

TAKING OWNERSHIP IN YOUR WORKPLACE

Becoming your own boss even when you work for others

By

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So you are an employee? You work for a living. Your boss is always breathing down your neck. You wish you had a better job. There must be something better out there for you. Sounds familiar?

As you sometimes face uncertainty in your career and life there is a tendency to think that your effort and the work that you do does not quite justify and satisfy your true ability. This is the paradox that you are confronted with. What is your true ability?

The world we live in today has undergone rapid and disruptive changes. New ideas, new working philosophy and new creed are replacing the old ones. This means that your employability and survivability in your organization is based on your ability to take ownership of what you are doing. Even if you are employed by someone else, you are as much the owner of the company as your employer is. When you take ownership of what you are doing you internalize that part of your job and become energized in what you do.

Let's say that you lost your wallet. You most definitely will put a lot of dedication in trying to find it. However, if your friend comes to you and says that he/she has lost his/her wallet and ask for your assistance to find it, you might not be that much dedicated in really looking for the wallet. For a simple reason being that it is not yours.

This parable is what exactly happens in organizational setting. People working in organization are sometimes simply running around doing things the right way. They are efficient but not really effective. They keep to organizational protocols and practices but do not question their validity or the need to change. After a period a general state of

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inertia sets in. This is when you start questioning your values and identify your vision and try to identify whether you are doing the right thing of staying put or perhaps move on.

Moving on to something else might be a step in the right direction. The traditional approach of long term employability is being challenged today. Many organizations are now offering shorter contract terms to their employees so that the organization have the option of selecting and keeping those employees that they feel would be an asset to the organization. This might create a sense of dissonance and lack of conviction to you as you might not be sure whether you are wanted after your contract runs out.

If you are keen to stay on and you feel that you can be an asset to your organization, what you need to do is to take ownership of your job. You need to change your paradigm from the traditional *“I work for the organization”* to one whereby you change your mindset and see as if *“the organization is working for me”* instead. You should see yourself as the owner, irregardless where you stand in your organization. Achieving this paradigm shift will make you an asset to your organization.

How can you achieve this new paradigm shift?

I would like to propose the **5R** that allows you to take ownership of your life and career.

1. RESPONSIBILITY

Learn to take responsibility for the actions that you do. Responsibility comes from the root word ‘response’. This means you should response to the situation rather than react to it. Taking responsibility will show you up as a person of high integrity and conviction and that will make others look up to you and value your opinion and the decisions that you make.

You can develop this quality by volunteering when you know you can do a certain task rather than waiting to be asked. Sometimes, people wait to be asked as they feel this

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alleviate them to a higher level of importance. This is certainly a quality of a person suffering from inferiority complex. You don't have to feel this way. You can dive yourself into your workload with passion and give it all your best. Do this conscientiously and people will take notice, one way or another.

Taking responsibility also makes you a more confident person and boosts your self-esteem and inevitably develop the next quality to take ownership of what you are doing.

2. RELIABILITY

When we buy any item we want to ensure that they are reliable. Simply because, when it is reliable it will not give problem and will serve our purpose. Likewise, reliability is a personal quality that you should develop. When you make yourself reliable, you become your own boss. You will become an indispensable asset to your organization rather than a liability and someone who the organization feels can help drive them.

You can become reliable by maximizing on your strength and minimizing your weaknesses. Identify those aspects of your life where you think you are good and develop these further. Be truthful to yourself by being able to identify the weaknesses that you possess and see how you can overcome them. This is not possible overnight of course, but when you make a concerted effort you can achieve it.

Set measurable goals to achieve in your life and give yourself datelines to achieve it. That way you develop more confidence in your personal ability. Go to work everyday with the attitude that you are the most important person your organization ever had and work to achieve that level of trust from your organization. How? Say what you mean and mean what you say! That is a classic way to become more reliable.

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3. RESOLUTE

Being resolute ensures that you are easily swayed by what others are saying about you or your organization. Learn to be open to constructive criticism that allows you to self-analyze and improve your personal qualities. However, don't fall prey to those 'emotional vampires' in your organization who intend to sap your sense of self-awareness and self-regard and make you feel as if you are wasting your time. It is easy to be swayed by others if you are unclear and unsure in your mind what you really want.

You can become resolute by being clear of your goals and to synchronize your goals with that of your organization's goals. If you are unable to do this it will lead to a clash between you and your organization. Under this circumstance, it might be a good idea to move on. However, if you can change your mindset and work in-sync with your organization's vision than you can take ownership of what you are doing.

4. RESOURCEFUL

Sometimes we lose sight of our goals and purpose in life because we feel that we might be in the rut and just plain unlucky. There are some who believe that they are plagued by hard luck. This is nothing more than a negative state of mind. You may have heard of the saying: *'When the going gets tough, the tough gets going!'* This is absolutely true. You can become tough by learning to make your own luck. How?

By becoming resourceful! Learn how to work within limitations and maximize your productivity. Practically all organizations have shortages of resources, one way or another. You need to exploit the resources available at your disposal to the maximum benefit of your organization. This is where you can learn to think creatively. When you are resourceful you make sure that whatever you have works for you. It is up to you to drive your organization from wherever you are. Maximize your resources, cut your losses quickly and put everything you can get hold on to work for you effectively to achieve your organization's goals.

5. RE-LEARN & RE-THINK

The day we stop learning is the day we die. Learning is an on-going process. It starts from the time you were conceived and continues to your dying breath. Learning also involves re-learning. Develop the habit of letting go out-dated visions and work methods and learn to embrace new technology and new ways of doing things. Also when things do not work as they should, you need to re-think the situation and come up with new ways of doing things. Remember, nothing fails like success. What worked once may not work the same again. *Albert Einstein* said: ***“The world we have made as a result of the level of thinking we have done thus far creates problems we cannot solve at the same level of thinking at which we created them.”*** We are daily confronted with problems. Instead of trying to avoid these problems, see them as opportunities for you to re-learn and re-think what you are doing. You don't have to re-invent the wheel but you could certainly improve on the quality of the wheel and make it more durable.

Make it a point everyday to learn something new or do something different. Try to re-think of something that you have been doing regularly to see whether you could refine the process, perhaps cut short the time or possibly change to something more efficient. Don't start thinking when things go wrong. Be proactive and continuously assess your ground and what you are doing. Creating this sense of self-awareness in you will make what you are doing more efficacious and help you remain self-motivated.

President John F Kennedy famously said: ***“Ask not what the country can do for you, but ask what you can do for the country!”*** You and your organization must become as one wholesome unit. You and all others working for the organization are the parts. All the employees when they come together with a shared vision that's when the 'whole' which is the organization becomes greater than the sum of all the parts (the individuals).

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When you achieve this state you will feel a sense of completeness in what you are doing feel a sense of ownership of your organization.

Leaders in organization also play a pivotal role to create the psychological ambience that allows their staff to take ownership of their organization.

Leaders can achieve this state of consciousness by empowering their staff when they seem fit to take on additional responsibilities. Leaders should maintain an open environment that allows all sorts of communication to flourish so that everyone knows their job. They should also emotionally connect with their staff in that the staff sees them not just as their superior, but someone whom they can trust and rely on.

It is easy to forget where we are going and end someplace else. Only to realize that there was no necessity to move at all in the first place. Embrace the above 5R qualities and take ownership in whatever you are doing and you will feel a sense of personal achievement.

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If your organization is interested in conducting a course on proactive thinking, contact:

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