

Handy tips for young leaders to take on organisational challenges

Being a star young leader comes with its fair share of challenges. The organisation's expectations are high, and tricky issues such as an inefficient boss, time management, older colleagues and career stagnation can derail the best-laid plans. ET gives the young leader handy tips to take on challenges while keeping an eye on the big picture.

How to manage older colleagues

Respect, appreciation and trust are traits that will help you gain their confidence and stand you in good stead.

Case Study

In a leadership role, there is a tendency to command respect, but when dealing with older professionals, it is important to first respect them for their experience, says Sanjay Singh, director, HR and administration at Cairn India. In one of his previous stints, Singh supervised a professional who was 10 years his senior. "When I joined the company, a lot of people warned me about this person and said he might try to derail me," he says. But Singh decided to have a candid chat with him. "I told him I had certain goals for the company and that I would not be able to achieve those without his help. Over time, we developed a deep bond and I am still in touch with him," he says.

Keep their concerns in mind

"Sending emails early and late, inviting or dialling into meetings at odd hours, being online all the time is not what your team will appreciate for long," says Sameer Bhariok, HR director, Eli Lilly. "Don't forget that older colleagues may have families that require them to live at a pace different from yours," he adds. During emergencies, young leaders should make sure they are doing more than what they are expecting of their teams.

Evaluate your leadership style

Singh dealt with a professional 20 years his senior, who had rigid views. "I always respected him in front of other colleagues and dealt with his problems in private, which he later began to appreciate," he says.

Avoid Micro-Management

Leaders need to explain the context well. "Let them define the operating principles within teams. This is key to building trust. Yet, if performance is not optimal you should tighten your grip on operating metrics and methods," says Bhariok.

Seek their opinion

Bhariok feels senior colleagues can surprise young leaders with simple and practical solutions. "Value their experience and insights, but do take the final call," he says.

How to make work-life balance click?

With the BlackBerrys and Smartphones spilling over into personal time, work-life balance does get difficult. But it is worth the effort.

Case Study

A young leader must respond to situations, and not cut himself or herself off after office hours. Ramesh Nair, president and executive director, Jindal Stainless who became the company president at 38, understood this, but worked a way around it. "You are essentially connected all the time and when your job needs you, you have to be there. So try compensating when you can — over the weekend or on days when you don't need to work late into the night. Give that time to yourself and your family," he says. Nair has struck this fine balance now for four years. There are other ways too.