

Do Hobbies matter in the corporate world?

Do you need to have a section for Hobbies and interests in your CV? This is a question that often people have asked me and my answer has always been yes - because your hobbies and interests tell people a lot about you, and it shows off the whole you. Of course, there are a lot of caveats - how much you write about it and what hobbies do you want to share in public (I do not judge!). However, I do believe that hobbies or interests are a crucial part of your personality. Something that highlights you as so much more than a dull business bod. So why do I think this?



Genuine interests/hobbies act as stress relief: The word genuine is crucial here. If you just want to join the bandwagon and put in golf or yoga as it is the in-thing, that is not genuine at all. Your hobby or interest needs to be something that genuinely excites you and something you would be quite happy to talk for hours about. Cooking is one for me - obviously how well I cook or not will have no reflection at all on how I will do my job. But I am very happy to share in the work context that I love cooking. It feeds my creative instincts (pun intended) and helps me destress. So, while it is not directly relevant to my job, it is an important stress outlet for me and helps me do my job better. If I have had a long and hard day at work, nothing relaxes me more than spending some good time in the kitchen. And luckily for me, I have a family always willing to sample my creations.



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They activate other parts of your mind: When I was younger, I was a dancer (Indian classical dance). Dance activated a deep-seated creative side of my mind that I did not often connect with otherwise. As a student, I was seriously academically oriented and loved studying. Dance opened a totally different part of my mind where I could explore and connect with emotions in a way I could never do with my studies. Don't get me wrong, I LOVED studying. But I was a better student when I indulged in both studies and dance.

They add multiple facets to your personality: What do I mean by this? Let me tell you a story. As a young dancer, I had to perform on stage in front of large audiences. Very quickly, you learn how to overcome fear of public performances (only true if you are really involved and excited by your art) and build a loving relationship with the audience. Then, years later, when I had to present in public in front of large corporate audiences, the whole experience was more of a joy for me as it reminded me of being back on stage. Little things like including the audience in your presentation, maintaining eye contact across the whole of the audience and body language were things that instinctively came to me. You may think that is ok for a dancer but not every hobby will do this. I don't agree. A mentor of mine was a hockey player and captained her team. Her leadership, coaching and collaboration were skills she honed through her hobby. Another team member that I admire is a big football fan. So much that he can talk about his team for hours - and he does so much public speaking and getting involved in football that this does add a great new facet to his corporate personality.



They can be a great way to exercise your mind or body: Again, you may say that this is only true of some types of hobbies, but I disagree. If you are genuinely interested in a hobby, it is bound to exercise your mind or body. E.g., yoga - I have been doing this for years - and it started as a stress-relief. But now, it is my favourite form of exercise and helps me stay active. I have a friend who is an avid gamer. Her mind-eye co-ordination has improved over the years with this. So, all hobbies and interests stretch you and are a great way to enhance your mind or your body.

They teach you a lot about yourself: A friend of mine started doing podcasts - he developed this as an interest and now he is one of the best public speakers I have come across. Two things come to play here.... he talks about something that he truly believes in, and all his podcasts have given him incredible practice to hone his skills. Another example - I love reading books - and decided to write a fictional fantasy book with Indian mythology and dance woven in. When I finished it, I learnt a lot about myself - the fact that my love for dance will never leave me, the fact that I am inspired by mythology (Rick Riordan - you're my hero for making mythology so interesting) and also about how I like to persevere (writing, editing and publishing a book are not easy things to do - so you really have to want to do it). And if you are one of those marathon runners or keen on an iron man, then yes, you will truly understand perseverance.

My mum and her best friend used to do a lot of embroidery and other craft work. While this was another way to get your creative juices flowing for my mother (whose day job was to teach physics), this was also a great way to socialise and connect. My husband is fond of golf - he has used this for years to connect with his friends and he still goes off to play a game of golf with people he knew since he was seventeen. Such is the social power of a joined-up hobby.

There is much more that I can say about this - but think I have laboured my point enough. I would highly recommend you allow yourself to indulge in your hobby or interest. This is something that you will do not just for yourself but also for everyone around you as hobbies and interests make you so much more relaxed, more evolved and more interesting than if you did not do them. Balance is key - and having an interest or a hobby for yourself is a way to bring that balance into your life while adding more to the society. I would love to hear your thoughts about this.