From the President

Warm greetings to readers and fellow members of the Asian Association of Management Organisations (AAMO).

I trust you are doing well and staying safe and healthy in these difficult times.

The COVID-19 crisis that has affected societies and economies around the globe, will permanently reshape our world as it continues to unfold. While the fallout from the crisis is both amplifying familiar risks and creating new ones, change at this scale also creates new openings for managing systemic challenges, and ways to build back better.
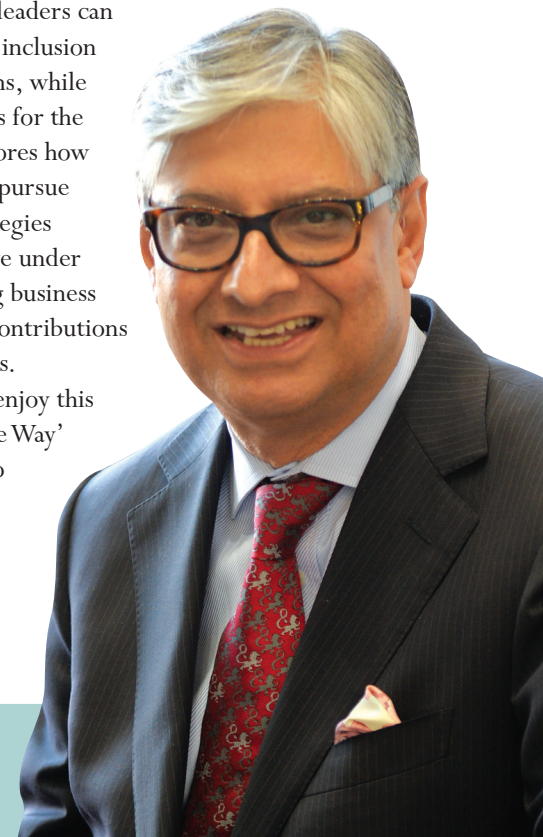
The pandemic has challenged the management orthodoxy and it will force a radical rethink of business structures, processes and behaviour in the coming years. What we do right now will define the future, and yet making decisions and acting with assurance has never been more challenging.

Decision making amid uncertainty is never easy, but business leaders cannot afford to wait and watch when events are moving as fast as they are right now. The most astute leaders are trying to capitalise on the new normal when everyone is open to trying new things. They are investing in developing new products with significant new features and benefits to excite the customers. They are looking to create new markets instead of merely adapting to changed consumption behaviour.

Not only do leaders have to protect organisations from getting severely damaged by lockdowns, they also have to ensure readiness for a quick rebound. This is a time for organisations like AAMO, and the National Management Organisations to lead the way to help management embrace change and adopt new ways of working & learning; and foster management agility in these uncertain times.

This issue of 'Leading the Way' explores new and emerging trends in management and leadership from the Asia Pacific region. Contributions from India – 'Ethics Matters' – explores how being ethical is not just a desirable leadership trait, but straddles the entire spectrum of organisational culture; while 'Power of Many' shows how organisations that think long term invest heavily in building game changing teams. An article contribution from Sri Lanka focuses on the importance of 'Building Internal Consistency and Synergy among Human Resource Management Practices'. An article from Macau on 'Book Summary Apps', explores the rising popularity of such apps and how to use them effectively. 'A Growing Pay Divide in APAC' – contributed by Malaysia – highlights the widening pay gap between the skilled and unskilled, due to globalisation and digitalisation. Two contributions from Nepal include 'Management Practices in Institutions for Higher Education in Nepal' and 'Leadership as Arts of Organisational Inspiration' which explores the importance of a leader's ingenuity and astuteness to enhance the organisation's performance. 'Why Diversity and Inclusion Matters Even More During a Pandemic' sheds light on how leaders can adopt diversity and inclusion in their organisations, while 'Strategy Directions for the New Normal' explores how companies need to pursue new and novel strategies to survive and thrive under the newly emerging business conditions – both contributions from the Philippines.

I do hope you enjoy this issue of 'Leading the Way' and look forward to your feedback and suggestions.

Rajive Kaul
President

Contents

Ethics matters

'Being ethical' is not just a desirable leadership trait; it has to be seen as a precept that straddles the entire spectrum of organisational culture.

By- Dr Shruthi J Mayur, Associate Professor

As I entered a coffee shop the other day, I noticed a group of youngsters fervently working on an assignment. Their enthusiasm drew me to a table next to them. I was curious to know what had ignited such gusto at eight in the morning. I did not have to strain my ears too much to comprehend their topic of discussion—'ethical leadership'. Of all that transpired amongst them, two statements caught my attention. One said,"Isn't leadership supposed to be ethical? So why the hype?" Another remarked, "It sounds like an oxymoron."

This drew my attention to this highly relevant topic. And digging deep into the tons of information available, I came across a simple and meaningful definition for it. According to the Center for Ethical Leadership, "Ethical leadership is knowing your core values and having the courage to live them in all parts of your life in service of the common good."

This implies that you need to become an ethical and honest person first to become an ethical and honest leader. So, what is the difference between the two?

It is important to understand the difference because very often, individuals apply one set of values in their personal life and another in their professional life. This dissonance can lead to many negative consequences. While the first role is about the ethical values an individual follows in his or her personal life, the second and more challenging role pertains to an individual striving to inculcate these in his or her followers. This is a challenge because many moral principles are not universally held.

According to one of the definitions I came across, ethical leadership means staying true to one's moral principles, while being aware of the complexity of certain ethical issues, being sensitive to the differing views of employees, and being able to manage the conflicts that may arise. Thus, ethical leadership is not a style or a leadership trait. It goes much deeper—it is a culture. A culture where everyone understands and performs with synergy—synergy between the core values of the individual and those of the organisation—without being micromanaged. It is a culture wherein the employee is empowered and respected. But how many actually understand this and behave in a manner that is expected? Is it enough to do the right thing only when someone is watching?

So, how does one practise and instill in others such an inclusive culture? It is not easy, but possible. Some pointers as to how this can be achieved are given below:

Define personal values

As a leader, spend time listing personal core values. It must be clear that there is zero tolerance for non-compliance. It calls for a lot of introspection and understanding of experiences one has gone through, to list these sets of values. This is also influenced by the value system one has grown up in. While the environment has prescribed certain values, one has to script one's own value system. Unless one can stand by these values through hell or high water, one cannot expect another to follow it.

- **Study and understand the organisation's value system**
  Personal and professional value systems have to match; or else, the journey with the organisation will be short-lived. Consider something as simple as punctuality. If you strongly believe in it and the organisation you work for takes time for granted, then you will not last there long. This also works vice versa.

- **Code of conduct**
  Develop a code of conduct for the organisation. Codes are different from rules; they act as guides that help individuals during a dilemma. A well-articulated code will help in bringing back on track anyone who strays from the value system. Easier said than done? No, the code can serve as a beacon.

- **Differentiate between ethics and rules**
  "Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what isright to do." - Potter Stewart. Ethical behaviour is different from complying with the lawor the rules laid down by industry. While something may be lawful, it may be unethical as it goes against personal and organisational values. In such a situation, an employee must be encouraged to take action in compliance with their personal/organisational values.

- **Behaviour modelling**
  From childhood, we are told to look up to people of repute and try to emulate them. Even now, one of the most popular questions during interviews is: Who is your role model? This is basically because people learn by observing others whom they believe are credible and knowledgeable. Like Robert Noyce said, "If ethics are poor at top, that behaviour is copied down through the

organization." Leaders must model the behaviour they want others to follow. This should be done at all times, and not just when others are watching.

- **Transparency**

  Be transparent in all dealings, irrespective of the issues or people involved. There should be no scope for 'reading between the lines', as this can lead to loss of trust, confusion, and chaos. As a leader, ensure that whatever needs to be said is done in a language (simple) others understand and be sure to answer all queries they may have.

- **Participation**

  Involve employees in making decisions that impact them. If they are part of the decision making process, then individuals mostly go the extra mile to make things work. The sense of ownership motivates them to perform better; it will also create accountability for the actions taken. Participation creates trust and respect in the workplace.

- **Call a spade a spade**

  "Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted with important matters." - Albert Einstein. Be fair in all dealings. As a leader, one may make mistakes, but have the courage to own up. Ensure that the rules are the same for all, irrespective of rank or position. There is no place for nepotism in an ethical environment.

- **Hiring the right people**

  Having said all of the above, the entire exercise will go waste if the organisation does not hire the right people. Warren Buffett has been quoted as saying, "Somebody once said that in looking for people to hire, you look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence, and energy. And if you don't have the first, the other two will kill you." So, first define what 'right people' means for the organisation. The task is to find not only people with the right competencies, but also those who display an ethical approach to work. This has to be clearly articulated in job descriptions and questioned in depth during interviews. Checking references must be done with diligence.

Concluding with some food for thought—a quote by Warren Buffet one should read everyday: "It takes twenty years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you will do things differently".

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Power of many

Organisations that truly think long term invest heavily in building game - changing teams.

Muniinder K Anand
Managing Director India & South Asia Center for Creative Leadership

Let us start by asking a few questions: Is there a need for teams in organisations? Why does it matter that they succeed? Why must they be game-changers?

A 'team', to a layman, is a group of players on either side in a competitive game or sport. In the corporate context, it refers to a group of individuals working in a competitive environment—motivated by the common goal to outlast competitors in the game of bagging client contracts, increasing market share, building the best products, harnessing innovation potential, and so on.

We need teams because our collective ability is greater than our individual capacities. Also, if we, as individuals, work on only our tasks and priorities without any common sense of direction, then the result will not necessarily be the one we expected when we set out.

Teams are necessary also because it is important to align individual efforts with common goals. Such alignment and coordination are critical to organisational success since teams invariably comprise all kinds of people who depend on each other for information, access to resources, and domain-, area-, and industry-specific knowledge and skills.

A 'game-changer', as defined by Oxford English Dictionary, is 'an event, idea, or procedure that effects a significant shift in the current way of doing or thinking about something'. In today's ever-changing economy, characterised by rapid shifts and dynamic trends, such as artificial intelligence, design thinking, Internet of Things, automation, and an evolving geopolitical environment, the key differentiator would be to maintain a competitive edge. What is needed to navigate successfully and stay ahead is a game changing team, the kind that brings about a significant change in the way of doing business and doing things differently to produce tangible business outcomes.

More and more organisations are directing their efforts towards supporting and driving business strategies with the help of talent strategies. The talent strategies being developed and sought are the kind that are detailed, speaking to business structures such as centralised/ decentralised, verticals based on business unit/centres of excellence that extend across geography and are not limited to or by country or region or areas. These strategies are crucial to building game changing teams, as they generate value and relevance and ensure competitive advantage.

Stakeholder buy-in is also critical while developing talent strategies. Leaders committed to this cause are

good at making a business case for talent development, and they deeply invest in laying the building blocks to sustain and support the initiatives. They own the process and hold others accountable for identifying, developing, and retaining individuals with the potential to be a part of the game-changing team; these individuals are often referred to as high potentials in HR terms.

Creating an authentic game-changing talent strategy is not simple; it is mired in ambiguity and complexity. How to balance the imperative to be strategically oriented while maintaining operational excellence? How does the strategy support a strong, enabling culture for all and yet create space for high potentials to chart their route? How can the strategy be relevant and compliant with local norms even while resonating with the global ethos? How does one provide structure and process to ensure governance and yet be flexible and agile vis-à-vis the changing environment?

Game-changing teams are the ones that look at these conflicts as opportunities rather than trade-offs. These are, in fact, polarities that must be managed and prioritised as the situations evolve; there is no one-size-fits-all. All these are important and come with characteristic tension that ought to be reconciled. While adopting a strategic outlook, organisations must also look at optimising operational efficiency; the drive of individuals to succeed must be tempered with collective ownership of goals; a global mindset should strive for local relevance; legacies and past success must not stand in the way of fresh ideas and new plans. Championing these four polarities is the way organisations can look at formulating the talent strategy, which forms the foundation of game-changing teams.

A game-changing team may have all the good-to-have features—shared commitment, ownership, energy, innovation, etc. I have found that the following five strategies work and can deliver business results when building game-changing teams:

- **Nurture relationships**

    Nurturing and building relationships is crucial to team behaviour and success. A recent Harvard Business School study found that teams that engage with each other outside of work are more likely to succeed and outperform others.

A successful team needs the support of key stakeholders who may take on the roles of advocates or sponsors. They may be customers, business partners downstream or upstream, or, in some cases, even competitors. The involvement and engagement level required to develop relationships with both external and internal stakeholders may vary or differ depending on the team's tasks.

- **Engage in trust building**

    Developing trust is centric to deepen relationships and enhance engagement. It helps in breaking barriers to collaboration, enables adjustment to growth, and conditions people to adapt to as well as drive change.

Teams functioning in today's context face problems and shifts that are quite complex—gaining market share, boosting productivity, and developing products with short go-to-market

Effectiveness indicators

Results oriented indicators	Feeling oriented indicators	Learning oriented
Achievement of team-specific tasks by the team instead of an individual	Satisfaction level of the team with the team	The efficiencies which are created by the team
Supporting the team through citizenship behaviour	Satisfaction level with members of the team	Improvement of efficiencies over a period of time
Supporting the organisation through citizenship behaviour	Commitment to and identification with the team	Ability to adapt approach to changing conditions

timelines while working on operational efficiency. Having a high degree of trust is essential to be able to work on these priorities. Building trust may seem easy but it has its own set of unique demands and challenges. Trust is a complex construct with its definition changing with different people. One may have a high or low degree of trust, yet it elicits an emotional response. Research undertaken by Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) suggests that results in three core areas may be utilised to measure team efficacy and effectiveness. (See table above)

- **Imbibe agility and flexibility**

    In order to survive and thrive, organisations ought to be flexible in the way they operate and deliver—agile in both thought and action. Emphasis must be on building judgment early and enabling decision-making in dynamic scenarios. The need is for an owner's mindset versus a tenant's mindset, to operate and execute strategies and plans effectively.

- **Demonstrate courage**

    Great leaders have often demonstrated courage under adverse conditions—Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, and Amelia Earhart, to name a few. Simon Sinek once said that "the courage of leadership is giving others the chance to succeed even though you bear the

responsibility for getting things done." Good leaders demonstrate courage by expressing confidence in their team members. It is about enabling the team members so that they can respond effectively even during a crisis because they know that the leadership team expects them to be decisive, based on their convictions and assessment of the situation.

- **Support risk-taking**

    An organisation that looks unfavourably at every risk, any mistake that is made in good faith, and attempts to help is not cut out to succeed in the long term, and neither are teams that follow the same route. Successful teams know that if they are fully empowered to make decisions based on the information available and their logical reasoning, then they will be not be reprimanded for a mistake.

As it is often said, "Training is costly, price of not training is even more". Thus, organisations need to shift from an earning mindset to a learning mindset and invest in the journey of building game-changing teams.

About Author

Muniinder K Anand, Managing Director India & South Asia Center for Creative Leadership

Building Internal Consistency and Synergy among Human Resource Management Practices

By Dr K.L. Chandratilleke

Human resource management (HRM) has gained increasing recognition both as a concept and practice in managing people at work especially since the 1980s. Having evolved through conventional personnel administration, which continued to occupy a prominent place in setting the teaching and research agenda of business management, HRM has become a prominent discipline in contemporary discussions and debates on 'building high commitment work systems' and achieving competitive advantage through the integration of human resource policies and practices with business strategies. In the past, there have been extensive discussions on the distinction between 'personnel management' and 'human resource management' in relation to the key assumptions about people at work, strategic orientation, nature of work organization, role of line manager and handling employee relations (Storey 1992).

While these discussions have shed some light to gain a better understanding of the distinct features of HRM, the discipline itself is plagued with internal inconsistencies and contradictions, which have led to serious questions being asked by various writers on the practical feasibility of incorporating the various and divergent elements of HRM within a single model.

Some of these inconsistencies and contradictions highlighted by the leading scholars of HRM are summarised below.

In the first place, there is an element of conflict between the soft version of HRM, also known as the 'Harvard Model' (Beer et. al., 1984) derived from the principle of 'developmental humanism', which stresses the need to gain employee commitment through trust building, training and development and self-regulation and the 'hard version' also known as the 'Michigan Model' (Fombrun et. al., 1984) or the 'head count approach' anchored in 'utilitarian instrumentalism'. Unlike the soft version, the latter one emphasizes the need to closely integrate human resource policies and practices with business strategy and employees are regarded as a resource to be managed in the same way as any other resources to achieve business objectives. In this process, the focus on the 'human' element becomes less significant than under the soft version. Inevitably, this creates a conflict between elements of self-expression and high trust embedded in the soft version and the elements of control and resource management found in the hard version.

Within the soft version itself a potential conflict is found if and when attempts are made to secure employee commitment while at the same time

maintaining flexibility, both of which are considered as major policy goals of HRM (Guest 1991). There are different types of flexibility (Atkinson 1984; Prieto 1993) such as numerical (flexibility in deciding the number of employees required), financial (where wage determination can be linked to performance) and functional (where employees could be rotated among tasks to meet business needs) and some of these types can be inconsistent with the goal of securing employee commitment. For example, if an organization decides in favour of numerical flexibility, which may include downsizing the permanent work force through voluntary retirement schemes, deployment of short-term temporary or contract workers on specific assignments and also outsourcing some of the functions hitherto carried out by the permanent employees, then it could have an adverse impact on permanent employees' commitment to that organisation. In that sense, commitment and flexibility are not necessarily compatible goals.

HRM is based on the unitarist approach to employee relations with emphasis on individual employment contracts and not collective agreements (Armstrong 2009). The unitarist approach assumes that employees' goals and those of the organization are not in conflict and employees work as members of one team in pursuance of organizational goals. In translating the unitarist approach, HRM often advocates direct communication with employees through mechanisms such as suggestion schemes, team briefing sessions, employee opinion and attitude surveys, speak up campaigns, and 'walking the job' under which managers are encouraged to be more visible and accessible to their employees (Beaumont 1993) Whilst promoting such mechanisms on the one hand, HRM tends to encourage team work and even fall back on collective bargaining, which is firmly rooted in the pluralist approach to managing employee relations. The pluralist

view recognizes the existence of conflicting interests between the employer and the employee and therefore the need to institutionalize such conflicts through the bargaining mechanism. For this reason, questions have been raised as to how HRM could reconcile these two seemingly contradictory approaches to manage the employment relationship.

Similarly, the notion of integrating HRM policies and practice, both externally and internally has been questioned by some critics. Those who advocate external integration always emphasize the need to design HR policies and practices to suit the particular business strategy pursued by the organization, but in achieving internal integration the focus is not so much on meeting the requirements of the business strategy, but more on making a proper alignment among the different human resource practices. However, it has been argued that due to this difference there could be an inconsistency between internal and external integration especially when an organization develops a set of perfectly knit human resource practices which do not support the achievement of business objectives or a clearly articulated human resource strategy with a business focus, which is not supported by an integrated set of human resource practices at operational level.

Some critics consider human resource management as a discipline replete with rhetorics meant to create a positive impression, but often lacking in sincerity

or meaningful content in actual practice. Some of the prime examples are 'empowerment' which in reality means making someone else responsible for one's work commitments, 'flexible employment practices', the hidden objective of which is to allow management to do what it wants, 'right-sizing', which is nothing but redundancy, and 'team work' the aim of which is to reduce individual discretion (Sisson 1994). According to these critics, such concepts are often used as a mask to cover the harsh realities in manipulating people in pursuit of organizational objectives (Legge 1995). Empirical investigations carried out in organizational settings in some parts of the western world have been cited as evidence in support of this argument.

The ideological contradictions within HRM will continue be debated more in academic circles, but it should not be considered as a reason for managers and other practitioners to be disillusioned about its meaning and value as a more effective approach to manage the human capital than conventional personnel administration. Instead of abandoning HRM for lack of consistency in theory and practice, the challenge before the HR practitioner is to develop congruent human resource management systems and practices that are mutually reinforcing internally to promote the desired behavior among employees (Horizontal integration) and also aligning such practices with business objectives and strategies (Vertical integration). In the absence of such congruence, HRM concepts can always be seen as mere rhetorics than reality. This could be illustrated through the following few examples.

If an organization, which has declared team work as a key corporate value and a behavioral norm expected from employees, continues to measure employee performance and disburse rewards exclusively on individual contribution and output, employees are unlikely to practice team work seriously as they know team work does not bring them the desired rewards. Similarly, if an organization makes various pronouncements to show its commitment to employee empowerment, while maintaining a rigid hierarchical structure with centralized decision making, employees will see empowerment more as rhetoric than a sincere managerial commitment.

As pointed out by Dreher and Dougherty (2005) in an insightful discussion, incongruence in HRM practices could stem from one or more of the following problems.

- Failure of HRM activities to promote targeted employee behaviours

- Application of HRM practices which are in conflict, such as urging employee to be innovative, while at the same time practicing zero tolerance of mistakes

- Failure to provide mutually supportive HRM practices to induce target employee behaviours.

In developing HRM practices that are internally congruent and externally compatible with business objectives and strategies, HRM practitioners have to follow several steps. The first step is to identify key employee behaviours required to support business objectives. This step is critically important because business objectives cannot be achieved without the employees' ability and the will to work in the direction expected by the organization. For example, as some scholars have pointed out, an innovation strategy designed to gain competitive advantage would call for employee behavious such as a high degree of creativity, high tolerance of ambiguity and unpredictability, longer term focus and a relatively high level of cooperative and interdependent behavior. In contrast, a cost reduction strategy would require relatively repetitive and predictable behavior, a rather short term focus, low risk taking and a high concern for quantity of output (Schuler & Jackson 1987).

The next step is to develop human resource policies and specific practices that can reinforce the desired behaviours. For instance, if an organization which has adopted a strategy of innovation, has recognized generation of innovative ideas as one of the key behaviours expected from the employees, then it has to develop and implement human resource practices to induce employees to be creative and innovative. This may include extensive training on creativity and innovation, using creative potential of job applicants as a criterion in hiring new employees,
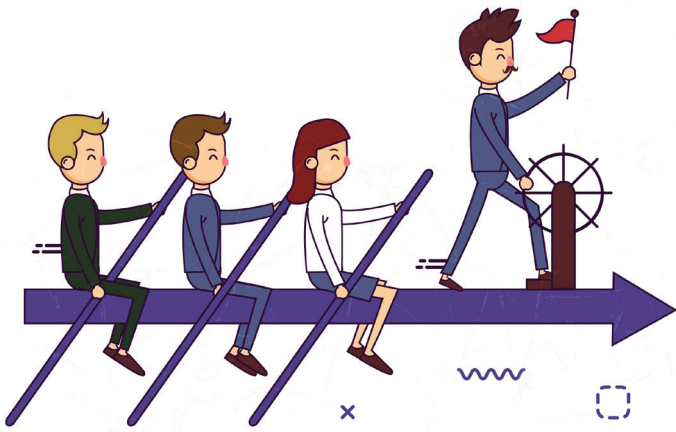
recognizing creative and innovative ability in assessing employee performance and thereafter in granting promotions. In doing so, it is equally important to exercise caution to ensure that the different human resource management practices do not give confused and even conflicting messages to employees. In the case of innovation it will be detrimental and self-defeating if employees are penalized and reprimanded for making mistakes, whilst being encouraged to take risks and experiment with new ideas. These two practices, which are obviously contradictory, could make employees blind conformists as they may fear that experimentation could even cost their jobs!

The third step is to establish synergies among the different HRM practices by ensuring that they are mutually reinforcing. Synergy cannot be achieved by implementing selected HRM practices without examining how such practices could fit into the overall human resource strategy and the organisational culture. In some instances selective implementation of HRM practices could only result in partial achievement of expected benefits at best and waste of resources at worst. One such example is investment in 'stand-alone' training, which most organisations do, without being complemented by adequate follow up activities and also promotion and career development programmes to retain trained employees. Another example of a piecemeal attempt, which is unlikely to produce positive results, is creating various mechanisms such as quality circles, self-directed teams and work improvement teams ostensibly to promote team work among employees while the organizational culture dominated by authoritarian values remains unchanged. For these and other reasons, it is imperative that instead of following a piecemeal approach, HR practitioners attempt to offer a package of HRM practices ranging from human resource planning, performance management and training and development to reward

management, blended in a manner that could support the achievement of overall business objectives. As Kepes and Delery (2007) have aptly pointed out what is required is not individual HRM practices, but coherent and internally coherent HRM systems that create positive synergistic effects on organizational outcomes. Undoubtedly this is an uphill task which needs meticulous planning and implementation, but it is the only way to build up the much needed synergy to make HRM more a reality than a bundle of rhetorics.

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Book Summary Apps

Author: Brian Tang, Corporate Training Consultant

Do you like reading nonfiction books? You probably do. Most working class people like to read nonfiction books in order to learn new knowledge and skills for the purpose of self-help, inspiration, and enlightenment. But, and this is a big but, we don't have time to read. Most nonfiction books contain more than 200 pages from cover to cover, and research shows that most people don't make it over the first 50 pages before they put the book back on the shelf. As much as we like to absorb new knowledge and keep ourselves up to date with the outside world, we simply don't have the time and patience to dive into books. To make things worse, smart phones and social media have made our attention span shorter and shorter. Our minds have been trained to react to high stimulation medias such as pictures and videos. When we scroll through the feeds in social media, what catches our eyeballs? Pictures and videos. We are less likely to read if the feed is written in texts, let alone long texts. We will read a text feed only when it is short, such as the length of a tweet. It has been proven that videos and catchy photos on social media could get way more "Likes" than texts, and short texts get viewed more than long texts. In sum, we have been trained on a daily basis to react to high stimulation events. Since our brain attention is limited, we become less likely to pick up a book – hundreds of pages full of texts that are of low stimulation. Even if we are courageous enough to pick one up, most of us don't make it to the back cover before putting it back on the shelf.

To solve the problem of people not having time and patience to read, people have come up with book summary apps. They are smart phone apps that offer summaries on nonfiction books. Instead of spending weeks or even months to finish a book, you can now get the essence of the book in less than 15 minutes. Basically, someone else has read the book, distilled the core ideas and insights, and summarized it professionally for you. Most apps offer the summaries in written and audio formats. You can either read the written summaries or listen to the audios. By using these apps, you will no longer have excuses not able to "read" books. Compared to picking up a physical book, you are much more likely to squeeze 15 minutes out of your busy schedule to either read or listen to the book summary. You can easily finish a book while taking
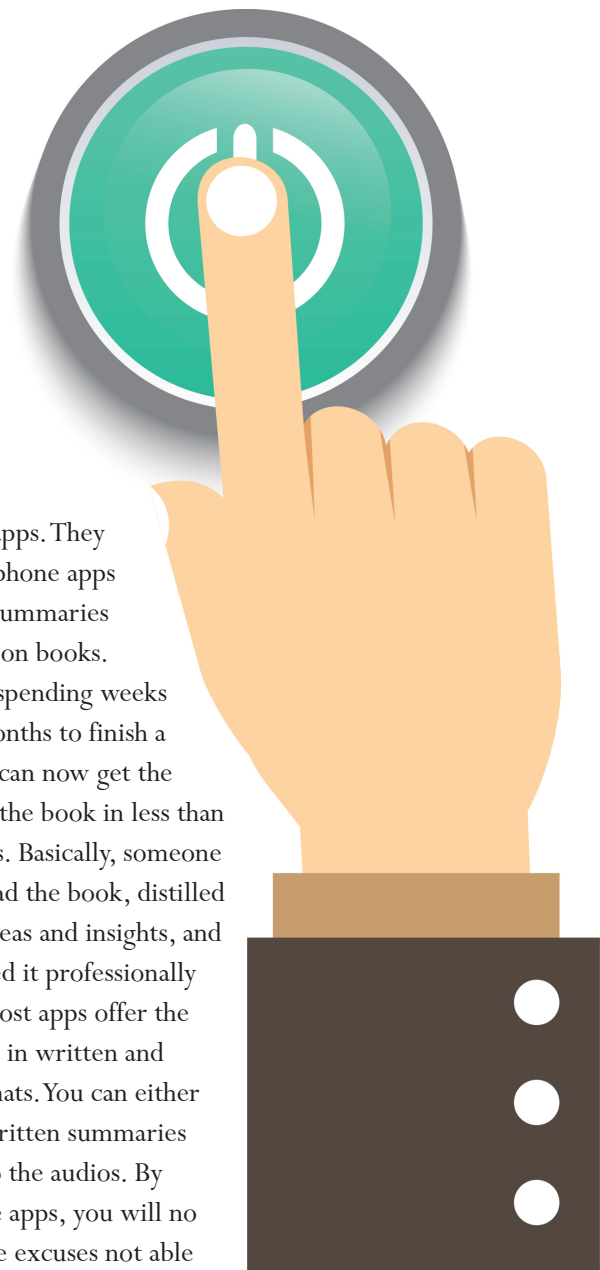
a bus, waiting for your soybean milk latte, or during your workout in the gym. This article will give you four advices from finding the app that suits you to getting the most out of the experience.

1. Do your homework before choosing the app

There are plenty of book summary apps out there, and they are usually available on both iOS and Android systems. Type "book summary" in your app store and you will find plenty of them. Each app is unique in terms of their libraries, payment options, and user experience. While Blinkist, probably the biggest player of all, offers the biggest library with over 3000 bestselling nonfiction book summaries, Instaread delivers exclusive contents from Harvard Business Review and New York Times articles. I suggest that you read through the app descriptions and see if their unique selling points appeal to you.

In terms of payment, most apps run on a subscription model. You pay a monthly or a yearly fee in return of the book summary service. Some of them offer one week free trail so you can fully experience the app the first week without financial commitment. Some apps offer free version but you get a limited selection of books or run the app with a lot of advertisements. In addition, each app is designed differently so your user experience will vary from one app to another. You are suggested to download a few apps, try them out, and select the one that's best for you. You may also Google user reviews of different apps if you don't have the time to try them on your own.

One tip to select your app is to see if the summary is written and recorded in a single summary or broken into bite-size chunks. The app I use breaks down a book summary into sizable chunks (usually 8-12 chunks) with each chunk lasting no more than 2 minutes. I find this approach more digestible. You may want to check out how the summary is formatted in your chosen app.

2. Start with a book you have previously read

If you have never used a book summary app, I suggest that you start with a book that you have read before. "Reading" a book with a summary app is a very different experience compared to reading a physical book. By starting with a book you have previous read and are familiar with, you can put your focus on the experience itself rather than the actual content. Is the app interface user-friendly? Are you able to navigate without much of a learning curve? By starting with a book you have read, you will also be able to evaluate the quality of the summary by comparing it with the materials you have read before. How much content, data, and examples were omitted in the summary? How well does the summary capture the core idea of the book? Is the voice recording easy to listen? Is the pacing okay? Again, at the very beginning you want to immerse yourself in the experience rather than content, and there's no better way than starting with the book you already know.

For example, I started using the app with my favorite book, an all-time best seller "7 Habits of Highly Effective People". I know the material cold. So, instead of listening to understand the content, I put my focus on navigating the app and get used to the experience.

3. Pause often, take note, rewind, and re-listen

When you read a physical book and come across an insight or "Aha moment", what would you do? You would pause the reading, do a reflection in your mind, or even write some notes on the margin of the page. This becomes difficult to do when you listen to the audio summary when the talking fires like a machine gun. The narrator would not stop talking unless you hit the pause button. However, the pause and reflection are what makes reading so powerful in the first place.

Without the process of reflection, we won't be able to internalize the material, let alone putting it into our long-term memory. So, when you come across insights and "Aha moments" during your audio summary, don't be afraid to pause, reflect, open the note pad app in your phone, and take notes. If you don't capture your ideas and thoughts at that very moment, you will lose it with a blink of an eye because your attention will be drawn to the continuous talking of the narrator. Pausing and note taking is absolutely key if you want to get the most out of the summary. By the same token, when you hear something confusing or a difficult terminology, rewind the talking or restart from the beginning and give yourself another chance of understanding. Listening to audio summary is much like eating. We get the most out of it by doing it slowly and regular pauses. Gobbling up the food is bad for your health. Your stomach cannot digest too much food at one time. Unchewed food is hard to process, and you probably don't get a lot of nutrition out of it. Pausing, note taking, and rewinding during your listening of audio summary is very much like eating slowly and chewing sufficiently.

Finally, I would recommend that you re-listen to the audio summary after you have finished it. Because of the fast pace of talking and the huge amount of highly condensed content, our brains won't be able to process all the information the first time we listen to it. This is especially more pronounced for those whose first language is not English. By re-listening to the same summary over and over again, we will be able to slowly process the information, thereby making the most out of it.

One more tip, if you find some terminologies from the summary hard to understand, you may read the written summary and listen to the audio simultaneously.

4. Use the app like a screener of great books

A book summary will give you the core ideas of the book, but it won't give you all the data, background, examples, and recommendations from the author. If you listen to a book summary and you really like it, go buy the actual book and read it from cover to cover (because you have known the essence, you can finish the book fast and still benefit tremendously!) In other words, use the app as a screener of great books. As valuable as it can be, book summary apps cannot replace traditional book reading altogether. Some classics, such as "7 Habits of Highly Effective People", has so much wisdom that a 15 minutes summary simply cannot contain. But the app can let you "test the water" and select the books you really like. Without the app, you run the risk of buying a book, reading the first 30 pages before abandoning it. Now it is occupying valuable space in your bookshelf. With the app, you only buy the physical copy if you really like the ideas presented in the summary. Imagine you finish one summary per day. That is equivalent to digesting over 300 books a year. You can gain a lot of quick tips and novel knowledge out of it. If you find 10 books out of the 300 that you really like, and you buy and read those physical copies, you are essentially taking a deep dive into the topics and mine the golden nuggets. In other words, you go for quantity with the app, then dive into quality with the carefully selected books. The book summary app allows you to greatly improve the efficiencies and effectiveness of your reading activities.

In summary, book summary apps are popular nowadays because of social trends and our short attention span. Book summary apps won't replace the traditional book reading. Rather, it offers a convenient alternative. When using it wisely, it not only fills the downtime of your ears, it also gives you opportunities to increase your knowledge bank at a fraction of time and resources.

A Growing Pay Divide in APAC

By May Knight, Korn Ferry

We've been tracking the pay gap between lower-level employees and senior managers since 2008. Over that time, the gap has continued to grow, no matter the economic conditions. Powered by globalisation and digitalisation the gap between skilled and unskilled keeps widening.

Understandably, the pay gap has become a hot social and political issue. However, we believe it's important to look behind the emotional headlines. Our research shows that it's rarely wilfully unfair pay practices that create and perpetuate the gap. Rather, it's market demand for skills and local or regional business conditions that are driving the difference.

Supply and Demand

Often, it's the most basic of economic principles that's to blame: supply and demand. At the lower end of the labour market, automation and offshoring mean there are now more people than jobs and this slows increases in pay. At the top end, there's a shortage of people with important hard skills and proven experience, such as STEM. The same goes for in-demand soft skills, such as emotional intelligence, creative thinking and the ability to manage large and complex teams. As a result, pay at these higher levels is going up and increasing faster than other jobs.

The cost of living can amplify this effect. Jobs at the lower end are typically paid a 'local' wage, while jobs at the higher end compete in a global market. So the lower the cost of living in a country, the bigger the pay gap.

What's the Story Behind the Stats in APAC?

In line with the global story, most Asian countries we studied saw moderate increases in their pay gaps between lower-level and higher-level employees. The average increase across Asia is 15 percent, but the disparate nature of the Asian economies means this figure cannot adequately communicate the complete and complex story of the region.

In Malaysia, the increase was on the Asian average. "At the higher levels of the labour market, Malaysian companies continue to face challenges finding and retaining quality candidates," explains Halim Ariff, Country Manager, Korn Ferry Malaysia. "But when they do they are willing to pay for strong performance driving higher wages at the top of the market."

Singapore tells a similar story, with the average increase at a slightly below average 12 percent. "The salaries at senior level have risen steadily owing to an increased need for talent that can grow the business and take organisations global," says Kartikey Singh, Associate Client Partner, Korn Ferry Singapore. "However economic and inflationary growth has also led to significant salary increases at lower levels, which had led to a moderation in the pay equity gap. Going forward, as businesses feel the pressure of technological disruption and the effects of the talent crunch on

middle and top level leaders, we may see the gap widen at a faster pace."

The pay gap grew significantly more slowly in Hong Kong, where the high cost of housing, high senior management salaries (compared to other Asian economies) and a low unemployment rate (at less than 3%) leave little room for a significant increase in the pay gap. "The pressure to increase wages at the lower end of the labour markets is high, especially with the high cost of housing," says Alvin Low-Thue, Senior Client Partner, Korn Ferry Hong Kong. "In addition, the local government – one of Hong Kong's largest employers with close to 185,000 civil servants – has consistently raised the pay for low level and mid-level staff at the same rate. This has certainly helped to limit the pay gap growth."

In addition, the local government- one of Hong Kong's largest employers with close to 185,000 civil servants, has consistently raised the pay for low-level and mid-level staff at the same rate.

In India, the pay gap has also increased, though the data indicates that salaries at both the top and lower ends of the labour market are growing, albeit the latter more slowly. "We've seen rapid increases in the size and complexity of large corporations in India over the last decade and this has resulted in a dire need for senior, seasoned professionals who can take up executive responsibilities and manage complexities of a much higher order," says Amer Haleem, Business Manager, Korn Ferry India. Inflation and a rising cost of living are also taking their toll, as companies seek to attract senior executives from regional or international economies, while lower level salaries are determined by the national labour market.

The pay equity gap movement has been less pronounced in Australia and New Zealand than in some other geographies. "When compared to the developing world, wages for junior roles are relatively high in ANZ, and combined with social equity policies and union pressure, wages for these roles have largely kept pace in their percentage increases when compared to more senior staff," says Paul Wright, Senior Client Relationship Manager, Korn Ferry Australia. In the past decade, some sectors, especially resources and Oil & Gas, have seen some years of double digit increases but these increases have generally been across all levels rather than focused on senior roles only.

What Can Organisations Do?

Wherever your organisation operates, you're at the mercy of the market when it comes to pay. But this is a difficult message to communicate to your people. Inequality is seen as bad, ergo, so is the pay gap. However, as we've discussed there are real market forces shaping the pay gap that can't be controlled. What you can control is how you talk about it. We suggest you do three things:

1. **Understand all the factors at play and plan for the future**
   Don't fall into the trap of simply blaming local market forces and conditions: the industry you're in and your operating model are factors too. For example, a retail company will have a bigger pay gap than a professional services firm, because it mainly employs lower-paid people, not well-paid ones. As a result, organisations must develop a strong understanding of the current market competitive position and a strategy for all jobs, and especially the senior managers and highly skilled jobs.

2. **Be open and transparent**
   It may not be a regulatory requirement to disclose the gap between top and bottom pay (yet), but consider how voluntary and appropriate transparency can help build understanding and trust in your organisation. By communicating the reasons for your gap and explaining your pay policies, you can show there's a method behind why you pay some jobs more than others.

3. **Help your people to move up the organisation**
   Market forces control the pay gap in many cases, but they don't have to control the potential of your people to move from the bottom to the top. Create and communicate clear career paths and then help your employees to develop the hard and soft skills they (and your organisation) need. Your employees will feel more engaged, and you'll save money by filling more senior roles from within. Win-win.

This article was published in the Malaysian Institute of Management's e-Management portal in May 2020.

Management Practices in Institutions for Higher Education in Nepal

Dil Prasad Shrestha, PhD

Abstract

This paper analyzes overall management practices in institutions for higher education in Nepal. A mixed-method study design was followed for this study. Principals and campus chiefs, to a greater extent, viewed management functions as being applied than viewed by their senior faculty. There is a difference in the level of management practices between constituent campuses and affiliated colleges. Differences exist in the level of application of management functions among various higher education institutions.

Keywords: Management Practices, Higher Education, Total Management Practices

Introduction

Management is all about improving organizational performance. All organizations need to be managed effectively. Management is the essence of all organized efforts. It involves the functions of planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling. Just as organizations have common characteristics, so does management. The concept of management has been changing rapidly. Strategic management has emerged as one of the most important areas of current management research and has moved beyond the private sector to include all types of organizations.

A few past policy documents of the education sector coherently recognized that disciplined, value-based, productive, and quality human resources are the crux to the overall socio-economic development of Nepal. However, government commitment to financing higher education has been very nominal and colleges/campuses lack enough financial support from the government. Due to the lack of government commitment and clarity, expensive private schools and colleges are being operated in urban areas and resource-poor community schools and colleges are operated in rural areas. The already existing inefficiency in most of the schools and colleges has been further deteriorated resulting in further erosion of quality education because of the lack of management practices among others.

Studies have revealed that management practices were recognized and practiced in the private sector first and gradually began to include all types of organizations. Educational institutions in many countries like the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia, Japan, and so on have evidence of management practices together with the total quality management movement. Studies have also concluded that schools and colleges with formal and effective management systems had a better educational performance. Management practices in schools and colleges ensure that resources are used efficiently as they might be and its techniques help educational managers set a series of strategies to better facilitate their educational institutions.

Research Methodology

The study followed a survey research design and collected data and information from the field. The survey was administered in 147 different representative campuses/colleges situated at different places in Nepal.

Results

Management Practices in the Higher Education Institutions

Each institution participating in this study was first rated for each of the five management functions: planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling. The totals for all these functions were added together to determine an overall level of management practices for the institutions. Table 1 presents the extent of management practices in higher education institutions (Shrestha, 2008).

Table 1: Extent of Management Practices in the Higher Education Institutions

Overall Extent of Management Practices	No	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Below Satisfactory	1	1.0	1.0
Satisfactory	8	8.2	9.3
Good	34	35.1	44.3
Very Good	43	44.3	88.7
Excellent	11	11.3	100.0
Total	97	100.0	

A remarkable number of colleges (44.3 percent) appeared to be very good at practicing management functions. A very good standard is defined as a standard of performance which leaves little to be improved. The colleges make their senior teachers and administrators aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their college. They analyze organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and constraints for planning purposes. They have clearly defined administrative, financial, and academic rules and regulations. Information in the college/campus usually flows from both superior to subordinates and subordinates to superior. When complex coordination problems arise, the college forms committees and taskforces to handle the coordination problem. The colleges regularly analyze their employees' developmental needs and provide training to their staff to cope with the job (on-the-job and/or off-the-job). The colleges have opportunities for advancement, a prestigious or status job, and good working conditions. The college leadership also shows

emotional maturity- the ability to appreciate other's ideas- and initiative- being a self-starter. It uses very little power and control. The colleges monitor their educational activities by managing problems as they occur and after they have arisen. They have data collection and analysis systems for measuring performance deviation.

Of the total colleges that participated in the study, 35.1 percent of the colleges were found good in applying management functions. A good standard of performance is regarded as above the average and meets all requirements. Colleges under this band develop plans collectively and consider stakeholders' views for their development. The college management reasonably delegates required authorities to their senior staff to perform their roles and responsibilities. Information in the college/campus usually flows from subordinates to superiors in the form of suggestions, problems, and feedback. Standardized rules and procedures are used to handle the coordination problem. The colleges regularly analyze their employees' developmental needs and provide training to their staff to cope with the job (on-the-job and/or off-the-job). The colleges have opportunities for advancement, a prestigious or status job, and good working conditions. The college leadership also shows emotional maturity- the ability to appreciate other's ideas- and initiative- being a self-starter. It uses very little power and control. The colleges monitor their educational activities by managing problems as they occur and after they have arisen. They have data collection and analysis systems for measuring performance deviation.

Management Practices by College Types

Data were analyzed whether there was a difference in the extent of management practices between constituent campuses and affiliated colleges. The analysis of data indicated that there was a difference in the extent of management practices between constituent campuses and affiliated colleges. Table 2 provides percent data of the college type-wise level of management practices.

Table 2: Management Practices by College Types

Type of College	The Extent of Management Practices					Total
	Below Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good	Excellent	
	percent	percent	percent	percent	percent	percent
Constituent	5.9	0.0	70.6	23.5	0.0	100.0
Affiliated	0.0	10.0	27.5	48.8	13.8	100.0
Total	1.0	8.2	35.1	44.3	11.3	100.0

A total of 70.6 percent of the constituent campuses were found good followed by 23.5 percent campuses as very good in practicing management functions, while 48.8 percent of the affiliated colleges appeared to have been very good followed by 27.5 percent of the affiliated colleges as good and nearly 14 percent of the affiliated colleges as excellent in practicing management functions. However, none of the constituent campuses appeared to have practiced management functions satisfactorily and excellently. Similarly, none of the affiliated colleges appeared to have practiced management functions at the below satisfactory level. On the whole, 44.3 percent of the constituent campuses and affiliated colleges were found very good followed by 35.1 percent campuses and colleges as good in overall management practices.

The study revealed that there is a difference in the extent of management practices between constituent campuses and affiliated colleges.

Management Practices Assessed by the Principals/Campus Chiefs and Senior Faculty

Overall management practices were analyzed based on the responses provided by the campus chiefs/principals and senior faculty. Table 3 presents the management practices assessed by the principals/campus chiefs and senior faculty.

Table 3: Management Practices Assessed by the Campus Chiefs and Senior Faculty

Management Functions	Designation of Respondent	N	Mean	t-value	P-value
Total Management Practices	Principal	75	63.35		
	Senior faculty	139	55.42	3.79	.000**

The research data show that there was a statistically highly significant difference in the overall management practices assessed by the two types of respondents: campus chiefs/principals and senior faculty. Further, there was a statistically significant difference between the responses of campus chiefs/principals and senior faculty in all five management functions: planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling. Planning, leading, and controlling were found highly significant among others. The study reveals that differences exist between the assessment made by the campus chiefs/principals and senior faculty concerning the overall management practices in their campuses and colleges.

Conclusion

Institutions for higher education have applied management functions at wide-ranging levels. Education managers - principals/campus chiefs - of the institutions for higher education perceive management practices differently. There is a difference in the level of management practices between constituent campuses and affiliated colleges. Differences exist in the extent of application of management functions among various institutions for higher education.

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Nepal
Management Association of Nepal

Leadership as Arts of Organizational Inspiration

Suman Acharya

Introduction

Regeneration and retreatment of the goals and their functional application are the fundamentals of organization. All the members and staffs converge together to produce the outcome of the organization which has been persuading by the organization leaders. Leader performs more than positional hierarchy that promotes mutual understanding. It hinges all on convergence of diversity of the resources with mutual interactions. Benjamin Franklin, US Statesman and Confucius rightly observe the necessity of realization through involvement of the staff in organizational task as 'Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."Yet, participation and motivation to the staff are important tasks of the leader which can be innate in nature. Sometimes, it may be acquired through learning culture together. Leaders must be acute of ingenuity of strategy to maintain their organizational performances. Henry Minzberg regards managerial role as interpersonal, informational and decision role as below.

Types	Roles
Interpersonal Roles	Figurehead
	Leader
	Liaison
Informational Roles	Monitor
	Disseminator
	Spokesperson
Decisional Roles	Entrepreneur
	Disturbance Handler
	Resource Allocator
	Negotiator
	Attribution: Henry Minzberg

Whatever the roles to be performed based on the demand of the time and situation, leaders are visionary to keep it in right tracks and to keep in touch with organizational members gently so that organizational environment may not be stirred up and goals are efficiently realized.

Ingenuity of Leadership

Leaders are brilliantly talented to handle the situation and to make work done rightly. They risk everything cautiously. As the leaders are visionary, there evolution is presciently multiplicity in the line of linkages. Organization keeps close tab of them for the successful accomplishment of their goals. As Max Weber rightly observes leadership from the point of view of authority viz. traditional, charismatic and rational legal authority i.e. traditional authority accepted mores and values of the society with personal bellicose prowess which has been supplanted by the charismatic leaders establishing their own ideology and architectures of the society and finally stabled in rationality. From the time immemorial, competitive rationally for healthy performance has been accepted which has valid argument even in contemporary society.

From the organizational point of view, authoritarian, paternalistic, democratic and lassie faire leadership are solely or in consonance applied across the globe. Even state structure and organizational environment makes influence on it. In contemporary time, transformatory leadership follows novel brilliant approach more than the general transaction of the organization which is reverse than transaction leadership.

In fact, leader should always follow on situation and wary on the ongoing scenario of the organization. Leaders should be vigilant to produce the outcome of every human brain having enrolled in the organization. They should always wary on the lame-duck situation that may hinder the organizational performance. A sense of ownership, participation and involvement must be granted to willing and potential employee having ingenuity. In fact, it may not be expected from toxic leader who abuses the system of leader-follower relations. In other scenario, leaders must lead follower from motivation, inspiration, knowledge and performance. It would be better if exemplary leadership has been implemented.

Transformatory Leadership as the Participatory Method

There is no doubt that two minds are better than one. Lots of knowledge and skills are scattered within the organization which can be utilized by leaders within the organization. Leaders are acute to learn new things and implement through surrounding people. Transformatory leader may easily recognize this scenario within the organization. Such leaders are charismatic and visionary in nature. They are willing to inspire staffs to transcend their self-interest for the organization. They support for appeal to ideals

and values of the staffs, development of problem solving attitude with different angle of thought, granting ownership of the organization through their psychological appeal, motivation and right guidance to the staffs etc.

Exemplary Leadership as New Leadership Method

In contemporary time people desire exemplary leaders. It is not that leader who preaches one and practises another thing. An exemplary leader shows organizational behaviour through own practices and are always forward looking and performer as change agent. They are innovative and ready to improve their knowledge through continued interaction with people and experts. Seeking new opportunity out of the organization, accepting challenges, learning, unlearning and relearning are the features of them. As knowledge is continuously developed across the globe, leader can adapt them if such knowledge suits locally.

It has been depicted in the organization that many people present their pessimistic attitude. If such persons are faced with optimistic leaders, everything can be changed, which makes differences in the productivity and commitments. Similarity, mutual interest may rekindle the hope to implement common purpose of the organization. Inspiration to the shared vision is must with positive and hopeful outlook to be set by the leaders.

An exemplary leader always follows collaborative goals that enable staffs to act accordingly. Active involvement in decision making and problem solving has been expected and personal attribution of the work is rejected. The credit of the organizational performance has been taken collectively which inspires people and staff further. If possible, some of the power of top leader requires delegating to change the psyche of the subordinate for better performance and empowerment. Sharing of updated information and

granting a sense of feeling of autonomy to the staffs may bring positive results.

An exemplary leaders prepares own world view in the form of model of working. Not only the apt in intelligent quotient but also sharp in emotional quotient, an exemplary leader grasps the employee and treat them accordingly.

In recent days, winning heart from other is very difficult tasks. There requires mutuality to encourage other's heart and keep the leader himself encouraged. A sense of pride on the work of the team must be acknowledged. Yet, it shouldn't be personalized. A kind of the team spirit and collective ownership must be depicted. A kind of reward may be granted for well performer and feedback on the working of the organization must be received regularly.

Proactive Formula in Leadership

New leadership seeks greater emphasis on strategic management. Vision, mission, goals are well set and every member including leader has been guided by it. Method of the motivation and inspiration are continuously used. Adaptation of the change and innovation, involvement and participation are applied as much as possible. Granting empowerment for those having less power and creation of the environment for the commitment are implemented.

Absence of Effective Leaders Means Failure of the Organization

The success or failure of the organization depends on efficiency of leaders and managers. If there is no deep understanding and commitment to the organization from managers and staffs, it never gets success. The absence of shared vision and goals leads organization to that extreme degree. Similarly, if the wants and needs of the organization are not realized and if there is no strategic path to grow for all, organization may go into lurch. It is expected to make good alignment between various hierarchies and structures of the organization. Poor alignment between goals and structure may lead organization towards failures. If the style of the organization is acceptable, it may lead organization towards success. The wrong styles on the vision, structures and values may turn organization into chaos. If the leaders and managers have poor skills on organizational performance and if there is low level of trust, such organization obviously goes to failure. The absence of the self integrity also leads organization into lurch. Thus, establishment of self integrity, high level of trust, matured skills, proper style, good alignment, and strategic plan may lead the organization towards greater success, which cannot be formalized in any formula. So, it is an art of motivations and performances.

Conclusion

Leadership is always tending towards forward looking and problem handling strategies. It may different than early trait approach. It is not about physically standing character rather it is about mental ingenuity. It blends leadership traits, behavior and situation handling altogether. Yet, even person having leadership works with or without position. Various types of leadership have been developed over the time. Yet, new leadership has accepted the features of leaders as proactive, emotionally intelligent, positive mindset, motivating, honest, adapted to change, and rational. All leaders are groomed and get learned to develop leadership skills continuously.

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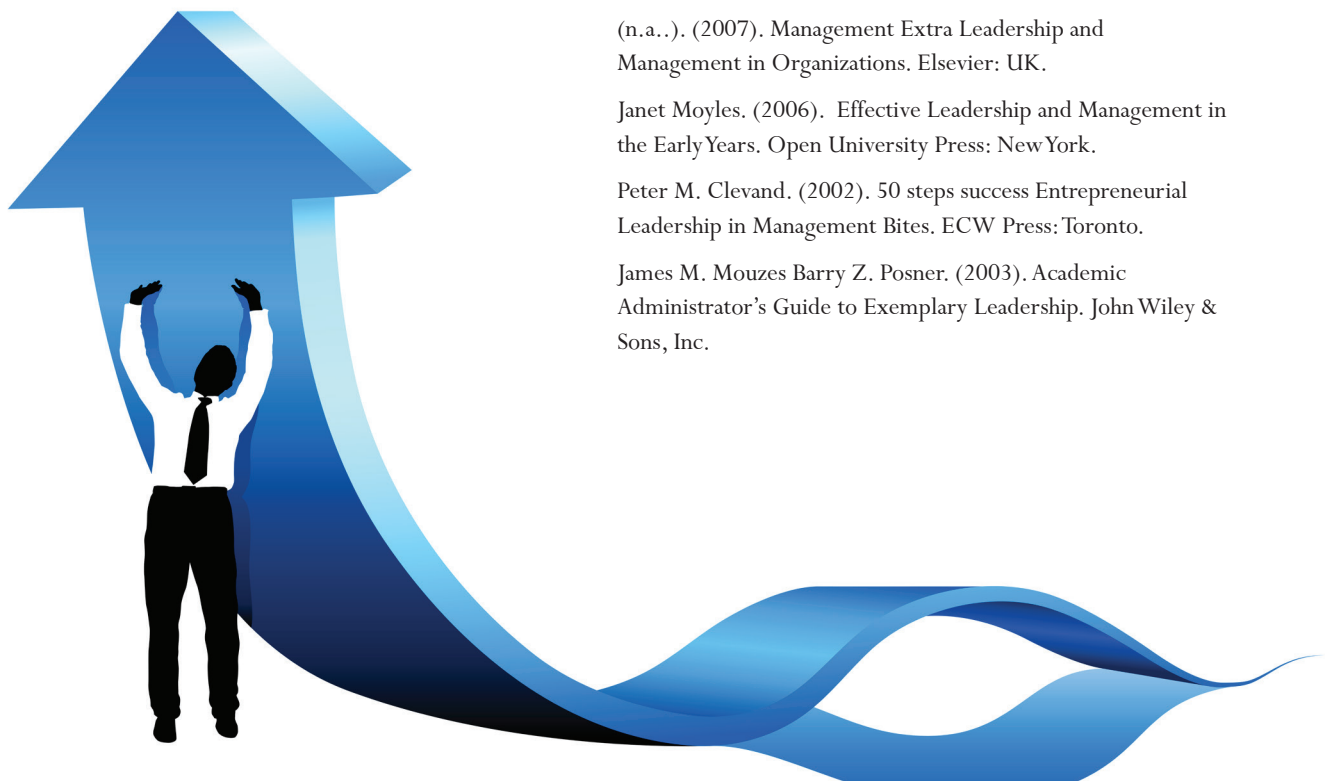
Why Diversity and Inclusion Matters Even More During a Pandemic

Junie del Mundo

As COVID-19 continues to confront companies with a daunting degree of disruption, leaders are left with little choice but to adapt and adjust.

The unique impact of the virus has driven institutions to contend with two kinds of crises. The first and more obvious one is on our economy: the imposition of the two-month-long ECQ and travel bans resulted in a major hit to sectors that drive our economy. Many companies, especially SMEs, have seen a massive drop in sales, resulting in layoffs, furloughs, and even establishment closures.

Second and more importantly, people are experiencing heightened anxiety over their health and well-being, as well as their income security. The shift in working arrangements takes an invisible toll on our people, not only as they adjust to new ways of working, but also as they integrate the previously separate spaces in which they work and live.

New behaviors and expectations emerge from our customers, employees, and all stakeholders. Organizations must acknowledge both the economic and human crises brought about by the pandemic, otherwise, they risk exacerbating the other. Against this backdrop, diversity and inclusion (D&I) shines as a bridge that connects both crises to long-term solutions.

In our 2019 Philippine Trust Index, EON's biennial proprietary research, the top drivers of trust in businesses show one thing in common: human welfare. Filipinos have been placing greater trust in businesses that look after their customers, communities in need, and most importantly, their employees. Moreover, younger audience groups advocate brands who actively communicate D&I efforts. In a study we conducted in 2018 entitled, "Advocates of Empathy: A Study on Filipino Centennials and the Age of Empathy They Usher In," we found that centennials (more commonly known as Gen Z) hold greater affinity for brands who embody values that reflect their ideal worlds.

More recently, we conducted a survey to get a topline look at Filipinos' sentiments on COVID-19. Ninety-three percent of the respondents indicated that it was important to see the help extended by brands and companies during the pandemic, while 42.8% of

the respondents answered that the private sector is not doing enough to help fight COVID-19. It is clear that the responsibility to fight the pandemic and protect the public no longer just falls on the government or health organizations, but also on the private sector. All these studies are sending us the same message: the public is expecting organizations to do right by them, and that expectation grows more apparent in the time of COVID-19.

With companies going into survival mode, senior leaders would likely prioritize initiatives that are essential to the business and unintentionally jettison anything that is considered "nice-to-have" - including their D&I strategies. Yet, as I argued at the recently-conducted MAP Webinar, "D&I Agenda: Does it Matter During the Pandemic?", those who are pulling back on their D&I efforts are at risk of being at a greater disadvantage in the long run. Not only will furthering our D&I agenda demonstrate our accountability to our public, this will also help solve the key challenges we face amid COVID-19 in the following ways.

First, solving our economic challenges entails leveraging diversity at the table. Years of research have repeatedly proven that gender and ethnic diversity, inclusion, and performance go hand-in-hand. At another webinar hosted by Quisumbing Torres on the role of LGBTQI in driving business transformation, I came to the same conclusion as fellow panelists in the fields of financial services and human resources: organizational success can be achieved by bringing D&I inside the boardroom. Organizations can better understand multicultural stakeholders at all levels and give businesses a better grasp at the specific, changing needs of consumers today. Innovation and resilience - two qualities that characterize diverse and inclusive organizations - are essential as companies recover from the crisis.

Second, D&I is essential in crisis communication. Organizations need to understand that different sets of their consumer and employee populations are impacted by COVID-19 in dramatically different ways. For instance, some employees may only encounter minor inconveniences with a work-from-home setup, while others - such as working parents - will need to deal with major adjustments to their schedule as they balance work while taking on remote learning roles for their children. Some customers will expect assurance that their favorite brands are maintaining business as usual, while others are looking for signals that businesses are adapting to the crisis with their customers' safety in mind. The leaders at the front lines of our crisis need to fully understand the nuances of our stakeholders' various needs in order to deliver effective, informative, and genuine messages that can build affinity with our people.

Continuing our D&I efforts is important because, ultimately, long-term success and corporate sustainability entails focusing on a broader set of stakeholders. Businesses who don't address the economic challenges they face will have more to lose than they did four months ago. The people crisis is subsequently a D&I crisis - companies who don't solve these issues won't survive.

Our D&I initiatives need not be costly, or entail additional budgets. Afterall, everyone already has a platform that we can use to activate our purpose and spread messages of solidarity. Below are a few tips for using our platforms for D&I and influencing our publics towards a more inclusive mindset.

1. ***Use digital and social media as avenues for expressing brand solidarity and educating***

our audiences. In the time of social distancing, digital and social media have become the most effective avenues for sharing information with our audiences. Our pages are platforms that allow us to express who we are as personalities and organizations, what we stand for, and the kind of world we are trying to build. These allow us to enlighten, educate, and inspire our audiences to be a part of our movement.

One recent example of this is Nike's "Don't Do It" video, a reversal of its famous "Just Do It" tagline to inspire its audience to act and speak up against racism. Locally, the #HijaAko movement took over Twitter a few weeks ago as social media users condemned the thinking that women's outfits are to blame for sexual assault. This is a signal for organizations to communicate messages of respect, and educate audiences on proper practices.

2. *Communicate D&I within the company by practising empathy and sensitivity to the individual situations of employees*. It is important to look at practices in our own organizations, understand how the pandemic might be affecting our employees' lives, and find ways to act on them. At EON, for instance, we have been sending out regular communications to our employees on ways to cope during the pandemic. These ranged from practical tips to ensure health and safety during COVID, to a mental health webinar with a professional from one of our partner organizations. These efforts stemmed from casual conversations with our teams to understand what they needed at the time.

3. *Lastly, focus on what you do best*. We need to harness our creativity and resilience as Filipinos to come out of this crisis even stronger. This is a pivotal time to go back to your organization's core purpose, key strengths and offerings, and channel those into messages and efforts that show

how you create value, help those in need, or take part in ending the pandemic.

We at EON, for example, have been activating our CSR and advocacy efforts through the EON Foundation. We continue to use our strength in storytelling and relationship-building to make sure everyone's voice is heard. In doing so, we remain honest about our strengths and use them deliberately toward enabling positive change that helps us all.

Now, more than ever, organizations have an important role to play as enablers. Not only must we convey our positions as corporate citizens, we must make our actions and resolutions speak for themselves.

Pride month may be over, but that does not mean our work on D&I is complete for the year. D&I work will never end, because it continues to evolve just as our conditions evolve.

As leaders, we need to keep an open mind, be creative in coming up with solutions that work for the context of our organizations, and have the courage to keep iterating. There is no blueprint for advocating D&I during a pandemic, nor is there a one-size-fits-all solution, so let us create one that works for us.

About Author

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Strategy Directions For The New Normal

Dr. Niceto "Nick" S. Poblador

Businesses today face three sets of forces that are concurrently disrupting the global economy. First are transformative changes brought about by the 4th Industrial Revolution. Second are changes that have been set off by the fundamental shifts taking place the world over well before the onslaught of COVID -19, notably the breakdown of globalization, increasing nationalism and growing political extremism. The third and most recent set of forces are those that have been unleashed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Under the unsettling conditions that prevail in today's business environment, existing business models and old ways of doing business have become largely dated and ineffective. In order to survive and thrive under the newly emerging business conditions, companies must pursue new, novel, and heretofore unproven strategies.

In adapting to the so-called New Normal, businesses may adopt either of two broad strategy options. If they are experiencing only limited threats from both the pandemic and the structural changes that have been taking place beforehand, and can therefore safely weather the storm – or even prosper – they may opt to navigate the crisis, seizing opportunities as they occur and fending off threats as they arise. Or, if they are already in a decline when the pandemic struck, they may choose instead to use the crisis as a catalyst for change.

Alternative survival strategies

The structural changes that are taking place as a result of the pandemic will affect businesses in different sectors of the economy in different ways. Companies must therefore pursue different survival strategies. Depending on the special set of circumstances that they face, companies may choose any of the following strategies.

- Straying – strategies pursued by firms confronted by severe structural challenges arising from the ongoing pandemic, and face ominous threats to their continued existence. Major players that are engaged in the travel and tourism sectors, such as those in the airline and hospitality industries, retail merchandising, and entertainment, fall under this category, along with the small ancillary businesses that form part of their extensive supply networks.

- Consolidating – strategies implemented by firms in the wholesale business, those that engaged in metal production, high tech and textiles, many of which need to redefine their business models in order to survive under the newly emerging business

environment.

- Recovering slowly – strategies that are suitable for firms in non-food retail, professional services and banking.

- Continuing, or staying the course – strategies that are well suited for businesses that are neither doomed to extinction nor destined to prosper as a result of the crisis, such as those in real estate, pharmaceuticals and financial services.

- Seizing – strategies that are appropriate in industries that will profit the most from opportunities arising from the changing global business environment and the ongoing pandemic. Food retail, online food ordering and delivery platforms and those that offer data storage services are among these sectors.

Whatever survival strategy is adopted, it is imperative for firms to reboot their business models in order to enhance their chances of surviving the crisis, if not indeed to thrive in it. These are the essential steps to be taken:
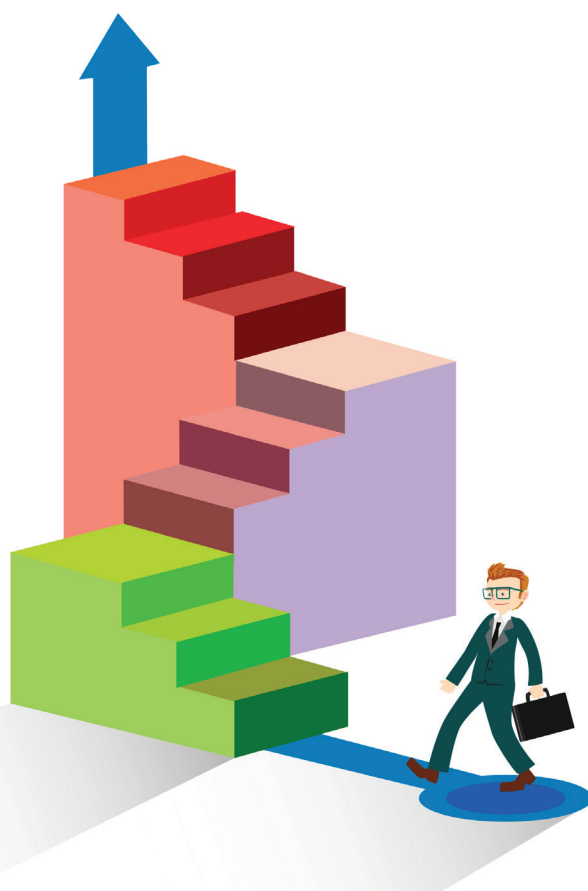
Re-establish financial viability as quickly as possible

In order to immediately recoup as much lost ground as possible, it is essential for business organizations that have been adversely affected by the crisis to respond to the fast-moving situation as quickly as possible. Under the highly dynamic and unpredictable circumstances as those that exist today, timeliness is crucial, and flexibility is key. What is needed is a start-up mindset which favors action – even impulsiveness - over deliberation, and testing – or experimentation - over analysis.

Firm up relationships with stakeholders

Times like these require business organizations to reassess their relationship with their stakeholders on whom they depend for their continued existence – their customers, their workers and the other firms that form part of their extended value networks. It is therefore crucial that they rethink and strengthen their relationships with them. The following steps are necessary:

- Focus on changing customer needs.

Companies need to understand what customers will value under the New Normal, and develop new products and services, or repurpose existing ones to better serve those needs.

- Address the pressing needs of workers whose lives and livelihood are under threat. Companies must reassure their employees as best as they can that their jobs are secure and their incomes are assured. Operational procedures must be reconfigured and job assignments modified to enhance working conditions and lessen anxiety among workers, particularly those who are required to work from home.

- Adjust ecosystems to new realities.

In responding to crisis-related disruptions in supply sources and distribution channels,

adaptability is essential. This means changing the existing ecosystem and considering nontraditional collaborations with nontraditional partners up and down the supply chain.

Rebuild operations

- Accelerate end-to-end value-chain digitalization.

  Even before the coronavirus struck, many companies have already been digitalizing their operations. Accelerating these efforts will enable them to achieve substantial benefits in productivity, flexibility, quality, and end-customer connectivity.

- Embrace the future of work.

  The future of work is defined by the extensive use of automation and technology. This process has been going for years since the onset of large-scale digitalization in the early Nineties, and COVID-19 has hastened its pace. Employees at all levels of management and operation and across all functions are learning to work remotely using digital communication tools. Production operations even go further with the continued decline in manual and repetitive tasks and a rise in the need for analytical and technical support. This shift calls for sizeable investment in workforce re-training aimed at developing new skills and work attitudes, primarily those that are relevant to the handling of large volumes of information using advanced digital tools.

Rethink the organization

The massive structural transformation that is taking place in the world of business as a result of the pandemic calls for major shifts in the operating models of business organizations which compel them to work in new and unaccustomed ways. Strategic goals have to be re-thought, managerial roles re-configured, and operational procedures re-invented. In a world characterized by rapid change, volatility and unpredictability, quick, decisive moves should replace the sluggish decision-making processes that have long been the bane of corporate bureaucracies.

(This article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines or the MAP.)

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