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Managing radical change

Monday, 21 February 2022 : Online

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66th FOUNDATION DAY & 16th NATIONAL MANAGEMENT DAY

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Managing radical change**

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ALL INDIA MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Dear AIMA Members,

Congratulations on AIMA's 66th Foundation Day and thank you for joining us in celebrating the organization and its mission.

AIMA has withstood the many waves of Covid pandemic and continued to serve India's management fraternity with increased vigour and creativity. The digital transformation that started in 2020 has been consolidated during the past year and today AIMA is operating entirely digitally. The organization has acquired the capabilities to seamlessly transition to a hybrid economy and it has the agility to adapt to any disruptive change. However, we may not have seen the end of Covid and the radical uncertainty triggered by it. AIMA is well positioned to evolve with every change in the environment and help Indian management stay up with the latest management knowhow and innovations.

AIMA has demonstrated its strength by staying financially healthy despite a tremendous pressure on its revenues caused by the disruption of the physical economy. In fact, AIMA has not only digitalized its traditional activities in education, testing, recruitment, training and leadership development, it has added new digital platforms for learning and networking. The most recent addition to AIMA's portfolio of knowhow acquisition is Management Cafe. AIMA has created a library of its programmes on its website for anyone to learn at their convenience. Work is on to build capacity to create and add more high-quality content, both in-house and in collaboration with top media organizations.

AIMA's digitalization has allowed it to reach out to a global audience and bring top leaders from across diverse domains to interact with AIMA members and associates. AIMA has got the top leaders from government, politics, science, technology, healthcare, armed forces and strategic affairs to share their outlook on issues that impact business strategies and leadership practices. AIMA members have greatly benefited from such holistic approach to management learning and leadership development. AIMA has also continued its association with global platforms, such as Horasis and St Gallen, and persuaded them to hold India-specific sessions led by AIMA. Even as the physical economy resumes, AIMA will continue to harness technology to enhance member experience and services.

After seeding AIMA's Young Leaders Council to engage the new generation, AIMA is now founding AIMA Women's Council for focused activities aimed at developing women leaders and fostering gender equity in leadership. The council will provide a platform for India's women professionals and experts to network, share knowhow and support each other. Like the YLC, the Women's Council would be eclectic and involve participation from all areas of organized activity.

AIMA has increased its engagement with Indian armed forces this year. The current Chief of Army Staff has addressed AIMA members and has asked AIMA to partner Indian Army in training its officers. AIMA is running a series of collaborative management programmes with the Indian Army.

AIMA has also taken an initiative for MSME executive education and training in partnership with the LMAs. AIMA is helping the LMAs conduct a certificate programme in MSME management. This initiative is very timely because the MSME sector has borne the brunt of the pandemic's economic impact and they need to upgrade their management capability to recover and rebuild.

AIMA's Foundation Day is an occasion to celebrate the organization and its mission of promoting management excellence and fostering continuous progress in management thinking. Today, we present the AIMA - JRD Tata Award for Corporate Leadership to Dr Pawan Munjal, who has made Hero a global two-wheeler brand, and the AIMA Life Time Achievement Award for Management to Mr Harsh Mariwala, who has built an outstanding corporate institution in Marico. Today, we also show our gratitude to those who have ensured safety and continuity of life and business through the pandemic. This year's AIMA Public Service Excellence Award goes to the anonymous frontline workers. We also felicitate the best management writing in AIMA's journal Indian Management and innovation excellence in the MSME sector.

This Foundation Day is also dedicated to exploring management response to radical uncertainty and changes and thriving in the new environment instead of merely surviving. We are delighted to have Mr Jyotiraditya Scindia, Minister of Civil Aviation and Mr Amitabh Kant, CEO, NITI Ayog address the Foundation Day.

This is an occasion to acknowledge the vital contribution of AIMA's past presidents and council members to the organization's resilience and growth. I am grateful to them for their guidance and support in steering AIMA under challenging conditions.

I welcome all of you in today's celebrations and I look forward to your continued association with AIMA.

Best wishes



CK Ranganathan
President, AIMA
and Chairman & Managing Director
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The All India Management Association (AIMA) is the national apex body of the management profession in India. AIMA is a not for profit, non-lobbying organisation, working closely with Industry, Government, Academia and students to further the cause of the management profession in India.

AIMA has a membership base of over 38000 members and close to 6000 corporate /institutional members, through 67 Local Management Associations affiliated to AIMA; and is represented on a number of policy making bodies of the Government of India and national associations.

Established in 1957, AIMA has contributed immensely to the enhancement of management capability in the country over the years. AIMA offers various services in the areas of testing, distance education, skill development & training, research, publications, executive education and management development programmes.

Over the past six decades, AIMA has evolved as times have changed and catered to the growing needs of today's management community. Apart from its flagship Post Graduate Diploma in management, AIMA offers topical and industry-oriented programmes and initiatives to help management professionals and students keep in step with times; while offering state of the art business solutions for organisations and institutions.

As the pioneer of Distance Education, AIMA has always been an early starter, even in the digital space. AIMA was amongst the first mover organisations to offer Internet Based Remote Proctored Tests on a national level; and among the first to shift its service offerings online. AIMA quickly built digital expertise and now has the capability to offer its management programmes and business solutions in the physical, virtual and hybrid mode; as per industry requirements.

AIMA also brings to the Indian managers, the best management practices and techniques through numerous foreign collaborations with professional bodies and institutions. AIMA is an important and long-time member of the Asian Association of Management Organisations (AAMO), which promotes professional management in the Asia Pacific region. India (AIMA) took over the Presidency of AAMO in 2019 and will hold the AAMO Secretariat for the next three years. In addition, AIMA has developed close associations with several leading international Universities and Institutions including University of Berkeley - California, UC Santa Cruz – California, St Gallen Symposium, Horasis, The World Bank to name a few.

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FOUNDATION DAY THEME

THRIVING ON UNCERTAINTY MANAGING RADICAL CHANGE

The covid pandemic has shaken the world out of shape. It has created lasting challenges for supply chains, travel, and trade and deepened the crisis of confidence in familiar ideas and practices. Simultaneously, it has accelerated the tectonic shift towards digital technologies and a new way of living, working and doing business. Even as the pandemic seems to be ebbing, there are multi-dimensional uncertainties in the economic environment. Radical changes in priorities and strategies is the key to thriving amid this uncertainty and managing that radical change itself is a key task for the leadership. Indian management needs to identify the broad certainties in this flux, undertake radical transformation, and develop new sources of opportunity and competitiveness in this new environment.



THE FOUNDATION OF RESILIENCE

Empathetic leadership must be an integral part of all rungs of management.

Winner of this year's 'AIMA-Dr Ram Tarneja Award for Best Article in Indian Management 2021'

VIVEK MEHRA, SAGE PUBLICATIONS INDIA PRIVATE LIMITED.



It is important to understand resilience in the context of businesses. Typically, resilience refers to the ability of an object or an individual to come back to status quo or the original position when displaced by an unknown or unforeseen event. Another definition I read talks about the 'the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties'. These understandings then suggest that the resilience of any organisation should be measured in terms of its ability to 'return to achieve projected revenue, or profit'. In the context of COVID-19 and the devastation it has caused, resilience seems to be the ability to bounce back to the status quo and resume the journey to revenue and profit generation.

BUT I TEND TO VIEW DIFFICULTIES DIFFERENTLY.

For an organisation, the path is sometimes described as 'rock-solid'; one that 'marches on' no matter what the adversity. It is almost like a ship designed to sail through frozen seas or a hot knife that slices everything that is

thrown at it. By design, this state of mind is dangerous and detrimental to the medium and long-term future of the organisation. Too much attention is paid to get back to 'as things were'. All effort is directed at getting back on track while another, more subtle issue begins to surface. To illustrate my point, here is a live example from the times of COVID.

When the lockdown hit in March 2020, all transportation came to a standstill. The publishing industry was brought to a grinding halt, so to speak. I heard the following pain points being aired:

- Manuscripts could not reach typesetters because of couriers being shut down;
- Printed books did not reach individuals;
- Retail stores shut down, and hence, customers could not buy books off the shelf;
- Printing presses shut down, so no books were printed.

In the first three months of the pandemic, it is safe to assume that these pain points were focused on and all efforts were made to get rid of them. However, this should have been a wakeup call and a time to introspect. The pandemic thrust upon this industry a situation that should have forced a rethink of processes. Unfortunately, most focused on the tip of their noses so to speak, and hence, suffered—not just through the lockdown but continued to do so after it too.

An adverse event in the course of normal business needs to be viewed differently. Instead of viewing it as a challenge that needs to be overcome, an organisation needs to view it as an early warning sign of change. The event could be an indicator of change that is internal or external with respect to the organisation. It is thus important that appropriate action be taken to address not just the event but the change that the event is a symptom of.

The impact of COVID-19 should be viewed as the symptom of a larger problem that had nothing to do with the pandemic. The ones impacted by COVID-19 had not changed in the following manner:

- Their workflows were heavily dependent on physical movement of goods and services. This should have changed to digital modes almost a decade ago.
- Distribution channels had long moved to online modes, but many sections of the industry were still hesitant to embrace this change.
- The products too had moved from physical ones to digital ones; the ones without a digital strategy were most impacted.

The effects of the pandemic were thus symptoms of greater problems. The pandemic itself was probably not more than a brief interlude to test future readiness.

BUILDING RESILIENCE - A 3-STEP PROCESS

Resilience should be understood as the ability of an organisation to be ready to adapt to any unnatural adverse event that has the potential to cripple it. In this context, building culture is important and building this sort of culture can be divided into three easy steps:

Step 1: Clear, long-term people focused objectives

This sounds obvious, but very few organisations commit to long-term objectives. The most important objective should be building a culture of process, product, and people awareness. Processes and products are relatively easy to identify and become aware of. Any industry has market leaders that bring about process and product innovation. These can be adopted/adapted easily. But within any industry, people is one variable that is unique to every organisation and is based on various parameters. My top three parameters are:

1. Size and geographical location of the organisation;
2. Demographics and biases; and
3. Value, reward, and growth systems.

In every organisation, culture is made of the above-mentioned three parameters. Together, they set up the foundation of resilience. An organisation must be committed to building an environment where such objectives are continuously committed to.

Step 2: Empathetic leadership to the fore

A big problem with management is that the higher it sits, the less empathetic it is to the hardships faced by those at the lowest rungs. When an adverse event hits, the scramble at the top leaves the grassroots unattended, thereby contributing to fear, isolation, and lack of will to work. The pandemic is an extreme but valuable event in terms of learning the effects of isolation and the lack of motivation that affect any organisation. When the lockdown hit, many individuals found themselves alone in one-room apartments or even two roommates living together in an apartment suddenly felt alone. The



camaraderie they were used to in the office vanished overnight. Simple tasks such as access to food, essentials, and even medication suddenly became challenges. On top of this, the prospect of job loss loomed large and that had the potential to rapidly deplete any motivation the workforce had.

Senior management cannot wake up to a pandemic and suddenly act empathetically. To be able to do this, empathetic leadership must be an integral part of all rungs of management. When the going is good, managers should be continually taught to take empathetically balanced decisions and not simply quote the 'rule book'. When an organisation is led by a management that understands the pain of its workforce, every adverse event will be handled effectively.

In SAGE, there are many examples of initiatives that helped, but here are my top three:

1. Creating a database of every employee that lived alone and ensuring that each of them had a buddy they could reach out. Every single one of them was contacted every day to ensure they were well, had food, essentials, and medicine.
2. Setting aside time during working hours to have fun. Many did not understand this or did not want to participate but we insisted that every week, a minimum of 1 hour 'during working hours' be spent on having fun. Fun hour was dedicated to hobby lessons. I also shared my passion for cooking and some 300-plus employees attended the CEO cooking sessions.
3. Making the CEO visible. During the lockdown, I ensured that I was on a platform (MS Teams) interacting with 400-plus employees directly. During the interaction, everyone was encouraged to write comments and/or ask questions. This helped bring some of the camaraderie back. As CEO, I answered all questions, no matter how uncomfortable they were. This loosened up individuals in a manner, emails or any other sort of communication couldn't have.

Step 3: Walk the talk, honestly

To be credible in times of crisis you need to build your credibility 'before' the crisis hits. All too often, leaders and managers find themselves 'not being heard or believed', when in the midst of an adverse event. And they wonder why. The answer lies in the credibility that has been built over time. Management, and especially the CXO Suite, believe they are credible. But I believe practices, policies, and values as played out in day-to-day operations are a great indicator of credibility. All too often, value statements remain enshrined on fancy paper and even fancier frames hung on office walls. These need to be brought to life and this effort has to be led by the CXO Suite. In the time of adverse events, it is this credibility that helps the workforce to make seemingly instant yet essential changes effectively.

Thus, organisational resilience needs to move away from its conventional definition to a new more relevant one: Resilience should be understood as the ability of an to be ready to adapt to any unnatural adverse event that has the potential to cripple it (the organisation).

Businesses change and need to keep pace with changing environments, especially if adverse events become more frequent.



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ADOPTING THE FUTURE OF WORK

Digital transition should go beyond just adopting digital tools; it should be a holistic transformation.

R SUMITRA, BARODA APEX ACADEMY

MSMEs segment is the backbone of the Indian economy. However, in the past few years, challenges such as demonetisation, supply chain bottlenecks, financial crisis, and adopting to digital ecosystem have been rocking the MSMEs sector.

The growing importance of digitalization in MSMEs is not only the policy agenda but is also important for the survival of this segment. Digitalisation will not only improve their competitiveness, but also benefit society at large because SMEs are the main service providers in the regional economic growth and innovations.

Though digitalisation is the buzzword today, anxieties about how to adopt it and the impact of this transformation in business are still restricting its adoption in many an organisation.

The MSME sector is critical to the growth of a country like India, especially because of its huge population, as it fosters entrepreneurship and employment opportunities. This sector reduces the problem of disguised unemployment by absorbing the agricultural labours during the lean season. This segment also extends support to the large industries in the form of ancillary units and plays a significant role in the entire value chain of the business. Since almost 51% of Indian MSMEs are based in the rural regions, the sector contributes to the economic empowerment and social inclusion of the rural population. They are engaged in diversified fields ranging from traditional rural handicrafts to technology oriented industrial units.

The significance of this sector is evident from the numerous government initiatives taken to boost its growth, the most significant one being the revision in the definition of the MSMEs. Global trends in classifying MSMEs revealed that most of the countries are using major parameters like number of employees, net worth,

turnover, capital employed, etc. To facilitate ease of doing business the Government of India revised the definition of MSMEs vide the Gazette Notification S.O. 2119 (E) dated June 26, 2020. Accordingly, the definition of MSMEs is mentioned in the table given below:

Existing and Revised Definition of MSMEs			
Existing MSME Classification			
Criteria : Investment in Plant & Machinery or Equipment			
Classification	Micro	Small	Medium
Mfg. Enterprises	Investment < Rs. 25 lac	Investment < Rs. 5 cr.	Investment < Rs. 10 cr.
Services Enterprise	Investment < Rs. 10 lac	Investment < Rs. 2 cr.	Investment < Rs. 5 cr.
Revised MSME Classification			
Composite Criteria : Investment And Annual Turnover			
Classification	Micro	Small	Medium
Manufacturing & Services	Investment < Rs. 1 cr. and Turnover < Rs.5 cr.	Investment < Rs. 10 cr. and Turnover < Rs.50 cr.	Investment < Rs. 20 cr. and Turnover < Rs.100 cr.

Despite the notable contribution of the MSME segment to the country's economy, it could not evolve as a robust, resilient player. MSMEs face several challenges - availability of lowcost credit facilities, procurement of raw material, inertia to technology adoption, capacity building, supply chain disruption, and the perennial problem of delayed payments, among others. Apart from these, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to keep the world on edge. Though businesses are getting back to pre-pandemic levels, the uncertainty over the duration and intensity of the pandemic continue to cause concern. Just like boosting immunity of the population is a key to tackle the pandemic, the key to long-term sustainability for MSMEs would be to focus on innovation and digitalisation.

SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES FROM DIGITALISATION

Digital is becoming a way of life—billions of people wake up to notifications from social media sites, e-mail, etc. Opportunities provided by digitalisation are compelling organisations to look at their business models from a different perspective.

A digitalisation infrastructure can help reposition business

by improving the reach beyond geographical boundaries. The era of invisible networks has created a new market for the economy at large. Information rushes through the networks at the blink of an eye, customers can pick and choose any services, products from across the globe.

INDIAN MSMEs AND DIGITALISATION

The MSME sector is yet to benefit from the advancements in the digital space. Anxiety and confusion about how digitalisation will impact my business, how much capital will be required for the digitalisation, the fear of failure to implement, and more such doubts are gripping the MSMEs into inaction.

Given the present scenario, more and more customers are shifting to online platforms which are providing opportunities for MSMEs to transform and build on digitalisation of their businesses. Digitalisation provides opportunity to thrive on enriched data and thereby take corrective actions on time.

WHY IS DIGITALISATION A CHALLENGE FOR MSMEs?

Digital literacy: The term 'digital literacy' means ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create and communicate information using both analytical and technical skills. Digital transformation requires cultural and behavioural changes such as new ways of approaching customers, monitoring the digital behaviour of the customers, keeping customers engaged using digital marketing, increased collaboration with tech-savvy entities, etc. It is important to develop a mindset to embrace the change. Digital literacy is the primary step towards the ultimate goal of embracing the change and reinforcing new behaviours and way of working through the digital platforms.

Denial from workforce: Concerns about being replaced by young, tech-savvy staff, or machines are reasons enough for the workforce to oppose digitalisation. Insecurity and anxiety about the unknown may even lead to sabotaging of the process of digital transformation.

Switching Cost: A majority of the MSMEs operate on a thin margin with limited capital. These units do not have easy access to formal credit system. Most of the firms run their business out of their own investment or by borrowing money from friends and family. These entities feel that digital transformation requires abig budget and are therefore pessimistic towards digitisation.

LOSS OF REVENUE FROM NON-DIGITAL

customers: Digitalisation is often considered as a



something that will eat away the share of revenue contributed by non-digital platforms.

Cyber Security: An unsafe online environment presents another challenge in adopting a digital framework. Instances of hacking, intellectual property infringement, etc. are pose major threats.

Inconsistency in quality of customers and digital agenda: The real meaning of digitalisation is often misinterpreted. The business units assume that digital transformation means the act of using some of the digital tools along with the traditional business model. They fail to understand that it is not a momentary event, but it is something that they must sustain over the years.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT LEVELS OF MSMEs IN INDIA

The series of struggles which the MSMEs face leads to obstruction in their way to transformation. They try to adopt reform measures on a trial and error approach. They experiment and mend things and many a times come at crossroads. In this process some reach their destination, some struggle in the initial stage, while the rest reach the mid-way and thrive to improve with perseverance and zeal.

The engagement level of MSMEs can be categorised as under:

Offline. MSMEs which do not use computers, social media platforms, and have no access to internet.

Connected. Those that have preliminary knowledge of digital platforms and are making minimal use of digital channels like e-mails, search engines etc.

Enabled. These entities have corporate e-mail IDs, own website, and social media presence to maintain relations with their clients. They understand the market using digital platforms.

Engaged. These segments of MSMEs are tech-savvy and proficient in digital tools, predominant volume of their business activity is executed through digital platforms.

At present, over 80 per cent of the MSMEs belong to the offline and connected engagement level.

WAY FORWARD

Real digital transformation is about breaking the barriers and leveraging technology for increased earnings and profitability. There is need for effective integration of technology and all the available key resources of the business.

ACQUIRING DIGITAL IQ

Acquisition of Digital IQ or Digital Maturity is necessary to reap the benefits of digitalisation. It

is the measurement of the organisation's ability to harness growth and profitability from the digital framework. The journey towards digital agility is not a onetime moment; it is a continuous and enduring process. It is a thing beyond a statement like, 'We want to go paperless'. The management must be clear about the specifics of the organisation, assess the effect of transformation on the culture and commercial side of the business and align the digital objective with the mission of the business entity.

SHIFT IN THE MINDSET & CULTURE CHANGE

Regardless of the effectiveness of the digital mission, it will be truly successful, only if there is a shift in the mindset of the entire workforce of the organisation. The employees should be directly involved in the transformation process. The leader must set an example by getting actively involved in the process.

IDENTIFY THE GAPS

It is also important to maintain close connection with the world outside the organisation to understand the external needs, temperament of the customers, and strategies adopted by competitors. Meaningful connections needed to be established with the customers to understand the digital experience they value. From the needs of the customers, identify the digital model that will bridge the gaps of the unmet customer expectations. One method to identify the gaps can be to host a virtual event for the customers to get their feedback, experience the digital products used by the customers, etc.

LEVERAGING GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

The government is introducing several schemes and incentives for MSMEs who want to adopt digitalisation. ZED is one such scheme introduced to encourage MSMEs to adopt quality tools/systems and energy efficient manufacturing process.

ROUTE TO DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Some methods for successful digital transformations are consistency in plan, establishing flexible framework, and a collaborative approach with expert service providers like digital hubs, startup support system, etc.

Transformation is not just an agenda; it must become a natural way of working of the entity. The emerging technologies must be the core competencies of the organisation. It is important to embrace the challenges to make the journey meaningful and effective for the business.

Reference

Digital Transformation by Lindsay Herbert



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ENGAGING A MULTI GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

An engaged workforce—across generations—is the best vaccine for any organisation to help it develop immunity against future crisis; but are the leaders listening?

DR DEBASHISH SENGUPTA, AUTHOR, THE LIFE OF Z



To be fair, it has not been easy for anyone—neither the companies, nor the employees. The pandemic has not only caused a major, worldwide disruption, it has meant a quantum jump in challenges. Since much has been written and deliberated already on this topic, I decided to focus on how the so called 'new normal' is affecting different generations at work.

It is during times of crisis that relationships—including that between an employee and the employer are tested. Engagement has never been more relevant than it was during the past year.

While writing this piece, I had the opportunity to interview a lot of people across generations—Generation X (born between 1964/65 and 1977/78), millennials (born between 1979-1999) and Generation Z (born 2000 and 2020)—working in India and abroad, and listening to their experiences first-hand. Based on these interactions

and other research, I have drafted this article to describe the on-ground situation, and hence serve as a consultative guide for organisations to in re-align their employee management and engagement strategies/policies to suit the new order.

AN ACCOUNT OF A GENERATION XER

Dhruv, who works in the non-profit sector says, "Our organisation being in the social sector depends on various types of grants and funding for undertaking social development projects, and it was severely hit due to COVID. This resulted in subsistence concerns for the organisation, which, in order to maintain its visibility and get newer business, had to work overtime with PR exercises like organising webinars during the lockdown period to keep the clients and beneficiaries engaged, and also to pitch to new corporates and funding agencies.

Regular office hours as well as the boundaries of timelines were erased as employees were redeemed to be always available for work. Meetings on three different online platforms—and at increased frequencies—became a norm. The concept of lunch breaks and coffee breaks disappeared. Many a time we had to excuse ourselves from office work, even on a Sunday when we had to do some urgent domestic work. Meetings were called at short notices via a message on the official Whats App group, which meant that we had to be constantly checking our phones. Despite being at home 24x7, we were actually not with our family and family life had gone for a toss.

Online meetings have become such a menace that people have to attend them even when they are commuting. Earlier, office was office, but now the home is also office. There is no respite from work anywhere.”

A MILLENNIAL'S ACCOUNT

Prathap, a millennial, its pecialist says, “Like many of my friends, initially I was thrilled when I got this convenience—I did not have to go to office, I could manage my office work and household chores, all while watching my two-year-old baby grow. It did not take much time for me to set up a mini office in my house. I used to do work from home (WFH) once or twice in a week in the pre-Covid-19 era as well, so I familiar to it. On top of everything I was saving transportation time and expenses, as well as the mental and physical exhaustion due to hours of commute.

While all this brought joy to me and my family for the first few months, slowly I started realising that the duration and quantity of work was increasing manifold. The usual nine hours of work in a day was reaching up to 12 to 13 hours. Introspection led to an interesting finding. The joy of staying at home all the time engulfed the increasing workload and long working hours for the organisation. Apparently, I did not mind dedicating my precious two to three hours of time to my employer, which I could have otherwise happily spent with my family or for myself; it was because I knew that I did not need to rush to log off from my office on time to drive back home without being late, that I did not need to take a small meal break, and that I did not need to take a break to go for a stroll after being exposed to the laptop screen for hours. At home I could see and meet my family whenever I wanted to and I get my meal delivered to my table.

At the same time, I also found that organisations' expectations have changed during the lockdown—employees are expected to be online all the time, they are expected to complete a given task on the same day, which

would have taken more time in the physical office setting. In short, the organisation is trying to take as much advantage of this new normal as possible. I also slowly realised that I am encroaching my family's space. In a nutshell WFH is a double-edged sword.”

A ZENER'S ACCOUNT

At 20 years of age, Simone is among the oldest members of her generation. She is studying in college and had secured an internship opportunity in her dream company. The year 2020 could not have begun on a more promising note for her until the Covid catastrophe struck. Due to the lockdown and shutdowns, her internship was cancelled, and she was instead offered an online course by her university as an alternative. This online course, though would fulfil her graduation requirements, could in no way replace the rich experience that she could have gained interning. Simone wondered how this would impact her career. Campus placements had been delayed as well. Securing a job is still getting difficult even as the world is trying to get to back to normalcy.

WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION – GENERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Generational challenges are unique in someways but they also converge on many aspects. Though each generation has been hit hard by the pandemic, from a work-life integration perspective, Gen X and millennials seem to be affected the most.

When home becomes the new office, it is bound to cause commotions. After all, homes are neither spatially nor spiritually designed for work and the new setting is unsettling and a forced choice for most. Let us see how it has impacted both work and life of people.

Disappearing boundaries

The onset of the pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns meant a sudden switch to WFH for many. Most industries and jobs are not designed for the WFH model as yet, and this unexpected transition started diminishing the boundary between work and life. It also meant increased workload and longer working hours. Shiraz, who works for an IT multi-national in Hyderabad says, “All meetings are now virtual; hence, the number of meetings has increased substantially. This is compounded when the number of stakeholders is more and when they are spread across multiple time zones.” This has also seen a rise in unrealistic expectations from the employees—to always be available for a meeting, always be online, be available for work and respond to office mails at odd hours, even during late evening and nights.



Umang working in a global MNC, who moved into a major Asian market just before the onset of the pandemic says, "Companies should not put pressure on employees to be online all the time. If a person is at home, it is obvious that there will be kids to handle, someone has to cook and clean, and then bosses expect calls and availability round the clock. So, empathy towards an employee's personal life has to be formalised in some way."

Infodemic' and triggered stress

Dealing with bad news is never easy, and when there is a barrage of bad news pouring in—death statistics reported on a daily basis like a scorecard, news of lockdowns and miseries of people, etc—it becomes enormously difficult to deal with the same. On top of it there is abundance of fake news and rumours that spread like wildfire, especially via social media. The imminent risk of health, safety concerns of self and of near and dear ones, and the looming uncertainty have not been easy to handle. Many went through panic attacks, anxiety, and stress. The pandemic has had a ravaging impact on the mental health of people and sadly there is no vaccine for it.

People employed in the government sector, especially in essential services had no option to work from home. A senior professional remarked, "For essential government services, many employees had no option of virtual work. Every morning they had to brave the Covid scare to perform their duties. HR departments of many companies need to retrospect their policies when it comes to employee health and safety."

Ashish, who works for a European IT service provider, says,

"Organisations providing psychological support to their employees through expert talks and counselling is really helpful during such times when there is so much uncertainty and turmoil."

Working from home also meant a sedentary life with greater incidences of fatigue and stress on the back and eyes. The challenges of managing without domestic helps and learning to do a lot of new things meant huge time consumption on daily chores.

Shrinking income, rising expenses

The pandemic has had a direct impact on people's income as well as their earning potential, in most sectors. Salary cuts, reduced benefits/ incentives, and delayed salary

disbursement were common, whereas expenses kept on rising—through the setting up office infrastructure at home including furniture, internet bandwidth, and better gadgets. There has been financial stress and uncertainty and space in the house has become premium due to earning members working from home.

No more commuting blues

The biggest positive from the lockdown has come in form of cut-down in commute time, expenses, and energy. Apart from this, most of us have learnt new things, learned to most of us have learnt new things, learned to manage work more independently, and have been able to spend time with family. Almost every working professional has undergone at least one training on online working and it will not be wrong to say that we are more digitally adept than before.

Collaboration impediments

Managing communication and collaboration across teams has not been easy in the virtual set-up. Umang says, "I am in a new role and it required meeting customers in the Asia Pacific region. It is almost a year and I have not met any of them face to face. It is very difficult to build personal rapport via Zoom or Teams meetings. For business it is important to know each other personally, which you achieve through face-to-face meetings, dinners, and

traveling together. I am missing that personal touch.” Like Umang many have complained the lack of personal touch owing to zero socialisation and building of personal rapport.

Coping with new technology

Generation Xers have faced this problem more than millennials and Gen Z, who are more of digital natives. Online work models have necessitated quick learning and adaptation to new technologies and platforms. And, considering that there was no time for transitioning, it was mostly learning in real time, on the job, though trial and errors. Learning something new and at the same time keeping up performance levels, with zero transitioning time, has been quite a daunting task.

Force fit

The short and sudden compulsion to transition their way of working left many people still following the offline model for online work. This often resulted in duplication of work, longer process hours, and cumbersome reporting procedures. Rachel, who works as a teacher in Bengaluru, remarks, “We have to send a lot many offline videos as the number of periods now is less compared to when we had regular school timings. Again, those offline videos have to be revised and taught in the online class if students have doubts regarding the topic, which generally happens. This results in doubling of work.”

Leading by managing

It will not be incorrect to say that this sudden change has left most human resources (HR) departments clueless about the way the employees must be managed. Most HR policies are not designed to understand remote working and managing employees accordingly. The pressure to pull through during bad times and a perception that work from home may mean employees will slack have, at times, resulted in unclear expectations from the management, resulting in employee burnout and strong backlash.

Rachel further adds, “I would really like the VP to stop bugging us and calling us for meetings at all hours and telling us to prepare things such as charts and flash cards because I am at home. The school will not provide the material as it is closed.”

Ritwik says, “Leaders should learn to demarcate clearly between work and leisure hours. There are those exceptional days when working day and night for the benefit of the organisation is required, but when it starts becoming a norm, it gets problematic. People might not speak openly for the fear of creating a negative impression

of themselves, but prolonged exposure to such conditions will cause deterioration of health and motivation levels, ultimately resulting in reduced or average performance.”

People having more unstructured and independent work arrangements have had different experiences. Adrija says, “My situation is a bit different. I was working from home from a year before the rest of the world joined in. Also being from an advertising agency background, and with my personality/ nature being the way it is, I have always found it hard to keep a firm boundary between the two. But in my current workplace, when there are leaner periods, I am able to do more things I enjoy and when there is a busy period, we all put our heads down and work. It is definitely a better balance.”

FUTURE OF WORK

The work-life integration is a reality and even after the pandemic is over, it may not go away. It is here to stay. So, coupled with the challenge of managing and engaging a multi-generational workforce, organisations also have to deal with the challenge of the dissolving of work-life boundaries. The future of work will need us to reinvent, reorient, and realign old rules, practices, and approaches.

CRITICAL ROLE OF LEADERS

Crisis brings out either the best or worst side of leaders. Crisis is, in a true sense, a test of character and intent. Organisations and leaders who think that letting employees keep their jobs and paying their salaries is a privilege they are extending to their employees during a crisis, is a mistake.

Leaders need to exhibit greater levels of empathy. It is not easy for an average employee to deal with the pulls, pressures, and the constant stress. A bit of understanding goes along way in instilling confidence among the workforce that they are together during difficult times. An open channel of communication is needed especially when face to face meetings become diminished.

The contrasting experiences of Dhruv and Adrija are a testimony to the difference that leadership can make in the 'new normal'.

Dhruv is not very happy with his experience and says, “Decision makers in the organisations should appreciate the concept of work life balance. If the chairman or the CEO of a company is a workaholic, he/she cannot expect the entire staff to be the same just to keep up with his/ her pace of working. He/she may or may not have a family life or have any recreational inclinations, but the same may not be true of other employees. Every individual has

different emotional and social quotients, and they should be treated with appreciation for their difference.”

Adrija is fortunate to be working with a organisation with leaders who have shown much more empathy. She says, “While many are happy to work from the comfort of their homes, the work is not lesser than it was earlier. For some it is even more, and often under distracting, demanding circumstances. If everyone acknowledges that and respects that everyone is trying to do their best in the current scenario and as long as realistic time lines are being set and deliverables are being met, micro managing can be avoided.

Thankfully, it works very well in our organisation. Knowing that we are trusted with a job and will get back when we are ready because we know the time lines and implications as well, the onus is on us and we know we can deliver. Also, a clear and open channel of communication helps. If everyone knows what they are working on and by when they need to deliver or connect to discuss and take it forward, the 'remoteness' aspect ceases to be a big hurdle.”

REDESIGNING PROCESSES

Offline work models and reporting mechanisms can not be copy pasted in online remote settings. The processes need to be redesigned for remote/online work models. The future of work will not discard remote/online working completely even after the pandemic is over. The online mode is here to stay, and hence processes need to be redesigned to suit the changed demands of the online platform.

NEW HR POLICY

The human resource policies for managing and strategies for engaging people also need to be reinvented. The future of work will have people working in both face-to-face as well as online settings and policies need to evolve to manage and engage people both in place and space. The

concept of a work time/hours, reporting/responding to emails/queries, definition of mental health of employees, and support that can be extended to deal with anxiety, guidelines to supervisors, and managers to manage their teams without causing stress, professional development in new emerging technologies, and most importantly, understanding generational needs in managing a multi generational distributed workforce are some of the areas that need urgent attention.

A FUTURE-PROOFING VACCINE

The end of the pandemic is now imminent with vaccine making inroads to provide immunity against the 'invisible intruder' that caused mayhem everywhere, but businesses all over the world also need a booster dose to revive their dwindling fortunes. An engaged workforce can be the best vaccine for any organisation to help it develop immunity against future crisis and environmental upheavals. Organisations need to learn from both the mistakes they made and the things they got right during this pandemic. Implementing these learnings in the post-pandemic normal will be critical to effectively lead, manage, and engage the workforce in the future of work and thereby create more future-proof businesses.

Note: All names used in the article are aliases.



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LEAD TO WIN

Acting like a leader, rather than a boss is key to conducting successful meetings.

KK VERMA, ACADEMY OF HRD AND IIM-AHMEDABAD

Much has been written and spoken about meetings—uncharitable remarks like waste of time, waste of money, boring, airing frustration are made. So much so, that a recent Harvard Business Review article was titled, 'Stop the Meeting Madness'¹.

Most of the published literature has focused on why meetings fail or succeed, scheduling meetings efficiently, planning for a successful committee meeting, etc. Emphasis is now on how to make the best of a meeting. Sufficient focus is not espoused on the leadership dimension, a key aspect for effectiveness, which this article aims at.

Committee meetings are normally desired to discuss specific organisational issues that require wider discussions and problem solving.

FRAILTIES OF MEETINGS

1. Committee formation, at times, is not a well thought out plan. A bias for inclusion/exclusion occurs.
2. Many committees fail to ensure contribution of all members.
3. Team of equals not created is visible in seating arrangement; attention to questions missed, etc.
4. Chairperson (Chair) arrives late which encourages members.
5. The authoritarian style of some Chairs has serious implications.
6. Members find bureaucratic meetings boring.
7. Often, there is no focused discussion.
8. Due to hidden agenda of some, many members cannot come out with their ingenuity.

Therefore, the role of the chairperson and his/ her credibility is critical to the success of a meeting.

ROLES OF A CHAIRPERSON

Chairperson leads the committee for a task. A committee is formed for a temporary, but important assignment. The right people need to be included, which means only a diverse mix of talent—who would suit better to the



subject/objective(s) and one member with research background or aptitude if research is likely to add value.

An incident is cited here to show how subjectivity enters in the selection of members. The HRD department that I headed had proposed a performance management system for which extensive research and discussions had been done. I was asked to propose by the executive director certain senior executives to form a committee. I was also indicated names of one deputy general manager and a general manager for inclusion. I had interviewed those two for the project. In my opinion, they would care less for research and had negative and fixed views. I was in a dilemma. Had I proposed those names, most probably, the proposal would not have obtained a favourable recommendation. And had I skipped those names, I would have disobeyed, and the proposal would probably have gone into the cold storage. After thinking a lot, an idea

occurred: accommodate the two and for the remaining, propose relatively young, positive, and development oriented minds. I hoped the latter would prevail. The recommended names were accepted. No formal chairperson was fixed.

The members, after some time, started attaching each other's ideas and arguing outside the subject. After about 45 minutes, the discussions were heated, as if they were rivals. I expressed that the discussions were slipping. No effect. Later, again, I stressed that time was running out. After lunch break, the tension broke, and there was sufficient focus. The HRD proposal got through with some minor changes and suggestions to include. But I had played a tactical strategy and forgot my personal values doing so. However, balancing selection helped competitive discussions too. Wrong selection may involve loss of focus in discussions and dilution of the professional orientation and content. Being thoughtfully selective about the right members is critical.

ENCOURAGING THE TALENTED AS WILLING PARTICIPANTS

Highly talented executives like to avoid inclusion for varied reasons. When I was MD, I discussed with a senior vice president that I was nominating him to a committee. The assignment was to undertake a study of the customer requirement and design a scheme focused to customer-needs. He had lot to argue and said, "I don't want to go. There are others." I opened discussion again, the next day. I finally explained, "Look, designing a customer scheme is a creative work. All cannot fill the slot. You are the right person. Your own hidden talent will come to the fore and advance further and you will carry the memory career long." This is how he was mentally prepared to agree. It is necessary to make the executive a willing member than just to pass orders to join the committee. This is the job of the manager.

In view of the above, the CEOs of the companies need to communicate with all heads the rules for selection and helping him/her to be willing and effective participants in the committee.

DEVELOPING A WINNING TEAM

The chair provides the necessary drive and momentum to the members to keep moving. Though a temporary entity, the task requires a dedicated team. It is for the chair to help the group become a team and a winning team. He/she explains the goal(s) which the committee is required to achieve. Members would have concerns and issues and answering to their satisfaction that the members start to

think of the goals as their own goals. On the way there might be conflict between the members which the chair needs to settle. Apart from owning the goals they begin supporting, cooperating as the behavioural sciences guru, Dr. Udai Pareek, explains while summarising team theories, particularly of Bennis and Shepherd and Bruce Tuckman². The chair also needs to ensure that no one is marginalized or discriminated against.

COLLECTIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DECISION-MAKING STRATEGY

It is expected that the committee's performance for the assignment produces the expected results. Collective effort under leadership of the chair is another strategy. The chair focuses on the objective(s) of the assignment, team objectives like cohesiveness, making diagnosis and reaching solutions. One interesting case, though not strictly as a committee is defined, relates to one-hour daily meeting. Dr. Anil K Khandelwal, ex-Chairman and Managing Director, Bank of Baroda organised meetings with top management as an important lever of change. In these meetings, setting apart from a compelling vision of technology led business transformation, the top team reviewed its legacy problems including internal bureaucracy, response patterns, business climate, issues of customer centricity, and employee engagement. According to Khandelwal, morning meetings played a significant role in aligning the management to a shared vision and a futuristic agenda and achieve a multi-faceted progress including the doubling of business in just three years³. Khandelwal's strategy of daily morning meets makes it evident that collective problem-solving and decision-making is a creative process to achieve multiple goals for better results. The chair's focus, likewise, on collectiveness will lead to better results.

BETRANSSPARENT THAN DOUBLE TALKING

A good leader is a clean person than a double talker. He/she helps, rather than misleads. However, on the ground, at times, it is the opposite. Award-winning, best-selling author, listed in '100 business coaches', Richie Norton mentioned, "Old guards will tell you to innovate and be creative, but won't mention that it's only ok as long as it's something they've already thought of and agree with." Clearly it is a double game. Faced with double game, members would be confused and the outcome, ineffective. The hidden agenda may increase problems: members losing confidence in leadership and their initiative and morale will decline. Denying transparency is denying free expression and the right to deliberate. The chair must commit to transparent dealings than double talk.

BE LIKE A LEADER; NOT A BOSS

A Facebook video⁴ in which the chair is sitting on one side and seven to eight members are sitting facing him in rows goes as follows:

The boss shouts, "You stupid fellows, I am the boss. Do, what I say."

One member firmly states, "Yes, you are the boss." The boss retorts, "What do you mean?"

The guy gets up, "You are the boss," and walks up to him and hands over his resignation.

The boss, "Why are you resigning?"

The guy, "So as to tell you the difference between boss and leader."

In this case, the boss assumes himself to be great but the member feels otherwise. He resigns, while each of the rest seems to think, "Why am I here?"

A leader has ideals like compassion and helping attitudes; the boss may be commanding and abuse his power. A leader shares his powers. He knows executives work for their dreams; not for transactions.

Chairs must try and learn to be like leaders.

Listening and encouraging for focused discussion

There are leaders who are too eager to talk too much. Microsoft CEO, Satya Nadela's advice for better meetings, "Listen more, talk less, and be decisive when time comes."⁵

Focused discussion is the backbone of a committee. They say quality emerges from a mass of information. Therefore, the chair needs to encourage all members' participation. And if one tries to dominate discussions, the controls has to him/her.

Chair needs to learn that silent, hesitant, introvert's participation can be creative; the genius, intellectual

needs special attention. This role is neglected by several chairpersons. Experience suggests that positive attitude of the chair combined with simple questions which maintain the interest of members, matters. Leading well, therefore, requires the chair to talk less, listen more, encouraging all to contribute and improve the standard and focus of discussions.

IN CONCLUSION

The above discussion is around the process issues involved in leading a committee. The chairperson needs to reflect and exhibit his/her image like that of a leader who is democratic, believer in human values, and has motivational strategies so that members remain excited and focused and are keen to contribute. She/he encourages diverse views, poses small questions, complimenting and supporting the members, and reinforces good dialogues to help them sustain their interest and continuous thinking.

Lest it gives a wrong impression, I clarify that there have been well-run committees with good successes. They can be emulated. I also suggest that appropriate orientation or counseling programmes in leadership with focus on meetings for likely chairpersons be arranged.



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LISTEN TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

A good customer experience management strategy will not just help retain existing customers but also attract new ones.

RAKESH GOYAL, PROBUS INSURANCE BROKERS PRIVATE LIMITED

It takes months to find a customer...seconds to lose one. - Vince Lombardi Keeping the customers happy and satisfied is critical to the survival of business in today's 'customer's era'. Having a robust customer management system can help companies acquire new customers, retain the existing ones, and also convert potential customers to customers/consumers. Moreover, it has been observed that satisfied customers are likely to bring in more customers through word-of-mouth medium. Such a customer also holds the factor of loyalty to the brand, and, in return, enhances the reputation of the company.

Customer experience management (CEM or CXM) refers to various company policies or protocols that are designed to enhance the overall customer satisfaction. This enables the company or brand to increase customer loyalty towards them and ensure continuous as well as repetitive business.

A successful CEM system would help the business/ company to obtain the following benefits:

- Enhance the experience of the existing customers;
- Give more insights on customers—it will help analyse the customer data and identify the upscaling factors;
- Combine data from different sources to create a collated data centre for customer analysis reports. Also, it would help in segmentation of the customers depending on their needs and help in acquiring better insights on their needs;
- Enhance customer retention;
- Anticipate the future needs of the customers through new and existing data.

CEM FOR TODAY'S ORGANISATIONS

Apart from being a sales opportunity or revenue generation medium, a customer, in today's world, is someone who can drive the business to great heights or knock it down quickly.

A company could have the best possible product in the segment, but if not sold correctly and treated the customers right, then there is never a guarantee of it being a success. Having a well-organised CEM system helps build a robust relationship with customers. It is also critical to enhancing crisis management techniques for any business.



As per the Harvard Business Review, "Depending on which study you believe, and what industry you're in, acquiring a new customer is anywhere from five to 25 times more expensive than retaining an existing one". It further says that, "If you're not convinced that retaining customers is so valuable, consider research done by Frederick Reichheld of Bain & Company (the inventor of the net promoter score) that shows increasing customer retention rates by 5% increases profits by 25% to 95%."

CEM system is also important to maintain the churn rate

and increasing customer retention for a specific brand or company.

IMPACT ON BRAND REPUTATION & PROFITS OF THE ORGANISATION

Inclusion of enhancing factors that improve customer relationship allows the organisations to manage, serve, acquire, and extract definite values from the customers and enhance the company efficiency by targeting the right audience. This also helps to establish robust long-term relationships that ensures that the customer keeps coming back, thereby creating new business for the company and expediting the Rols. It also helps manage customer interactions effectively, and in return, enhance the brand reputation and achieve sustainable growth.

HOW CAN ORGANISATIONS ACHIEVE GREAT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE?

While strategizing a great customer experience, organisations need to ensure that they do it for existing as well as new customers. Ensure that you have the right strategy in place to establish the required trust within your customers about your brand or company. Creating strategies and implementing them in the right way helps to upscale the reliability factor within the minds of the consumers. Creating quality content that can be used to communicate with the customers both physically or digitally can also have a significant impact on the prospects and for generating new consumers for your products or business.

MAKE THE BEST USE OF DATA

Ensure that you make the best use of data and insights in order to boost the sales and understand the future demand of your existing customers. Constantly reviewing your previous customer results can help identify whether you are putting the efforts in the right direction and targeting the right audience as per your product or business. As rightly quoted by Steve Jobs, "Get closer than ever to your customers. So close that you tell them what they need well before they realise it themselves."

KEEP YOUR CUSTOMERS OR PROSPECTS ENGAGED

Prospects do not turn into customers overnight, nor does

brand promotion happen in a single day. One needs to understand that this is a long process, and hence needs to be handled with a proper strategy. Keeping your customers or prospects engaged helps gain the confidence of the prospects and later turn them into customers.

TRY TO ADDRESS THE OBJECTIONS ABOUT YOUR PRODUCTS

If your customer has some incorrect assumptions about your brand then it becomes your duty to identify those assumptions and address them. This creates a positive perception of your offering in the customer's mind.

Another factor that might impact your customer management process is selling harder to your customers. This is one of the biggest mistakes that many companies make. Such an action could be quite annoying at times—receiving considerable promotional emails on a busy working day, follow up calls, etc. Pushy sales are not likely to improve your conversion rates as the customer of today is far more educated and discerning.

Hence, designing and reacting to customer interactions or to meet/exceed customer expectations is highly necessary to ensure customer loyalty, satisfaction, and advocacy, and a good CEM strategy will help achieve this. While implementing such strategies, one might require to undergo certain alterations in the existing process and the existing technologies to ensure successful results.



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POWERING THE SURVIVAL CONUNDRUM

Digitisation and adoption of related technologies in the oil and gas industry has manifold benefits for this sector.

DR MP SUKUMARAN NAIR, CENTRE FOR GREEN TECHNOLOGY & MANAGEMENT, COCHIN



The much-hyped oil and gas industry too is facing several challenges during the ongoing pandemic days. Weakening of the financial performance of several industry majors is the most daunting among the challenges being confronted by the industry. Consumer demands are changing, new energy resources are emerging, unconventional oil and gas resources are being developed, the significance of emerging economies like China and India is increasing, and a host of other factors are contributing to market depression.

Oil demand is peaking through lockdowns and travel bans, while prices have plunged well below the level needed to turn a profit. Companies are bringing down capital expenditure and thus trying to drive down operating costs. Back in 2006, the average return on capital employed in upstream activities among oil majors stood at more than 27 per cent, a recent study by Boston Capital Group revealed. In 2019, that average was no more than 3.5 per cent. That is before the pandemic pummelled oil prices and forced severe spending cuts. The oil industry's returns, the study showed, had become much less resilient to price movements. Harnessing the potential of digitalisation throughout the industry and achieving consequential economic and other gains is thought as a means of survival. The performance related data of the physical assets is collected in real time and then analysed,

visualised, and utilised for taking business decisions that lead to greater efficiency. It uses the power of the industrial internet for enabling sensor guided remote operations, drones for remote data collection, robots for checking integrity of pipelines, etc, cameras for surveillance, cognitive computing for appraisal of exploration blocks, 3D printing for on-demand production of replacement parts, and data analytics for supply chain optimisation.

FACILITY MANAGEMENT

The effective functioning of modern oil and gas facilities involves tremendous planning and scheduling with regard to procurement, production, quality control, safety and environmental care, off sites and utilities, marketing and logistics besides ensuring optimal use of raw materials, energy, and manpower. We have been using aspect specific systems and tools to address optimisation in each of these areas for prudent decision making to improve the bottom-line. Digitisation capabilities help to develop a holistic approach in the above decision-making process. Digital transformation envisages the application of information technology (IT) or IT-enabled technologies to advance existing business operations, processes, models and strategies with the intent of making the company more productive, environmentally sustainable, competitive, and profitable.

Major industry segments such as manufacturing, power generation, oil and gas, aviation, transportation, etc, are taking advantage of the new industrial internet of things (IIoT) opportunity to unearth additional value from their operations. Various performance management and process optimisation tools employed in the facility generate voluminous data and there has been little effort in the past to holistically review the big data and optimise performance, sustainability, and safety at the enterprise level. The lack of a trusted platform to collate, segregate and analyse data was a major hurdle. The emergence of IIoT resolved this state of affairs and it has become handy to harness plant data through sensors and derive operational and other benefits including operational excellence, better manpower deployment and utilisation, cost reduction, product quality enhancement, and better safety and environmental standards.

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY

Over the years, the oil and gas industry, as a whole, has witnessed considerable improvement in its operational efficiency. This has been possible because of their timely adoption of innovative and commercially proven retrofit and revamps technologies. Modern managements envision to strategically advance reliability, availability, operational efficiency of manufacturing systems and achieve increased production, yields, and ensure remunerative capacity utilisation.

With advanced automation, it is easier to do rigorous and real time plant monitoring, resulting in optimisation of all kinds of resources, better management through effective planning, and scheduling. Going further, highly connected open systems with real time domain and instant data integrated with enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, operators gain command over the increasing complexities in the industry with regard to management of difficult to handle upstream, midstream, and downstream operations.

Even in well-optimised plants, there exists ample scope for improvement in operating efficiency through the adoption of digitisation and IIoT capabilities. Where to tap for further improvement indeed is a tough task. Technologies continue to develop; operating facilities adopt newer ones as and when they become technically proven and commercially viable and the operating results in the real-time plant environment follow them. Within the gaps of these developments lies further scope for optimisation.

A major technology company, through internal studies, has shown that 80 per cent of production downtime,

much of which is due to operator errors, is avoidable. These errors cost the petrochemical industry approximately \$ 20 billion a year. A well-developed preventive maintenance strategy can bring down operating costs which also account for downtime due to unexpected failures by 25 per cent. An advanced predictive maintenance program with the support of wireless technologies, IIoT and machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) enables even greater savings. Under such challenging conditions, there is likely to be a growth of remote operations supported by modern, artificial intelligence platforms.

Current developments in wireless technology—smart sensors, intelligent connectivity, mobile technologies, data storage, analytics, and cyber security are increasingly contributing to advance the operability, productivity, maintenance, safety, and environmental stability in the industry. IIoT intelligently connects physical devices, driving improved operating efficiencies, business growth and environment friendliness. Industry engages with the IIoT and uses a number of sensors of different designs to capture the operating parameters in real time and use the output for decision making to ensure that the operation of the facility adheres closely to the designer's intent and enhance stakeholder value. Connected devices sense operation data and communicate the same to the data centre where it is analysed with the support of big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and cognitive analysis. The output from the analysis is developed into actionable programs to operate the facility in the most optimised manner.

Across the value chain in the oil and gas industry, digitisation and IIoT are engaged to monitor variation in operating parameters, detect leakages, theft and tampering of pipelines, oversee security and integrity of installations and check physical condition and location. Real time monitoring of pumping and compressor stations along cross country pipelines helps to instantly assess inhibitory factors depressing operational efficiencies and expose corrosion. Such measures, taken in advance, improve productivity and thus reduce costs.

In recent years, the industry has been increasingly encouraged to use wireless sensor networks and supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) for monitoring oil and gas installations. Compared to IIoT, wireless sensor networks (WSN) have limited transmission range, storage capacity and power backup all of which need more improvements. On the other hand, SCADA systems are costly, difficult to maintain and not scalable. In its place, digital twins are capable of multiple access of a

wide-ranging data of several equipment at a time at a lower cost. Thus, IIoT is capable of addressing the bottlenecks and improve productivity by enabling predictive maintenance in place of preventive maintenance, monitoring changes in operating conditions in real time and reducing downtime due to accidents. The IIoT architecture for the above purpose comprises sensor (smart device), connectivity to the control centre (gateway), and control centre (server) responsible for application and analysis of data from sensors to generate information and support the decision making process.

Digital twins are coming up in a big way in the manufacturing industry offering to increase utilisation of capacities, improve product quality and output, forecast deviations from the designer's intent with regard to processes and operating parameters, reduce specific consumptions of energy and feedstock, improve bottom lines, and achieve better workplace safety and environmental targets. A digital twin is a virtual model of an asset (compressor) or process (catalytic cracking), use IIoT sensors to monitor and capture data from physical objects, process it in real-time in combination with historical data to provide an elaborate view on the performance of manufacturing equipment and plants. These models are combined with advanced visualisation technologies and data analytics to fast-track troubleshooting, forecast imminent failures, and innovate equipment and retrofit the same in an existing facility.

Often, a low turn down ratio arising out of over design in size and capacity of equipment is a generic problem associated with design. These data driven models in the virtual environment also provide the requisite inputs to better future designs. Digital twins are used in brown field projects to guide the revamp and modernization of

existing facilities to capture better operating efficiencies.

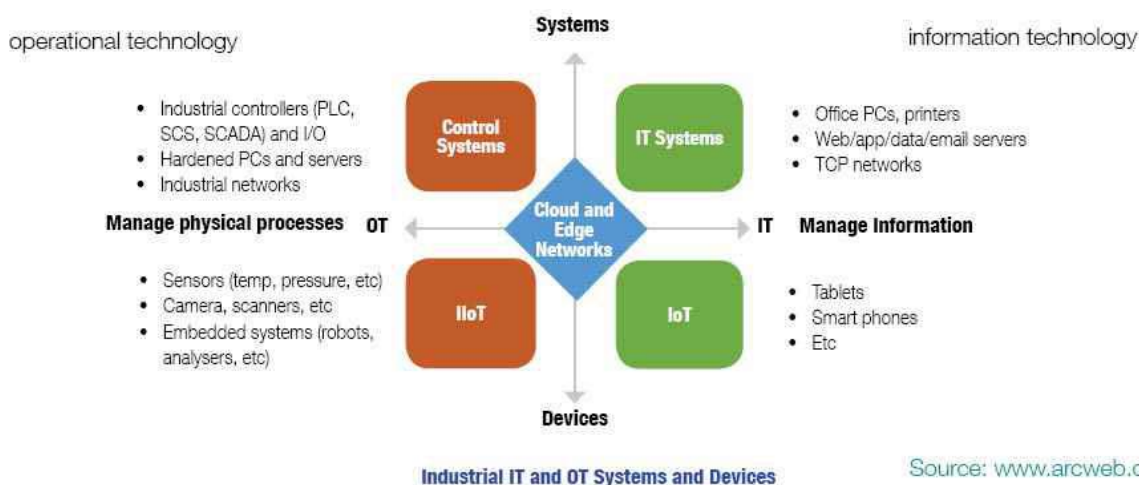
SHIFTING MAINTENANCE STRATEGY

Historically, operators and maintenance men are trained by the original equipment manufacturer (OEM). They list out the immediate as well as long term maintenance requirements during daily inspection. OEMs on the other hand manufacture and deliver equipment with utmost reliability taking into account the facility owner's requirement of balanced throughput, energy efficiency, asset integrity, safety, and long service life. Even with a highly optimised design, the shop floor performance of the equipment may experience certain voids needing design improvements or else to be overcome through a modified operating philosophy. Analysis of real time operating data captured by monitoring systems will help the operator to ascertain deviation in machine condition at the right instant, run a software modelling, and predict an imminent under performance or failure.

The shift from reactive ('run to failure') to reliability centered maintenance (RCM) was gradual and successfully avoided costly equipment failures. Today's pro-active or predictive maintenance programs use advanced AI-based analytics to identify the predominant factors and monitor parameters to fix variations leading to failures—abrupt or incipient. Moreover, advanced predictive systems are capable of accurately predicting remaining life of furnace tubes and likely failure time of rotating equipment. By this, the operator is empowered to extend equipment service life, avoid expensive repairs, and minimise unscheduled downtime.

CORROSION MANAGEMENT

NACE International puts the annual cost impact of corrosion in the processing industry alone as US\$ 50 billion. A 30 per cent savings on adoption of best practices



Source: www.arcweb.com



in corrosion prevention will come to US\$ 15 billion. Beyond economics, corrosion also adversely affects plant reliability, leads to accidents, damages assets and spoils the environment. Therefore, early detection of corrosion, its progress, and the impact of the vulnerabilities of varying process parameters have to be understood through advanced monitoring techniques.

Most of the present-day, non-destructive techniques for corrosion inspections are costly and are likely to invite added risk and downtime. Traditional inspection techniques are built on design data and operating parameters and are likely to evade remote locations such as buried pipes or equipment located in trenches or covered under insulation. Digital corrosion management techniques empower companies to go beyond traditional inspection and maintenance activities to achieve optimum performance all across the unit. By using a digitally enabled corrosion management approach,

companies can develop a holistic, proactive, and cost-effective maintenance and inspection plan and strategies for corrosion abatement and inhibition.

DATA SECURITY

In the digital world, data security is a prime concern and responsibility. Increased digitisation in the oil and gas industry, while improving profitability, raises concerns of cybersecurity risks. Organisations with good governance processes are able to practise security-by-design— building systems and processes able to respond to unexpected risks and emerging dangers. Employee awareness is also a crucial frontline defence.

The EY 20th Global Information Security Survey shows that rising digitisation and IIoT are increasing the complexity of the threat landscape. To protect critical information, an organisation must not only address the security of the traditional IT and OT environments, it must also deal with the added complexities from the IoT, while also integrating innovative digital business process disruptors, such as robotic process automation, blockchain, and artificial intelligence. Never before has it been so important to ensure that security efforts are integrated into every facet of an organisation's operations.

EY Cyber Fusion lists three levels of cyberattacks and suggest remedies thereof.

Common attacks: These are by hackers and can be prevented with tools including antivirus software, intruder detection and protection systems, consistent patch management, and encryption technologies.

Prudent attacks: A prudent threat detection and response capability may be called as a security operation centre (SOC) and is an excellent defence against advanced attacks. SOC's are active defense guards—a deliberately planned and continuously executed campaign that aims to identify and remove hidden attackers and defeat likely threat scenarios targeting the organisation's most critical assets.

Emerging attacks: In order to tackle emerging attacks, such as the rise in cyber-physical threats, in the oil and gas sector, companies need to build agility into their

cybersecurity practices and approaches which reduces their reaction time.

TURNAROUND MANAGEMENT

Turnarounds inevitably contribute to bulk of the downtime in operating plants. Completion of turnaround without time and cost overruns is dependent on ensuring the right and necessary information, supplies, equipment, and manpower at the right time. Therefore, a lot of planning and scheduling is to be done before shutting down a productive plant for cleaning and maintenance purposes.

Today, with the use of AI, real time modelling of maintenance and turnarounds, debottlenecking and troubleshooting become handy and the targets could be achieved almost within the schedule. The development of app-based software is a good way to enhance facility safety.

Wireless monitoring limits the risk of operating personnel being exposed to hazardous areas in the plant. Online monitoring of the loss of heat transfer efficiency of heat exchangers, energy and steam loss through faulty traps, and predicting end of run of reactor catalysts are well established through app-based software. Abnormal situation monitoring is yet another area where smart, wireless devices and sensors enable cloud computing of equipment data in various formats. Overheating, over pressurisation, and excessive vibration limits are set to identify normal and abnormal operations. In AI-based predictive solutions, deviations from the designer's intent or a set fault threshold initiates warning to alert the operating staff.

DIGITAL WORKFORCE

The oil and gas industry are widely distributed and engage thousands of workmen to work under extreme climatic conditions and hazardous installations. Effective coordination of the workforce at all levels with the

objective of achieving greater productivity is a difficult task. Moreover, their safety and wellbeing (physical and mental) are also a concern. Digital workplace services combining cutting-edge technology and best-in class support services enable the workforce to work from anywhere, anytime and in a secured environment. Digital communication enabled workforce solutions, planning and prioritising daily workflows with mobile wearables, IoT and automated AI technologies encourage collaboration among supervisors and workmen and facilitate proactive problem-solving.

Thus, IIoT allows delivery of a large volume of data at greater speeds and at lower costs. A recent Gartner survey suggests that nearly half of all organisations implementing IoT technologies were currently using or were planning to use digital twins. According to a recent research report, the market value of digital twins is estimated to grow from \$3.8 billion in 2019 to \$35.8 billion by 2025. Companies like Royal Dutch Shell are harnessing the power of digital transformation for over two decades to optimise their operations and drive enterprise-wide performance. Indeed, a wedding of operational technology (OT) and information and communication technology (ICT) resulting in a saving potential of the order of 25 per cent in avoidable costs. Besides, it is also another step forward in achieving the COP21 goals of the global climate change agenda.



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PRIMED FOR CONSOLIDATION

Riding on the back of steady supply, booming demand, and compelling valuations, fintech is expected to grow by leaps and bounds in the days to come.

BIMAL RAJ, SINGHI ADVISORS



A NEW FORCE OF HABIT FOR INDIANS

The fintech culture, as it evolved over time has now become synonymous with the way individuals do their day-to-day financial transactions. Ironically the Covid-19 pandemic came as a blessing in disguise for the sector, spurring adoption rates as the country of 1.25 billion moved to find contactless and cashless ways for transacting their daily financial needs. Suffice to say that Covid-19 disruption played out to be a

Financial technology or fintech in short, has been enjoying its moments under the sun for quite some time now. From nowhere in sight a few years back, fintech firms have transformed the conversation about financial intermediation in the country beyond recognition in a very short span of time. Minds with rich imagination even portrayed the scorching growth of the sector as yet another David versus Goliath story with David gaining grounds in the battle field by miles every passing day.

Many of the once puny firms [startups] have now grown in size and achieved a critical mass by chipping away business volumes from bigger banks and other well-entrenched players, in a highly competitive financial domain. Interestingly, their spectacular growth has nudged the leaders in the financial service industry to toe the line, one way or the other, rewriting the much touted 'follow the leader' maxim. Credit is also due to these sprightly innovators who have braved many odds including the yawning trust deficit and push back from stubborn customers by convincing them to join their ranks to meet their daily money moves. Arguably the right minded regulations or Redtechs and the launch of UPI platform by the government with its telling impact on customer adoption rates added tail wind to the sails of the sector.

big boon for the fintech firms with their business volume surging to record highs. It has even altered the behavioural pattern of individuals for good and logging on to fintech platforms has now become a force of habit for most individuals.

THE TICKET SIZE IS GETTING BIGGER

However, despite large scale customer adoption, a major irritant that has been spooking the sector's aspirations is the low ticket size of transactions. This is because despite roaring volumes, the value of the overall transactions remained low. But this will soon become a thing of the past as the regulator has allowed the lenders to use fintech platforms for onward lending to micro and small enterprises. This is decidedly going to be a game changer for the fledgling sector as the amount transacted through this channel will gross higher volumes and leave enough scope for margin expansion.

END OF THE ROAD FOR SUPER SPECIALISATION

As the sector has been growing at a faster clip than the broader economy with high growth visibility, it is only natural that the space has got crowded, if not overcrowded, over a period of time. But it arguably still has

enough space for more players as each firm focuses on highly atomised niches, though, in the long-run, it may not sustain umpteen players with the accompanying economic benefits not justifying the financial costs incurred. With investors becoming more demanding and asking for results from firms before writing the next cheque, the small but super specialist players with little capital buffer can no longer afford to get away with their cash burns.

SUITORS IN WAITING

The rapid pace at which the sector has been growing all these years has predictably lured many big names with deep pockets. And growth compulsions are egging them to take aim at small players operating in niche spaces. It makes good business sense for them to have a higher market share with a finger in many pies. That saves them the trouble of re-inventing the wheel again. Predictably, the small, super specialist players who are left with little fortune to grow business and market share are the natural take-over candidates. While large players sitting on a huge pile of marketing rupees or dollars can still afford to onboard new customers, cash-strapped players with investors breathing over their shoulders to show results have limited options before them but to court the best suitor coming their way.

GETTING VALUATIONS RIGHT

A big positive, however, playing out for the small players with high revenue potential ahead is the changing cap table. With the ticket size of transactions poised to move from small to medium to large, the valuation gap between the high-flying e-commerce platforms and fintech companies is closing fast. This presents a golden opportunity for players with a respectable market share but little cash to burn for further expansion an easy way to

gain capital and move on in business. With the second wave of Covid poised to peak sooner than expected, fintech space with high growth visibility will see a flurry of deal activities in the next six months to one year since the booming sector has got all the three things necessary and essential for consolidation – steady supply, booming demand and compelling valuations.

AND, ENTER THE SUPER APPS

The impending big bang entry of the 'Super Apps' as they choose to call themselves will further turn the wheels of consolidation in the fintech space. These apps are billed as a one-stop-solution for all financial needs of a customer with a single platform offering the services of as many apps. But the big question is will another David with a different market disruption approach give the new Goliaths—super apps—a run for their money is the question that nags the minds of many. Indeed any comments at this point of time may prove immature as the outcome, right now, is anybody's guess. Let us wait and watch.



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Disclaimer

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RURAL FORAY

AI holds great potential to bridge the urban-rural divide in India.

SACHIDANAND UPADHYAY, LORD'S MARK INDUSTRIES PVT. LTD.

Over the last few years, digitisation has become an integral part of our lives and permeated every aspect of it. Technological advancements driven by digital tools and solutions have been pivotal to boosting economic growth and enabling employment generation across the globe. The integration of disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) into core processes has enabled global businesses to increase operational efficiencies and improve productivity. The Indian government is also leveraging AI-led interventions to expedite the upliftment of rural regions. Bolstering the functional competencies of social sector areas like agriculture, education, and healthcare is the key to fostering sustainable development in villages and building resilience in rural communities.

Agriculture is the mainstay of India's economy comprising around 18 per cent of its GDP. Farming and allied activities are the chief source of livelihood for more than 65 to 70 per cent of India's population who live in the country's villages and hinterlands. There is a greater pressure on the farmer today to maximise food production by increasing the average crop yield per acre to feed a growing population.

AI-driven agritech solutions hold the potential to eliminate dated farming techniques and unleash the untapped potential of a sector dominated by fragmented land holdings and lack of mechanisation. Focused investment in AI technologies can help resolve the problems of disrupted supply chains, boost land productivity, and ensure crop security and sustainability. The rural agricultural ecosystem is set for a complete overhaul with the introduction of future-ready AI-enabled digital platforms like e-mandis. These online marketplaces directly connect the farmers with the merchants facilitating the transaction of agricultural produce in a mutually agreed, transparent manner. They also cut out the unwarranted participation of intermediaries like middlemen in the agriculture value chain. This helps farmers get fair and remunerative prices for their products.

Predictive analytics leverages the power of AI and machine learning to help farmers improve agriculture productivity and reduce crop wastage. AI-driven predictive analytics can help farmers in the rural hinterlands of India to boost per acre crop yield through



seasonal forecasting models. These models enable farmers to predict future weather patterns and make informed decision for scheduling farming activities like crop irrigation. Predictive analytics can be used to provide data-driven insights to farmers to optimise their farming operations, facilitate better crop management, improve agricultural supply management, and increase their profitability. Through the promotion of sustainable agriculture practices in rural areas, AI can help India's agricultural sector become self-reliant and facilitate the building of empowered farming communities.

The education infrastructure in the rural areas and far-flung villages of India is found to be lacking in several aspects—abysmal teacher to student ratio, dearth of funding and resources, and lack of access to a stimulating learning environment which hampers the development of their cognitive skills and impedes their social and intellectual growth.

AI can prove to be a game-changer in upgrading the standard of teaching and learning in rural areas. By offering an immersive learning experience for students, it helps spark their creative imagination and motivates them to expand their sphere of knowledge. With a keen emphasis on personalised teaching, AI can help in developing customised learning modules to improve clarity in teaching and help students understand subjects in an easy manner.

An acute shortage of teachers in rural areas can be addressed by the deployment of personalised AI chatbots and virtual assistants. Taking into account the aptitude and the behavioural response of students, these personalized assistants can address the doubts of students in an empathetic manner. By accurately gauging the strengths and weaknesses of a student, AI-driven tools will help them to focus on their area of improvement and boost their learning outcomes.

An AI-driven remote learning model can help brilliant students living in villages to gain admission and access to highly specialised degree and professional courses from prestigious global universities. The government needs to identify such students and subsidise their education through affordable loans and scholarships. Innovative AI-enabled technologies have the potential to improve access to quality education, lower dropout rates, and boost students' learning competencies by providing them an empowered academic environment.

Though India is one of the most populous countries in the world, more than 70 per cent of the healthcare services in the country are provided by the private sector. This has led to quality healthcare becoming inaccessible for the poor, a majority of whom live in rural areas. AI can help in plugging the gaps in the country's healthcare ecosystem and making it more cost-effective and streamlined.

AI-driven solutions can provide insights to ensure optimal decision-making and improve access to quality healthcare

for poor patients in rural areas. Through an in-depth analysis of the personal medical history of patients and keeping track of their disease profiles and related risk factors, AI can facilitate customised treatment interventions for individual patients.

AI-enabled Electronic Health Records (EHRs) systems can be flexible and interoperable, providing clinicians timely access to clinical data of patients. An interoperable AI-enabled EHR enables improved treatment outcomes, helps reduce overhead costs and facilitates data integrity. By checking the authenticity of patient credentials and verifying their health records and claim applications, AI-powered systems can play a key role in ensuring that benefits of government health insurance schemes reach the intended beneficiaries in rural areas.

AI can be positioned as a people-friendly technology having the potential to bridge the urban-rural divide in the country. The disruptive technology can mitigate risks arising out of societal imbalances and resolve humanitarian and ecological challenges. AI-led policy interventions can lay the groundwork for bringing a large number of the rural poor in the social and economic mainstream.



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SAY. DO. CONFIRM.

Brands with a purpose—do they deliver?

AMBI PARAMESWARAN, BRAND-BUILDING.COM

Toto Chan—Girl by the Window is reputed to be the largest selling Japanese book of all time. Written by Tetsuko Kurayonagi, a TV personality, it is a charming story about her childhood in post-World War II Japan. She attended a small school called Tomoe Gaukuen that had some unique practices that made the children fall in love with the school and its principal. One such practice was that children should come dressed in their oldest set of clothes. Why? Well, the school encouraged them to play in the dirt and sand. Clothes could get dirty and may even tear.

As I was reading this delightful book, I was reminded of the Unilever's Persil 'Dirt is Good' campaign, now in its 13th year. In India the campaign was adapted for another Unilever brand Surf and the line was the evocative 'Daag Ache Hain'. Just as the kindly principal of Tomoe Gaukuen, Surf wants parents to encourage their kids to get their clothes dirty by playing in the open. Because Surf had the detergent power to remove the deepest of deep stains and dirt.

Surf and Persil are good examples of a brand that has transcended from rational and emotional benefits to a purpose-driven campaign.

WHY ARE PURPOSE DRIVEN BRANDS BECOMING MORE AND MORE IMPORTANT?

In a highly cluttered market place, brands are getting more and more commoditised. They contain similar raw materials and provide similar benefits. In the 1970s and 1980s, for example, in the case of cleaning detergents, brands could stand apart based on their cleaning power. Once that bridge was crossed, brands started harping on emotional benefits—love care, bonding, and so on.

The new millennium has levelled the field for both rational and emotional benefits. And as Bob Garfield of Ad Age observed about purpose-driven branding: "It is not positioning. It does not aim to be differentiating. Purposefulness is an ethic. A worldview. A mentality."

If Unilever did a fabulous 'Dirt is Good' campaign, Procter & Gamble, maker of Ariel, was not to be left behind. They unearthed a social truth in Indian society. Washing clothes, even in washing machine equipped upper market homes, was the woman's domain. Why can't men be roped into

this? The campaign 'Share The Load' is now in its sixth year and every year they manage to add a new layer to the campaign.

Let us pause here for a bit. Why are these two campaigns case study material. Simply because they are strongly integrated with what the product does. It is not like a fashion label running a LGBTQ campaign, or an insurance company showcasing a girl with a disability.

Surf's 'Dirt is Good' is all about the product; it cleans, irrespective of the kind of amount dirt. In a different vein, Ariel 'Share the Load' is also about the fact that the detergent is so good that even an untrained man will be able to do the job. Not to worry.

If we were to analyse these two campaigns, we find that they adhere to what T Duncan and S Moriarty [authors of the book Driving Brand Value – Using Integrated Marketing to Manage Profitable Stakeholder Relationships] suggested as the Strategic Consistency Triangle. Say. Do. Confirm. What are the planned messages you are going to say? What does your product and service do. What is the way you are going to get a confirmation from your customers/stakeholders.

If we examine Ariel and Surf we will see that their effort was not a whitewashing, or should I say 'purposewashing' exercise, but based on what their products actually deliver to customers. Thanks to this 'say-do connect' they actually got a very strong 'confirm' from all the stakeholders concerned. Their consumers loved the campaign, opinion leaders and influencers loved the campaigns, and the ads even won some awards.

Ariel and Surf are not the only two brands to have run successful purpose based brand campaigns. In packaged tea both Tata Tea and Brooke Bond Red Label have run successful purpose led campaigns.

Tata Tea's 'Jaago Re' was rooted in what a hot cup of tea does for you, it wakes up all your senses. And Tata Tea made it a call to activism. Brooke Bond Red label's campaign 'Taste of Togetherness' managed to use the bonding power of a cup of tea to building relationships across caste, creed, and religion. Both these campaigns have had a good deal of confirmation from customers and media.

Among all the global purpose driven campaigns none has received more recognition than Dove's 'Campaign For Real Beauty'. This was lauded as the No. 1 Campaign on the Ad Age's top 15 campaigns of the 21st century. The brand has been able to adapt this concept to various cultures and geographies. In India this year they have started a campaign 'Stop the Beauty Test', to get parents to stop looking for fair and beautiful brides for their sons. Their campaign has been well received, and, instead of just doing a campaign, the brand is engaging with all matrimonial websites and newspapers to nudge advertisers to avoid beauty terms in their ads. We have to wait and see if it has an impact on behaviour, but it is a good effort. If you were to layer the fact that Dove is a premium soap that is almost clinically devoid of perfumes, it sits well with the 'real beauty' promise.

While these are all great purpose led brand campaigns, there is also the virus of 'jump on to the new purpose' gripping marketers. You may have seen a one off campaign from health insurance companies using differently abled children. Or a fashion label showing off an LGBTQ activist. Or a paint company touting women empowerment. Girl child. Poverty alleviation. Eradicating illiteracy. Improving nutrition.

Many of these campaigns are one-off efforts and will be forgotten the moment they stop running. Building purpose driven brands is not the job of an advertising agency or a film maker. You need to examine what your brand does and then see how you can discover the purpose behind the brand. Take Lifebuoy. It always stood for health: 'Tandurusthi Ka Raksha Karta Hai Lifebuoy', went the old jingle. They managed to find a link to health, hand washing, and preventable diseases in children. Their campaign 'Help a Child Reach Five', created in India has gone to many developed countries. Lifebuoy could not have done a 'Share the Load' or an 'LGBTQ Empowerment' campaign.

In her article in Journal of Brand Strategy [Spring 2017, Chung-Kue [Jennifer] Hsu suggests a five step process. Start with a long-term commitment—what does your brand do and what can your brand do that is credible? Be relevant and have a serving mindset: the purpose you pick should intersect your brand, your target consumers and the larger cultural ecosystem. Be honest and transparent in your 'say' messages: express your messages in an authentic tone of voice. Be consistent with your 'say' and 'do' messaging: you cannot have a campaign that is disjointed with what you are doing on the ground [State Street Global Advisors that sponsored the 'Fearless Girl' statue in Wall Street New York was discovered to be discriminating between its male and female employees]. And finally use social media to reach and inspire your audience. Remember, if you are not getting a confirmation message back from your target audience then your efforts are not getting recognised.

Lastly, it is not a compulsion that you should look for a purpose to hitch your brand to. Sometimes your brand comes with a well-infused purpose. In India, you can think of Tata, Amul, FabIndia and a few more. But it is not always possible to find a purpose that you can 'say-doconfirm'. If so, better stick with rational and emotional messaging.



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THE A.C.C. OF LEADERSHIP

Imbibing an 'Awareness', 'Choice' and 'Care' can help achieve the desired results in all fields—be it work or personal life.

SHEEJA SHAJU, INSTITUTE OF GENERATIVE LEADERSHIP, ASIA

Invite you to reflect on the questions I have added in the article at the end of every piece.

In one of my coaching conversations, a coachee of mine who was also the head HR of a large organisation said that she was facing some issues with her team.

She said, "I am doing all it takes for my managers to be happy, but I don't feel the connection with them. They don't express much, and I also find them avoiding my presence. I feel they don't trust me. I wish I knew how to handle this because it is affecting the results."

The A.C.C. of Leadership is about three powerful words that have the potential to change our lives. All that is required on our part is to understand and implement them.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE FIRST ONE: A = AWARENESS

In my coachee's world, she was working very hard to have the team trust her. According to her she had ticked all the boxes, and yet she did not have the desired results. This just means that there was something missing; something she was not aware was happening; something she was blind to.

REMEMBER, YOU CANNOT ALTER WHAT YOU CANNOT SEE!

Imagine, putting a bull in a china shop (I know the thought itself is weird!). The bull, in all its 'blindness', will cause destruction. Just the swish of its tail will do a lot of damage to the goods. But the bull is just being what it is. It is perhaps just walking or probably trying to get out of the shop.

Similarly, we, as humans, do a lot of damage in our lives by being blind and unaware in many domains. Let us go deeper in one of them here.

In our trainings, we often ask people, "Where do actions come from?" and the usual answers we get are "events" or "conversations with others (planning, brain-storming, strategies)", etc.

Here is what we claim happens: When an event takes place, we quickly make a story in our minds, think that story to be the truth, and based on that story, we take actions in the real world. So, between the event and the action is 'our story' that is 'our interpretation of the event'.

No wonder, for the same event, different people take different actions.

The interesting thing is that we are blind that we make stories. We are also blind that we hold these stories to be the truth. We forget that we were the authors of these stories in the first place!

Relating back to the example of my coachee. She narrated one of the incidents which made her think her people





distrusted her, “Last week, when I entered the cafeteria, some of my staff who were seated there were speaking animatedly. As soon as they saw me, they stopped talking and resumed their lunch without a word, and as soon as I exited, I heard them speaking and laughing again. I am sure they were speaking about me behind my back!”

Here, my coachee is relating the experience from what she felt is the truth. She did not realise that she created those stories based on her interpretations of the situation. If we were to speak to the team candidly, they may come up with completely different reasons for keeping quiet when she entered.

My coachee had many similar experiences to share, due to which she made herself believe that her team distrusted her.

Because you do not see something does not mean it does not exist. But we forget this and go about in our own world thinking our stories to be the truth and taking actions accordingly. My coachee here was clearly not considering other possibilities that she could not 'see'.

Relate this to your life and think of the last time you were unhappy/upset/disempowered. Become aware of the stories you made then

1. Get present to the action you took because of those stories

2. What results did that story set you up for?

Awareness gives you the choice to shift your stories and opens up possibilities for new actions and hence new results!

LET US LOOK AT THE NEXT ONE, C=CHOICE

This one is actually a part of the Awareness bit, but the power of Choice needs more attention; hence, I have created it as a separate piece.

Our stories determine our actions and thus our results. We are the authors of our stories but many of us are blind to it. We always have a choice in the stories we create.

Imagine this: As the events take place, you become aware that you are creating the stories. You see that if you change your story, what you will speak or do will change. You make a choice, you now see the power you have to change the future. You are not at the mercy of the situation anymore. You see you have choice and you are exercising that choice!

I am greatly inspired by Amanda Lindhout, author of *A House in the Sky*. She was a journalist, who, along with her entourage, was kidnapped and held in captivity for 15 months by Islamist insurgents in southern Somalia. This book is about her experiences during that time, which include physical and mental abuse by her kidnappers and she states that ending her life would have been an easy choice. But instead she chose freedom. She was committed that she would one day go back to living a normal life. Which is exactly what she did. Today she travels the world and conducts talks about her experience.

What did Amanda do? She exercised her power of choice. She created stories that would help her stay focused on getting out of that place.

IF SHE COULD DO IT, THEN WHAT IS OUR EXCUSE?

Here are some questions for you to reflect on-

1. What are your stories about your spouse/ children/in-laws/customers/colleagues?
2. See that you are making a choice in creating these stories,
3. Observe you have a choice in changing them,
4. What new actions and results will the new stories give you?

LET US MOVE ON THE NEXT C = CARE

We believe that humans are beings of 'Care'. Simply put, we humans live to take care of what matters to us. All our actions and efforts are directed towards taking care of something. When we take care of what matters to us, we have value, satisfaction, meaning and empowerment in life.

But the interesting thing here is many of us do not know what we care for. And if this is the case, then we will not know if we are taking care of that what matters to us. This will often result in us being unsatisfied with the results.

A few years ago, we conducted a 9-month program for a massive auto-component manufacturing organisation, and one of the participants, who was then the regional head of sales, was particularly quiet and pensive. When provoked to share his thoughts, he said, "My family is my care. I always thought I was taking care of them by providing them with a comfortable home and great quality of life in all senses. But now I see I have been missing out something very big." His eyes were moist at this part. He continued, "My family consists of my twin children who are 3-year-old and my wife. Every evening I go home and sit in front of the TV or read the newspaper or I am on my phone or laptop. If my twins want to show me something or speak to me, I usually only nod my head and go back to my work. I now realise, I hardly speak to my wife too. Suddenly, I feel I have lost many years of my life."

This man committed to taking charge of his life and in three months, when he came for his next session, he

shared he was much more committed to his cares and was very satisfied about how he was handling things.

There are three very important questions you need to ask yourself-

1. What do you care about?
2. Are you taking care of what you care about?
3. If you are not taking care of what you care about, then what are you doing?

Living a life of Awareness, Choice and Care will enable you to take full charge of your future and thus have results in your life that matter to you.

I have learnt from Bob Dunham, Founder of Institute for Generative Leadership about the power of Care.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sheeja Shaju is Director of Learning and Somatic Leader, Institute of Generative Leadership, Asia.

Disclaimer

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THE WAY FORWARD

Digitalisation, to be adopted by all, must be first made user-friendly.

RAJEEV SHROFF, CUPELA CONSULTANCY

According to the ICUBETM report by Kantar, December 2020 ended with an active internet user base of 639 million. Classrooms went online and e-learning emerged as the new trend. Workforces settled into a 'work from home' module and the 'Vocal for Local' businesses gained rapid recognition. The world witnessed a massive wave of digitalisation, as 2020 proved that remote working is here to stay. It also established the fact that every individual as well as business, needs a contingency plan.

But questions kept surfacing constantly: 'Is this wave an all-encompassing one?' or 'Is it for a selected few?' And if this wave is not inclusive enough to uplift everyone, then how are we going to sustain the pace of the evolving technology?

During the pandemic, professionals across industries, geographies, genders, as well as age groups got drawn into the 'tech-wave'. From banking and payments to consumption of video content across OTT platforms, to consistently engaging over social media portals, digital inclusion became essential. To put it simply, this wave of digital solutions became a self-sustaining medium of user-

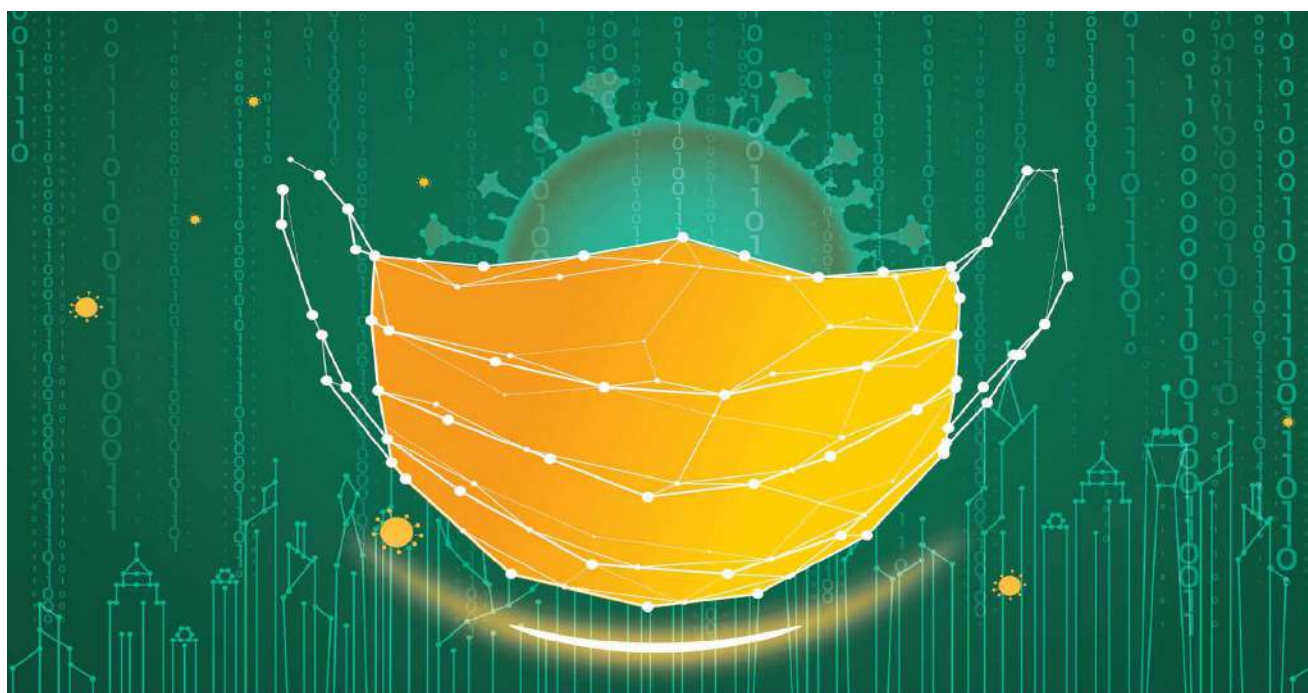
generated content. It comprised availability, accessibility, operational feasibility, and most importantly, a spectrum of diverse users.

But, have organisations been successful in securing a digitally inclusive future for their users?

Most of these digital solutions have not been designed for mass use. Instead, they are marketed with targeted USP and predominantly attract the corporate and MNC crowds. In today's lingo, the urban millennials. These solutions are constantly evolving and integrating new competitive features. But they seem to hardly ever consider the aspect of being user-friendly or even user-centric in design. In user interface, less is more and very few applications have been designed to provide a natural user experience. Therefore, the more we replicate common, humanised behaviour in digital interactions, the more the adoption will increase.

RISING BEYOND THE BARRIERS

How would your users know the benefits of going digital if it has not been communicated in the right manner? Will



they be able to adapt if they have not received any form of training or mentoring?

Misinformation in the press is becoming an alarming issue as bombardment of communications can be detrimental. Take the example of everyday television advertisements by banks, issuing warnings about not sharing personal data or OTPs—for every person that it manages to alert, there are some that may take a complete aversion to the very existence of digital banking. Besides, exaggerated stories doing rounds on WhatsApp, further add to the fear of the unknown for embracing digital.

Therefore, just as people are taught how to drive carefully instead of being scared into not driving at all, a better way would be to teach safe and beneficial use of digital before thrusting it upon them. Changing the human mindset is a continuous and everyday process. Using informative campaigns and creating an interactive omni-channel presence to address queries will help people transition better into the digital world.

FLEXIBILITY IS ESSENTIAL

Human interactions are based on experiences. It forms the basis of our ability to absorb and analyse the information, before we make any decision. Whereas, AI and ML tools use pre-programmed mechanisms that come across as impersonal. It is either a 'Yes, I can help you with your concern' or 'No, I am unable to process your inputs.'

For example, you log onto a portal that allows you to order a newspaper online. It gives you a drop-down list of newspapers. But if you are looking for a particular newspaper, say for example The Hindu, and the chatbot does not have the specified name in its list, it may not be able to recommend an alternative, unless, it has been designed or trained to do so. Whereas, if it were to be a human interaction, the solution could be, 'Hey, the Indian Express is very similar to The Hindu. Why not try that instead?'

E-commerce giants like Amazon are beginning to get a hang of it but are still in a nascent stage. There are alternative suggestions based on past purchase history of the consumer. But trusting a new brand takes time and there is no way to compare the quality, unless you experience it yourself.

DEMYSTIFYING THE COMPLEXITIES

According to Capgemini's report on 'The Great Digital Divide', 36 per cent people claim that complexity of using the internet restrains them from making the most of the available technology.

While some find it hard to upgrade and keep up, some struggle with the mere technicalities.

To ease the process of purchase for consumers, a lot of digital first brands have integrated an OTP verification system into their payment gateway. But expecting the generation currently in their fifties and sixties to adopt as easily, is unfortunately a misjudged assumption. Instead, can there be a better solution developed? A voice recognition mechanism or even facial recognition, perhaps? Could symbols or voice control be used with customisable access to reduce the dependency on typing?

Digital literacy that empowers the digitally excluded to access more online opportunities has to be implemented across sectors. Brands often disregard the demographics and neglect the existing intergenerational gaps amidst the users. Simplification of technologies is therefore the key to driving an impactful digital transformation.

DIGITAL ERA IS LARGELY DRIVEN BY DATA

The internet age has created a digital divide in our existing society—one spectrum being called the 'digital natives' and the others labelled as 'digital immigrants'. For decades, digital growth has been driven by private enterprises. But today, when its penetration has expanded across different markets, an intervention is critical. There is a rising demand for a people-centric public policies that protect the privacy of its users.

The future is definitely driven by digital and digital inclusion will be incomplete if it does not cater to a diverse plethora of user base. Investing in tech without mapping out sustained improvement or relevant communications, is like shooting an arrow in the dark. Therefore, while maximising the use of digital, one also needs to consider how the tech-first digital initiatives can truly be inclusive.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rajeev Shroff is CEO and Global Leadership Coach, Cupela Consultancy.

Disclaimer

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TOWARDS A BETTER FUTURE

The future of the world depends on the actions we take today with respect to climate change and environmental degradation.

KRISHAN KALRA, CLIMATE PROJECT FOUNDATION INDIA

The dreaded COVID pandemic is hopefully on its way out and everyone is looking forward to getting back to some sort of normalcy in their lives and work. Much has been written, spoken, and discussed about how the pandemic has affected our lives, jobs, education, healthcare infrastructure, businesses, and industry; how it has ruined the economy of most countries and this debate is likely to go on for a long time. Most of us are hoping that the so called 'New Normal' will free us from all restrictions—on travel, socialising, work, shopping, entertainment, cultural events, sports et al—and we will once again get back to 'business as usual'. Sadly, it is not going to be so. We seem to be missing out on one of the crucial factors that has brought us face to face with the cursed infection and no one is sure if that will disappear with the universal vaccination drive. The purpose of this article is to first reflect on that and then to explain the possible scenario of a realistic 'new normal'.

Sir David Attenborough, world renowned environmentalist and elder brother of the late Sir Richard Attenborough who made the highly acclaimed film *Gandhi*, has beautifully explained the relationship between the pandemic and another much debated subject 'climate change'. In an engaging short video, he puts it down to the phenomenon of the human race encroaching upon and appropriating the space meant for animals, birds, reptiles, insects, and other species and how some of these species are getting dangerously close to the human habitats—in a sort of poetic justice to reclaim what was always theirs. Man's ever-expanding ambition, seemingly insatiable appetite for more, wanton consumerism, and unchecked desire to possess more of everything—greed, to put it crudely—lie at the root of all this. The 93-year-old naturalist's recent Netflix documentary *A Life On Our Planet* has jolted the world from complacency and set people, communities, and countries realising that our planet is dying by our hands; it made them think how to slow down and stop this suicidal act of humanity. This is a scary message coming from a man whose voice is synonymous with so many documentaries on nature. He strikes a balance between the urgency of the situation on the one hand and also offers a sense of hope

on the other. He has a vision for the future and tells us how we can 'right our wrongs'. My own takeaway from the film, very briefly, is 'we must learn to live with less'.

Before I talk about the corporate world, industry, and the national economy, let me start with our own wardrobes and homes. Have a critical look at the clothes, shoes, and personal accessories like watches, pullovers, ties, cuff links, belts, wallets each one of us owns; how many of these have we not used for, say, one or two years? Perhaps 50 per cent will easily fall in that category. Most of us have become impulsive buyers—we see a friend wearing a nice new shirt or a suit and go rushing to the mall to pick up something similar without giving a thought to whether we need it or not. Once at the stores, a couple of pairs of new shoes/sneakers or a jacket or another shirt catches our eye, and we get back home with several shopping bags.

Of course, women are several steps ahead in this department; they hoard much more than men. How can any self-respecting woman be seen twice in the same outfit in the same crowd? The new acquisitions are worn a couple of times and then consigned to the back of the almirah as soon as one is out for another shopping binge. Why do we do that? Vanity or 'keeping up with the others', or retail-therapy for the over-stressed, but certainly not for catering to our needs. Flashy advertisements, fake sales, high voltage promotions by manufacturers, and brand owners only add to our cravings and we give in. The same thing holds good for other personal acquisitions including household goods; we buy them not because the old ones are no longer good, but only because we want to possess the latest offerings in the market, and, of course, it feels great to show these off to family, friends, and the social circle.

Peer pressure is a huge contributor; so, why not? How does it harm anyone? I have the money and every right to splurge. True, but please consider that everything one buys—even just a shirt—uses precious resources like water and energy and leaves a carbon footprint making Mother Earth that much poorer. If only we can become a little more circumspect and buy less, we will cause lesser



damage to the planet—our only home in the vast universe.

As a start, I looked into my own hoard sometime in April/May 2020 and took an instant decision to 'not buy or accept as a gift any clothes, shoes, and accessories at least till end of March 2022'. The way things are going I would perhaps extend this to 2025 barring may be a pair each of slippers and sneakers and some underwear. And, I am very sure, I am not alone in making this resolution. Others are probably giving up bigger comforts and more vanity items.

Even Zandra Lindsey Rhodes, the eighty year old high priestess of Britain's fashion world, has gone on record,

during an interview with an Indian journalist, saying, "Going forward it won't be spend-spend-spend. If we are to keep the world going as we know it, we will have to do it differently. Scaling down the industry is inevitable and desirable." Coming from such a big designer, it gives us some pointers about the shape of things to come. After all, it is the designer fraternity that creates dreams for the rich and famous and eggs them on to their insatiable spending spree.

Let me now move on to business and industry—the corporate world. COVID and the related lockdowns gave boost to the concept of 'work from home' (WFH), and, surprisingly, a lot of companies seem to have discovered its merits. People work flexi hours, they save time spent on commuting—up to four hours in some cases—and the resultant fatigue, they do not have to dress up for office, they can help with household work, spend more time with the family...there is seemingly no downside to this. Barring factories and a few jobs involving 'essential personal contact' nearly 25 per cent of all

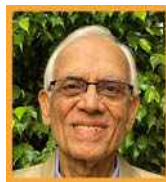
workforce will perhaps continue with WFH even after some sort of 'herd immunity' is achieved. Really, a win-win for the employers and employees.

Many corporates have already surrendered large areas of rented office space, those with their own buildings are swelling or renting out. MD of CISCO India recently mentioned in a press interview that his company's 16,000 employees who were working out of a 25-acre sprawling complex are now operating from 109 towns across the country. Worldwide, CISCO has closed numerous offices and given better tools and technologies to employees so that they can collaborate remotely. They are moving away from the concept of pouring huge amounts of money into real estate.

Of course, there are challenges. WFH means missing out on emotional bonding, team building, creating personal relationships, and trust and companies are suggesting various options to employees for working together virtually on fun things like exercise and book clubs, cooking, board games, and making care-packages for the underprivileged.

Real estate sector is rightly worried, but there is demand for space by the new businesses that have emerged—delivery services, video chat platforms like Zoom, edu-tech firms, technology startups, research labs for healthcare, and other sectors. There is enough opportunity for real estate companies in the national infrastructure building area as well as affordable housing. Green buildings, more efficient HVAC systems, reimagined packaging to reduce waste and pollution, electric cars, and two wheelers would all help to reduce pressure on the planet. To quote Harsh Goenka, Chairman, RPG Enterprises, “The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted an urgent need to create sustainable economies. India can take a lead in earth-friendly businesses and consumer strategies. We can't just continue living as if there was no tomorrow, because there is a tomorrow”. Well said, sir, if only we do not kill that tomorrow with our consumerist culture of always wanting more of everything.

And, to top it all, our drive to change from fossil-based energy to renewable sources-based is already amongst the fastest in the world and must continue and pick up even greater speed. At the same time our agriculture has to transform. We just cannot carry on with the hugely inefficient irrigation systems and water guzzling crops which we do not even need. Environmental degradation and lack of inclusivity are perhaps the two biggest challenges before the world today and it is more than likely that both will be addressed by the corporate world as they move on with life in the post-pandemic era. Our new normal will and should lead us to a better world.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Krishan Kalra is past president of AIMA and member, BOG IIMC. He is Trustee, Climate Project Foundation India.

Disclaimer

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AIMA EVENTS CALENDAR

Event	Programme Chairman/Director	Venue	Date
New Age Leadership Workshop		Online	03 March 2022
Management Development Programme (Gamification)		Online	04 March 2022
Global Procurement Summit		Online	07-08 March 2022
54th LeaderSpeak session	Mr Baijayant "Jay" Panda, National Vice President and Spokesperson of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	Online	09 March 2022
Programme on Business Strategies to Drive Growth in the New World		Online	15 March 2022
Corporate Management Olympiad		Online	15-17 March 2022
PSU Summit		Online	18 March 2022
AIMA Online Training on Mentoring for New Mentors		Online	22 March 2022
Programme on Marketing strategies in an impatient economy		Online	24 March 2022

Event	Programme Chairman/Director	Venue	Date
Case Writing Competition and Conference		Online	24-25 March 2022
10th Pragati - Celebrating Achievements of Women		Online	29-30 March 2022
Retreat on Leadership in the Post Pandemic World		Goa	31 March - 02 April 2022
7th National Leadership Conclave and 12th Managing India Awards		New Delhi	12 April 2022
31st National Management Games (NMG 2022)		Online Regional Round 1 Regional Round 2 Regional Round 3 Regional Round 4 Regional Round 5 Grand Finale	24-27 May 2022 7-10 June 2022 21-24 June 2022 5-8 July 2022 11-14 July 2022 16 July 2022
Women Leadership Workshop		Online	May 2022
Management Development Programme (Gamification)		Online	June 2022





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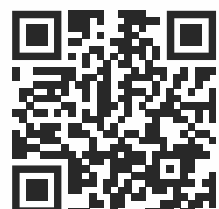
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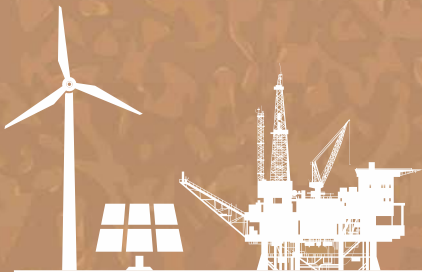
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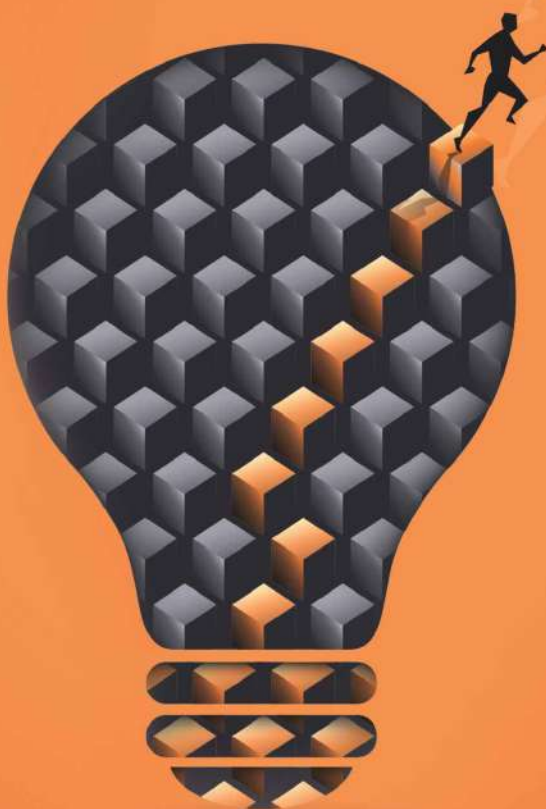
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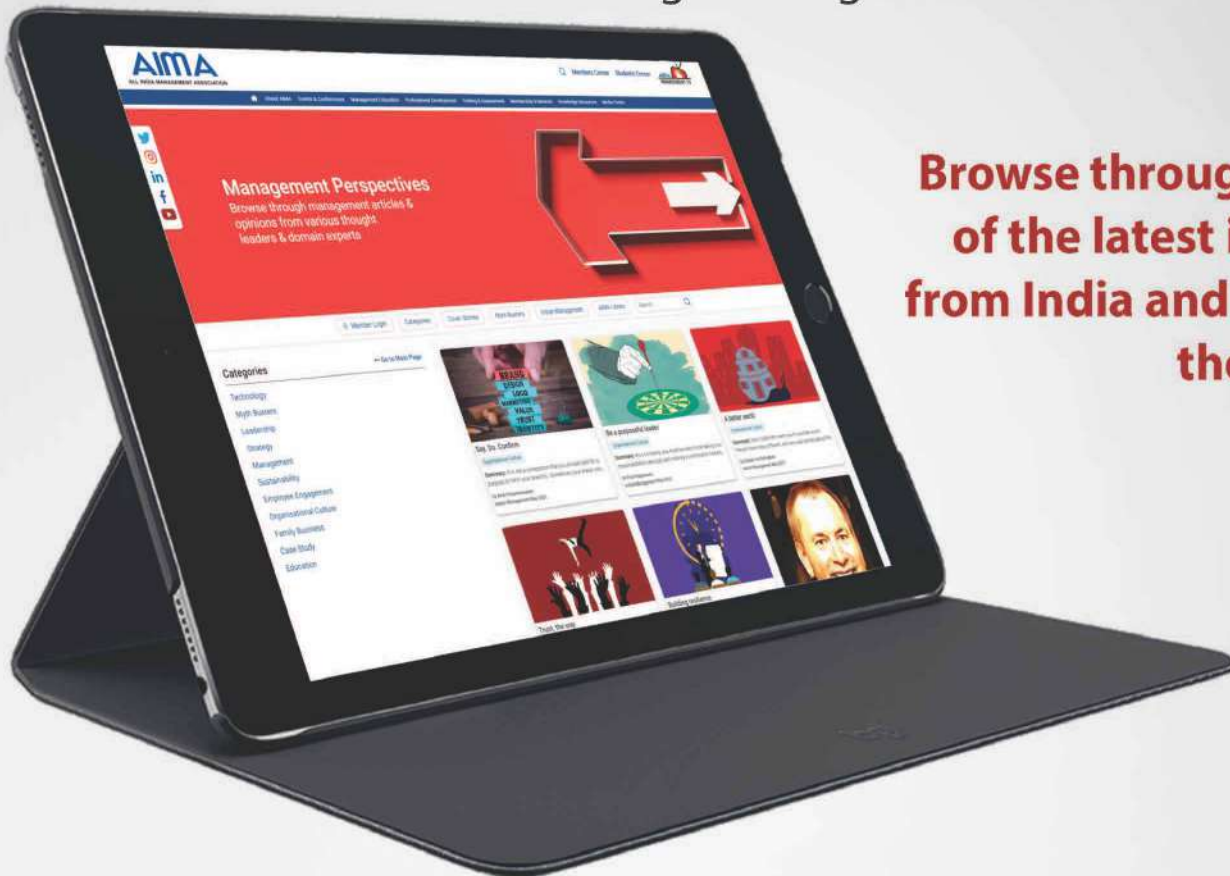


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