

How to Succeed in 2011

Written by U.S Immigration News

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Sometimes toward the tail end of last year, I was assigned to interview a young and new law school graduate who had applied for the position of an intern with our firm. It was an impromptu arrangement, so I barely had time to really scrutinize his resume, but at a glance, I noticed that the young man apart from having had a barely average performance in school had interned in some of the big law firms in the course of his college and law school education and had written several professional exams, some of which made me wonder if he was planning a change of career. At the time I was perusing his credentials, he was already waiting to meet me. However, within the short time I had, I was able to draw one inference from his resume, he does too many things at the same time, and in a way, that could have contributed to his not too impressive academic records.

He was soon ushered into my office; he was sharply dressed in a black suit, with black tie worn on a clean white shirt. I noticed he was wearing a tag, from an ongoing conference on 'Arbitration and Mediation', that gave me an hint that he came straight from the conference venue and probably did not have enough time to prepare for the quiz and interview. After few minutes of filling out forms and answering some structured questions on the relevant areas of law, the oral interview commenced in earnest with me asking him to tell me more about himself, beyond the academic and professional qualifications outlined in his Resume.

The learned fellow spent about 15 minutes telling me all the impressive things about himself, the expressed perceptions of his friends, his parents, and other people in his world about him and his lofty dreams and ambition of becoming a well known commercial lawyer and a Business Magnate. He spoke at length about his many successes and achievements and for his age, I must admit his drive and ambition are quite commendable. However, as impressed as I was with what he had to say about himself and what people say about him, I was also curious to know about his past failures, and his failings, my intention was to find out the lessons he had learnt from his failures and what he has been doing to deal with his failures, when I asked him if he had failed in his life, he coolly answered in the negative, I asked him if he considered his academic performance and indeed his performance in the structured test (he again scored below average) and his answer was still negative, his excuse was that he did not have enough time to prepare for the test (whose fault?) and that if he had been given more time, he would have performed better.

In a bid to help him understand my questions, I asked him if he has any recurring fault his friends or family members complained about, which could impede his optimal performance as an intern with the firm, and he again said there was none except the fact that people sometimes say, he is very driven and focused, that to me sounded more like a compliment than a complaint (probably that is the kind of answer suggested for such interview question in the books on job interviews). Anyway, after several questions, I was able to reach another conclusion: the applicant was a smart, energetic, promising young man who is either too focused on his potentials to notice his failings, or he just never admits them. That to me is one significant weakness in itself.

While his potentials and impressive records would have gotten him the job, his inability to come to terms with his weaknesses and find ways round them, cast too much murk on his bright side, and cost him a wonderful opportunity to explore his potentials in an environment that seeks to help him deal with his weaknesses.

This month marks the beginning of a New Year, it's the time we try to put the past behind us and start the year with a renewed hope that things will turn out better than they were in the previous year. However, mere hoping may not bring about the kind of dramatic changes we expect in our lives, there may be a need to retrospectively consider all the factors that made the previous year go the way it went and consciously take steps towards ensuring that things indeed get better in the New Year.

One of such positive step is to identify what we did wrong to make the previous year turn out the way it did. We have to look beyond the impressive feats we achieved, beyond the goals attained, and the progress made in the previous year, we have to ask ourselves, what we did not do right or what we could have done differently to achieve better results. Put succinctly, we have to identify our failures, mistakes, and shortcomings, especially the ones that have direct bearing on the outcome we recorded in that year, admit them as far as we are responsible and make efforts to ensure that they do not impede our success in the New Year.

As easy as this might appear to be, it has been observed that, it is often difficult for people to sincerely identify their shortcomings and admit that it is indeed a challenge that can hamper the realization of their dreams and ambitions. There are so many people like the young man seeking the internship position, who get carried away with their strengths and pay little attention to their weaknesses even when such weaknesses are so obvious to other people in their world. I barely spent 2 hours with him and I could tell that he spreads himself too thin and end up not

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doing well in his simultaneously run multiple projects, yet he would not admit that, or the fact that such is likely to impede his performance on the job.

The truth is, living in denial about one's failings does not in any way change the fact that they really do exist; rather, failing to take cognizance of their existence puts one at the risk of being constantly brought down by them. People's complaints about you may not matter, however, be careful to ascertain that they are really wrong, or else, you will be proving them right every time you fail or make mistakes.

Although it is highly essential, identifying or admitting one's failings in itself does not guarantee successful living, one will have to work hard towards overcoming them. Your potentials will remain in the realm of possibilities but may never be fully realized until you learn to do or not to do those things that are capable of slowing you down. Doing well in what comes easy to you is admirable but doing better in the necessary things you find difficult to do is a key to achieving sustainable success.

Failing is part of nature's way of teaching men the important lessons about life and living, indeed, a lot of the most celebrated high achievers we have come to know experienced failure at several points in the course of their journey to the top and they still fail sometimes. They are not perfect human beings and they do not try to hold themselves out as one, but they are people who are conscious of their potentialities, and are not oblivious of their weaknesses. True, successful people often have confidence in themselves, but there is no denying their frailties, they succeed because they have learnt to manage their shortcomings well and explore their strong points to achieve greater advantage.

The is the time to we look back and identify what went wrong last year, accept responsibilities for our mistakes and failures, identify our failings and take constructive steps towards turning things around for the better. It takes wisdom and humility to admit one is wrong, it takes courage to decide to make a change, and it takes determination to follow-through on that decision.

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