The Reward Stability Tension

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At the most basic level of professional endeavors, there lies a relationship between reward and stability. It is a relationship built on tension.

This is that relationship:

- High reward with low stability
- Low reward with high stability

Like a seesaw, the level of reward and stability are intentionally adverse to each other. The space between them varies in its expression of either aspect, but must still maintain a balance of tension between them.

Risk analysis describes the assessment between Reward and Stability. I could have addressed this paradigm from that point of view. Instead, I prefer to draw our attention to what the risk speaks of and focus on what it is analyzing.

Both Reward and Stability are desired elements of professional endeavors - types of professional gains. A professional endeavor cannot lose the tension between Reward and Stability without losing what matters: engagement and performance by the professional.

An imbalance in the Reward Stability Tension produces disastrous results. The most extreme examples can be identified as results of corruption. In this paradigm, corruption is identified when the tension is disastrously imbalanced, resulting in either:

- High reward with high stability
- Low reward with low stability

When either of these extremes occur, something is wrong with the professional environment at the most basic level. Those that reap the highest benefits should not do so with ease. Those that have ease should not reap the highest benefits. These are forms of high reward, high stability corruption. Those that reap little should not have to fight for what little they get. Those that are ill rewarded should not fear for their job. These are examples of low reward, low stability corruption. Arguments supporting either of these conditions are rationalizations favoring the corruption that pollutes the professional environment. Don't be fooled. Anything that produces such situations is

corrupt no matter how good it sounds. Only once such corruption is rooted out can a healthy Reward Stability Tension be established.

A healthy Reward Stability Tension adds value to the professional environment. It incentivizes success for the driven by way of high reward while maintaining value for the less driven by way of stability. Driven people are rare, not normal. The average person is not aggressively ambitious towards high success. A healthy Tension incentivizes success with reward and tempers that reward with volatility. Achieving itself requires drive - hence the promise of reward to incentivize that drive. However, the drive for high reward creates competition as only a few can receive high rewards. For the less driven, the more normal members of the workforce, the converse state is stability - the promise of perpetuating normalcy. It is not very rewarding, but stability itself is something to be valued.

High reward does not partner well with high stability, this breaks the incentive pattern by removing the tension between risk and reward. This can lead to the corrupt state of a stable system that rewards those that happen to be at the top. They no longer earn the rewards they receive, they are merely granted them by the system's corrupt design. This is corruption favoring the powerful. On the other end, low reward does not match well with low stability. This crushes the professional under the weight of need (low reward) and volatility - something that induces stress and erodes personal stability. This defeats the individual in a "no-win" scenario that is encased in meaningless risk. Because risk without reward is meaningless and cruel.

Because neither corrupt extreme works, it is the opposite of each condition that does. High risk yielding high rewards encourages productivity and competition. Low risk yielding high stability creates consistency. Together, these expressions of a healthy Reward Stability Tension allow the driven to succeed and the rest of us to live in relative peace. All kinds of professionals find a place in this type of system.

Tags: design, necessary tension, productivity, professional, success
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