



Hack #1: Direction

Hard work and talent can only take you so far!

Siddharth walked out of his performance appraisal, his heart heavy with disappointment. The poor ratings he received were a blow to his morale, and with them, his chances of getting promoted dwindled. Settling back into his chair, Siddharth's mind raced, trying to understand where he went wrong. He was one of the most talented and hardworking members of his team. Why wasn't that enough?

His thoughts drifted back to his hometown, where his journey began.

Siddharth hailed from a middle-class family in a small town. His parents had instilled in him the values of diligence, honesty, and integrity. After completing his schooling at a modest private school, Siddharth moved to the city to pursue a degree in Computer Science Engineering. His hard work paid off as he emerged among the top students in his batch.

When campus placement season arrived, Siddharth set his sights on DeceptiveGlow, a beauty e-commerce company known for its world-class product team and rapid growth. Despite the tough selection process, Siddharth's love for solving puzzles and his diligence earned him his dream job.

The first year at DeceptiveGlow was phenomenal. Siddharth quickly gained respect and recognition. But now, here he was, dejected after his appraisal. What had gone wrong?

As Siddharth delved deeper into his work at DeceptiveGlow, he began to notice unsettling things. He discovered that product ratings were being manipulated to artificially drive sales of high-value items. Worse, user data was being sold to third parties without consent.

At first, he thought it was a mistake. He brought his concerns to his supervisor, who told him to keep quiet and focus on his work. Unsatisfied, Siddharth raised the issue in an open team meeting with a senior leader. The leader promised to look into it, and for a moment, Siddharth felt relieved. But no action followed, and soon, strange things began to happen.

His colleagues started avoiding him, and he was no longer considered for any rewards or recognition. His ideas were dismissed, and he sensed a growing undercurrent of politics and backbiting. But he couldn't pinpoint the exact cause.

When the time for performance appraisal came, Siddharth was hopeful. He expected a promotion, believing that his hard work and talent would be rewarded. Instead, his boss highlighted minor mistakes

to justify giving him poor ratings. With that, Siddharth's promotion hopes evaporated.

Sitting in his chair, Siddharth made a list of what was wrong with DeceptiveGlow: unethical practices, office politics, lack of recognition, and a stagnant career path. What should he do next?

Siddharth found himself at a crossroads. Should he quit and find another job? Should he stay and fight the system? Should he become a whistleblower? Or should he stay and endure the system?

He pondered whether it was possible to fight the system and still build a career. If he stayed without fighting, wouldn't he be compromising his values for money? Could he turn a blind eye to the unethical practices around him? If he left, what guarantee was there that his next workplace would be any better?

His value-driven upbringing made it hard for him to accept selling his soul for money. He wondered if the financial benefits were worth compromising his values. How were others managing this? What would happen if he didn't find another job?

Lost in thought, Siddharth walked to a nearby chai shop and ordered tea. As he waited, he noticed an older man sitting opposite him with a book in his hand. The man looked up and introduced himself as Dr. Vishnusharma. They struck up a conversation.

Vishnusharma mentioned that he worked for DeceptiveGlow. Surprised, Siddharth introduced himself and asked about Vishnusharma's role.

"I was brought in by the CEO to instill ethical practices at DeceptiveGlow," Vishnusharma said.

Siddharth couldn't help but laugh. "DeceptiveGlow and ethics in the same sentence is funny," he said.

"I understand your skepticism. Why do you feel that way?" Vishnusharma asked.

Siddharth recounted his experiences and his current dilemma. Meanwhile, his eyes fell on the book Vishnusharma was holding.

"What's the book you're reading?" Siddharth asked.

"It's the Panchatantra," Vishnusharma replied.

"What relevance does that have in today's world?" Siddharth asked, puzzled.

"What do you know about the Panchatantra?" Vishnusharma asked.

"Well, it's a set of moral stories for children, isn't it?" Siddharth responded.

"You couldn't be more wrong," Vishnusharma said. "The Panchatantra starts with a story that offers valuable lessons on navigating life's challenges."

Vishnusharma starts narrating the Panchatantra story

2500 years ago

In the sun-kissed lands of the south, a gem of a city bloomed by the name of Mahilarupya. Within its walls, prosperity flourished, untouched by maladies, want, or malfeasance. The secret to this utopia lay in the benevolent rule of a king unmatched in greatness. Like the mythical Kalpavruksha, the wish-fulfilling tree of lore, his reign bore fruits of abundance. His regal footwear gleamed, a testament to the obeisance offered by lesser monarchs who knelt before him.

Yet, despite his splendor, the king harbored a worry in his heart. His three sons, though princes in title, were devoid of wisdom and direction. Concerned for the future of his kingdom, he beseeched his council of ministers for a solution to educate and enlighten his heirs. The task, however, seemed daunting, and the ministers hesitated, deeming it beyond mortal capabilities.

A glimmer of hope arose when one minister mentioned the name Vishnusharma, a sage of renowned wisdom and wit. The king, seizing upon this hope, immediately sent for Vishnusharma. Upon his arrival, the king greeted the sage with utmost respect and shared his predicament.

Summoning Vishnusharma to his court, the king found solace in the sage's assurance. Vishnusharma, with a

calm demeanor and a glint of wisdom in his eyes, not only accepted the challenge to enlighten the royal heirs but also vowed to achieve this monumental feat within a mere span of six moons.

Impressed by Vishnusharma's confidence, the king offered a lavish reward of 100 villages as a token of gratitude. However, Vishnusharma gracefully declined, proclaiming, "Wisdom is beyond price, Your Majesty. My true reward lies in the enlightenment of your sons and the prosperity of your kingdom."

With a sense of determination, Vishnusharma unveiled his ground-breaking educational plan to the king. He proposed a unique approach: teaching the princes through engaging and morally rich stories that would impart wisdom, strategic thinking, and ethical values.

"Your Majesty," Vishnusharma began, "education is not merely the accumulation of knowledge. It is the cultivation of wisdom, the ability to discern right from wrong, and the skill to navigate the complexities of life. Allow me to guide your sons through the path of wisdom using stories that have withstood the test of time."

Moved by Vishnusharma's vision, the king decided to place his unwavering faith in the sage. "I trust you, Vishnusharma," he said. "Take my sons and mold them into wise and just leaders."

With the king's consent, Vishnusharma embarked on his transformative journey with the royal heirs. He took the three princes away from the palace's luxuries and into a serene hermitage, where distractions were minimal, and the focus on learning was absolute.

Vishnusharma began his teaching through stories, captivating his audience with the tale of how a cunning jackal managed to disrupt the budding friendship between a lion and a bull.

"In the vibrant city of Mahilarupya," he began, "there lived a prosperous merchant called Vardhamanaka, known for his wisdom and wealth. One tranquil night, as he lay on his luxurious couch, thoughts of increasing his fortune filled his mind. "

The merchant thinks about the benefits of making money

"There exists nothing (in this world) that is not to be accomplished by means of wealth. So, a wise person must pursue the acquisition of wealth only through efforts"

"A man, possessing riches, has many friends and relatives. He who owns wealth is considered noble and learned in this world"

"A person who is wealthy, even though he doesn't have merits, is praised for their 'charity, craft, art, firmness or valor"

Even a stranger behaves well with a rich person, even
“relatives act with malice towards poor people”

As rivers, increased by water of tributaries from different sides originates from the mountains, so do all actions proceed from increased wealth, procured by different fiscal endeavors and amassed”

“It is only due to the influence of wealth that a person, not worthy of veneration, is venerated, one not fit to be approached is approached and the one unworthy of adoration is adored”

“As the organs of the body becomes strong with food, so, all the actions become accomplished on the strength of wealth. For this reason, wealth is stated to be the instrument of executing everything”

“In this world, people are ready to risk their lives and even leave their family for the sake of wealth”

“People, who possess riches, remain young even though they age, those without wealth even in their youth appear as the old”

Having known the importance of wealth, the Merchant wants to earn more money. Driven by entrepreneurial zeal, he decided to embark on a journey to the bustling city of Mathura.

Today..

Dr. Vishnusharma, having narrated the beginnings of Panchatantra and the story of the Merchant, turned to Siddharth.

"Now, Siddharth, tell me, what will you do about your job?"

"I'm still not clear on how this story relates to my work," Siddharth replied.

"Think about it. The Merchant is already wealthy. Why is he striving to earn more money?"

"Greed, I suppose," Siddharth suggested hesitantly.

"The Merchant's wealth has come from dharmic means; he is not greedy by any standard," Dr. Vishnusharma corrected gently.

"So, are there other reasons people earn money?" Siddharth pondered aloud.

"You tell me," Dr. Vishnusharma encouraged.

"I can't think of any," Siddharth admitted.

"First, do you think earning money is important?" Dr. Vishnusharma asked.

"I'm not sure," Siddharth responded.

"There are people who risk their lives for the sake of money. Imagine the construction worker who works on unsafe high-rise buildings. Why do they do it? Is money worth more than their lives?" Dr. Vishnusharma queried."

People leave their families and relatives to go to far-off places to earn money. Is money worth more than their families?" he continued.

"According to our Indian tradition, a person has four goals in life: Artha (wealth), Kama (desires), Dharma (righteous living), and Moksha (liberation). People generally think our Indian scriptures are all about Moksha, but there is a rich set of literature on Artha and Niti. One example is the Panchatantra.

"Panchatantra is very clear on the importance of Artha. It doesn't advocate gaining money through unethical means, but it clearly states that seeking to earn more money is not a sin. Now, let us come back to the question. Is earning money important?" Dr. Vishnusharma reiterated.

"When I see people taking dangerous jobs or leaving their families for money, it does seem important," Siddharth conceded.

"The Panchatantra states that money gives you wings, much like a popular caffeine drink ad," Dr. Vishnusharma noted. "This is what the Panchatantra has to say about money:

Having wealth makes you look young, even if you are old.
If you don't have wealth, even the young look old.

With money, even strangers become relatives; without money, even relatives become strangers.

Just like all rivers start from mountains, all human activity starts from wealth."

"Okay, earning money is important. I get it. But does the Panchatantra ask us to sell our souls for it?" Siddharth asked.

I can't give you the answer now, but the Panchatantra offers a practical solution for being happy in your job," Dr. Vishnusharma responded.

"What's that?" Siddharth inquired, intrigued.

"The Panchatantra has a simple formula for financial prudence:

Earn what you cannot earn.

Protect what you have earned.

Multiply what you have protected.

Invest in just causes."

"That sounds like advice from popular personal finance books we see today. I'm amazed that this advice was given 2,500 years ago," Siddharth remarked, surprised.

"Humans will be humans irrespective of technological progress. But there is a significant difference between top personal finance books and the Panchatantra. It says that if you don't spend your money on just causes, it will start to stink like stagnant water in a tank. Therefore, one needs to find just causes to spend money on; only then can money give you wings," Dr. Vishnusharma elaborated.

"Understood. What should I do?" Siddharth asked, seeking direction.

"First, quitting is not a great idea, at least not right now," Dr. Vishnusharma advised.

"Why?" Siddharth questioned.

"When you quit and join another company, you will still face mundane tasks and office politics. Perhaps unethical practices won't be there, but the chances are high in today's world," Dr. Vishnusharma explained.

"What do you really want here?" he asked.

"An interesting job in a company that is ethical," Siddharth stated.

"Is that enough? What about your personal needs?" Dr. Vishnusharma pressed.

"Maybe a decent pay package, some respect, a lot of recognition," Siddharth listed.

"What if I told you, you could get all that here and more?" Dr. Vishnusharma proposed.

"Okay, but how?" Siddharth asked, skeptical yet hopeful.

"First, let's address the interesting job part. There are three ways to make your job interesting. You can choose which ones make sense to you:

Job crafting: an employee-initiated approach that enables employees to shape their own work environment to fit their individual needs by adjusting the prevailing job demands and resources.

Identify a just cause: Fundamentally, if you cannot craft your job, you can craft how you use the money from the job, giving you a reason to stay.

Take on a vision: This addresses the fundamental question of 'why' regarding your job. Pick something you are passionate about and focus on that in your current job. You can find our workbooks here if you want to try these," Dr. Vishnusharma suggested, pointing to the resources available.

"Are you saying all this just to retain me?" Siddharth asked, wary of ulterior motives.

No, not really. There is an altruistic motive and a selfish one for me," Dr. Vishnusharma admitted.

"First, the altruistic motive is that I know for a fact that organizations will have politics wherever you go. So retaining you is not my intention here; rather, it's to help you in whichever job you want to take up.

"Second, the selfish motive is that if people like you leave the organization, my intention of making

DeceptiveGlow ethical will become tough. The CEO has given me three years to make it possible, and I will retire by then," he explained.

"However, the decision is yours," Dr. Vishnusharma concluded.

"I get the gist of what you've said. Let me think about it," Siddharth replied, contemplative.

Siddharth, although appreciating the logic, still wanted to quit. He applied to a few companies and got a couple of interview calls. He converted one, only to find that DeceptiveGlow was paying him better. The other company couldn't even match his salary, leaving him back at square one.

Deciding to try Dr. Vishnusharma's advice, Siddharth downloaded the workbook and crafted his role to make it more interesting. He also focused on his passion for educating the poor, donating and contributing to an NGO dedicated to this cause. This gave him a reason to earn. Lastly, after speaking to Dr. Vishnusharma, he was motivated to help make DeceptiveGlow ethical, giving him personal motivation to succeed in his career there.

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Hack-1 workbook

