

Continuous Development – Building a Personal Brand – 2

In the first part of this article, we explored the rationale for building a personal brand and understood a few key qualities which we need to focus on. These were Trust and Dependability, Achievement orientation, Cultivating depth in domain, knowledge of global trends and understanding the linkages between issue and events

Let us try and explore a few new qualities that professionals need to develop:

Ability to communicate effectively – In today's global economy, the importance of this quality needs to be fully understood. More than 70% of appraiser remarks in industry today, contain the remark of – Needs to improve on communication skills. HR professionals then try and organize to send the appraisee to a communication skills workshop and nothing much changes on the ground or with the individual. That's because, communication is such a misunderstood term and seems to fit the definition of many qualities. It is important to understand that communication has many dimensions – verbal communication, written communication, brief e-mail communication, cross cultural and accent issues in communication, leadership communication, structuring a communication, use of emotional intelligence in communication, communicating a view / report / making a presentation, public speaking, media related communication, relationship building communication, technical communication, telecommunication, and a whole lot more Unless the dimension of communication is clearly identified and highlighted for improvement and success targets are set, generic communication becomes a motherhood training initiative with little or no impact.

In today's competitive and highly connected world good professionals need to rank high on each of the relevant dimensions of communication. Development gaps needs to be highlighted with specific dimensional details and then addressed through a training / development initiative.

Questioning and Probing skills – One would have often heard the remark that the biggest challenge to solving problems and issues is to understand the key issue. Good professionals do not immediately get to problem solving mode the moment they come up with a problem. They question, probe, dig deeper by asking probing questions. Questioning is a key skill which is also a critical leadership trait. At decision making levels, the quality of professionalism is displayed by the quality of questioning skills before coming to a solution. Good questioning also required structured thinking and analyzing skills, so important in the business world.

Project Management Skills – Today careers in knowledge areas are a series of projects. Every professional irrespective of industry or role is managing projects, resources, timelines with critical paths and critical chains involved in their execution. It is therefore important for all professionals across domains to develop this skill through both serving

as understudies to good project managers and understanding project management through formal education and managing various tools which helps us manage projects better.

Developing Common Sense oriented thinking – I have heard many a professional throw up their hands in despair that they do not get the professional exposure in the specialized areas they desire. In fact, it starts at the student level where they feel that they have not had a good grounding on well thought thorough, relevant summer projects replete with good mentors. In most cases, projects are what you make of them. I have suggested to many a student that when they do not get exposure to projects of their choice, try and look for opportunities on the street where you can pick up tips in the area of interest through observations and fieldwork. One can learn a lot of management skills by going to the wholesale vegetable market early in the morning where money is borrowed at exorbitant rates of interest to buy produce by the poorest in our society. Procurement, differential pricing, working capital management, debt servicing, negotiation skills, customer segmentation and servicing and whole lot more can be learnt just by spending a couple of days at the market or mandi. Watch a bhelpuriwala in action through the day and learn multitasking, customer relationship management and a whole lot more. This street learning learnt by artisans, many of whom have had very little formal education clearly demonstrates that this learning develops through observation and a hands on approach to understanding processes, problems and solving them. A very vital skill in life.

Understanding commercial and regulations in the area of domain - Reading widely in the area of governance, commercial and regulatory areas is another input which helps the mind understand these dimensions better. If this is not your domain area, each of us will be well served by developing at least a working knowledge and identify situations when you need to call for professional help.

To summarize, the qualities of communication, questioning, probing and analyzing, project management, common sense based thinking and developing an understanding of the commercial and regulatory issues impacting our domains further the value of each of our personal brands.

In the third and final part of this article, we shall explore other areas of handling failures, handling change, handling the mundane, building a positive mindset, dedicating ourselves to a cause beyond ourselves and try and understand the timelessness of qualities of value based living and personal humility.

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