

Personality Traits of B Players – Driving force for organizations

Properly nurtured personality traits can be the driving forces for organizational development.

Ivan Farmer, a manager in oil rigs of a large conglomerate was dissatisfied with his B players as they were less ambitious and were not comparable with A players. A players are star performers who are brilliant and contribute a lot to corporate organizations. He started disrespecting and disregarding his B players. While many B players left for being disregarded, A players also left the organizations for better prospects. As a result, performance started declining and he started respecting, valuing and rewarding B players.

In general, organizations invest huge time, money and energy in recruiting star performers without understanding the reasons for decline in profits. A company's long-term performance including survival is dependent on B players and not on A players. They help organizations with continued support, especially during a crisis.

Characteristics of B Players:

Playing strong character parts:

- B players are not less intelligent than A, but A and B players differ in their temperament. B players are self-managed and like the proverbial wheel that never squeaks. On the other hand, A players squeak loudly to gain attention.
- B players have a very high premium on work-life-balance and also value the time spent with family and friends, whereas A players would be ready to leave the organizations for personal reasons.

James Nuckolls who graduated top in class from Princeton was appointed to study third-world development in Kenya. At 23, he was recruited by the American Foreign Service and held two major posts by 30. Leaving major opportunities ahead, Nuckolls returned to US to join a small publishing firm. He continued with the firm for more than a decade. He sacrificed his job of glory and fat paycheck to spend time with his family. A players are more mobile and would be ready to scale down their career for family and friends.

- B players are truth tellers with religious zeal for honesty and true in their interactions with superiors. They are functional experts interested in their work and not in career. They are obedient to the company and this makes approachable to other colleagues.
- *Pete Lessiter is a loner in the trading division of a financial services firm. He is interested in his present job because of the technology, trading, and company infrastructure and with no intentions to move out. He is committed and sincere towards company's values and culture. Once he discovered that office had paid more than the current price for its newly installed computer system, with the influence of a powerful executive, to please the client. While no one opened their mouth, Pete got involved courageously and saved millions of dollars to the company.*
- B players, though with second-rate functional skills, have extraordinary affiliation to organization's processes and norms. They are called the 'go-to' people.

Cindy Friedman is an investment broker who lacked the analytical skills required to excel as a deal maker. As she was interested in the current high-paying job, she worked hard and developed a strong network that all others started consulting, when in need.

- Some B players are called middling because they are less competent than other B players but they respect organization's values though are less risk taking and are not entrepreneurial.

Oscar-Winning Performance:

- B players bring depth and stability to organizations to improve performance and resilience. B players balance to support the successes and failures equally. Especially in times of crisis, stability is the organization's saving grace.

Richard Snow is an honest type of B player in New York investment bank. He was continuing in a higher position there safely but with no promotions. During the economic downturn of 2000, he was confident that his job was safe, but other younger colleagues were worried about their job. Richard started telling them stories about how Wall Street firms survived the financial crises and informed them that it requires some time, concerted efforts and emotional energy to overcome problems. This helped the company move towards a long-term recovery.

- B players are not afraid of restructuring. They understand that change is inevitable and support accordingly. Not only do they assure to adapt on their part, they also impose a sense of confidence to the rest of the organization. They are good mentors in times of transition, stress and during change.

Scibiolo is a group of biogenetics laboratories that underwent three disruptive change initiatives in five years. After the second restructuring, Paul Chung, a lab assistant who joined in Los Angeles from Asia was left without a boss for a research project. Bruce Jones, a veteran who once studied in Asia, took Paul into his team. He taught him about how the system works. Later, Paul's abilities were apparent to everyone.

- B players play a balancing role in transitions. When a new CEO takes over the organization, while A players would be ready for promotions and C players would try to bury their incompetence, B players get back to their work normally as they know the truth that they would be passed over for promotions. They ignore all the political fights and remain a backbone for the organization.

Warewick Life Insurance is a company where, after huge losses, a new CEO took up leadership. She immediately fired 400 employees and replaced top people to shift focus from personal agents to electronic commerce. While other players wasted their time in expecting what would happen, B players were poised and continued to work by managing with the use of computer technology, with very little guidance or mentoring.

The personality traits of B players and the cases given clearly show that B players are most suitable to organizations and they need to be nurtured, encouraged and recognized for the success of the organizations.

An individual's **personality traits** and attitudes determine his/her behavior to a large extent. Invariably, these factors also have an impact on the person's behavior at the work place. There are five important personality traits – Extroversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Openness to experience.

Discussion Questions

1. 'Personality traits and attitudes determine one's behavior'-Justify
(**Hints:** extroversion- agreeableness- conscientiousness- emotional stability- openness to experience)
2. Discuss the personality traits of B Players as driving forces for organization development
(**Hints:** self-managed- truth tellers- extraordinary affiliation to organization-adaptable- balancing behavior)

Source: Thomas J. DeLong and Vineeta Vijayaraghavan, Let's Hear It for B Players, Harvard Business Review, June, 2003