

Mastery of Soft Skills by J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter

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Abstract

Soft skills are basically known as people skills or behavioural skills which enable one to behave well in personal and professional situations. Soft skills are partly present by birth and later acquired over a period with proper training. Literature being the reflection of human life has incorporated all the soft skills in it plays a vital role in every sphere of the human lives. Reading literature enables a person to bring out the soft skills within him not only through words but also in action for Soft skills not expressed will have no values. Harry Potter's personality seems to be the embodiment of all these traits. This research paper aims to analyse J. K. Rowling's celebrated character Harry Potter as a protégé of soft skills such as Perseverance, Leadership Skills, Teamwork, Communication Skills, Problem Solving Skills, Work Ethic, Flexibility/Adaptability, Interpersonal Skills, friendship, Sympathy, Empathy, etc.

Keywords: Harry Potter, Soft skills, Behavioural skills

Introduction

Soft skills are basically known as people skills or behavioural skills which enable one to behave well in personal and professional situations. Soft skills are a much in need commodity required by the employment market. While reading or watching Harry Potter, it is evident how the qualities of his personality helped him to be successful in winning over the Antagonist Voldemort.

Soft Skills – Definition and Significance

Soft skills are generally defined as people skills or behavioural skills. These skills are nontechnical personal skills which enable one to behave well in personal and professional situations. Soft skills include personality traits, social graces, and facility with language, personal habits, friendliness, responsibility, confidence, self-control, honesty, team building, management skill, negotiating talent, customer satisfaction, working with cultural diversity and also possessing or developing qualities such as optimism and assertiveness that distinguishes people.

Soft skills are mandatory for today's corporate employees who are facing a lot of challenges in managing varied circumstances. Not only for the success of employees but also for the employers and institutions to be distinguished from the rest soft skills imperative. In order to survive and thrive in the highly competitive environment, organisations require employees who are quick to adapt, creative at problem solving and good at relation building. An employee with ample soft skills is considered an asset as he/she creates a conducive work atmosphere.

Pervasiveness of Soft Skills in Literature

Literature, being the reflection of life, has incorporated all the soft skills necessary for one to be successful in the characters and situations present. Reading literature enables a person to realize soft skills within himself and exhibit them effectively not only in words but also in action because if actions do not articulate soft skills, words will never communicate effectively. Since literature is the collective body of literary productions, it has enormous knowledge and fancy preserved in writing. As C.S Lewis described "Literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it. It enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides and in this respect, it irrigates the desert that our lives have already become".

From Chaucer to Twenty first century literary works, each literary works got its own characters filled with personality traits allowed them to become successful. Even renowned writers like Francis Bacon and William Shakespeare derive out the purpose of life and character through their writings. Bacon claimed that any moral action is the action of the human will, which is governed by belief and spurred on by the passions. Not to mention the protagonists of the plays. For instance, if one looks at Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer describes about the Knight in his general preface that the Knight represents the ideal medieval Christian man at arms. The Knight has participated in no less than fifteen of the great crusades of his era. The narrator deeply admires him for the banner he holds and the character he explores and those heroic qualities are recognized as unique characteristics in olden days and it is termed as soft skills in the present scenario. Shakespeare's famous soliloquy presented by Mark Antony denotes the effectiveness of communications.

Literature has examples of the other kind and immeasurable destructions caused when failed in soft skills. For example, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is the best example of the character's inability in decision making. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* Darcy was denounce by people in the beginning despite his wealth is due to his lack of soft skills.

George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* is a better example of how certain personality traits can be ingrained to people and refine their life. Good habit is what aids men in directing their will towards the good. In Sonnet 116, the narrator tells the "young man" that it is in the capacity of humans to adapt to the force of time according to the seasons of human life. (Manoah, JJS,

2011) Literature has always been the store house of soft skills. The works and characters portray how each protagonist become the winners at the end of the work with the aid of their personality skills.

Soft Skills in Harry Potter

J. K. Rowling had to go through a lot of difficulties making Harry Potter from a spark at King's station to a successful story. It was not a journey down the hill for her to get the book for publication after being rejected by about 11 publishers. She has turned her determination into the characters. She didn't give up during those dark times, when she felt clinical depression and even thoughts of suicide. She later funneled that emotion into the dementors – the soul sucking creatures in Harry Potter. So, it begins from the author and prevails in the characters of Harry Potter series, especially in Harry Potter. He from a passive boy turns into a determined personality with his innate personality and mentoring received by various characters present in the novel.

Perseverance of Harry Potter

J. K. Rowling's Resiliency is one of the primary skills seen in Harry's personality. From his determination not to be part of Slytherin in the Sorcerers' stone till his determination to meet Voldemort alone in the woods in the Deathly Hallows, Harry Potter's determination is his aid that made him the celebrated hero.

“Listen to me, Harry. You happen to have many qualities Salazar Slytherin prized in his hand-picked students. His own very rare gift, Parseltongue — resourcefulness — determination — a certain disregard for rules,” he added, his mustache quivering again. “Yet the Sorting Hat placed you in Gryffindor. You know why that was. Think.” “It only put me in Gryffindor,” said Harry in a defeated voice, “because I asked not to go in Slytherin...” “Exactly,” said Dumbledore, beaming once more. “Which makes you very different from Tom Riddle. It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.” (TCS, pg 351)

Leadership Skill of Harry Potter

Leadership is major skill that requires a lot of other skills. In the Harry Potter series Harry proved himself to be an effective leader. Truth and transparency is major requisite of a leader which Harry's character well equipped with. Though truth may not be easy, it is in treating it with caution and respect that allows everyone around to hold themselves accountable for results.

Cultivating an environment where others feel their voice is heard and where progress leads to the success of leadership. Dobby, the house elf, and Luna Lovegood, the one who wears odd jewelry and rattles on about far-fetched topics despite being treated meanly or indifferently

by others are treated good by Harry. This quality of him brought him their support at the desperate situation. Harry steadfastly treats them as equals. He listens to them and genuinely considers their input. As in the words of Dumbledore he has the leadership thrust upon him.

"Those who, like you [Harry], have leadership thrust upon them, and take up the mantle because they must, and find to their own surprise that they wear it well." (TDH, pg. 586)

Experience, practice, and consistent learning help develop a strong leadership style and effectively become great leaders. Getting everyone on board and directing them towards a goal and result is no easy feat. Harry, Ron and Hermione trio from the beginning and Order of the Phoenix, and Dumbledore's Army proved the effectiveness of teamwork. Harry has proven excellence in channelizing the power in the right direction. Though he had to put up with Ron's insensibility in certain situation, he never holds grudges amongst friends, which also includes Malfoy and Snape. He saves the life of Malfoy and works with Snape despite his dislike for him when Dumbuldore instruct him to learn with Snape for breaking the mental bond with Voldemort.

Sympathy and Empathy in Harry Potter

Harry had to go through a lot of painful experience in his early childhood until the day Hagrid comes to deliver the letter from Hogwarts about his commencement of classes as a wizard. He was bullied by his niece and treated badly for acts happened without his knowledge that he is a wizard. This experience could have been the reason why he is the most compassionate character in the novel.

Neville Longbottom, who emerges as a key hero in the later part, shares the same fate prophesied on the chosen is portrayed as someone Physically clumsy and lacking confidence and being bullied by other students at school. In one class, he ends up suspended from a chandelier. In the Book one Harry puts aside Neville's Remembrall from Malfoy. Malfoy throws Neville's Remembrall in the sky challenging Harry to catch if he is capable of. Harry rushes boldly and flies high without minding the danger and catches the Remembrall just in time before it falls down.

Harry Potter has many reasons to hate Severus Snape, who constantly makes disparaging remarks about the young wizard. But in the end, Potter gets new information that reshapes his thinking. Harry names his second child Albus Severus Potter in the ultimate public reversal of sentiment.

Dobby, the house elf, comes to Harry in the chamber of secrets to dissuade him from going to Hogwarts and flabbergasted at his politeness when he asks Dobby to sit down which is

not practice among the magic world. And, towards the end of the book he gets Dobby his freedom too. This is a result of his empathy and sympathy.

Communication Skills of Harry Potter

Effective communication is the better way out of many difficult situations. Throughout the seven-part series, Harry confronts challenges, obstacles and enemies when it would have been easier to duck, surrender or not show up at all, but he face them boldly and conquer the situation and people with his communication skills. In the first book, *The Sorcerer's Stone*, Harry, though terrified of Hagrid, readily admits that he is Harry Potter, confronting the perceived threat, rather than dodging it.

In *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, to approach the Hippogriff 'Buckbeak' Harry had to use a deep and respectful bow to communicate to the Hippogriff, which shows how in certain situation body language is essential and one has to use the language understood by others to communicate effectively.

The character also shows us why it is needed to convey things clearly in communication. In the Chamber of secrets when Harry attempts to use the Flo powder for the first time to commute. He mispronounces the word as 'D-Dia-gon-Alley' which results himself be dropped at a shop in Knockturn Alley. (TCS, Pg 56) With the proper pronunciation, pause and cadence, Harry would be magically transported to the intended destination since he mispronounces the spell, ends up in a dodgy alley full of unsavory wizards and the like, which is no place for a proper wizard like Harry Potter.

Flexibility/Adaptability of Harry Potter

Harry accustoms himself to situation all through the novel. From his submissive nature to the Dursely's to his smartness at school to him assertiveness in conquering Voldemort, he proved that he could adapt to situations.

The first part of novel 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone/Sorcerer's Stone' unfolds the situation where Harry learns to be passive to his Aunt's family and in his school. He allows himself to be bullied by his cousin Dudley and his friends. The same Harry at school stands up to Neville when Malfoy bullies him. Also he takes flight in the Broomstick without second thought to catch the Remembrall thrown by Malfoy in the air.

In the same book, when the day comes for Harry to go to school, Uncle Vernon leaves him alone in the station and bids good-bye with a malicious smile for in the ticket it is mentioned as Platform 9 3/4. Harry though hesitant at the beginning when he hears Ms. Molly utter the word muggles' follow suit and immediately make friends of the Weasley family.

Harry could go on at school with assertive attitude and behaves smartly. He involves himself enthusiastically in the magical lessons and games, builds friends and argues boldly against Mr. Snape when he teases him purposely in his class.

Conclusion

Virtue rewarded can very well be rephrased as soft skills rewarded as we see through the reasons behind Harry's success. Thus, incorporating a variety of behavioural skills, "Harry Potter" achieves his goals. Also his skills are refined by people like Dumbledore, Lupin, Snape, and Sirius Black. It can be rightly said that the exclusive characteristics which are called as soft skills are prevalent in Literature.

Abbreviations

The Philosopher's Stone - TPS

The Chamber of Secrets –TCS

The Deathly Hallows - TDH

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