

LEARNING BY PROXY
LIVING BY
PROXY

BY VIVEK SRINIVASAN

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1.

ON TIME

Almost all of us have gone through those exams which are considered milestones of life. In different countries they are called different names.

In India, it is the 10th and the 12th board exams. Those exams are supposed to make or break your life or at least that is what every child is told at the time. Then there is the college entrance exam and so on. We remember them because they are unfortunately considered milestones in life.

Do you remember any other exams that you took during the many years of education?

10-years later, was it really worth the tension and stress you put yourself through? Does it really matter?

Have you ever been in a situation where you had to deliver a project to a client the next day? Where you worked all night to ensure that it got delivered. I have done it several times. The real gut punch is when you slog to meet this artificial deadline only to discover the next day that the client is not available. Also, the client would only see it the week after.

The problem that worried you never materialised. Half the things you worry about never come to pass.

We often make our lives miserable because of the diktats that are imposed from the outside. We obsess over things that would not matter the least bit once a moment has passed. We make ourselves miserable and also makes the lives of those around us miserable.

Have you ever bought something that you never used, but would not throw away just because you bought it and it is still unused?

We spend so much time and energy on things that serve no purpose. We reduce our living or storage space to hold on to that, which is not useful.

Worrying is a little bit like this.

“TIME MAKES THE FUTILITY OF THOSE THINGS OBVIOUS. IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT WE WASTE SO MUCH TIME BEFORE REALISING IT”

2.

ON KEEPING ON MOVING FORWARD

In 1984, Ivan Lendl was playing the finals of the French Open against John McEnroe. He was two sets down, 3-6, 2-6, and barely hanging on to the third set. From the perspective of Lendl, it would probably have been easier to lose than to win. The third set was 3-4 and the game was 0-40.

Lendl had to lose only 5 more points and the match would have been over.

I would not be writing about that match if that is what had come to pass.

He won a point, then another, and then one more. He told himself all he needed to do was to break McEnroe's service once.

Just once.

Then the break came. He went on to win the match 3-6, 2-6, 6-4, 7-5, 7-5. If you look at the entire match Ivan Lendl had his service broken more times than McEnroe did.

Lendl just kept moving forward.

The difference between life and sports often is the duration for which you need to keep fighting. Even the longest match

would be over in a few hours. In life, you might have to keep the fight up for months, perhaps even years.

You need to find the spark that will keep you moving forward. For Lendl, in that match, the spark was breaking McEnroe's service once. The spark that you need, to know that you are successfully fighting back might be different, but you need to see that spark. Once you see it, chase it.

Take a wild guess when 'BookMyShow' was founded?

August 1999. Back then, they were the Swiggy for movie tickets. They used to have a fleet of bike riders who would hand-deliver tickets which customers could book by calling a phone number.

Then in 2001, Bryan Adams came to India. They had a flood of bookings and their boys would show up only to find the buyers refused. Priced at Rs. 1000, having 500 tickets refused meant absorbing Rs. 5 Lacs in losses which was huge for the company at the time. They had too many refusals. They almost shut down their business but instead downsized to three members and decided to just survive. They survived selling customer management software.

They launched as an online business in August 2007 with their ticket booking portal. This time, with no delivery involved. Customers got a message that they showed at the box office to get the tickets. 21 years on, they were on the verge of becoming a unicorn and then COVID happened. They streamed nonsense but kept themselves alive. And they kept moving forward.

The hardest thing to do when things are difficult is to keep moving forward, the temptation to give up is quite strong. In reality, you need to keep moving especially when things are difficult. When things are good, it is like moving in the direction of the flow of the river; you would not have to expend a lot of effort to move ahead.

Often, the troubles in our lives are self-inflicted. At times like the ones we are facing today, one can feel like a victim of the circumstances. It may feel as if you have no control over things in your life and feel helpless. Even so, keep moving. Do what you have to do and keep moving. It is a matter of time, things will change, there will come a day you will look back and think, it was so hard, but I came through.

“JUST DON’T GIVE UP. KEEP MOVING FORWARD”

3.

ON DISCIPLINE

If you were to go back to your days in school, there was always one big exam at the end of the year. If you passed you were promoted and if you failed you got left behind.

It gave you time to prepare and plan. You get the opportunity to perfect yourself. Life often does not afford you that luxury.

I have come across several people whose greatest achievements in life are academic; who tend to look at life like this. The fact that the year-end appraisal reinforces this - is a reflection of the catastrophic state of Human Resource Management in organisations.

Their entire focus will be on that one launch. That one product. That one event. That one interview. But what happens after the launch? You still have to show up every day; excel every day. Great businesses are not built because the launch was phenomenal. Invariably nobody will remember the launch - the day after. Do any of you remember the launch of Tata Nano?

Succeeding often takes continuous and consistent work to keep delivering.

You are probably not going to get fit because you decided to work out. You need to keep working out; every day. Just because you did your workout today does not guarantee

anything for tomorrow. You have to get up again and show up again. You get to stay in good shape till such time that you have it in you to keep showing up. It has to become a part of you.

Sportspeople show up and practice each day, every day so that when it matters they are in a position to give it their best. In business, you show up every day to ensure that you and your organisation are doing great work and delivering the very best. To be great at anything you need to show up and do what needs to be done every day. Showing up every day is called Discipline.

**“DISCIPLINE IS A BATTLE YOU WIN OR
LOSE EVERY DAY”**

4.

ON THE RIGHT KIND OF FRICTION

Slide a muslin cloth past wet hands.

S If your hand is too wet, the cloth gets wet as well and allow your hand to easily slide past.

If your hand is dry, then the cloth will easily slide past as well.

But, if your hand is just a bit wet, there is enough friction to keep the cloth stuck to the hand.

Every relationship requires friction. If there is too much friction, you will keep having problems and if there is too little friction it gets boring. Just the right amount keeps everyone interested.

You will see this in movies as well. Too many plot twists and you lose interest, too little and it is limp. You need just the right amount.

Think of apps; too many notifications and too much happening, I just can't keep up and I leave it. Too little and I forget about the app. You need to find just enough.

How do you create this tension between your business and your customer? Where they neither care too much nor too little, just enough to keep them coming back. Finding this balance is the key to building a successful enterprise.

What intrigues your customer/user? What makes them sit up and take notice? What causes them to think or even feel some discomfort?

**“IN LIFE, FRIENDSHIP, RELATIONSHIP,
WORK, BUSINESS, HOBBY OR ANY
OTHER PURSUIT, FINDING THAT RIGHT
AMOUNT OF FRICTION IS CRITICAL”**

5.

ON FOLLOW THROUGH

In almost every sport when you hear the commentator describe the motion of the athlete, they emphasise the follow through. How great the follow through was.

“Look at the follow through on that shot” — Would sound appropriate whether it is Cricket, Tennis or Golf.

The follow through comes after the ball has been hit. How does it matter? Is the job of hitting the ball not already done? How does it matter what the bat, racquet or the club does after the ball has left?

The follow through is the result of the effort put in to make something happen. You cannot hit a great shot and not have a follow through. Also, a shot without a follow through will not be great.

The follow through is just as important as the shot.

**“WHEN YOU DECIDE TO START
SOMETHING, A COURSE, A JOB, A
CREATIVE ENDEAVOUR, A BUSINESS,
STARTING IS IMPORTANT BUT THE
FOLLOW THROUGH MATTERS JUST AS
MUCH”**

6.

ON COURAGE AND STUPIDITY

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Courage ~ mental or moral strength to venture, persevere and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty

Stupid ~ given to unintelligent decisions or acts: acting in an unintelligent or careless manner*

There is a thin line that separates courage and stupidity.

Often, the outcome determines whether it was courage or stupidity.

What I have noticed is:

If the outcome is favourable, the person is called courageous; if the outcome is not favourable, they are deemed stupid.

In business, when was the last time you came across a courageous failure? Had Elon Musk lost all of his money trying to build his rockets, would he have been deemed courageous? Richard Branson was called stupid, for years, for pursuing similar goals.

WHAT IS COURAGE?

I had once met an Everest climber who had summited the mountain twice. He had attempted the climb five times, failing the first three times. He told me that although he did not summit, the first time was the best. Getting to the summit of Everest involves crossing several [crevasses](#) several meters wide with ladders and ropes. Also, the last 850 meters of the climb is called "The Death Zone." The oxygen in the air is so low that you require oxygen tanks. If you do not reach the summit and climb down before your oxygen runs out, the cells in your body will start dying due to hypoxia.

He was blissfully unaware of all this when he set off to base camp for the very first time. He could not acclimatise well on his first climb and had to be airlifted quite early. While he knew the danger, he still attempted to climb Everest the next time.

While the first time was a sheer act of stupidity, it took courage to try the second time. He was aware of the consequences this time. He knew how easily he could end up dead. He knew that mountain had as many dead people buried in it as most cemeteries on the planet.

Courage is when you know what the consequences could be and you still take the leap. Leaping without any idea of the consequences is stupid.

It takes a unique mindset to be willing to undertake a risk despite knowing all possible outcomes. One is prepared for the worst and hopes for the best. At times blissfully ignorant people also pull off impossible feats. This is a stupid act with a positive outcome, not an act of courage. Had they known what could happen, would they have still done it?

WHAT IS STUPIDITY?

Steve Jobs, on his return to Apple in 1998 was asked by a journalist; "What do you think about what the Wall Street Journal wrote about Apple?"

He said, "You know, when I and Woz started Apple, we did not read the Wall Street Journal. I did not even know what the Wall Street Journal was! And it served us well. Had I known, I would have probably nudged Woz and told him we don't stand a chance."

They built what they loved and it served them well! But it also brought them to a place where Apple ended up with neither of them in it.

Everyone wants to be Steve Jobs but nobody wants to end up thrown out of their own company to be him. Few have the courage. I am sure even Steve Jobs himself was unaware that he had the courage until he was faced with the consequence.

The thin line is knowing the consequences. That line determines if the act was courageous or stupid.

I have often found myself sitting squarely on the stupid side of the divide. Truth be told, most founders take the plunge because they are stupid enough to. If they were to know all the possible consequences, they probably would never even bother starting a venture. This kind of stupidity is important as well. It allows us to do things that others would not dare to do.

**“OR AS STEVE JOBS FAMOUSLY SAID -
STAY HUNGRY, STAY FOOLISH.”**

7.

ON FEARING SUCCESS

Success is often very public, while failure is extremely private.

When I started writing my first book, I thought to a million dollars, I had written that organising events was nerve-racking. When you organised events, your successes were public and so were your failures.

I was wrong.

If nobody shows up for an event nobody knows that except yourself.

Edison failed a thousand times in private, but when he did succeed, it was in the public spotlight. His failures were so private that he had to tell people that he had, in fact, failed.

Working with entrepreneurs I meet several and one of the common things that I see is that people are **afraid to succeed**. They will talk as if they are filled with confidence but in reality, they are really afraid to succeed.

People who are unwilling to share their ideas are not afraid that someone would steal their idea, at least then they can take credit for it. They are afraid that someone might think that the idea is worthwhile. They are afraid to have the idea

validated because it would mean that they need to take the next step!

I know an entrepreneur who has a product, and is selling the product to customers but refuses to build a simple website giving several excuses. 10-year-olds can build a website today, with the tools that are available online. What is stopping you from building one? The fear of success. (I had originally written this post in 2020 and as I update this in 2022, it remains true)

Success will thrust you into the spotlight and you need to take responsibility for it. This is something that most people are uncomfortable with.

They will say that they are fearful of failure or rejection. Failure or rejection allows you to put something aside and move forward. Why would you want to be tethered to something if it is not going to deliver success? Fail fast, invariably you will also fail alone and nobody is going to care a damn about it. Move forward in search of success.

Take risks. Put yourself out there. Fail, feel bad, forgive yourself and move on.

“IF YOU ASK FOR SOMETHING, THERE IS A 50% CHANCE THAT THE ANSWER COULD BE ‘NO’. IF YOU DON’T ASK AT ALL, THE ANSWER IS DEFINITELY ‘NO’.”

8.

ON WORK IN PROGRESS

We are all works in progress.

We always have been; always will be.

None of us is the same as the day before. Just like a tree which is never the same on a subsequent day as the day before. The trouble is that the change is hard to see. Have you ever woken up, looked out the window, seen a tree you see every day and thought; that has changed!

As humans, we are only capable of seeing big changes.

If someone loses 15 Kgs, you will notice. But who the hell has ever shed 15 Kgs in a day. Alas, we just do not have the ability to see that we lost 100 Grams. This is part of the reason most people give up on their exercise regime. Improvement is never a step change but a series of small changes that accumulate over time to make a huge difference. Weight is still something that can be measured.

Have you looked back at something you wrote years ago and found it to be crap? The person, who wrote it would not have felt it was crap. If you had thought so, you would not have written it. But sometimes the only way to get better is by writing a lot of crap. You hope that there will still be those who take the time to read it and encourage you.

The most important thing is to make sure that you are moving in the right direction. The only way to establish that for a fact is by asking for the opinion of others. When it comes to weight, we ask the opinion of the weighing machine. Who do you consult when it is a creative pursuits?

Create something - ask people what they think about the creation - improve - repeat.

Apply this to anything you want to get better at.

Ultimately, you need to persist. You need to keep doing whatever it is and keep improving a little bit at a time.

When you do not lose weight at first, don't give up.

When you write junk at first - don't give up.

“KEEP WORKING AND PROGRESS WILL COME TO YOU. EVEN WHEN THAT PROGRESS COMES, YOU WILL STILL BE A WORK IN PROGRESS.”

9.

ON WHAT YOU THINK OF YOURSELF

We all have an image of ourselves that we have constructed in our minds.

I had this image of myself as being that person who loves to play the piano and would imagine myself playing fluently on a keyboard or a piano. Because of this image of myself, I not only spent money on buying a keyboard but also wasted space in my house to accommodate the same. The truth is that I did not need a keyboard, I needed discipline, which was lacking.

We all are prisoners of the image that we have of ourselves. It is liberating when you realise that reality is divorced from that image. You take a lot of pressure off yourself and you can focus on the things that you can be disciplined with.

In my case writing.

Just take a look at the things around your house that are there just to conform to your idea of who you are. You will often find that those are the things you use the least and most certainly amass the most, to compensate for the fact that you suck at it. Here are a few things and your excuses -

Musical Instruments - I love playing, just learning it slowly.

Books - I love reading. There are just so many books I have, it is hard to decide which one to start with...

Workout Equipment - I have decided that I will start exercising next year as my new year's resolution.

Cookware - I could be the greatest chef. I am watching a lot of videos, for now, and will start making it soon.

And the list goes on...

Get rid of it.

**“LIBERATE YOURSELF. MAKE THE IMAGE
IN YOUR MIND CONSISTENT WITH
REALITY.”**

10.

ON OPTIMISM

I would never consider myself an optimist. I was reading a book recently that changed my mind.

Every problem has a solution. The only thing holding us back from finding the solution is the lack of knowledge. If an asteroid had crashed into our planet 2000 years ago, humans could have done little but stand around and watch. That is not the case today. We can detect it before it lands and perhaps even attack it with a nuclear warhead.

Typhoid was a death sentence 500 years ago. Today, it is no longer the case, we have the knowledge to fight it off.

If you were to show a TV to someone living in 1500, to them, it would have just seemed like magic. Also, it would take a lot of knowledge - electricity, broadcasting, electronics and such - before they understand what is happening. It solves a problem but the solution is neither obvious nor easily understood.

Optimists are those who imagine the impossible and chase it. Those who create. Who remain open to possibilities and who believe in solving problems.

Athens would have been considered morally decrepit by the Spartans. Every man born in Sparta was trained to be a warrior. They did not entertain possibilities, there was only

one way. Every man born in Sparta was trained to be a soldier from birth. All the work that had to be done was done by slaves. They had very rigid routines and inflexible lives.

For all the glorification attributed by Marvel and the movie 300, the Spartans contributed nothing to art and culture. Nobody could be a poet or a writer in Sparta; they all had to be soldiers. Further, they lost. It's not like Sparta stood the test of time. They were pessimists, preparing for an onslaught. The onslaught arrived and they perished.

Athens on the other hand entertained possibilities. They let art and culture revel. They let state-craft grow. They won more through politics than through the sword. They grew and they prospered.

Being an optimist means being the kind of person who is willing to look for solutions to problems. It means being willing to entertain possibilities and it is about creating.

“ARE YOU AN OPTIMIST?”

11.

ON LOOKING AHEAD

You can drive a car looking at the rear-view mirror, but the outcome would not please you.

We all lose things in life. It seems like the hardest thing to deal with at that moment. You might fail an exam; you may sink your business; you may lose love, or your loved one might pass away. No matter how catastrophic the event, the only option that ultimately delivers is looking ahead.

Some people choose to look backwards constantly and feel sorry for themselves. Without a doubt, depending on the kind of person you are, there are only two destinations this leads to - depression or suicide.

Looking forward allows you to focus not on what was lost but on what greater things lie ahead.

Don't mistake me, I do not mean to say that one should not feel any sorrow, anger, frustration and myriad other negative emotions; but one should avoid wallowing in them forever.

In life, I have come across two kinds of people.

First, those who look through the windshield and keep moving forward. Second, those who look through the windshield for a moment only to return to what is lost in the

rear-view mirror. Often their lives are determined by the attitude they choose to foster.

**“ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD. ALWAYS
MOVE AHEAD.”**

12.

ON NOT DOING

You buy a stock. It falls immediately. Then it rises past the buying price. What do you do, leave it be or sell it immediately?

Far too many books have been written about winning the difficult fight. Overcoming the impossible. Almost everything you will read will encourage you to take action. It will be about what someone did.

Read the biographies of Steve Jobs, Mahatma Gandhi, Richard Branson, etc. It will always be about what they did. It has inspired a culture of action as opposed to reflection. Activity instead of productivity.

Almost nothing is written about the fight not fought. Not because of fear, laziness or cowardice but because it was the right thing to do.

Try searching how many books you can find on wars that were fought, and how many books can you find on wars that were avoided.

Apart from the Cuban Missile Crisis, there would be few. Had the missile crisis turned into a war it would have been a stupid war. A war that should not have been and was rightly avoided. At least, we know about the Cuban missile crisis.

How many such instances would have been avoided during the Cold War?

Have you ever found a book that compiles all the acquisitions not done? Acquisitions that would have been catastrophic for the buyer. We all know the names of the CEOs who made large acquisitions. Nobody would be able to recall ONE that avoided them. Books are written about successful rocket launches, not about the launches that were cancelled and rightly so.

“HEROES ARE ALWAYS PROJECTED AS DOERS. SOMETIMES HEROES ARE HEROES BECAUSE THEY HAD THE NERVE NOT TO ACT.”

13.

ON THINKING

Thinking is a double-edged sword.

I often advise entrepreneurs to think about what they plan to do. I also advise them to spend time thinking about their business rather than getting down to execution. Thought is a cheap simulation machine that is available to us. The more data you feed it (talk to potential customers), the better the results.

The other edge of that sword is overthinking. Almost all of us are guilty of it. Overthinking is something that we tend to do with things which are very close to us. Usually relationships, money matters, etc. Every bear run is a result of overthinking.

Overthinking positively is dreaming, while overthinking negatively is anxiety.

Both can lead to terrible outcomes. If you dream too much you could get delusional but if you become very anxious, you will probably invent problems that may not have ever existed.

Thinking can be your greatest asset but it can also be your greatest enemy. Like most things in life, it's wise to use it in moderation.

“SPENDING TIME THINKING ABOUT THE THINGS THAT YOU ARE PLANNING TO PURSUE IS CRITICAL. FIND YOUR LIMIT AND STOP. IF YOUR THOUGHTS ARE NOT ADDING VALUE; MAKING YOU SEE SOMETHING THAT YOU DO NOT ALREADY KNOW, STOP.”

14.

ON HOPE

I was once told by someone, don't give hope to an entrepreneur if you think it will not work out.

I used to think that this was the right approach as well. In the pursuit of this philosophy, I have taken apart more than my fair share of business plans and pointed out flaws in thinking.

Today, I beg to differ.

While hope alone cannot take you all the way, the absence of hope can turn negative outcomes into self-fulfilling prophecies.

This is not just applicable to entrepreneurship. An employee who has no hope of promotion would never give the job everything that they have got. Thus, it is not even possible to argue for promotion in many cases.

A mountaineer stuck on a peak unable to descend. Does he muster the last shreds of strength in him, hoping a rescue crew would show up or just resign to inevitable death? The bedrock of most survival movies is hope. 126 Hours, Gravity and several others.

I was recently watching the movie Marshall on Netflix. It is a movie about a case that Thurgood Marshall wanted to fight

on behalf of the NAACP. The case of Joseph Spell Vs the State of Connecticut, where Joseph had been accused of rape and attempted murder. Set in the 1930s, it is just after the depression and just before the second world war. The judge does not allow Marshall to represent Joseph Spell, who is a black man. The defence does not give up, even though the court seems to be against the accused. Despite the fact that it does not seem to be a fair fight.

Even though it is unfair, they soldier on, hoping the truth will prevail. You can already guess what happens since they made a movie about it.

Hope is important, even if the chances are slim. There is no way to predict how successful an attempt will be, or what chances a person will take in the hope of succeeding.

“AS THEY SAY, THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION YOU NEVER ASKED IS ALWAYS - NO. IF THERE IS HOPE, AT LEAST YOU WILL ASK THE QUESTION.”

15.

ON TOMORROW

Our tomorrow is a result of the seeds we sow today.

But we cannot know for a fact, what our tomorrow will look like.

We take steps today based on what we anticipate tomorrow; but that we know not. We make a payment on an e-commerce site because we expect them to deliver. What if we did not believe they would deliver? We would not buy anything online!

Whether running a business, or applying for a job that seems out of reach; if you believe a positive outcome is possible, you would take appropriate steps. If you don't...

**“YOUR TOMORROW IS A CONSEQUENCE
OF YOUR BELIEF.”**

16.

ON CARRYING ON

In an experiment that was conducted in the 1960's two dogs were placed within separate cages. Each dog then received a series of electric shocks to their hind legs at the same time. The first dog's cage was fitted with a pad that could be pushed with its nose to stop the electricity. The electricity would stop for both dogs. The first dog learnt to push the pad; the second dog had no choice.

After conducting the same test 25 times, the dogs were put in different cages. This time they were subject to sharp sound. While the first dog tried to find a way to stop it, the second dog lay on the floor whimpering and waiting for the sound to stop.

The second dog had learned hopelessness.

In life, we all face the same probabilities. Odds are, all of us face the same number of successes and failures. The order in which they arrive may vary.

Let us try a problem in permutation and combination.

S = Success

F = Failure

If I gave you 4S' and 4F's, in how many ways can you arrange them?

I am sure there would be one arrangement that goes – FSFSFSFS; and one that goes FFFFSSSS.

The two stories end up separating optimists from pessimists.

What often separates optimists from pessimists is hope.

Further, it is the willingness to attribute failure to factors that are temporary and can be changed, whether internal or external that makes someone an optimist.

Pessimists often assume failure is due to permanent causes and stop trying. In their case, failure becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Focus on your self-talk. The seeds of what your life looks like today lie within it. If you think the reasons for your failure are temporary, you will change something and believe in yourself and you will persist.

It gives you the strength to carry on and to find success.

“KEEP FIGHTING.”

17.

ON FALLING APART

Holding it together - is often the difference between those who lead and those who follow.

In life there will be times when things do not go your way. We all operate on assumptions and it should come as no surprise that some of those assumptions turn out to be wrong.

The more fundamental the assumption, the harder the hit. When this happens, you often feel like everything is falling apart.

Entrepreneurs probably go through this feeling one too many times. It never stops. But most people will be confronted with such situations in life.

Great leaders hold it together when confronted with their world falling apart. Not only do they hold it together, they analyse the situation properly and make the right decision.

**“THIS QUALITY UNIQUELY
DIFFERENTIATES LEADERS FROM
FOLLOWERS. NOT IQ, NOT ABILITY, NOT
SKILL; JUST BEING ABLE TO HOLD IT
TOGETHER AND DOING THE RIGHT
THING.”**

18.

ON MOST RESPECTFUL INTERPRETATION

Say you ask your bank to make a change to your account, which provides you with a higher interest rate. You do not hear back from them, what do you assume?

That they are working hard on your request,

OR

That they are just trying to avoid making the change and stonewalling you?

Most of us would assume the latter, while there are benefits to assuming the former.

Hanlon's Razor - Never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity.

People are often far more stupid than they are malicious. Incompetence plays a much greater role in delays than malice ever did.

Further, when you assume the person at the other end is just incapable or going through a struggle you tend to approach things rather differently. Your first instinct is not to lose your

temper but to escalate to someone who would, hopefully, be more competent. Alternately, you might try to work together with the other person to find a resolution.

By comparison, when you force the other person into an adversarial stance, you often have to push the opposite side into submission. This can be far more time consuming and painful. Even if the other person is approaching the position with malice, if your approach is one of giving the other the benefit of the doubt, the two greatest creations of human society, guilt & shame, will bring them around to your position.

“THERE IS ALMOST NOTHING TO GAIN FROM ASSUMING A MALICIOUS MOTIVE. THEREFORE, ALWAYS MAKE THE MOST RESPECTFUL INTERPRETATION OF THE OTHER PERSON’S INTENTION.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Vivek has been writing Learning by Proxy since 2020. He has been blogging since 2011 but took it up in a disciplined manner in 2020.

He co-founded Startup Squares (<https://startupsquares.com>) where he works with startups, supporting them through strategic consulting. A lot of his blogs often relate to startup experiences because of his work.

His work, travels and engagements have given him the opportunity to work with several entrepreneurs. It has also given him the opportunity to speak on several stages across the world.

He has been in the habit of reading over 200 blogs a week for the last 10 years. In addition he reads over 50 books every year. This gives him adequate exposure in several areas and

on topics as diverse as politics, economics, psychology, technology, business, and history.

Learning by Proxy was born out of the suggestion of friends who asked him to precipitate all that he was reading into a weekly blog.

You can learn more about him at <https://viveksrinivasan.com>.

You can follow what he writes at <https://learningbyproxy.com>