

Migrants: The Unprofitable Servant

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Views are personal and does not reflect the views of the organization I am employed.

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The Church has celebrated the *World Day of Migrants and Refugees (WDMR)* since 1914. It remains an occasion to express concern for the many vulnerable people on the move, to pray for them as they face uncertainty, displacement, and rejection and to raise awareness of the profound opportunities that migration offers both to individuals and societies.

This reflection draws inspiration from that celebration and invites us to look deeper; to recognize that, in many ways, **we are all migrants** in our professional journeys.

Migration isn't always about crossing borders. In the modern workplace, we are all migrants, moving across roles, functions, and disciplines in search of relevance, growth, and purpose. We move through organizations, projects, and roles, building cities we will never own and serving economies that may never serve us back. Like the migrants who labor unseen, we too contribute to structures of prosperity that often forget the hands that built them.

The phrase **“unprofitable servant”** can also be seen as a metaphor for those who give more than they gain — individuals who serve with quiet commitment, often without visible reward or recognition. In a world driven by returns, metrics, and margins, profitability has become the yardstick for human worth. **Yet, migrants and by extension, professionals everywhere, remind us that true value often lies in what cannot be measured.**

Sacrifice, loyalty, perseverance, and silent dedication seldom appear on a balance sheet. The hours spent learning after work, the family moments missed, the quiet endurance of change; these are the invisible currencies of commitment. They do not show up in promotions or pay grades, yet they form the unseen backbone of progress.

Professional Mobility and Employability

We all choose our trades early — in high school, at graduation, or during the first few years of our working life. But migration from one trade to another, especially in the middle or later stages of a career, can feel as daunting as scaling Mount Everest. Employers and recruiters often prefer what I call the **“profitable migrants”** — those who not only know their trade but have stayed within a familiar domain, such as BFSI, Energy, or Manufacturing.

This mindset isn't entirely unfounded. In industries like healthcare or aviation, where precision and regulation are non-negotiable, formal training and field-specific experience are essential. Yet, in many other sectors, this rigid thinking may deserve a rethink.

Take the case of a Risk professional.

Risk, by nature, is a universal discipline; it cuts across sectors and speaks a common language of uncertainty, control, and assurance. Restricting a professional to **“BFSI risk” or “Energy risk”** is like asking a seasoned mountaineer to climb only one peak. The fundamentals remain the same; what changes is the terrain.

Migrants to Refugees: The Easy Prey for Exploitation

Continuing the analogy, professionals who migrate between roles or industries often find themselves in vulnerable positions. **The moment they lose a job or seek new opportunities; they risk becoming refugees in their own careers; displaced within systems that value continuity over courage.** In these transitions, vulnerability creeps in and exploitation follows close behind.

Many face subtle or overt forms of imbalance: lower pay, heavier workloads, unrealistic targets, or arbitrary KPIs. When the need for stability outweighs bargaining power, even capable professionals may settle for less than they deserve. The irony is striking; the very adaptability that defines professional migration can also become the reason for its abuse.

One might argue that organizations have established structures to address grievances, that hiring managers are trained to be unbiased, and that talent is recruited based on merit and fit. However, in practice, much depends on governance; how effectively an organization monitors, manages, and acts upon what it claims to value.

Employee churn could be one indicator.
Mediocre performance could be another.
Bias and favoritism could be a third.

Each of these is a symptom of a deeper issue: risks that quietly erode trust, stall growth, and dilute the organization's ability to produce sustainable value for its stakeholders. These are not risks that appear in compliance reports or audit checklists, yet they are among the most corrosive.

Being compliant with boundaries — **internal or external** — can never surface these intangibles yet profound areas of risk. Left unacknowledged, they fester beneath the surface like a hidden wound. Over time, what begins as a small infection of neglect or bias can spread, until the organization faces a form of cultural amputation it can no longer avoid.

The Human Body Checkup

Predicting a cardiac arrest can be difficult, but it can be better managed through today's lifestyle choices, advanced technologies, and most importantly regular checkups. These checkups reveal what the naked eye cannot see. They forewarn us of potential dangers and give us the chance to take timely corrective actions.

In much the same way, organizations must establish time-bound goals and periodic assessments to check their internal pulse. These **"organizational checkups"** help reveal issues that may not be immediately visible — cultural fatigue, disengaged employees, or widening gaps between purpose and performance.

They serve as early warning signals:

Are employees slowly turning into migrants, searching for greener pastures?
Are there refugees within, silently enduring exploitation or burnout?

Regular reflection and feedback, like health diagnostics, **are not signs of weakness, they are acts of wisdom.** They help organizations detect hidden stress before it becomes systemic failure.

However, many organizations fall into the **“Fill it, shut it, forget it”** trap — a mindset where processes replace purpose, and periodic reviews become mere rituals. What starts as structure ends as stagnation. Real progress demands that we keep our systems alive — **listening, adapting, and evolving** — much like the heartbeat of a healthy body.

Final thoughts

Migration, in the professional sense, is not merely a change of role or title. It is an act of faith, a belief that one’s skills, values, and experiences can transcend boundaries. And that’s where the metaphor of the **unprofitable servant** returns **those who migrate for meaning, not margin**, often carry the truest sense of purpose within them.

Perhaps being unprofitable in the worldly sense is not a weakness at all. It may be the quiet grace of those who give more than they take, who serve with integrity, adapt with courage, and persist with hope.

In the end, our journeys as professionals are *not about arrival — but about becoming.* Innovations and technological advances may make our lives easier, but it is the *“good old human heart”* that truly keeps workplaces healthy — free from refugees, free from migrant exodus.

Because empathy, fairness, and purpose are still the best technologies we’ll ever build.