

PAPER: THE STAR (VIEWPOINTS)
DATE: 27 OCTOBER 2012
PAGE: 07

Care for yourself like your company

Personal health is not always given the same weightage as work



I CANNOT remember when my conversations at lunch changed. It might be when I entered the 50+ age group. I cannot quite remember what we spoke about during my 30s and 40s.

But age aside, lunchtime conversations with clients or business associates would revolve around golf, a holiday destination, or a topical matter.

However, these days, whether one is with friends, colleagues or business associates, we not only discuss business matters but personal situations as well - chiropractor visits, blood sugar levels, diets, colonoscopy, cholesterol and blood pressure levels and medical tests. We share health tips.

The conversation may include recommendations for a chiropractor, natural health remedies to lower cholesterol and blood pressure, exercise routines when you wake up in the morning, supplements to take, or treatment for back pain.

These topics are not too personal. Rather they break down barriers

and give us an insight and understanding about another person.

While health is a common concern, personal health is not always given the same weightage compared to work in terms of urgency and importance.

An executive remembers details at work, profit per unit item, sales figures by day, week and month or by store. With his team, he will grill them on performance figures. But somehow the same person does not apply the same diligence on himself when it comes to his health.

After he returns from visiting the doctor, he is not able to explain what tablet he is prescribed or how the tablet works. When it concerns his company he will probe his staff to get clarification and understand what action will be taken and why. Yet he does not demand the same degree of clarification and understanding when it comes to his own health.

An overweight individual diagnosed with high blood pressure merely asks, "What tablet do I need to take? What can I eat to lower the pressure?"

The right questions to ask are probably, "What lifestyle changes can I make?" or "How much weight do I need to lose?"

Yet, when it came to company

An overweight individual diagnosed with high blood pressure merely asks, 'What tablet do I need to take? What can I eat to lower the pressure?' The right questions to ask are probably, 'What lifestyle changes can I make?' or 'How much weight do I need to lose?'

matters, he would not be as simplistic and would go all out to look for root causes and options.

We are diligent in managing the company's performance (KPI's) but not in managing our own health. We try but we don't always make progress. It is difficult to lose weight, for example, when we have to grapple with issues like entertainment, tiredness after long hours at work, and finding time to go to the gym.

For others, happiness is being able to enjoy the food and lifestyle that we want. So the need to change lifestyle or exercise is not top of the agenda.

Somehow a person who is highly capable at work does not believe in showing the same concern for himself.

Many of us delay our annual medical check-up for various reasons such as busyness with work, travel and appointments. Some want to work on improvements such as lowering the weight or go through a period of dieting before the tests.

There are some who defer it because they don't want to know. However, when it comes to looking at performance figures, they won't say they don't want to know. They want to know the revenues, costs, margins, turnover and all the figures in the management reports.

In one of my annual executive screening, I was reminded by the doctor that the annual check gives the illusion of 'health-consciousness'. He stressed that what I do daily or on a regular basis is more important.

As I reflect on his comments, one can consider looking at medical results once a year being akin to looking at say, sales results once a

year.

In reality, the sales performance needs to be managed daily, weekly and monthly. We measure not only the results but also the sales process - actual time spent on sales activities, number of targets, conversion rate and whether sales management processes were adhered to.

Similarly, in terms of our health we need to measure both the outcome and the process - what exercises we do (how often, how long); and what we eat (how much, how often), etc.

When we hear of someone who suffers a stroke or heart attack, it seems too close for comfort. It makes us reflect on our own vulnerability. But after a while, life goes on as usual. We shrug it off and continue with our life and routine until a crisis hits us and we are forced to act.

In company matters, we don't wait for a crisis before we act. We should do the same when it comes to our health. Care for yourself in the same professional standards.

Let's start by making an appointment with ourselves to do the right thing for our health.

● Joan is writing this to remind herself of the need to focus on the health KPIs.