

Managing Up, Down and Across

Establishing a rapport with your boss is not enough. Peers and juniors also matter

When talent managers at Maruti Suzuki go to campuses to recruit freshers, they invariably see some students trying to monopolise the group discussion. These students tend to speak the most and the loudest. Year after year, the company does not hire this set of students. The interview calls and the jobs go to those who are seen trying to make their views heard while giving others a chance.

Inside Maruti, things are no different. Career paths are faster and more easily chalked out for those who appreciate the views of others. "If you appreciate the viewpoint of others, there will be a dialogue. Otherwise, there will be an argument," says S.Y. Siddiqui, Managing Executive Officer for administration, in charge of human resources, finance and information technology.

While this may sound like common sense, people often fail to get their interpersonal equations right, talent managers say. "People mostly go wrong by establishing a good relationship only with their bosses and ignoring peers and juniors. In a volatile business environment, all three are equally critical," says Siddiqui.

Acceptance at the workplace and career growth happens only when all the aspects are balanced. More so in an organisation like Maruti, where every process requires interfunctional interaction, says Siddiqui.



"At the peer level, keep your personal issues out and look at your work objectively"

Sanjay Modi, MD, Monster India

Processes such as a 360-degree appraisal emphasise this.

Of course, your position in the hierarchy also matters. If you are at the entry level and have a role of individual contributor, focus on the directions given by your supervisor. Your boss is your mentor and can help you understand the organisation. At the middle level, when you have a team to handle and you also report to someone, do not make the mistake of not listening to juniors.

The most problematic area, however, is peer relations, when competition stifles the exchange of ideas,

information and learning, say talent managers.

According to executive coach Ashu Khanna, who works with organisations and managers, the deepest differences come up at the level of peers because of competition. Her advice: "Coexist amidst healthy competition."

Sanjay Modi, Managing Director of Monster India, explains what he looks for in his managers when they work with peers. Not everyone in an organisation can reach the top 15 per cent. What makes a person stand out is his or her open consultation approach with peers, ability to collaborate positively, and emotional quotient. "At the peer level, keep your personal issues out and look at your work objectively," says Modi.

Finally, while interpersonal relationships are important, do not forget to develop yourself.

Khanna recalls a director struggling to keep his flock of managers and juniors together. Reason: He was not the best of communicators, although it was not that he did not want to communicate. As a result, he was not delegating. The team was disgruntled because its members were not developing and growing.

"If the director had worked on developing his skills, he would have managed his people at an efficient level," says Khanna. ♦

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