

6 Thoughts for the Fresh MBA

The MBA degree is under scrutiny. The MBA was a first among masters' degrees for the last twenty years. Today, the degree in theory and the holder in practice are both being challenged.

What can young MBAs do?

Most MBAs tend to trip in the first year at work on attitude and behavior. After that, they get branded and the recovery process stalls, hurting their ego and confidence. I signal six thoughts for the fresh MBA from my experience of coaching more than 200 MBAs.

1. The MBA is a width degree, one learns concepts of many disciplines in B School, but one doesn't get into depth in any one discipline. The width gives you fertile jargon, jargon that's understood by other MBAs. This poses a challenge in communicating with fellow workers. The workplace is the exact opposite; it is not about jargon, it is about depth. A successful job needs detail orientation, in some cases the detail boringly repeats and can be seen by the young MBA as drudgery. A company wins because it out executes its rivals and that cannot be replicated easily by competition. Execution is about detail. Be excited about detail, it is a passion that's needed to succeed in your career.
2. In the MBA course, one competes individually for grades, projects and jobs. B school project teams end up in bitter arguments and are not about collaborative learning. The workplace is the exact opposite. Barring a few individual led sectors like creative people in advertising or investment banking, the WE is more important than the ME at work. You cannot win at work by being a solo star. Learn to be a team player and contribute to the team success wholeheartedly. You cannot lose when you are a team player.
3. MBAs compare companies based on their classmates view and narrow experience at work. The pizza Tuesday at one company will be compared versus the Friday disco at another and the car pool at a third company. Each company has a different employee value proposition and combining a value proposition with the best perks from each company is something no company can deliver. The better thing to learn from a classmate in another

company is about the values of the company, what makes it tick and it's winning recipe.

4. Money is a big yardstick of comparison and is wrongly equated with success. Money is important and convenient, not so important that you take short cuts with your career. A fresh MBA should focus more on the learning a job offers and not the money. Money is never an indicator of how good you are. If you are good, money will follow. If you have money, it doesn't necessarily mean you are good. In a twenty-five year career, savings happen in senior roles, so have the patience to achieve financial stability and success. Whatever you do, please don't mortgage your career with high EMIs. It will corner you to into the wrong career lanes.
5. MBAs get into some bad habits when they start working. They stop reading, they put on weight and their schedule goes awry, robbing them of morning freshness at work. In B School, you can sleep through classes, mug up the subject before the exam and score marks. The company you work for will be challenged every day and if you are not up to date with the latest concepts and thinking, you will become a bystander. As students, one has a hobby or something one is passionate about. Somehow, when one starts working, passions and hobbies take a back seat, that's not good, Pursue a hobby!! A good career is a marathon, not a sprint. One cannot win a marathon without the physical and mental strength. So stay in shape.
6. At B School, the school or professors cannot give you work-life balance. The same is true at work. Your boss or the company cannot give you work-life balance. Pick a company not because they don't work on a Saturday, but because the learning is great and work is a hobby. The most productive employees succeed because they don't see work as a chore. You have to decide what's important in your life and the script will follow your decision. To be good at work-life, one needs 'learning' in between work and life, i.e., be a life long learner. Concepts in business change fast. In the last 50 years, we have seen 63 new management concepts, that's almost one every year. So, if one is not up to date, one will be living and talking in the past tense. Reinvention is key to all MBAs!!

The world is changing fast and to be successful, young MBAs will need to adapt and change faster. They will need to lead us into the future.