

## **INTERPERSONAL SKILLS**

### **Definition**

**Interpersonal skills are the skills we use every day to communicate and interact with other people.**

A number of studies (Appleby, 2000; Johanson & Fried, 2002; Yancey, 2001) have found that the most critical job skill a new employee needs to possess is good interpersonal skills. Drew Appleby asked 39 employers what job skills were most important in making hiring decisions. Social skills ranked first. George Yancey asked 76 recent BA psychology graduates and 44 recent master's psychology graduates what job skills were most useful to them in their current jobs. Interpersonal skills ranked first. John Johanson and Carrie Fried asked 144 psychology graduates what job skills were most useful to them in their current jobs. Again, interpersonal skills ranked first.

**Interpersonal skills** include not only how we communicate with others, but also our confidence, and how we deal with others. Problem solving, decision making and personal stress management are also part of interpersonal skills. People with good interpersonal skill are good leaders as well as they use their interpersonal skill to understand and motivate others.

People with strong interpersonal skills are perceived as more calm, confident and charismatic, qualities that are often appealing to others. They are also usually more successful in both their professional and personal lives. By being aware of your interpersonal skills can help you improve and develop them.

### **Importance of Interpersonal skills**

Strong positive interpersonal relationships are essential to achieving our success – whether they be work relationships, family relationships or relationships with others in our communities. We're in almost constant contact with others and we should make every contact an opportunity to strengthen our social skills and reinforce our relationships.

Individuals may be accustomed to doing things on their own, but often “two heads are better than one.” Considering the ideas of co-workers, even if they are different from yours, leads to creative and effective approaches to solving problems and getting work done. Employers appreciate employees who get along with people at all levels; therefore, they seek employees who have good interpersonal skills . Interpersonal skills enable you to work with others harmoniously and efficiently. Working well with others involves understanding and appreciating individual differences. It also means using those differences to your best advantage. Of all the

challenges faced by professionals today, developing Strong Interpersonal Skills ranks as one of the biggest – and most critical. In fact, studies show their ability to work with people can MAKE THE DIFFERENCE between project failure and success.

### **Benefits of Interpersonal skill**

- Helpful in relationship building
- Reduces conflicts
- Increases the productivity
- Happiness/satisfaction

Using good interpersonal skills is often the difference between effectively communicating, and building barriers to the communication process. Understanding the individual and creating an environment conducive to effective communication is an efficient means to developing valuable relationships.

## Tips for improving your interpersonal skill

- **Be genuinely interested in other people** -Observe what's going on in other people's lives. Acknowledge their happy milestones, celebrate their success and express concern and sympathy for difficult situations. Make eye contact and remember their names. Ask others for their opinions.
- **Smile** -Few people want to be around someone who is always depressed. Do your best to be friendly and happy around coworkers. Maintain a positive, cheerful attitude about work and about life. Smile often. The positive energy you radiate will draw others to you.
- **Listen** -To actively listen is to demonstrate that you intend to hear and understand another's point of view. If you can restate, in your own words, what the other person has said- it means you are LISTENING. Your coworkers will appreciate you more when they know that you really do listen to what they have to say.
- **Be generous with praise and cautious with criticism** - Find one positive thing about everyone you work with and let them hear it. Be generous with praise and kind words of encouragement. Say thank you when someone helps you.
- **Build Trust** – Trust is a major part in the foundation of interpersonal relationships, whether it is between parents and children, friends, or in our profession. To build trust - **do what you say**, never lie, if you do lie - admit to it show openness, Do not break promises, however small they may seem , Demonstrate a strong moral ethic.
  
- **Don't Complain** - There is nothing worse than a chronic complainer or whiner. If you simply *have* to vent about something, save it for your diary. If you must verbalize your grievances, vent to your personal friends and family, and keep it short. Spare those around you, or else you'll get a bad reputation
- **Talk in terms of the other person's interest** - In your dealings with people both in and out of the office, remember to talk to them in terms of their interests and you'll find a lot more people paying close attention to you
  
- **Call people by their name** (Remember that a person's name is, to that person, the sweetest and most important sound in any language). People feel bigger and better when called by name because it is their most valuable possession. It gives them a sense of individuality – a feeling of being unique. So call people by their name and also **make the other person feel important**. Always show respect to others. Fill your vocabulary with phrases such as "*I'm sorry to trouble you,*" "*Would you be so kind as to -*" "*Won't you please?*" "*Would you mind*" and "*Thank you.*"
- **Empathy** -Empathy means being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes and understand how they feel. Try to view situations and responses from another person's perspective. This can be accomplished through staying in touch with your own emotions; those who are cut off from their own feelings are often unable to empathize with others.

## Key Points

- The ability to communicate and connect with others at work will make you happier.
- Interpersonal skills will help you build a sense of community and gain the support of others when you need it.

*"The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people." (Teddy Roosevelt)*

Interpersonal Skills are the skills that enable you to work efficiently with others without any personality conflict. These skills will help you build good working relationships with your clients, employees and business associates. Working well with others involves understanding and appreciating individual differences. Therefore, interpersonal skills play an important role in determining how well you manage your interactions with customers and employees. How you behave with them can determine your success or failure. Try the following helpful tips to improve your interpersonal skills:

# No one wants to be around someone who is always frowning. Maintain a positive, cheerful attitude about work and life. Practice smiling often.

# Be generous with praise and words of encouragement. If you let others know that they are appreciated, they'll want to give you their best. If you have to criticize, do it gently and give suggestions for improvement.

# Pay attention to people. Make eye contact and address people by their first names. Ask them for their opinions and suggestions. Really listen to what they have to say.

# Keep your promises. If you tell your customer that you will have the item in stock by the end of the week, make sure it is there. But make promises sparingly and do not commit to doing something that you cannot accomplish.

# Treat everyone fairly and do not play favorites. Avoid talking and discussing others behind their backs.

# Keep an open mind. Remember there is always room for discussion and compromise.

# Learn how to be an effective mediator and help sort out differences. By taking on such a leadership role, you will garner respect and admiration from those around you.

# Pay close attention to both what you say and how you say it. Your body language and tone of voice will give you away. Think before you speak and avoid misunderstandings or hurt feelings.

# Most people are drawn to a person who can make them laugh. Use your sense of humor as an effective tool to enhance your interpersonal skills.

# Try to see things from another person's perspective. Empathy is about being able to put yourself in someone else's shoes and understanding how they feel.

# There is nothing worse than a chronic complainer or whiner. Do not talk about your problems, instead focus on the other person's problem and try to help out.

To run a successful business as well as enjoying a fulfilling personal life, it is necessary for you to establish a good, comfortable relationship with:

- your customers - nothing puts off a prospective client more than an unhelpful attitude and surliness.

- your employees - to retain good employees, you have to be seen as a positive, cheerful boss.

- your business associates - networking is one of the keys to good business. By being known as a caring, cheerful person, you are likely to make more friends in your business circle.