Hack #3: Punching above your weight

Siddharth now accepted the fact that Pranesh was his boss. His vision of making DeceptiveGlow ethical was going nowhere. Despite his efforts and job crafting, acceptance of the world around him had calmed him down somewhat. Yet, respect and recognition were still nowhere in sight. How could he get recognized?

Siddharth remembered Dr. Vishnusharma had asked him to read the Panchatantra. There were so many different Panchatantra books — which ones to read? He decided to call Vishnusharma for guidance.

When Siddharth called, Vishnusharma was pleasantly surprised to hear that Siddharth was even thinking about reading the Panchatantra. Vishnusharma told him that there were different resources available but emphasized that one should always consume the original Sanskrit version along with a translation in a language they could understand. He gave some options from Vyoma, YouTube, free online sources, and also books that were true to the original Sanskrit.

"Start with the basics," Vishnusharma advised. "Understand the core principles of each story. The Panchatantra is not just a collection of tales; it is a guide to navigating the complexities of life and human behavior.

The wisdom contained within these stories can offer you new perspectives on how to handle your situation at DeceptiveGlow.

Siddharth thanked Vishnusharma and decided to begin his journey with the recommended resources. He found a highly regarded translation of the Panchatantra that stayed true to the original Sanskrit and began reading. As he delved into the stories, he was struck by the timeless wisdom and the depth of insight into human nature.

2500 years ago

Just as the bull was making loud noises, at the same time, a Lion approached the Yamuna River to drink water with his retinue. The Lion King, majestic and powerful, was accustomed to the usual sounds of the forest. However, this time, as he bent down to lap up the cool water, he heard an unusually loud noise echoing through the dense forest.

The noise was not just loud; it was terrifying. It reverberated through the trees, sending flocks of birds into the sky and causing smaller animals to scurry for cover. The Lion King, despite his strength and position, felt a shiver of fear. The roar, unlike any he had ever heard, made him think that some formidable creature had come to take over his kingdom.

Fear and uncertainty gripped the Lion King. He immediately decided to form a Chatur Mandala, a strategic formation used in times of crisis. Calling his retinue, which included his trusted advisors, the wise old leopard, the cunning jackal, and the fierce tiger, he led them to a nearby Banyan tree. This ancient tree, with its sprawling branches and thick roots, provided a semblance of safety and a vantage point to observe the surroundings.

There are two Jackals in the king's retinue who had been ousted from their positions. Having seen the King afraid, one of the Jackals, Damanaka, saw an opportunity to take political advantage. The two Jackals had a conversation about their next steps.

Damanaka asked, "Having gone to drink water at the Yamuna, why has our King stalled?"

Karataka, the more cautious of the two, responded, "A man wishing to interfere in other people's business will die just like the Monkey who pulled the Wedge."

Damanaka was curious. "How is that?"

Karataka began his story. "Near the city, there is a temple under construction in a grove. One day, a few carpenters left for lunch, leaving a splintered log separated by a wedge. A group of Monkeys started playing with the Wedge. One monkey, whose end was near, pulled the Wedge. He did not see that his tail and testicles were between the splintered wood. I don't have to tell you what happened when the monkey pulled the Wedge."

Damanaka shuddered at the thought, understanding the implied gruesome fate of the monkey.

Karataka continued, "We get our food and we should be content. Why seek trouble?

"One should live a life worth living, according to one's potential"

Both of us are ousted and considered worthless. Why take this initiative when there are seniors more fit for this task?"

Damanaka, however, was not convinced. "A person who does what seniors do becomes a senior. A senior, if he doesn't do what he must, is demoted."

Karataka sighed, knowing Damanaka's ambitious nature. "But think, Damanaka. Our King is in a state of fear. He is vulnerable. While it might seem like an opportunity, it is also a risk. If we fail, we could be punished severely. The story of the monkey teaches us that meddling in matters that do not concern us can lead to our downfall."

Damanaka, however, was determined. "But it also teaches us that with careful planning and understanding, one can seize opportunities. The seniors are paralyzed by indecision. If we step up and manage to calm the King, we can regain our positions and respect."

Karataka remained skeptical. "We have been ousted for a reason. To try and reinsert ourselves into the King's favour could backfire. It is wiser to stay within the bounds of our current position and ensure our survival rather than risk everything for a chance that might not even exist."

Damanaka shook his head. "Survival is not enough. We must thrive. I will approach the King. If I succeed, we both stand to gain. If I fail, the blame will fall on me alone. But doing nothing is the surest way to remain in obscurity."

Today

Siddharth began reflecting on what he had just learned, but he still couldn't decipher how to apply it to his work life. He wanted to meet Vishnusharma in person to discuss this further. So, he blocked some time in Vishnusharma's calendar and went to his cabin.

"Hey Siddharth, how did your Panchatantra reading go?" Vishnusharma asked, looking up from his desk with a welcoming smile.

"It is good, but I am not able to connect the dots to my work life," Siddharth admitted, feeling a bit frustrated.

"Did you read it in full?" Vishnusharma inquired.

"No, I read up to the part where Karataka and Damanaka have a conversation after seeing that the Lion King Pingalaka is afraid," Siddharth replied.

"Okay, what's your inference from that part?" Vishnusharma probed.

"Nothing much. It looks like a normal story, and I am starting to think the Panchatantra is useless for my situation," Siddharth confessed, feeling more disheartened.

"Let's start with this character Damanaka—what do you think of him?" Vishnusharma asked, steering the conversation.

"He comes across as someone who wants to interfere with other people's matters," Siddharth responded thoughtfully.

"Why do you think he is doing it?" Vishnusharma prompted.

"Possibly to gain a good name with the King?" Siddharth ventured.

"Good. What do you call this in your work world?" Vishnusharma asked, guiding Siddharth towards the insight.

"Recognition," Siddharth answered, a light bulb going off in his mind.

"Excellent. What's his approach to gain recognition?" Vishnusharma continued.

"He wants to poke his nose in the King's business," Siddharth explained.

"Is the King just another person?" Vishnusharma queried.

"No. He is his boss," Siddharth clarified.

"Is the King just a boss?" Vishnusharma pressed further.

"I think the entire forest reports to him. He probably makes all the important decisions on how the forest is run," Siddharth elaborated.

Now what do you think Damanaka is doing?" Vishnusharma asked.

"He is trying to interfere in matters beyond his capabilities and scope of work," Siddharth concluded.

"Okay. How do you categorize Damanaka?" Vishnusharma asked.

"Ambitious," Siddharth replied.

"To summarize, to gain recognition, one of the ways is to start interfering and contributing to areas beyond your scope of work. In short, you should start punching above your weight in your organization," Vishnusharma explained.

"You're just making this up to align with popular management techniques. This is not in the Panchatantra," Siddharth objected.

"On the contrary, this is explicitly stated in the Panchatantra. Before we go there, let us look at the other character, Karataka—what do you make of him?" Vishnusharma asked.

"Karataka pokes holes in Damanaka's thinking," Siddharth answered.

"What's his view?" Vishnusharma probed.

"Protecting the status quo, I assume," Siddharth said.

"Good. How do you know that?" Vishnusharma asked.

"He says, 'We are getting our food and we should be content with it. Why rock the boat?'" Siddharth explained.

"What else does Karataka say?" Vishnusharma inquired.

"He says that they are already 'apradhana 'or not important, and there are other important people to take care of this. Why should we bother?" Siddharth elaborated.

"What do you think is Damanaka's response?" Vishnusharma asked.

"Possibly to interfere in the King's matter," Siddharth speculated.

"Yes but let us look at his answers precisely. First, he says life, even if short-lived, should be a great life. Just being content is not a life at all. Then, he says if one doesn't use his potential, that potential is wasted like the latent fire in the wood.

Third, he says one who does the job which seniors or important people do becomes important. When important people don't do important work, they lose their importance," Vishnusharma explained.

Got it. You are pretty much advising me to stop doing my job and pick up something important to do instead," Siddharth summarized.

"Don't stop doing what you are doing. But slowly start contributing to what's important," Vishnusharma clarified.

"Will it help me achieve my vision?" Siddharth asked.

"No, not really. But it will gain you recognition which will help you set yourself up for your vision," Vishnusharma answered.

"Do you have some workbooks for this as well?" Siddharth inquired.

"Of course. But before that, let us look at Karataka and Damanaka's characters again to drive home the point. If Karataka is maintaining the status quo, what does Damanaka do?" Vishnusharma asked.

"He is challenging the status quo," Siddharth replied.

"One secret to gaining recognition in the organization is to challenge the status quo. Also, what do you think is the status quo in DeceptiveGlow?" Vishnusharma asked.

"Unethical practices are okay to drive business outcomes," Siddharth answered.

"Excellent. What do you think challenging the status quo would look like?" Vishnusharma continued.

"Unethical practices are not okay," Siddharth replied.

"Great. We cannot change that immediately, but I am setting you up for it," Vishnusharma said.

Siddharth then downloaded the workbook Vishnusharma provided and began mapping out how he could punch above his weight in his organization. However, even with his new strategy, he still found that his needle didn't move as much as he hoped.

Hack-3 workbook