

HR

DEMYSTIFYING SUCCESS AND HAPPINESS IN PROFESSIONAL LIFE





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In professional career, sense of achievement (Satisfaction) and worldly accomplishments (Possession) are two most fundamental elements that drive people across the globe. Though everyone wishes to remain thrilled and committed for attaining one's life goals, 'Happiness' and 'Success' have different connotation to different people, based on their perception. JRD Tata once said, "No success or achievement in material terms is worthwhile unless it serves the needs or interests of the country and its people and is achieved by fair and honest means." So it is vital for today's professionals to demystify these terms, comprehend their significance and make the right choice. In common parlance happiness is an inner feeling that evokes positive emotions and brightens up one's mood. It lifts one's spirit and makes him energetic and motivated. On the other hand, success can be both, an internal or an external experience. A person who is down with prolonged illness does everything possible and finally comes out of his miseries. A student seeking to crack IIT or IIM ultimately manages to get through the examination by his determined efforts. These are some examples of success evaluated internally. But people around us might quantify success externally. For example, a person's bank balance, number of houses or cars he owns or his societal status can be construed as success from outside. To me, if success lies in

accomplishment of goals, happiness can be experienced in the journey, i.e. while we become busy chasing these goals.

A few days back, I had an opportunity to visit one of my friend's factory premises and speaking to some of his employees. During my informal chat with them, I sensed that though the employees had everything that my friend could have asked for, the enthusiasm among team members seemed to have been missing. When I countered them with my apparent observation, there was a tall, bright guy who came forward and asked, "Sir, can you please articulate, how does an employee excel in today's outwardly challenging and competitive environment? In addition to domain knowledge, what are the key areas that he needs to focus for guaranteeing high intensity performance year-on-year? In midst of aggressive behaviour both from within and outside the organisation, how does he remain cool? What should he do to cope with occasional failure?" I thanked him for being truthful. I am convinced that these are legitimate questions which haunt today's professionals. However to appreciate the intricacies surrounding such bewilderedness, employees require an in-depth understanding of reality and thoughtful application of mind. They need to discover their uniqueness and respond sensibly in ever changing surroundings. Let me elaborate.

Today most of the individuals get into an organization through a stringent screening procedure, where amongst so many eligible aspirants, only the best find a place. Besides subject knowledge, applicants are tested in a wide range of parameters, including professional aptitude, emotional intelligence, clarity of thought, ethical orientation and many other psychological factors. Any candidate worthy of selection is expected not only to score highest marks in aggregate but also secure threshold grade in each of the chosen attributes. However, it is really baffling to observe that employees become disillusioned even after such superior staffing procedure. What really transforms technically brilliant individuals into average achievers? Let us go to the genesis of this weird coincidence.

Close scrutiny of workplaces reveal that there are three central aspects that remain on top of every employee's mind. Firstly, how to perform well on a consistent basis? Second, how to constantly remain focused and motivated towards goal? And third, how to get recognised for superior performance and be rewarded? This contracted vision gets manifested in their actions, e.g. regularly stretching in office beyond stipulated working hours; bringing office work back home; not spending sufficient time with family members and friends; and doing anything and everything

possible to impress superiors for higher reward etc. At times this inner craving for recognition becomes so very intense that employees end up doing something absolutely crazy. Result being, they not only earn a bad name for their desperate actions, but also end up antagonizing many stakeholders. And once this damage is done, his actions thereafter become expressions of struggle, causing immense pain and anxiety. Eventually, employees become directionless, confused and depressed. They turn into mediocre performers. Now, is there anything that employees could do differently? Let's find out.

Imagine an employee carrying out all the instructions of his manager diligently without even asking a single question. By doing so, he earns the tag of being the most trustworthy and obedient follower but as his managerial skills are not manifested, every now and then this timid approach sends out wrong signal. People start doubting both, his subject knowledge and courage to express views independently. Moreover, this hesitant conduct slowly suppresses the creative side of the brain and limits his performance further. Finally he gets branded as an insignificant contributor. On the contrary, if he speaks out very often in every meetings and discussions, he gets labelled of being an exhibitionist - a domineering individual. His outspokenness and impromptu ideas make others uncomfortable. Candid views start getting viewed as arrogance and irritate his immediate supervisor, who construes such behaviour as direct threat to his authority. Another important aspect that we notice in today's vibrant organisations is that employees who regularly seize new initiatives are appreciated by supervisors. And when such initiatives go beyond one's area of expertise,

this enthusiasm and positivity, create an enduring impression on higher management. They start perceiving the individual as a budding leader. But there is a pitfall in this system as well. Sometimes, peers view such enterprising efforts as unwarranted interference. They start disliking the individual silently. Really, an agonizing situation for any employee. Therefore while dealing with any situation or person, one needs to be extremely cautious. He can ill afford to create cracks within the team and spoil the cohesiveness. He should neither give an impression of being a dumb or an over smart individual. In fact, office dynamics is completely different from the environment seen in educational institutions. To succeed here, employees have to strike a three way balance i.e.

a) Constantly attempt at improving his worth. To meet growing challenges within the organisation, master new skills, enhance competency and stay future ready;

b) Maintain a harmonious relationship with all stakeholders. To build a superior connect within the organisation, invest time and efforts in meaningful discussions, engage in productive networking; and

c) Remain ambitious in actualizing his potential without compromising on individuality. To execute different ideas and not be cocooned by the fear of failure.

I agree it is exceedingly difficult to walk on such a tight rope; trying to balance between frying pan and fire. But to remain as a significant contributor and yet be happy, one has to pursue a superior behavioural blueprint which includes:

1. Discovering one's USP (Unique

Selling Proposition). Remember, every one of us is blessed with some distinct quality which differentiates us from others. Look out for this uniqueness in you. What do you do better than your peers and how can you use this to help others? Silently observe, are you counted for out of box thinking? Are you the go to man when your team faces challenging targets or timelines? During crisis management, do others bank on your active involvement? In nutshell, prerequisite is, basis your interactions with various groups, figure out that uniqueness and build on it. Use your distinctiveness to create positive experience among people. Always bear in mind, when you harness your exceptionality in achieving team goals, chances are you will be more successful.

2. Do a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. It is bound to help you set your priorities. Focus improving on weak areas; dedicate time to build additional skill sets. This conscious effort will improve both, your efficiency and effectiveness at work. You will experience appreciation pouring in for your appetite aimed at value addition. However, it is equally important to be aware of one's limitations. Surely, there would be something which is beyond your reach. Do not try too hard and get disheartened. Researches on superior employee performance reveal that one needs to work more often using his strengths and spend relatively lesser time in fixing weak areas. Thus, if you devote, say about 75% of your time working with the tide (using your strengths) and spend 15% of your time for self-improvement (overcome weaknesses), you will have a better chance to succeed. Similarly, awareness of various opportunities and threats that lie ahead of you shall provide critical inputs in shaping the direction of your voyage. Acknowledge

them and plan your moves.

3. Discover your AI (Adaptability Index). How quickly you adapt to changing situations, shall help you walk the road to success. Flexibility in navigating through unexpected terrain adds character to one's armour. Remember, victory does not necessarily come from following one's original track. Time and again, it has been proven that success is directly associated to one's ability to learn from mistakes and improvise. It depends on one's attitude to rise after every fall and if need be, choose a completely different path from the one set out earlier. What went well in past will not guarantee similar success. It is simply an indicator to chalk out future course of action. So step out of your comfort zone, try adapting to changes. Mature through life's experiences and evolve continuously.

4. Acceptability among peers go a long way in making our journey interesting and rewarding. Instead of being recognized as fierce competitor, one needs to collaborate. I agree that individual aspirations will be playing at the back of your mind but sometimes you ought to set aside your personal ambition and help others genuinely (especially, when they need the most), without feeling the need of instant reciprocation. You ought to be prepared to sacrifice personal milestones for achieving collective good. After all what does a TEAM stand for? It means - Together Everyone Achieves More. Believe me, it is worth the efforts to build superior relationship - be trusted and counted by stakeholders.

5. Dependability as viewed by seniors, determines our progress at workplace. Make them believe in your abilities. For continuance of their trust, rise above past unpleasant

encounters and support them wholeheartedly. No, that does not mean surrendering meagrely to their narrative. As professional, you must express your viewpoint objectively; discuss and deliberate on available options, evaluate pros & cons and finally arrive at a collective decision. This exercise is not to score brownie points over others when some of your suggestions are accepted. Rather, it is an opportunity of enriching yourself with alternate viewpoints and implementing what is best for the organization. Always keep in mind that, even if your proposal is rejected, you ought to remain cent percentage committed during implementation of the chosen alternative.

In contrast, senior executives who are already at the top of the pyramid, my recommendation will be a tad different. When you choose to remain level headed and make yourself available to subordinates' needs, you will benefit immensely. As you have that invaluable experience of various accomplishments and setbacks, you have that much more insight to share with junior colleagues. Words of wisdom and compassion that you display shall help them to be on a sound footing. It would be worthwhile, if you choose to:

1. Be a mentor. In one's hectic work schedule - be it to increase plant's productivity or creating a superior brand value for merchandise or deciding on a new investment plan or increasing market capitalization of your company or be it in any other fields within the organization, one very important aspect that often gets ignored is creating the second line of leadership. Just like an 'organization', which is a 'going concern', there has to be continuity in vision and direction of leadership. Thus mentoring subordinates become that much more

important. Have regular feedback conversation with your subordinates. Don't just tell them what to do or how it is to be done, instead, prepare them to face tomorrow's challenges with grit and conviction. Ask probing questions. Let them explore solutions. This will empower and bring out the best in them. Yes, at times they will falter but you can remind yourself of the leadership lesson from a mother - helping her child to learn walking. Though initially the child tumbles and gets few bruises here and there, she does not stop. She persuades him to get up and try once more. Same applies at workplace. Make sure your subordinates benefit from your guided way and not just the easy or the hard way.

2. Surround yourself with people who are more skilful and adept. Although you might be principal architects behind organisation's stellar performances and growth so far, you can raise the bar of company's success further by surrounding yourself with people having different talents, skills and experiences. Stop being threatened by their virtues or level of proficiency. With your maturity, more you channelize your energy to bring synergy among varying intellectual thoughts, better would be the result for the team in particular and the organisation in general. Make no mistake, when everyone performs well your aspirations of going further up the ladder automatically materializes. But if you are sceptic and enjoy being surrounded by lesser mortals who hardly engage in free and candid professional discussions, you will lose out on your effectiveness. Sooner or later that cutting edge will disappear. True, some of the subordinates shall not have the courage to contradict your views but you ought to encourage them for making constructive criticism. Insipid behaviour of the yes men

surrounding you shall definitely hamper your growth; deter you from attaining higher feats.

3. Let go the complex. Today it is fairly common that managers and subordinates work in different time zones, different offices or projects or in different geographical locations and hence seldom meet. Communications with team are mostly through e-mail, telephone or video conferencing. However, there can be no better bonding than to have face to face periodical interactions with the team. When you sit down with them you can experience their ways of handling issues. You must agree that basis your past learning and belief you have developed your personal style of trouble shooting. But today's problems can be more complex. Any cut and paste solutions in fixing them might not work. In the era of Internet of Things (IOT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotic Process Automations (RPA), Chatbot Programmes (BOT), Augmented Reality vs. Virtual Reality (AR/VR) etc., your method of mitigating problems, might be less effective. You should not think of your limitations and get scared. It is better to open up. Remember, accepting inadequacies in front of your subordinates shall not make you look less competent. On the contrary, when you offer yourself to learn today's stuff; it will help you garner greater respect. You can exert that extra push to become more techno savvy and feel confident. You

will be better equipped to respond to future challenges at workplace. In the whole process you will reinvent yourself.

To put it differently, you must practise a virtuous style of leadership. Comprehend the work environment well. Act sometimes like 'Ram' and sometimes like 'Krishna'. If you are the Ram of your team, you have to fight the battle with full vigour. Being the most skilful fighter in the team, entire responsibility rests on you to direct and lead from the front with lesser skilled warriors. At each and every step you need to strategize. Regularly narrate the bigger picture, remind teammates of their goal, articulate dos and don'ts and prepare their Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Clearly communicate them on individual roles and responsibilities and seek their understanding. What's more important, empathize with less significant contributors and make them feel important. Bind the team together. On the other hand, if you are the Krishna of your team, you already have the star performers in your side. Reminding them of the roadmap or their day to day schedules are not necessary. In fact, your continuous and explicit directives might de-motivate them. This action can suffocate and drive them away from you. Remain conscious that you won't engage in day to day counselling. This resource pool does not warrant that kind of micromanagement. Your

engagement will be to remove their illusions, cluttered belief and needless worries. You need to support them in discovering the truth and reach the cherished goal. At occasional failures and grief stand by them; display that optimistic smile. Be the symbol of reassurance. Ensure well-being of everyone around you. Be a real life 'Sarathi'.

To sum up whether you are the leader or the junior most employees in the organization, chose your action in following order:

- a) do what is good for the organization;
- b) do what is good for your team; and the
- c) do what is good for you.

Once you internalize the above sequence and demonstrate them in your actions and behaviour, you can rest assure that success and happiness shall be your lifelong companion. I wish to summarize with my mantra. Work with 'PEACE' i.e. Prepare well, Execute meticulously, Achieve collectively, Create congenial atmosphere and Emerge as a successful person with inner happiness. **MA**

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CORRIGENDUM

In the Article / Case Study "Jet Airways: A Voyage of Stress & Strain" published in The Management Accountant, September 2018 issue written by CMA Dr. Sreehari Chava read as under on page 94, second para under the subhead 'Passenger Load Factor'

PLF can be calculated by dividing the Passenger Seat Kilo Meters (PSKM) with the Available Seat Kilo Meters (ASKM).

Passenger Load Factor	=	(Passenger Seat Kilo Meters) / (Available Seat Kilo Meters)
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