

SOFT SKILLS MOST REQUIRED BY TEXTILE EXECUTIVES FOR INDUSTRIAL SALES. EVIDENCE GATHERED IN PERU

Víctor Hugo Fernández-Bedoya¹, Johanna de Jesús Stephanie Gago-Chávez², Mónica Elisa Meneses-La-Riva³, Josefina Amanda Suyo-Vega⁴, Susana Edita Paredes-Díaz⁵

¹ Universidad César Vallejo. E-mail: vfernandezb@ucv.edu.pe. <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2464-6477>

² Universidad César Vallejo. E-mail: gago.johanna@gmail.com. <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0804-6017>

³ Universidad César Vallejo. E-mail: mmenesesl@ucv.edu.pe. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6885-9207>

⁴ Universidad César Vallejo. E-mail: jsuyov1@ucv.edu.pe. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2954-5771>

⁵ Universidad César Vallejo. E-mail: sparedes@ucv.edu.pe. <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1566-7591>

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ABSTRACT: The environment in business is constantly changing and with it, every company must identify new external factors, in order to take advantage of the opportunities that arise, while being able to protect itself against threats. The industry has evolved a great deal from the industrial era to the present day, it requires workers who not only have technical skills, but also soft skills. This study sought to identify which soft skills are the most determinant during the hiring of industrial sales personnel by 42 executives of companies dedicated to the industrial textile sector in Peru. The sample was asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = least rated, 5 = most rated) how important they consider 11 soft skills during the selection stage. The results showed that negotiation power was the most demanded soft skill (4.62 points), communication skills was the second (4.52 points), decision-making capacity was the third (4.48 points), and strategy formulation was the fourth (4.05 points); while creativity (3.38 points) and time management (3.26 points) were least demanded soft skill.

KEYWORDS: Soft skills, industrial sales, recruitment, personnel, Peru, negotiation power, communication skills, decision-making capacity.

I. INTRODUCTION

Until a few years ago, it was common for every businessman to think firmly that for a company to lead the market, it was enough for the personnel to have a good technical management of how to perform the tasks correctly, according to some manual or procedure, arguing that only a lack of compliance with the procedure would lead to not performing the work correctly and therefore, not meeting the organizational objectives

However, the business world has changed, and with it, companies have seen the need to have personality with skills that go beyond technical knowledge, looking for members with soft skills, such as teamwork, leadership, communication and proper time management [1].

Previous authors have already explained terms of the background and evolution of the industries [2]:

a) Industry 1.0:

The beginning of the Industrial Revolution characterized by craft work, steam engine and the introduction of the first industrial machines.

b) Industry 2.0:

The Industrial Revolution in its heyday and reflected in the use of machines for the manufacture of products, and transport (ships and railways).

c) Industry 3.0:

Integration of computers and Internet, processes are automated, focus on the control and care of energy

d) Industry 4.0:

The Internet of things appears, where the presence of humans is minimal given that processes are automated, giving rise to artificial intelligence, in turn, robotics, cybersecurity, big data, 3D printing, among others.

From this point of view, the person and his abilities (both technical and soft), are increasingly appreciated.

According to the latest LinkedIn study on soft skills [3], where the results of questionnaires applied to 2,000 business leaders worldwide were analyzed, it was concluded that the four soft skills required at the business level, in general, are leadership, communication skills, predisposition to collaboration and time management.

Although there is a great deal of research concerning soft skills, many of these documents measure the effect of their development during the education stage, whether in the school stage [4], undergraduate [5, 6], and even postgraduate [7], to name a few of them,

However, the vast majority do not relate to soft skills from the point of view of entrepreneurs in relation to their motivations towards hiring personnel oriented to the sale of industrial equipment.

Among the few previous works found in the Latin American region, a research carried out in Colombia [8], whose authors maintained that in the productive labor world it is required that the management processes have human talents that can achieve to develop an adequate interrelation with the rest, based on knowledge of being, knowledge of living together, knowledge of creating, knowledge of managing and knowledge of communicating; all this complemented by a synergy in know-how based on the interrelationship of values, social-emotional skills or soft skills, knowledge and ways of proceeding in their daily work environment.

Another previous study [9], conducted in Chile, concluded that professionals in the world of work today need to demonstrate soft skills in job performance, so workers need to be adaptable, proactive, resilient and responsible. It was emphasized that it is fundamental in higher education to promote the development of social-emotional skills, for which it is necessary to implement methodological and evaluative strategies that improve educational proposals.

In a study carried out in Ecuador [10], entrepreneurs were found to have developed sufficient technical and intellectual preparation; however, in today's work environment, the qualification of their soft skills to hire them is appreciated. These skills that employers have provide competitive employment advantages. The results of the study showed that the profile of soft skills desirable for all employees in this new era should be given from universities to develop these differentiated skills to compete in the labor market and to achieve better expectations regarding their salaries, jobs and welfare in what they do.

The changes that are taking place today in the business environment, have caused changes in the structures within them, there is a tendency to flatten structures and the constant evolution of jobs, which makes it difficult to maintain the stability of them, since they are characterized by the globalization of the economy, and the continuous introduction of new technologies in production processes and administration in organizations [11].

It is important to emphasize that the business environment is constantly changing, so that companies must frequently adopt measures related to continuous improvement [12], thus ensuring not only their survival, but also the leadership of the sector. Innovation, development, creativity and internationalization are terms that have long been related to engineering, increasingly necessary [13].

Soft skills are a set of skills that make it possible to perform better in work and personal relationships [14]. Likewise, other authors argue that, soft skills are a set of attributes or qualities of a person that allow him or her to distinguish himself or herself from others, even though they may possess similar type of experience skills [15, 16]. Soft skills and other competences for living can be developed at early age [17, 18, 19, 20]

A study carried out for the Research Institute of the University of Phoenix, in the United States, the soft skills of the personnel that compose any organization will generate competitive advantages that will allow reaching success in 2020 [21].

Specialists agree that technical skills can be taught much more easily than soft skills, so it can be inferred that the priority of retention of workers in organizations is given to those individuals who develop and show soft skills oriented to the business world [14].

Among the essential soft skills in a Latin American context, most authors [22] agree that they are: emotional intelligence, communication skills, time management, creativity, decision-making capacity, teamwork and conflict management, leadership, negotiation power, motivation power, strategy formulation, and thought capacity.

There is no doubt that soft skills are a subject with much to explore and investigate, especially for the impact they generate in the business world.

The objective of this study was to find out which soft skills are the most appreciated by executives related to the industrial textile business, for the hiring of industrial sales representatives.

II. METHOD

This study presents a quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional study of a non-experimental design [23], whose population was made up of 42 textile executives in different levels, all of them working for industrial companies in Peru.

Each executive was asked to indicate, on a scale of 1 to 5, how important they consider each of the soft skills to the correct performance of the sales force, and therefore, consider during the selection stage of applicants for a job in that area (5 = most appreciated soft skill; 1 = less appreciated soft skill).

Emotional intelligence, communication skills, time management, creativity, decision-making capacity, teamwork and conflict management, leadership, negotiation power, motivation power, strategy formulation, and thought capacity were the 11 soft skills chosen in this investigation.

The individual results obtained were then averaged, in order to obtain a general weighted analysis, which help readers understand what soft skills are the most required by executives of textile companies for the position of industrial seller.

III. RESULTS

Results are showed in Table 1, labeled as “Weighted valuation, ordered from the highest to the lowest”.

Table 1: Weighted valuation, ordered from the highest to the lowest.

Soft Skill	Weighted valuation
Negotiation power.	4.62
Communication skills.	4.52
Decision-making capacity.	4.48
Strategy formulation.	4.05
Teamwork and conflict management.	3.79
Emotional intelligence.	3.60
Leadership.	3.48
Thought capacity	3.48
Motivation power.	3.45
Creativity.	3.38
Time management.	3.26

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The results found showed that the soft skills most required by the leading textile executives during the recruitment of personnel for the industrial sales area was "negotiation power", which obtained a weighted score of 4.62 out of a possible 5.00. The results showed that the soft skills most required by the leading textile executives during the recruitment of personnel for the industrial sales area is "negotiation power", which obtained a weighted score of 4.62 out of a possible 5.00. This can be caused by the fact that, during industrial sales, customers often wish to have products with the minimum technical specifications required for a product at the lowest possible price, for which there are a wide variety of factors to negotiate and that affect the price, such as payment policies, distribution and after-sales service.

The second soft skill most required by this group of people was "communication skills" with 4.52 points. It could be based on the premise that every seller must be a good communicator: it is not enough to know the product portfolio, but it is also important to let the customer know.

The third soft skill most required was "decision-making capacity", with a weighted value of 4.48 points. Many of the respondents commented that industrial customers hate it when a seller answers a question "I have to consult with my boss", they require salespeople who know what the company's limitations are with respect to negotiation, what to offer and what not to offer.

The fourth soft skill most required by respondents was "strategy formulation" with a score of 4.05 points, this occurs largely because sales management must be planned correctly, and this leads to develop plans aimed at achieving sales objectives, before it is necessary for the industrial salesman to know the environment surrounding the customer, in order to provide what is really needed for him.

As for the soft skills less required by entrepreneurs in the textile sector to fill positions related to industrial sales, these are "creativity" (3.38 points) and the "time management" (3.26 points), this could be caused to the fact that the environment in which the negotiation takes place is cold, in which both the customer and the seller have studied themselves, while they really know what they require, the only thing they are looking for is to obtain as many additional benefits as possible; therefore, and from the perspective of those surveyed, it is not so necessary to have creative industrial salespeople nor is it necessary for them to know how to manage time correctly.

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