



RNI Registration No. KARENG/2012/46828
ISBN 978-81-909837-3-0

₹ 200

PERFECT PROFESSIONAL

Enabling Managers to Make a Difference

Vol-2 Issue - 11 Jan- Apr 2015

Total No. of pages -82

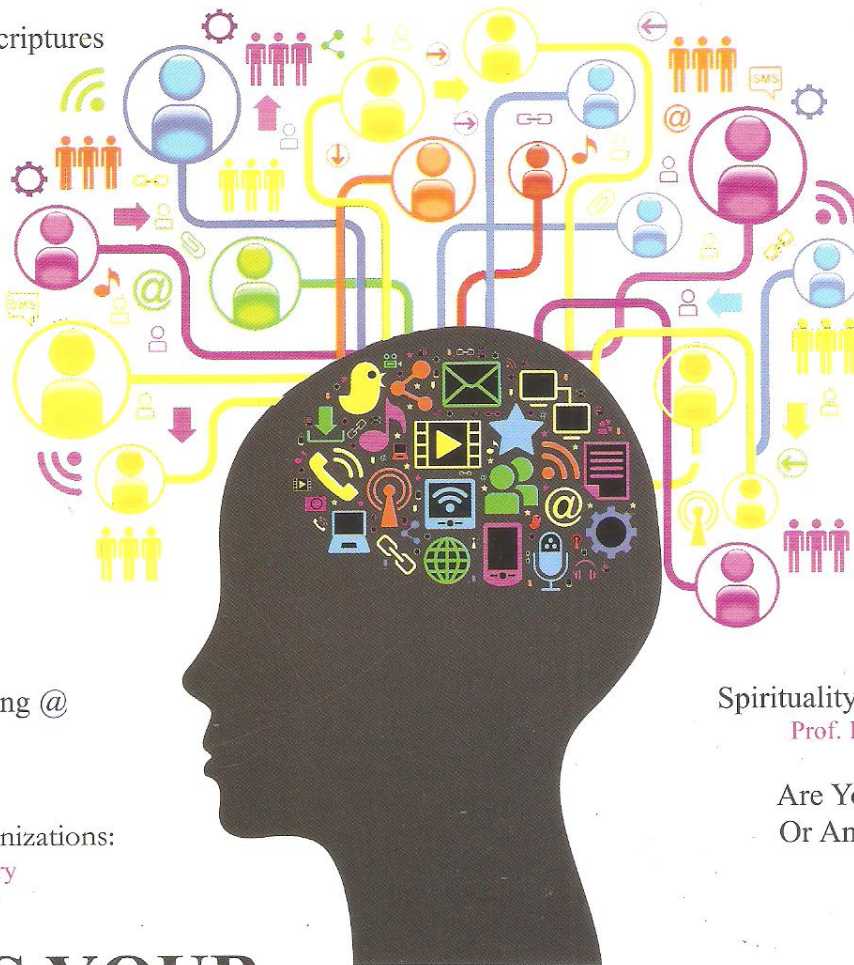
Theme Based

Travelling To Learn

Mr. Benny. K

Learning From The Scriptures

Dr. Ramya Ranganathan



Face To Face

Rediscovering Learning @
The Workplace

Mr. Barkat Charania

Learning Within Organizations:

Mr. Tridib Roy Chowdhury

Well Being

Spirituality In Management

Prof. D. P. Chattopadhyay

Are You An Energizer
Or An Energy Sapper?

Ms. Gunjan Shukla

WHAT'S YOUR LEARNING AGENDA ?



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From the Editor...

Live as if you were to die tomorrow....
Learn as if you were to live forever...

-Mahatma Gandhi



Nandini Chawla
CEO, TVRLS

The passion to succeed must be matched with a hunger to learn. Successful individuals, organizations and societies often come across to us as examples of great learners. Learning is truly the hidden element behind success.

We are surrounded by varied sources of learning. Learning may happen through hands on experience, books or scriptures, by interacting with others and sometimes even through quiet introspection. The fact that you are reading Perfect Professional itself means that you are learning something every time you leaf through our magazine!

The world outside and the world within us is changing at a rapid pace. New technology, new social platforms and even new human behaviour is forcing each of us to constantly change the way we look at each other and in this process, learn.

With this in mind, we at TVRLS are happy to present to you our latest issue of Perfect Professional titled "What's Your Learning Agenda". Keeping up with our tradition of adopting a theme based approach in our magazine, there are various articles, interviews and opinions by experienced learners and facilitators of learning.

You will come across how mergers help professionals learn and can be a great inspiration to adapt quickly to change along with understanding that organizations can learn from their employees through the simple act of "Listening".

Twenty important lessons from travel teach us how common we are and yet how different we choose to be. We also share with you the importance and need to reinvent to stay relevant and how choosing to develop cross-functional competence helps organizations.

Fear is in all yet we must fight it and learn is another important aspect that we have covered. The case for investing on a learning agenda is presented too with pointers on driving the same in organizations.

Ancient scriptures are an eternal source of wisdom and this forms an integral part of our current issue. Also presented is "Spirituality in Management" with interesting anecdotes.

Our interviews with successful learners capture their valuable views. We also share with you helpful insights into how adults learn as well as how experience can be a great teacher.

Like sunshine on a bright morning, we wish that 2015 brings to you joy, prosperity and contentment. We also wish you the very best in your endeavour to learn something new every day and hope to increase our learning through you as our beloved readers.

Happy "Learning" 2015 to each of you!

Nandini Chawla



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SUBMISSION

We whole heartedly welcome the contribution of authors for the magazine.

We request you to go through the Author's Guidelines before submitting the article, research, etc.

For Guidelines visit us on www.tvrls.com or write to us on perfectprofessional.tvrls@gmail.com

Owner

T V Rao Learning Systems Pvt. Ltd.

Published by
Nandini Chawla

Place of Publication

T.V. Rao Learning Systems Pvt. Ltd.
No:1739, 9th Cross Road
Opposite Nilgiris Supermarket, JP Nagar, 2nd Phase
Bangalore 560078. Karnataka, INDIA.
Ph: +91-80-65975191, 26494919
Visit us on: www.tvrls.com
Write to us: perfectprofessional.tvrls@gmail.com

Printed by
K. Venkatesh

Printed at
Hamsanikethan Printers
No.126, C.T. Bed, Banashankari 2nd Stage
Bangalore-560 070.
Phone: 080-2671 4921

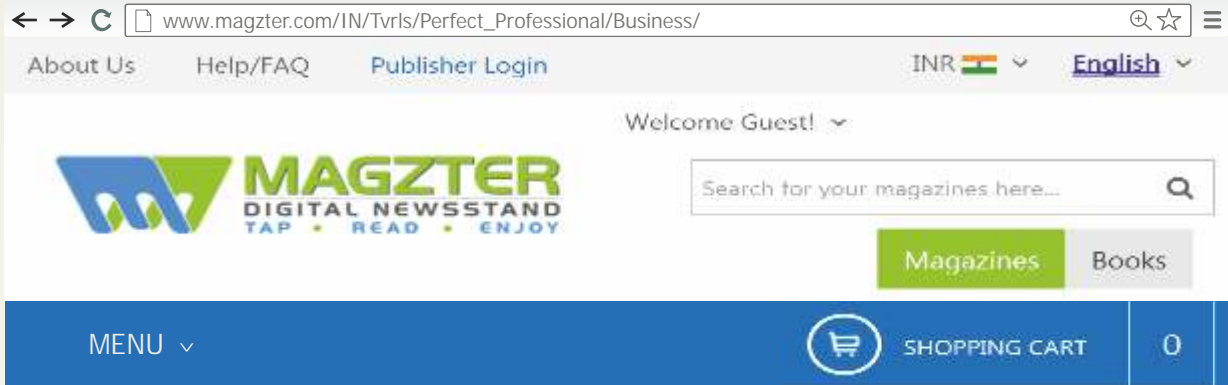
Distributed by: India Today



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Total No. of pages -86



PERFECT PROFESSIONAL

Enabling Managers to Make a Difference

Delegation-More Or Less?
by **Dr. Marshall Goldsmith**

Theme Based
Is Delegation Important?
Prof. (CAPT)
A. Nagaraj Subbarao


Face To Face
Effective Delegation Is
Built On The Fundamental
Pillar Of TRUST
Dr. Shyam Bhat



Well Being
Wellness Begins
In The Mind
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Personal Effectiveness
Adopting A Project Mindset-
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OR STAGNATE




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PREVIEW



Contents

EDITORIAL

WHAT'S YOUR LEARNING AGENDA ?

- 8 Experience-The Best Teacher
by: Ms. Luna Daniel
- 12 Travelling To Learn-20 Lessons To Learn From Travel
by: Mr. Benny. K
- 16 Learning From The Scriptures
Gita Verses That Nourish And Nurture
by: Dr. Ramya Ranganathan
- 20 Lessons And Learnings From Mergers-
by: Ms. Rupali Rane
- 24 Reinvent To Stay Relevant Learning From Change.....
by: Mr. Bert Cherian
- 28 Learning Through Listening
by: Mr. Soumaditya & Mr. Sudip
- 32 Driving A Learning Agenda In Organizations
by: Mr. Sumeet Singh Arora
- 36 Fear Systems-The Giant, Silent Killers Of Learning
by: Mr. Chetan Dhruve
- 40 Adult Learning and Its Application @ Workplace
by: Ms. Mridula Murthy



KALEIDOSCOPE

- 44 Perspectives Of Five Different Organisations
On Their Learning Agenda
by : Ms. Supriya Roy Sohi, Dr. Vivekanand,
Mr. Prashant Sree, Mr. Phalgunan Maroly Kumaran &
Ms. Chitra Parthasarathy

Face To Face

- 50 Rediscovering Learning @ The Workplace
by: Mr . Barkat Charania
- 54 Learning Within Organizations
by: Mr. Tridib Roy Chowdhury

WELL BEING

- 60 Spirituality In Management
by: Prof. D. P. Chattopadhyay
- 64 Are You An Energizer Or An Energy Sapper?
by: Ms. Gunjan Shukla

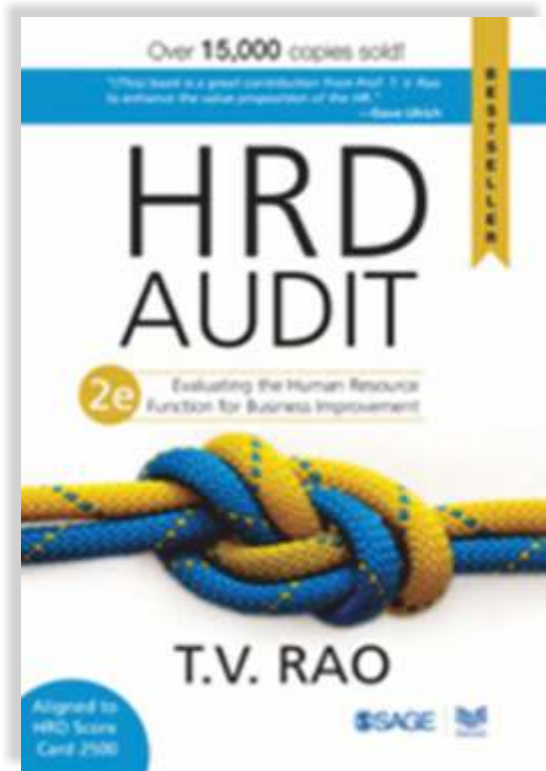
PEOPLE PRACTICES &TALENT

MANAGEMENT

- 68 Building Cross Functional Competency:
An Emerging Need For PSUs
by: Mr. Indranil Banerjee



New Releases



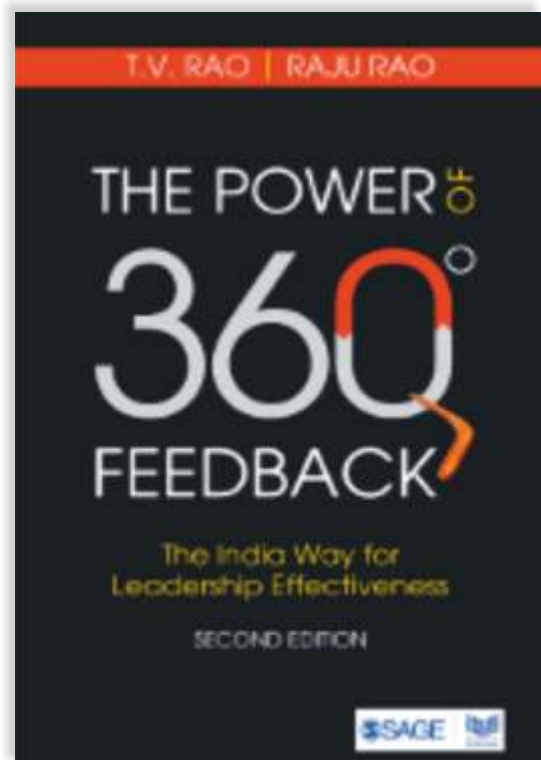
HRD Audit

"The book offers specific insights and tools for how to turn business aspirations into human capital goals (talent, leadership, and capability), then how to transform the HR department, HR practices, and HR professionals to make this happen". Dave Ulrich, Ross School of Business, University of Michigan.

"A thorough evaluation of HR function is imperative both to rejuvenate it and to make it more business driven. HRD Audit makes such an evaluation possible by examining the adequacy of the existing HRD systems". Financial Express.

The Power of 360 Feedback

The book includes research done using 8000 top-level managers whose leadership roles and qualities were profiled. This book also presents readily usable 360 tools for NGOs, Schools and colleges besides the corporate sector. The new edition of the book shares a lot of experience gathered in India in the last two decades of 360 feedback covering several thousands of managers in India and other countries. – Authors.





Experience-The Best Teacher



Learning happens even without an agenda.

Each one of us learns differently-some proactively seek methods and means to learn more, while others who claim to 'not learn', are doing so involuntarily. Often, the greatest learning is from an unconventional source-a candid chat with a friend, a book, a movie or even a solo travel experience. Learning is everywhere and whether we accept it or not, it is something that we embrace even before our umbilical cord is cut!

Personally, learning excites me and I am game to try out anything new. However, it is not a quest to do everything but a journey to know myself better, a chance to experience the beautiful gift of life and to explore the opportunities it presents.

In my personal journey of learning, there have been many 'eureka' moments and I am a culmination of all these learnings. This article is an attempt to share my personal story and my sources of learning-largely through experiences at various stages of my life



Home-The First School:

My father played a significant role in shaping my learning in the formative years. A strong believer of Jim Rohns funda, 'You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with', he constantly encouraged me to surround myself with the 'best'-not only toppers and high performers in school, but people who were hardworking, responsible and disciplined. I never really understood or appreciated this thought, at that point in time. But looking back, today I can clearly see that my outlook towards life has been nurtured by those very "best people" who helped me learn, improve and experiment constantly in whatever I did. They not only helped me imbibe the best qualities that they had but also motivated me to constantly improve in whatever I did.

Another key learning in my formative years was the futility of external comparisons. My parents never switched on to a 'comparison mode', (to the extent that they never even asked me what my best friend scored or what the topper got), and they egged me to accept failure graciously and taught me to love myself. My father often reminded me that competition became unhealthy when it focused on the 'fear of failing' rather than on the merit of learning. The result-I realized that my biggest competitor was only "me". This helped me accept failure graciously and taught me to love myself.

Today, I can proudly say that my formative years have helped me appreciate my individuality-This has not only helped me push myself harder but has also helped me build lasting relationships with people!

Learning As An Adolescent

Convent education can be very rewarding. It teaches you discipline, humility, respect for resources and also instills a huge sense of responsibility.

I spent the first 12 years of my student life under the watchful eyes of the 'sisters' that ran the convent. However, after my secondary examination, I joined an 'elite', co-educational school, which was run by one of India's biggest business families. As a convent bred girl, the presence of the opposite gender made me uncomfortable. I felt alien in their presence and being a minority in number, (14 girls in a class of 60) did not help either!

Life changed dramatically- impeccable English was not mandated and morning assemblies were sans the 'Our Father' or the hymns. I made friends with the girls and keenly observed the boys, and well, they seemed VERY strange! It felt out of place sharing the basketball court with them, not to forget competing with them in the class. Life had changed and HOW! However, the most trying adolescent years had three key learnings for me:

a) Learn to accept people with all their quirks. Greater the difference between you and the others, greater is the learning that you get from interacting with them. Also, preconceived notions can be a huge deterrent while forging and sustaining relationships.

b) Life is an equal playing field. It is important to have healthy associations with everyone- irrespective of backgrounds, society standings, religion, gender or caste. The two years made me appreciate differences and question the stereotypes. I looked forward to putting myself in the forefront-not to defeat those who were different from me, but to win them over!

c) Acceptance does not come from others, it comes from you. People will be comfortable with you, only if you are comfortable with yourself. Being different does not make you inferior or superior. It just makes you, YOU! Something that may not seem to be 'up your alley' can indeed be something you enjoy.



Ms. Luna Daniel

About the Author...

An alumnus of St. Xavier's College, Kolkata, Luna is an experienced HR Professional. She is certified in Competency Mapping and Designing and Implementing Assessment and Development Centres by T. V. Rao Learning Systems and is a post graduate in Business Management. Presently, she is involved in core HRD interventions, like Competency Mapping, Assessment Development Centers (Designing Tools and implementing ADCs), Behavior Event Interviewing, HRD Audit & Scorecard, Implementation of Performance Management System and 360 Degree Feedback. An avid reader and a self confessed lover of food, music and books she can be reached on luna0206@gmail.com



My First Job

In my first job, I had the opportunity and privilege to work with someone who was a 'father figure'. A great motivator, he would encourage me to "take a shot at it" and "tread unconventional paths". When most bosses were fiercely protective about their female team members, my boss never gave me ANY special treatment. I was given all the opportunities to take on multiple responsibilities that allowed me to travel across the country by myself. So whether it was travelling to places that I had only heard of or to places where I could only communicate in a sign language-my first job pushed me to learn the hard way. It taught me humility, independence and self-sufficiency.

Being A "boss"-learning From My Team Members:

The greatest inputs that I have received on my self-development have been from my juniors. I had youngsters who joined me right after college and I always wanted to emulate my first boss. However, I was in for a rude shock! I assumed that 'they' would be like 'me' and I always wondered why I could not break the ice with them. Some of the key learnings from my team members were:

- a) 'Necessity may be a mother of all inventions' is a passé thought! While working on certain projects, it is important to proactively deal, understand and plug the gaps. Waiting for a necessity to arise may be too late!
- b) It is okay to receive feedback from people who do not mirror

your style of working. The perception that the other person has, is of significance to your growth. If you are being perceived in a particular way and it is not something that pleases your ears, STOP and introspect!

- c) Take time to listen carefully. Many of us believe that we are experts in certain areas, simply because we have done something repeatedly. Always remember that being an expert can have its downside-you may develop a blind spot that may do you more harm than good. Listening to others and their suggestions / experiences is therefore important for continuous improvement.

Learning From My Profession

My stint as an HR professional has been very rewarding. I have had the pleasure of meeting many people who have contributed to my personal growth. People are powerful assets and it is indeed intriguing that each of them has a story to tell. While working in the HR domain, both in a corporate house as well as in consulting organization, the range and extent of learning, has been phenomenal. Some of the key learnings based on observations and interactions have been:

- a) Getting along with your co-workers is just as important as doing your job. You have a "work family" that you spend much of your time with, and it is important to keep that family strong. When you are close with your co-workers and have a trusting relationship, everybody works harder and more efficiently.

b) Job Loss is a new chapter: Ask any employee today what he/she fears the most and without batting an eyelid, they will mention 'Job Loss'. But what is the silver lining in this dark cloud? Job loss helps one take a step back to analyze, introspect and retrospect. The time that each one takes to look for another job can be optimally utilized for learning something new, connecting with old colleagues, family and friends and it also helps one appreciate the value of 'having a job'.

c) You are the only one who can take charge of your own growth: It's easy to get complacent about professional development when you're employed. Upgrading yourself will help you succeed, both in the short and long term.

d) Seek out people who are on the career path you aspire to be on. Ask them how they got to where they are. With a little effort, you can easily learn from their successes and mistakes. With various platforms, it is easy to connect with peers and old colleagues who can help you do things differently-as they say, seek and you shall find!

Learning not only helps you discover a 'new' agenda, it also helps you discover YOU. Learning need not be a costly affair and can be acquired from all over; you just have to look out for it!! As a small takeaway, I would like to share a few things that will help YOU learn something new!



Happy Learning!

One Movie that you MUST watch	Forrest Gump
One Book that you MUST read	Ayn Rands 'The Fountainhead'
One song that you must listen	Happy by Pharell Williams Another day in Paradise by Phil Collins
One Activity that you MUST include in your daily agenda	Reading/Googling one topic that is totally different from what you do.
One Interaction that you MUST look out for	Meeting/Calling old colleagues, friends, meeting your cousins/grandparents at least once a month.
Relationships that you MUST fulfill	Spend at least one single unadulterated hour everyday with yourself and your family.
One opportunity that you MUST never miss	Upgrading oneself/Trying to master/learn one new activity every year!
One investment that is totally worth it	Travel, with as little 'luxury' as possible.
One companion that you must always desire to be with	Nature-having pets/ gardening can change the way you appreciate the small wonders of life!

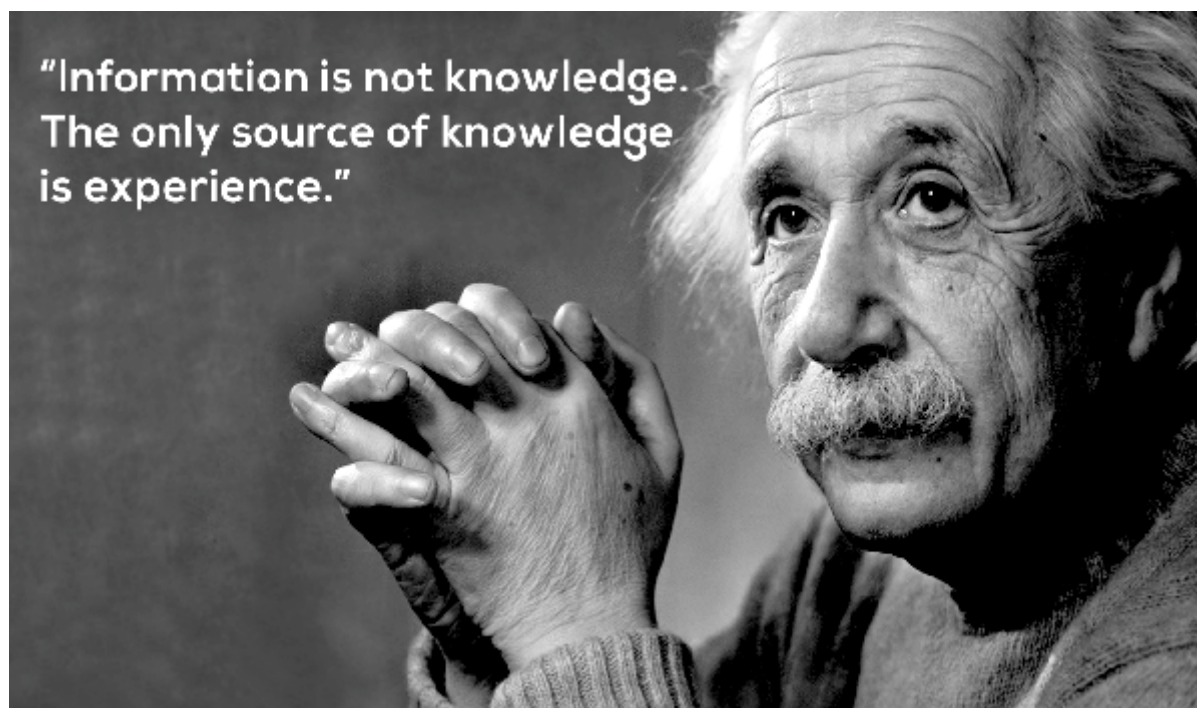


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**THE WORLD IS A BOOK,
AND THOSE WHO
DO NOT TRAVEL
READ ONLY A PAGE.**

Travelling To Learn 20 Lessons To Learn From Travel



Eight Years...
416 Weeks...
3,000 Days...

This is the amount of time that I have been on the move-without a fixed home; Experiencing new countries, culture, language every few months has made up for most of my life and it's still long from over.

I had travelled before-a couple of summers in the United States, and an entire month in Spain. However, back in 2003, on the week of my 21st birthday, I left India for good. I had graduated a few months before, and knew that I would only be coming back "home" for visits. Since then, wherever I lay my boots, I called that my home. I had gone through as many books as I could and thought I knew it all, but the fact is that I have become the person I was meant to be only in the last 4/5 of a decade, while on the road. And I can safely say that I still have a lot left to learn.

As I celebrate my 8th "travelversary" this year, I thought it fitting to share with you some of the key insights I have gathered on this journey. These are the outcomes of my observations from travelling and meeting people from across the world:

1. Everyone's Desire Is The Same

Vastly different as the world's cultures are, if you speak to Italian millionaires, homeless Brazilians, Dutch fishermen and Filipino computer programmers, in their own languages, you start to see that we are all incredibly alike where it matters. Everyone wants validation, love, security, enjoyment and hopes for a better future. The way we express and work on it is different, but we all have the same basic desires. You can relate to everyone in the world if you look past the superficial things that separate you.

2. Never Defer Happiness

Too many people presume that when they have "that one thing" they work towards for years, then "everything will be alright". This is delusional. When you get it, there'll be something else missing in your life. We can learn to be content with what we have, live in the now while enjoying the progress and changes we are making. If our whole life is working up towards one really big major goal that we hold onto for years, then we are in for an anticlimax once the dust settles. Work towards it, but stop deferring happiness.

3. Be Practical. You Will Never Win The Lottery.

People seem to have a strange concept of how luck works and how things will eventually fall into place for them. Why should one rely on or pray for luck? Is it not better to actually get started and do something tangible? I personally don't believe in magic or fairies or astrology. As a practical person, I see the world as a very logical place with physical and social rules and understanding this has helped me live well in it. A good belief to have is that the universe owes you nothing; you owe it to yourself to be the master of where your life ends up.

4. There's No Such Thing As Destiny.

Destiny is used as a standard excuse by most people for why they don't do something with their lives. The thing is, it doesn't exist. You are not limited by who you know, where you were born, what genes you have, how much money you have or other such aspects that you can claim are your stamp of failure for life. If you are determined enough, there are many opportunities in life that are totally achievable with minimum resources, regardless of who you are.

Mr. Benny. K

About the Author...

A gypsy at heart, Benny is a freelance language specialist and is conversant in 12 different languages. His love for the unknown is fuelled by his passion to travel and since the age of 21, the only thing constant is travel. He can be reached on benny_travel@outlook.com



5. Seek Out People With Different Beliefs And Views Of The World And Get To Know Their Side Of The Story

I have some beliefs about the world that many others do not subscribe to. People get their meaning in life from believing in 'things'. I don't. So when I meet someone with a very different belief system, it is better to get along than to try to "convert" them. When someone is sure about something and has believed it for many years, it is difficult to convince them with a few cleverly picked words. They have to discover the truth for themselves over time or just continue believing what they do. It is not worth taking responsibility for convincing the world that you are right. Rather, it may be wiser to acknowledge that maybe you are actually the wrong one.

The world is much more fun with people of varying interests and beliefs. Despite my skepticism, in all my travels I have hung out with astrologists, palm readers, religious folk, conservatives, and people who hate technology. My life and experiences have been enriched because of people with varying backgrounds and interests. Spending time exclusively with people who agree with you on everything would never challenge you and allow you to learn so much more.

6. Nobody Has It All Figured Out!

Almost everyone has problems and puts on a brave face-don't presume they have it easy. You see of each person what they let you see. You have no idea what they are going through or what they had to put up with to be in a situation that you can consider "easy". This is universal-millionaires, students, the cool kid,

the party animal, the introvert and everyone in between has more to their story than the superficial restricted one you see. Never dismiss them as having it easy if you don't know the entire story.

7. You Don't Know What You've Got Till It's Gone

Don't take anything for granted. I couldn't afford to pay for accommodation one night and had to sleep outside on a rock because of it. Ever since, I appreciate having a bed, couch or hammock, no matter how small or where it may be, because I know what it's like to not have one. One night was enough to burn it into me-I sigh a breath of relief every time I go to bed now.

I went partially deaf due to an ear infection for two weeks and appreciate my hearing and all the beautiful sounds around me all the more because I got it back. I've never lost anyone close to me, but I hug my family members and tell them I love them every chance I get, and clear any bad air with friends and don't hold back on sharing my emotions with them. Life is too short-if I lost anything important to me then I want to make sure that I never wasted the time I did have with it or with him or her.

8. More Money Will Never Solve Your Problems

As long as you are not living in the street or going hungry, you do not "need" more money. When you spend time with people who are actually living on next to nothing, but having a full life, then you will truly understand this. Everything that is wonderful about life doesn't cost a penny, and the rest is way cheaper than you think it is.

9. Don't Let Possessions Own You

Look at the real reason you want to buy something more expensive and you realize that it all comes down to validation from others in one way or another. You don't really need any of it unless it's directly related to essentials in how you work or survive. Focus on interactions and people instead of focusing on possessions.

10. Get Outside And Do Something With Other People

The world that is worth experiencing is not in books or on TV or computer screens. It's with other human beings. Stop being shy and get out and meet them!

11. Watch Others' TV

TV was an important part of the 20th century, bringing communication and news to the masses, but now it's wasteful. People get biased news through it. Why watch terrible TV shows that teach you nothing, when better alternatives await you? TVs encourage people to be antisocial. The only TVs you should be watching are someone else's-go to your friend's house to share a series you like if you must, or go to the bar with your mates to watch sports.

12. Put A Cap-Use The Internet

Unlike the TV, the Internet is interactive and allows you to take part and become virtually social. It connects and communities all over the world. Use it to enrich your life, but put a cap on how much you use it so you can get out and live that life. Replacing one screen with another (even when you use it to chat to people) is just escaping the real world, which is much more beautiful.



13. Modern Foreign Culture May Not Satisfy Your Stereotypes

Every country in the world is modernizing but this does not mean that they are westernizing or Americanizing. What makes them unique does not have to satisfy your “quaint” tourist-brochure view of them. Leave ignorant stereotypes aside and have an open mind about how modern life is like in that culture. Not all Irish people drink, not all Brazilians samba and play football. Everyone will surprise you if you leave your presumptions about them at the airport. Respect the differences, try to adapt to them and realize that to them you might seem backwards in many ways.

14. Take Your Time

If there's one thing I've learned from living in countries that are more “easy going” it's that they are way wiser than the rest of us in their pace of life. People and countries that do everything quicker also do it worse. Take it easy and go slowly. Enjoy every bite of food, walk at a slow pace and take in your surroundings. Let the other person finish their side of the conversation while you listen attentively, and stop in the middle of your day, close your eyes or look at nature and become aware of your breathing.

15. You Can't Please Everyone

“I don't know the secret to success, but the secret to failure is trying to please everyone”

Bill Cosby

State your opinion and stick to your guns. If you are confident enough and share your idea with enough people, you will irritate someone no matter what you talk about.

That's their problem, not yours.

16. Stop Thinking So Much And Act

People think their way out of doing everything that's worth doing in life. The reason I feel I'm getting so much done in the last few years is precisely because of how much time I give to over-analyzing whether I should do something important or not: NONE.

17. Making New Friends Is Easy And So Is Appreciating Your Current Ones

My entire eight years travel has been alone. I arrive in a new nation without a single friend waiting for me. I have no connections, but I make them anyway. I find a party online and go straight to it and say hi to everyone. If you are friendly, genuine and charming, making friends with people from every culture and background is possible. When people tell me that it's hard to meet new people I feel like waking them up to the opportunities around them, which I have had consistently for almost a decade.

18. Doing Anything Specifically To Impress People Is Stupid

People will never give you the validation you seek if you try to be a dancing monkey for them. Saying how many languages you speak, how rich you are, who you know, where you studied or what you do for a living, or trying to show-off in any other way to get someone to like you, or working for these things just for the bragging rights will leave you really disappointed.

People are impressed by those who aren't trying to impress them. They are comfortable in themselves, social and interesting. Sometimes

to be “interesting” all you have to do is be a good listener.

19. The Most Valuable Lessons In Life Can Never Be Expressed In Black And White, But Must Be Experienced

I thought I knew it all back in university-and that everything of importance can be found in books. But the truth is that the most important things in life are very hard to put in black and white, including what I've written. When most of the world's information is at our fingertips, a mouse click away, it makes it feel like we don't need to experience any more. Movies, books, or “living vicariously through someone else” means we can apparently get the general gist of anything. This is false. Experience is the greatest teacher of all. Stop reading about or watching the world passively and start living it.

20. Swallow Your Pride And Apologize

Never hold a grudge and never try to win every argument. Sometimes it's best to let your pride slide for the sake of clearing the air with someone. Be the first to say you're sorry. Do not wait for the other person to make the first move.

To Conclude....

Travel is really a great teacher. It gives you a rich experience and a diverse learning.

Make sure to include it in your Learning Agenda

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Learning From The Scriptures Gita Verses That Nourish And Nurture





Reflecting on the last 10 years of my life's journey, I see a multi-colored collage of joy, exhilaration and love. I also see moments of challenges, tears, frustrations, and disappointments.

I do not want to undermine the presence of one in favor of the other, but just acknowledge that both the highs and the lows of life have contributed in their own unique ways towards my growth and evolution. My experiences of love, joy, and connection have been instrumental in fuelling me to search for ways to embrace and befriend the surge of life energy that is waiting to flow through me. At the same time it is only by facing various difficulties that I have gradually been able to recognize, acknowledge, and let go of fears and thought patterns that were binding me from within.

As I continue to be enchanted by the magic of the vibrant life-force-energy that pulls me to live and as I continue to be bombarded by challenging situations that trigger further peeling away of fears and assumptions, I want to pause and acknowledge my heartfelt gratitude for both the joys and difficulties in my life.

My Journey With The 'Gita'

Over the last ten years, I have been blessed to receive guidance, inspiration, and understanding about life from several sources. My learning has come from people, life experiences, schools of philosophy and spirituality, new-age wisdom books, Holy Masters, and from Ancient scriptures (Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian). I have a particular fondness however for the 'Bhagavad Gita' because it is the first formal source of learning that nourished me at a time when I was obsessively searching for a better understanding of life and what I then understood to be the unchosen phenomenon of 'living'.



Dr. Ramya Ranganathan

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Dr. Ramya Ranganathan is an Electronics engineer from IIT Madras and holds a PGDM (MBA) from IIM Ahmedabad. She worked in the corporate world with blue chip companies like ICICI, Infosys and Citibank, before she embarked on a quest to learn how she could help people (and herself) flourish better at work. Ramya has a Doctorate in Management from the London Business School and is currently a faculty of Organizational Behaviour at IIM Bangalore. Her personal passion is to help people find joy and meaning through their work. Ramya is also a poetess and you can read her poems at: www.sharingmypoe.ms.blogspot.in. Ramya also teaches courses and classes on the topic of training our minds so that we can manage our inner worlds better. You can access a free series of mini-video lectures on this topic at <http://craftingourlives.com/managing-our-inner-worlds/>



My journey with the 'Gita' started in 2004 when I spent a month at an ashram learning Yoga and getting trained as a yoga teacher. We had classes from morning till night that covered all the four aspects of Yoga-Karma Yoga (developing skill in action), Bhakti Yoga (opening our heart-connection to all of existence), Gyana Yoga (understanding life and creation from a theoretical basis), and Raja Yoga (a systematic path to channel physical and mental energy towards spiritual goals).

The ashram atmosphere and curriculum was an ideal cocoon for me to learn new information, new yogic practices, and open up my heart. On the last day of the course when we asked one of our teachers how we could continue the study of the scriptures to which we had been introduced, he told us that an easy place to start would be the Bhagavad Gita. There started my journey with the Gita, a book that has been a north star guiding me during confusion and acting as a buffer cushion when I have been broken and distraught. I elaborate below on two of my favorite verses from the Gita and acknowledge how they have nurtured and nourished me in my everyday living and working.

My Learnings In Choosing My Career

Sreyansva-dharmovigunah
Para-dharmatsvanusthitat
Sva-dharmenidhanamsreyah
Para-dharmobhayavahah

My understanding of this verse (Chapter 3, verse 35) is that it is far better to follow one's own path or calling (even though that path might be fraught with difficulties and challenges), than follow another's path. In 2003, I took a bold decision to leave my career in

the technical field of a corporate organization (I had a degree in electronics engineering from IIT Madras and an MBA from IIM Ahmedabad and was working in the technology and process re-engineering division of a well known bank at that time).

My work was reputable and lucrative and the bank had provided me with lavish accommodation in a sea facing apartment in the heart of Mumbai. Despite all this, my spirit felt caged and I found my work uninspiring. I would weep silently at my desk when no one was watching and at times visit the washroom and cry my heart out. I recognized that the work I was doing was not meant for me and was not nurturing my spirit. I had a powerful conviction that there was something else I had to be doing on this planet. The only problem was that I did not know what that was.

Eventually I quit my job and decided to study the relationship between people and their work. I joined a Doctoral program and there began my wonderful journey studying psychology and philosophy. In the daytime I would attend classes in psychology and organizational behaviour and in the evenings read books on philosophy and the meaning of work and existence. It was during these years that the Gita became my favorite textbook. I also enrolled in Sanskrit classes just to get a better understanding of the Gita.

It was during this time that this particular verse on 'swadharma' started growing on me. Having experienced a definite shift in my energy after switching fields, I realized that I was on the right track. I started reading more about how people can discover their 'calling(s)' and flourish by

operating out of their own inner essence or element. I experimented with almost every exercise I came across in the field of trying to figure out one's own 'purpose' in life. As I made progress in my own experiments of aligning my work with my inner nature or 'swadharma' I noticed that my 'work' was gradually becoming the highpoint of my existence. My 'work' started infusing my life with joy and meaning, and became a pillar around which I could build my sense of identity and purpose.

Gradually it dawned on me that there is no one 'path' for everyone and that each of us comes into this planet with our own unique blueprint and kitty of strengths and passions. It is an act of self-caring and compassion to start looking within to gain a better understanding of our own blueprint. It is also an act of honoring our creator when we decide to accept and acknowledge the unique gifts each one of us have been given, and put them to use. Most importantly, it is an opportunity to experience a sense of connectedness with all of creation when we can allow our inner potential to surface, enabling us to touch and inspire others as well.

Today, a key portion of my own life's work consists of designing and teaching courses that help people discover their own calling. I also help participants become aware of and work through mental blocks and limiting beliefs that might prevent them from opening up to the idea that each one of us has a unique life purpose. I try to help people break out of their comfort zones of conformity that compel them to work at jobs and careers where they imitate or mimic other people's paths.



Learning About My Best Friend: My Mind

Bandhur tm tmanastasya
Yen tmaiv tman jitahō
An tmanastu atrutve
Vartet tmaiva atru-vat

The meaning of this verse (chapter 6 verse 6) as I understand it is that our mind has the potential to be both-one's best friend as well as one's worst enemy. If we manage our mind or train our mind well, then it can become a great source of strength, inspiration and joy. At the same time, an untrained or unmanaged mind can literally wreak havoc on our sense of peace and wellbeing and on our entire life itself.

Initially I had understood this verse to mean that no matter what happens in our outer world, if we can bring a sense of peace and contentment in our inner world, we will be happy. Indeed this was the attitude with which I practiced meditation (my way of training the mind). I started reaping the benefits of this form of mind-training and I believed that I had understood the meaning of this verse. However, over the years I have begun to see even deeper implications of this verse. A best friend can not only calm us and make us feel good no matter what the situation but she can also inspire us to set and achieve higher targets in our work and our lives.

I learnt from my research in organizational behavior how 'goal-setting' is a practical way to train the mind to be this kind of a 'best friend'. Again, a best friend is not just one who inspires us to act but one who helps us see the world in a more positive light and spot valuable opportunities, which we might not have noticed. I learnt from my research in positive psychology how there are proven techniques to train the mind to start seeing the world through an optimistic lens and also train it to scan the world for positives rather than negatives (Tetris effect).

A best friend also makes us rethink our interpretations of events and examine if we could view the same events and incidents from multiple perspectives. Indeed there exist forms of meditation that help us train our mind so that it becomes easier for us to examine our own interpretations and assumptions before speeding up our mental ladders of inferences and jump to conclusions.

There are times when we find it difficult to make sense of the world and events around us. A good friend could help by sharing inputs and ideas that give the events a proper perspective. Similarly, our brain does not make sense of information that comes in through the senses in an absolute manner. Rather, it filters the information that comes in (bounded awareness) and then gives it a meaning based on existing mental models that pre-exist in our brains. Mental models are created from our past experiences but they are frames in our mind that influence the way we make sense of what is unfolding around and within us in the present moment. These mental models can be helpful or unhelpful. We can work on our minds to let go of nonfunctional mental models and construct new and helpful ones that serve us better.

Conclusion

I work on my mind every day-at work as well as in non-work contexts, in self as well as relationship contexts, in material as well as spiritual contexts. I work on my mind to train it and to befriend it. I have learnt that it works best for me to work gently and gradually with the mind, and not to push it too hard. I have also learnt that when my mind works in ways that are not helpful to me (which it often does), it serves me better to see the mind itself as a victim of social conditioning than as a problematic force. This way I can work on my own mind with compassion and allow it to evolve at a pace that works for me.

Image Source:<http://www.dollsofindia.com/product/hindu-posters/gita-updesh-by-krishna-to-arjuna-in-kuruksheetra-war-reprint-on-paper-CA58.html>





Lessons And Learnings From Mergers

Learning can come from everywhere-books, people, travel and even mere observations. Professionally, a huge amount of learning can come from experiencing a merger- either by being a part of the team facilitating it or by being a part of the workforce, affected by it.

While traditionally mergers are dreaded and looked at something 'to be over and

done with', there is an alternative perspective that involves viewing mergers as a great source of learning. They teach you the right way to deal with people, to be sensitive and to appreciate even larger than life issues like working towards a common vision, respecting different work styles and philosophies, celebrating differences etc.

In my opinion, one should experience working in an M&A situation, as this



adds significantly to one's professional learning as well as increases ones sensibilities to embracing change and differences, positively. Looking for the best in people, being open to accepting another culture or 'way of doing things', integration of values and framing a common mission despite differences, are some of the learnings that can be got 'all-in-one', through the experience of mergers.

Given below is a gist of my learnings and experience as a member of the senior leadership team, leading a merger which was a great source of learning – both personally and professionally. It challenged existing concepts and my thoughts on the way HR should handle a 'ruffle'. In this article, I would like to share with you, the top 5 learnings from the merger experience where employees and the human capital were pitched as the most important entities for the facilitation of change.

Learning 1: Urgency, urgency, urgency

Developing a sense of urgency for a successful change.

Prima facie, a merger is overwhelming for any organization. Employees go through a huge professional and emotional turmoil. If not attended on time, employee perception can be a huge barrier to success and can cause more harm than good. Mergers are inherently risky, and without proper strategy, intuition, and knowledge, mergers, can get, ugly. Hence it's critical to gear up, strategize, create a way forward, communicate and get onto an action plan. And this MUST be on a priority basis. In my example, a lot of thought and time went into the planning of the premerger state and this was in reference to combined synergies and value systems. It was important for ALL important stakeholders to learn both systems, understand nuances that would impact smooth merging of entities, look at ways and means to communicate

more and also create a sense of urgency and enthusiasm for the teams, down the line. Not only were the premerger activities thought through carefully, even the post-merger roll out planning process was dealt with rigor and a clear plan of action was completed within 12 weeks. All teams were geared for one common goal-that the impending change was for the better and this was supplemented with constant communication through town halls. This was important as when you relay a frequent message, employees do not get time to think otherwise, and this was another significant learning for me.

Learning 2: Need for a guiding coalition.

Another significant learning for me was that: **One needs to bring together a coalition, or a team of influential people, who take accountability and responsibility for seeing through the successful change.**

We all know that change is inevitable. Yet in the midst of transformation, too many leaders abdicate and I learnt that a non-negotiable during the merging of two entities, was a strong leadership team. Pareto's principle shows that 20% of the people impact 80% of the company goals. The 20% can make or break the effort and therefore it is important to select an able team of influencers from the senior management population. It is important for the organizational visionaries to help these influencers understand the mission of the change and allow them to come up with ideas to facilitate this change within their scope of work. In my example, a task force comprising of leaders from both entities was formed to work as a team and build the requisite momentum around the change. Both cultures had their positives and negatives and each of the side helped see the best of both the worlds. To ensure seamless working styles, each aspect was discussed in detail to arrive at a new organization strategy with



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Rupali Rane passed out from California State University in 2002. She completed her 2 yrs MMS in HR from Mumbai University in the year 2000. She is a passionate HR professional with almost 14 years of experience in India as well as USA. She has a wide range of experience across Infrastructure, Manufacturing, IT, ITES & Healthcare Sectors. She worked in IGate, Mastek, L&T, Ozone group etc. In 2010 she joined Fortis Hospitals as Sr. Manager HR post merger of Wockhardt Hospitals & Fortis Healthcare Ltd. where she played multiple roles like PMS Head, HRIS Head for all India & Regional L&D head. Currently she is working as Associate General Manager HR and focusing mainly on L&D of South, East & west Region along with her PMS responsibilities. Her hobbies are pets, music and travel. She can be reached at : rupali.rane@fortishealthcare.com.



combined synergies in functions like supply chain, marketing, Finance and HR. The team established a new way of doing things that would redefine the brand, the way the external world perceived it and pitched the employees from the new entity as brand ambassadors of the new change.

Learning 3: Create and communicate a vision for change.

A third important learning was that: People need a clear vision to understand why they are being asked to do something new.

For managing change, the most important ingredient is that of having a clear vision. During my experience of the merger, a new Vision and mission was defined for the combined entity. Based on the new vision, a 3 year plan was created. A task force arrived at a set of leadership competencies that were critical to take the organization to the next level. From a HR perspective the most important competencies were initiative, risk taking, risk management, creativity and innovation. From these, it was very clear that the new combined entity looked at infusing an entrepreneurial spirit among their executives to move forward. The central (corporate) team functioned as a think tank and a regulatory mechanism to ensure process adherence was put in place. The organization strategy was drilled down by the central team using Performance Management and through the percolation of SMART goals. This let the leaders run their respective business units with a common vision. It also helped the organization to accelerate growth at a rapid pace and cut down unwanted bureaucracy.

The goals were defined for leadership, and then this was broken down for functional heads, business leaders and subsequently for all middle and junior managers. This had a threefold effect:

It set clear directions for every individual and teams.

It helped employees understand how they contribute to overall organization.

Clearly established HR's role as business partner, where HR had a major role to play in the overall performance of the new entity.

Another important learning from this experience was that: A Powerful, vibrant, persistent and constant communication is the key to success. In the merger experience, as a leader I learnt that it was important to embed the vision into everything one did as a people leader. The leadership translated the strategy into a map and created short term plans. The CEO and COO conducted town Halls across all centres to communicate the annual plan and set clear direction for the new Performance goals and this support from top management worked like a magic wand. They spoke about the way forward as well as the new philosophy for driving performance. This ensured that people accepted a fairly big change and instead of feeling threatened by the new system they looked forward to contribute, perform better and of course, earn better rewards.

Learning 4: Empowering broad-based action and building on the change.

A fourth learning from the merger experience was that: The structure for change needs to be in place; one must continually check for any barriers to it.

The biggest challenge within the merger was to win over people, as there was a strong legacy as well as strong employee loyalty towards the original entity. It was important to build trust among employees and to constantly remind them that they would be playing a bigger role in the growth of the new organization and would have the power to make decisions. The HR Leadership, identified process champions aka "Performance Ambassadors" at each location, brought them together to headquarters and drilled down the philosophy of how performance would be redefined for the organization as a whole. A detailed program to address issues at respective locations, on a quarterly basis was structured. The program had class room sessions, mailer campaigns, process feedback and quizzes built in, to ensure that people were clued on at all times. Another key learning that came with this experience, was that to build on new initiatives, you need to change the systems, structures, and processes that don't fit into the overall new scheme. For example, earlier the goal setting was done by managers for respective teams with twice a year assessment. In the new system, monthly scorecards were launched to keep a close tab on achievement of goals. Participative goal setting, monthly scorecards, MBO pay-outs became part of regular vocabulary. The old incentive and bonus schemes were discarded and a new variable Pay scheme was launched based on the overall organization strategy and performance. The new scheme focussed on both top line as well as bottom line. Revenue, EBITDA and Cash Flows were given equal importance to arrive at healthy growth. The results were obvious – a healthier balance sheet at the end of 2 yrs. The debt equity ratio moved from 2.5:1 to 1:1. What was planned as a 3 year target was achieved within 2 years itself!



Initially monthly scorecards were treated as an additional burden but over a period of time business heads realized that it helped in keeping employees focussed on their targets and achieving business goals. Employee participation in process design helped HR in establishing shared responsibilities. It was important to integrate new systems into everyday activities, as it is seen that initiatives die but processes based on strong systems last.

Learning 5: Celebrate short-term wins and anchor significant changes within the corporate culture.

A fifth learning from this experience was that: **It was critical to have some quick wins. This motivates employees in pursuit of the larger goal of change in the organization. Without this, critics and negative thinkers can slow down and hurt the change process.**

This was based on the assumption that it was better to change the way employees see their circumstances so that they can, in turn, impact their own reality, rather than working to change employees' circumstances. As an example to the above, monthly scorecards were launched to monitor performance against defined goals. The goals were tracked through monthly scorecards and the top 3 performing units were given a CEO award every quarter. This created a healthy competition among all units. A new Mascot was launched just for performance management. The Mascot would communicate with all employees through mail, phone and sometimes visit the centres for spot recognition.

Another important learning was that: For any change to be sustained, it had to be an integral part of the organization's culture. The leadership should clearly articulate the connections between new behaviours and organizational success.

The HR team, along with the leadership went back to employees and shared success stories. The importance of a clear direction and its impact on organizational performance was communicated through town halls every quarter. Performance Ambassadors along with the HR team played a critical role in recognition through spot reward initiatives. Timely recognition played a huge role in the success of the change management. The organization is now on autopilot, with strong second lines and employees who call themselves 'brand ambassadors'.

Conclusion

Mergers & Acquisitions present opportunities and hazards for both the company and the HR team. A KPMG study showed that 83% of mergers and acquisitions failed to produce any benefits - and over half actually ended up reducing the value of the companies involved. The number is astonishing when one considers how many mergers occur in a year, and how companies concentrate on physical assets and combined supply chain synergies but give very little importance to culture and in built systems.

For every eight failures, there is a case where both companies emerge stronger. The key here is that some companies capture the benefits of learning and others do not. The successful ones do four things:

- Define success and failure clearly, neither accepting definitions without examining them closely nor altering a definition to achieve desired results
- Learn & Merge the best practices among both entities, address all inhibitions in open forums and communicate new way continuously
- Celebrate short term wins, recognize all involved facilitators and integrate new way with existing systems
- Monitoring, Learning and course correction on real time basis to achieve the best from combined synergies

As mentioned in the beginning, the experience of a merger helped me grow considerably, both professionally and personally and in the organizational context, the success factor was because people in both entities were valued and worked actively together to bring out the best in each other. Happy Learning!

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Image Source: <http://www.computerworld.com/article/2688337/networking-hardware/softbank-in-talks-to-buy-dreamworks-animation.html>





Reinvent To Stay Relevant Learning From Change.....

Case in point: Your Career! Noticed how life has changed? We have become super busy. Chained to smart phones and the internet, we just 'have to' answer every single random call, open every email and reply to every sms. I often wonder-has 'Life' learnt to keep pace with us or vice-versa! However, in this process of change, some sanity prevailed. There was a 'Caller Alert' installed on our phones so that pesky tele-callers would be identified, fingerprinted and banned from our lives. We 'formulated' methods to help us know which numbers we wanted to definitely cut. Spam filters were also installed, because we really didn't care to claim the \$100 million that

we had just won in some Coca Cola raffle in Estonia.

Amidst all the 'busyness', something else was happening. When we weren't paying attention, our careers were undergoing a dramatic change. We found that old skills were less useful and other skills that were more useful-we did not have them. Virtually, every field witnessed this shift. Look at the IT industry-for millions of young people getting onto the IT wagon, there is a steady decrease in the number of jobs and this is almost irreversible. And this is just one shift that's beginning to catch the attention of people.



You may ask-“But why should this bother us?”As leaders of our families, careers and business, it is essential to reinvent ourselves, always! Why?? Because change is the only thing constant and if we do not learn and adapt, we will be redundant.

Learning is Change. Change is learning. Those who learn and adapt faster are the ones with a competitive advantage.

The Map Is Changing

In the book, ‘A Whole New Mind’, Dan Pink had argued that there are 2 forces shaping the new world- Asia and Automation! He was right about Asia. And he is also right about Automation. When a job gets automated, it vaporizes forever, consigned to the innards of a computer network in a far away server farm. An example-IPsoft, a company founded by a brilliant mathematician, ChetanDube. This company believes that machines can handle IT and people are not needed!?(Thank you very much!) and hence Amelia, the humanoid was born! The benefit to companies: You could expect 30% of the engineers and back office people to become redundant. Amelia is built on Artificial Intelligence and mimics how an engineer thinks and answers problems in a fraction of the time. She speaks 10 languages and doesn’t take breaks.The great news is that, IPsoft has signed up over 500 large clients like banks, insurance and IT firms to take over the repetitive task being done at BPO firms. There will definitely be resistance, but this will surely wear out. If our warm body is not longer needed, which seat will we fill?

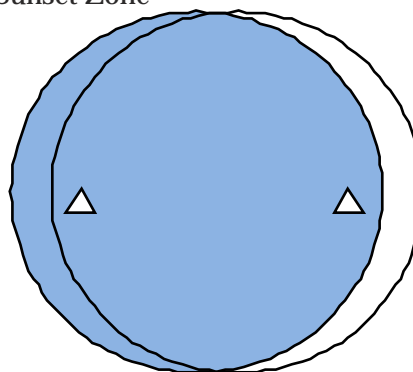
Keep Your Head-and Leverage Your Biology

When faced with change, the first thing to do is to keep your cool and not lose your head. Sure, you hate change, but fear is not the answer. We must be ready to take the next step, NOW. Dr. Bruce Lipton, in his insightful book, The

Biology of Belief’, talks about how research is pointing out that fear actually makes us dumb. The HPA axis (Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenaline) kicks us, and stresses us out. Think of a 100-meter race. The call goes ‘On your marks’ and the athletes take their position. ‘Get set’ and they raise their heads looking straight at the goal and their legs ready for an explosive leap. At this time the HPA axis is in full action and the adrenaline is coursing through the blood stream. When the call ‘Go!’ rings out, all that energy, training and fire power is released as the athletes’ race down the track. In our modern life, Lipton points out that the ‘Get Set and Go!’ doesn’t happen, and hence we are in a state of ‘taking position’ but the presence of fear prevents us from taking action. Action is essential-for our physical well being and our careers too. We have to trust and take the action. The beauty of trust is that it changes us. We become open and when we look around with anticipation, we see things which we never noticed before: they were already there but were invisible to us!

Reinventing And Learning May Be Easier Than You Think

Sunset Zone



How close to the sunset are you? What are the sunrise sectors in your field?

After trust, the next thing is to become aware and build on an adjacent area. Don’t go off to the left field and fall of the edge. Too often an IT engineer runs



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About the Author...

Bert completed his MMS from BITS, Pilani in 1981. He worked in rural India in the field of integrated development during which he started up multiple small scale businesses for the rural people, set up non-formal schools, organized farmers, and set up health delivery. This was foundational in developing a hands-on and practical approach to leadership. He then joined IBM in 2005 and continues to be associated with the company in Leadership Development and Strategy where he led strategic design sessions for multiple verticals like Distribution, Retail, General business, Public Sector, Business Analytics and others. His approach to Strategic Innovation has resulted in dramatic bottom line value increase for clients such as Sigma Alrich, a global leader in chemicals and life sciences company. He is the author of several books written in the genre of 'inspirational fiction' on leadership, coaching and strategy. Bert is a passionate coach and motivational speaker.



off to become a photographer with unpleasant consequences. Let me give an example. A few weeks ago I was coaching a young man who was working on big Mainframe computers. It takes very little genius to see that jobs in this space are going the way of the dinosaur and the dodo. Every industry and profession has a sunrise area and a sunset zone. So what should he do? I advised him to pick a sunrise area that will help him build on his years of experience. He set sight on IT Security. This meant that he would need to get a new certification and for a while he chafed against the proposed change, till he realized that irrelevance is a lot worse than learning something new!

The Big Idea Called Nano Degrees

Get a degree... that's an idea that's getting irrelevant in today's day and age. Spending 3-5 years studying some random subject, post which you're not ready for anything-is a waste! If you ask any hiring manager today, she will tell you that most professionals coming out of college are just not hireable.

A question to ponder upon: What if we could learn a useful skill that could support us immediately? What if it did not take 3-4 years? In fact what if it took just a week? Or a month? Over the last couple years in our NGO, we tried out the idea that we learn best when it's hands-on and useful. We had previously clueless students build robots, program games, and learn languages in less than a couple of months.

Another example was my accountant, a fine man with 18 years of experience. He hadn't done his CA, so what was he supposed to do now? What could be his reinvention path? We explored new areas. Doing a CA at this stage was both daunting and virtually impossible, not to mention it would take 3 years. We zoomed in into high value areas for him. One of them was doing a 'nano' degree on Forensic Accounting. This is a high-demand area for fraud detection and prevention.

Armed with this new knowledge, he could first implement it in our own company and then look at building some muscle memory and ownership of this new skill.

Is that a high value skill for his clients? For sure.

Would it be valuable? Certainly.

Was it rare? You bet.

He could be out of the commodity trap in less than 6 months.

Why Should We Reinvent Ourselves?

When you're in the same role at the same company for a long time, you can easily get complacent. In today's world, there's no such thing as certainty. You can't let yourself get too comfortable. You never know what's ahead so keeping your competitive edge is always a good idea, no matter how "secure" you feel at the moment. And who knows what kinds of opportunities may come your way? Hence, it is important for one to learn constantly, in order to be 'relevant'.

Creating A Competitive Advantage Through Learning

The following tips will help you stay at the top of your game. That way-whatever happens-you know you're in a competitive position.

1. Develop Your Skills and Invest in yourself (Books, programs, workshops)

Every role, no matter how long you might have served, has a scope for growth. If you feel that there is nothing more to learn, it might indicate that you might not be trying to upgrade yourself or are not looking hard enough at your capabilities. There are many ways to develop your professional capabilities, and this requires investing time, money and energy. If you don't make the investment, you're not a serious professional. This investment of money does not mean spending



hundreds and thousands of rupees. A book costs about 500 INR, and you can learn a lot just by reading a book on any topic.

2. Join a Professional Association

Joining a professional association helps you interact with like-minded people who in turn give you a first-hand experience of their learnings. These associations can also help you build relationships with people who can help you grow while giving you a peek into new and exciting opportunities you would otherwise have overlooked. Besides networking, most professional associations also give you access to featured speakers at meetings, annual training conferences, or newsletters highlighting trends in your field.

3. Volunteer

Consider volunteering for a few hours every week with a community association for which you feel some kind of affinity. Besides personal satisfaction, you'll also gain valuable experience you can use in the workplace. Much of what you do will be quite different from your day-to-day work. You are likely to find yourself stepping out of your comfort zone frequently-and that's a sure shot sign of growth.

4. Network

Attend regular networking events in your community. Sadly, too many people associate networking with job search. They wait to do it until they need something from the people they meet.

Build trust and get to know people for who they are, not what they can offer you. Then, should you need a little assistance in the future, you'll have a strong network to call on. And they'll be more than willing to help you-as a friend, not just a "contact".

5. Challenge Yourself

Finally, it is a healthy habit to continuously challenge yourself-personally as well as professionally. Seek out opportunities for growth, even if you don't immediately see how it relates to your career. The more you expand your horizons, the more you will have to offer in the workplace-and you never know how it will pay off. Find something that inspires you and go for it. You will become a better person and, by extension, a better (more competent) professional.

Conclusion

Learning is not just about figuring out which course you need to attend. Learning is about getting over your emotional barriers and keeping yourself resourceful. You're sharp enough to know what changes are going on in your industry. To clarify your mind and clear the suspicions, talk to a few senior colleagues and get some perspective. Check out magazines for insights in your field. I find that trade blogs from the gurus in your field are often prescient in calling the next play. So what will you do? If you're near the sunset zone, get a move on. Find direction. Take bold action. And reinvent.....

Image Source: <http://youthvillage.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/career-change.jpg>



Learning Through Listening

How Organizations Can Learn From Their Employees Through The Simple Act Of 'listening'

"I remind myself every morning: Nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I'm going to learn, I must do it by listening."

Larry King



Listening can be a passive activity, or it can be a rich, active, intense experience that leads to serious learning. The difference lies in our intentions—the purpose and awareness with which we ‘Listen’. This applies to both— individuals and organizations. Historically, organizations have been known to listen and learn from their leadership team, stakeholders, customers and even from their suppliers.

When it comes to learning by individual employees, they are often advised and ‘given’ inputs by their managers. Rarely do managers solicit ideas and thoughts from their direct reports or team members. In today's knowledge-driven economy, organizations need to develop a strategic perspective in creating workplaces that value "learning up," where leaders learn from people who work with them.



What Can Organizations 'Learn' From Their Employees While 'Listening'?

Listening to employees is perhaps the most important task for the leadership team. The company's future and performance depends on this conversation. Leaders and organizations, who listen, are able to create trustworthy and transparent relationships. This encourages loyalty and the resultant culture is one of continuous learning, innovation and out-of-box thinking.

Organizations That Are Listening And Learning From Their Employees

Starbucks is a classic illustration of the value that one can create, merely by listening and learning from employees. The idea of the drink 'Frappuccino' was first suggested by a Starbucks store employee and a store manager in Southern California. While the idea was initially shot down by the Starbucks corporate office, one manager encouraged the store to experiment anyway. The result- a billion-dollar product for Starbucks!

Another case in point is that of HCL, India's fourth largest IT firm, where employees generate ideas worth \$500 million for HCL. This value creation did not happen overnight but was a function of carefully promoting the idea of "Ideapreneurship". As a part of its plan, HCL employees were encouraged to come up and share innovative solutions to customers' business challenges. During recession, when most companies were handing pink slips to a part of its workforce, HCL took the path less travelled. It developed and started living a radically refreshing philosophy. HCL called it "Employees First, Customers Second". This essentially indicated a paradigm shift from customer centricity to primacy of employees. Simply put, HCL put its



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money on learning from its employees-their talent, skill & ideas, to do what is best for business and customers.

HCL identified that true value for a business is created not necessarily in the boardroom but at the sweet spot where their front line employees meet their customers. Systems and processes were reengineered to help and not hinder employees in their work. HCL is a good example of an organization that has its head held high, keeping its ears to the ground. This philosophy of putting 'Employees First' translated into tangibles in the business context. In the past three years:

-HCL received over 32,000 innovative ideas

-Employee learnings were converted into ideas that helped deliver approximately USD 500 million of value to customers

-HCL grew at a CAGR of about 25% and almost doubled its market share and tripled its customers.

-Its revenue per employee is among the highest in the industry today

How Can Organizations Learn From Their Employees?

While it is important for organizations and leaders to listen to their employees in the quest for learning, this is more easily said than done. Normally, there are certain pre-requisites that help organizations to be truly listening and learning organizations. Some of these are:

- Encouraging an environment of transparency and openness, which helps employees feel secure enough to share their thoughts, learnings and suggestions.
- A mind shift from managing people to leading people. This is about



understanding the value add that each employee brings to the table-intellectual capital.

- Investing serious time to solicit thoughts and learning from employees-regularly and continuously.

It is also important to note that leaders and organizations must not look at only making 'listening' a check list item, but also look at ways to help employees feel a part of the learning curve of the organization. This facilitates a symbiotic learning relationship between the employee and the employer. Given below are some of the most commonly used modes to listen to employees:

- Focused Group Discussions (FGDs):

Focused Groups are a mode of collecting qualitative data. FGDs help organizations get specific inputs on what can be improved and the likely benefits. FGDs encourage free flowing conversations and allow participants to share their own ideas or constructively evaluate ideas given by others. However, the challenge with FGDs is that they are fairly time intensive and large organizations may find it unfeasible to invite all employees for such an activity. If indeed you have to select participants for such an FGD, it would be good to shortlist participants who have been 'consistently high performers' in their respective roles.

It is also good to invite both tenured and relatively new employees of the organization for the FGD. The tenured employees are likely to give rich inputs as they have a deeper understanding of the culture, ecosystem, challenges & opportunities. On the other hand,

the new comers can come up with fresh & innovative ideas that may not occur to employees who are used to do things a certain way. Learning can take place based on inputs given by both categories of employees.

Remember, Wright brothers neither had experience of flying nor did they have a pilot license. They still invented the airplane!

- Employee Surveys:

Conducting an employee survey denotes an organization's intent to reach out to its employees and solicit their opinion on things that truly matter. Administering a survey these days is easy, quick and inexpensive. More ideas can be solicited by simply adding 2 open ended questions, like the ones suggested below:

- What is the one thing you would like to change?
- What is the one thing you would not like to change?

You will be surprised, and possibly overwhelmed, with the response that you will receive from your employees. However, it is good to remember that soliciting opinions and ideas through a survey may give rise to expectations of management action. In such a situation, it is good to proactively chalk out a communication plan towards managing employees' expectation.

- Town Hall Meetings:

Town hall meetings are a good platform for leaders to showcase that they truly care to listen to the employees. The leader's enthusiasm and encouragement in seeking candid feedback will go a long way towards making employees feel

valued, involved and committed in the organization. An effective Town Hall meeting is not so much about what leaders have to share but more about what employees have to share. Following the 80:20 rule may help leaders talk less and dedicate more time to listen to employees.

- The BIG Idea Contest:

One of our clients, on our advice, recently launched an organization wide contest inviting ideas from employees. Instructions were kept to the bare minimum. Employees were encouraged to share ideas that will positively impact the client's business and operations.

An avalanche of ideas came from employees. Some of them dealt with managing cost of leasing equipment from suppliers while others were on maximizing revenues on existing client accounts. Within the first quarter, the client observed a 7% reduction in overheads and a 5% increase in the revenue from their largest client account. And all it took was for the leadership to sit back and listen to its employees! Organizing an idea contest sparks off energy, enthusiasm & competitiveness amongst employees. It also encourages employees to come up with high quality ideas that will stand apart and bring them recognition.

How Does 'Listening To Learn' Really Help Organizations?

An organization's DNA primarily determines its culture. One may think that this culture depends on leadership, but this is a misnomer. It is created and driven by the people within the organization-people who are a part of the workforce and who set pace for



organizational growth and continuous improvement. It is important to ask employees what they like about their jobs, what they hate, and what they think should be done differently in order to ensure continuous improvement. Organizations that listen, not only learn and understand what is happening at ground zero but also benefit in the following ways:

Innovation- Soliciting, learning and implementing ideas that come from employee experiences.

People are a rich source of ideas and normally organizations look outside to cater to business needs. However, increasingly organizations are proactively listening to their employees and learning from them. In fact, some are going out of their way to continuously seek inputs from their employees to improve customer satisfaction levels, products, ensuring faster SLAs etc. This not only tickles the creative and strategic thinking juices of employees but also fast-tracks the organization to learn and innovate faster and be change ready!

Greater engagement-Listening and learning, intently!

Employees share their ideas without any inhibitions when they feel that their opinion counts. This fosters a culture of openness, trust and also facilitates accountability at work. People instantly connect with the goals of the organization and participate actively in the short term and long term strategy of the organization. There is a sense of belonging and loyalty that not only help employees pave their own path for career growth but also help the organization appreciate and retain talent.

Better top and bottom-line

Ideas from employees help organizations learn ways to save cost, minimize risk, create customer centric products / services etc. With a clear understanding of ground realities and expectations, employees can give you a realistic idea of how to achieve the same. The only necessary condition for this is that one MUST ask!

Keeping competition at bay

Listening organizations know that the only 'competitive advantage' they have is their people. Employees today are far more aware of what is relevant in the market and what the competitor is doing. Understanding current systems and mapping them to what is being done differently will help organizations be 'two steps' ahead of the competition and this can be done best only by YOUR employees!

Benchmarking and Continuous Improvements

Employee experience and expertise can help an Organization understand emerging implications of technology, on the ground realities, competitive activities and other factors impacting business. All these inputs can be used to make good, strategic decisions. Continuous improvements can only happen when there is a deep understanding of the current status-which is best understood only by current employees. By soliciting ideas on continuous improvement, the organization will not only help employees question status quo but also help them fend for solutions. This is a win-win as it paves the way not only for individual professional growth but also organizational growth.

In conclusion:

Great leaders know that the best ideas often come from others. Good organizations continuously seek new ideas from their employees and act on them. Employers that listen, and learn, grow! Learning from employees is one of the most powerful and yet least utilized tool in the leadership tool box. It is important to identify something that employees do well and organizations and leaders must make it a point to learn from them. One needs to develop a learning plan- a plan that involves leveraging on the potential teachers all around.

Image Source: http://www.100open.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/social_listening-service-e1373636354824.jpg



Driving A Learning Agenda In Organizations



A difficult day @ Neo Learning Mr. Ankit, the training agency manager @ Neo Learning, was in a foul mood. He was miffed with the results of a Training effectiveness study of a training program that had been recently conducted for a well-known client. He called the facilitator who had conducted the training program to get a better understanding of the reasons for the 'not so desired' scores on the training effectiveness study. "What more can I do?" asked the facilitator. "I did all the pre-work with the client and also put together a detailed Training Need Analysis, which was mapped to the Competency Framework of the organization. I shared the session plan and took the client's L&D manager

through each and every activity of the program. I also completed and solicited expectations from the participant group, used innovative methods, relevant activities and examples that would help convert theory into practice. What can I do, if the participants don't apply the learnings at their workplace?"

Ankit then looked at his program requirement checklist and was surprised. The program feedback was at acceptable levels and the post training test had reflected knowledge transfer, as well. He had all the relevant boxes ticked, and yet the client wasn't seeing benefits vis-à-vis the training. 90 days later when the Reporting Managers were asked for feedback about the training



programs conducted, many stuck to the statement: “The lunch was good and my team is happy”. Disappointed, Ankit decided to dig a little deeper. Contrary to his assumptions, something was not working out, though he could not point out the ‘What’. He setup a meeting with his team to understand the real problem and find a solution.

The dilemma @ Neo Learning is true for many organizations trying to implement training and development as a strategic function for business. Through this article, I would like to share my ‘learnings’ on how training and the process of learning for individuals and organizations can be looked at from 3 important standpoints-the facilitator, the individual and the organization. As I have donned the hats of a facilitator, entrepreneur, business head as well as a learning consultant, the thoughts shared are based on my personal experiences gained through interactions with various employees, clients and team members.

Who is Responsible For Learning?

Building and sustaining a learning culture within an organization depends on 2 important pillars-The Facilitator and The Organization

Role of a Facilitator in ensuring Learning

The attitude with which a facilitator approaches the ‘training program’ is a very important factor that ensures training effectiveness. The facilitator should have clarity on his/her responsibility-Does the facilitator’s responsibility end at training or does it end when the participants have learned? Does the facilitator see him/herself as a teacher or as an anchor providing suitable opportunities and environment for the participants to reflect, learn, internalize and apply the concepts shared?

The role of a facilitator is very different today, thanks to the availability of information on the click of a button. The facilitator needs to come up with engaging ways to facilitate learning and help participants question, reflect, discuss and construct knowledge; i.e. learn. The skill of the facilitator lies in being able to direct questions such that the learning takes place as per the defined learning objectives. The Role of a Facilitator is to Create Opportunities to Learn, Assist to Remember and Inspire to Apply

Desired Qualities for a good facilitator

✓Along with desired professional qualifications, all competencies as per the ASTD competency model for training professional are a must for a good facilitator

✓It helps if the facilitator has worked in atleast 3 departments out of the following-Business Development / Customer Service, Operations / Manufacturing, Accounts / Finance, Marketing/Advertisement and Quality. This is necessary as certain relevant business agendas need a clear understanding of interdepartmental dependencies, areas of focus and expectations of various stakeholders, both internal & external. Being a “Jack of All, Master of One” i.e. a multi-industry experienced person, who has worked in various departments and roles is certainly an advantage.

Designing the Program based on a sound Training Need analysis

Apart from the functional competency, the facilitator should strive to ensure that the program is designed based on an in-depth Training Needs Analysis (TNA) conducted in the organization. The TNA can be undertaken through online surveys, reports, forums, meeting/talking to a few business managers and if possible a few



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customers and vendors. It also helps to conduct a detailed study of the level of knowledge and experience of the likely participants for the program, with respect to the topics/competencies that the workshop is going to focus on.

The Ideal “Training Need Analysis”

Collect Information and Insights of the Industry and Market: The past, present, trends, competition, market position, market share etc.
The Company: The Vision, Mission, Values, Scorecard, Goal Sheets, Key Focus Areas, Org-wide Initiatives, Org-structure, Presence, etc.

The Department: Departmental Objectives, Department-Structure, Work Flow/Process, Bottlenecks, Dependencies etc.

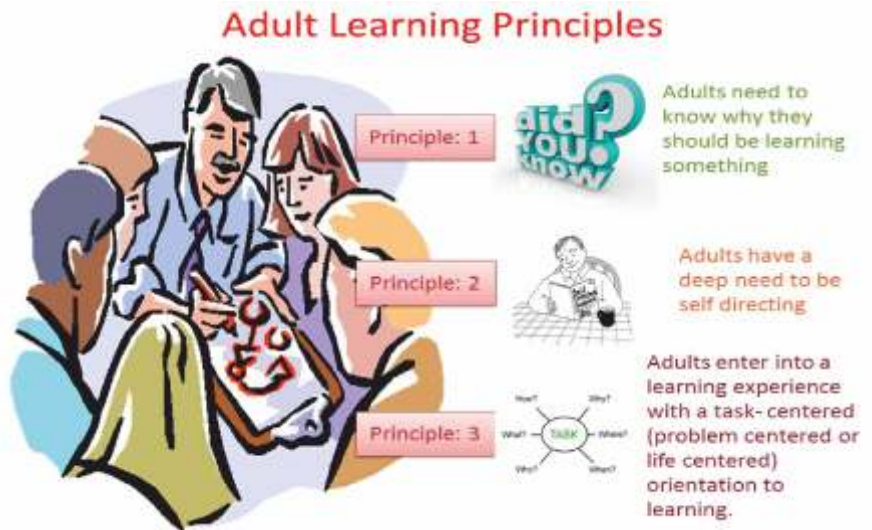
The Participants: Role, KRA, Competency ECG, Performance, Previous Training attended, Experience, Qualification, Expectations from training

The Reporting Manager: SWOT of participant, Performance and Behavior Expectations and specific Pain Areas.

Other Stakeholders: General Expectations and Pain Areas from the department/ participant or both.

Building The Program Incorporating Adult Learning Principles

Facilitators should be well versed with the concept of ‘Adapting as per learners’ where he/she understands ‘Adult Learning Principles’.



The facilitator should play the role of a catalyst, creating experiential learning opportunities, providing factual evidences and reasons for imbibing learning and designing reflection process & time to convert learning into action plans. Earlier, nobody used to take responsibility for the after training impact, only an excellent feedback score was sufficient.

Today, organizations want their trainers to be available for group coaching, on the job training etc. and are very concerned about the ROI on the training intervention.

Role of the Organization in facilitating learning

A critical question to be answered is whether the organization provides sufficient opportunities and flexibility to the participants to choose the competencies they want to develop, when they want to develop, which method and with whom they want to develop?

Internalizing and applying the concepts shared in the training cannot be the primary responsibility of the facilitator.

Participants can apply the principles learnt in a training program only when they are presented with an opportunity to do so, when there are given an environment where they know there is no risk of failure and when they are given support as they apply the newly learnt concepts. This can only be done by people who belong to the organization and not by the facilitator alone. The immediate supervisors or the L&D Manager play a crucial role in creating opportunities for the participants to apply their learnings.

Also, if participants are involved in the decision making process, then they own the learning opportunity and make efforts to get the most out of it. Hence, implementing the H.A.R.M process to enable every learner to internalize learning is considered beneficial.

Improving the Post Training Effectiveness- The HARM Responsibility Matrix

H – Hand holding: A responsibility of Internal SMEs / L&D or External Facilitators



A – Action Plan: Creation by participant under guidance of Facilitator; Approved by Reporting and Resource Manager

R – Resource Availability: A responsibility of the Reporting Manager.

M – Monitoring & Motivation: Responsibility of HR head.

Some steps which can be taken to effectively implement the H.A.R.M Process:

- ✓ Ensuring that the L & D Manager is aware of the entire process and information, i.e. the TNA, the content of training and the action plans made during training.
- ✓ Roping in the L&D Manager for group coaching for critical competencies.
- ✓ Dedicating at least an hour in a 1-day intervention to create Action Plans, voicing them in the group and making participants accountable for their achievement. Action plans should be time bound and should have a clear mention of the resources required for implementation.
- ✓ Discussing the action plans with the reporting manager and concerned managers to allocate resources. The plans may be modified but should be finally signed off by the participants and their reporting managers.
- ✓ Forming an online group for every intervention where participants share early wins, congratulate each other and raise concerns and seek advice/support.

✓ Holding group review meeting with the reporting manager and HR Head would act as a real guide towards organizational development efforts.

Theoretically speaking, this must be done for every intervention, but practically this could be done for all critical interventions. Will this give the organization a direct ROI? Yes! The ‘M’ in the H.A.R.M, i.e. the Monitoring system has a STAR in built. S-Situation, T-task at hand, A-Action Taken and R-Result.

The participant must consciously identify certain actions and record them at the work place. The Reporting manager verifies and signs off the document. These STARS have incidents of application of learning created by the participants, verified and approved by the reporting manager. These STARS would serve as inputs for calculating ROI.

Conclusion

In today’s fast paced business environment, every organization/ individual is under immense pressure of performing. Hence performance improvement / enhancement is the key indicator of training effectiveness. Performance Improvement cannot be achieved by the Participant, Business Manager or the L&D Manager alone. The Participant, The Business Managers and The L&D Manager partner to focus on creating process, resources and environment to be able to improve and monitor performance. ROI can be achieved by setting the right processes and indicators in partnership with business, otherwise it’s another item on the wish list of the CXOs.

Measuring ROI: The STAR way!

Training Program : Time Management

No.	Date	Situation	Task	Action	Result
1	15-12-2013	Fortnightly Meeting	Boss needs an update report on 15 th and 30 th of each month. He usually sends me a reminder on 15 th morning and I start preparing my report.	I had scheduled report making on 14 th Dec. I checked the report on 15 th morning and sent it by 10 AM.	Pat on the back
2	04-01-2014	Monthly To Do list	I was never able to submit my monthly To Do List before 5 th of every month	I sent the updated To Do list on 4 th Jan.	Pat on the back
3	03-02-2014	Monthly To Do list	I was never able to submit my monthly To Do List before 5 th of every month	I sent the updated To Do list on 3 rd Feb.	Feeling Elated.

Image Source: <https://peakcare.wordpress.com/category/campaign-the-munro-report/>



Fear Systems-The Giant, Silent Killers Of Learning

“It is very difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends on his not understanding it.”



This profoundly insightful statement was made by Upton Sinclair, an American novelist, who passed away in 1968. Decades after his death he continues to be proven right, as several tragic events show. One such event took place in Mangalore on 22 May 2010, when an Air India aircraft crashed leaving 158 people dead and their families shattered. The conclusion of the official investigation was that the landing approach of the plane wasn't correct. Of course, planes don't land on their own. They are controlled by pilots, who are human beings. So the question to ask is, what went wrong?

In the aircraft's cockpit, the junior pilot realised they were making a mistake. Three times he told his senior, the captain, that they should abort the landing and do a "go-around", i.e. fly around, correct the approach and then attempt a landing.

The captain evidently refused because of which the plane went ahead and crash landed. Both pilots died. Although the junior pilot had clearly seen the danger, he did nothing to stop the landing. Why not? And although the captain had heard his junior pilot's warning, he didn't listen. Why not? The "Why not" question has been asked several times for many tragedies before, with misleading answers: subordinates don't have guts, they aren't assertive enough or are timid. Bosses are arrogant, they have big egos or are not good listeners.

And ultimately the accusation is that both bosses and subordinates aren't learning from their mistakes, or simply aren't learning. In all these cases, the 'solution' has been training, training and even more training. What this means is: learning, learning, and even more learning.

Despite all the management training and apparent learning over the years, we really aren't learning.

We especially haven't learnt in the one area where it truly counts. Leadership. And I don't mean leadership in the sense it's bandied about in organisations, in which every manager who is sent off on a leadership training course beams with pride-because the company has now anointed him or her with the grand title "leader". This kind of 'leadership' is worse than idiocy because it is truly and catastrophically dangerous. How is it dangerous?

Dictatorship And Learning

'Leaders' in corporate organisations today are not really leaders but dictators. How are they 'dictators'? Bosses are people with power over their subordinates, but haven't been elected by those they are leading. Hence, by definition, they are dictators. The absolutely non-negotiable condition for someone to be called a leader is this: be elected by those you seek to lead. As Abraham Lincoln so eloquently put it, "No man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent."

Why is all this important in the context of learning? At this point, let's take a quick tour of systems thinking, through which we will get some answers about what's really wrong with 'leadership' the way it's currently practiced in organisations.

Systems Thinking - A Quick Introduction

Conventional thinking relies mainly on analytical thinking. In analytical thinking, we break down an issue into several parts, and try to figure out the problem with each part. The underlying assumption here is that the problem lies with a part and if you fix it, the overall issue will go away. In the case of people, we blame the individual 'parts'-the leader and the subordinate, i.e. it's a 'leader' problem' or a 'team-player' problem.



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In contrast to analytical thinking, systems thinking focuses on interactions among parts, not so much the individual parts themselves. Before getting into systems thinking further, let's first define the word 'system'. In systems thinking, a system is defined as an entity that is created and sustained by the interaction among its constituent parts.

For example, water is a system because it is made of two interacting components, hydrogen and oxygen. Without the interaction, the system called water cannot exist. Further, this interaction produces what's called an 'emergent property', a property that exists only because of the interaction-liquidity in the case of water. This property of liquidity is not present in either of the constituent two gases.

Let's now apply systems thinking to the boss-subordinate relationship. Every human relationship is a system because relationships cannot exist without interactions (on some level). As I've said before, bosses are dictators by definition because they haven't been elected. Further, the relationship between boss and subordinate is that between a dictator and subject; the relationship is a dictatorship system.

We know from real-world experience that there are a couple of emergent properties of a dictatorship system: fear for the subordinate, and abuse of power by the boss.

Workplace Dictatorship

In short, our workplace systems are dictatorship systems or 'fear systems'. That's why subordinates are scared, and that's why bosses don't listen. It's important to understand that these are automatic behaviors-nobody is trained to be fearful or abusive. Of course, these behaviors may not be exhibited at all times but at an opportune moment, they can burst forth without warning.

In a survey quoted in Forbes magazine, only 10% of CEOs said they used fear as a motivator. But the executives said fear was the no. 1 motivational tool of their CEOs! What this means is that while only some CEOs used fear deliberately, all those below them in the hierarchy were afraid anyway.

Actually, this was a completely pointless survey. It was like asking someone, if you throw a ball up, what will bring it back down? You know the answer is gravity, whether or not you admit it. Gravity is all-pervasive. Similarly in fear-systems, fear is all-pervasive. CEOs don't have to artificially manufacture it. The 10% of CEOs who said they used fear as a motivator were only admitting to the obvious.

In an article titled 'Bureaucracy Must Die' in the Harvard Business Review, Gary Hamel wrote the line, "Big leaders appoint little leaders". The key word here is "appoint". If the word appoint is used in the context of leadership, alarm bells should go off in your head. "Appoint" simply means that someone else, not you, gets to decide who rules over you. So that quote should actually read, "Big dictators appoint little dictators". And dictatorship automatically means fear. While this fear can be used to motivate, it's the surest way to kill learning. It also kills all the other things associated with learning-asking blunt questions, curiosity, freedom, and enthusiasm. In the cockpit of the ill-fated Air India aircraft, the junior pilot had obviously learnt how to fly a plane. Yet all his learning was useless in the face of a boss who apparently hadn't learnt to listen. That said, we must rein in our instinct to blame the junior pilot or the senior pilot, and instead blame the real culprit: the system. It's important to remember that fear is a feeling.

When we feel fear, it means our biology has kicked in-our hearts pound, our hands sweat and our muscles tense up.



Under these circumstances, it's difficult to do the kind of higher-order, free-spirited thinking and learning that is required in today's complex and fast-moving environment.

Recall Upton Sinclair's quote. When your salary is at stake, you will be willing to 'not understand' and not learn anything. It's like the old days of the Roman emperors, who at the flick of their thumb, could condemn to death highly accomplished gladiators. Similarly, fear of job-loss is not a trivial issue for someone who needs a job to survive.

We're long past the age of gladiators. All 'modern' and professionally-run organisations want to be, or indeed claim to be, learning organisations. There's a very simple way to check if an organisation is indeed a learning organisation. Ask the basic question, "Is this a fear system"? If it's a fear system, you can pretty much guarantee that no genuine learning or application of that learning is going to take place.

Why We Should Fear 'Fear Systems'

In an environment of fear, important skills such as decision-making are put at risk. The reason is that in a fear system, decision making is easy: just go with what the boss says. If you don't, the fear system will attack and try to destroy you. An example of that comes from the UK in the field of medicine. An article in the Guardian newspaper tells the story of Dr Raj Mattu, a cardiologist, who raised the alarm that lives were being lost due to wards being filled beyond capacity. His organisation hit back, raising over 200 complaints against him, including criminal ones.

All the charges were investigated by an employment tribunal and found to be false. The investigation found that management had created a culture of fear. But again, by virtue of the system, the culture of fear already existed – nobody needed to create it. In the process, Dr Mattu had suffered from illness and depression and was dismissed. Mercifully, he will be awarded compensation.

Dr Mattu emerged from the crisis with his head held high. But others aren't as fortunate. Under such circumstances, learning does take place, but not the kind of learning you'd want. When you see what people like Dr Mattu go through, you learn to shut up and keep your head down in the face of wrongdoing.

If we are truly dedicated to creating learning organisations, we first need to create free systems. By that, I mean systems in which freedom is the emergent property. And the way to do that, radical though it sounds, is to give subordinates the right to vote for their bosses. You can laugh as much as you want, but why then will you not give up your right to vote for your country's leaders? Because you know that if you lose your right to vote, you'll lose your freedom.

Just like dictatorship is a system with fear as an emergent property, leadership is a system with freedom as an emergent property. Yet, despite all the talk of leadership in 21st century organisations, we're still running on primitive ideas of earlier centuries. Think about it the next time you are in a hospital or in an airplane.

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Image Source:<http://www.rubiks.com/>



Adult Learning and Its Application @ Workplace



Albert Einstein said, “Learning is Experience, everything else is information”, and “I never teach my pupils, I only provide them conditions in which they can learn”. These statements help us understand the nature of adult learning- Experiential, voluntary and self-driven. This article (based on interviews conducted with teachers and students) throws light on the psychology of adult learning, illustrating how adults learn through the usage of various techniques, which make learning effective and interesting. These techniques would also benefit supervisors at the workplace to train and guide young adults and motivate them to learn:

1) Creative Learning Methods deal with innovativeness and originality in learning. Given below are some of the techniques teachers said they were using to make learning more effective.

A. Brainstorming and Group Discussions

“Interactive activities help students develop communication, leadership, empathy and other required skills”

Young adults love an interactive way of learning and learn better when they are in groups. Teachers stated that Group Discussions and Brainstorming activities help young adults in sharing their ideas and viewpoints on various topics.

Students too shared that they like to discuss concepts in groups and exchange ideas and examples related to certain topics and concepts. This would help them in the corporate setup where each young employee is given the opportunity to share their ideas about on-going work, and understand the scope of their task better. Brainstorming and Group Discussion activities could be arranged regularly in the form of team meetings as well.

“I think group discussion gives a shared and mutual motivation to study and learn certain concept which we would otherwise find boring”



Some young adults also mentioned that they learn and understand well when they debate with their person an issue or a problem that they are given to solve which can be used as one of the techniques to make training and learning at the workplace, more interactive.

B. Assignments and Original Work

Teachers said that they encourage students to come up with original and innovative work to bring in ownership in the learning process. They mentioned that they like to give assignments which the students enjoy working on and learn without realizing that have learnt something.

“I make students learn without making them realise they have learnt something by giving them a sense of ownership in their leaning process”

This way the learning will be long term and not just for a short term goal of writing an exam or in context of in the corporate setup, completing the current project. This method can be used in organizations to bring in ownership in the young employees towards their tasks and roles play in the team.

There are also managers who encourage their young employees to work on original ideas and help them publish the same in various journals.

C. Utilize Flow Charts And Mind Maps To Explain New Projects And Assignments.

Young adults show more interest and grasp better when simple visual representations like Flow Charts and Mind Maps are utilized. This simplifies complicated procedural concepts. In organizations when new projects / initiatives are introduced, these techniques make it simpler and more interesting for the young learners.

It would not only help them get a grip on the nature and scope of their tasks but also give them more clarity on their roles in the current project

The figure bellow illustrates a mind map :



2) **Multisensory Methods** are techniques where an individual uses more than one sense like eyes, ears and muscles to receive information from the environment and processes them to form a meaning. This information is used through our senses to understand, remembers, solve problems and get new ideas of what they have absorbed from their surroundings. This leads to very active and long term learning.

A. Encourage Participation And Proactive Behavior In All The Activities

“I just keep asking doubts and questions till I understand something right... I can't put in full efforts in my assignments till I understand fully what I am actually doing”

Young adults love to be given the opportunity to learn more. They always want a platform or a forum where they can ask questions and get a chance to work on something innovative. On being asked about their preferences in an active form of learning, some students mentioned that they love to ask questions till they are convinced and understand a particular problem or a concept. If they are given that space where they can ask more questions and participate, their urge to develop and grow in their area of interest will be



Ms. Mridula Murthy

About the Author...

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kept motivated. This would enhance their work and career satisfaction too.

B. Audio Visual Techniques and Live Demonstrations

“I remember concepts better when I watch videos or the procedure carried out live by my teachers of seniors than when I just read or listen”

Young adults usually find learning more interesting when they watch videos and clips related to the concepts being applied in at work. Some videos (through You Tube or other mediums) that demonstrate or illustrate procedural tasks in a simplified way can be utilized to explain projects in a more interesting way. This will help in giving the employees a clearer picture of their job description.

“I like watching You Tube videos which Illustrate concepts that I am learning or what is related to the assignments that I am working on”

Another observation is that the young adults love to experience the whole process being carried out by their supervisors which gives them confidence and motivation to perform and grow in their career. The young learners wish to be given the opportunity to evaluate their team members by observing their work and performance. This would enable them to learn where one can go wrong, get hands on experience in giving constructive feedback and also be open to receiving feedback.

3) Semantic Methods

These method and techniques of learning deal with giving a meaning to whatever one is learning. Some of the techniques that I came across as very common in the responses I got in the interview are:

A. Meeting On The Scope Of On-going Projects

“I always teach keeping in mind that I need to keep my students updated with current researches and studies going on in topic of discussion”

Each young learner can be given pointers to come prepared to talk about in meetings. It is very important for any employee to keep in touch with the current issues and practices going on in their area of interest. Teachers said that they see to it that their students are up to date with the current trends.

This technique is used by many managers in organizations too.

B. Arrange For Guest Lectures/ Workshop Programs

“I feel guest lectures and arranging for external workshops brings the outside world inside and the inside world outside which would motivate the youngsters to have a vast knowledge in the subject”

Young adults like gathering information of how things work outside their organization. This helps them to be more open to learn the same concepts from different perspectives. Companies are already working on arranging regular training programs for their employees from external sources.

CONCLUSION

All the above techniques and methods would work well with any employee, keep them motivated and satisfied with their job and keep their minds open to learn. At the end of the day every trainer/teacher/professional dealing with adult learners should keep in mind this quote by Benjamin Franklin “Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”



Kaleidoscope:

Perspectives Of Five Different
Organisations On Their Learning Agenda



Supriya Roy Sohi

Head Talent Management at GMR Infrastructure Ltd

1) One word that you associate with Learning?

Continuity or Being Alive or Growth

2) What is your definition of Learning?

Every day is a new beginning and brings with it something new to be learnt and experienced

3) How do you learn?

I love reading anything that comes my way – fiction and non-fiction related to my domain. To feed my interest I subscribe to a few magazines, on-line sites and use my “kindle” app to quench my thirst. I read for an hour daily Sunday is when dedicate myself to reading the entire day. If I find something interesting and important – I underline/ write it down. At times convert them into a presentations. I share this with my team members as part of my endeavour to build capability. I try to implement my learning at the workplace.

At meetings I take copious notes and then reflect on what I learnt. I learn from my colleagues/ peers/ whoever comes to meet something new each day.

4) What is the importance of learning constantly?

In this VUCA world, knowledge is the one thing that will give you an edge over the others, and one source of it is constantly learning something new. There are no more steady-state organizations and functions today, Change is constant and technology aided change is something we need to adapt and internalize. We need to be learning at each stage of our lives at work; need to be open to learning from seniors / juniors/ peers and anyone whom we interact with will increase our learning abilities.

5) One learning that has changed the way you are/ the way you perceive things/made you successful?

I don't know everything and have no issue saying I will come back by a particular date. During this time I will make it a point to learn the “new” from someone/ search for the “new” over internet/book and at least have some understanding of the topic before the next meeting has helped me in being successful in uncharted territories /industries.

6) One method that you would suggest to readers to ‘UP’/kickstart their learning agenda?

Introspect and ask yourself whether “you” want to learn ... as learning starts with the individual feeling the need to learn.

Understand your personal style of learning – is it visual, auditory and kinesthetic.

Based on your style, you have reading material available in more forms than one – paper and digital and audio. Force yourself to start reading anything which is of interest to you – newspaper, magazine, fiction and non-fiction at least a page or two. Do this daily till you get comfortable and it forms a habit.



Image Source: http://blog.web-translations.com/wp-content/uploads_webtrans/2011/05/communicationsprobs.jpg



Dr. Vivekanand

Faculty at ICFAI Business School, Bangalore

1) One word that you associate with Learning?

Growth

2) What is your definition of Learning?

Not committing the same mistake again and again

3) How do you learn?

By being observant of what is happening around, being open to others' views and ideas, and by reflecting on my own thinking process and the resultant action.

4) What is the importance of learning constantly?

If one wishes to grow, there is no alternative to being on the learning curve. Like change, learning is the only constant for being relevant in this ever changing world.

5) One learning that has changed the way you are/ the way you perceive things/made you successful?

Being is important than having. This learning is based on a reading of a book by a similar name ('To have or to be' by Erich Fromm). The learning from this book corroborated with my own life experiences and the life of others that I got to observe. This learning that 'being is important than having' has made me more appreciative of the intangibles in life.

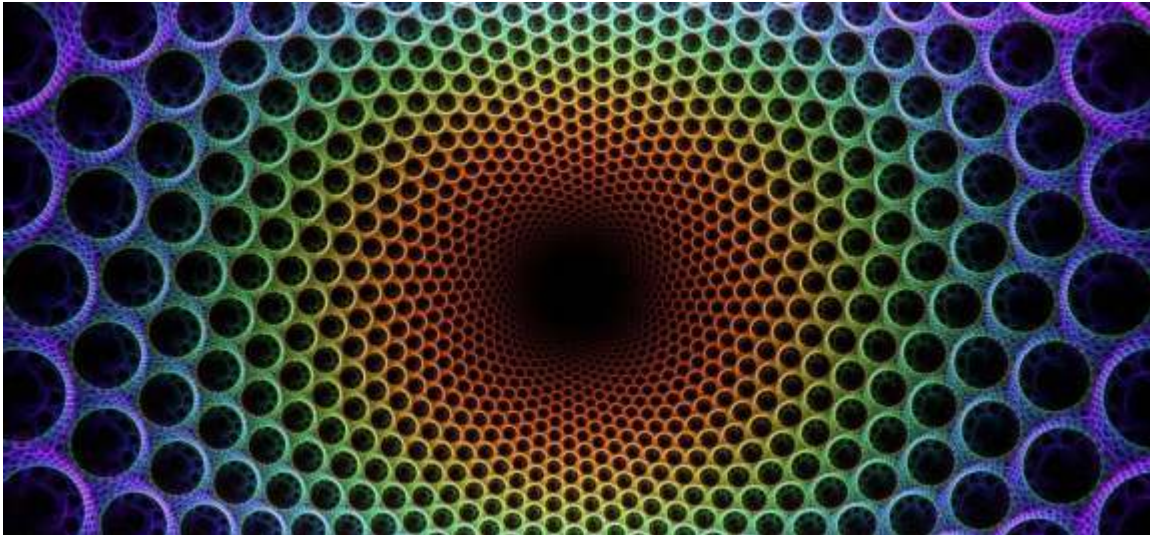
6) One method that you would suggest to readers to 'UP' /kickstart their learning agenda?

It is never too late to learn. Be observant and open to what others do and say and more importantly never forget to reflect on your own thinking and action. Remember, the ultimate objective of learning is to be able to control and alter your own thinking process and the desired behaviors will follow.



Image Source: http://www.wallpage.ru/imgbig/wallpapers_33099.jpg





Prashant Sree

HR Manager at Larsen & Toubro

1) One word that you associate with Learning?

Lifelong

2) What is your definition of Learning?

A process of integrating new attitude / skills / knowledge in our life which leaves us a better individual than before

3) How do you learn?

I don't have a fixed time table to learn. Learning can happen anytime. It doesn't be only by reading, one just needs an open mindset & an interest to learn.

4) What is the importance of learning constantly?

You either learn or perish. Without learning, one runs the risk of becoming obsolete

5) One learning that has changed the way you are/ the way you perceive things/made you successful?

Apart from concept learning, a major learning has been 'All that matters is NOW. Most often we either spend our time thinking about past or worrying about the future, where as the only thing that matters is the present moment.

6) One method that you would suggest to readers to 'UP' /kickstart their learning agenda?

I believe that methods don't matter. What works for me may not work for you. In terms of learning agenda, have a (professional/career) goal and make your learning agenda around it. What's also important is to 'Get started with applying what you read. Before, i just used to read and read. Nowadays, I strive to apply 1-2 concepts of which i have learnt.

Image Source: http://hd4desktop.com/images/b/1920x1080_psytrip-402667.jpg



Phalgunan Maroly Kumaran

Manager - Corporate HR and Learning & Development

1) One word that you associate with Learning?

Life

2) What is your definition of Learning?

Any aspect that results in a change of behaviour.

3) How do you learn?

I learn by absorbing information through my senses. Every day there is so much to learn in every interaction with people.

4) What is the importance of learning constantly?

Just as water is important to keep the body hydrated, learning is important to keep our life going in a healthy and positive manner.

5) One learning that has changed the way you are/ the way you perceive things/made you successful?

NLP

6) One method that you would suggest to readers to 'UP' /kickstart their learning agenda?

Get in touch with your life goals & needs. Start reading books, as it can be done at one's own pace.

Chitra Parthasarathy

Visiting Consultant-TVRLS

1) One word that you associate with Learning?

Growth – personal and professional

2) What is your definition of Learning?

Learning is a process that extends from birth to death. We owe all our successes to learning.

3) How do you learn?

Learning is multi-modal – it happens through observation, listening, experiment, experience, inquiry, reflection, interaction and through sensitivity. The crucial element is to have an open mind and accept variety.

4) What is the importance of learning constantly?

If you don't, you perish. If you do, it makes you wiser, an essential for achieving goals.

5) One learning that has changed the way you are/ the way you perceive things/made you successful?

Learning from mistakes, Learning with persistence; and Learning from any source

6) One method that you would suggest to readers to 'UP' /kick start their learning agenda?

Successful, you may be now; but future success of your organization requires a constant dose of learning especially at a time when change is the norm.



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T V RAO LEARNING SYSTEMS Talent Management and Organisational Development

ADVANCED LEARNING PROGRAMS FOR B-SCHOOL STUDENTS



HRD TODAY

Today, HR plays the role of a business partner and contributes by managing talent and creating the intellectual capital of an organization.

While present day business schools prepare young minds to deal with various HR processes, there is a need to delve deeper into the practical aspects of certain core HR interventions. An in-depth knowledge of contemporary HR practices prepares young professionals to contribute effectively to the organization they join, from day 1.

Keeping this objective in mind, TVRLS has designed programs for B-School students, based on in-depth research and consulting experiences with corporates.

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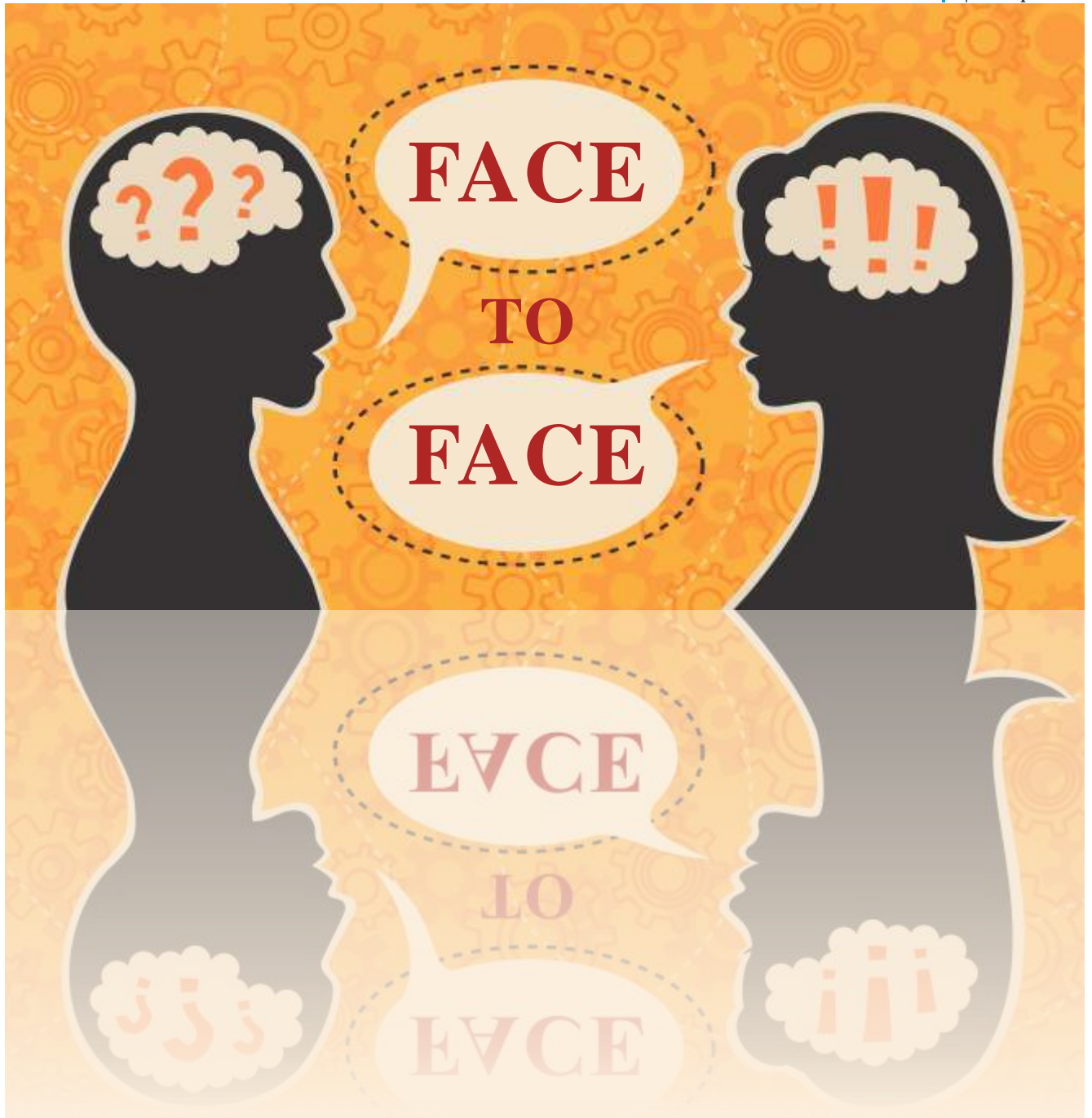
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- ▶ Performance Management Systems
- ▶ Design & Implementation of Assessment Development Centers
- ▶ 360 Degree Feedback based Leadership Development

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For more details, please visit www.tvrls.com or call on 080-65975191

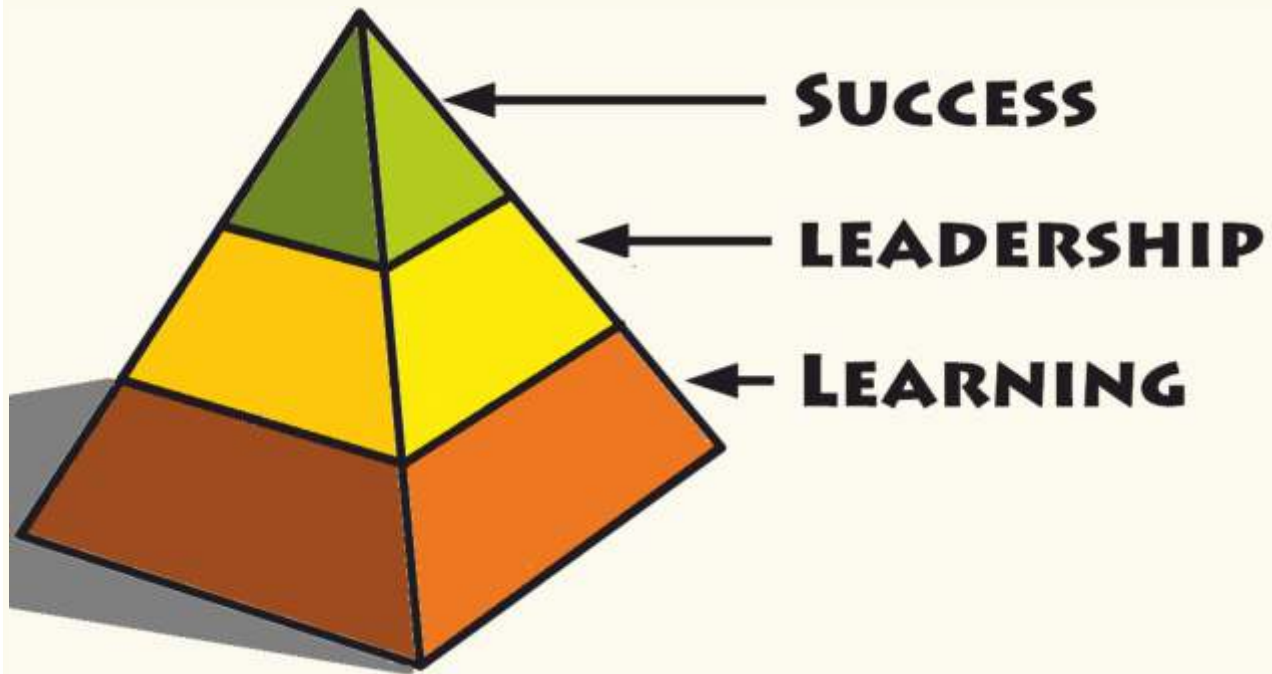




INTERVIEW



Rediscovering Learning @ The Workplace



What are your personal views on learning?

Learning is a continuous, voluntary and long-term process. It needs to be seen as relevant and important for employees and must not be thrust as a mandate by leaders or managers.

As a leader, in order to ensure that my organization has a thriving learning culture, I ensure that people are given both responsibility and the authority as learners. At the same time, one also has to ensure that a significant amount of time is invested both by the individual as well as the organization to facilitate learning among individuals and teams. Only then will employees be enthusiastic and embrace learning as a means to stay 'up-to-date'.

I also believe that learning need not happen with a pre-defined purpose. Often learning is confused with the word 'training'. While training is conducted with specific objectives in mind, learning need not have a direct, tangible or immediate impact. Therefore, in order to establish a true learning culture, organizations must give more emphasis to learning.

What has been your biggest learning from the recruitment industry?

Having spent a number of years in the industry, I have realized that good hiring translates itself into having good bottom/top line for the organization. Organizations too have understood that employees are the best "assets"



one can invest in. Hence, recruiting “right” is essential to carry out any business. My biggest learning is that if marketing is promoting your product in the market-place, then recruitment is about promoting your organization to attract the bright, “right” talent, which in turn translates into better performance and thereby better a bottom line.

‡ As a Leader, what is your personal learning agenda?

My learning comes through multiple channels, both in my role as a leader as well as an individual. I have a three pronged agenda:

Challenging Assignments

I believe that a true leader learns through purposeful practice. One of the most powerful ways of learning is through stretch assignments; these are assignments that demand that we step outside our comfort zone and even develop new skills. Challenging assignments can include:

- Expansion of roles and responsibilities
- Increase in decision making authority
- Dealing with change and diversity
- Working on new and innovative projects
- Building new teams and capabilities
- Working in a different industry or country

I also learn by taking time to reflect on my experiences. One of the prerequisites of learning from experience is to develop a regular practice of reflection. Reflection is simply a quiet time, purposefully set aside, to cast our minds back and think about the events of the day or past week, with the clear intention of learning. By asking questions such as “what happened?”, “how did I react?” and “what can I do differently next time”, we learn valuable lessons.



Mr . Barkat Charania

Barkat Charania holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Management from Mumbai University, Post Graduate Diploma in Business Management (PGDBM) from Symbiosis, Pune and currently pursuing his PHD. Starting his career as a recruiter and reaching to CEO within a short span of time, his career has developed through team leadership, business management and overall strategic management. He has also been a part of various projects related to Recruitment and HR outsourcing for the regulatory bodies for the Government of India. As a part of knowledge sharing, he often writes articles and columns for various publishing related to retail and have been a predominant speaker at various CXO level events and conferences.



Developmental Relationships

We are social animals. I encourage learning by creating an environment where people can work in teams and thereby take advantage of the social aspects of learning. Encouraging teams to talk, share experiences and best practice accelerates learning. We must learn from discussions and feedback we receive from relationships and conversations with others. Here are some ways that we can encourage developmental relationships:

- Create small teams for new initiatives where team members can learn from each other.
- Identify opportunities for experts to work with others.
- Encourage coaching as an approach for the development of future leaders.
- Create meetings for people to gather and share their best practices and experiences.
- Create space to debrief and reflect on what's working, what could be improved and what should be stopped

Formal Training & Reading

Formal learning occurs through courses, training, seminars, and workshops. Sadly, formal training does not always result in changed behavior. This is because effective learning requires a combination of formal training, developmental relationships and challenging assignments for maximum effect. In particular, I gain a lot of leadership insight and knowledge from reading books. It's important however to remember that while reading for personal

development, we must focus on reflecting and applying what we read.

What have been the benefits that you have been able to reap as a result of 'Learning'

"The best leaders are continually learning. They see all experiences as learning experiences. But there is a catch. Unexamined experiences don't produce the rich insights that come from reflection and analysis. If you want to become a better leader, you need to study your own performance and become more conscious about the choices that you are making and how you are acting on your intentions." (The Leadership Challenge Workbook by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, 2003.)

I am very conscious of studying the performance of my own, my team, my organisation and my clients as well. I am on a constant look out for ways and means to add value to every assignment that I take up.

Let me share my assignment with respect to recruitment. Contrary to what many people think, recruitment is very dynamic. The truth is that neither two clients and their requirements nor two candidates are the same. My learnings come from understanding these differences and applying this insight to my next assignment- which in turn results in better client satisfaction.

I also learn from the network of people I know and from attending relevant forums that keep me updated on the market trends and the industry.

Therefore, each agenda of learning helps me become better-personally and professionally. I also strongly believe that learning is incomplete, if it is not shared with a larger group. Therefore, I make it a point to keep my team updated on anything new that I learn.

What can leaders do to imbibe a learning culture within organizations?

Among the many responsibilities that come with leadership, one that I'm particularly passionate about is facilitating the learning and growth of those who serve the organization. Here are some pointers that can help leaders weave learning into the fabric of the organization:

1. Focus On Behaviors To Create The Right Culture

'Focus on behaviors to change culture. Behaviors turn into attitudes, and attitudes become the culture.' – Bob Bennett, Vice President, Human Resources and CLO Global Organizational Learning Development and Services, FedEx Express

Successful learning organizations rely on good people behavior. Although training programs help in providing platforms to help employees gain clarity on what they can accomplish and how, we have to be mindful that it's the behaviors that employees see every day that help shape their attitude and understanding of what is acceptable to those in charge. The behavior we exemplify and evoke in others also serves to shape the real culture and values found in the organization.



It is therefore critical to educate employees on what behaviors are supported, thereby leading to improved learning at the workplace.

2. Make efforts to understand employees better-where are they presently and where they want to go next.

“We have to meet our employees where they are at and with what they need.” (Melissa Daimler, Head of Organizational Effectiveness & Learning, Twitter.)

One of the problems with most training programs are that they are created based on what those in charge want and not on what employees need. To facilitate the learning and development of employees and with it the growth of the organization, one needs to understand where employees are presently in their career development and what tools and resources they will need to begin the next stage of their growth.

Learning opportunities are not limited to time spent in training

sessions or classrooms, but can be found in everyday activities and events in the organization. It means not just assigning tasks to employees to keep them busy, but also giving them the tools to assess and evaluate where to go next and at times, why things went wrong.

3. Create Forums to share learning

“At the heart of social learning is connection.” (Liza Taylor, Director of Talent Development, Hulu)

For most of us, the fond memories we have of our school days are not just about what we learned, but of the teachers and friends who were a part of that learning journey. Being able to share about learning a new idea or technique is unquestionably important to the learning process. Consequently, as much as the organization should focus on what employees need to learn to become better contributors to the shared purpose, we also need to provide them with opportunities to share that process with others, be it through in-person gatherings or through internal company social media portals.

Any suggestions for our readers.

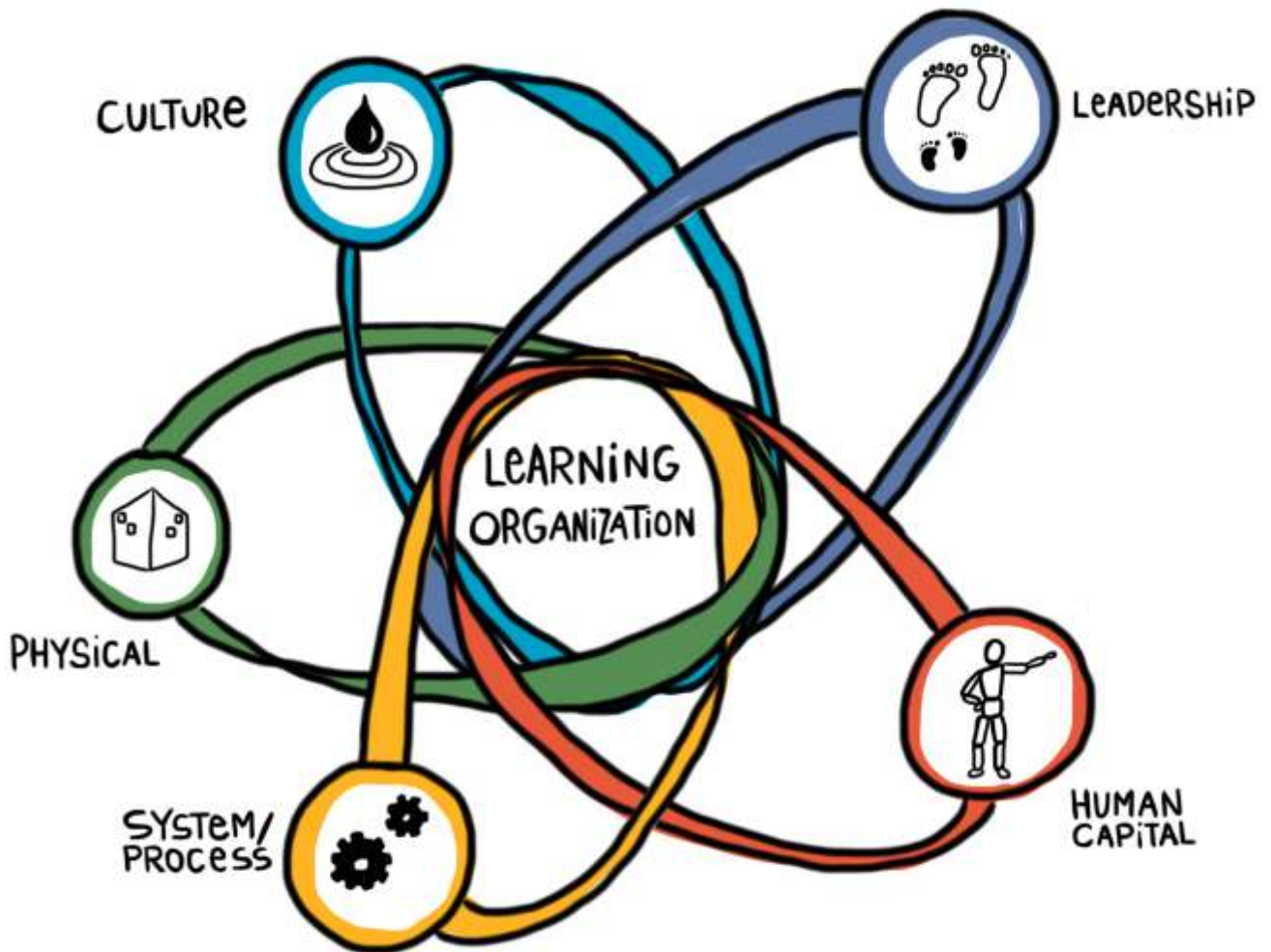
I would like to summarize my thoughts with a quote by Henry Ford which says “Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.” Each one of us therefore needs to have the same inquisitiveness that we once possessed. This is not only to remain alert and aware of changes but also for growth and optimum utilization of our talents!

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Image Source: <http://learningleadershipandsuccess.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Pyramid-of-Learning-Leadership-and-Success.png>





Learning Within Organizations:

Empowering people to think and invest in their growth and that of the organization



“An organization's ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage.”

Jack Welch

How would you define Learning Organizations? How does this concept apply to Adobe?

There is no single word that can describe what a learning organization is. It is complex. As a member of the L&D team, I constantly question myself on our contribution to the overall goal of the organization.

The key to the success of learning within Adobe is to constantly look to ensure, to the extent possible, that every learning initiative is clearly linked to the broader business objectives of various groups and, by extension, of the organization. Sometimes, the impact of the initiatives may not have a visible and immediate impact, but they are seen to be improving the business readiness to leverage emerging trends for the future. We specifically look at identifying competencies that are directly aligned to the business objectives, immediate as well as long-term, and proactively design ways to train people on these sets of competencies. It is also imperative for us to figure out whether these competencies are applied effectively on the job and whether the training made a difference.

We see ourselves going beyond spreadsheets and operational data, as these do not make us a part of the growth story of the organization or its people. It is important that the people see us helping them growing professionally, while the organization sees people as important partners helping it achieve its goals more efficiently. Having said that, measuring impact of learning is no doubt, one of the biggest challenges that any L&D department faces within the organization.



Mr. Tridib Roy Chowdhury

Tridib is the Sr. Director of Products And General Manager at Adobe Systems, Bangalore. Tridib manages the Adobe e Learning business strategy, the popular casual 3D game development platform of Director / Shockwave, the enterprise business of Cold Fusion and the eBooks business. He is also responsible for the L&D activity in India. Tridib is a serial entrepreneur, the latest being as a founder-director of STEX Software, one of India's first software product companies. STEX was acquired by 3i-Infotech in 2006. Tridib is a visiting faculty at IIIT- Bangalore for the last 12 years and teaches Advanced Databases. Tridib is very interested in fostering innovation and is passionate about usage of technology in scaling access and reach of quality education. He has a keen interest in politics, physics, genetics and all other branches of popular science. Tridib is an avid sports fan and sports statistician. He has represented his state in Tennis, and has played cricket, hockey, and football at division or university level. Currently, he is a keen long distance runner and bicyclist. Tridib completed his B-Tech (CS) from IIT, Kharagpur, and MS (CS) from University of Maryland, USA.



How can one ensure that Learning is aligned with the changes that businesses go through?

“People don't resist change. They resist being changed.”
Peter M. Senge

The world around us is changing at a fast pace, and nowhere is the pace faster than in the field of information technology. Adobe is widely seen as an innovation leader within this vertical, and is very aware of the role that L&D can play to help it remain future ready and extend its innovation leadership. The challenge for the L&D department is how to plan long-term or even medium-term in this environment of change, without chasing every new shiny penny that is out there.

We do so through deep engagement with all the business and product heads to understand not just their immediate requirements, but understand the technology and business road maps of their products and how they perceive readiness of their team with respect to execution of that roadmap. This engagement is done at reasonable intervals to incorporate any mid-cycle shift in direction or emphasis. Shiny pennies are not all bad, but we must be able to focus on those that business sees most value.

Finally, for a company like Adobe which is not just at the cutting edge of technology and business processes but in fact prides itself in developing the next edge, training is not limited to skill building for use on the job. The aim of the training is not limited to providing people access to cutting edge knowledge for use at

their work, but to help them develop the next edge ideas in their respective areas of expertise.

What are some of the changes or trends that you observe, with respect to learning patterns within the organization?

Adobe believes that it has the best of people from the industry. Most of them invest a significant amount of time learning what is relevant to the industry and to their own growth. I also believe that Adobe is what it is, because of its human capital which brings in immense adaptability to rapidly changing business requirements. But, like any organization, a lot of our people find it challenging to balance the pressures of immediate “execution” with the need to continuously up-skill for the future. We understand this and actively work with all stakeholders to help create a space for learning and adapt to change.

This goes beyond technology training and extends to training for managerial and softer-skills. We have the following behavioral management capability programs that are continuously refined and upgraded and targeted at different learning segments – managers in waiting, first time managers, senior managers &, directors and above.

There is a strong belief that one cannot be a pioneer in the industry, without developing ones human assets who can build the “next” edge, not just integrate the cutting edge. Training now needs to also be extremely aware of the trends around us and work with group heads in deciding on which trends to focus. For example, if

you want to enter and make it big in ‘cloud computing’, you cannot wake up to that reality in 2013 or 2014. To establish yourself as a strong market player and a pioneer, you should have identified the trend and started training some part of your organization at least 5 years prior, when the idea was new and at a nascent stage. A successful organization cannot jump onto a speeding train-it has to be driving the train when it starts.

At every step, employees need to be at the cutting edge, so that they are ready for the next innovation before it hits the market. As an organization, we ensure that there is a strategic and tactical mix in the training we provide. This is closely done with the group heads, who chart out a 3-year road map for the organization. This gives the L&D function a starting point to think and understand the skill sets required for the growth of business and work towards partnering with the best of facilities to roll this out. However, the goal is not only to implement the programs. We realize that merely training employees, does not give them a cutting edge-it only makes them good practitioners. We help and facilitate employees to deep dive into the cutting edge knowledge and help them research and understand the importance of being future ready. For example, in the case of campus hires we have elaborate training programs to make them job ready. This makes them understand the context of the theory that they have learnt and also realize the distinction between what is relevant and what is not at that point in time. This understanding also helps them realize the



importance of training and learning constantly and appreciate that learning is important for career and professional growth.

Apart from core learning agendas that help people perform better, we also look at ‘esoteric’ trainings that have no direct implementation opportunities. Our model is to not just facilitate learning from these programs but equally to make them share the learnings with a wide range of people, typically within the team. We try to promote a TTT model which we believe has a 2-fold impact: one it improves the participant’s communication skills and to internalize the learning, two it scales the reach of a program and three it helps managers to rate the effectiveness of the program in those situations where immediate on-the-job validations are not available.

From an L&D point of view, we ensure that progress is tracked at all levels.

‡ **Have you ever faced any resistance vis-à-vis implementing learning initiatives?**

The organization has not seen any resistance to learning and development, and we are proud to say that a large percentage of people appreciate and understand the importance of training. Small-scale as well as large-scale training interventions have been accepted very well at Adobe. Enrollment is at all-time high, and pretty much all employees undergo some training or other during the year. On any given day of the year, we believe that one or more training should be taking place somewhere on campus.

While most of the training is planned keeping business interest in mind, these trainings are most often not tangential to the employee’s daily work. Of course we also do cover aspirational or futuristic subjects as well – and given the DNA of Adobe these get enthusiastic support.

We also make it a point to solicit feedback after each training program, where the manager as well as the employee gives us focused inputs on how the training was implemented and on the job performance improvement.. In case of a gap between the training objectives and the implementation, we work with the learners to understand what did not go well and make the necessary changes for the next time around. This spirit of collaboration and transparency of post-mortem is ensuring that we work as partners not as an “external” agency.

We are keen to sensitize all stakeholders on the need for training. Training is not a ‘check box’ at Adobe, but a strategic initiative to manage change. There is enough focus on this from the top management, which makes the implementation and success of learning initiatives a reality.

‡ **Is there a specific learning agenda that Adobe focuses on?**

In the age of Google, people think that by recruiting the best talent out there, we are gifted and equipped with enough content to learn! In practice that does not happen in a coherent and effective way to leverage business benefit.

I think quality learning content needs to be created and aligned to the individual as well as the organization’s requirement. For example, we believe that prima facie there are 3 types of learners:

a) Foundation learners- Employees who take the opportunity that is presented to them by the organization. Most of the training and learning for this group is prescriptive, but they enthusiastically participate. ILT is possibly the most preferred vehicle of instruction for this group.

b) Independent learners- Employees who are self-motivated to learn and will possibly explore different channels to satisfy their quest for knowledge. Digital libraries, Internet and e-Learning are the preferred channels. For this group it is important that their individual knowledge pursuits have some coherence and that is typically the role played by people managers, supported by L&D on content.

c) Expert Learners- Employees, typically from the Independent Learner group, who are interested in sharing their knowledge for a variety of personal reasons. To motivate this group we try out ways to make the process of content creation and sharing easy and accessible. Support by the leadership in recognizing contribution should help.

We also believe that self-learning must be a part of the self-development goals of an employee. At Adobe we align learning goals to work objectives and help employees pause to answer two critical questions:



Where am I going? Where is my career going?

The answers are a byproduct of the discussions between an employee and his manager-where employees introspect on where their career is going within and without the organization. This serves as a good starting point for planning out a learning program to achieve individual learning objectives. It is good to note, that the manager's role is to:

- a) Facilitate this discussion
- b) Fine-tune any misalignment of learning objective vis-à-vis business or career objectives

While self-development is at center stage, the organization pushes employees to mull over and suggest ways by which the tactical/other knowledge gained can be used for the betterment of business. After all, learning has to be an integral part of career growth. Tactical/technical knowledge may be driven by the organization to hone relevant competencies, but it is an individual's responsibility to keep ahead of the learning curve and create sustainable growth for self and professional career.

Any Concluding Thoughts on an Organization's Learning Agenda?

“Through learning we re-create ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we never were able to do. Through learning we re-perceive the world and our relationship to it. Through learning we extend our capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life”

Peter M. Senge

At Adobe, we view learning as being integral to the agenda of being a center of innovation-pioneering ideas that are unheard of within the industry. Organizations must figure out how learning can help them grow and achieve objectives. L&D must learn to make a difference to business; else it will remain a mere cost center for the business!

In conclusion, I would like to add that each organization should take a call on the “What's in it for me?” in relation to learning and then shape its own relevant learning agenda.



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<http://image.slidesharecdn.com/internationalhr-nhrdn-edit-111121223619-phpapp01/95/nhrdn-vls-on-international-hrm-on-3rd-nov-2011-1-728.jpg?cb=1321938562>



Finding a Balance





Spirituality In Management

Spirituality-The Need Of The Hour

Life is by no means as simple as it used to be a few decades back. Challenges and demands of the modern world seem to be mounting day-by-day. Many of us often feel as if we are living a 'pressure cooker' existence. All these fast paced changes and challenges often result in unholy and unbecoming practices, leading to scams, frauds and people succumbing to vices like greed and craving for power. The net result-an erosion of our social culture and an upsurge in the number of diseases, health issues and pathological manifestations.

This deplorable state of affairs has triggered the need for spirituality in today's world. We need copious amounts of unconditional love, selfless service and rectitude to address this malaise. We need to get back to 'simple living' yet 'high thinking'. The words of sages ought to serve as guiding principles to build a strong social fabric and architecture. Character is important as it is the bedrock of all other things.

It is crucial to bear in mind the adage of the philosopher and poet of ancient China, Lao Tzu, "Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny."



Management also needs to appreciate the importance of institutionalizing Spirituality in the Workplace, not only to achieve performance excellence but also to sustain the same.

Spirituality-Simplified

Spirituality is the vertical dimension in our lives, whereby we relate to a higher Being than ourselves and acknowledge that we are not the ultimate power in our own lives and in the lives of those around us. In other words, our spirituality should remind us that we are not totally independent but rather interdependent and members of the same human family.

The term “spirituality” comes from the Latin words “spiro”, “inspiratio” (breath), with a meaning close to the Sanskrit “atma”, or the Greek word “pneuma”.

Connecting Spirituality and Management

Spirituality is the state of intimate relationship with the inner self-the self that deals with higher values, morality and recognizing the truth of the inner nature of people. It is a way for celebrating the self-behavior of the employees that enables the organization to be different. Firmly rooted at the center of organizational spirituality discussion is the notion of core values. For core values to be inspiring, they must be shared by the organization and its people. Community is perhaps the most frequently discussed value. Community enables workers to find substantive meaning in their work, facilitating them to help co-workers and customers achieve greater success. Teamwork and serving others can create a sense of family that inspires improved creativity and productivity. Closely linked to community are the values accomplished self-esteem and balanced work life.

The spiritual well being, which includes a sense of community, will be positively

related to co-operation and negatively related to turnover and absenteeism. Several researchers have advanced the idea that sense of community is linked to employee commitment and turnover which is strategy related to intention to quit. Increased workplace spirituality results in organization commitment, intrinsic work satisfaction, more job involvement and organization based self esteem.

Decoding Spirituality

Spirituality is a multidimensional, multilevel phenomenon. Acknowledging that consensus is lacking in spirituality literature on how spirituality should be defined, a conceptual convergence in workplace spirituality literature is reported in terms of harmony with self, harmony in social and natural environment and transcendence. Spirituality is defined as a dynamic balance of these three factors. Harmony with self is about finding meaning and purpose in work that includes inner life, joy at work and self-actualizing tendency. The second dimension of spirituality is relational. This is manifested in relation to the environment in general. This dimension is manifested in community. It is about being comfortable with the world. Transcendence, the third aspect of spirituality at work is about the connection to something greater than oneself. The ‘something’ can be other people, cause, nature, or a belief in a higher power.

Thus, spirituality in the workplace can be compared to a values-led approach to management that seeks to recognize the whole person rather than simply the functional person, trying to engage the hearts and minds of the people than simply exchanging money for skills.

Within spirituality is also found a common emphasis on the value of thoughtfulness, tolerance for breadth and practices and beliefs, and appreciation for the insights of other



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religious communities, as well as other sources of authority within the social sciences. Love and/or compassion are often described as the mainstay of spiritual development.

Few spiritual practices for organizations to follow:

- ▲ Psychological practices, for example meditation
- ▲ Somatic practices, like light and balanced eating
- ▲ Social practices, such as offering help to the needy by way of discharging corporate social responsibility
- ▲ Divine practices, to include, daily prayers, sharing the “Aha” moments of the day amongst employees biweekly through well-orchestrated informal group sessions
- ▲ Conceptual practices, embracing briefings, panel discussions by experts, corporate-managers who have practiced spirituality in management in their respective workplaces
- ▲ Quality Mind practices, entailing at the end of day-long activities, the employees carrying out a process of emotional purification (Chittashuddhi) routinely for 30 minutes under the guidance of a facilitator

My Experiences:

Spiritual Practices as experienced while working across organizations:

1. The first incident relates to 1974, one year after I commenced my professional career. I was working in a leading US multinational pharmaceutical company. One of my peers working in field sales in another territory developed an eye-problem. Having medicinal samples within his reach he applied few drops into both eyes several times; after sometime, he started experiencing blurring of vision. Taken to the eye-specialist immediately thereafter, the doctor diagnosed herpes

simplex, a neuro-viral infection in which case steroids are absolutely contraindicated. Unfortunately, the eye-drop which my colleague had naively instilled into his eyes contained steroids. The ophthalmologist said that indiscriminate self-medication has caused this mess. The office-colleagues accompanying the afflicted colleague became panicky and asked the doctor as to whether there was any way to salvage the situation. The doctor said, there is an antidote eye-preparation manufactured by the same company, however, not available in India, but marketed in other western countries. Provided this can be procured within the next 72 hours and applied, it can resurrect the derogatory situation. In those days, where mobile phones, computers in India were distant realities, we informed our company through cable/telegram, long-distance calls, and the parent company in USA on knowing about this precarious situation briskly acted upon the same to get rushed 2 vials by air-lifting same from three different Continents and our colleague's eye-problem could be corrected. This was spirituality in action on the part of management where the company went out of its way to come to the rescue of one of its employees demonstrating exemplary care and concern.

2. The second example dates back to 1984 when my only child (daughter) was born. My company, an Indo-Hungarian organization, was empathetic to my domestic front and periodically inquired about the well-being of my wife, who was then admitted to a nursing home for delivery. The attending gynecologist kept saying that everything was normal in the prenatal stage-right up to the time of delivery, when he said that a Cesarean section operation needs to be performed.



Ultimately, everything transpired well and both mother and child were in good health post the surgery. All through this time, the company from Mumbai was telephonically in touch with me at Calcutta. On the next visit of the Marketing Chief to Calcutta, during an informal chat initially, while exchanging pleasantries, handed over an envelope to me which I opened to find a cheque for Rs 5000/-. On inquiring what this amount was for, I was told by the Marketing Chief that the company pre-empted that since my child's birth was through Cesarean section operation, I would have likely incurred upon sizeable expenses towards fees of the attending anesthetist, gynecologist, for which this was a token gesture from the company to be by my side emotionally towards my pecuniary needs. I was greatly touched at this benevolence and in hindsight realize that this was exemplary spirituality in management practice representative of compassion and love.

Conclusion:

Evidently, spirituality in management in its structured form is one of the “hottest” emerging fields in management as it provides corporate reputation for competitive advantage. Organizations have been realizing that spirituality promotes effective leadership practices which can have a significant impact on organizational life and ultimately organizational success. Individuals and organizations who perceive themselves as more “spiritual” are more creative, productive, and adaptive since work is connected to a bigger picture.

The cumulative result of spirituality in management will be an enhanced quality of work-life, which will lead to improved attrition-rate, promote employee loyalty and foster total employee involvement in workplace.

All the three P's of Triple-Bottom-line Concept in Management, namely, Profits, People and Planet can be effectively met once spirituality in management gets its roots entrenched in the organization DNA. The denouement will be a caring organization which is committed to achieving performance excellence with its ethos targeted to make it a great place to work for people.

Image Source: <http://www.aimislam.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/spirituality.jpg>



Are You An Energizer Or An Energy Sapper?



In his book titled “Liquid Thinking”, Damian Hughes has divided people into two distinct categories:

- 1) The Energisers (Possibility Thinkers) and
- 2) The Energy Sappers (Probability Thinkers).

These 2 categories of people have their own unique approach to life and relationships and it is intriguing to see the differences in the way they think, behave and therefore in the way they interact. While one category operates from a deep rooted belief of scarcity and high probability of failure, the other category operates from a feeling of abundance and possibly attracts more abundance. It is the classic case of the glass being seen as half full or half empty.

Because of these differences, there is an impact on the way these two categories of people pursue and achieve their goals and therefore on the organisation that they belong to. Let’s take a closer look at how the mind functions for both these categories of people and how they impact the culture and functioning of an organisation.

The Suns or Energisers

“This is a fantastic idea...”
“Wonderful...”
“Great job...”
“Keep it up...”
“Thanks...”

These are the typical comments that you will hear from people in your circle of friends or at the office that energise you. Meet the ‘Suns’ or the ‘Energisers’. Full



of passion and zest, they are characterised by immense and seemingly inexhaustible stamina and strength; You come away from them feeling good about yourself; you are enthused; your productivity goes up; They seem to electrify the environment when they walk into it. They not only wear a smile at all times but have a cheerful voice to accompany. Their handshake is firm and grasp-just about right. They symbolize the sun-the universal energy giver. These energizers have a multitude of ideas and a passion which spurs the team to think and to make a difference. When you pitch an idea to an Energiser, before you have even finished your sentence you hear, "That sounds good". Bursting with enthusiasm, raring to forge ahead, they are on the constant look out for ideas-even from an unfriendly person.

The Energy Sappers or the Black holes

"This has a lot of problems..."
 "We have done this before" or the classic
 "Yes but ..."
 "This can't work..."
 "This is bound to fail..."
 "We shouldn't be doing this...."
 "People are Useless..."
 "You people are good for nothing..."

These are the phrases that you will often hear from the Energy Sappers or the Black Holes. Interestingly, some black holes may even appear outwardly friendly. However, when you move away from them, you realise that you are completely drained. Such people are characterised by their negative attitude bereft of encouragement for others; A conversation with them would often have undertones of narcissism, judgment, and critique. It is interesting to split the two terms-energy and sapper and see what synonyms are in store for us:

Sap which means bleed, deplete, devitalize, drain, erode, exhaust, undermine, weaken, or wear down.

Energy which represents-drive, efficiency, exertion, fire, force, intensity, power, spirit, stamina and strength.

I have seen a bustling high energy team literally wilting like a dying flower when there is a change in the leadership-when an energiser has been replaced by an energy sapper. There is a palpable atmosphere of mistrust and fear of taking initiatives. Dealing with Energy Sappers or Black holes is not an easy task especially if they have the power to influence ones career, relationship etc. The first step in circumventing such situations is to become aware of the presence of a sapper and exploring ways to proactively mitigate the draining effect that they have on us.

Impact of Energisers And Energy Sappers on An Organisation

A study conducted by Prof. Wayne Baker of the University of Michigan Business School, Rob Cross of the University of Virginia and Andrew Parker of the IBM Institute for Knowledge-based Organizations, indicated that energized people can create an upsurge of enthusiasm that helps improve team performance, motivate colleagues, stimulate innovation and increase job satisfaction.

According to Bernie DeGroat of the University of Michigan, "These energizers served in effect as lightning rods within their organizations, attracting more time and attention from colleagues for their ideas and expertise. The researchers also identified the key attributes of energizing interactions, including those that presented a compelling vision, created opportunities for others to contribute meaningfully or offered hope for the attainment of a worthy objective."

On the other hand, energy-sappers had the opposite effect-draining away enthusiasm, deflating fellow workers, stifling new ideas and making the



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Ms. Gunjan Shukla joined BHEL as an ET in IT in 1989, shifted to Corporate IT as software developer, System administrator for Unix. In 1994, was transferred to Power Sector Marketing as a Sr. Engineer for IT systems and Planning. In 2008, was transferred to HRDI as DGM. In 2013, was transferred on promotion as AGM to Power Sector HRDD. She has directed core managerial programs at BHEL for middle, senior level officers on knowledge transfer workshops; competency and Strategic need based programmes. She is a faculty on Creativity, Presentation skills, Active Listening, Decision Making, Stress Management, Self Esteem, Customer focus. She has authored papers in Annual handbook of HR initiatives and interventions. She has authored and presented her paper at 42nd IFTDO World Congress, New Delhi.



workplace a real drag. It is important that executives and managers find ways to inspire energizing behaviours within their organization in order to help their firm improve performance and achieve company-wide goals and foster learning.

They found a critical link between energy and performance, and discovered that people who energized others were higher performers.

In contrast, Ms. DeGroat reported that "the study found that de-energizers, which included individuals or members of a functional area or leadership group, constantly aired negative views, failed to engage others, favoured their own solutions or did not uphold the commitments they made. These actions drained the energy of other co-workers and groups, stifled creativity and hindered progress on initiatives."

As research clearly reiterates the importance of energisers, organisations need to firstly learn how to identify energizers and if possible weed out energy sappers during the recruitment process itself. Secondly, companies need to learn how to support already employed energizers, develop any latent diamonds in the rough energizers and convert energy zappers into energizers.

Having said that, I feel that the presence of both energisers as well as energy sappers is important. However, the proportion of each category has to be just right!

Energisers And Sappers-Getting The Mix Right

Even the so called 'energy sappers' or pessimists can be very useful provided we take their opinions and judgments with a filter.

They are the fault finders of the group and so their inputs can be used to make existing plans more robust, to ensure a smooth and fool proof execution and to ensure the right focus on quality. Can we imagine driving a car with only accelerators and no brakes? These brakes are provided in a natural way by the energy sappers or pessimists.

Energy sappers can be a boon to the organisation, thanks to their focus on details, structure, policy implications etc. and many can be accommodated in crucial functions like purchase, finance, audit, vigilance etc. Infact, all groups/functions needs such individuals, and in my view some amount of 'pessimism' would not do anyone harm. However, if there are too many such individuals, they may succeed in bringing down the energy levels of the entire group. This, in turn can be an impediment in achieving success in any challenging task. Put differently, the overall energizing force at a workplace should be greater than the total sapping force in the workplace ($F_e > F_s$).

Achieving The Balance-What Can Leadership And Organizations Do?

"Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Organizations need to put a premium on developing (through training or coaching) and rewarding (compensation systems) energizing behaviours and attitudes. Employees are most likely to follow the path for which they are rewarded. If someone is a sapper, we need to take their criticism with openness and ascertain for ourselves if what he is saying is

making sense or not. If the motive is not found to be genuine, then we either have to help them change or as a last resort, shunt them out of the organization before they derail the team's best efforts. Whatever the situation, the first step is to generate awareness through genuine feedback to the sapper and to listen empathically. We don't know what that person has gone through in his/her life. It helps if we understand and accept the differences and uniqueness of each individual's personality, pattern of behaviour, attitude and problems.

While it is important to spend more time around those who give us energy, we must aim to surround ourselves with the right mix of energizers as well as energy sappers (they are actually not chosen, usually you will find them by default in your arena. Hence it means learning to live with them and accepting the sighs, oh no's along with ohho's). Personally, I deal with energy sappers with a pinch of salt. I constantly remind myself that it's important for me to take all viewpoints—one must appreciate the greys along with the reds, the blues and the greens. Just as the universe has all the colours and the mixture of all colours brings about the beautiful rainbow after the rains, so do the energisers and the black holes bring about new experiences and learnings. Perfect compartmentalisation is but an illusion. We have certain aspects of both categories in us for we are truly a mix of both thoughts processes and it's up to us to choose which aspect we want to highlight.

So... which category do you belong to???

In the words of Wayne Dyer... *"Be miserable. Or motivate yourself. Whatever has to be done, it's always your choice."*



People Practices And Talent Management



Image Source: <http://www.innovationmanagement.se/2012/04/12/10-tips-for-successful-innovation-teams>





Building Cross Functional Competency: An Emerging Need For PSUs

The role of a Manager is to create synergy among domain specialists so that the organization can match or exceed stakeholder expectations. This role becomes even more challenging in a matrix organization. The moment one drills down into the organization structure, one finds two typical situations with respect to leadership.

Situation 1: where managers gain the necessary expertise and then lead

Situation 2: when managers delegate and depend on the wisdom of their second line or on individuals who are domain specialists.

Both these situations have 'cross functional competencies' as their foundation. For, if the customer perspective remains the point of focus for the organization, how can different functions whether technical or managerial keep their eyes away from customer needs? Thus, it is clear that no matter what the leadership approach, functional integration as a way to meet the business objective of the organization. Hence, building cross-functional competency of team members becomes a differentiator for all organizations to sustain growth, stay competitive and to supplement managerial capability.



For PSUs where customer satisfaction is the focal point of success, it is important that the technical and managerial function share the same sentiments towards serving the customer. Therefore, if an organization allows a domain specific approach instead of building cross-functional skills in the team, there is little chance of achieving a competitive edge in the market. This can only be achieved by building cross-functional teams, thus breaking the 'silo' approach.

Importance Of A Cross Functional Approach

Building cross functional competency is not a new concept. Typical HRD programs like "Finance for Non-finance" or "HR for line Managers" are widely attended. Similarly, in order to manage critical tasks, "Cross functional work groups" are being successfully used. Such training programs and work practices also inculcate diverse knowledge that is beyond the individual's own domain and thus aids in building Cross functional teams for the organization. This is typical in PSUs, where planned succession planning coupled with cross functional competency building is used as one of the Talent Management tools. While managerial recruits often lead organizations, leadership positions in PSUs which are largely engaged in core industry and infrastructure development for the nation are normally held by domain experts.

The practice of managerial cadre leading the organization is slowly being adopted at PSUs too. If we look back, we have noteworthy cases where functional experts from non-core stream did wonders in the central management of the organization by leading from the front. To quote some examples,

▶ We have a typical case of proactive succession planning with Cross functional Competency Building in the form of Mr. Ansuman Das, Chairman-cum-Managing Director of one of the Navratna PSUs, National Aluminium Company Limited, who joined the organization in 1982 as Senior Engineer in Project and Technical services. He worked in various capacities and rose to the level of General Manager (Marketing), was in Materials Management department as Executive Director and then took over as Director (Commercial). He also shouldered additional responsibility of Director (Human Resources) and Director (Finance) of the organization (1).

▶ Mr. Partha S Bhattacharyya, a Cost Accountant who joined Coal India Ltd. as a Management Trainee and rose to become Chairman of the Company and stayed in that position for a long time (Oct' 06 to Feb' 11) and spearheaded the successful market capitalization process(2),.

▶ Dr Anil K. Khandelwal, who after working as Deputy General Manager HRM in Bank of Baroda, a valuable and powerful Public Sector Banking brand, shifted to banking operations and finally retired as Chairman and Managing Director of the bank and was instrumental in its turnaround during his stint of 3 years(3).

The Bridge Between individual growth and organization growth

There is scope to upgrade the contribution of HR and the role it plays in bridging individual and organizational growth. HR should be a strong facilitator in implementing strategic decisions by bringing opinion makers and influencers under one umbrella, away from divisive thought. It is surprising to note that although every organization professes to have an



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“Employee first” policy and intends to deliver “Customer delight”, it hardly puts in any genuine effort in integration of its various functional nodes.

This challenge can be solved if each executive who is being provided with a completely different domain to work with, is explicitly told the expected deliverable from the assignment. HR should facilitate by establishing competitive HR practices which include giving extra credit for those who are ready to take new challenges. These cross functional moves should be made a part of the succession plan.

Culture as an Enabler

Organization culture often happens to be the major determinant for building cross functional competencies along with individual willingness to adapt to the same. Everyone talks about enjoying a prosperous career. Often, dispelling fear of failure in individuals and allowing them to take a leap from one domain to another is a factor ignored most of the times by organizations. In such situations, continuing with the conventional attitude is detrimental to organizational growth. It is therefore important to create a culture that is away from the myopic view of ‘individual streams’ and focuses on a larger platform of ‘cross functional assimilation’.

The cross functional switch over may not be advisable at base level, as it would be detrimental to building core competency. However, general management functions (Finance/HR etc.) can take up building cross-functional expertise across levels.

This can be done as an experiment by beginning with small groups covering just 10% of business roles, develop a consensus with other functions and then move forward by launching it as a full-fledged initiative.

Conclusion:

Encouraging a positive attitude towards building cross-functional expertise is a change of mind set and it has nothing to do with loss of career opportunity. In a business arena that is becoming increasingly complex, it is important for organizations to develop a culture of openness to becoming cross-functionally skilled, thereby building an effective Leadership Pipeline.

Imagine an organization where a Material Manager is the future CMD or an engineer is heading the administration or a finance wizard is leading Operations or an HR Head is signing off the Company’s financial statements. That would be the time when the organization has truly achieved its goal of being competently cross-skilled. In the words of John Lennon,

“You, you may say
I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one
I hope someday you’ll join us
And the world will live as one...”

(Imagine: John Lennon, 1971)

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Image Source: <http://top10profit.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/colored-network-people1.jpg>

