

Comparison can make or break your career

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Although career experts say it is healthy to compare yourself to your peers, they warn that obsessing over it is dangerous.

In Summary

- Sometimes the feeling of inadequacy can overwhelm an individual when they compare themselves with success of their peers. It is, therefore, advisable to compare yourself with others rationally otherwise you risk losing focus of the great way your career may be shaping up.

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By Phionah Nassanga

Once in a while we are tempted to compare our lives with those of our peers we feel are doing better than us. Sometimes, it is helpful to compare yourself to more successful people because it helps you know what may be possible but most times it may evoke envy, jealousy and low self-esteem.

Most times, like Timothy Mukisa, the chief executive officer at MIRT Uganda says, we cannot help but compare our progress with that of our age-mates. “Often times I feel as if I am lagging behind and other people’s lives are moving way faster than my own.

While it motivates me to see other people of my age excel, I have to remind myself that I am not looking at their life totality to avoid getting jealous,” Mukisa explains. He discourages this kind of comparison unless it is being done rationally because irrationality evokes jealousy thereby distracting one from positively pursuing and building their career and business.

Raise the bar

As a self-employed businessman Deus Tumuhaise says, he usually compares the performance of his business to that of his peers. “I observe their assets, business reach and adjust mine accordingly. For me, that comparison helps me set the pace,” he adds.

Tumuhaise adds that comparing yourself with those who have already achieved significant success in your field can help you see where you want to go in life, and who you aspire to be. It can help you set new goals, and encourage your competitive spirit. This can leave you more motivated.

Appreciate differences

Cleophus Bagumire, a community psychologist, notes that comparing your career growth to that of your age-mates is counterproductive because we are unique individuals who should not have a similar life trajectory.

“I, instead of comparing my life to others’, endeavour to use my God-given talents to achieve my goals, my way. We are not the same and have different backgrounds that have given us different opportunities to be where we are,” he adds.

Similarly, Phiona Abaasa says she does not compare herself to her peers because she is aware that each individual charts out a different path in their life in response to the opportunities they have found and the challenges. “However, I believe that destiny is never concluded until the fat lady sings. I must also say I admire my age mates who have achieved what I am yet to and that encourages me to struggle more,” Abaasa reveals.

As Abaasa graciously points out, your peers’ success can serve as an eye-opener for growing your own career. We all choose to pursue goals after seeing other people’s lives. It might not be a duplication of their dreams, goals or successes but how they achieved them.

Marianne Namanya discourages comparison noting that when you do that you are basically saying you should be more like others because who you are is not enough. “We grow differently in different fields and we have different gifts, abilities, experiences, and opportunities. The irony of life is that the person you think has it all together might also be feeling lost,” Namanya explains.

When jealousy bites

If you find yourself focusing far too much on other people, just stop. “While it is important to

keep up with the activities of people in your field, spending an unhealthy amount of time and energy on them is more harmful than helpful. By the same token, if people are jealous of your successes, distance yourself from them, too,” Namanya asserts.

Who can influence our choices?

Family. Career choices and interests of an older brother or sister, needs, opinions and work of our parents, family work traditions or family aspirations for the future.

Friends. Getting pressure to make the same choice as them about careers and leaving school

Culture. Their neighbourhood, ethnic group and social group, popular culture such as TV and movies, role models – successful and famous people

Teachers. Inspire, motivate and inform you, see talent, skills and aptitudes for certain careers, offer resources, work experience opportunities and guidance.

Media. Online career websites, apps and newspapers, career planning and self-help books

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