

Foreword from Academia

Over the past four decades, I have been privileged to be associated with such institutions as Carnegie Mellon University, Kellogg School of Management, Bauer College of Business in University of Houston, in the USA. In India, too, I have been involved, over the last 20 years, in founding the PGPM programme at MDI, Gurgaon; as the founding faculty and chairman of the faculty of the Indian School of Business (ISB); and, as the Dean, in founding Great Lakes Institute of Management, a reputed and successful institution in India. During this exciting journey, I have had the opportunity to work with and mentor literally hundreds of students from India, who are highly successful in their chosen careers. All these great men and women have a few things in common—that they are not only experts in their chosen fields, but are also the most articulate; their power of compelling communication match their high level of intellect; their strong conviction and pride in what they believe in fuel this intense drive and conviction; their adaptability to multiple cultures and environments make them successful in the global arena. In short, I believe that the success is directly attributable to the appropriate mix of the so-called soft skills in their persona. I have seen this belief reinforced in my association as a board member in Personalitree, which inculcated soft skills in the Indian college students of engineering and management, by making them cultivate the right-brain functions that are so essential for soft skills.

When one of our adjunct faculties, Gopalaswamy Ramesh, approached me with a request for a foreword for a book on soft skills, I was intrigued and had several questions—what new things can be written about soft skills? In what new ways can these be said to create a lasting impression? Upon closer look, I found several things unique about this book:

- ▶ By defining soft skills as those skills that are required to succeed in one's environment, the authors have given the most broad-based, appropriate and results-oriented definition of soft skills that I have seen.
- ▶ By covering a broad spectrum of topics relating to soft skills—a positive attitude towards oneself and towards the group, taking ownership, dealing with tough situations and so on—this book is significantly more than a quick-fix, spoken-English communication guide.
- ▶ This book includes the full range of communication scenarios in a business environment—starting from resumé-writing to interviews to meeting management and proposal-writing—and, hence, would be useful to everyone, regardless of which stage of their career they are in.
- ▶ The authors have brought in challenges and solutions relating to the use of modern-era-communication vehicles such as e-mail, phone and text messaging, thus increasing the direct practical relevance of the book. Most of the earlier business communication text books sidestep this important aspect of adapting to these new media.

- ▶ The authors have followed a novel approach of using typical work scenarios (which they have called 'Snapshots') to illustrate the concepts and approaches, making the learning highly experiential. The presence of cartoons lightens the reading, without reducing the quality of content.
- ▶ A number of graduates from successful academic institutions like the Great Lakes get placed in MNCs. It is essential for these students to get sensitized to the realities of working in multicultural, trans-border, multifunctional teams. This book amply highlights this important area. The authors have also shown that they have a clear pulse of the sensitive areas by covering topics dealing with diversity awareness and how to say 'no'.

I strongly believe that we should ingrain soft skills into our professionals by catching them young. As a part of our social responsibility, Great Lakes is working with a few schools in Chennai and providing exposure and experience to school students to inculcate effective soft skills. This will enable them to hit the road running when they get into college. And we should continually reinforce these skills at all levels, till they become a habit for them.

I am delighted that Professor Gopalaswamy Ramesh, who teaches in the MBA programme at Great Lakes, which nurtures all the values, has put in this effort in co-authoring this book. I would like to suggest that this book and the principles and practices discussed here should be covered at the school level itself and re-emphasized at the college level.

The most important attribute for a student to succeed in soft skills is attitude, if they want to compete with the best of class from the USA and the rest of the world. I am confident that this book will enhance this recognition and make the students and professionals, at all levels, master this aspect. It is certain that all of them will immensely benefit from this book. I wish the authors and the book all the very best in this endeavour.

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