

Employee to Entrepreneur – a personal story

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In the earlier days of my career I felt drawn towards being an instrument of change, in someone's life, not knowing completely what it may mean. While pursuing my MBA in HR, I realized I was drawn towards Training and Development and it seemed in a way what I wanted to do. I moved in this direction, got my first campus job in Ambuja Cement in Training and Development. Here I worked with the challenges of the shipping department, plant employees and corporate employee's learning agenda. It was a new role. I learnt my first lessons on managing business and support functions perceptions here.

I moved on to a new role in a market research firm, Ugam Solutions. Here again I was the first employee in the Training department and started from scratch. I worked with the COO to match his vision of creating a learning organization. The first need of any growing organization is to have an induction process, it became my first assignment and I moved on to design and deliver management development programs. Since the work I did meant creating a culture of learning in the organization I was also asked co-create the campus recruitment process, to bring in possible talent that would fit in with the organizational culture. Working with Ugam has been my best experience. It taught me to broaden my horizons, work in areas I had never worked, most of all I learnt to work with challenges beyond expectations. I have learnt the most from this journey and it has been the most memorable one. It was during this stint that one of the participants met me after a few months at lunch, and spoke about a concern, something we had discussed as a case in one of my trainings. I responded, dint we discuss this during the training and we worked at how you could apply the model. To this he responded, "yes Payal, but real life is different". This was the day, then on I had sleepless nights. I questioned what I was doing, was my work really impacting peoples life in reality. How much, of what I am doing is meaningful to the realities of life. This uneasiness made me want to move out of my comfort zone. To search for more...

My next move was to Bennett and Coleman, known more as Times Group. I took up the role of Lead OD and Training. I think I always attract roles that require me to start from scratch. The role excited me, since it had to do with a large setup and work with a different set of people, older age group, more experience and a mix of bureaucracy, entrepreneurship and flexibility. I was pursuing a course in OD (Organization Development Certification Program – from ISABS) while I was working with BCCL. Since I was creating the role, I had opportunities to bring in the flair of OD here. I worked with various departments, to create departmental vision and strategies, resolve interpersonal differences and interdepartmental issues and also look at developing leaders. My role moved from a trainer and training manager role in Ugam Solutions to a facilitator and coach role in BCCL. While I worked in BCCL, I realized my role of an internal consultant had its limitations and I felt to work at an organizational level to bring change, I may not be able to bring about the change that was seen as important.

So, my journey progressed to starting up on my own with a fellow from my ODCP batch. As a consultant and being on my own I have lived the entrepreneurs life of creating visibility for myself, my work and now getting validation for my work. As a consultant I have realized I cannot sell Organization Development to clients. How can I tell someone that you need to change, it really needs to come from the client that he feels the need for change.

I moved on to forming my own organization this gave birth to Celebratory Network where my personal vision took shape, **“Facilitating change within organizations, communities and countries”**. As an entrepreneur I am sharing a few things that I have seen as must haves to sustain and grow are. Risk taking, innovation, leadership etc are all a must haves I don't deny that but for me they are well written about and spoken off. I am hoping to share the new insights I gained in my journey.

Conviction, I see this as the most important one and it tops my list. When the going is good the world sees you but when it gets tough, only you can hold yourself. The ability to be resilient and hold myself in moments of doubt is what makes me still be an entrepreneur. The easy way for an (ex) employee is to go back, I will land up getting a good or great job but that is not what I set myself to do.

To manage loneliness and at times understand the doubt it is helpful to have a group of entrepreneurs to engage with. It need not be a big group; it can be just three or multiple dyads. This co-created community gives a sense that I am not alone; each others experiences are helpful at time we have even helped each other without any finance attached to it. There are times we have tied up as a group, new possibilities have emerged. What is a must here is we all are in it (the group) not just for me, but also because it is important for me to see the other person also succeeds.

Meeting at least 3 new people a month, with the intent to know about the world outside, knowing about different industries. When I first started doing this, I felt odd. People I met doubted my intent, but I was persistent. I found a better way. I asked friends to connect me with people. I have met CA's, Social Entrepreneurs, Teachers, individuals from the military, TV artists, my own competitors and many more. When I meet them I tell them I just want to know their story, story of them as individuals, what they do. I also share with them about myself and it's a great conversation. Some of us are still in touch some are happy where they are. What this helped me with was it creates a great amount of learning and sharing about me and my work.

Documenting, please please document what you do. It is so much of hard work, when you document, you leave learning behind for others and also create reflection time for yourself. New ways of doing work may emerge when you start doing this. If it is difficult get help to do this. I am still to make this a regular process but I am doing my bit and improving myself. This document is one way for me to share my experience and document it.

So far this is what I am writing on a reflective Sunday... Good Luck!

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