, be it a company, health care or any form of business.

The development of interpersonal skills starts at a very early age and is mostly influenced by the environment one is in, be it family, friends, relatives and observations of the world we live in. There are other factors that determine our interpersonal skills as well. Media plays a pivotal role in developing our interpersonal skills. Once we are exposed to the television from a young age, one learns the different nuances and characteristics of the interpersonal lingo and exchange. Some of the characteristics we grow up with are passed on from our parents and are a part of our inheritance and gene pool, whereas we acquire most of the other interpersonal traits by observing our surroundings and the environment we are raised in.
Interpersonal skills is somewhat of a confusing term, as it refers to traits and skills possessed by a person from birth, rather than something which can be taught in a formal setting, such as a classroom. It is correct to assume both, as these two scenarios are mutually exclusive. Interpersonal skills are passed down from parents and can be enhanced in a classroom as well, once a child starts attending school.

In order to improve our interpersonal skills we have to be conscious of how we are perceived by others around us. We need to be more cognizant of the way we interact with individuals, our unconscious habits, behavior and other things that affect people that we are not aware of. The role of teachers is very crucial in inculcating and developing good habits in students from an early age; good interpersonal skills are taught in schools at a large extent.

Once a person attains adulthood it becomes his or her responsibility to change and rectify behavior and enhance interpersonal skills according to circumstance and situation at hand.

Interpersonal skills are more important than ever as they influence both opportunities and success. As children we try to change our interpersonal skills, whereas once we are adults we are most likely to formulate judgments based on interpersonal skills without explicitly saying anything to others. Similarly employees with good interpersonal skills, a positive mental
attitude and proclivity are most likely to excel at their given tasks and be more productive, as they are better equipped to provide solutions to problems, rather than those employees with poor interpersonal skills in an organization.

**Non-verbal communication:**

Non-verbal communication forms an integral part of interpersonal skills. Effective communication is the basis of any relationship, be it professional or personal. Non-verbal communication includes our body language; the facial expressions, our overall demeanor, actions, eye contact, posture, and tone of voice—speak louder than words. In order to develop better interpersonal skills, it is incumbent on everyone to decipher body language and pick up on the non-verbal cues. This then helps in honing one’s skills to connect with individuals and to build better relationships as a consequence. Non-verbal communication is a ubiquitous practice. The way we conduct ourselves even when we are not speaking to people around us is a form of non-verbal communication. We are constantly giving and receiving signals; the gestures, our body language, the way we talk, walk and make eye contact, all send out powerful messages. Silence in itself is a powerful tool and one is said to be a form of non-verbal communication. This too is an important
aspect of interpersonal skills and helps in building relationships with people. At times when we speak and what we portray with our body language are contradictory to each other. These mixed signals can leave the other person in question confused, therefore the listener has to decipher between the non-verbal and verbal message and make a judgment call on his part. In most cases the person may choose the non-verbal message, as it is a natural inclination to follow one’s intuition and believe the person’s intentions and feelings rather than the words.

**Interpersonal Skills in a corporate environment:**

It is important to develop good interpersonal skills in a work place, as it can help professionals get promoted to senior positions. Employees need to develop sound interpersonal skills, both verbal and non-verbal, of which listening and empathizing with each other is foremost. If these skills are implemented in one’s routine in a proper manner, it can prove to be mutually beneficial for the supervisors and employees alike. In order to foster good interpersonal relationships in the office the superiors need to be open about sharing their experiences and being adept listeners as well. The superiors need to provide feedback and respond to what is being said by the subordinates, so that there is effective communication at the work place. A
person in the supervisory position must be an intent listener, who pays total attention to detail and then voices his opinion accordingly. A person is deemed to be an active listener, when he makes eye contact and uses his facial expressions efficaciously to indicate his level of attentiveness. In order for the supervisor to be considered empathetic, he needs to develop an accepting attitude along with the ability to show concern for individuals. Supervisors can become more adept at understanding workers and their problems by studying role types and behavioral patterns, this in turn can help in developing their empathy and interpersonal skills as a consequence.

In any given organization supervisors are chosen on the premise of their knowledge or skills. They may possess good analytical skills and abilities, but they most always fall short in any prior supervisory experience. Similarly when an employee who has been associated with a company for some time is promoted to a managerial post, his or her interpersonal skill pattern needs to be established. These people in supervisory roles may not be privy to the psychological needs and wants of their subordinates and may have to face problems in relating to them. Therefore the idea is to build and develop strong interpersonal skills, so that there is an unequivocal understanding of shared experiences along with empathy and listening as well. If these interpersonal skills are properly worked on, they will prove to
be extremely beneficial for the employees, supervisors and the whole business organization at large.

Sharing experiences can help in building better interpersonal relationships in the office. The concept of power, status and authority can deter the flow of information. Employees are more inclined to filter bad information before it can be relayed to their managers and superiors. As the situation gets tense, more bad news gets filtered. In order to create an environment more conducive to growth and productivity, it is imperative to create a more open and candid exchange between all members of the organization. This can only be done when experiences are shared, as this in turn facilitates greater cooperation and develops better interpersonal skills.

The concept of “Window of opportunity” can be used to elaborate this point. The idea of building a better interpersonal relationship can be explained as the window between two individuals i.e. the supervisor and the staffer. The window is comprised of four dimensions or “panes”- The Arena, the Blind Spot, the Façade and the unknown. The first pane or the Arena contains the information and knowledge shared by the two parties or individuals involved. This is therefore considered to be the public pane. The Blind spot is the area, which is possibly the most dangerous aspect in this entire scheme of interpersonal relationships. This is because it contains
information, which is common knowledge for others yet the person in question is oblivious to it. For example the idea as to how one appears to others and how others perceive us to be is not known to us. This can then prove to be extremely frustrating on many levels and can be a source of embarrassment as well.

The other pane is called the “façade” which contains the knowledge the individual possesses himself. This includes his hopes, ideals, aspirations, dreams, fears, wants and needs. People are usually quite tight lipped about personal information, so the others cannot relate or respond to such hidden knowledge appropriately. The unknown is thus a mystery, which can only be revealed when two individuals interact and converse with each other. Once they develop the appropriate interpersonal skills, they will be able to find out and learn about the other and therefore communicate more effectively as a consequence.

Supervisors need to enhance their interpersonal skills, so that they can get to know their employees better. This can be done if they become better listeners and pay close attention to what is being said to them. Attentive listening involves eye contact and gestures, which indicate that the listener is paying attention to what is being said to him. People who are speaking should be allowed to speak without any interruptions and should be allowed
to share their thoughts before the other party can make any judgments whatsoever.

The next most important aspect is the concept of “empathy”. This idea is more difficult to achieve, as one literally needs to imagine that he or she is another’s position or predicament, which is easier said than done. Supervisors who are trying to hone their interpersonal skills need to feel empathy towards their employees. Developing an accepting attitude, appreciating individuality, tolerance of other’s shortcomings and showing compassion and concern for people is considered as empathetic behavior. Supervisors need to work on their interpersonal skills to gauge as to how their employees are according to their individual personality types and then decide their modus operandi accordingly.

The techniques described above can prove to be beneficial in the understanding of employee/supervisor relationships in a work place. A rapport needs to be developed, which is possible when the body language, facial expressions and people’s reactions are understood. A supervisor is better equipped to comprehend the staff’s reactions, if he pays close attention to detail and tries to increase the productivity of the work force by enhancing his interpersonal skills.

**Conclusion:**
On a personal level it is important to develop dynamic interpersonal skills as they aid in the understanding of the human psyche. Human interaction is a must in any given situation; therefore a person should be a good listener and a speaker at the same time. Both qualities are mutually exclusive. If there is an emergency situation one should be equipped to handle it in a calm and composed manner. Similarly a person should be an empathetic listener as well as it can prove to be handy in any given situation. All areas of interpersonal skills should be strengthened as it can prove to improve relationships, increase productivity and prove to be propitious for all.

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