# Multiple Hats

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This is the story of dichotomies and opposing behaviors that we manifest every day, as part of the many roles we play -
There are many hats that we wear day to day, for the different roles we play professionally and in our personal space.
Much has been written, discussed and spoken about the need to do so, and how crucial it is to be great at all the many roles we play, in case we want to be successful.

We get all the appreciation when we play those roles right… but the question here is, how do we manage the perceptions we create for ourselves in the dichotomous roles we play?
For example… Prem Chopra -  – the famous Bollywood villain, or Alan Rickman and Christopher Lee from Hollywood we hate the negative roles they have played, so much, that in our minds, they have become synonymous with everything evil. We cannot imagine them being good human beings, even in their real lives.

Recently, I happened to be part of workshop on Conflict Management. It was an interesting experience, where, during the course of the workshop, we got to know our predominant styles of resolving a conflict, where the trainer emphasized that no style is bad.
Then a more interesting discussion ensued..if no style is bad, then how does one manage the perceptions that stem from using one or another style predominantly? For example, if my predominant style is to avoid, then I carry the perception of being a walk-over; if my style is generally 'Competing', then I am perceived as someone fighting all the time or being unpleasantly aggressive.

Looking around us we see other examples of these kind of dichotomous roles or situations in our professional life – an HR Manager with the responsibility of increasing employee engagement, has in the past, in times of a downsize, helped identify employees who may be asked to leave. Her past actions, of working with management for downsizing, may have led her to be perceived as a 'voice of management' or 'with them and not us'. Now, in order to be successful in the new responsibility of 'increasing engagement', she has to be viewed as 'with us'.

A teacher who also teaches her son/daughter as part of a class is often perceived as favoring her child in class, even though it may not be so. Another conflict may be with the child who, does not feel cared/loved by her parent in class, and as a result, remains emotionally aloof at home too.

A recruiter, who also an organizational coach grapples with the perceptions created as a recruiter in instances of conflict with the hiring managers. These hiring managers may be skeptical or uncomfortable when assigned this recruiter as a Coach.

Hence we see that success in the multiple hats we wear, would also depend on our environment accepting us in them.

So the question here is – if you are creating perceptions about yourself which in turn hamper your success in the other roles you play, how do you break these stereotypes? How do you work on changing the perceptions?

One of ways that comes to my mind, is to display behaviors opposite to the perceptions that have been created, frequently; and work on it consistently, for a reasonably long time, as perceptions are known to change slowly.

For example, the HR manager has to frequently display behaviors that clearly show that he is with the employees and not 'a voice of management'; the teacher will need to consistently and frequently display behaviors of fairness; and the recruiter needs to consistently and frequently connect with hiring managers to give more opportunities for better understanding of each other, rising above the conflict.

What do you think? Do you have more suggestions?

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