

When trailblazers lose their way

To spare themselves a bumpy career path, young professionals have to internalise a few principles

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Sometimes, professionals who show considerable promise when they are in their twenties, totter through their thirties, and hit a block in their careers when they reach their mid-forties.

Here's why this happens.

Lack of control

In their 20s, trailblazers have two things going for them – fearlessness and an ability to solve seemingly intractable problems. While these qualities took them to the top of the pile, they are not of much use to these professionals once they are there. Now, their responsibilities have increased and they have to come to terms with the fact that there are variables they cannot control.

Failure to do so leads to cynicism. “God, grant me

the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.” These words by Reinhold Niebuhr are well-known, but most of us will agree that they are difficult to follow. Those who have been trailblazers in their early careers may especially find it difficult to put this into practice.

Lack of learning

Sometimes, trailblazers tend to get complacent in their 30s and stop learning. What is worse, they fail to see that they can learn from other people. They don't invest in building partnerships at work and, eventually, when the chips are down, there is nobody rooting for them.

The ‘I’ syndrome

Peter F. Drucker said, “You will achieve the greatest res-

ults in business and career if you drop the word ‘achievement’ from your vocabulary. Replace it with ‘contribution’.”

When someone is focussed on personal achievements and dwells too much on the sacrifices he has made for the organisation and stops being grateful for the privilege of being able to contribute to somebody else's success, he is setting himself up for a fall. It is said true happiness can be found only in the intense pursuit of happiness for others. Similarly, I believe true success as a professional comes only when someone pursues success for his team, colleagues and boss.

Impulsive behaviour

Anger can undo a lot of good work. It is common workplace wisdom that when in anger one should stay away

from email. Even if he has written that email, it will be better for him if he keeps it in the ‘drafts’ folder. Let it stay there for 24 or even 48 hours, and then let him read it again.

Ninety-nine times out of hundred he will find it unnecessary to send the email anymore. Most of the time, people don't show such restraint and dash off a mail to “teach them a lesson” and “make a point”, but only succeed in exposing their own insecurities and lack of maturity for the ‘big table’.

Having a successful career is largely about managing oneself emotionally and being able to work as part of a team. This is a lesson trailblazers will do well to learn early in their career.

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