

Why actions speak louder than degrees

I have learnt 'that', but I can 'do' this—today, skills score over degrees, and this is the new success mantra for the millennial generation

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THOSE OF YOU who have watched *M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story* will probably remember the scenes when a young Mahendra Singh Dhoni, played by ever-impressive Sushant Singh Rajput, had to balance between his duties as a railway ticket inspector and long net-practice sessions, often leaving him drained. While Rajput's acting was pitch-perfect, not many know that a similar situation in the young actor's career might have propelled such a fine performance. The actor, who was an AIR-7 rank holder in AIEEE-2003 and a National Olympiad winner in physics, faced a difficult time letting go of a bright academic career to pursue his passion of acting. Today, he has achieved the rare feat, based on the strength of his skills lying latent under the mass, force and weight of massive physics books.

The internet, TV and every other medium of communication today is chock-a-block with messages prompting audiences to 'choose the path they love', 'follow your heart' and so on. However, they fail to acknowledge the risk that goes into taking such decisions, involving not only an individual but his/her near and dear ones' future. Even if a person has a strong belief in own abilities, the choice of 'quitting' the daily grind to follow a calling is, at that very moment, a selfish act.

Lately, however, we have seen a growing trend of people choosing vocations that utilise their existing skills instead of the degrees with which they walk out of

academic institutions. But this has been brought about by the increasing number of alternatives and available information over the internet, opening up avenues for people with talent in various skills to build an audience or a target customer base. From digital marketing to cooking, acting to event planning, there is an appreciation of high-level skill-sets in any profession.

Jack of all trades, master of one

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neers who can explain in 15 steps on paper how to change a tyre, but they may have never done it physically. In fact, one of the biggest problems MNCs in India face while recruiting is the lack of necessary industry-relevant skill-sets in professionals, even amongst those with high academic merit. The government wants to tackle this scenario with initiatives such as Skill India and organisations such as the National Skill Development Corporation, with an aim of skilling 78 million Indians in the next 10 years.

By 2020, India will become the youngest country in the world, with an

average age of 29. As the unemployment scenario worsens, Indian youth need to gradually try and identify skills that distinguish them from the crowd and help them to create a niche of their own, rather than hinging their entire future on a piece of paper owned by several other youngsters. With the threat of automation also looming large, it is time to shine the spotlight on faculties such as singing, dancing, acting, art, sculpture and other such non-mechanisable skills. Also, focusing more on the digital world, and learning its tropes by pursuing courses such as digital marketing, new media communication, graphic designing, etc, is extremely important in the current day and age.

Youngsters today have millions of information and mentoring sources to guide them towards their chosen path. Thus, unnecessarily romanticising the grand days of struggle of the previous generation, and attempting to relive them in spite of alternate resources, is foolish. One needs to allocate enough time for self-introspection to identify skill-sets, devise a blueprint to follow a particular path in the most efficient manner, and identify the best category or niche wherein one can rise to the top, than just linger on the average threshold. Even the great Leander Paes, after winning the bronze medal at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, opted to play doubles in the future. He identified a better possibility of him becoming one of the best doubles and mixed doubles player of all time, rather than remaining on the periphery of greatness in the singles circuit. Identification of skills, persistence in practice, smart choices and grabbing the right opportunities, all of these factors together contribute to success, but it all begins with knowing the 'gift' you have.

The author is co-founder, Digiperform, the digital marketing training platform. Views are personal