

HRBS White Paper

Why High Fliers Fail

Tina Radford, Managing Director of HR Business Solutions investigates common reasons why high fliers fail.

I attended a great HR conference in Singapore last year and recall a particular presenter talking about the 3 myths about career success, they were:

- Patience is not a virtue – to succeed in your career, you must be hungry and ambitious
- Ability is not always enough and will not always be recognized
- The best people do not always get promoted, sometimes the best ‘self promoters’ get the corner office.

It got me thinking about the reasons why high fliers sometimes fail in their careers. You know people who join an organization full of promise and guts, only to stumble and miss out on that promotion they have been working so hard for. Here are some questions to ask yourself to use to assess if someone you know or work with may be at risk of failing in their career due to one of the following reasons.

Skills Mismatch

I would say about 20% of people fail in their roles because they do not have the skills to actually do the job. Ask yourself the following:

1. Do I enjoy the role?
2. Do I feel I achieve something every 3 months?
3. Is the general feedback I receive positive?

Bad Judgment

1. Does my team tell me bad news?
2. Do I have external confidants that I can talk to and seek advice?
3. Do I have a good detail person on my team?

Ineffective Radar

Some people fail simply because they do not see the signs that they are not being supported in their role.

1. Do I actively nurture my network and have good relationships with my peers?
2. Is there someone who gives me the heads up on potential issues?
3. Do I have access to reliable information to make decisions?



Style Misfit

From my experience, about 20% of high fliers fail due to a style mismatch with the organization.

1. Is my view usually consistent with others?
2. Are my decisions mostly well supported by others?
3. Do people say I am good to work with?

Poor Self Marketing

If you don't blow your own trumpet who will? People must know what you have done or you will not go anywhere in an organization. Ask yourself:

1. Is your boss aware of your achievements?
2. Do I manage my self-brand well?
3. Am I strategically positioned to get noticed?

Conflict with the boss

About 10% of people don't get promoted due to conflict with their boss. Let's face it if you don't see eye to eye with the boss then your chances of getting promoted are slim. Ask yourself the following:

1. Can I resolve it to make my boss look good?
2. Can I limit the damage?
3. Do I have an exit strategy?

Bad Job Choice

The final test I like to call the Monday morning test.

1. Am I generally content and happy at work?
2. Do I like Monday Mornings?
3. Do I know where the job is taking me?

If you are struggling to get ahead in your current organization, reflect on the reasons why to see if you can take some positive steps towards climbing that ladder.

