

The dangers of being average at anything

A red rectangular graphic with the text 'WEEKLY LEARNINGS 2023' in white. The word 'WEEKLY' is in a bold, sans-serif font, 'LEARNINGS' is in a larger, bold, sans-serif font, and '2023' is in a large, elegant, cursive script. Above the text, there are several lightbulb icons of varying sizes, some with lines radiating from them, suggesting ideas or inspiration.

WEEKLY LEARNINGS 2023

Weekly Learnings 14 / 2023

Last week, an ex-colleague of mine called and said that he feels he lost out on his career because he chose to stay average. He asked me to write about my learnings on the same topic. Here's my shot at it:

1. Being average in a demanding world is dangerous. The demand is not coming from your boss or the company, it is coming from the consumer and customer. Being average has several dimensions to it.
2. Being average at anything is first a mindset issue. Managers who end up average do not show urgency for the issues at hand.
3. A lot of what you push for mentally comes from you and the first set of bosses one has. If one has had easy going bosses in the first three to four years, then one could end up lowering one's standards.
4. Sometimes being average is a function of the culture of the company. When a company does not show urgency then all standards drop in the company. A casual company in a demanding world will not last long.
5. At an individual level manager who want to be average show a few characteristics. The first is being risk averse. Such managers want to play safe, pick safe roles, not push boundaries.
6. The second is managers tend to look at results to effort. If they find the effort to be of a high order, then they give up and stay average. Managers justify this by saying that for this salary, I can only do so much.
7. The third characteristic of average managers is time wasting. They never tend to finish anything on time and are constantly postponing their work in a sense they lack focussed timelines. I have seen average managers tend to congregate together and waste time as a team.
8. The fourth characteristic is their ability to talk a lot but do little. I call them NATO managers - No Action, Talk Only!
9. The fifth characteristic is to externalise everything. It is always someone's problem and never their responsibility and accountability.
10. The last characteristic is that their time management and scheduling is normally weak.

Here are my suggestions to you - If you work for an average manager, pls ensure that you get some mentorship or find a role model at work who can inspire you.

IF you have scored YES to even three of the six characteristics I have outlined, then you need to rethink the EFFORT you are bringing to your job.

Don't stay average, there is no runway in being average.

One could argue that in any company, with or without bell curve appraisal system, someone will be average. My point is it doesn't have to be YOU!! It's a choice you can make.

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