

**Subject:**

Week 129 - performance learnings

Dear All

All businesses have been challenged in the COVID period and we have put out our business continuity plans.

I see the results across the board and give you my understanding.

All companies need performance, all teams need performers and most individuals want to perform.

So, I have two hypothesis:

- 1. Performance of individual + Expectation of him/her = Potential we seek**
- 2. Potential of Individual – ( Excuses he offers) – ( his/her approach to context he/she faces) = Results**

Let me explain 1 now.

I think all of us come to work to achieve something meaningful and special. But I think we do a lot better when our leader or the boss has a higher set of expectations. That higher set of expectations from the boss comes either because he sees something in the person or he is used to a higher standard. The mistake we can always make is to think that people who are setting higher expectations are 'demanding' people. On contrast, they might actually be raising our game.

Look at sports as a discipline. The role of a coach in sport is to make the player perform beyond peak capacity. That's why successful coaches like Alex Ferguson have lasted years, because of their relentless pursuit of getting the best for the club. Look at Gopichand in India, he really pushes his disciples Sindhu and Saina to the wall in order for them to be match fit every day.

I recall a story where Pete Sampras had a neighbour who was his coach. When Pete Sampras was 7 years old , this neighbour drew an agreement with Pete's dad that he would get 25 % of Pete's earnings when Sampras started winning. This neighbour took Pete Sampras to watch Wimbledon when he was 9 or 10. When Sampras sat in the Wimbledon stand , he promised himself that he would one day win Wimbledon!! He won 7 Wimbledon championships!!!!

So if you are a leader, you must have high expectations of your people and your team. Setting a low standard and being popular doesn't help either the team or the person. I find it amazing when some young people have such low expectations of themselves and hence unwilling to stretch. Young people have the highest energy and must go for the maximum stretch. You have so many years ahead of you to relax later.

My own learning: If an individual is committed to the company and is stretching himself, then give him tailwind, it is the people who are not stretching who need your nudge.

Let me explain 2 now:

Every individual has potential, but very few people actually realize their full potential.

Why do many people not realize their potential?

I believe it is because a career is lived forward but understood backwards. As long as you are going till age 50 you believe everything will work out, but when you look back after 50, then you realize what you have missed.

Many people give themselves and their families and their friends and their companies many excuses of why they missed things. I have noticed that people tend to externalize the issue and do not take ownership of what they could have done. I personally believe that giving excuses is a choice one makes,

one has a choice and the more one gets used to giving excuses, then that is the first step to a lower level of results and before long the excuse mentality becomes a habit.

Covid has taught us that the context is bad for all of us in every industry. However I have seen some people brave the context and take it on to produce great results. This is about resilience and is the opposite of the excuse mentality. Resilient people get excited about a challenge because it tells them that they can make a difference.

I remember in the mid 90 s, when I was regional manager of south for Hindustan lever and we were having a disastrous year. Quarter 1 was down 10 % or so. I asked every distributor to do one ton more than the previous year, meaning I didn't want anyone to be negative. Believe it or not, that simple message went viral and we finally grew 4 % by year end despite being 10 % down in the first three months. The team rallied around not wanting to be negative and we were the only region to be positive that year.

So , individuals raise their game and achieve their potential when they don't offer excuses and they take every challenge as something to showcase their skills and prowess. Individuals raise their game when their leader has higher expectations of them..

Enjoy !! feedback welcome

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