

## Performance as a function of Cognitive Skill

Cognitive skills being the core skills that we use to think, read, learn, remember, reason, and pay attention, etc. is the new cool of the contemporary professional world. Simultaneously functioning, these skills take incoming information and move it into the bank of knowledge we use day to day. A wide range of these skills include the visual memory, numerical & verbal ability, spatial perception, visual accuracy & speed and the like.



Cognitive skills enable human beings to understand the world and respond. Studies have shown that the cognitive and behavioral skills seem to play a relatively larger role in the retention and management of the blue collared employees. But surprisingly, the importance of these skills has been restricted to the upper elite class of the organization. In the current scenario, the organizations under-invests in the skill development of the employees at a lower level and over-invests for the same of the higher level employees.

Had it come across anyone's mind about the vital role it plays in the increasing profitability and efficiency at the lower end, much more of the resources may have been invested in making it a 'trend' for the cluster at the radical level as well. Imagine having a staff with a quintessential technical knowhow yet fails to perform tasks like noticing a minor change in the sound of the machine, leading to a disaster. Disturbing, isn't it? In yet another example, a customer service agent might have all the information and resources of providing aid to the client but what if he cannot pay enough attention to what the client is saying? Or he cannot concentrate on the piece of information he is supposed to pass on to the customer? While the

technical expertise is appreciated, it hardly leads to the expected results unless it's accompanied with the abilities like understanding simple mathematics or processing day to day information. No expertise can endure without the aid of the ability to understand the objects in the space, perception of the figure and ground, and especially in the absence of the ability to mentally juggle multiple bits of information at a time.

It is said 'Skill begets Skill'. At a superficial level, this might seem a layman's phrase, but the same words make a lot of sense when understood for the cognitive skills and its association with the other pool of skills. The cognitive skills don't only enhance the technical skills but also add to the social and behavioral skills. An interesting study published in the journal 'Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America' states that the cognitive skills strongly affect the preferences and choices of the individual in the favor of economic success. Better cognitive skills lead to patience in short and long run. It also gives a boost to taking better calculated risks and to be perseverant on the job.

A study carried out by the 'International Adult Literacy Survey' threw some light on the importance of the cluster of skills known as the cognitive skills as the results lead to the induction 'lesser the cognitive abilities, higher the rate of unemployment.' Another study on skill development conducted by World Bank in Vietnam suggested that stronger cognitive and behavioral skills help workers to continuously update their technical skills during their working lives. On similar basis, several studies show that those with lower levels of cognitive skills are more likely to stand at the end of the job queue, all others being equal. In particular, when workers competing for the same jobs possess similar formal educational qualifications, regardless of the level of education, it is those with higher levels of cognitive skills that are more likely to get the job, all other things being equal. As much as we would like to believe otherwise, on these grounds, it can be rightly said that cognitive abilities are indeed the pillar of any other capabilities a person might possess.