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Horizons

Risk Taking, Optimism & Hope



It may be impossible to grow in a career without taking reasonable risks. Enhancing people & professional skills with field expertise helps in career success.

The arrival of New Year brings optimism and hope. We endeavor to take vows to improve our habits—such is the significance of a new beginning. “When I despair, I remember that all through history, the ways of truth and love have always won,” oft quoted words of Mahatma Gandhiji emphasizing the importance of hope. Great epics of the world like our own Ramayana is built on attributes like hope and truth. Without knowing where his beloved queen is, the hero of the epic Sri Ram revered as Lord, while suffering from the separation from his beloved wife, never gave up his hope and determination to get her back. While not knowing about her whereabouts, he walks all the way from the banks of Godavari River in Nasik area to deep South and beyond showing determination, courage, and hope. Life is all about surprises and one should not give up, which is the moral of Ramayan.

Cultures are replete with epics and texts that extol the exemplary traits of heroes and heroines such as self-confidence, truthfulness, valor, and determination. As it is the beginning of New Year, it is a good practice for us to remember such heroes, heroines, and endeavor to cultivate these good characters.

Career is Built on Hope

Hope, aspirations, hard work, and determination are four pillars on which a career stands. In India children are guided by their parents, family members and their teachers in choosing their career. While individuality and interests are of paramount importance, in Indian set-up parents tend to exert influence on career choices of their children. The situation is slightly different in Western countries where students make their independent decisions in choosing their career. The educational system in Western countries aide such independency

as admittance to first year can be “undecided.” As youngsters navigate through an unfamiliar environment, flexibility helps to find their own ways and build confidence. Being able to make one’s own decision builds hope and confidence.

Flexibility Enables Hope

Many would have experienced that the career what one chooses is not entirely what they aspired to be but ended up in a different place. Particularly this is the case for students from highly populated and competitive regions like China and India. Having entered a field due to circumstances beyond control, hope to succeed, competitive spirit, grit and hard work are some of the traits needed to succeed. Success will help erase disappointments and bad memories.

Dr. Kelsie Jackson, Director of Research Proposal Development, College of Arts & Sciences at Texas Tech University is a good example to highlight how to pivot and make one’s career fruitful and enjoyable. Dr. Jackson’s basic degrees are in history, but to enhance skill sets and employability, he took a minor in communication studies. Kelsie enjoys interacting with people and hence communications minor is a good fit as well.

“The best means by which a person can assert control over their career is to become comfortable with taking reasonable risks (e.g., applying for positions of significantly greater importance or responsibility than what one currently has) and to acquire a broad knowledge base. Demonstrating a wide scope of knowledge is also an indicator of one’s strengths as a learner, as well as evidence of an enlightened and multidisciplinary mind,” stated Kelsie Jackson.



Dr Kelsie Jackson

Reading and gathering knowledge in a variety of fields enriches confidence and builds hope. This we see from the life of Kelsie Jackson. During a recent Zoom meeting with him, I could see his home library in his background which was full of books on India and Mexico. This intrigued me to know more about him, which turned out to be a good education. Jackson is an avid reader on India and keeps himself well informed on Indian culture and politics. Kelsie Jackson's interest in reading and exploring various cultures is reflected in his approach to people of diverse cultures in a multicultural society. Such interactions enhance confidence, which is important for youngsters.

It is my belief that such attributes help with people skills and interactive ability which employers seek these days. "Enriching people and professional skills in addition to field specific expertise is the need of the hour," opined Jackson. "As a student and a professional, my priority has been to learn as much as possible about as much as possible—being conversant in everything from Kenyan geographic to entomological diversity is more than just a nifty dinner trick: it is a means by which I can build meaningful, genuine connections with people from a wide range of fields, interests, and disciplines. A relentlessly curious mind wedded to a willingness to learn has carried me through the long, iterative process of building a solid career—but more importantly, it has been the key ingredient in building strong relationships with some of the leading

scholars in their fields that have led to both career and personal success,” opined Jackson.

People with such skills are motivational for youngsters and mid-career people. It is evident from my interaction with Kelsie Jackson that success will follow if one has people and communication skills. While college education imparts subject specific knowledge, it is our own efforts in college that enriches soft skills. There are many Jacksons in one’s communities, who are walking Universities from where we can observe and learn.

Hope is not merely an abstract entity that cannot be learnt and transmitted. It can be infectiously relayed to others. Hope is evident in role models in families, neighborhoods, and broader communities. That is the reason Indian culture emphasized the importance of joint family systems. Professional and economic migration has dismantled such set-ups. Schools and professional environments must fill in the voids and provide opportunities for youngsters to look for role models and learn to cultivate valuable traits. Experienced people are our teachers and seeing and learning from them are lifelong lessons for us. Saint Tyagaraja, a great composer in Carnatic music aptly scribes in Gowri Manohari tune that without tutor how can one be knowledgeable no matter how skilled one may be, “Guruleka Etuvanti Guniki Teliyaga Podu.”

Hope is a Good Habit

Jackson stresses the importance of good habits to boost once hope and stated, “Aristotelian philosophy teaches that, because we are the sums of our habits, excellence is therefore a habit. Cultivating the habit of excellence—of exceeding expectations, of producing quality work, of making interactions and relationships meaningful, of getting things done—is thus as much a part of one’s personality as it is a part of a “job description.” When we speak of “work ethic,” it is of personality that we speak: it is not possible or even desirable to bifurcate a person and their work habits. A person dedicated to bettering and growing themselves will naturally seek to do the same in the workplace; a

person unmotivated to be their best self-will similarly lack the motivation to produce their best work.”

As the adage goes, “If hope is lost, everything is lost.” In the New Year we make a solemn pledge that not only we will enrich our confidence, but we will serve as stewards of hope for others in society.

As a way of valuable advice Jackson stated, “Too often, people become mired in recriminations or justifications, when what is really needed is the answer to a simple question: what happens next? You should always be able to answer the question, what am I trying to achieve? when looking ahead from a failure.

May the New Year bring happiness and peace to the world.

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