

## Skilling them softly!

How you shake your hand may be the most important thing in clinching a deal

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IT'S no more just about hard-selling a concept. Because, if one has to go by the latest trends in corporate approach, hard is out and soft is in.

And if you have not yet got the drift, it's soft-skills that we are talking about. "Soft-skill training is important for the growth of an individual's career... only technical expertise will not take him/her further ahead," says Riya Arora, Specialist, Leadership Development, Learning and CultureTeam, Kanbay.

So what exactly are soft-skills? HR managers explain that in a changing global scenario, even the way you shake hands can make or break that all-important deal.

And India is fast catching up with this trend.

HR managers and corporate heads are not only recognising the need for soft-skill training for their employees, but are also becoming increasingly conscious about the quality of such training. Riya, for example, feels that it is essential that the industry invests in high-quality trainers rather than the 'fly-by-night-operators'. "A high-end motivational speaker, with the quality of his content, integrated with a good sense of humour, brings about just the right level of transformation in an individual," she says.

Minocher Patel, the Founder-Director of Ecole Solitaire, India's first residential finishing school, and one of the country's leading motivational speakers and corporate trainers, seconds the view. "In spite of the fact that the training industry has a bad name because of some quacks who conduct these three-hour courses, promising

the client a 'complete change in personality', it's catching up pretty fast in the corporate sector. If you pay peanuts, you'll get monkeys. However, a good speaker can actually change your life, brainwashing you into a positive state of mind and functioning. A high quality speaker makes results happen," says Patel.

That developing soft-skills is an important part of an execu-



tive's making is also being recognised by B-schools. Educationist and director of the Indira Group of Institutes, Chetan Wakalkar, explains, "These courses motivate students throughout the management course and helps them develop high levels of self-esteem and confidence. Most importantly, it teaches them to accept and deal with their own limitations."

Patel, who has worked internationally as a motivational speaker, has an important input to give in this regard. He feels that in the present scenario, this skill should be developed more among young managers. "An increasing number of young managers are going places, hence it's more important to train these younger soldiers for the front line," he says.