RESEARCH ARTICLE

BUSINESS VALUE OF SOFT SKILLS IN SOCIAL NETWORKING

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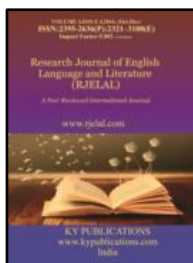
ABSTRACT

In literature, writing skills reflect intelligence and articulation, which should be taken seriously. A vast difference exists between the way most students communicate via social networking sites and how they should write and speak to professors, employers and peers in the campus. Dr. Kelley Crowley, from West Virginia University agrees that students prefer to participate in brief e-mail exchanges avoiding personal interactions which harm the competency of young professionals and difficult for students to speak to senior professionals during interviews because they lack the necessary nonverbal behaviours or soft skills, like eye contact, gesture, etc.

Networking sites are created to facilitate better communication, but social networks are ruining the public communication skills, especially college students. Though designed to allow college students to maintain bonds with family and friends often separated by distance, these sites have become a detour for college students to avoid personal contact with professors, which is a key for their success. Face-to-face communication and phone conversations have become foreign to the millions of users who rely on social media and networking sites. In this paper an attempt has been made to highlight the Business Value of Soft Skills in Social Networking.

Introduction

Students communicate differently via social networking sites and this mainly affects how they should write and speak to professors, employers and peers in the campus. The common mistakes are an embarrassment and frustrating for the rest of us in cyberspace to read. Social networking sites, though designed to allow college students to maintain bonds with family and friends often separated by distance, these sites have become a detour for college students to avoid personal contact with members of faculty and Professors, which is a key for their success. Face-to-face communication and phone conversations have become foreign to the millions of users who rely on social media and networking sites.

Social Networking - Scrutiny

Dr. Kelley Crowley, who teaches public relations writing and principles of advertising at West Virginia University, agrees that relationships with her students are different due to these networking tools. Crowley said, "Students have become reticent and intimidated in the classroom to speak directly with me. Rather, they feel more comfortable sending me an e-mail from behind a computer screen, which is impersonal and does not contain context at all". Networking sites were created to facilitate better communication, but

social networks are ruining the public communication skills, especially college students. In Northern Michigan University, Michigan, United States of America, college students who used "facebook" while studying, even just having it in the background, earned grades 20 percent lower on average than non-users in 2010. It is a concern of utmost importance that users of social networking sites, college students in particular, are aware that the opportunities to communicate using these tools are countless and convenient, but the number of informal and improper communication errors will dramatically increase and threaten the intelligence and productivity of our future generation.

Social networking can increase self-esteem and help someone feel less isolated. It allows people to develop independence and self-expression, digital competence, research on topics that are hard to discuss, communication, integration and community participation. Young adults who experience difficulty with social skills can socialize anonymously, and can experiment with different personas and practice initiating and maintaining online friendships. They can also respond to others by taking advantage of having time to review and edit communications before sending it on. Ultimately, this social networking skill carries over into "real life" and gives a sense of new courage to make and maintain friends in everyday life.

Media literacy is a tool that needs to be taught proper usage, much like a gun. A gun is a tool that can be used for protection, or it can be used to go around shooting at anyone and anything. Similarly, social networking sites are tools that can be used to represent one as a professional seeking networking opportunity (Megan, P., 2010).

"Face-to-face contact is much more important in the 'Facebook age' because technology can create isolation despite its many benefits," argues Hobsbawm (The Iconoclast, 2012). The younger generation using technology to explore the world should ensure the time spent on 'networking' is valuable and aware of the soft skills with the current corporate professional environments.

Equip for the need

The typical expectation in engineering field is still that broader practice ('soft') skills such as

communication and management will be developed after graduation, as part of a graduate development process in a workplace context. (Stephen, J., & Helen, M., 2005).

According to an analysis through cross-institutional survey from Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan in 2011 addressing "What soft skills are employers looking for in graduates?" using the multiple perspectives of employers, faculty and students resulted in communication skills as the highest ranked cluster among the seven clusters of communication skills, decision making / problem solving skills, self-management skills, team work skills, professionalism skills, experiences, and leadership skills. The report includes findings for the ranking of soft skill clusters. A job candidate with good communication skills could be selected over a candidate with strong leadership skills or internship experiences.

Young college students are under pressure to face 'a constant challenge for the students is to develop a framework for their professional practice that reconciles their own personal codes of conduct with professional codes, morals and practices' (McGregor et al., 2002, as cited in Stephen & Helen, 2005).

Conclusion

All user-friendly applications meant for e-learning is within the reach globally regardless of the location from where it is accessed. Soft skills that include personal and interpersonal behaviours develop and maximise human performance apart from the technical skills such as financial, computer, quality or assembly skills. Alongside skills in leadership and social intelligence, intercultural competence is currently one of the most required 'soft skills' for managerial positions (Friedman, V. & Berthoin Antal, A., 2005). Social networks, classified under 'leisure' and 'business' categories with the leisurely accessed network having more than 1000 million users (Source: History of 'Facebook', Wikipedia) clearly shows that professionals are creating relationships among the Professors, respected campus peers and Employers too.

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