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AVENUES**Five ways to be a champ**

All of us wish to be kings but little do we realize that the crown will come to us on its own the day we are ready for it - Swami Vivekananda

Outdated though we may think our own thinkers are, but the above statement has never been more relevant! Today, when we see our youth struggling to gain a foothold in the intensely competitive marketplace and to carve a niche for themselves, we get a feel that something somewhere is amiss. An analysis of the successful clearly tells that there is much more than conventional education that has gone into their making. In fact, the contribution of regular university education can be dramatically low in many cases.

So, if a young man decides today to make his own mark, what should be an ideal gameplan? Let us try and list down certain rules-of-thumb.

First of all, one must start early. It gives one the terrific advantage of planning at a leisurely pace and then implementing the plan systematically. This also gives you an ample leeway to effect changes to the plan depending on expert advice from time to time. To develop such a plan, you must consult as many experts as possible. It helps. In any case several brains are better than one.

Second, you must work on multiple plans simultaneously. What this means is that tying your horses to just one post may be a fatal strategy. So in case a particular game-plan does not work out, you must have an alternative back-up present. Having a knee-jerk reaction to situations may not be the best thing to do.

Third, diversify your skill-set. This, you will realise in due course of time, is possibly the best preparation you can do for the future.

Thus, not only should you be good at your core competence i.e. your chosen field of academics, but also at supportive skills like working knowledge of computers, latest trends in information technology, at least two major languages including English, a well-known game or sport, extensive reading skills, interpersonal human skills, and a strong hobby.

This combination will prepare you adequately for the future work-place where getting ahead is more a function of personality skills and presentation capabilities than mere bookish knowledge.

These can not be done at all after you finish your schooling... these things need time, a lot of time and must start during school days.

One caveat though: Diversification of skillset should not mean that one ignores specialisation. It simply means keeping your wild-cards open till the last moment.

Fourth, be cosmopolitan. Develop a liberal mind-set. Be open to radical ideas and different thoughts, while maintaining your own identity. The rate at which all the economies are opening up and disparate cultures are coming together is a clear pointer to the fact that narrow-minded, parochial and provincial mindsets will not be able to integrate themselves wholly with the mainstream in the coming millennium.

Suffocating boundaries of gender, caste, creed, religion, language and region will be as anachronous in the working place of the third millennium as a steam engine is today!

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Your success will be largely determined by your capacity to integrate yourself in a largely cosmopolitan workplace.

Finally, don't judge by the past - understand that experience of the past is possibly the worst indicator of what lies ahead! In fact, the converse may be true! Thus, the only thing that we might learn from our past experience is that the entire world is changing at a breakneck speed and in order to stay where you are you need to run pretty fast.

As a young man keen on breaking new ground, you must learn to manage your time well, remain self-disciplined and be as open to criticism as possible.

The employer of the future will be keener to recruit a holistic individual rather than a mere specialist found wanting in personality areas. Do not harbour the typically public-sector-like romantic notion that your employer is responsible for ensuring your life-long job....it could well be exactly the opposite. In this age of retrenchment of the inefficient and survival of the fittest (no social Darwinism intended!), there is little that anyone can do for an inefficient, outdated and outclassed individual.

(Pity that the Indian PSUs still need to understand this!)

Sandeep Manudhane, CMD, PT Education & Training Services Ltd, in collaboration with the Avenues

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