

By V Pradeep Kumar



The last two decades have been very eventful for a resurgent and strong India, playing an influencing role in the world economy. The rise of the IT and services sector have led to an increase in GDP growth, per capita income and standard of living.

However, despite providing increased remuneration and benefits, employers continue to be unhappy with productivity. Ironically, even economic development hasn't led to happiness in professional and personal life for employees. On the contrary, conflicts at work place and high stress levels have led to a decline in quality of living, proving the futility of materialistic comforts.

Conflicting views: Employer & Employee

These aspects of Indian society are intriguing for an observer and a challenge for all management thinkers, working to set things right. The analysis of feedback from several managements indicates these key trends:

- Difficulty in getting right people
- Decline in quality of work and actual work time
- Decline in dedication and commitment
- Absenteeism, increased turnover
- Negativity

Significantly, these trends persist despite an increased people orientation in work environment. Interestingly, employees have a diametrically opposite views:

- All jobs are of high pressure
- Conflicts at work
- Expectations not met
- Variations between job profile & actual

As against these conflicting views, the trends in urban India's family life are:

- Nuclear families, with working couples
- Reduced interaction between family members
- Dependence of children on maids and drivers
- Ego clashes, frequent conflicts and domestic violence
- Increased trend of living in, extra-marital affairs and divorces

Further, individuals are in conflicts with their inner-self. Employees admit in casual and formal counselling, that they have internal conflicts relating to career, relationships, children and material comforts.

These disturbing trends imply that while as a nation we are progressing, employees in urban India are living in continuous conflict with their employers, family, society and self. This explains the general lack of enthusiasm and passion for work in employees.

Lack of passion causes inertia and is the main cause of poor productivity at work. In a recent lecture at a leading IT company, I observed that employees spend just about five hours a day on actual work. However, a senior manager who was present quickly countered saying it's not more than four hours per day. There could be cases at the other extreme in companies too.

Notwithstanding this, employees complain of high stress levels. To make things worse, inadequate urban infrastructure and social issues have added to the stress levels bringing it to a breaking point.

Nimhans Study: Disturbing trends

A study conducted by Nimhans in 2007 on the mental health of professionals in IT and IT-enabled sectors confirms these trends, with these observations:

- 19 per cent of respondents felt, they were being edgy and bad tempered
- 28 per cent of respondents felt being under constant strain
- 22 per cent of respondents felt they were unable to enjoy their daily activities
- 36 per cent of respondents classified by Nimhans, as probable psychiatric cases

Conflicts at work and home, have reached alarming proportions and consequently, crimes by white collar people is on the rise. When people find it difficult to live together and resort to heinous crimes, senior officials and counselors recommend as a last option, separation of marriages. Our society is moving towards westernisation with these dangerous trends and need rectification. The benefits of a flourishing economy should reach all sectors and an improvement in the happiness and well being of employees, while preserving our social fabric is a must.

Bring passion at work

The process to bring back passion at work for sparkle in personal life is multi-dimensional as below:

- Life objectives: Just as an organisation defines its objectives through a statement of vision

and mission, employees must define what they want in life. The ideal way to define this is through a personal vision and mission statement. In simple terms, this is what you want in life and how you propose achieving that.

- Professional success: In an increasingly competitive world, it's difficult to compartmentalise professional and personal life. Material comforts, children's education, family welfare and social status, all require a strong professional life. Therefore, a good personal life hinges on our professional success. Therefore focus on:

a. Productivity: Productivity is the reason for your employment and hence, be result oriented.

b. Responsibility: Accept additional responsibilities, without insisting on additional benefits. Understand and apply the principle, 'Give more than you get, as eventually you would get more than what you give.'

c. Initiative: When things are not right, take initiative to set them right, instead of complaining.

d. Self-evaluation: Get professional, evaluating your performance frequently. The frequency depends on your job profile. For example, for sales and marketing positions, evaluate monthly and take corrective steps.

e. Valued employee: Similar to ABC analysis, in organizations only 20 per cent people are real performers and hence highly valued. In general, about 60% may qualify as average and the balance 20 per cent people, might be redundant for indiscipline, low performance etc. For career growth, be in the top 20 per cent and be valued.

- Personal success Personal life success is vital. In general, the following key factors are important.

- a. The 'bigger picture: Make your dreams together, with your spouse.

 - b. Think Win / Win: There's no philosophy better than win/win in inter personal relationships.

 - c. Share responsibilities: Sharing jobs/household chores is in the spirit of being together.

 - d. Be empathetic: A simple way to understand others is to be empathetic.

 - e. Communicate well: Inadequate communication causes misunderstanding leading to relationship failures. Avoid frictions, by listening well, turning arguments into discussion. Have open mind and use soft words to convince, focusing on what is right and not who is right
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- Self development: To remain competitive in professional life, all round self development is critical. All individuals deserve quality time to themselves. Utilise this time to:
 - a.Examine and have an appropriate value system.

 - b.Evaluate your achievements against plans. Keep updating your plans.

 - c.Be active, balancing work and personal life.

 - d.Enjoy life without missing the fun. Develop hobbies like reading, writing, travel, photography, music, etc. that's interesting for you.

 - e.Learn to forgive, getting rid of emotional baggage.

Importantly, learn to live in the present moment.

As American philosopher Jim Rohn says: "You cannot change your destination overnight; but certainly you can change your direction." Choose a profession you love; and work with passion- the only way for sparkle in life.

About the Author

Mr.V Pradeep Kumar, hailing from Bangalore has over 28 years of hardcore management experience in all aspects of management in a variety of Industries including FMCG, Industrial marketing, Media and Publishing. Currently based at Dubai, his focus in the last fifteen years has been on Media and Publishing.

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