

THE PERRFECT EMPLOYEE

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FOREWORD

My life has been replete with learning.

In the past 2 decades, I have met hundreds of professionals, young and old, stagnant and growing, happy and miserable. With each meeting, I learnt about aspirations and frustrations, dreams and failed approaches, successes and flame-outs.

We all know that professionals want to succeed. That they want recognition. That they want growth, learning and satisfaction. That they also want to be happy, find fulfilment and contribute value.

While it is uplifting to encounter such aspirations and dreams, it is saddening to hear of the number of stumbling blocks that professionals are having to grapple with on their journey. Obstacles and hurdles seem to abound, slowing, demotivating, and alienating them, leading to a gradual build-up of cynicism and detachment.

In my experience, these career blocks fall broadly into three categories - within themselves, in their workplaces and in the macro environment.

The first, mostly internal, deals with issues such as – stagnation, perceived and real; lack of a personal vision; inability to sense signals until they are too late; lack of meaning or fulfilment; feelings of disconnectedness, and so on.

In their workplace, they face more extrinsic challenges – that bullying boss; the bad-mouthing colleague; customers with unreal expectations; a lack of recognition; the incessant pressure; being on the wrong side of nepotism, and more of such.

Finally, the broader environment throws up challenges relating to stagnant or slipping market conditions; underperforming against competition; being far from the corridors of power; being mired in the wrong function, sector or industry; elusive financial independence; being a woman professional unable to break male bastions; the lack of a support network, and other systemic issues.

The good news is that there is a silver lining!

I have learnt that these are only-too-similar situations and challenges, regardless of industry, company, country and position. I have been mentoring and guiding for the last 20+ years, and between my own experiences and those that I have listened to, I have come to realise that while each individual's problems seem to be unique to them, these are actually minor variations on recurrent themes. While the symptoms may vary by person, company and industry, the root causes are surprisingly repetitive.

Even better, most of these problems have real solutions. The reason an individual professional may not have access to a solution for a specific problem could be that she is facing this situation for the first time, that she has no one to confide in or who could guide her, that she has recognised it too late, or that she finds it difficult to consult anyone without hurting her ego and self-confidence.

These insights gave rise to the series "CEO Chronicles" and "Billion Dollar Learnings".

At different points in time, professionals have asked me to write a 'ready reckoner' on career progression and management. In the past, I demurred, out of a sense of my own fallibility. But the calls have been getting louder and more widespread.

So we come to "The PERRfect Employee". A collation of 6 CEO Chronicles articles, this short and easy-to-read guide takes you through the qualities of a perfect employee and how you can, by following these simple guidelines, achieve recognition, reward and success in your career.

I hope you enjoy this publication, and find it useful and beneficial.

All the best!

Table Of Contents

Foreword	1
The Gang Of Four	5
The Perfect Employee	7
The Proactive Employee	7
The Emotionally Intelligent Employee	8
The Reliable Employee	9
The Resilient Employee	10
The PERRfect Employee recap	11
The PERRfect Employee and Proactivity	12
What does 'being proactive' mean?	12
The Six Habits	14
A Way Of Life...	17
Hallo! What about Gerry and Evan? What happened with them?	18
The Perfect Employee and Emotional Intelligence	19
What is Emotional Intelligence?	19
How does Emotional Intelligence help?	22
How do I become Emotionally Intelligent?	23
The Eight-Step Path To Inner Peace...	23
The Perfect Employee and Emotional Intelligence – Part II	24

A lesson from a cockroach	24
How does Emotional Intelligence help?	26
How do I become Emotionally Intelligent?	27
The Eight-Fold Path...	31
The Perfect Employee and Reliability	32
A Reliable Story	32
Understand expectations	33
The Perfect Employee and Resilience – Part I	39
My Husband Murdered His Father!	39
Suddenly, The World Went Dark	41
The Power of Resilience	42
The Perfect Employee and Resilience – Part II	44
Loss	44
Recovery	45
Response	46
My Mother’s Guide To Resilience	47
The Power of Resilience	51
Afterword	52
About the Author	53

The Gang Of Four

(and the Mystery of the PERRfect Employee)

“Wow, I love this Japanese scotch,” said Chow Yen, “It is so smooth.”

“I am really glad.” said Anders. “I find it amazing, but I was not sure if you would like it, too.”

Faizal sipped on his orange juice. “Okay, whose turn is it today? And what is the problem we need to solve?”

“My turn,” I said, “and thanks for taking the time. Remember, when we last met, I spoke about recruiting a senior manager for our engineering services division? It’s been five weeks and almost 20 candidate interviews and we are still far from finding the right person.”

Chow Yen leaned forward. “20 interviews? Wow, that’s a lot!” Chow Yen was the General Manager of a logistics company, and ran a team of more than 500 people.

“I agree,” said Anders, “20 interviews means at least 200 candidates? That’s a lot of time and resource to fill one position.” Anders was the COO of a shipping company with operations across the world.

“I know,” I said glumly, “that is why I need the help of the Gang of Four.”

Faizal laughed. “You are not going to let that name go, Shesh?” he asked, “We sound like a set of B-movie villains!” Faizal was regional CEO of a global manufacturing company.

“If it was good enough for Sherlock Holmes, it is good enough for me!” I shot back.

The Gang Of Four is the informal group of four friends – Anders, Chow Yen, Faizal and I – which meets once every 5-6 weeks to catch up, and more importantly, to discuss issues and problems each of us was facing and to find approaches and solutions together. Today, we were in a rooftop bar just outside the CBD, enjoying the evening breeze.

The Perfect Employee

“Coming to the issue at hand,” I continued, “my question is this – **what qualities make up a perfect employee?** What should we be looking for and testing for? Somehow, all my recruitment policies and processes don’t seem to be choosing the right people. The ones we recruit are okay functionally, but behaviourally fall well below the bar.”

“If I have to answer this, I need at least 2 more drinks,” said Chow Yen, smiling.

“This is a good problem to solve, Shesh – what qualities make up a perfect employee!” said Anders. “I know the first quality I look for. May I start?”

“Of course, Andy, go ahead!” said Faizal, leaning back.

The Proactive Employee

“Whoever I hire has to be **#proactive**.” said Anders. “She must think ahead, take initiative and do things without being instructed or asked.”

“I agree 100%,” said Chow Yen. “I call this **‘self-management’**. We must not need to tell the employee what is expected. He should know what needs to be done, do it and then after reporting completion, move to the next activity.”

“Wow,” said Faizal, “I think we are all brothers of different mothers! I feel the same way, though I call this quality **‘self-motivation’**. Such an employee knows what his role is, and does what it takes. He is persistent, doesn’t get impacted by failure, and keeps moving forward towards his goal.”

“Such people are naturally **positive**, too,” said Anders. “They look for and at the bright side, constantly see opportunities rather than problems, and motivate and encourage the people around them.”

I was scribbling as fast as I could. “Proactive, self-managed, self-motivated, positive,” I wrote, and hoped that I would be able to read my writing later.

“I remember an amazing quote by a US Senator, #williamsprague,” said Faizal, “He said,

“Do not wait to strike the iron when it is hot. Make the iron hot by striking it”.

That is what I call being proactive.”

“Thank you, this is great,” I said, “What’s the next quality?”

The Emotionally Intelligent Employee

“I look for people with **high #EQ** – candidates who are emotionally and socially aware,” said Faizal. “They tend to be more friendly, open, responsive and flexible.”

“Very true,” agreed Chow Yen, “An emotionally intelligent employee also knows how to **adapt** to different situations and teams, and so, tends to be much more versatile.”

“This is a tough one for me,” said Anders, “if I have to choose between IQ and EQ, I tend to go with the former. He may not be as flexible or adaptable, but he can deliver results.”

“So are you saying that you would prefer a competent jerk?” joked Chow Yen.

“No, no,” protested Anders, “no jerks, please! EQ is important in certain roles, and less necessary in others; IQ is critical in all roles.”

“I am not so sure,” I said, “I understand where you are coming from, Andy, but in my experience, average intelligence + hard work + EQ makes for a very trainable and competent employee.”

“Fair enough,” said Anders as he digested this input, “I get where you guys are coming from.”

"I agree," Chow Yen said, "I remember reading that,

"Emotional Intelligence is not the opposite of Intelligence. It is not the triumph of heart over head – instead, it is a unique intersection of both".

"Thanks, guys," I said as I finished writing, "may I share what I believe is a really important quality?"

The Reliable Employee

"The most important quality in any employee," I said, 'is **#reliability**. The candidate needs to be someone his team and his colleagues can depend on."

"Absolutely," said Anders, "this is a critical quality. An employee who does not keep his **commitments**, or misses deadlines, or arrives late to meetings and appointments is a serious menace to his team and the organisation."

"No disagreements here!" exclaimed Faizal. "This is a baseline requirement, especially for senior and top management. I do not promote anyone who is not known to be **dependable** and **consistent**."

"Agree wholeheartedly," said Chow Yen. "a reliable colleague is far more valuable than a smarter colleague who is not as reliable. A couple of months ago, I had to let one of my business managers go because he was always delivering less than he promised."

"Have you guys heard of Wolfgang Schauble?" asked Anders. "He is one of Germany's most senior politicians. He has often said,

"Reliability is the pre-condition for trust".

And I think he has hit the nail on the head. I cannot trust someone who I cannot rely on."

"That's a great quote!" said Chow Yen. "I am going to put it up on my wall."

The Resilient Employee

“If we are done, may we move on to the next?” asked Chow Yen, after having ordered his next drink. “I have one quality that I look for carefully : **#resilience**. Every employee, especially in today’s crazy world, needs to be resilient. This is not a quality that is talked about much, or even understood much.”

“What do you mean by ‘resilience’?” asked Faizal, leaning forward.

“Resilience is the ability to adapt,” said Chow Yen, “a measure of a person’s mental and **emotional plasticity**.”

“Yes, and the ability to get hit and then get up and keep fighting,” said Anders, who is a big MMA fan.

“I agree,” I said, “Resilience is a rare and amazing quality to have. To me it connotes **adaptability** and **agility**. A resilient employee is usually a dependable and proactive one.”

“Now, I get it.” said Faizal. “And I agree – this is a great quality to have. I must note this down.”

“My Finance Director’s office has a great poster that moves me everytime I see it,” said Chow Yen, “it says,

"My roof collapsed in last night's storm. Now I can see the moon when I look up".

“Oh wow, that is beautiful!” I said.

“Amazing quote,” said Anders, as he rose and stretched. “Gentlemen, I have to take your leave. Thanks for a wonderful evening. Shesh, will you share a recap of our discussions?”

The PERRfect Employee recap

From: vshesh@radicaladvice.net

To: anders@shipco.com; faizal@manco.com; chowyen@logco.com

Sent: Friday, January 9, 2017 10:55 PM

Subject: The Gang of Four | Meeting #11 | 09 Jan 2017

Gentlemen,

A quick recap of our discussion this evening.

The main question : **'What qualities make up a perfect employee?'**

All of us agree that the four main qualities (of a PERRfect employee!) are –

- **Proactivity**
- **Emotionally Intelligence**
- **Reliability, and**
- **Resilience**

Please be prepared, when we meet next, to discuss this further. How do we test for these qualities? How do I, as a prospective employee, develop these qualities?

Have a great weekend!

Best regards...

The PERRfect Employee and Proactivity

In the opening chapter, we asked, 'What qualities make up a perfect employee?'

We listed out the four main qualities of a PERRfect employee are –

- Proactivity
- Emotionally Intelligence
- Reliability, and
- Resilience

On reading this, your immediate questions were –

- How do you define a Proactive Employee?
- How can I be (and be seen as) a Proactive Employee?"

Both good questions. Let's start with understanding...

What does 'being proactive' mean?

Proactive employees look ahead. They anticipate needs, problems and possible outcomes.

Proactive employees plan ahead.

Proactive employees take responsibility and ownership. They focus on solutions.

To understand the concept better, let's meet **Gerry** and **Evan**, two young professionals.

Gerry and Evan were nominated by their company to attend a three day conference in Kuala Lumpur in the following month. Both of them were thrilled and excited.

Evan told his family the news, and then sent out a WhatsApp message to his friends and groups. He then filled in the travel and hotel requisition forms and handed them over to Admin. Evan had never been to KL before, so he spent some time looking at a few websites to see what KL had to offer. He was sure he was going to have fun and eagerly anticipated the trip.

Gerry did more.

Gerry, too, told his family, and sent out a WhatsApp message. He, too, arranged to book his air tickets and hotel room, and then arranged the car for the airport to the hotel. He then checked if there were any travel restrictions, and any visa requirements (there were none). Gerry then went through the agenda and program for the event. He looked for, but couldn't find the list of delegates, so he wrote to the conference organizers who sent him the list. He went through the list to see if he knew any of the delegates. While doing so, he found that he had met two of them before and was connected through LinkedIn to 6 more. He wrote to each of them expressing his happiness that he was going to meet them in person, and arranging to have a cup of coffee with each.

Going above and beyond...

Gerry then ran through the various events, and chose the specific presentations and break-out sessions that he thought would be of most value. He then wrote messages to three of the speakers, requesting them for some of their time to meet, during the conference breaks. Then, he called the organizers again, and asked them to clarify the dress codes. Following the call, he made a note to pack a suit for the gala dinner and a pair of sneakers and shorts for the 'fun-filled team building activity'.

Gerry then ensured that he would have at least 200 business cards, as the conference would host about 100 delegates. He purchased a digital recorder so that he could record the sessions that he was most interested in.

A week before the conference, Gerry purchased a 'data pack' for his phone under a promo so that we did not have to depend on the venue wifi. He purchased about 200 ringgit in case he needed to tip or purchase sundry items for cash. He spoke to HR and confirmed that the company insurance covered Malaysia and noted down the contact details for the KL branch office.

Finally, Gerry asked his family what he could bring them from KL, and noted down their requests.

It's not an accident that people like Gerry always seem to be on top of things. They have a spare USB drive to loan, a digital copy of the manual that no one else can find, or a pain killer when someone's in distress.

These are the people we naturally turn to when we are in need. These are also the people who are most often selected as managers, team leaders and project directors.

How can we be proactive employees, you asked?

To be consistently proactive, you need to embrace...

The Six Habits

What is the proactive employee's secret? How are they able to be prepared for almost any situation? Here are **six habits** that you can practice to become and be a proactive employee.

Think Ahead & Stay Ahead

Try and think ahead – at least 4-6 weeks into the future. Many of us think about today and perhaps tomorrow. By thinking ahead, you will have enough time to plan and prepare for various events and situations. By reaching out to his connections well ahead of the conference, Gerry was able to meet one-to-one with almost a dozen people, enhancing his network, learning about new opportunities, building the foundation for robust relationships.

Do today what most people set aside for tomorrow. Take care of your regular tasks, even if they are not enjoyable, now. This will allow you to reduce, if not prevent, molehills from becoming mountains.

Finally, learn to prioritize. All of us have myriad tasks on hand. This can seem overwhelming at times. Focus on what is most important, complete it, and move on to the next. You will get a sense of satisfaction from each accomplishment, which will spur you on to the next.

Set Goals & Own Them

Set goals for yourself. Proactive employees hold planning sessions with themselves, and set realistic goals for the future. They allot deadline dates and they schedule time to work on them. By doing this, you can make your own future.

Own your goals. You are the only one who can drive and accomplish your objectives. Yes, people will support and help, but you are in the driver's seat. Take charge and take responsibility.

Finally, focus on what you can actually achieve. You will know the fantastic Serenity Prayer –

“Please grant me the courage to change the things I can, the serenity to accept the things I cannot, and the wisdom to know the difference”.

Too often, we stress ourselves about what we cannot control or influence, thus impacting our ability to achieve what we actually can.

Participate & Engage

Get involved. Proactive people are never idle observers, they are active participants. They engage and influence. Once engaged, they contribute. They don't stand by or react.

Listen carefully. Be situationally aware – know what is going on around you. Recognize that you are a piece of the whole and that you can influence the environment positively.

The more you engage, the more you can learn, the more you can exert your influence and more you can contribute positively.

Use Checklists

Make a checklist. Proactive employees use checklists for all events or activities, such as meetings, travel, conferences, sales calls, workshops and interviews. Checklists save time and money and prevent errors.

Read what Dr. Atul Gawande writes in his international bestseller, “[The Checklist Manifesto](#)” – simple checklists are essential for anyone working to get things right. Checklists convert goals and plans into simple action plans, which are visible, doable and trackable.

Review Results

Review the outcomes of your planning and doing. Proactive employees don’t just carry out planned tasks and events, they make sure the results are worth the time and effort expended. They ensure that they are indeed completing the 20% of the tasks that yield 80% of the results.

Reflect on whether you are making the best possible use of your time. If you aren’t reaching your goals, review the steps you are taking. Can you eliminate some steps? Shorten some? Should you do something differently?

Learn from your setbacks. If we go through a failure, we must learn from the experience. What things could we have done differently? What different things could we have done? By converting every shortfall into a lesson, we will only become even better at being proactive.

Focus on Solutions

Develop the right attitude. Proactive employees use many tools and techniques, but a big part of being proactive is their state of mind.

Start with a positive outlook. Many of us find it easy to see life as a series of problems and hurdles. Proactive employees tend to see life as a series of achievements and successes – they need only find the route to these.

Look for the best possible outcome of every situation or problem. Then, work towards this outcome. Think of yourself as a problem-solver, not a problem-identifier.

A Way Of Life...

Being proactive is a way of life.

The more times you think ahead, the more goals you set and achieve, the more comfortable you will become with planning. As you see your days running smoother, with fewer crises and problems, the more you will be encouraged to become proactive in everything you do.

Proactive means “acting beforehand”. Taking action in the present will influence things in the future – even the future itself.

Develop and nurture these six habits –

1. Set Goals & Own Them
2. Think Ahead & Stay Ahead
3. Participate & Engage
4. Make Checklists
5. Review Results
6. Focus on Solutions

And you will be an outstanding, productive and proactive employee...

Hallo! What about Gerry and Evan? What happened with them?

Oh, I almost forgot. Evan had a nice time at the conference; he came back with a bag full of goodies and handouts, and knowledge about 3 new topics that were presented.

Gerry came back with much more. He came back with more than 20 new professional connections, two offers to meet and discuss possible career opportunities; appointments from two prospective customers that Gerry's company were hoping to acquire; and a very nice testimonial from the conference organizer to his boss, praising him for his attitude and engagement. Finally, he enjoyed his wife's delight when he presented her with a lovely Selangor jewelry case...

The Perfect Employee and Emotional Intelligence

When we began, we asked, **'What qualities make up a perfect employee?'**

We listed out the four main qualities of a PERRfect employee are –

- Emotional Intelligence
- Proactivity
- Reliability, and
- Resilience

Once we identified these qualities, you asked, sometimes nicely and sometimes impatiently,

- What the heck is Emotional Intelligence?
- How does it help?
- How do I get it?

Many years ago, I asked these very same questions! The answers changed my life in more ways than I ever imagined...

To answer first the question,

What is Emotional Intelligence?

We don't need to look too far away or too far back.

"Singapore Government raises DORSCON Level to Orange!" said the headline.

Peter panicked.

“This is terrible!” he screamed at his wife. “We will run out of food and essentials! There is no place to run! We need to barricade ourselves! We need to protect ourselves! How can God do this to us? It must be all those nasty immigrants!”

By the end of the day, Peter and his wife,

Purchased as many noodles packets (200) and as much rice (50 kgs) as they could and stocked up on 40 cartons of bottled water.

Bought as many toilet paper rolls as possible.

Obtained (from a grey market source) 2,000 face masks.

Obtained (from the same grey market source) 60 bottles of hand sanitiser.

Had fights with all the shops and markets they went to, when they were told that there is a limit on the number of items they could purchase.

Carried all their purchases from the car to their apartment in suitcases so that no one would know what or how much they had.

In the coming days, Peter spent his time avidly following social media stories and news and becoming more worried and scared. He also forwarded and shared many scary stories and anecdotes with everyone he knew.

Two days later, he heard that one of the apartments in his condo had a suspected case. He told his wife, and they agreed that they would not go anywhere near that apartment (or that block!).

When one of his neighbours mentioned on WhatsApp that he had run out of masks, Peter sent out a message saying that he, too, had run out of masks and sanitiser.

When his neighbours put together a watch group to sanitise the elevators and common areas, Peter smiled grimly and waited for them to fall sick.

“Singapore Government raises DORSCON Level to Orange!” said the headline.

Paul pondered.

“This is terrible!” he said to his wife. “This is going to affect all of us individually and as a country. I hope we will be able to work together to deal with this problem calmly.”

“What should we do,” his wife asked. “Do we need to hurry and buy masks and food?”

“Let’s first understand the situation properly,” said Paul.

Over the next few days, Paul and his wife,

Spoke to all their relatives and friends, and assured them that all would be fine.

Read as much as they could about the Corona Virus and its spread and impacts.

Shared relevant information with their networks to calm some of their friends down.

Evaluated what they had at home and calculated that they had enough for a week, or even two weeks if they were economical.

Visited the family of a suspected case in their condo, and offered their help.

Helped put together a watch group to disinfect the elevators and common areas.

Shared their extra stock of masks and hand sanitiser with a neighbour who had run out.

Continued to stay in touch with their friends and relatives, asking if anyone needed help.

Did you spot the differences?

Paul, even though in the exact same situation as Peter, acted differently.

He was self-aware. He did not panic or give in to fear.

Paul controlled his emotions. He did not react without thought.

Paul knew what he wanted and why. He planned the way forward.

He cared. And looked beyond himself.

He recognized others' needs and helped. He stepped up and added value.

This is the essence of Emotional Intelligence. Our ability to know ourselves, control ourselves, understand our and others' motivations, empathise and care.

Who would you prefer as a neighbour or a colleague or as a boss?

I know that I would much rather have Paul, any day, any where, any time.

How does Emotional Intelligence help?

As we saw, in the stark difference between Peter and Paul, Emotional Intelligence helps you be calm, serene and thoughtful, even in the most dire of situations.

Emotionally intelligent employees are dependable and reliable.

They look at the whole picture and act with thought and planning.

Such employees understand not just their own needs, but the needs and requirements of others around them.

They recognize that 'no man is an island' and put their team or community ahead of themselves.

By doing all this, they build an amazing reputation. Their colleagues respect them. Their peers recognize them as leaders. The entire team (or organization) looks to them in times of crisis.

Being Emotionally Intelligent sets you apart and puts you ahead.

How do I become Emotionally Intelligent?

There are 8 steps to becoming Emotionally Intelligent.

These include –

1. Understanding your emotions and tapping into them
2. Seeing the links between your emotions and your behaviour
3. Accepting yourself
4. Planning your behaviour
5. Knowing what you want and why you want it
6. Learning to open your mind
7. Understanding others and recognizing how they feel
8. Measuring the impact of your behaviour on others

The Eight-Step Path To Inner Peace...

Being Emotionally Intelligent is more than about doing well in your career.

It makes you calmer, helps you de-stress, and leads to a deep feeling of happiness, with yourself and with others.

Being Emotionally Intelligent makes you more positive, more accessible, more likable and more reliable – all of which lead to your fulfilling your belonging and esteem needs, thus leading to a life full of contentment and satisfaction and inner peace.

The Perfect Employee and Emotional Intelligence – Part II

A lesson from a cockroach

In the previous chapter, we began our discussion on Emotional Intelligence (and Emotional Quotient or EQ). We met Peter and Paul and saw how differently they reacted to the same situation. We discussed the definition of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and how this quality can change our lives for the better.

While I was reading about EI and EQ, I came across this brilliant extract from a speech by [Mr. Sundar Pichai](#), CEO of Google, which I thought you would love!

To Scream or Not To Scream?

At a restaurant, a cockroach suddenly flew from somewhere and sat on a lady.

She started screaming out of fear.

With a panic stricken face and trembling voice, she started jumping, with both her hands desperately trying to get rid of the cockroach.

Her reaction was contagious, as everyone in her group also got panicky.

The lady finally managed to push the cockroach away but ...it landed on another lady in the group.

Now, it was the turn of the other lady in the group to continue the drama.

A waiter, hearing the commotion, rushed forward.

In the relay of throwing, the cockroach next fell upon the waiter.

The waiter stood firm, composed himself and observed the behavior of the cockroach on his shirt.

When he was confident enough, he grabbed it with his fingers, walked to the door and threw it out of the restaurant.

Sipping my coffee and watching the amusement, the antenna of my mind picked up a few thoughts and started wondering, was the cockroach responsible for their histrionic behavior?

If so, then why was the waiter not disturbed?

He handled it near to perfection, without any chaos.

It is not the cockroach, but the inability of the ladies to handle the presence of the cockroach that disturbed the ladies.

I realized that, it is not the shouting of my father or my boss or my wife that disturbs me, but it's my inability to handle the disturbances caused by their shouting that disturbs me.

It's not the traffic jams on the road that disturbs me, but my inability to handle the disturbance caused by the traffic jam that disturbs me.

More than the problem, it's my reaction to the problem that creates chaos in my life.

The Cockroach Theory

I understood that I should not react in life.

That I should always respond.

The women reacted, whereas the waiter responded.

Reactions are always instinctive, whereas responses are always well thought of, just and right to save a situation from going out of hand, to avoid cracks in relationship, to avoid taking decisions in anger, anxiety, stress or hurry.

How does Emotional Intelligence help?

Just as Peter's EQ helped him keep calm and thoughtful, so did the waiter's. Both of them rose above the situations they were in and took actions that benefited not just themselves but everyone around them.

Emotionally intelligent employees are dependable and reliable.

They look at the whole picture and act with thought and planning.

Such employees understand not just their own needs, but the needs and requirements of others around them.

They recognise that 'no man is an island' and put their team or community ahead of themselves.

By doing all this, they build an amazing reputation. People respect them. Organisations recognise them as leaders. People look to them in times of crisis.

Having a high EQ sets you apart and puts you ahead.

How do I become Emotionally Intelligent?

The 8 steps to becoming Emotionally Intelligent are :

1. Understanding your emotions and tapping into them

We rarely try and understand our emotions. Most often, we ignore them or suppress them. But when we ignore our feelings, we are overlooking an important and integral part of ourselves. Our emotions have a huge effect on our mindsets and behaviours.

We need to start understanding our feelings and connecting them to our experiences.

For example, when we are at work and we hear that a colleague has bad-mouthed us. What emotions arise when this happens? Or, when we are praised for completing a project on time. What exactly do we feel? Naming our emotions – sadness, embarrassment, joy, contentment, etc., will help us understand how we react to different situations and stimuli, and help us understand ourselves better.

2. Seeing the links between your emotions and your behaviour

The next step is to understand the impact of emotion on our behaviour. How do we react when we feel a particular emotion?

Do we withdraw when we are embarrassed? Or do we become belligerent?

Do we raise our voices when we are angry, or do we walk away to be alone?

Do we cry when we feel hurt or do we try and take it out on someone else?

The more we understand what emotion causes which behavioral impulse, the better we will be able to actually control and change our behaviour to our advantage.

3. Accepting yourself

Often, we don't like our emotions. As often, we don't like ourselves when we are emotional.

All our emotions are valid, even the negative ones. Every emotion we have is a new piece of useful information connected to something that's happening around us. Without this information, we will not know how to adequately respond to different situations – we will only react.

I have personally found it very difficult rationally evaluating and accepting my emotions. For many years, I have practiced letting negative emotions surface and connecting them to what is happening around and to me. By doing so, I have learnt my 'hot buttons' and 'triggers'. Today, I am better equipped to know what emotion triggers which reaction in me, and to consciously try and plan my response.

4. Planning your behaviour

We cannot control the emotions we feel, but we can decide how we respond to them. If I have an issue with lashing out in anger or shutting down when I am hurt, and I know this, I can start planning how I should behave differently. The next time I am angry, I recognise this and I say to myself – from past experience I have learnt that lashing out only makes things worse; let me take a walk for a few minutes and calm down and then come back and respond with a cooler mind.

By understanding our emotions and our past behaviour patterns, instead of letting our emotions overwhelm us, we can decide how we will behave.

So when something negative happens in our life, let us take a moment to feel our emotions. Once the initial wave has passed, let us make a conscious decision to communicate our feelings in a calm manner, rather than lashing out or walking out.

5. Knowing what you want and why you want it

Much of the time, our reactions are an outcome of ignorance. Often, when we are faced with situations or events, we don't know what we want the outcome to be. This is because we don't know what we want and why.

When I was younger, I would get enraged when people did not listen to my ideas. This would lead to my becoming increasingly aggressive, which would then push people even further away.

After years of introspection, I realised that one of my innermost needs was to be seen as innovative. I realised that when people did not heed my ideas, I felt rejected. Gradually, I realised that this was not their fault, but mine. Over time, I modified the intensity of this craving. As this happened, I realised that when I began placing my ideas on the table without desperation or aggression, they had a much better chance of being accepted.

The more we understand our needs and desires, the better we are able to manage the way we communicate and respond.

6. Learning to open your mind

Being open to ideas and inputs is a critical aspect of EQ. When our minds are open through understanding and internal reflection, we find it easier to deal with conflicts in a calm and self-assured manner.

Often, even today, I find myself believing that there is only one 'right' way to do certain things. The moment I believe this, I have narrowed my mind. I find myself rejecting any new inputs or ideas, and getting angry and frustrated when others don't accept 'my way'.

Every time this has happened, it has led to unhappy outcomes. By keeping our minds open, we find ourselves more socially aware and open to new possibilities. We are more receptive and understand others better, leading to better and more agreeable outcomes.

7. Understanding others and recognising how they feel

An important aspect of EQ is to be able to recognize how other people are feeling. To do this, we need to 'listen actively', really paying attention to what people are saying, to their body language, to their microexpressions. The more we understand their feelings, their reactions and their mindsets, the better our interactions and communication with them.

To improve our empathy, we need to put ourselves in other people's shoes. We need to think about how we would feel if we were in their situation. We need to imagine how it must be to go through the experiences they are encountering and what might alleviate some of their hardship in terms of support and care.

Empathy allows us to be truly interested in what people are saying, so that we can respond in a sensitive and helpful way, thus adding value to them in their time of need.

8. Measuring the impact of your behaviour on others

And finally, we need to understand our effect on the people around us. Do we make people happy? Or do we make them nervous? Are we inclusive? Or do we exclude?

We need to identify these patterns. Do I tend to pick fights with my loved ones? Do people tend to close up a bit when I am around? If so, I need to change my attitude, approach and behaviour so that I can have a better emotional effect on people.

I try and ask my family and trusted friends what they think about my impact on them and their feelings. I ask them to tell me the areas I need to improve in. (This list is long and is a work in progress!) By doing so, I am able to gradually improve the impact of my behaviour on their lives.

The Eight-Fold Path...

Being Emotionally Intelligent is more than about doing well in your career.

Having a high EQ makes you more positive, more accessible, more likeable and more reliable.

I hope you are able to use these eight steps to find your path to a life full of contentment and satisfaction and inner peace.

The Perfect Employee and Reliability

To recap, in the opening chapter, we had asked, **'What qualities make up a perfect employee?'**

We agreed that the four main qualities of a PERRfect employee are –

- Proactivity
- Emotional Intelligence
- RELIABILITY, and
- Resilience

Now that we have identified these qualities, you asked me –

- What are the components of Reliability?
- How can I be (and be seen as) a Reliable Employee?"

As always, great questions. Let me share...

A Reliable Story

It was 2007. One of my friends, Rajesh, the CEO of a electronics products company in Singapore was in the final stages of an acquisition of a small competitor.

All of a sudden, one Sunday morning, he received a call from Delhi informing him that his father had had a heart attack and was in the hospital. His mother needed him there immediately.

He and his wife, Shobha, booked their tickets and starting packing to leave.

Rajesh was in a quandary. There was no question that he was needed by his father's side. But, he was also needed in Singapore to close out the acquisition. He could not do this remotely. He needed to identify someone completely reliable. As he was preparing to leave, he scanned his organisation in his mind. Ten minutes later, while waiting for the taxi, he called his COO.

“Good morning, Serena,” he said, “sorry to disturb you so early. My Dad’s in hospital and I have to leave for Delhi now.”

“Hi, Rajesh,” said Serena, “I am so sorry to hear this. What happened?”

Rajesh explained the situation to Serena. Then, he came to the reason for his call.

“Serena, I want to make Anwar the point man for the purchase. He will substitute for me. Can you please inform him, and ask him to call me? I will be getting into a taxi shortly.”

“Anwar?” asked Serena. “Don’t you want me to handle this?” She seemed a little taken aback.

“Serena, you have enough and more on your plate,” said Rajesh, “Also, Anwar has been part of the transaction from day one. Just ask him to call me.”

Fast forward to nine days later.

Rajesh walked into the office. His father had recovered and was back home, in good health. There was a loud cheer and applause as he entered.

“Thank you, guys!” he said, “great work, everyone! Well done!”

After shaking many hands and receiving a bunch of high fives, he reached his cabin. As he settled in his chair, he looked back at the previous week. I owe Anwar a huge debt, he thought. Without him, this deal would have collapsed. Anwar is such a reliable person. He is worthy of a much bigger role...

He swiveled his chair and looked out of the window, as his mind went back...

Understand expectations

When Anwar called, Rajesh and Shobha were in the taxi on the way to the airport.

“Good morning, boss,” said Anwar, “Serena told me about your father. So sorry, and all the best. What would you like me to do?”

“Thanks, Anwar,” said Rajesh, “I need you to take charge of the merger. Can you do this?”

There was a pause. “If you can guide me from Delhi, without impacting your time with your father, I think I can,” said Anwar, “but I need to understand specifically what are the issues I need to focus on, and what are the specific outcomes we want.”

The conversation continued till Rajesh reached the airport, and then both signed off.

Six hours later, Rajesh and Shobha landed in Delhi. Once in the Uber, Rajesh opened his email. There was one from Anwar with the subject line, “List of expectations”. Rajesh opened the email and read it carefully. Over the next 30 minutes, he entered his comments and sent them to Anwar.

By the next morning, Anwar and Rajesh had agreed on the specific expectations of Anwar to complete the transaction.

STEP 1 : Always set sharp, clear and specific expectations. Leave no question marks. Set your target so precisely that your arrow will strike it exactly. The more precise the expectation, the more reliable the outcome.

Plan & Prioritize

By Monday morning, Anwar had a list of 30 items that he was expected to oversee and complete.

He spent the first half of the day at the whiteboard. He wrote out all the items and arranged them in order of what needed to be completed first, what items followed which, the estimated amount of time each item needed and the resources required for each.

Then, he then went to speak to Serena.

“Serena, I need your help,” he said, “could you give your advice?”

“Of course, Anwar,” said Serena. For the next 2 hours, they spent time discussing the plan on the whiteboard. Serena made suggestions and changes, and by 3:00 PM, both had agreed on the plan and the priorities.

Serena then called for a meeting and invited 4 colleagues. Over the course of another 2 hours, the ‘task force’ went through the plan, the actions and who would do what, by when.

At the end of the meeting, Serena asked each member of the team whether they had any concerns or issues, and resolved the few that came up.

The task force was ready. They agreed that they would meet every morning at 8:30 AM to carry out a review and plan the activities for the day.

STEP 2 : Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance. As [Abraham Lincoln](#) said, “Give me six hours to chop down a tree, and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.” The better the preparation, the more reliable the result.

Communicate. Then, Communicate Again.

Before leaving for the day, Anwar sent the detailed plan to Rajesh. He then asked for a call.

Anwar then called the lawyers and bankers involved in the deal and informed them of the situation. They agreed that they would meet the next day at 10:00 AM at Anwar’s office and discuss the plan.

Rajesh called Anwar after dinner. Anwar took Rajesh through the plan, the people in the task force, the timelines and the areas of concern.

Rajesh asked a few questions, but could not find anything amiss. Anwar and Rajesh agreed to have two catch-up calls every day, one at lunch time and one just after dinner.

Rajesh informed Anwar that he had already spoken to the CEO of the target company and informed him of his unavailability, and of Anwar's nomination as lead.

The next morning, Anwar and the task force met at 8:30 AM. They agreed on the specific tasks to be completed that day. They agreed to catch up just before lunch for a quick review and once at 6:00 PM, before the close of the day.

Then, Anwar and Serena met with the the lawyers and the bankers and took them through the plan. Anwar asked them to allocate their team members for each of the items that needed their inputs, which they did. They agreed that they would have a catch-up call every afternoon at 5:00 PM.

Anwar requisitioned one of the meeting rooms for the next week, and put up the plan and timelines on the whiteboard, so that it was accessible and visible to everyone involved.

STEP 3 : Proactively communicate. Avoid surprises. Remember [Bill Gates](#)' words, "Like a human being, a company has to have a robust internal communication mechanism, a 'nervous system' to coordinate its actions." The more transparent the communication, the more reliable the teamwork.

Initiate & Close

Anwar uploaded the plan and timelines onto his mobile phone, as a task list. Every 2 hours or so, he would check this, and evaluate progress.

Each time an item was reported as completed, Anwar sent a message to the task force, and asked for acceptance from everyone that the item was closed. This served both as confirmation as well as information to the team to move to the next step.

On Thursday, the team were to receive a notarised document from the target company. They did not. Anwar did not waste time calling or following up. He informed Serena and drove to the company's office. There, he asked to see the CEO and CFO, and explained the issue and the importance. The CFO and he drafted and finalized the document and together, went to a nearby notary and notarized the document. Anwar thanked the CFO and returned to his office with the required document.

By Friday, 26 of the 30 items were completed. Anwar filed documented evidence of each closure in a folder in his desk drawer. The morning meeting was full of anticipation – the finish line was near!

By late Friday evening, all the items were closed. All that remained was the formal signing. Anwar reported to Serena and together, they called Rajesh and updated him of progress.

Rajesh, in his turn, gave them an update of his situation. His father was better, but he needed to stay in Delhi till Monday evening. They agreed that Serena would be the authorized signatory for the signing. After the call, Rajesh and Serena got onto a call with the CEO of the target company and informed him that Serena would preside over the signing ceremony.

On Monday, Serena signed the deal. Anwar stood behind her, a sense of relief and achievement writ large on his face.

STEP 4 : Initiative and closure are the bookends of reliability and success. The best way to finish strong is to start strong. The more the initiative, the more reliable the closure.

How To Be Reliable

Being reliable is not rocket science. Let's recap. It is about 4 STEPS –

1. Understanding expectations
2. Planning and prioritizing
3. Communicating, and finally,
4. Taking initiative and closing what we start

Reliability is an amazing quality. Reliable people get and keep friends more easily, forge deeper relationships, receive the best opportunities, are granted more autonomy at work, have more self-confidence and live with integrity.

I hope you will be able to use the 4 STEPS to make yourself indispensable to the people around you – to be the 'go to' person, the person others value, respect and promote.

(BTW, today, Anwar is the CEO of a maritime services group in Singapore.)

The Perfect Employee and Resilience – Part I

Next, let us move on to the fourth weapon in the PERRfect Employee's arsenal – Resilience.

However, we are in a dire situation where the whole world needs resilience. Countries, communities, companies, individuals across the globe are in the thrall of a pandemic. Borders are being shut down, jobs are being lost, subsistence is at risk, fever is raging and the bodies are piling. How do we cope?

So, rather than write about the components of resilience or the professional's path to resilience, I am sharing two touching stories about people who have gone through their darkest times and found their way out into light.

These stories are extracts from www.optionb.org, a platform that helps people build resilience and find meaning in the face of adversity.

My Husband Murdered His Father!

That moment that everything changes. For me, that was July 17, 1989. Sitting in a police interrogation room, my world crashed down as I listened to two detectives tell me that my husband had coordinated and carried out the murder of his father.

At the time, I was newly married and seven months pregnant. When I learnt that the man I had loved and planned a family with could do such a horrible thing, it buried my head, my heart, and my hope for the future in darkness.

As much as I wanted to move forward and back into the light, reminders of that day were inescapable for the next several years. Newspaper headlines and evening news stories about my husband's case were a regular occurrence. My hometown community whispered. Friends walked away. His trial and sentencing to twenty-two years to life brought even more press coverage and chatter.

But in that time of darkness, my beautiful child was born. My desire to move forward turned into a need to move forward. The need begat a will to move forward. And I began to see that I had options for my life, and my daughter's life, other than those that were crushed. I would find another option, and it would be good.

Finding Option B

This was not easy. It required me to step out of complacency and into action. As I navigated my divorce, I had to use my voice in a new and assertive way, something that I was not used to. Being burdened by all of the financial obligations of my ex-husband's debts tested my negotiation skills. I faced and dealt with the emotional fallout of fear, betrayal and anxiety. For the first time, I was truly choosing to happen to life, rather than letting life happen to me. I was choosing resiliency.

There were moments when I had to simply rely on a will-do attitude, rather than a can-do attitude. At times, I wanted to sink back under what felt like the weight of the world. But as I took accountability and responsibility for shaping my future, and that of my daughter, I decided that my life would be a life of victory, not of being a victim of someone else's actions and the judgment and darkness they brought.

In the years since, I have found a healthy and loving relationship. I have raised three daughters to be strong, independent women. At the age of thirty-five, I returned to college and earned my degree on the same day that my oldest daughter earned hers. I have traveled the world.

Along the journey, life has tested my resilience time and again. Emotions, questions, anger, confusion, and hurt didn't just disappear when I chose something different for our lives. But as issues arise, I feel, address, and work through them. I learn from them.

You see, I did not just move forward to exist. I bounced forward and am living.

Suddenly, The World Went Dark

A week after New Year's Day, Gabby Giffords was shot. The year of 2011, which had started so inspired, had turned into a tragedy..

Gabby loved New Year's. To her, starting afresh has significant meaning. Before she was shot, Gabby was one of those dedicated New Year's resolution-makers – she always had a list of 10 things she wanted to achieve, whether reading more books or finally taking lessons in the French horn, the instrument she played in college. She always prompted her husband to make his own resolution, because he never would without her encouragement. But that year, and every year since, she's had one resolution: to keep fighting through her recovery.

Gabby was shot by a zealot, who also killed and injured eighteen other people in his shooting spree. In one instant, her life and those of her family changed.

Gabby was shot point blank in the head. She was not expected to live. But she did. She survived and after two harrowing weeks in the hospital, began the long road to recovery.

Gabby suffered from severe aphasia, a result of her traumatic brain injury, which made speaking difficult. She was paralyzed in her right arm and right leg, so she had difficulty moving around. Gabby lost 50% of her vision in both eyes. These struggles remain to this day.

An Uphill Journey

On 1st August, 2011, eight months after she was shot, Gabby made her first public appearance on the House floor to vote in favor of raising the debt limit ceiling. She was met with a standing ovation and accolades from her fellow members of Congress.

On 22nd January, 2012, Gabby announced that she would resign from her congressional seat in order to concentrate on her recovery, but promised to return to public service in the future.

Over the past years, Gabby has gone through intensive rehabilitation treatments. Her surgeon noted that Gabby's recovery was long, arduous and tiring, and expressed amazement at her progress.

Even through all the pain and trauma, Gabby opened her heart and home to everyone who wanted to talk to her. She refuses to give up, and stills sees the world in a positive light. Gabby runs a political action committee "Giffords: Courage to Fight Gun Violence." She is still a vital politician and activist, active on Twitter and working passionately to give voice to millions of regular Americans who desire gun control and safety.

It's coming on nine years now. And in that time, Gabby and her husband Mark have learned a lot.

"You may find that after times of tragedy or struggle, your cherished traditions change," says Mark. "Some may disappear. Others may just need to wait, for now. But if you leave yourself open to them, new ones will appear – and you'll find causes for celebration and types of resolve that you may not have otherwise imagined..."

The Power of Resilience

As we see from the above stories, resilience is the hard fought ability to bounce back from tough situations. Resilience is about NOT becoming a victim of helplessness and angst.

So often, we go through such horrible situations that it seems impossible to come out strong on the other end. But resilience allows us to do just this. Once we learn to take control of our lives, prepare for the unexpected, reinforce our mental, spiritual and physical selves, we will find ourselves living happier, more purpose-filled lives. We will also learn to handle adversity with calm and deliberation.

Increasing our resilience is about willpower, about deliberate action, about being adaptable, about self esteem.

We will discuss these aspects of resilience in the following chapter.

Till then, let us all be healthy, safe and positive. Let us try and help those around us whose ability to cope is less than ours. To find ways to be proactive and empathetic with our families, friends, neighbours and community members. Let us be products of our actions, not of our circumstances.

This pandemic, too, will pass. We will be strong again.

The Perfect Employee and Resilience – Part II

This is the story of the incredible resilience of a 45 year old woman, struck by a tragedy in the prime of her life.

Why this story?

You may recall that we had started this book with asking, **'What qualities make up a perfect employee?'**

We agreed that the four main qualities of a PERRfect employee are –

- **Proactivity**
- **Emotionally Intelligence**
- **Reliability, and**
- **RESILIENCE**

In the preceding chapters, we discussed proactivity, emotional intelligence and reliability, and how we can build these qualities in ourselves.

This story shows us what resilience really is, and how we can make it part of our professional armory.

Loss

She sat in the darkening room. Her eyes were dry. She just had no more tears. As her eyes scanned the room, errant memories surfaced.

He used to sit in that easy chair, enjoying his coffee and newspaper every Sunday morning.

That is the sideboard we bought when our first son was born. How shocked we were when we found out the price!

Today is Saturday; we would have all gone to the temple together.

No more.

That life was no more. He, her husband, was no more. Not even 50, he had left her and their four children bereft. A heart attack, they said. We tried everything, they said. It's God's will, they said.

The tumult had died down. His body had been cremated. The countless rituals that various relatives insisted on were done. The house was almost empty, reflecting what she felt.

What was she to do? She had never envisaged this future in her wildest imaginings. In all her visions, he was always there by her side. And now he wasn't and never would be.

What was she to do?

Recovery

As a matter of habit, she wiped her dry eyes with the pallu of her sari. She took a deep breath.

First, I have to make sure that the children are not impacted in any way, she thought. Shri needs to go back to college at the earliest. Once he immerses himself, he will recover.

Chandra, too. I never know what's in that boy's mind, she thought. He must be hurting badly, but doesn't show it at all.

Her heart seemed to tear apart when she thought of her youngest two. Oh, they are too young to lose their father, her mind cried. 13 and 11! How cruel can life be?

I have to look for the bank passbooks. How much money do we have? Not very much, I think.

When are the college and school fees due? When is the next rent due?

She almost broke down again. He would handle all these issues, she thought. I don't even know how much the fees are! Shri has another 3 years, and Chandra has another 5 years. How will we manage?

She recalled a snippet of conversation from earlier that week –

“Just come over to Trichy and live with us. We are there for you. We will take care of everything...”

As tempting as that sounded, her back straightened with resolve. I am not going to be a burden on anyone. My children will not be a burden on anyone. Whatever we do, we will do by ourselves.

She stood up, feeling more tired than she had ever before in her life. Strangely, at the same time, she also felt a sense of strength that she did not know existed. She started walking to the cupboard to find the bank papers, her stride becoming firmer with every step.

Response

Seven years had passed.

She sat in the front row, excited and proud to be witnessing her youngest son's convocation ceremony. Guests were still being ushered in, the hall was alive with chatter.

She also felt a sense of tremendous relief.

Shri has completed his post graduation and is doing so well in the US, she sighed. Chandra is a full fledged doctor. And now, Sessa will start his career as an engineer. Padma is well on her way to completing her BA. What an amazing girl she is – so supportive and caring!

I never thought we would make it, she thought.

As the hall gradually filled up with parents and families, her mind slipped back in time. How did we make it? she asked herself. Her mind scanned the thousands of memories, sliding over them, but not finding anything that stood out.

Probably God's will, she said to herself, as the first announcement for the graduation ceremony shook her out of her reverie.

My Mother's Guide To Resilience

No, it was not God's will.

It was my mother's will. It was her courage, her patience, her persistence, her belief in herself and in her family and her willingness to work 25 hours a day.

Today, 45 years later, we know how she made it. She started with the first component of resilience, which is

1. Courage

My mother is the most courageous person I have known.

I whine when the smallest of issues befall me. "Oh, my car stereo is not working. Why does this always happen to me?" It's easy to be a victim, isn't it?

Even before my father died, my mother soldiered through the most difficult of times, never complaining, never ever allowing any of what she went through to be known to or seen by her children. It was only later on in life that we realised how much we were insulated and protected by her.

My mother is a small woman. And physically rather frail. But in terms of her ability to cope and stand strong, she is a giant.

Many years later, when we asked her how she coped with her husband's sudden and premature passing, she would say, "What could I do? I did not have the luxury of extended grieving. You were four hungry, growing children. I had to put aside my personal issues and make sure that you had whatever you needed to complete your studies successfully and start living your independent lives. That was what drove my every thought, my every action."

My mother doesn't use words like courage. She lives them.

"Courage is not the absence of fear. It is overcoming fear, knowing that you have to achieve a goal regardless".

The next quality that comprises resilience is

2. Patience

My mother understands the value of patience.

When we were young, and desperately wanted something, she would say, "Be patient, there is a time and place for everything."

When she was going through her darkest hours, she realised that she had to play the long game. Yes, everything seemed dire and disastrous, but that was now. There was always tomorrow. And the day after tomorrow. And the day after that. She had to get through each day, step by difficult step, patiently doing what needed to be done, so that tomorrow was better.

My mother pawned her jewelry to put her children through college, her heart breaking as she did so, but hoping and believing that she would one day, get it all back. One day, she did.

She fought a court battle to evict recalcitrant tenants for over 7 years, finally getting possession of the house her husband and she had built with their toil and tears.

She still has this amazing quality of 'calm'; the ability to remain unflurried even in a maelstrom.

"In battling the challenges of life, the two most powerful weapons are patience and time".

A third component of resilience that my mother taught us by example is

3. Persistence

My mother doesn't know when to quit.

She never, never gives up.

We, her children, were not the obedient, amenable examples that parents dream of, before they have children. We were headstrong, opinionated, argumentative and disobedient.

She recognised that arguing was futile. So she waited us out. We went through teenage rebellion. She was there for us and gave us her advice when we asked. We went through adolescent angst. She waited, and gave us her shoulder to cry on. We went through crests and troughs, seeking ourselves. She fed us and listened to us and suggested that we look at things differently.

In time, one by one, we fell in line. We recognised the value of the values she wanted us to live by. We understood what was right. Her teachings, previously seeds on arid soil, took root and bloomed.

My mother always played the long game. She never gives up.

When we were young, my mother told us about a small stream encountering a large rock.

"The stream finally cut its way through the rock," she said, "not because of how powerful it was, but because of how persistent it was".

Yet another quality that supported my mother's resilience was

4. Belief

My mother believes. In herself, in God, in her family, in people. She believes that good will prevail. That all will be well in the end.

She was fortunate to have wonderful, supportive parents and loving siblings. She knew she could count on them, even if she never leaned on them.

My mother was fortunate to have the help of people who came forward to advise and guide her in sorting out the administrative mess than any intestate death brings.

She was lucky to have a few close friends whom she could speak to, confide in and pour her heart out complaining about her headstrong, disobedient children.

She has immense faith in the Almighty. This faith carries her across arid deserts and stormy waves.

Her belief sustained her through the worst of times; it calmed her in the best of times.

I remember reading a quote and immediately thinking of my mother –

“The sky is not the limit. Your belief-system is”.

The final quality that defines resilience (and my mother) is

5. Hard work

My mother worked 16 hours every day. Seven days a week.

She arose at 4:00 AM and slept at 10:00 PM. (I think she still does!)

My mother hates depending on anyone else. She hates taking shortcuts. She believes in the joy and satisfaction of doing something herself and doing it well.

My mother always believed and still believes that our actions define our intent. Work, she believes, is worship.

When I was 9 and was crying about something I wanted and did not have, she said,

“You get what you work for, not what you wish for”.

The Power of Resilience

My mother taught me the 5 qualities that comprise resilience.

1. Courage
2. Patience
3. Persistence
4. Belief
5. Hard work

Not rocket science. (Though she also taught me physics when I was young). Simple, timeless qualities.

I hope her lessons will serve you well, as they did me.

AFTERWORD

So there it is – the simple and straightforward path to becoming a PERRfect Employee.

Much easier than you thought it was, isn't it?

Four qualities (that you already have in you, which just need to be awakened and brought to the fore)

–

1. Emotional Intelligence
2. Proactivity
3. Reliability
4. Resilience

Each quality having the potential to impress and impact, to satisfy and succeed.

I hope you will be able to hone and display these qualities and by doing so, find meaning within yourself, and success in your workplace.

If you stumble, don't give up – it just means that you are moving faster than before.

If you stagnate, don't despair – it just means that a better springboard awaits you.

I wish you all the very best, and as always, if you have any feedback or inputs, please share the same with me at vshesh@radicaladvice.net.

Your well-wisher and mentor,

Shesh.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Venkatraman Sheshashayee (Shesh) is an engineer, manager and leader

His career spans 33 years, during which Shesh created U\$ 1.5 billion in shareholder value.

Shesh has worked in shipping, manufacturing, services and offshore logistics. He has extensive experience in building greenfield companies and turning around distressed companies. He has worked in MNCs, family-run businesses and PE-owned enterprises. He has served as CEO/MD for over 10 years in three companies.

After retiring from an active corporate role in 2018, Shesh is now on a mission to leverage his billion dollar learnings to mentor professionals and start-ups fulfil their dreams.

PURPOSE + PERFORMANCE = POWER.

Purpose + Performance = the Power to function at full capacity and maximise potential - this delivers to us the life we dream of.

Invoking this philosophy, Shesh has lived his dream life and achieved more than he ever thought he would.

Today, Shesh is an Author, Speaker, Mentor and Advisor. He is also Managing Director of Radical Advice, a unique Advisory focused on mentoring.

His two series - "Billion Dollar Learnings" and "CEO Chronicles" are widely read across the world.

Billion Dollar Learnings are bite-sized lessons distilled from real life situations, with practical approaches, shared at scale.

CEO Chronicles are in-depth articles designed to get you off the bench and make you captain of your playing field.

Shesh's past avatars (in his own words) :

I started as a marine engineer, sailed to 61 countries, and worked with more than 50 nationalities. Starting as a Junior Engineer, I was promoted rapidly and within a record 4.5 years took over as a Chief Engineer of one of the largest ships in the world.

Then, I moved to management, and learnt how to manage the workplace environment and create and deliver value; in the process I was promoted 7 times in 9 years.

Finally, I moved into the C-Suite, and spent 14 years growing, reviving and transforming companies, creating more than US\$ 1.5 billion in shareholder value.

All through my career, I have mentored hundreds of professionals, helping them discover their purpose, guiding them in performing optimally and coaching them in channeling the resultant power towards achieving their dreams.

Industries : Shipping | Manufacturing | Services | Logistics | Oil & Gas | Start-ups | Board Advisory

Domains : Sales | Marketing | Operations | Strategy | Growth | Turnaround | Transformation

Avatars : Chief Engineer | Chief Executive Officer | Executive Director | Board Director | Mentor | Husband | Father

You can follow Shesh at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/shesh-venkatraman-sheshashayee-4299601/> or reach him at vshesh@radicaladvice.net.

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