



Continuous Learning – Part of Ethics for a True Professional

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Abstract :

This article highlights the importance of continuous learning and updation for a true practicing professional. It has to be seen as a commitment and a part of professional ethics. It reminds the reader that an obsolete human resource is equally bad as any other resource used in the organisation.

Key words: *Continuous Learning, updation, Ethics, Un-Learning and Re learning*

Introduction

As true practicing professionals we ourselves should not be outdated or obsolete! Have you ever thought of it? To be relevant and to be fully true to our profession, I feel continuous learning and keeping oneself updated also is also one of the intangible ethics we should follow as a true professional in any field to give 100% to our organisation and Nation at any point of time.

Discussion

‘How to keep learning’ is the question. On the surface, the topic looks simple enough; after all, we are all quite “well-learned” to

reach this level in our careers. However, I implore upon you to scratch beneath that surface and introspect on following points:

- When was the last time you felt amazed to hear something new?
- When was the last time you were filled with wonder after understanding how something works?
- When was the last time curiosity was ignited in your experience hardened minds?

It is great if the answer to these questions is

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a phrase like – “a few weeks back” or “twice within the last fortnight”. It is something to think about if the answer is a phrase like – “not in a few years”. The cynic in you may wonder whether it really matters. Already, there’s a lot that’s on mind – family, profession, health, travel, etc. Why to worry about something as basic as “keep learning”?

The answer, as always, is right in front of our eyes. The world has changed immensely in the last 3 decades. The pace of innovation is much, much higher than it was, say 50 years back.

A skill learned in 1960 might still be relevant in 1980s. But, the same cannot be said for, say 1990 and 2010. The frequency of disruptive change has increased immensely. What earlier used to take decades now happens in a matter of years. The job market has evolved rapidly in the past 3 decades. Some skills acquired at the beginning of 1990s – for instance, short hand, are almost irrelevant today. Look at any sector and try to recall how it looked 3 decades back. There is a good enough possibility that either that sector has changed completely beyond recognition or in some cases didn’t even exist. You might wonder how that affects me. After all, we are government servants, company employees, NGOs, service providers and the like with a reasonable level of job security. But look around and spare a moment to glance on the path India and the world have embarked upon, with rapidly advancing technologies and globalisation of business.

At least some of you reading this article might have entered into professional life post-1991, when India opened the gates of liberalisation. The protectionism of previous

era was effectively gone. The field was open for competition and full of rewards for a winner determined by market forces, with the end-user (customer) being the ultimate beneficiary. Today we are not on the path to become a state controlled economy – like Russia or China, rather more towards becoming a business-friendly country, wooing investors and strengthening institutional mechanisms to create an ecosystem of growth. Around the 2000s, came the internet. It would not be wrong to hold internet responsible for changing the dynamics completely. The word Start-up was introduced in the common lingo. What started with Computer and IT sector has today turned the game on its head in almost every domain, say, in Education (Byju’s), in Finance (UPI), in Housing (Airbnb), in Transport (Uber).

These are just some of the sectors and the chief disruptors therein. The strategic sectors have also been not left untouched. Gone are the days when innovation in defence and space was the prerogative of the public sector. Today, the private sector matches and even pushes beyond the boundaries of innovations. Just look at SpaceX and what they have achieved in the last two decades.

So, now let’s get back to the original topic and let me ask a corollary question - “how to stay relevant”. The answer dear friends, is what I am asking you to embark upon – by always learning. In the process, you got to un-learn and relearn. Perhaps the more difficult skill to master than relearning is un-learning. The cobwebs of past have to be shed, thereby making space for new ideas to germinate. Learning is equivalent to the insurance cover you take to prepare for the unexpected. It

changes your perspectives. Just as the muscles in the body need to exercise, consider learning as an exercise to sharpen your brain.

I want you to show the same enthusiasm you showed in learning to use the e-mail, the credit card, the mobile phone and your multiple social media accounts. Yes, there was an incentive in doing those – societal approval and increased convenience. But, take a look around and realize the changing professional landscape. This is an ever-evolving, dynamic work environment, where you have to upgrade consistently, continuously and systematically. At stake is the progress of yourself as an individual and consequently, the progress of the organization you have helped build and thereby our Nation indirectly. Thus it is an important aspect of professional ethics. A professional should not be satisfied just by doing assigned task; but must continuously learn, update knowledge, innovate and improve. By being constantly self-aware and taking a keen interest in learning, you can not only navigate the changing workplace environment, rather also thrive in the same.

I know it gets difficult after a while. To pick up the old dusty book. To immerse yourself in acquiring a new skill. But, remember – you need to take just a small step. That first step, done repeatedly, will become a habit. Spend some time daily in learning something new – it may even not be related to your core strength. It doesn't matter. Gradually, you will start feeling curious again. You will find yourself talking about new topics. You will acquire more depth and self- confidence. You

will make new friends. Most importantly, you will feel content and daring to face whatever comes your way. There would be failures, but worry not – that is just as required. The tools at disposal are more easily available than ever – reading, listening, online courses, podcasts, hardware workshops, music classes – Whatever you wish for, your city has it all. Anything which can be repeated will be automated. The time is not far when humans will also be counted as machines. In order that you be recognized as a human among the machines, Keep learning and updated!

Conclusion:

If after reading this article, if you feel motivated and inspired to appreciate and understand the newer trends and technologies and able to stay relevant and use the same maximally to the benefit of the Organisation and Nation, I feel happy and satisfied. I have not meant this to be an article by itself, but a small reminder and a warning bell to stay relevant and professional!

References and further reading:

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आचार्यात् पादमादत्ते पादं शिष्यः स्वमेधया।

पादं सब्रह्मचारिभ्यः पादं कालक्रमेण ॥

[āchāryāt pādamādatte, pādam śiṣyah swamedhayā |

sabrahmachāribhyah pādam, pādam kālakramena ca ||]

Translation:

The brahmacārī attains a quarter of the meaning of the Vedas by passage of time; a quarter by staying with the Guru; a quarter by his own enthusiasm and a quarter by mutual discussion with others.

The greatest joy	.....	Giving
The greatest loss	.....	Loss of Self-respect
The most satisfying work	.....	Helping Others
The ugliest personality trait	.....	Selfishness
The most destructive habit	.....	Worry
The greatest “shot in the arm”	.....	Encouragement
The greatest problem to overcome.....	.....	Fear
The most crippling disease	.....	Excuses
The most dangerous act	.....	A Gossip
The worst thing to be without	.....	Hope
The most powerful force in life	.....	Love
The two most power-filled words	.....	“I Can”
The most beautiful attire	.....	Smile!
The most prized possession	.....	Integrity
The most powerful communication	.....	Prayer