Why IT Professionals should work to improve English Communication skills

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The Indian IT & ITES industry has been one of the major employers of the young, educated workforce in the last two-three decades. The demand for qualified manpower in this sector with diverse technical skills continues to be high. Many IT professionals therefore believe that their technical skills such as programming will be good enough to give them a good and long, successful career. This is far from the truth. Excellent English communication skills along with a range of other soft skills are not only desirable but also becoming imperative for succeeding in the IT sector.

In fact, it is not only for programmers and IT professionals who want to go and study abroad or work abroad that English proficiency is important (such people should obviously prepare for IELTS test) but also for IT professionals who intend to build and grow a long-term career in the sector.

There are some obvious reasons to work on this aspect of personal development to boost one's chances of career progression. Many domestic IT companies, mainly export-oriented IT industry, provide their services for international clients, with whom the medium of communication is always English. Inability to communicate well and clearly with these international clients is bound to be an impediment to one's career. As we have already written recently, it is important to speak up in meetings and get one's views heard; people who do so tend to get noticed sooner and progress faster in their careers.

Understanding and grasping client requirements clearly, and translating those into functional systems, are among the important aspects of a programmer's work. Any lack of understanding or misunderstanding of these requirements could derail the work and add to time and cost overruns, which in turn are bound to affect one's job performance rating.

On the other hand, the programmer may have some ideas on why something should be/ can be done in a certain way. If these ideas aren't expressed clearly such that the clients (whether internal or external) or stakeholders get a clear understanding of what is being proposed, there will be a disconnect between the two sides. Such a disconnect obviously has serious implications, both at an individual and an institutional level. [See some common technology-related English idioms commonly used in the workplace].

To summarise, there are at least four reasons why IT professionals should have good English proficiency and be able to communicate well in English (both written and spoken):

- Understand requirements clearly
- Explain proposed solutions clearly
- Express concerns/ issues clearly
- Communicate with stakeholders clearly and without ambiguity

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-By Chander Madan

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