

We hear people express disappointment every time somebody in their world fails to live up to their expectation of him or her in a given circumstance, and as individuals, we also have expectations from people in our world based on our relationship with them and our perception of their competencies. Parents have expectations from their children, and children on their part have expectations from their parents, so also are employers and employees, governments and the nationals, investors and businesses, teachers and students, candidates and examining bodies, aspiring professionals and their respective professional boards, Congress men and members of their constituencies, husbands and wives, neighbors, etc, to bring it closer to home, every nation has expectations from its immigrants and so do the Immigrants from the nations.

Overtly or covertly, we are all being constantly and consistently assessed by relevant people, institutions and authorities in our worlds, just as we always assess their performances, considering our expectations. Interestingly, we also have our individual expectations from ourselves at every point in time.

Sometimes expectations and the yardsticks for assessing performance are not expressed however, to a large extent, while expectations find expression in the laws, byelaws, rules, public policies, company policies, organizational policies, religious tenets, work manual, professional ethics, deadlines, set goals, terms of contract, targets, standard requirements, performance records, examination grades, norms and customs, promises and undertakings, mission statements, company memorandum and articles of association, set goal, standard practices, the yardsticks for assessing performance can be the age, status, level of education, parental background, religion, nature of relationship, first impression, antecedents, experience, nationality, level of exposure, consistency, efficiency, output etc. of the person being assessed.

When individual performances in a given task is compared over time in relation to the expectation of the assessor (which may be the individual himself), his or her personal best and worst performances emerge. Similarly, when different individual's performances on a common task are compared in relation to a standard expectation, the individuals that have the best and the worst performances in the group emerge. The foregoing being no rocket science, we can safely conclude that success or failure on a particular task or a given situation is determined by measuring performance against expectation.

The practical implication of low performance when expectations are high, varies, depending on the task and the circumstance and the individual, for instance, companies lose ratings when they fail to perform up to the expectation of the stakeholders in their industries, employees lose their jobs or are denied promotion when they fail, a cheating spouse loses the trust and respect of the other if he or she is found to be unfaithful as expected, Leaders lose the confidence and the mandate of their followers if they fall short of their followers' expectations, reckless drivers lose their driving licenses, illegal immigrants risk being deported or refused re-entry, unruly children become alienated by their families or end up in prison, erstwhile popular football teams lose their popularity and by implication their income if they continually perform less than expected in their matches or tournaments, the current performance of Chelsea, in the UEFA premier league is on point here.

Failing to meet expectations in marriage ends in divorce, failing to meet the expectations of your business management makes the business go under, failing to meet the expectation of the examination board means re-sit or carry over or outright disqualification, , failing to comply with the rules of your professional ethics and standard practices could result in withdrawal of license and or imprisonment, failing to meet personal expectations makes one feel like a loser, and failing to keep up with changing times makes one lose relevance in the scheme of things. The list of possible effect of failing to meet up with expectations is endless but since the generic term here is 'failure', it is safe to say performing below expectation has the same effect as failure. Income (both actual and prospective), goodwill, opportunities, relationships, freedom, popularity, self confidence, etc are lost when one continually fails to meet up with expectations of the relevant people, institutions and authorities in his or her world.

On the other hand, the mark of successful people is performing beyond expectations, high performers almost always exceed expectations, they are the pacesetters, and they set new limits. Expectedly, being a high performer comes with all the perks of being successful.

If one has to consider the changing times we live in , where new realities are being set on daily basis, then the challenge is not just how to cope with the challenges of performing up to expectation but, how to meet up with changing expectations. Finding answer to this germane question is key to maintaining relevance in these changing times. With the stakes being raised no thanks to forces of change such as economy, knowledge, electronic commerce,

digital convergence, establishment of virtual organizations, major mergers and acquisitions, other types of technological and scientific advancement and the attendant effects on all areas of human endeavors, it takes more to be a high performer.

It takes more to return as a champion, it takes more to run a successful business or be gainfully employed, the competition is getting stiffer, and standards are being raised every day. Employers are no longer seeking just employees, they want innovation and ingenuity personified, customers no longer buy just products, they look out for improved value, and clients want more than services, they look for efficiency, speed, and accuracy. There has been increasing emphasis on improved value, just as the allowed margin of error is getting narrower and a higher level of output is being demanded.

Ignorance in this age, is worst than negligence, it takes more to succeed as an immigrant in the US, worst still as an entrepreneur, it takes more to buy a house and keep it, just as it takes more to keep a home and make one's marriage work, it takes more to manage one's finance without running into debts. With the combined effects of September 11, the global economic crisis, internet, failure of the comprehensive immigration bill no thanks to the insensitive congress men etc, it now takes more for immigrants to succeed on this 'mission to America.' The America dream is fast becoming elusive for those who are not aware of these changing times and the need for improved performance.

The words of Jack Welch on 'change' are spot on:

*When the rate of change outside exceeds the rate of change inside, the end is in sight.*

Change is no permanent end; it's just a herald of new beginnings.

In the next edition, we shall be discussing how best to improve on our best performances to meet up with changing expectations in this changing times. We all have got to do better, we can.

