

Skill building amidst the lockdown

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a havoc in the world. There hasn't been any vaccine or drug discovered to fight this virus and having a sense of anxiety and stress amidst this global pandemic. But like the saying goes that every cloud has a silver lining, so does this quarantine. The quarantine has given us ample time to do all the things we love and this article would enlist how this lockdown as we taken in our stride and how can we utilize this time to chisel our skill sets.

Keywords: Covid-19, Skill Building, Lockdown, Quarantine

Corona viruses are a class of viruses that are deemed to instigate respiratory issues in humans and animals. These respiratory manifestations can range from common flu to Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The newly found COVID-19 is a disease caused by the latest discovered corona virus (WHO, 2020). The disease is presumed to be started from Wuhan, China in December, 2019.

The R-naught or R0 is defined as the speed or value by which a disease spreads from one person to another. The value of R0 fluctuates based on population density and its spread. The R0 of COVID-19 is 2 to 2.5, based on the evaluation done by WHO. The R0 of COVID-19 outbreak in Diamond Princess Cruise ship came out to be 2.2 (Zhang, 2020). Based on the contagious factor it can be stated that it is less contagious than measles but more contagious than common flu. The fatality rate of COVID-19 is stated as 3.4%, but it is predicted that this percentage would be mellowed down as more attention is paid to diagnose it on the onset of its prodrome or on its early stages (Mcfall-Johnsen, 2020).

The nationwide lockdown was levied on March 24 spanning for 21 days. Owing to the spread and hike in cases, although the lockdown was levied, made the government extend the lockdown till May 3. The hasty and impromptu lockdown came as a disadvantage to people of lower strata. As per the working class, this lockdown gave them ample time for themselves and they were suddenly hit by boredom as to how to spend time. This boredom has become a reason for anxiety, stress and sedentary lifestyle. To top it up, we are surrounded by media giving out news about the pandemic resulting in a hike of our anxiety and stress levels. For our well-being it is mandatory to divert our attention in doing something productive which

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makes us feel good. The quarantine should be viewed as an opportunity to do all the stuff that somehow we had managed to shrug off pertaining to our busy schedules. This time could be utilized to do our pending work, indulge in a hobby, cover up the missed times with our loved ones and nurture skill sets. This article will predominantly talk about how to develop a skill set in this quarantine.

Skill Set

A skill set is defined as the attainment of knowledge, abilities and experience as needed by a job (Doyle, 2020). Examples of skills are research and planning, human resources, computer skills, etc. The skill set are classified into 5 categories namely soft skills, hard skills, hybrid skills, transferable skills and job-specific skills. Soft skills refers to the skills in the interpersonal domain. They encapsulate communication skills, critical thinking, empathy, detail oriented, listening and problem solving skills. Hard skills are the skill set which can be learned, taught and developed over time. These include technical skills or skills required for a job. Examples of hard skills are accounting, tally, computer programming, mathematics and data analysis. The major difference between soft skills and hard skills is that hard skills can be known via tests and resume, whereas soft skills can be determined through interviews and group tasks. Hybrid skills, as the name suggests, is an amalgamation of soft and hard skills. It refers to the combination of soft and hard skills as asked by a particular job profile. Transferable skills are skill set that can be applied to varied fields like mathematics, graphic designing, etc. Job-specific or employment skills are a skill particular job, for instance knowledge of flutter language is a must for coding in Android and iOS.

Importance of Skill Set

Currently the skill set asked by employers are similar that are needed for various jobs. To put it in a nutshell, skill set play an important role and increase the chances of getting selected for a job. A person having varied skills and a large number of skills gives out a positive impression and the employer views the person as an inquisitive individual willing to develop new skills. Inquisitiveness is a soft skill that every employer seeks in the applicants. Secondly, the varied skill set instills a sense of confidence in the employee. Another important aspect of nurturing a skill set is that it adds value to resumes and CVs. Lastly, knowledge is always crucial. Having knowledge, in this case developing a skill set, would give insight into the topic and it would result in increasing the horizons of the person.

DEVELOPMENT OF SKILL SET

Quarantine and all the hours to ourselves can be a little overwhelming. For the first time we have ample time to ourselves and still we are clueless how to spend time. Anxiety and stress owing to media are on a rise and in order to tackle them, it is essential to distract ourselves in accomplishing something positive. There are various ways to keep away stress and anxiety and inculcate positive feelings like joy, wholeness and peace. Some ways to do so include spending time with family, indulging in a hobby and developing a skill set.

Fitts and Poster (1967) suggested a 3-step model for development of a skill. The first step is cognitive stage. This step includes the how, why and what things have to be done in order to acquire a particular skill. This stage also includes high functioning cognitive functioning including listening and rectifying as per the feedback. The ways how this stage is accomplished by courses, seminar, reading articles, getting informal training or as apprenticeship. The stage following cognitive stage is associative stage. In this step practicing the acquired knowledge is done. The cognitive functioning is converted into competence. The

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last step is autonomous stage where in the learned skill becomes automated and without extra attention to it, we can show dexterity in it.

Having a mindset to develop a skill is the first step but being motivated throughout can at times be cumbersome. There are 7 steps in order to develop a skill set (Latumahina, 2008). The steps are enlisted below:

- 1) **Inquisitiveness:** Inquisitiveness can be defined as curiosity. Having this habit would make the learning process easier and more enjoyable. Having a curious nature would make the individual learn deeper and discover knowledge that the mere surface one. The common practices by which this trait could be developed is by eradicating the thought that something is boring, not accepting the things as they are and asking questions.
- 2) **Inculcation of learning skill:** This skill is the most prominent skill whose development influences the learning of other skills. A very important aspect that plays here is motivation and curiosity. When an individual is keen to learn, he or she can learn a skill easily and can have longer attention span for it.
- 3) **Versatility:** Having an open eye would promote the individual to nurture the skills that essential and have utility at a broader spectrum.
- 4) **Role model:** A role model is a figure that an individual can view as an inspiration. When an individual finds a concrete figure like whom he aspires to be, it makes the path clearer for choosing a skill. Also, it is a very essential motivating factor as the individual knows that there is someone who has achieved it.
- 5) **Finding mentors:** Once role model is chosen; it is beneficial to find a mentor who can guide one through. At times it may happen that the people whom we consider as our role model aren't at our close proximity and we cannot directly contact them, so mentors come to one's rescue here. They can help us understand the nuances of a skill. With that, it is also essential to understand finding a mentor is little tricky.
- 6) **Involvement in real-life projects:** The skills learnt would prove beneficial unless they are applied to a real-life project. The conventional path is waiting for having a hold on the skills and then applying them in projects. But instead of doing so, it is advisable to take a real-life project once an individual reaches the mediocre level. The reason for doing so is that there is a sense of excitement and pressure to accomplish a task. Also, it channelizes the skill as the individual knows what to do.
- 7) **Reducing the learning cycle:** Lesser the time period allocated to master a skill, more is the efficiency. The ways in which the time period can be reduced is by getting quality feedback and by taking up real-life projects.

DISCUSSION

When interviewed, out of 100 people, 37 people felt anxious and stressed in the lockdown. The other 73 people felt relief and felt happy about the lockdown. When these 73 people were asked the reason for the same, they stated they viewed it as a period to cover up pending work, get in back with their lost hobbies, develop a new hobby, learn a new skill and spend time with family. When asked what were their views about learning a new skill, an interviewee stated as below:

I love to paint and this quarantine I learned new skills of painting. The reason why I am learning a new skill is because I hadn't found time in my busy schedule for it. Also, it is mandatory to learn a skill rather than just indulge in hobby is because skills make us ready for life.

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Another interviewee when asked that what made him happy, he says

I am a coder and there is so much to learn to be in the race. But because of the busy schedules and deadlines, I never happened to learn the essential skills. This lockdown has given time to brush up those skills.

As viewed by the interviewee's perspective, it can be stated that people who are happy in this lockdown are the ones who are utilizing their time. Also, it was observed that professionals always need to be at par with the skills in order to be successful and climb on the ladder of success. But because of busy schedules they happen to miss learning them. This quarantine is an opportunity for everyone to learn a skill.

CONCLUSION

The lockdown should be viewed as a break from our busy schedules. We all received the much-deserved break we required for our holistic well-being. This time should be dedicated for restoring the balance and peace which somehow evaporates when we get caught in our hectic schedules. This time should be viewed as a transformational time instead of as a hindrance. This is a golden hour to cover up all our missed skills which we had swept under the carpet courtesy to absence of time. This quarantine was needed for our tired bodies to rejuvenate itself. The news around can be over whelming and cause a state of panic, but instead of looking at the odds, we should view it as an opportunity.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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