

“Impostor Syndrome”



Weekly Learnings 41 / 2024

A recent study from Korn Ferry said that 58 % of CEOs and Senior managers, ie CXOs have impostor syndrome. I had to talk on this recently and this is what I picked up:

The CEO number for India is 75 %, which means 3 in 4 Indian CEOs go through this. That's a high number and a worry. Film stars tend to display this..high on confidence yet high on insecurity In their case it's about the success of their film on any given Thursday.

Impostor syndrome simple defined is " When you doubt yourself , your skills and successes so far, feel you are not worthy as other believe and one day people will find out"

Why are so many Indian CEOs feeling this?

- 1.The pace of change has been relentless, many have grown in an era when they felt they were in control
- 2.The past is no longer a marker for the future, so CEOs are unsure of how things will shape out. They are not deep thinkers of the industry.
- 3.They genuinely do not have the skills or foresight to do the job. They give marketing gyan because they have been in some function (not marketing) in an FMCG company or give you technology gyan (because they have been around in some function, not in tech) in a tech company. They pass off second hand , meeting heard/learnt knowledge as their own.
4. Inability to accept failure and admit " they don't know"
5. Fear of Failure - The CEO exits they see and the big failure of some companies.

If your CEO has impostor syndrome , he/she is likely displaying the following:

- 1.Micro aggression, when there are fewer people in the room.
- 2.Aiming for perfection when its not needed
- 3.Ascribing success to external factors
- 4.Prcrastinates by playing the 20 questions type game
5. Tries to be liked vs being respected
6. Brings a small team to discuss an issue and doesn't invite you or asks others to brief you.
- 7.Doesnt put you on an important project team even though you are the best suited for it.

8. Plays one against the other , loves sycophancy of a high order, sometimes subtly, sometimes blatantly
9. Talks big to press, likes to announce big numbers.
10. Makes big project news, " Divide country into X clusters or aim for 5 X GDP growth or be fastest growing company or some such statements"

I think you can help your CEO by being patient and ensuring that your work is correct. Your CEO needs handholding from someone in the company or the board.

An impostor might be threatened by your good work, but that doesn't mean you have to drop your standard of work.

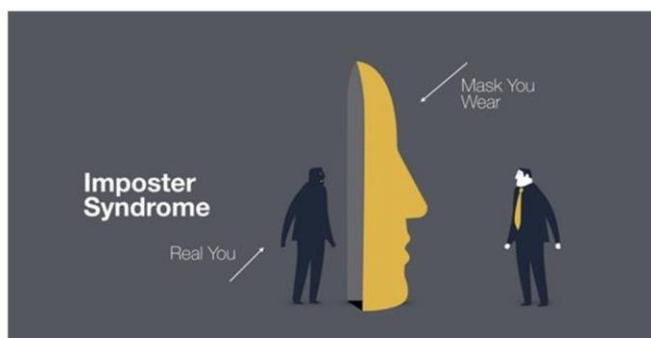
If an impostor dislikes you for your talent and intellectual honesty , then you have to bide your time till he exits. Or, you move on...

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Global data - 58% of CEOs and 58% of senior managers say they are in the imposter syndrome space.

The CEO number for India is 75%

The CEO needs help