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Performance in Adversity

Five years ago, when I decided to leave behind the security of a monthly paycheque & quit my job to become an entrepreneur, a Coach, my mind was filled with exhilaration, at the thought of being my own boss, at having flexible timing and being able to do all that I always wanted to.

Within a year the hard ground reality hit home as I sat outside yet another corporate office, seeking appointments with the busy HR guys, of how tough it was to re-establish yourself in your mid-life.

My small family of my daughter, my wife and my mother were used to a comfortable life. While I was still giving them the best, life was now on a budget, and I was walking the tight rope of time and money. Soon began the mental dialogue – “Was it the right decision? Will we go back to living as comfortably and luxuriously as before?”

Even as these thoughts were trying to take over my conscious mind completely, I shrugged it off and put my focus on what I had already accomplished. How within a year I was already an ICF ACC credentialed coach and slowly but surely making my mark.

My rich past experiences and my passion to serve humankind gave me enough expertise to guide people. These thoughts warmed my heart and filled me up with renewed vigour, I felt confidence coursing through my body. I was already on a roll.

Right then, the HR head walked out to greet me with an outstretched hand and deep apologies for keeping me waiting. As he filled me up about their situation and their aspirations on developing their teams and meeting the organisations objectives in their extremely competitive market, it brought up the thought that Performance under extreme situations is about Adversity management. It is all about how we manage the challenges, overcome roadblocks and bounce back. Our lengthy conversation covered every topic from market conditions to the pressure to perform. Eventually we found ourselves to be a mutually beneficial fit and I worked them as their Coach.

Forward three years, life was back with the new challenge of the Pandemic and the Lockdown. Life came to grinding halt. Corporations no longer had spare budgets and most Development Trainings & Coaching sessions were put on hold. Once again adversity had hit, and FUD situation ruled the roost. Come to think of it, Markets, Business Houses & Entrepreneurs have always been at the mercy of FUD situations.

Fear, Uncertainty and Doubt have always been there as part of growth and development. In business there rarely ever is a perfect condition. In fact, the conditions are constantly changing. Either the markets may be volatile and faltering or there may be a scarcity of raw materials, policy changes affecting planning & budgets or political drama creating unprecedented delays & spiralling up the costs of commodities.

Such turbulent times have added paradigm shifts to the expectations out of Leaders and the performances of their teams. Performance in Adversity has become synonymous with Effective Leadership and Resilience of the teams.

To be able to Perform in Adverse conditions, a team needs to understand that Performance is about leveraging strengths and resources towards defined objectives effectively despite a state of serious or continued difficulty or problems, on a day-to-day basis.

It is interesting to note, that, what hits us more in an adverse situation is not the specific factors surrounding it, but our perspective to it and how we frame it in our mind. This is very beautifully explained by world renowned philosopher, Sydney Banks, in his famous Three foundational Principles that create & govern the human experience - Universal Mind, Universal Consciousness and Universal Thought. He explains how we create our individual perception and experience of reality based on our thoughts.

The mind, which is the energy and intelligence behind life, project the thoughts into our consciousness. The consciousness creates an awareness in us and that is how, there is the play of thoughts in our mind. It is this play of thoughts that cause us to either feel resilient or overwhelmed when we encounter a changed or dynamic environment.

To bring a shift in us, it is important to become aware and observe our reaction when faced with adversity. Does it propel us to win or is the focus only on not losing? Our point of focus changes the dynamics of our behaviour to that situation and eventually the outcome.

Most people when faced with adversity, wonder, how to generate that extra capacity of self-efficacy, that inner belief in their own capacity, the inner strength, the resilience, and propelling beliefs necessary to produce specific performance attainments.

Even though most know that every crisis, comes with hidden opportunities, yet the response to any adverse situation is to allow it to look bigger than us, that is when fear takes over and overwhelms us completely. The demon of adversity thrives on our fear to grow bigger and stronger.

The Puranas, share a similar story of Krishna and Arjun, encountering a demon in the forest. This demon grew more powerful each day & people were petrified of it, little knowing that it was their very fear that fed it the energy to grow powerful. Eventually, the story tells us about how Lord Krishna, tames the fear and makes it look so small that he is able to tie the demon in his little pocket.

When adversity strikes, the first reaction is a freeze response, that is why to succeed, it consistently calls for raising our self-awareness about our strengths, unlimited potential, our awesomeness, the resources available to us, and rekindling our belief in our ability to raise our capability to match and more, the size of the adversity.

The good news is that the human spirit rises to the occasion. The answers to even the most complex situation lie within us, our Innate Intelligence holds all the latent resources to help guide us face every crisis.

Understanding this, most dynamic leaders look at any crisis as a challenge rather than a roadblock. Their will is ruled by trust in their ability to overcome. They, consciously and out of deliberate practice breakdown the situation into parts, bring their attention on all that they can control to move forward and put it under one column. Things that seem out of control, goes under the column, action needed to mitigate the effect. The balance that is beyond their control or beyond any action to mitigate is accepted with wisdom and serenity.

Thinking back of my journey, what worked for me was having a sense of clarity in my purpose, contributing to maintaining relations, staying open to collaborations, consciously reminding myself of my strengths and resources, and the invaluable experience of my earlier jobs. At times, also finding humour in the adversity, along with mental toughness. It also helped to have made peace with the situation.

This stands true for most people under similar adverse circumstances. They say, the benchmark of dynamic visionary leaders, is to know that we shall always be in the best of our efforts, to perform under adversity, and this will lead to something bigger and better in future. While we all have the potential to ride this track, do keep in mind that Success is a journey not a destination...

Deepak Kotak

aUt sUr Interventions & Transformations

M: +91 9820580984

E1: coachkotak@autsur.com

E2: coachkotak@gmail.com

W: www.autsur.com