

Why the 'me first' attitude doesn't work

Being obsessed with success can ruin your career

SENTHIYL S S G

WHEN we start out in an organisation, most of us are inspired to help the company achieve its goals.

As time goes by, the "drive" often wears off and we invariably end up being focused on our own individual needs.

This shift in focus has huge implications for the company and the employee. Yet we are either unaware of it or we try to justify our self-centredness by refusing to acknowledge its possible outcomes.

And one of the most commonly used justifications is that we are in a "no-win" situation.

Some examples include: "The company uses us and then discards us. What's the point of being loyal to the company?"

At this stage, we are often obsessed with the notion of "what's in it for me"? And we are constantly scanning and measuring others' impact on us. Every word, sign or emotion is measured and interpreted to determine how it benefits or threatens us.

It is precisely this tendency that leads to a litany of people problems, which beset us at work and at home.

FOCUS ON SELF INVITES PEOPLE PROBLEMS

People problems manifest in many different ways, including poor relationships and communication, lack of trust, feelings of insecurity, poor accountability and responsibility, inefficient leadership and conflicts.

To illustrate, let us explore a common scenario that might remind us of similar relationships we might have encountered at work or in our personal lives.

In an organisation, an executive named Tan, who



is focused on his career success, is threatened by the way his new colleague, Wong, handles his work.

As a result, Tan maintains a superficial relationship with Wong because he views the latter as an obstacle to his career progression.

To ensure his career progression, Tan feels the need to project the image that he is efficient and result-focused. He then makes an enormous effort to learn skills that would put him in a better light.

In the long run, such behaviour will be detrimental to your career as you might be putting double or even triple the effort to get things done. This will tend

to slow you down instead.

It might be worse when you spend less time improving yourself since all your effort is spent on fault-finding and trying to "prove" yourself.

In addition, this fixation on the self can lead to anxiety, stress and loneliness — as you distance yourself from others, you also learn less from them.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?

So, is there a better way to pursue our career goals? We can increase the scope of the traditional notion of "what's in it for me" by including the organisation and our peers.

Self-focus and a blaming culture do not allow us to reap the rewards we covet. On the contrary, they are the root causes of many problems faced by organisations and individuals.

Understanding and resolving these problems, which scholars now term "self-deception," is the key to unlocking organisational and individual potential and performance.

How self-deception happens, why we put up with it, and what to do about it — all these have profound implications on the way we choose to live and work.

The writer heads the South East Asia office of The Arbinger Institute, an international training and consulting organisation. It partners organisations, institutions and individuals in their peacemaking efforts by addressing a little-known problem called self-deception, which many organisations consider their costliest problem.

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BS Begawan 24/32C showers	New Delhi 26/36C thunderstorm	
Bangkok 26/34C thunderstorm	New York 17/26C partly cloudy	
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Hong Kong 25/30C showers	Tokyo 26/32C partly cloudy	
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Jakarta 24/32C hazy	Vancouver 13/22C partly cloudy	
Johannesburg 2/23C fair	Vientiane 25/33C showers	
Karachi 27/31C partly cloudy	Washington DC 17/27C partly cloudy	
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A READER'S LIST OF MISPRONOUNCED WORDS

combination	combinNAYshirn	not comBYnation
Japanese	japirNEZE	not JAPAN ese
harass	hir RASS	but also HAIR res
already	orl RED dy	not orREDdy
matured	mir CHUR d	not MARE chur d
sachet	SAIR shey	not say CHET
depot	DEP o	not desPOT
exaggerate	ig ZAIR gir rate	not EX za cherate

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