

CAREER PLANNING: FACTORS OF SUCCESS

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Based on a sample survey, this paper highlights the point that one needs to have and develop a variety of traits and skills for effective career planning exercise over one's career span.

INTRODUCTION

Each one of us desires to be successful in our respective career endeavours. Some are ambitious and matured and put in right efforts to be able to plan and develop their careers well enough while some others fail to achieve the career objectives despite the inner desires and efforts. After all, what does it take to make a success of one's career? Although the final satisfaction will largely depend on one's perception of career success and the environmental setting that one is placed in, there are certainly some basic factors in terms of skills, aptitudes, attitudes and personality traits that largely contribute to achieve career success. For Career Conscious Individuals (CCIs) and Career Caring Organisations (CCOs) it is important to know about the degree of importance of these basic factors that contribute towards career success.

SAMPLE SURVEY

In the course of a recent study by the author on career planning and development through sharing of experience with successful careerists from different professions, some of these factors were listed at random and views and feedback were sought from the sample respondents as to the degree of importance of these factors

that contribute towards career success. In a structured questionnaire the following posers were put to the respondents (see Table 1).

Table 1 : Which of the following factors are important in furthering one's career? (Please assign weights; total weights : 100)

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1. Ambition
 2. Aptitude
 3. Communication skills
 4. Credibility
 5. Dependability
 6. Emotional stability
 7. Flexibility in approach
 8. Hardwork
 9. Health
 10. Human relations skills
 11. Integrity
 12. Intelligence
 13. Luck
 14. Merit
 15. Patience
 16. Perseverance
 17. Positive attitude
 18. Sense of discipline
 19. Sociability
 20. Any other (please specify)
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SURVEY FINDINGS

While analysing the responses, it was observed that the above question put forth was perhaps not appropriately framed as many of the respondents found it rather difficult "to assign weights" to all these identified factors. While some of them did assign weights, most of the respondents ranked/prioritised these factors. Yet, most of the respondents did mention their perceived relative importance of the factors that contribute towards career success. For example, "Hardwork" was marked by 91 per cent respondents followed by "Intelligence" perceived by 82 per cent respondents to be the most important factor that contributed to career growth.

On the whole, most of the respondents marked factors like, "hardwork, intelligence, positive attitude, integrity, individual merit, health, human relations skills, sense of discipline, ambition, aptitude and communication skills" to be important contributing factors towards career growth. By far, the respondents have perceived "Intelligence", "Hardwork" and "Positive attitude" to be the top three factors for career success. The factor of 'Luck' was perceived to be amongst the least important factors rated down below.

A few respondents also stated that all these factors have varying degrees of importance for career success and the relative importance will further vary according to the type of work/organisation and the level of careerists. In the initial stages of career, some of these factors may be more important than others and their relative importance could vary as one moves up the career ladder. Further, all these factors cannot be uniformly applied to all professions. Different types of jobs/professions demand varying degrees of different factors. For example, an engineering job needs high degree of technical skills. A

Doctor needs specialised and expert skills on patient handling and a great degree of patience. A Marketing Executive needs to have more of perseverance, PR and communication skills, initiative and drive. A Banker needs to be more shrewd and possess sound knowledge on economic and banking affairs with high degree of managerial ability. He should have the ability to scan and understand the changes taking place in the banking, financial and business environment. An Entrepreneur needs to have more of risk taking and decision making traits. A Media Functionary needs to have creative skills and abilities and a strong 'media personality'. A Scientist should have hunger for research and knowledge and should have, what is called the "scientific temperament". Teaching professionals need to have a quality to understand the learning inputs required by their pupils and they should have the ability to develop a good rapport with their student community. A Manager needs to possess good human relations and leadership skills... and so on and so forth.

On the whole, all factors as identified and perceived above are important and as careerists we need to have them, acquire them, sharpen them and develop these traits year after year. And depending on the particular profession that we are in, we need to focus on factors that are more important and blend them to use in our careers and professions.

Some of the respondents, while giving their perceived importance of the identified factors, mentioned about some additional factors that also contributed towards career success, as follows :

1. Degree of contacts with influential people who matter.
2. Seniority/level of experience acquired over the years.

3. Inner urge and inspiration to grow.
4. Quality of self-reliance and responsibility.
5. Being a go-getter with initiative, drive and enthusiasm.
6. Ability to carefully match the organisational culture/values with individual values.
7. High degree of character — personal and professional.
8. Ability to evaluate and monitor individual performance.
9. Ability to manage different situations — known and unforeseen.
10. Administrative and coordinating ability.
11. Continuous efforts to improve working knowledge.
12. Decision taking abilities, including quality of such decisions.
13. Loyalty, dedication and commitment towards work and organisation.
14. Being fair and impartial in approach; being above board.
15. Leadership quality.
16. Originality in thought and action.
17. Boldness and appropriate risk taking ability.
18. Shrewdness in approach.
19. Spontaneity of reflexes.
20. Objectivity in approach and action
21. Ever-readiness and willingness to learn.
22. Moral, financial and professional integrity.
23. A range of peoples' skills.
24. Effective self-management skills.

CONCLUSION

In the ultimate analysis, one needs to have and develop a variety of traits and skills for effective career planning exercise over one's career span. Individual careerists will do well to develop self-assessment skills and be able to bridge the gaps through continuous development initiatives and inputs. Careerists must remember that true development starts from self. Focus has to be on self-discipline, self-starting, self-control, self-awareness and self-assessment. Every careerist should draw up and implement an action plan for self-development, which has to be related to one's career goals and objectives. Self-development needs a very planned and careful handling. It cannot be left to chance. Career planning through self-development efforts has the best chance to succeed. While all that is a dose of input for career conscious individual (CCI) employees, career caring organisations (CCOs) need to develop and implement on-going systems of career development programmes for all their employees. The aim of such development inputs should be to facilitate creation of a development atmosphere and a continuously learning environment for individual employees, which helps them acquire and sharpen the needed skills and traits and enable them to move from where they are now to where they wish to be in future.