PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In this latest issue, we explore a diverse range of topics, including the hot topic of Artificial Intelligence and its implications.

In the article "*Inclusive and Accessible Workplaces – What Do Leaders Need to Get Right?*", the author shares the inspiring story of Dean Barton-Smith AM FIML. As a distinguished business leader and disability advocate, Barton-Smith illustrates that true leadership involves creating inclusive and accessible workplaces from the outset, not as an afterthought. He emphasizes that such policies must be championed from the top to foster employee loyalty.

Roxanne Calder, founder of one of Sydney's leading recruitment agencies, presents "*The Key Skills AI Can't Replace*." She argues that while AI significantly improves work efficiency and productivity, the unique talents and skills inherent to humans remain irreplaceable. Continuous education, upskilling, and the deliberate development of these abilities are crucial for leveraging our human potential.

In "*Three Management Lessons I Learned from My Hairdresser*", seasoned management consultant Brian Tang highlights the necessity of providing motivational factors alongside hygiene factors. He stresses the importance of understanding what truly motivates staff and fostering open communication between leaders and their teams.

Muniinder K Anand in "*The Path to Intentional Progress*" discusses Gallup research indicating that individuals are "3.6 times more likely to be highly motivated in their tasks when they receive daily feedback". He illustrates how constructive feedback is vital for both personal and organizational growth.

In "*Be Careful What You Wish For (Thoughts on AI)*", Joey Bermudez raises important concerns about the potential for AI to not only replace human skills but also to overshadow the very creators of this technology. In his thought-provoking article, Mr Anand seeks to dispel prevalent misconceptions surrounding AI. This theme is further explored in Dr Abhishek Narain Singh's article, "*The Age of 'Gen AI'*", which emphasizes the urgent need to understand the functions and benefits of AI, particularly when the technology is employed responsibly and with positive intent.

We hope you find this issue's array of topics enriching and thought-provoking.

Happy reading!

SK Cheong

President
Asian Association of
Management Organisations

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Inclusive and Accessible Workplaces – What do Leaders Need to Get Right?

by Institute of Managers and Leaders Australia and New Zealand

Dean Barton-Smith AM FIML has represented Australia on the global sporting stage. He is a business leader and a disability advocate. He is also profoundly deaf, diagnosed at the age of two.

While his deafness has presented many challenges along his path, Dean has amassed quite the impressive collection of achievements in his life, and he continues to do so.

With a wealth of experience behind him, Dean is incredibly qualified to provide insight on what leaders need to know about creating inclusive and accessible workplaces. He shares his story and lessons that leaders can take to implement in their own workplaces.

Dean's path to the Olympics

To understand Dean's advocacy and insights, it's important to understand the path his life has followed.

Dean grew up at a time of mainstream schooling integration. He was left to his own devices in the classroom,

relying on his eyes to follow the teacher's lips. As soon as the teacher turned their back, it was like pushing the mute button on the TV.

"I didn't realise until I wrote my autobiography that it was the environment I was learning in that was the cause of my lacklustre school results," Dean recalls.

Dean's saving grace during his school years was sport.

"If you lose one of your senses, like your hearing, the other senses increase," he explains.

"For me it was my peripheral vision, which is excellent when you're into athletics."

When he was 7 years old, Dean was first captivated by the Olympics. Being an Olympian became a lifelong dream that Dean eventually realised when he represented Australia in Decathlon at the 1992 Barcelona Summer Olympics. Not to be confused with the Paralympic Games, he was the first deaf person in the world to achieve such a unique feat.

"When I got out on the track

and felt the vibration coming from the cheering crowd, it took me back to that feeling I had when I was 7 and first saw the Olympics on TV," he says. "I may not have won a medal but I did win my dream and that's what was important."

A career in advocacy

At the 1994 Commonwealth Games, despite a false start in the 110m hurdles, Dean kept running, unaware that the race had stopped. This experience led him to advocacy to ensure a level playing field for all athletes. Ultimately, this advocacy expanded beyond sport.

At every stage in his career, Dean has advocated for change for people with disabilities. In doing so, he has worked in a diverse range of organisations. Through his experience, he has also helped to shape his workplaces – and the products and services they offer – to be more inclusive and accessible. With a current population of over 4.5 million who have a disability in Australia, that's a sizable market that is often 'untapped'.
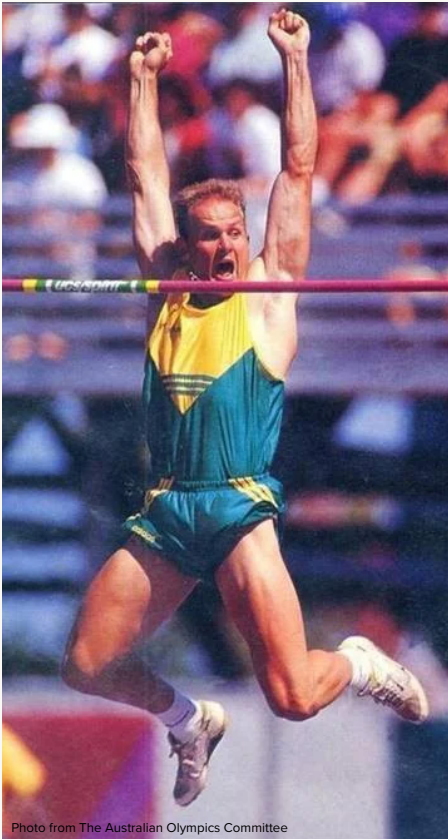
Photo from The Australian Olympics Committee

Following his athletic career, Dean worked for the Australian Communication Exchange as an Executive Officer, delivering the National Relay Service. At the time, it was a groundbreaking service that allowed people who were deaf or hard of hearing or have a speech impediment to communicate over the phone.

"During my nine years working there, I saw the impact of accessibility, inclusion and universal design," he explains.

In the years since, Dean has worked in community and disability organisations and also in non-disability organisations where he has had the power to enact positive change. He has worked in health and transport organisations in CEO, senior management and non-executive/chairperson roles. He was involved in National Disability Insurance Scheme lobbying, worked to introduce accessible websites and practices, established national guidelines for emergency management across Australia and advocated for the 20% of the population living with a disability.

Accessibility from day one

Dean argues that all too often, inclusivity and accessibility are considered as an afterthought. When you take this approach, he says, "it makes things more complex and difficult."

That complexity and difficulty applies to the organisations attempting to retrofit accessibility solutions but also to the individuals who need those solutions most. The implications when organisations get it right? It's often a win for everyone, opening opportunities perhaps never considered.

"In keynote speeches, I regularly reference an example from 1998," Dean explains. "A group of us found that there was a way for us to text each other but at that time you could only send SMS messages to people who were on the same telco carrier. We lobbied the telcos to introduce interoperability so we had the power to text anyone. That change benefited everyone and was no doubt very profitable for the telcos!"

A top-down approach

For workplaces and organisations to be truly inclusive and accessible, Dean advocates for a top-down approach. For businesses to succeed, it's essential for the board and senior management to set the culture and policy from the very top. He says this is key to overcoming the fear of the unknown and driving inclusivity and accessibility through every corner of an organisation.

"The question is, are you really making your workplace accessible for all or just for some," he asks. "Leaders shouldn't be afraid to ask the hard questions. Are we inadvertently excluding anyone? Are we doing everything we can to accommodate different groups of people?"

Importantly, any action should not just be a tokenistic gesture to tick a box.

"Often when organisations advertise a role, they'll have a line about encouraging people with diverse backgrounds to apply," says Dean. "But I think there's still a stigma attached to disability and we have a long way to go."

Dean encourages leaders to start with proactive communication and asking employees what their needs are.

"Never assume," he adds. "You send a really strong message when you proactively ask employees or potential employees about their disability needs. The question of 'how can we get the best out of you and what support do you need?' shows that you're focusing on their strengths. It's also a way to build brand loyalty, very quickly."

Evolutionary leadership

Dean is a proponent of evolutionary leadership, an approach he himself prescribes to as a leader. He explains that this leadership style is adaptive, able to respond quickly to a rapidly changing world.

It's also evolutionary leaders who Dean believes are best positioned to create more inclusive and accessible workplaces.

"Evolutionary leaders are thinking about what could be different tomorrow," explains Dean. "They have their finger on the pulse of what's happening and they're always ahead of the game.

"I encourage all leaders to take the blinkers off, and be bold and brave to ask the really hard questions. I think you'll find a lot of unexpected benefits when you do."

The Key Skills AI Can't Replace

by **ROXANNE CALDER**
Institute of Managers and Leaders Australia and New Zealand

Will AI replace our jobs? Deep down, I think we all carry some of this concern. A recent survey in the States shows that 60% of employees who use AI regularly worry about its impact on their jobs. With 72% of the respondents recognising that automation significantly increases productivity, we also know it to be true.

My pragmatic workplace approach says this is a good thing. Our global growth rate, stripped of cyclical ups and downs, has slowed steadily since the 2008-2009 global financial crisis. For Australia, our productivity rate is similar and is of concern. Add to this our worldwide skills shortage, which is still the case despite any increases in unemployment rates, and AI could be our saviour. But we still need you!

These are the key skills AI can't replace.

Communication and connection.

I'll confess I've tried to make friends with ChatGPT. We chatted, exchanged messages, developed a rapport, and even shared a joke, I thought. So, like in any relationship building, naturally, I asked for their name. An immediate shutdown, 'you can call me ChatGPT'. Nothing more, oh, except 'goodnight and I look forward to helping you next time'.

Photo from Pexels

I was left 'deflated'. Not so when we deal with humans. We, humans, have the incredible ability to connect and make others feel magical, fabulous, valued, appreciated, etc. We do this through our words, tone, body language, expression, effort and more. AI will never be able to replicate the fluidity of effective communication, especially for a deeper connection. Managers take note; this is a skill to harness and accelerate.

Emotional intelligence.

ChatGPT had no idea the impact of its rebuff. Great managers and leaders understand this. In a work environment, a similar brush-off has serious ramifications on employee engagement, productivity, retention, and so on. Emotional intelligence is a read on the environment. It requires feeling, empathy, compassion, and the appropriate use of boundaries. Managers with highly attuned emotional intelligence in the workplace can make the working environment psychologically safe.

Photo from Freepik

Original thinking.

Have you ever pondered a

problem, a major issue, and struggled with it supremely, to the extent of sleepless nights? Then miraculously, in the shower, walking the dog, or through some other odd trigger, the solution comes to you. But it's not an ordinary reprise of a previously forgotten and tried solution, this is an innovation, possibly groundbreaking for your team or business.

AI can imitate creative thinking and problem-solving, but at best, it presents a variant of past solutions. Original thinking, problem-solving, and innovation often require losing yourself, exploring the unknown and delving into our human imagination. AI requires the known, the tried and the tested. For leaders, original thinking is a must in today's fast-moving business world.

Photo from Freepik

Adaptability.

AI is excellent for structured tasks. But throw a curve ball into the mix, and it can falter. Instead, ask its human colleague. Humans reign supreme in being adaptable. To start with, just look at how we enter the world, from the placenta and womb to our first breath. And we just get better from there. Consider the

Photo from Unsplash

pandemic. For many, it is regarded as the most devastating experience of our lifetime. Yet, we got through it.

Put us on the spot, spur of the moment with a curly challenge and we pivot to connect the dots and find a solution. We may go off-piste but that's what explorers and pioneers do. Discoveries don't occur without being adaptable. Sticking to the straight and narrow delivers you the same outcome.

We have been here before, pre-war, post-war and all the industrial revolutions. Granted, with the pace of technology, this, our 5th industrial revolution, which interestingly is the integration between people and technology, does feel a little different. AI as we know it today is unchartered territory. In time, we will see the emerging benefits and risks more clearly. To safeguard our human skills, we should all stay acutely attuned to the progress and upcoming developments of AI and technology in general.

One major advantage, albeit a current business detriment, is our talent and skills deficit. It continues to provide ample opportunity to be ahead of the AI skills curve. Your job will change. That is a given. Assess the potential impact on your job

and the timing, educate yourself, upskill, and most importantly, leverage your precious and beautiful human skills. Don't take them for granted. Use them regularly and consistently, developing and improving upon them for better and higher performance.

Roxanne Calder
Founding and Managing Director
EST10

Roxanne Calder, author of 'Employable – 7 Attributes to Assuring Your Working Future' (Major Street $29.95), is the founder and managing director of EST10 – one of Sydney's most successful recruitment agencies. For more information on how Roxanne can assist with your recruitment needs, visit www.est10.com.au

Looking for ways that you can upskill your team cost effectively and quickly? Consider our suite of short courses. We can help you elevate your teams expertise in specific areas like problem solving and decision making, critical conversations at work, and emotional intelligence in the workplace. All considered the human skills needed in the modern workplace and discussed in this article as the skills that AI can't replace.

The Age of 'Gen AI'

Generative AI represents a paradigm shift in how businesses innovate, create, and interact with customers.

by **Dr. ABHISHEK NARAIN SINGH**
All Indian Management Association

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a cornerstone of modern business strategies, revolutionizing industries with its ability to analyse data, automate processes, and make predictions. One of the most promising advancements within AI is Generative AI (GenAI), which goes beyond conventional AI capabilities by generating new content, designs, or solutions. GenAI encompasses a subset of AI techniques focused on generating new content, images, text, synthetic data, or even entire scenarios. The debate around the capabilities of GenAI got heated with the launch of an early demo of ChatGPT by OpenAI on November 30, 2022. Unlike traditional AI models that rely on vast datasets or learning and inference, Generative AI models, such as Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) or Variational Autoencoders (VAEs), learn to create new data instances by understanding the underlying patterns and structures in the input data. This capability opens up a myriad of possibilities for businesses seeking innovation and creativity in their operations. GenAI uses advanced machine learning techniques to generate new and original content. According to Bloomberg Intelligence, the GenAI market was worth USD 40 billion, which is expected to grow to USD 1.3 trillion by 2032.

Concerns have been raised about job losses, privacy, and data security issues, biases and data-driven discriminations, ethical implications, and regulatory challenges associated with GenAI usage. Like any other paradigm shift in technology, organisations are also weighing the pros and cons of entering the GenAI game. Following are some areas where GenAI can provide business value to organisations:

• **Creative content generation:** GenAI can revolutionise content creation in industries such as marketing, advertising, and entertainment. By analysing existing content and user preferences, GenAI can generate personalised advertisements, logos, artwork, compose music, etc. This not only saves time and resources but also enhances customer engagement by delivering highly relevant and captivating content.

• **Product design and development:** In sectors like fashion, automotive, or consumer electronics, GenAI facilitates rapid prototyping and product customisation.
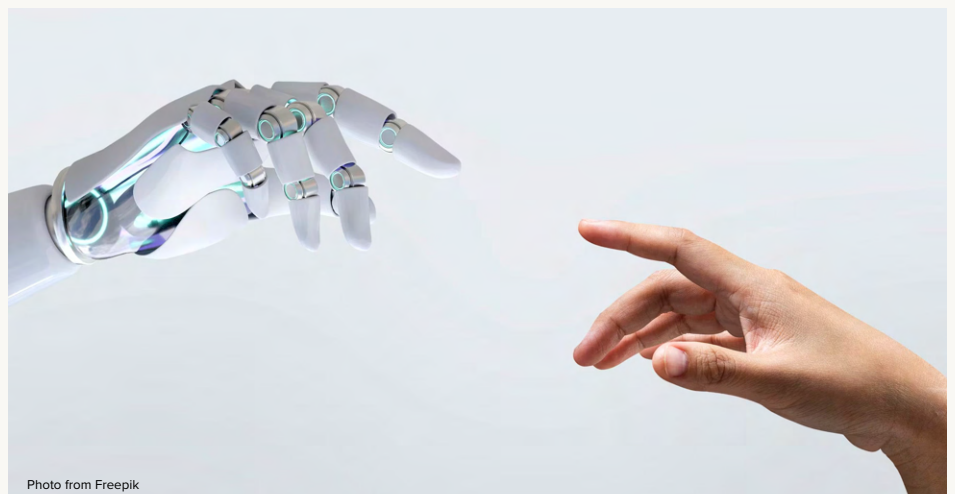

Photo from Freepik

Designers can use Generative AI algorithms to explore a vast design space, generating innovative product concepts based on user input or market trends. Additionally, GenAI enables the optimisation of product features by simulating real-world scenarios and predicting performance outcomes, leading to more robust and user-centric designs.

• Virtual try-on and simulation: E-commerce platforms are leveraging GenAI to enhance the virtual shopping experience through virtual try-on solutions. By generating realistic renderings of products on digital avatars or within the user's environment, customers can visualize how clothing, accessories, or furniture items would look in real life before making a purchase. Moreover, GenAI enables simulation-based training for complex tasks such as surgery, flight simulation, or disaster response, providing a safe and cost-effective way to train professionals in high-risk environments.

Photo from Unsplash

• Natural language processing (NLP) and conversational AI: GenAI has significant implications for NLP applications, including language translation, sentiment analysis, and chatbots. By generating human-like responses and understanding context, conversational AI powered by Generative models can provide more engaging and personalised interactions with customers. Moreover, in content creation and storytelling, GenAI can assist writers by generating plot outlines, dialogue, or even entire narratives based on specific themes or genres.

• Healthcare and drug discovery: In the healthcare industry, GenAI holds immense potential for drug discovery, medical imaging, and personalised medicine. Generative models can analyse vast amounts of biological data to identify potential drug candidates, simulate molecular structures, or predict drug interactions. Additionally, in medical imaging, GenAI enhances diagnostic accuracy by generating high-resolution images from low-quality scans, aiding clinicians in early detection and treatment planning.

• Design automation and optimisation: GenAI can automate and optime design processes across diverse industries, including architecture, urban planning, and engineering. By analysing parameters such as structural integrity, energy efficiency, and aesthetic preferences, Generative models can generate design alternatives that meet specific criteria and constraints. This accelerates the design iteration process, reduces costs, and enables the creation of innovative and sustainable solutions.

• Personalised learning and education: In the field of education, GenAI can personalise learning
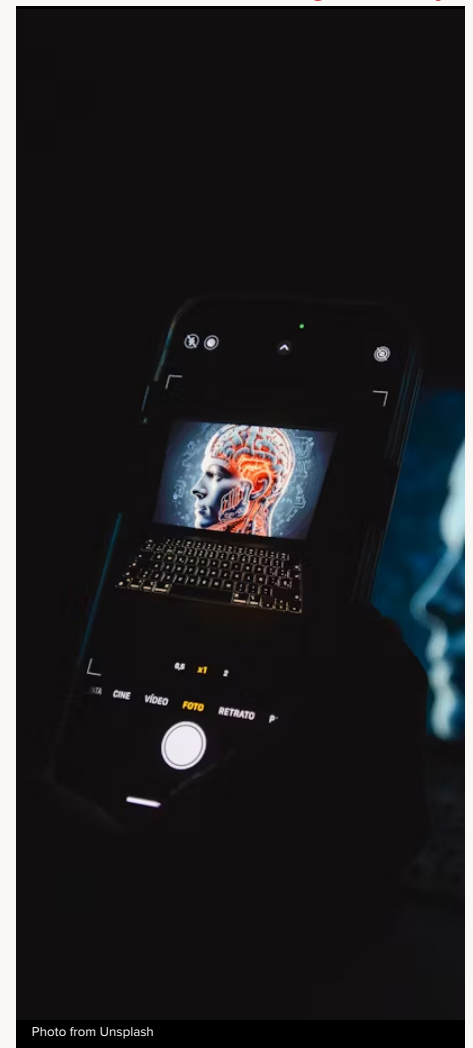

Photo from Unsplash

experiences by generating customised educational content, adaptive assessments, and interactive simulations. By analysing students' learning styles, preferences, and performance data, Generative models can create tailored lesson plans, instructional materials, and tutoring systems that cater to individual needs. This promotes student engagement, enhances knowledge retention, and fosters lifelong learning.

• Supply chain resilience and risk management: In an increasingly interconnected and volatile global economy, GenAI helps organisations build resilient supply chains and mitigate supply chain risks. By analysing historical data, market trends, and external factors such as natural disasters or geopolitical events, Generative models can generate predictive models for demand forecasting, inventory optimisation, and supplier selection. This enables

Photo from Pexels

companies to streamline operations, reduce costs, and respond effectively to disruptions, ensuring business continuity and customer satisfaction.

• Human resources and talent management: GenAI transforms HR processes by automating recruitment, talent acquisition, and workforce management tasks. By analysing job descriptions, resumes, and candidate profiles, Generative models can match candidates to job roles, assess skills and competencies, and conduct virtual interviews or assessments. Moreover, GenAI facilitates employee engagement and retention through personalised career development plans, feedback mechanisms, and performance incentives, leading to a more productive and motivated workforce.

According to a poll conducted by Gartner in September 2023 consisting of 1,419 business executives and leaders, 10 per cent of respondents said they had implemented generative AI solutions in production, while 45 per cent said they are still in the pilot stage of the technology. The majority of the executives believe that the GenAI provides more benefits than the risks it poses. If we look at various business functions, 47 per cent of investments are going to customer-facing functions like sales, marketing, and customer service, whereas 30 per cent of investment is into IT-related functions like software development, coding, designing, testing, and other operations. Other key functions seeing GenAI investments include HR and legal services.

Let us take a look at some of the applications of GenAI across industries:
   • Retail and e-commerce: Personalised recommendations, virtual try-on, and dynamic pricing.
   • Media, gaming, and entertainment: Procedural content generation, character design, and immersive storytelling.
   • Finance and trading: Risk assessment, fraud detection, and algorithmic trading.
   • Manufacturing and supply chain: Predictive maintenance, demand forecasting, and supply chain optimisation.
   • Agriculture and environmental monitoring: Crop optimisation, climate modeling, and ecosystem analysis.

Generative AI represents a paradigm shift in how businesses innovate, create, and interact with customers. It offers a wide range of business opportunities and applications across various sectors, from design automation and personalised learning to cybersecurity and supply chain management. By harnessing the power of GenAI, organisations can drive innovation, optimise operations, and create value in an increasingly competitive and dynamic business landscape. By utilising the strength of Generative models, businesses can unlock new opportunities for growth, differentiation, and efficiency across various domains. However, it is essential to address ethical considerations and regulatory challenges associated with GenAI adoption to ensure the responsible and sustainable use of AI technologies for society's benefit. Furthermore, with great potential comes ethical considerations regarding data privacy, bias mitigation, and the responsible use of AI technologies. As businesses continue to embrace GenAI, it is imperative to adopt a holistic approach that balances innovation with ethical and societal values, ensuring a sustainable and inclusive future for AIdriven business ecosystems. A recent study conducted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) suggests that the application of GenAI will impact clerical jobs and automating functions more in highincome countries compared to low-income countries. The research suggests that the new technology is more likely to complement the job rather than take it away from people, and that's a good news.

Dr. Abhishek Narain Singh

Assistant Professor (Business Analytics & IT) IMT Nagpur

The Path to Intentional Progress

Constructive feedback is important as it points out results of some our actions that may otherwise remain hidden, and in the process, makes us realise our weaknesses.

by **MUNIINDER K ANAND**
All Indian Management Association

When we are deemed responsible for Accomplishing a mission, we are equipped with the needed skill set, but when navigating through fresh opportunities, projects, assignments, and engagements, you uncover the hidden potential and strengths within yourself. With each initiative, you tackle new challenges that stand before the stepping stone of your professional growth.

However, not all aspects of our strengths become evident to us; that's where feedback comes in, as it visibilises the intricacies that may otherwise remain hidden and in the process of doing so, our weaknesses too come to the forefront.

It serves as a much-needed push for your people, as their efforts are recognised and appreciated while also ensuring they know about where they went wrong. People willingly show up when their work is acknowledged through ongoing evaluation at work, as they consistently contribute and strive to perform at their best.

Research by Gallup suggests

that people are 3.6 times more inclined to be highly motivated to excel in their tasks when they receive daily feedback, as opposed to feedback provided on an annual basis. While the emphasis on the importance of effective communication is brought up now and then, we tend to not validate the priceless asset that effective feedback can be in the growth and development of the organisation and its people.

It invites engagement through conversation, highlights the key issues, and improves talent development at work. Although the traditional response methods followed a rigid format as the process was often delayed, the dynamic nature of the modern workplace necessitates adjustments to its structure.

In fact, in recent years, varied ways of adapting to the changes have evolved—from complete elimination to other modifications. At the Center for Creative Leadership we promote feedback as a GIFT and call it the SBI feedback model.

The three key components of

the model include: understanding and defining the situation, detailing the specific behaviours observed, and elucidating the impact of the individual's actions. The framework offers flexibility in providing insightful, positive, or negative assistance, allowing both you and your people to progress toward a shared goal.

1. Situation
Offering guidance certainly benefits your team, but it also has the potential to introduce ambiguity into the work and create a transparent barrier that hinders communication. Without clear details, information with no context, including the omission of dates and times during feedback, can result in misunderstandings.

Recording and communicating even the details that seem minuscule, like a missed calendar invite for a meeting, proves to be beneficial to curb and eventually eliminate that from happening, as it might come in handy when dealing with situations of uncertainty.

2. Behaviour
Often, our unconscious bias, such as initial interaction,

gender bias, ageism, etc., stops us from looking at situations and people from an objective perspective. This limits our ability to see people for who they are, as the actuality of situations starts to get influenced by our perceptions and set beliefs.

When we stick to factual information, discuss observable behaviour, and refrain from including personal opinions or judgments, we leave room for more open dialogue among our team members.

3. Impact
Every behaviour has an impact on the individual in question or the team around them. Such outcomes can be varied, especially when the team is diverse. Along with that, with obscure and missed details comes indecisiveness in receiving or giving feedback. It lacks personalisation when you need to communicate details.

When you emphasise whether the impact was positive or negative, you employ a more nuanced approach to managing the employees, as it helps them grow and develop their skills in the right direction.

While models like this one make a substantial contribution to employee growth, it is crucial to explore additional factors and conditions that enhance this development.

Other approaches that contribute to employee's development
Effective mentoring programs and regular performance assessment sessions can provide personalised guidance and support for individual development. Additionally, it offers relevant training opportunities, workshops, and access to educational resources that empower people to acquire knowledge, contributing to their overall professional growth.

When giving feedback, I try to ensure that I compassionately convey my views, maintaining a balance that upholds both the quality and effectiveness of the work without compromise. It also goes beyond communicating the right and wrongs of their performance, as when provided with resources and tools, productivity levels significantly increase.

"It's important to have people in our lives who will give us honest, constructive feedback. This is the only way we can grow and become better."
- Bill Gates, Former CEO of Microsoft

Your people turn to you for guidance; it is crucial to create a workspace characterized by psychological safety. This, in turn, leads to clearer and more effective communication, as employees feel less hesitant to express their opinions and views. But how can we make sure that the reception of feedback improves so an honest conversation can take place?

1. Specificity in communication:
First and foremost is expressing the anticipated outcomes or expectations of the individual at the receiving end so mutual trust can be built. In addition to adhering to established Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), a provision for qualitative feedback should also be made available in the organization. Moreover, it's essential to be attentive to non-verbal cues, as an employee might face challenges in communication owing to hierarchical disparities.

2. Going beyond coaching: It is
imperative that organisations provide coaching and mentoring initiatives to cultivate the growth and development of their employees but that's just the beginning. When we attempt to create optimal learning conditions that are accessible to people working either remotely or on-site we make ongoing and dedicated efforts that significantly contribute to the overall enhancement of both personal and professional capabilities. This holistic approach ensures an atmosphere for continuous growth within the organisation.

3. Defining development dynamics: When working
towards collective growth, the organization's goals must align with those of its employees; a shared purpose cultivates a sense of belonging, fosters team harmony, and creates an environment conducive to seamless collaboration, ultimately facilitating the attainment of common objectives.

The gap between the collective efforts and goals of the organisation can only be bridged by optimal use of feedback, as it promotes surroundings geared towards sustained growth. So, ensuring that all that is said translates into actionable steps leads us to move toward intentional progress.

Muniinder K Anand
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Three Management Lessons I Learned from My Hairdresser

by **BRIAN TANG**
Macau Management Association

Consider the following scenarios at work:

Several weeks ago, I visited my hairdresser for a haircut. As I entered the shop, I saw my hairdresser went out of the door. I walked in. The shop was empty. There was not a single person in there. Couple minutes later my hairdresser came back. He apologized and started cutting my hair. I started the conversation by asking what happened. Who knows this conversation ended up turning into a management lesson!

The hairdresser told me there were three hairdressers in total. Two of them were working full time (himself included), and one working on "free shift" – he can come at flexible time. On the day of my visit one of the full times was on leave, and the "free shift" didn't show up for work. In other words, he was working alone on that day. The reason he went out as I came in was that he had to visit the café nearby and ordered food delivery. He didn't even have a lunch break. When the food arrived, he had to wait until there was no customer before he could eat.

I was stunned. Was that the best decision to leave the shop empty to order food? What else could he have done? That's another story. I want to focus on the management lesson in this article. There were three lessons I picked up during my conversation with the hairdresser and my reflection after that.

1. Motivation

It was a special day when I visited my hairdresser. All qualified Macau ID card holders received a MOP 10,000 cash through the annual "Wealth Partaking Scheme" introduced by Macau government since 2008. The day I had my hair cut was the day of money being deposited to our bank accounts. The reason why the "free shift" hairdresser didn't show up for work on that day, my hairdresser suspected, had to do with the windfall. "He must have gone to the casino once money was in his hand.", said my hairdresser. I didn't know his colleague so I didn't comment on his comment, but his statement got me thinking – what motivates local Macau people to work hard? This is a question I sometimes discussed

and even debated with my associates and friends.

Those who are familiar with Macau economy know that job security for Macau locals is relatively high, even during and post COVID eras. It's hard to fire or let go a Macau local without significant proof and repeated incidents of misconduct or underperformance. The annual "Wealth Partaking Scheme" contributed to another layer of privilege of being a Macau local. While the issues of "over job security" and the wealth sharing scheme may warrant additional research and analysis, it's no doubt that these factors do not promote people's motivation to work hard. Look no further, people in Hong Kong do not enjoy the same level of job security and certainly don't get a 5-figures of cash from the government every year. Their competitiveness and motivation to work hard are significantly more prominent than the Macau counterpart.

Going back to my hairdresser story – what could we do to increase our staff's motivation given the circumstances of job security and free money? The

"Two-Factors" theory by Frederick Herzberg may shed some light. The theory says that there are two groups of factors that contribute to job satisfaction and motivation. The first group of factors is called "Hygiene Factors", which include salary, benefits, job security – factors that more extrinsically rewarding. The second group of factors are called "Motivational Factors", which include achievement, recognition, status, development and growth – factors that are intrinsically rewarding. Herzberg told us that Hygiene Factors are foundational – staff will be unsatisfied if the company doesn't provide enough Hygiene Factors. However, simply providing Hygiene Factors won't motivate people – the best it can do is to make staff not unsatisfied. To truly motivate people, companies must provide enough Motivational Factors on top of Hygiene Factors.

In the situation of Macau, there are no lacking of Hygiene Factors – high level of job security, well paid package, annual free cash. Companies must provide enough Motivational Factors if they want to unleash staff's potentials. You may wonder, how much of achievement and recognition can we do in a tiny hair salon? That will depend on the staff's personal aspiration. For instance, if the staff is 2 years away from retirement, talking about advancement won't make much sense. If the staff has a mortgage to pay and two young kids at home, then opportunities and growth will motivate him. The prerequisite of staff motivation is interpersonal relationship between the manager and the staff. Do you know what motivates your staff? How's your relationship with him? Will he open up when you want to have that conversation with him?
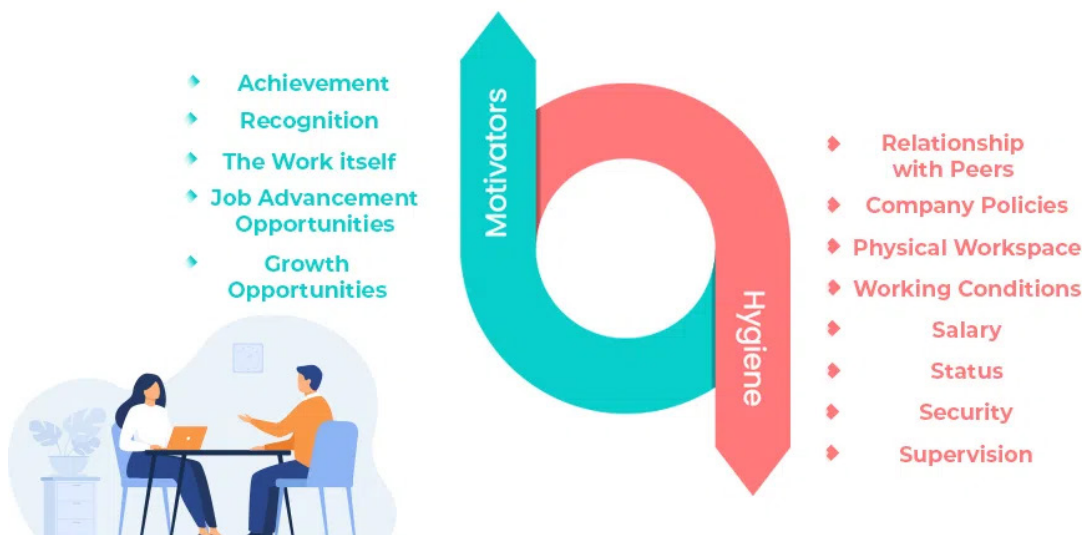
2. Management by walking around

When I learned that my hairdresser was working alone on that day, and he didn't even have a proper lunch break, I murmured to myself, "How could that happen?", "Why would the manager allow that to happen?" As it turned out, the "manager" may not even know what happened. According to my hairdresser, the boss, i.e., the manager, rarely came to the salon. He created a monthly roster – that's basically it in terms of managing the operation. "He never came, he didn't care. It was discouraging.", said my hairdresser.

In management, there's a concept called "Management by walking (wandering) around". Managers "wander" around the workplace in an unstructured and unplanned manner so that he can observe the true side of the operations and interact with staff real time. This concept originated from the manufacturing industry but was widely advocated in many other companies and industries. The core benefit of walking around comes from the randomness. The unrehearsed visit allows management to see what the customer sees. Experienced managers and leaders can take the opportunity to smell the strengths and areas of improvement in the operations. Consider a leader of a hospitality resort in Macau who visits the hotel front desk during the Golden Week, or the head of the casino who visits his casino floor at 3:00 in the morning. They will likely see something they don't normally see, speak to colleagues who usually work at overnight shift, and get to understand their business at a deeper level.

On the other hand, the unplanned visit has another symbolic meaning to the staff. Consider the US President who

Herzberg Theory of Motivation

- Achievement
- Recognition
- The Work itself
- Job Advancement Opportunities
- Growth Opportunities

Motivators

Hygiene

- Relationship with Peers
- Company Policies
- Physical Workspace
- Working Conditions
- Salary
- Status
- Security
- Supervision

Photo from Geeks for Geeks

visited his army unplanned. The President didn't visit to spot the area of improvements – he visited to see his troops and boosted their morale. When the staff sees the big boss, CEO or the President, coming to visit and talk to them, they feel a sense of importance and recognition, which boosts their morale.

Going back to my hairdresser. His manager is far from "management by walking around", because he simply didn't visit (or walk around) at all. And that is different than delegation. Delegation is a practice in which the delegator (usually the manager) delegates a task to the delegate. It is a deliberate behavior – there's communication and agreement between both parties. However, my hairdresser's manager simply took the "hands-free" approach.

3. Listen to the staff

My hairdresser didn't know I am a management consultant, so he didn't know he was talking to someone who knows much more than he did on the subject. I didn't talk much during the conversation. I acknowledged his opinion from time to time, but I didn't provide my own. Perhaps he felt heard, he kept talking without me asking further questions. That validated my understanding of the power of listening – make people feel heard, and they will talk more. However, the reality is that most of us don't care what people are saying – we are just waiting for our turn to speak.

He told me that if the boss knows "what to do", the salon business could improve. I asked what he meant by "what to do", he cited a few examples. Whether those ideas make sense to the business is another issue, the key point is that the boss didn't know any of those ideas. How could he find out "what to do"? One way is

management by walking around. The other is to listen to the staff. By talking and asking the staff who deal with the customers on a daily basis, the boss may understand far better than sitting in his office.

Here's four questions any manager may self-reflect in terms of listening to the staff.

1. Do you know you should ask for input?
If you are not aware of the need to ask for input, you simply won't be able to do it. We don't know what we don't know.

2. Did you ask for input?
This is a yes-or-no question. If yes, under what circumstances did you ask for input? Did you do it in a variety of setting and with a diverse range of colleagues with preferably different ranks?

3. How did you respond when the input was given?
Did you allow the person to finish talking? Did you thank the person who gave you the input? Did you resist the urge to give your own two cents?

4. Did you create a psychologically safe environment in the team so that team members feel safe to express their opinion without worrying about consequences?
This is more of a team culture question. High performing teams have one thing in common – high level of psychological safety. They feel safe to challenge each other without getting personal. They are more creative and willing to change. In the fast-changing world today, we are facing problems and challenges that are unprecedented. We need our team to speak up – the days when the boss knows the answer has long gone.

Epilogue

At the end of the haircut, I did the usual thing – I paid, thanked the hairdresser, and left. My

head felt lighter because of less hair, but my head was full with those management stories.

Management is everywhere. If you have a domestic helper at home, you are a manager. If you have kids, you are also a manager. Never in my life did I expect to learn about management during a haircut. That's also the beauty of management. It can happen anywhere with anyone. Have an open-mind, listen, and reflect. You may as well learn something about management in your next grocery shopping. Happy managing!

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i As of 2024, the MOP 10,000 amount applied to permanent ID card holders. Non-permanent ID card holders received MOP 6,000 instead.

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Be Careful What You Wish For (Thoughts on AI)

by **JOEY BERMUDEZ**
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Regulate AI!

I often hear this call from well-meaning crusaders who fear that artificial intelligence (AI), a technology that was developed to help man, might end up controlling him. Strangely, the present screams for regulation worry me as much as the evils that AI can possibly inflict.

My anxiety stems from three things.

Firstly, regulating anything requires a complete understanding of what is being regulated. Otherwise, regulation becomes a solution looking for a problem. Putting a handle on a technology that is rapidly morphing with no calculable terminal form makes it even more difficult to figure out where the technology police should come in, if at all.

With all due respect, I get the sense that many of those calling for regulation are prematurely hitting the fear button without any idea what bigger monster they're bringing unto themselves. For example, the loudest warnings I've heard about AI are from those who

Photo from Freepik

have played with ChatGPT and are disappointed by its occasionally misleading output. I mean no offense but I'm sorry to remind them that ChatGPT is an early stage "use case" of AI and is by no means the entirety of AI. The rant should therefore be confined to ChatGPT with no sweeping call to build inhibitory fences around the AI universe. Not only that. They should take ChatGPT for what its creators said it is meant to be, i.e., a language model that scans all the data it has access to and puts them in a format required by the user/instructor. ChatGPT is not a fact checker or a quality control tool.

Two days ago, I encountered a clear example of the confusion surrounding AI and the way its entire ecosystem works. In a chat group, someone lamented the laughable search results of "AI Overview" on Google about cockroaches and the male anatomy. In quick reaction, someone dressed down Google for having "no quality controls". Guys, take a deep breath. Google is a search and sharing platform where all manner of information, right or wrong, is shared. It is not a publication that claims authorship of everything inside it. It can probably shut out patently harmful content detected by universally accepted filters but it cannot proofread, censor or editorialize the way content authors do. By analogy, you can say that Google is like a superhighway through which vehicles of all shapes and sizes pass. Builders are responsible for ensuring that superhighways are constructed and equipped

to enable safe and orderly navigation but they cannot control the physical condition of the vehicles that enter the highway nor the driving behavior of vehicle operators. That responsibility belongs to someone else.

The second reason I fear the clamor for AI regulation is that many of its fears appear to be misplaced. Saying that ChatGPT will discourage critical thinking among students

assumes that the latter will use the tool indiscriminately and that teachers will uncritically swallow what they are fed. I would not belittle the creative pride of today's students whose generation bred the most amazing solutions to problems that their elders created. Nor would I underestimate the astuteness and sagacity of today's teachers who acquired their perspectives in an era that

saw the world change many times over. Technology expands the range of tools available to man. It is up to man to figure out which tools serve his objectives best. I believe that ChatGPT can make a good student even better. In the same way, I do not think that ChatGPT will make a decidedly lousy student any better, at least not under the care of a responsible teacher.

I concede that AI can be a tool of deception but that just makes the technology double-edged. A sharp knife can be a great friend to both a chef and a murderer. A gun can be indispensable to both a law enforcer and a criminal. One can choose to either shun the tool or use it judiciously. In my corporate life, I would jokingly tell the auditors that an "all clear" audit rating is a red flag that should make the Board ask whether business came through the door at all or Management simply shut the door to completely avoid risk.

We need not be reminded that natural intelligence is as guilty as AI when it comes to deception and non-transparency. It is quite amusing that people are only now up in arms against the evils that AI is capable of. Either people have forgotten or simply never found out that natural intelligence and AI worked like soulmates to condition minds and distort facts in several political exercises in the last few years.

At the barest minimum, we need to comprehend AI so that we can use it to make better

persons of ourselves. One must not shun technology and hide behind the "non-techie" self-label. Come on, that cute air fryer and that trusted microwave oven required some degree of "techie-ness" when you first used it. You learned because you had no choice. Remember when you first learned to drive? You probably got so intimidated by all the gauges and meters in the dashboard that you wished cars were never invented. Here's more news for you: You have no choice but to confront and feel AI, maybe at your own pace, maybe ever so slowly, maybe with extreme pain, but never "never" unless you intend to live under a rock.

The third and final reason I get frightened by shrill calls for AI regulation is that we invite grave danger every time we call for "regulation". Often, regulation brings in the heavy hand of government. Never mind the heavy hand if it is matched by the best of intentions and a sensible mindset. It has been shown time and again that government regulation, with all the pragmatic horse-trading and special-interest motivations that get baked into it, can end up mangling beyond recognition its desired policy outcome. We need not be painfully reminded that when the agriculture sector asked for help, Congress gave them the Agri-Agra Law which helped no one. When small enterprises cried for support, Congress gave them the Magna Carta for Small and Medium Enterprises which supported no one. In the United States, when the cryptocurrency community sought regulatory clarity and market order, they were choked by a dysfunctional Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) that chose to "legislate by jurisprudence". This retarded the full development of a new technology until the courts decided to call out the SEC Chairman for his folly and straightened him out.

Please don't get me wrong. I believe that something as powerful and life-changing as AI needs a sound, orderly, and just ecosystem. That is not possible if we let this beast run on its own. On the other hand, it will not be fair to mankind if we just cage this animal and cut its legs off because of fear. As with anything, balance is healthy. But first, we need to fully understand this beast in order to develop the "right" fears. What might these fears be? In my view, we need to ensure that proprietary platforms do not get unilateral and unrestricted power to decide, based on their pure commercial interests, what a user sees and which audience he can reach. Data and its

permutations are like water, energy, and any other natural resource in today's knowledge world.

Governments should come in strongly when there is visible appropriation of intelligence by monoliths for their sole benefit and to the exclusion of the very population that provided the data in the first place. On the other hand, governments should be absent when countries and peoples try to work transnationally to democratize intelligence and tear down all the chasms that cause inequitable distribution of wealth.

There is time to get our thoughts straight and ride this AI beast before rushing to call the technology police.

Regulate AI? Be careful what you wish for.

Joey Bermudez

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AAMO
ASIAN ASSOCIATION
OF MANAGEMENT
ORGANISATIONS

About AAMO

AAMO is a partnership of National Management Organizations (NMO) whose purpose is to share and actively leverage resources to enhance the achievement of their respective missions. AAMO is an independent, nonpolitical, and not-for-profit Association of NMOs, which promotes, facilitates and supports the development of professional management in the Asia Pacific Region.

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