

Tackle competitive exams with highway mindset

With the season of competitive exams just round the corner, there is tremendous anxiety in the air. Mock tests, past question papers, increased hours of daily study, shortcuts to solving problems, revisiting the fundamentals and visits to places of worship – students are doing all that and some more, leaving absolutely no stone unturned. Fresh graduates, individuals who have taken a year off to prepare and working professionals alike are battling it out to grab a piece of the big pie. Post-graduate courses in every stream like management, sciences, engineering, commerce and administrative services amongst others have their own entrance exams in their respective formats. Hence appearing for a competitive exam is a pre-requisite to post-graduate study. While there are numerous institutes prescribing proven methods to cracking competitive exams through time management and preparatory techniques, it takes much more than hard work to maximise your true potential.

Leave past baggage behind

One should never feel complacent due to their past achievements and success. It is equally important not to get bogged down by one's past failures and poor performances either. Competitive exams test our basic quantitative, analytical and grammar skills and hence, our success or failures in the past in other forms of exams and assessments will have little bearing on our performances in the competitive exams of today.

Take each exam on its own merit

Although there are scores of competitive exams scheduled one after the other in the next few months, it would be fatal to assume that studying for one exam would ensure a good performance in the others. Each competitive exam follows its own format with the intention of assessing candidates on specific parameters. That should explain the fact that while some formats have sections like general knowledge included, others have diverse sections like geography, history and current affairs. Moreover, there are finer differences within broader sections like quantitative and analytical that can surprise most candidates. Therefore, it is very important to be specific in our approach to each competitive exam.

Broaden your perspective

One or two prescribed study materials will not do you much good. It is very important to broaden your perspective. One has to look beyond the run-of-the mill methods to approaching competitive exams. An online search with keywords like tips, competitive exams, cracking competitive exams will throw up numerous articles, which tell you how you can improve your skill sets. Cultivating the habit of reading for instance helps one perform better in comprehensions, which is a major chunk of the grammar section. Social networking improves ones communicational skills that will be a deciding factor in interviews later. Because a competitive exam is only the first step of the process, one has

to be updated with current affairs and other trends in education and the economy. Most institutes look for well-rounded individuals to enroll in their institutes hence overall growth in terms of aptitude as well as attitude is very crucial.

Expect the unexpected

Most competitive exams throw up surprises that can catch you off guard. Most candidates tend to take mock tests and fall into a pattern of approaching a certain exam. When the structure of the question paper is changed for instance with regards to the number of questions, the weightage of each question and the time allotted for each section, it tends to break their pattern and hence put them off. Thus, it is important to get your basics right and ensure you think through before even starting to answer any exam. One basic rule that holds good for all competitive exams, irrespective of the format, weightage and surprise changes is the fact that one needs to dedicate equal time to the various sections. A skewed performance in various sections will only do more harm than good. Consistence in every section is a far safer bet.

Enjoy the process

The only way to consistently give your best in your preparations is by enjoying the entire process. One must always aim to strike a healthy balance between work and leisure as too much of either is not good. Preparations can sometimes get mentally strenuous and this will have its rub off on your health too. One of the biggest value additions of appearing for competitive exams is the fact that it increases your concentration, will power and ability to handle pressure. The exam per se might not mean much but the entire process grooms you well as an individual.

Highway or by lane

The difference between driving on a highway and on a by lane is the fact that when you are driving on the highway, you have your headlights focused far ahead and not immediately in front of your vehicle. At the same time, your own focus is far ahead and you cruise at high speed. While driving on a by lane, your own sight as well as the focus of your headlights is concentrated on the strip of road right in front of the vehicle. The only concentration here is to avoid potholes, as that is what you are concentrating on.

It is very important to have the highway mindset while appearing for competitive exams. It is important that we keep our sights far ahead because these exams are only a window of opportunity to a wonderful life ahead. Our quality of life in future, our social status and personal happiness will be a reflection of our decisions today. Therefore one has to get out of the by lane mindset of worrying about our past failures, the number of people competing in these exams, the pressures of preparation and other hindrances to performance and look beyond.

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