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Employment Breaks - Can We End the Scepticism?!

The case of employment breaks is almost always the most misunderstood one across industries. As corporate India, and as a society, we are too judgmental of people. However, as HR professionals, have the discretion to redefine cultures with our hiring strategies and possibly break some stereotypes.

What do you assume when you get a resume with a 6-month employment gap since the last job?

What's your reaction when you see a lady applying for a job 2-years after her maternity break?

What's your first thought when you see someone trying to get back to work after a 3-year entrepreneurial stint?

Be honest.

As corporate India, and as a society, we are too judgmental of people. If someone has been off work for some time, there's an immediate subconscious red flag raised rather than focussing and evaluating the skillset that the individual brings to the table. It could be anything - from an accident to a family emergency, a work sabbatical or a much-awaited refreshing travel break - interviewers, however, happen to equate it with the individual's capability and commitment.

There is a lot that we need to revamp (both, mindset and actions) in our homes and workplaces to collectively elevate ourselves. These are the two playing fields where we spend our entire lives driven by our personal values, deciding the actions we take and subsequently impacting lives.



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pretty decent job in giving people the chance for a second inning. This primarily stems from the fact that the promoters/founders were themselves mavericks who took the offbeat path and proved naysayers wrong.

HR folks, by the virtue of our roles in our corporate avatars, are the owners of corporate cultures by influencing what type of talent gets in and stays. When someone is on-boarded in your respective organisations, they not only bring in their skills and functional expertise with them but also their ideas, beliefs and personal values.

Employment Gaps

Start with empathy, giving the benefit of doubt to the applicant. Life is complicated and unpredictable. At times we need to take difficult calls for family and other times for our own sanity and well-being. E.g. someone taking a 6-month break to travel across the country! Wow! AND having the gall to quit their routine job (against majority's wisdom) to fulfill their lifelong desire. I see grit and passion and commitment.



Risk-taker, warhorse, lone-ranger is how I'd look at the profile. Scaling things from ground-up, new business development, exploring unexplored businesses is where the person would fit perfectly. The right ones with the right drive can act as a one-(wo)man-army possible surpassing performance beyond conventional wisdom.

The nature of our jobs gives us a platform to actually make a positive difference and break existing stereotypes. Let's take conscious steps to make our workplaces more empathetic, accepting and appreciative to redefine the 'norm'. Let's not be too quick to judge and open our minds to a fresh perspective, new possibilities and do good by acting in the best interest of not only our employers but the society at large as well.

Let's become that unsung hero.

Vishal Naithani is currently the Head of Human Resource [North] at Oyo Rooms. Prior to Oyo he was the Head-HR for Shuttl where he built and scaled the function from ground-up since inception. In his earlier stints he has also worked with larger MNCs like Xerox India Ltd, Sapient Consulting and Essar wherein he donned multiple hats within the HR function. His keen areas of interest are Organisational Culture, Leadership Development, Performance Management, Compensation & Benefits and Employer Branding. He has more than 11 years of rich experience post his MBA from MDI, Gurgaon and is intrigued by People & Culture challenges in new-age organisations.

Imagine the exposure and varied experiences this person brings to the table. This one would surely have more potential to be an inspiration for their team than the average Joe. Having an open mind and seeing what's beneath the surface can help HR professionals evaluate and unravel valuable talent.



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Women Getting Back to Work

Unfortunately, women who take a break during their career are often

labelled as not career oriented and undependable and a stability 'risk'. Really? On the contrary, imagine how aspirational the lady is that she's willing to compromise on personal time with her kid and make a mark on the professional front. Managing office and work is surely a herculean task, hats-off! Women getting back to work is beneficial not only for our social framework but corporate setups as well as bringing in a different perspective to people policies at work. Many companies like Philips, Godrej, Google, GE, IBM, and Microsoft already have back-to-work programs in place for female employees. It's time organisations at large start adopting these practices.

Entrepreneurial Breaks

It takes a lot of courage to embark upon an entrepreneurial journey. So, if someone takes a career break to start out on his/her own, for me they've ticked a lot of boxes already.