

# OD Quarterly

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## Learning the Elements of Good Judgment

*An interview exploring the 6 elements  
of Judgement and it's implications*

May 2023

## Attrition – Stop Analysing only the parts, study the whole

*A practical approach to resolve  
the attrition problem*

## The potential of turning empathy into skilful leadership practice

*An article exploring empathy for  
business leaders*

## Network Governance and Creative Leadership: The Formation of Udupi Jille

*Exploring the formation of Udupi Jille*

## Quo Vadis OD? Awakening Inspired Leadership in Organizations for the Future

*A practitioner's approach to leadership  
for the future*

And many more..



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# From the Editor's Desk

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Dear Reader,

As the monsoon makes its entry into South India, here is our latest Quarterly. In a world where attention span of people, all of us, are decreasing at an alarming level, an easy decision would be to offer small chunks of content.

Then that would be for people who like to do the easy things. Or for people who just follow the trend without thinking what is really useful. I am sure you are not in that category, neither us.

So here is some serious, slightly longer articles, some from academicians and some from practitioner's. We have tried to be inclusive in terms of choice of articles and writers so that you get a wide spectrum and body of knowledge.

I hope you enjoy reading this quarterly and we would like your feedback and continued support. We strongly feel that by change the nature of conversations, the we could create a shift in our thinking and doing. And we have tried doing that in this quarterly.

Happy reading and I look forward hearing your thoughts on this quarterly

**Founder of ODA**

Santhosh Babu

**Editor**

Priyanka Sharma

Smriti Walia

**Designer**

Gurtej Singh Kalsey

# Learning the Elements of Good Judgment

Yogi Sriram



Consultant to CEO & MD, Group Human Resources Larsen & Toubro Limited at Larsen & Toubro

For over 4 decades Yogi has been leading the HR function for large companies , most notably for India's most successful and large engineering and construction conglomerate , L&T. At L&T, he has contributed by conceptualizing & implementing a Performance Management System called FAIR, developing a high potential programme with over 20000 assessments of leaders in 2 decades and several other first of the kind HR Policies, particularly in Leadership Development & Talent Management. His specific skills and interest areas are:

1. Developing and designing a Job Evaluation system
2. Developing and designing a Variable Pay Plan for the IT Sector
3. Developing and designing Employee Stock Option Plans
4. Compensation of Independent Directors and Whole time Directors in listed companies
5. Team building using research and Applied Behavioural Science
6. Mentoring for improving leadership competencies
7. Designing Learning & Development Interventions
8. Industrial Relation Strategy and advise on matters related to the Labour Code
9. Drafting and improving HR policies in areas ranging from Performance Appraisal to Talent Acquisition
10. Conversationalist for relating Social Psychology with contemporary challenges and opportunities in the current HR environment.
11. Deriving insights from Employee Engagement Surveys
12. Setting up HR Departments and Teams appropriate for the business.
13. Deriving insights from the National Education Policy and the EdTech Sector for Industry Academia Collaboration
14. Coaching to develop HR competencies for the HR team

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# Learning the Elements of Good Judgment

Yogi Sriram

We interviewed Mr. Yogi Sriram to learn about the elements of good judgment for leaders and how they can be learned and imbibed into our leadership practice.

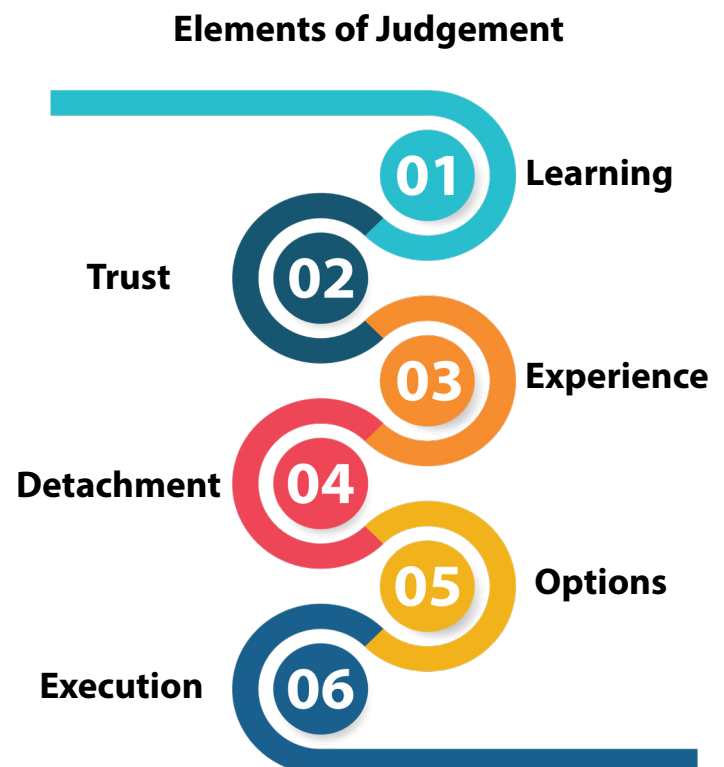
## How did you become interested in this topic of judgment? Do tell us a little more about it.

I became interested in the topic of judgment after a chance encounter with Sir Andrew Likierman, a former dean of the London Business School at a social gathering in Bombay. He asked me a question that made me think "Do you know what judgment means?" I was a bit taken aback and immediately my LLB mind went to a judgment order of the court or it went to someone pronouncing their judgment to be fair etc. Then he told me not to worry about what you think judgment is and asked me if there is a translation of the word judgment in my language. I saw "Nirnay" when I googled it. I told him that I am struggling to find a translation, he told me that he had tried this in 50 languages and he found the same story being repeated there- a faithful definition of the word judgment could not be found. I am not celebrating the English language for this reason, but **the term judgment needs to be understood and building a capability of making "sound judgment calls" needs to be developed. That is also at the core of good leadership.**

In this world of abundant information, knowledge and scarce wisdom there is a need for people to develop this art. It is not an esoteric thing that descends from the heavens or something that is gifted because you work in a blue-chip company or a listed company, or because you have gone to a public school. It needs to be developed. In his article in the Harvard Business Review from Jan 2020, he talks about these 6 elements.

The whole concept of being able to understand these 6 elements is very profound. There are 100's of articles and millions of thoughts on leadership, however the elements of good judgment are rarely talked about, and it is all about how to learn leadership.

Since then, I have been trying to read and learn more about it.



## What are the strategies for Leaders to develop the skills of judgment? What are the six elements of good judgment?

Each of these elements has a scope for one to learn from stories and conversations. **The first element is Learning.** It is not just listening to audios or watching YouTube videos or listening to audibles. It means learning through life's experiences. So, it is not exactly orthogonal, because all the six elements are interdependent. It happens when you read, listen very intently and it's very reflective. In corporate life one sees a lot of information, and here I am emphasizing more on reading. Enough has been said about listening. It is very important to go through things with a magnifying glass. There are many things that are unsaid, and learning in the context of not taking things for granted is very important. The author, Sir Andrew Likierman



gives a very interesting example of a Russian commander Stanislav Petrov, a scary episode that happened in 1983. He was in-charge of a missile station during the cold war. There was a glimpse of a missile hurtling towards Russia. He decided not to report it because he thought it improbable that the US would attack Russia. It turned out that it was the glint of the sun on the clouds, had he reported it, it would have led to nuclear war. Not that things are any better today, but at least this story tells us about the need to filter out mind-sets and assumptions we make before we go into the depths.

The second element he talks about is trust. Having a network of trustworthy individuals around you, who know about things better than you. Jack Ma, from Alibaba had never touched a keyboard when starting Alibaba. He said he wanted to hire the best. And a similar example of Sheryl Sandberg being hired by Mark Zuckerberg.

The example of Lincoln also takes us to the next example of seeing validation and not diversity. I don't know why leaders, as they become more successful, start seeking out yes men that have the same core beliefs. Also, they start thinking that they are infallible. However, past success is not a proxy for future success. For them particularly, amongst HR and line managers in multinationals - the word diversity is interpreted very narrowly to mean differently abled, women etc. However, leaders who surround themselves with people that are not yes men/women are more successful. Cycling back to Lincoln, there is a famous book by Doris Kearns Godwin called "Team of Rivals", she mentions that Lincoln deliberately assembled a cabinet where people would disagree with each other all the time. They were not maliciously against each other, but he had the art of creating a debate so that different perspectives can be got. So, seeking diversity and not validation is a very practical way of learning good judgment. It is hard because as people become more successful, they need more validation. I do not know why people need validation in spite of achieving power, success, a certain amount of influence and so on. So, they prefer to take people, that according to them "do not waste their time" and they are very dismissive of people who have a different opinion. I am so sorry to say that people who are from high potential programs tend to do that more and if

you happen to have the misfortune of being from elite institutions, I am deliberately using mischievous language here - three letter elite institutions - I will leave that to your imagination - you think you are walking on water, I am God, you cannot go wrong. I have cracked the GRE or GMAT or CAT at some point of time, why should I take someone else's opinion? So, that kind of arrogance will not work in terms of your ability to build trust.

### **The third element he talks about is experience.**

They say experience is the boon that God gives you when you lose all your hair. The point is that when you interpret experience from a narrow lens, you end up force fitting. The classical bias which is called confirmation bias, where you look for data and information that fits your paradigm. It fits your mind-set and belief. It's the most dangerous and experience can do that. If experience can be filtered and you write a diary, when you made wrong decisions and you took wrong judgment calls, where you analyse what went wrong, calls, where you analyse what went wrong, and if you have the courage and patience to refer back to those pages - I think that experience counts a lot. Rather than having a cookie cutter approach of fitting the experience to the situation. The situation might change completely. Look at the way the pandemic panned out. No amount of experience of the past really told us what to do. In the beginning there was no clarity on whether to wear a mask or not, whether COVID was a contact disease or not. It was like the first stage of the tale of two cities. It was time of the rich, it was time of the poor.

**The fourth element is detachment.** This is one of the most profound ways of thinking, which is how you recognise your own biases. The headline bias is the confirmation bias and the attribution bias. An example of that is "all people from a certain community are frugal" or "people from a certain area are good mechanical engineers". These are all attribution biases. There is a famous book called "Thinking Fast and Slow" which tells us about the optimism bias. Thinking about things as if they are going to happen very easily is also not helpful.

**The fifth one he talks about is options.** We learn business strategy to generate an option B and an option C. However, these options are so weak that we never think beyond option A. Obama, during the finance crisis, encouraged his

finance people to think about Option B and Option C, otherwise we end up with tunnel thinking.

**The last one he talks about is execution.** You can make an idea and a judgment; however, execution is everything. I am happy to say that I belong to a company that executed huge projects, delivery and execution is so important for the judgment call to be the right judgment call. You may have a very sophisticated mechanism to come to a decision with a decision tree etc. but it might be highly impractical.

**How do leaders resolve the inner conflict, when data says something else and their inner voice or gut says something else? Which voice should they listen to?**

I think they should listen to both. Data backed up with gut feel, and gut feel backed up by data are two sides of the same coin. In America for a long time, in the criminal justice system, they used a software called Compass, for deciding who should be given parole. There was detailed research done and they found that there was a definite bias against coloured people. This reflects our biases. After all, who makes these algorithms and data generating machines? We make it right. It is not some esoteric thing that descends from the heavens. So, looking at the data source with a certain amount of critical thinking, which is a NEP competency and education output, is very important. The art of questioning is very important. Some say that speed is also important. You cannot keep gazing out of the window. One incident at Starbucks highlights this issue of speed. There were two coloured people sitting at the table and not ordering anything. The Starbucks employee called the police and they were arrested. There was a huge uprising in America due to this. The CEO acted fast. He shut down all the 8000 cafes, issued an apology, undertook training for diversity amongst the Starbucks employees and announced a rapid-fire action plan. Acting with a plan is very important. Instinct and intuition are also important. Psychometric tests that put people into boxes, they say that some people are more intuitive and sensing. I think each of us has each of the 16 elements in us. It's what you cultivate through life. Intuition sometimes leads to confirmation bias, and ends up as a loop, telling you are right. Questioning the information and

looking for gaps in the information, look for where the data can be wrong.

**How can L&D interventions be designed to impart these skills to managers? Can these skills be learned?**

In our hiring and appraisal systems, I haven't heard too many people being asked: "When did you make a right or wrong judgment?" I have heard people describe their bio-data, qualifications and experiences and those who are doing BEI based interviews (Behavioural Evidence Based Interviews), also use those techniques. On the specifics of the elements of making a good judgment call is to plug this into every HR Process, especially when you are hiring people. Assessing people on these 6 elements is very important. Step 2: making an agenda for L&D which goes with the flow of work and helping them to assess where they are making wrong judgment calls. Also, creating a network of people that help us to make decisions is very important. Smart leaders always surround themselves with people that know more than them. As our honourable prime minister is doing, in certain domains he is very clear about taking the advice of scientists etc. Follow-up after the training program is very important. Many training programs spout wisdom but have very poor follow-ups. So, how a person implements this, and grows a network, is very useful for figuring out how to make good judgments. Each of these elements have a lot of content and you can develop a pedagogy around them. We can also encourage people to tell stories about what went wrong and right. There is also a lot of literature around biases. The temptation is to put them in a theoretical framework and then forget about it. Bias has implicitly a kind of a taint to it. A bias is wrong, if you are biased you are weak and prejudiced. Bias also protects us from something that is bad. Visiting these using case studies, talking to people who work with this is important.

**Leaders have to shoulder a lot of responsibility. There is a lot of fear still around failure. How can we encourage leaders to look at failure differently in terms of judgment?**

Imagine a conference room with a board that is debating the takeover of a company and there are mixed views in the room. It's a diverse board with 14 people in it. There are some for, neutral and against it. After debating it for 45 min, they all look

towards the leader to make a judgment call. A good leader would not say what the course of action would be at the beginning, but hear the entire noise, feelings, data and dynamics in the room and then talk about what his/her judgment is with reasons. Finally, the leaders have to make the judgment. Of Course, CEO's do get fired for wrong and terrible judgements. In the IT and financial services sector, many shareholders do not tolerate it. Since they are paid a lot of money in terms of stock options, they have to shoulder the responsibility to take the courage to make the judgment and own it. The art of listening to everyone and making a judgment call, and after that its destiny. Who knew that the pandemic would happen? Taking the Edu tech sector, in the K12 segment, they were going around with huge valuations. If people had made a judgment call that this is a hot air balloon that is getting fatter and fatter and it will burst at one point, they probably did well. But who knew? The TV was screaming it was good and there must have been some camp that said, you cannot spend before you earn. These are judgment calls. **Unfortunately, past success is not a proxy for future success. Past success can go to your head, especially if you grew up from nowhere - you tend to tell people around you - who are you to tell me. Humility is very important.** It is very hard to teach humility, unless you learn it through life experiences or do Vipassana meditation. Humility is a tough one but so important.

### **How can we distinguish between authentic humility and the fake self-effacing humility that we see so often around us?**

I call it manipulative humility, where you are just play-acting to get something done. In the north, we call it Matlabi. It's really artificial. The unfortunate part in corporate life is that humility is misunderstood to be a lack of confidence. All the interview sheets that you fill up have words like "fire in the belly", words like "thanda hai" are used about a candidate who is relatively quieter and humbler. It is also the respect they give you because of your authority. It is so easy to fold your hands and say "Sir, you are the greatest person in the world" and pamper the ego. True humility means saying a little prayer within "God, please help me to respect this person that is sitting in front of me" whether it is a driver, coolie or a bai.

Maybe this person is telling me something about the traffic, or the pollution or something that I did not know about, short-cuts, information etc. Humility is piecing together data and information. Genuine humility is forgetting about your qualifications and where you come from. I belong to "X", three letter services or services that you are walking on water, and that you have been selected from so many applicants etc. AT L&D we are very careful, when we speak about high potentials. We do not treat them as if they belong to some unique tribe. The ability to have diverse people around you are also important. There is also a lot of talk around coaching, role-modelling and stuff - to some extent coaching can teach you how to be humble. However, this adrenaline fuelled success, where you become very successful and you think you are infallible, it can become difficult. So, we can cultivate humility by hearing stories of more unfortunate people who struggled through life, like our IPL cricketers. There are many other stories from the young generation. One of the most profound things that a young person's struggle can teach us a lot. Because today the world is an extremely cut-throat one. If you hear stories of adversity that people have gone through with respect to persistence and resilience is very powerful in teaching humility. When I realize I grew up in a stable home, my parents had enough money, and you start thinking "Who am I" - then you slip into a mid-life crisis but that is a different topic.

### **How can leaders make good judgment calls when there is a conflict of interest between doing good and making a profit?**

These days there is a big debate around lay-offs. They are not lay-offs; they are more like retrenchments in the IT Sector in the software and product platform companies. Some of the more sanctimonious thinking HR are pointing fingers at these leaders, for letting go of people saying they are heartless, they have no morality, because they are letting people go. On the other hand, some of the events that happened in the world, like the Ukraine Russia war and the recession that is happening etc are also real. It is very easy to say that we should have seen through a crystal bowl, in our risk management framework. These are very difficult to see even in the most complicated stochastic models. These are based on very complicated geo-political dynamics, which is important to fathom.



So based on that context, you act according to the context. Some of the best IT companies, with high standards of governance have had to lay off people. I think transparency is very important. Communicating why it is important and why people are compelled to do that is very important. Also making amends. When the going is good, in the IT sector, the attrition was 25%, candidates behaved according to HR, in a mercenary manner, quiet quitting etc. When the onus of being a moral citizen fell on the candidate, the candidate failed miserably. It was attributed to youth, recklessness and a mercenary kind of attitude. So, where does the buck stop? So, when the management doesn't do well, why blame them? So, it is a see-saw battle which happens, to balance it out, the judgment calls that leaders have to take is to have a principle or a policy that is consistent. Consistency is very important. You do not act in a knee-jerk manner in a particular situation. In the tug between the VUCA world and your inability to see through a situation and to make the organization more successful and use your moral compass etc. is to debate very clearly in larger forums and make a democratic decision. I would not hesitate to ask in a town-hall, what would you do, if you were me? Issuing a genuine apology is also very important. You hear stories of leaders coming on Zoom and firing so many employees. The third is also building the right kind of culture. The challenge in the IT sector has been that people have not even seen the campuses. To grow that emotional connection has been a challenge. Having a very strong moral compass, where you can stand in a large audience and say what you have done without any remorse, shame or guilt is a good barometer.

### **What would be the top three judgements that you have made in your long and illustrious career?**

My first good judgment was coming back to L&T after having left L&T. I left L&T for some grandiose promise of joining a multinational, sit in a plane and see the world and experience diversity in its true sense. But the kind of learning I had in a professional Indian company like L&T and even the Tatas is incomparable. The second good judgment was that I agreed to my wife's repeated question of do you want to get married or not? We just completed 39 years of marriage on 6th of

May. I was undecided. I was not sure whether I wanted to enter marriage. Not because she was not beautiful or accomplished. But I was just uncertain. I feel great that I decided to marry her.

The third judgment was taking up the vocation of HR. Next life, if I choose a vocation, I would choose HR and employer Larsen and Toubro again. The decision was very serendipitous. I was on the bottom of a double decker bus near Haji Ali, out of ideas about what I want to do in my future, in 1975. I just finished my bachelors from Sri Ram College of Commerce. I just applied because I saw this brochure of Tata Institute of Social Sciences in the hands of a guy on the bus. I asked him what it was and he said it's the TISS campus, and they offer something called Personnel Management. Rest is history. It was a chance judgment. There is very little to congratulate myself on this judgment.

### **Would you like to share parting thoughts with our audience?**

One of the things to face adversity in life is discipline. It is waiting in the queue all our lives, it could be bad health, bad luck, a difficult boss etc. Discipline in the form of developing small habits as is written in atomic habits and sticking on to that schedule is important.

Social intelligence that one gathers through life's journeys - not being included in WhatsApp groups, being put down - but to stand up and to continue the journey and not being affected by all this - to develop a certain amount of emotional resilience. The ability to have the discipline to write down your feelings and overcome these.

Be an interesting person. I have hobbies like scale model trains, I also do wildlife photography. If you do not like to talk about trivia or politics, it's good to talk about hobbies.

Be determined to keeping fit both physically and mentally. Eat sensibly. After 40's, senescence sets in and you go through a crisis. Life begins at 40 is a wonderful book. It was written by Theodore Parsons; she mentions the importance of eating sensibly and keeping physically fit. It all boils down to discipline again.

# Attrition – Stop Analysing only the parts, study the whole

Shijin Sreeraman Karuwath (SSK)



Head Growth & Partnerships –  
OrgLens, Associate Partner - ODA

Shijin is an Organizational Leadership consultant and has been a proponent of Social Network Concept and Network Science theory as part of his work with individuals, team and organizations for empowering them make meaningful shift and growth.

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# Attrition – Stop Analysing only the parts, study the whole

Shijin Sreeraman Karuwath (SSK)

THE GREAT ATTRITION is a problem plaguing the businesses. The organizations are losing talents which is causing them lose money, time and effort as part of running the business. Why are organizations struggling? That is Because.....

It was a Monday, Ms.Sudha met her manager and broke the news of her leaving the organization. Sudha's Manager was shocked, then it was too late to make any course correction. A month later, Sudha left the organization. In her exit interview she mentioned some personal reasons which made her take the inevitable call. The past records of Sudha were excellent in terms of performance, in engagement survey she scored high on many softer aspects. The most shocking development was, six more members quit the organization, post Sudha's exit and they joined other organizations which they found more interesting. Organization, as part of attrition analysis, assessed the cause and effect, all pointed out to external factors like better pay, more exposure, geographical comfort, growth probability.



The employee files were closed and life continued. In the next couple of months, the organization witnessed an exit of 17 employees across various functions. Gradually organization realized it was slowly contributing to the research findings shared by *Gartner which mentioned 61% of organization were facing talent creaking and in*

***India the rate was alarmingly growing from 6% in 2020 to 20.3% in 2022.***

The traditional attrition or employee turnover models pointed towards individual choices as root cause when it came to making the decision of leaving the organization. Based on these models organization concluded that an individual decides to leave basis

- Her/his desire to make the movement (job change) and the ease with which the movement (job change) can be made.  
(March and Simon (1958))
- Utility of current job, perceived utility of new job opportunity and job satisfaction  
(Mobley's (1977))

With traditional attrition or job turnover models, the organization concluded that individual leaving the organization is result solely focused on individual's perception of their current job and available opportunities.

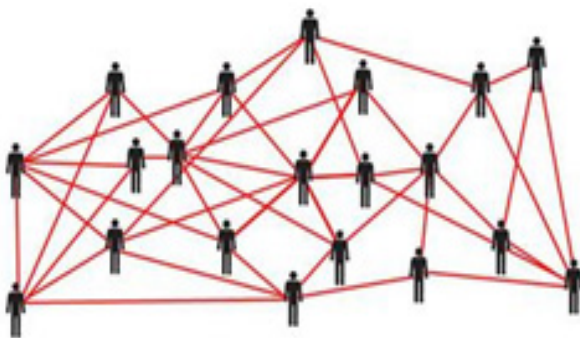
What startled the organization leadership was accidental exposure to intriguing data as the Leadership were reviewing the project completion report for the last 2 financial years. This data was never captured by the traditional models which organization leadership used to study the turnover. Ms.Sudha, had been in direct contact with 8 out of 17 people who left the organization as part of some or other projects as Team Leader to them or peer to them. And this entire 17 people who had left were one way or the other connected to each other as peers or manager-subordinate relationship as part of their work in few projects and overall tenure in the organization.



This accidental discovery made the organization dive deeper into the aspect of the connections Sudha had within the organization and checked whether these connections really played a role in influencing Sudha's decision and rest of others.

This discovery became the inflection point in the organization's endeavor to address THE GREAT ATTRITION problem. This is where organization leadership stumbled upon some fundamental facts and evolution aspects of human behavior and group relationships which introduced them to;

**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP NETWORKS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON INDIVIDUAL'S EMBEDDEDNESS IN A PARTICULAR ORGANIZATION OR GROUP. QUITE INTERESTINGLY THE TRADITIONAL MODELS OF ATTRITION OR JOB TURNOVER NEVER ADDRESSED THE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP NETWORK ANGLE.**



From the early days of Hominids (human, apes, chimpanzees etc.), social group formation and organization played a crucial role in their survival. The group made sense of the environment, threats, opportunities based on their interactions with each other. Humans bonded with one another to face the world more effectively. The group mechanisms enabled human beings to communicate and mimic emotions effectively as part of group survival and bonding. All these created deeper connections among each other and human beings were able to read each other's behavior, communicate information, facilitate interpersonal bonds. This also played a crucial role in impacting each other's behavior and their ability to make sense of the environment and experience various emotions.



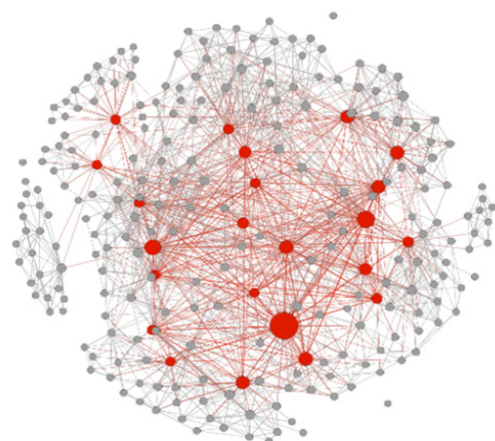
The choice of an individual is also a function of the individual's interaction within the group and how group interactions are influencing individual choice. This aspect is called Social Embeddedness

(Karl Polanyi (1944), Granovetter 1985).

Social Embeddedness theory and concept suggests that, studying an individual choice (e.g., whether to stay or leave a group) must be assessed as a whole, by considering overall social relationship context in which the individual is operating and not just by focusing on the parts i.e., their individual actions. To understand the connections among individuals within a group or community, it is critical to view the entire setup using a Social Network Lens which helps us see the

- connections between individuals
- the nature of these connections,
- frequency of these connections, and
- impact of these connections with respect to the overall social network of the individual.

According to the social embeddedness concept an individual's decision to stay or leave a particular group is primarily governed by.



**Links:** The amount of personal and professional connections individuals has among the group members

**Sacrifice:** Sense of loss and individual experiences in terms of forgoing the available relationship ties and resources as part of leaving the group.

Driving parallel in the context of organization, social embeddedness can be viewed as job embeddedness which means the social relationship ties an individual creates within the organization, which acts a net for the individual, eventually making the individual get stuck. Stronger and denser the relationship network, stronger the net and increased probability of the individual sticking to the organization.

(Mitchel et.al 2001)

The fundamental understanding gained by organizational leadership on social embeddedness helped them get a sense of what could be the potential angle they could explore when it came to Ms.Sudha's attrition from the organization.

The need to understand the nature of the Links and make sense of these connections within a larger group lead them to explore another perspective which added more meat to validate social embeddedness theory and concept, i.e. **Network Science perspective.**

Network Science perspective focuses on the social ties created by the individual as part of sharing information, gaining tacit knowledge, interpersonal connect, which they find valuable as part of advancing themselves in their job and feeling more connected and attached to the organization. (e.g., Coleman, 1990).

For exploring the Network Science perspective to understand the attrition pattern, organization made the choice of reaching out to **OrgLens** to study their existing employee population and help predict any weak points when it came to attrition.

## HOW DOES ORGLENS VIEW JOB EMBEDDEDNESS?

OrgLens uses a multi-dimensional approach, a combination of Social Psychology and Network

to understand job embeddedness and predict the probability of employee attrition within an organization.

- **The social psychology** lens makes OrgLens view the social relationships among the individuals and understand its impact on individual choice and decisions from social context.

- **The Network Science** perspective along with data science helps OrgLens to get relevant network view in terms of strength, content and structure of these ties in the network.

- o Strength – implies the breadth and reach of the ties.
- o Structure – implies the critical connections the individual possesses in the network.
- o Content – implies the nature of ties i.e., is it for professional reasons or personal reasons.

## FOR UNDERSTANDING JOB EMBEDDEDNESS AND PREDICTING ATTRITION PATTERN, ORGLENS UNDERSTANDS INDIVIDUAL RELATIONSHIP TIES BASED ON.



**Professional /Rational Ties:** Incoming and Outgoing Relationship ties individuals forms with others in the network as part of executing their tasks, accessing work related information, knowledge etc.

*Individuals who have a diverse professional network possess access to wider knowledge base and information pie, which can potentially act as an opposing force when it comes for them to make a choice of leaving the organization because of the sense of losing access to the information and resources which they already possess.*

*e.g., an individual who has a strong work connect*



*with his or her manager or if the manager acts a mentor to the individual then there is a probability that individual will stay in the organization because of the sense of losing the available professional support.*

*Network science term of professional or rational ties is: Instrumental Ties*

**Personal/Emotional Ties:** Incoming and Outgoing Relationship ties individuals forms with others in the network as part of sharing personal aspects more pertaining to friendship, emotional support, camaraderie etc.

*Individuals who have a strong emotional tie within the network are more likely to experience the pressure from their relationship to stay back and they too experience a sense of loss as part of developing an intent to leave the organization. Similarly, if the members in the friend network decide to move out, this creates a positive pressure for the individual for seeking other opportunities.*

*e.g., an individual who has trusted friend network in the organization finds herself and himself more comfortable and connected to the group. They seek second opinion from this trusted network for validating their choice of leaving, this network can create a positive pressure to stay back.*

*Network science term of professional or rational ties is: Expressive Ties*

### **Manager -Subordinate Relationship**

The Professional/Rational ties and Personal/Emotional Ties are also analyzed in the context of manager and subordinate relationship to understand the nature and content of the ties. Because this gives further indication of the employees who are more prone to attrition.

### **WHAT MAKES THESE SOCIAL TIES BECOME A CRUCIAL FACTOR WHEN IT COMES TO EMPLOYEE JOB EMBEDDEDNESS AND ATTRITION PROBABILITY**

An individual makes sense of the happenings in the organization based on the information, tacit knowledge, emotional connections flowing within these relationship ties. The information flowing across these social ties influence an

individual's choice and attitudes towards the environment and the group which they are being part off.

The greater the number of relationships ties an individual has in the organization, more the chances the individual can stick to the organization because these ties act as a pressure and pull for the individual to continue remain the part of the group. Losing these ties creates a sense of loss in the individual which encourages them to continue to be the part of the group.

Social network research shows that employee values, attitudes, beliefs, perception are product of the interaction of the employee with other co-workers. In cases where the professional and personal ties with their managers are stronger, employees tend to lean more on the manager as part of seeking advice and evaluating their decisions of leaving or staying in the group. In such cases managers can also create positive pressure for the employees to stay back and make them reconsider their decisions. Similarly, if the manager decides to make the move, then it could potentially encourage the individual to look out for opportunities.



### **HOW OrgLens STUDY OF SOCIAL NETWORK ALERTED THE LEADERSHIP TO PREVENT ANOTHER Ms. SUDHA FIASCO**

*Leadership conducted the study of the organization's social network to understand the social relationship patterns. Relationship networks of key resources were identified. Leadership delved deep into the probability of attrition of a key resource and intended to check the potential impact it can have on the system.*

The central node (Mr.Amit) if he decides to leave. It will potentially impact the connected web of

employees and based on the strength and type of ties (professional/personal or both) it can have a bearing on their attitude towards organization, opinion about the organization and can also make them look out of opportunities which makes them stay connected with Mr.Amit or go to a new place.



***Other insights helped the organization to get a detailed view of the disconnected and isolated individuals who may pose or risk of attrition.***

Overall network pattern indicates a strong portion of employees on the network periphery which means either they are having only very less ties or no ties.

This can potentially make them feel less embedded in the system and might result in more disengagement.

***Organization Leadership got a pattern of Professional/Rational and Personal/Emotional Tie prevalent in the organization. Which made them realize some key initiatives they could undertake as part of handling the probability of attrition.***

The network study insights when super imposed with relevant business context and other business data ( performance, engagement rate, attendance, career progression etc) gave leadership a complete psystem.f the business context and indicated how they can leverage the relationship network to gauge the probability of attrition and what course correction they need to make in terms of increasing the social relationship network strength of the individuals and make them feel and experience more embeddedness in the system.

Social network perspective comes with a rich contribution from various other theories like social identity theory, social resource theory, social embeddedness theory, social capital theory. All these social theories enable organizations to the aspect of job embeddedness and attrition probability as a WHOLE rather addressing it in the PARTS. Social networks enable organizations to uncover some hidden relationship patterns which otherwise are lying beneath the iceberg. Access to these relationship networks can enable organization to get a more holistic view on what is shaping individual access, decisions and behaviors and also how an individual is influencing others in the network when it comes to access the resources, make decisions and behave. Organizations when combine the social network data with relevant business context, it can potentially strengthen their ability to tackle systemic issues like attrition with more gravitas and data-oriented approach.

## About OrgLens

OrgLens is a technology startup incorporated in 2019. OrgLens uses a concoction of Social Sciences and Network Science principles and phenomena to help organizations get meaningful insights about the informal relationship networks prevailing in their organization. OrgLens enables organizations to strengthen their Social Capital using the insights derived from these relationship networks people build as part of their daily tasks and routines. OrgLens has partnered with leading brands in their endeavor to build and strengthen employee engagement, collaboration, teamwork, attrition, inclusion, etc

OrgLens have partnered with client like Schindler, EgonZehnder, IDFC, Paytm, Nestle, Tata Realty, Indoco, Bharat Serums etc,

# The potential of turning empathy into skilful leadership practice

Dr. L.W. Niezink

Dr. K.J. Train



Dr Lidewij Niezink is an independent empathy scholar and practitioner, holding a PhD from the University of Groningen, The Netherlands. She develops evidence-based interventions and education for diverse organisations and writes and speaks on empathy for scientific, professional, and lay publics.



Dr. Katherine Train holds a PhD from the University of Cape Town. As an independent practitioner, she researches, develops, and presents training on empathy, wellbeing, and professional development. Current projects are with human-centred designers and service design in healthcare.

Together, Drs Niezink & Train founded Empathic Intervision ([www.empathicintervision.com](http://www.empathicintervision.com)), training Integrative Empathy skills to achieve creativity, depolarization, interpersonal (inter-collegial) learning, expertise, and support.

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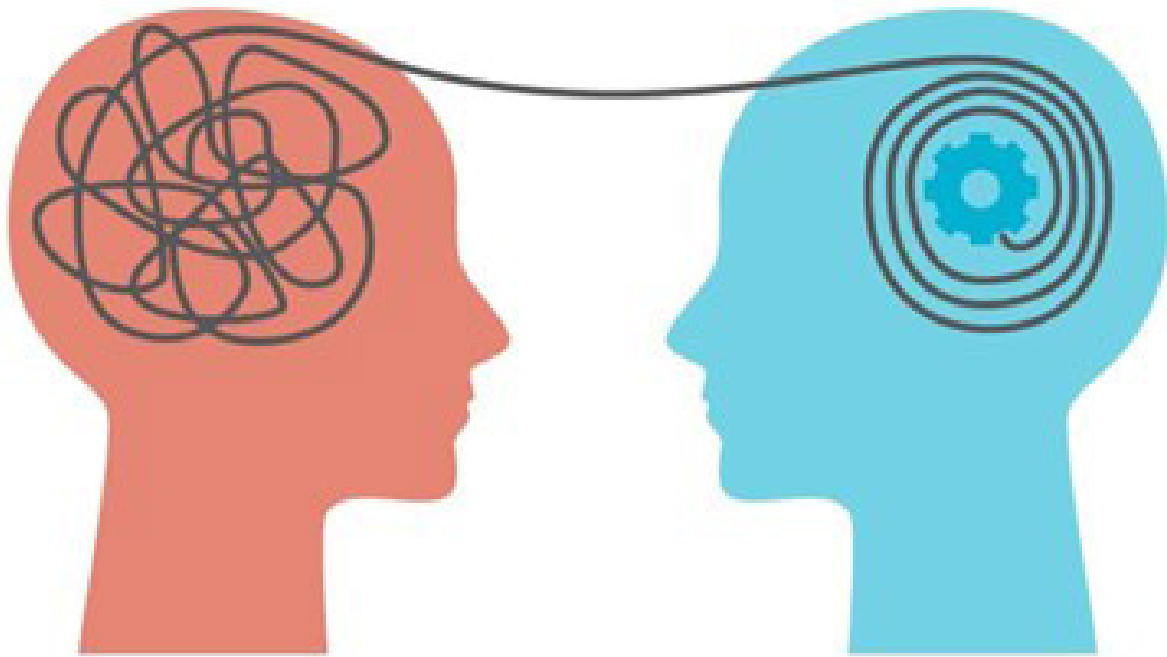
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# The Potential of turning empathy into skilful leadership practice

Dr. L.W. Niezink

Dr. K.J. Train

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*'You know what you need to do? You should just show a little more empathy' After all, empathy leads to improved creativity, better emotion regulation, increased employee satisfaction, a sense of mattering, appreciation, better business results, better coping, and so on. The list doesn't end there.*

Over the past twenty years of researching and training empathy, organisations have become convinced of the importance of its potential to build trust and get things done. Whereas fifteen years ago professionals needed an explanation of exactly what empathy is, today people have an opinion about it. 'Empathy is a soft skill; it doesn't drive results.' for example. Or 'You either have it or you don't.'

Well, no.

Empathy requires us to be able to understand the world of others as they experience it. It means being able to not project our own position of privilege, (un)certainly or competence onto others. It means listening carefully to people who depend on us but may not be like us in character, and reflecting on

own roles and actions which -often unconsciously- may have contributed to their experiences. It requires personal transformation in leaders - from having a focus on oneself to holding space for both self and other.

*Empathy is, the practice of providing space for others to express themselves as they are and make meaning of their experiences.*

The specifics of empathy practice in leadership are however often left to chance. While empathy is emphasized as important or even imperative, what is lacking is instruction on how to lead in a specifically empathic way.

When we ask people what empathy is, a common definition we hear is "to put yourself into someone's

shoes". We also hear that it involves knowing something about the thoughts and feelings of others. However, in a business context, there seems to be an aversion towards its emotional component. Understanding others: great; feeling with others: neh...

Empathy as a skill is an embodied and experiential practice. A cognitive description does not suffice. At best, its potential remains untapped. At worst it is misinterpreted, and preconceptions of leaders overshadow the expression of employees, resulting in lack of motivation and innovation. Not being able to empathize provokes resistance within organisations and can lead to employee attrition. This article describes a systematic set of practices, called 'Integrative Empathy', to apply empathy in leadership.

### Pitfalls of unskilful attempts at empathy



### Pitfalls of unskilful attempts at empathy

We observe a number of pitfalls leaders fall into while communicating and especially during change processes.

- **Directing towards a preconceived outcome**

Preconceptions and biases determine outcomes if they are not explicitly addressed. Leaders may avoid the big ones, but subtle ones, or those involving personal fears and anxieties, are more insidious. Doubt about performance, confirmation bias and pressure due to time constraints are commonly observed to cause a leader to direct outcomes.

Cultural biases may be deeply ingrained and therefore rendered unrecognisable. We've seen this in a change project where a new member of a team attempted to communicate her view that the organisational processes were inefficient due to unquestioned cultural habits. However, both the team as well as the manager directly responsible, failed to hear her or to evaluate a potential bias.

- **Breakdown in team cohesion**

Habitual power dynamics and conflicts of interest form in interpersonal interactions, unless specifically addressed. Compromised interpersonal dynamics are common in teams and are also observed amongst stakeholders and between leaders and those responsible for day-to-day management. In change management situations where existing teams are likely to be dissolved and reformed, such issues are brought to the foreground and are unstable. Team members tend to listen without actively hearing what others are saying.

The team working on the change project introduced above were unable to hear her new professional insights. Not feeling heard, she withdrew, refusing input, and considered looking for another job.

- **Avoiding difficult experiences**

Conflicts at work are common yet have a way of brooding below the surface while significantly disrupting organizational processes. These conflicts can lead to lack of productivity, demotivation, and a lack of true innovation. Difficult emotions of employees often steer or persuade managers towards safer ground. Through active and reflective listening, one can help to surface the deeper issues, thoughts and desires that are the cause of these difficult emotions. Building trust is the cornerstone of healthy communication.

In addition, people mimic each other's emotional and experiential states, leading to unconscious emotional contagion. Unless vigilant, leaders are prone to confuse who is the true originator. Attitudes attributed to your employee may in fact be the unrecognized attitude you have yourself. A lack of self-awareness, the inability to separate the experiences of self and other, the inability to really hear the other and the inability to take their perspective lie at the core of these failures.



## Leaders are perceived to lack empathy

A recent survey of over 1000 employees reveals that 74% of the people say that their leaders lack empathy in addressing resistance to change. Integrative Empathy skills aim to help leaders and teams to engage beyond cultural differences, to listen and hear each other's experiences, thoughts, and feelings about a topic, and to identify and take the perspectives of others. Integrative Empathy skills are applied to capture multiple perspectives of current and desired future states. It is particularly interesting for leadership because it addresses the human side of an ever-changing work environment through the experiences of multiple stakeholders<sup>1</sup>.

### Layers of integrative Empathy



### Five layers of integrative Empathy and their application

- All empathy starts with **self-empathy**. You direct your attention to your own inner experience to gain awareness and understanding of your current inner state. This creates self-awareness of biases and preconceptions and aids in opening a mental space for the experience of others through the suspension of judgment. It ensures that what a leader perceives to be part of the other is not in fact a projection of self.

- **Kinaesthetic empathy** - the capacity to participate in somebody's movement or sensory experience of movement - aids in connecting with others and creating an awareness of how people influence each other. Empathy, while thought about with the mind, is experienced, and expressed through the body, specifically in the muscles, heart, and nervous system<sup>2</sup>. Kinaesthetic empathy aids leaders to embody previously unknown employee experiences and sensations. A concrete example would be where you mirror another's movements, a form of physical synchronisation you can display consciously in conversation. This refines self-other differentiation - a sense of where the self-stops, and the other starts.
- **Reflective empathy** clarifies perceptions and problems through literal and advanced reflective dialogue. Effective listening is more than directing one's ears toward another person and is hard to maintain. To listen empathically is to attentively lean in to the other, with a willingness to be changed by what you hear. It requires directing full attention toward all that the speaker is saying, gesturing, and implying. When completely opening to what the other is expressing, while refraining from judgment, interpersonal cohesion is maintained, and preconceptions and biases are contained. Through the application of reflective empathy, leaders model a way of listening which results in employees feeling truly heard.
- **Imaginative empathy** uses imagination and 'as-if' acting to understand the perspectives of others and to experience the effects of having a problem explored from multiple perspectives. When empathising, one often asks the question, "How would I experience this person's situation?" But this 'imagine-self' perspective does not provide valuable insights into the experiences of others. The real empathic question is, "What is it like for the other to be in their situation?" This is an 'imagine-other' perspective, which aids innovation and provides a check to the limits of one's empathic accuracy<sup>3</sup>.

- **Empathic creativity** gathers insights into a guide-to-action. At any time during interpersonal processes, a leader can be confronted with 'significant change events' which are particularly intense, meaningful, and memorable<sup>4</sup>. They signify the moment when you realize something is 'different,' although you might not yet fully understand what that means. These 'change events' spur empathic action - they energise people to pick up on what is happening and follow through, enabling leaders to keep everyone on-board.

## In conclusion

Despite popular conviction, empathy is inherently neutral. It is always applied to an end, not an end in itself. This implies that it can be used for good or to hurt or manipulate. If you understand someone well, you can use that understanding to achieve many different results - not all of them in the other's best interest. Therefore, a dose of empathy is only as good as your motivations or intentions.

**"Empathy is not inherently good or bad, it is completely context dependent, adaptive to the situation in which it is practiced."**

Empathy practice requires action learning and experiential learning. Sensing the "mood of a room" or being involved in the ups and downs of employee engagement does not guarantee that a leader also has appropriate empathic skills to tackle the issues. For that reason, the instruction we began this article with - just show a little more empathy - is of little use. With this contribution, we hope to have provided a glimpse of how the instruction to be empathetic can be translated into concrete and skilful behaviour.

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# Network Governance & Creative Leadership: The Formation of Udupi Jille\*

Dr. Kalpana Gopalan



IAS, PGPPM (IIM  
Bangalore), PhD (IIM  
Bangalore)

Dr Kalpana Gopalan IAS is a composite public policy professional- practitioner, policy-maker, scholar, author, volunteer and mother. As an Additional Chief Secretary of the Apex scale of the Indian Administrative Service, she has over three decades of public service experience; and a Doctorate and Masters in Public Policy from IIM Bangalore. She volunteers her time by teaching, speaking and mentoring start-ups and NGOs. A keen researcher, she has authored several books and journal publications. She is recipient of many awards, citations and recognitions, the most recent being her nomination as Vice-Chairperson (Honorary) Life -Women Empowerment of the Governing Council of the All India Council of Human Rights and Social Justice in 2023

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# Network Governance & Creative Leadership: The Formation of Udupi Jille\*

Dr. Kalpana Gopalan

The creation of a new district throws up unique experiences and unusual challenges. In this easy first-person narrative, the author recounts her role as the first District Collector of Udupi District in Karnataka, India. On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the district, she draws upon her personal experience to paint a readable, worm's eye view picture of the establishment of Udupi district. For scholars of public policy, this is a useful case study of a public sector start-up experiment set against the backdrop of a transitional, developing economy context.

**A** career in the Indian Administrative Service throws up many opportunities for Leadership. Yet, for me, the unique, once-in-a-lifetime experience is the role I played in the establishment of the new district of Udupi. Yes, the temple town which was home to the famous Lord Krishna temple.

In 1997, the Government of Karnataka took a policy decision to bifurcate certain large districts to create seven new districts for administrative efficiency and convenience. Udupi was one of them. The posting happened innocuously, with the Chief Secretary calling for me and informing me, in his usual understated style, that I had been posted as District Collector (called Deputy Commissioner in Karnataka), and could I please leave as quickly as possible? "The MLA's are getting quite restless, you know. They feel the government is not serious about launching the new districts. Your going there will reassure them."

I landed in Udupi the next afternoon, to a warm welcome. I was an acceptable choice as a lady officer, for the region shared the matriarchal influence of Kerala. It was my first posting as a Deputy Commissioner, and I was also Udupi's first Deputy Commissioner. I was anxious to prove myself. Expectations were high, but infrastructure, funds, staff all were lacking.

Normally, District Collectors are inheritors of a hoary tradition dating back to British rule, and the accompanying paraphernalia of pomp and creature comforts. But a new district is different. The local officers could not immediately shake off the mindset that they belonged to the 'parent'

district Mangalore. And the administration and finances were still with the District Collector, Mangalore.

I decided then and there that my first task would be to create an identity for my district. In government, one is running in different directions at the same time! But I had a good idea what I wanted, and proceeded as systematically as circumstances allowed.



I wanted to try and take the citizenry along with me, as Udupi had a literate and aware populace. Together we launched the process of district building. My first priority was to locate suitable accommodation for government offices. An action plan was chalked out for the development of the district without disturbing the rich ecology of the district. Industrialization in the Western Ghats area



is fraught with tension, owing to the presence of activist NGO groups. So from the beginning Non-Governmental Organizations were inducted, and the agenda drawn for the district attempted to be in tune with its educational, pilgrimage and tourist potential.

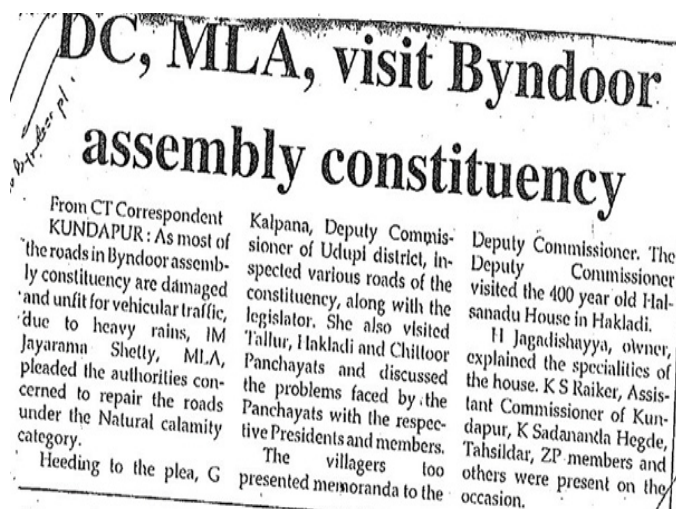
The beautification of Udupi town was another initiative I took up. Udupi had a then little known but lovely beach called Malpe. We started the campaign with a March for a Clean Malpe by schoolchildren. This was followed by a Shramdaan for garbage clearance. Certain prominent businessmen contributed to the erection of boards, dustbins and lighting. More difficult was the relocation of the fisherman's families along the coast. This was achieved by distributing alternative free sites slightly away from the main beach area.



I touched base with my superiors regularly, especially with the Secretary to Government in the Revenue Department and the Divisional Commissioner who became valuable and appreciative allies. Simultaneously I began to work on the process of carving out the new district in close coordination with my counterpart in Mangalore. This was a Herculean task, complicated by the feeling of being 'divested of authority' which he felt. But we got over it, and I

had a staff, vehicles, funds, and a 'treasure' of 2000 files in record time. Since prior willingness of the officials and officers was taken to post them in the new district, they were willing to work hard.

So busy was I with my work, I had so far not paid much attention to the local politicians, except preliminary courtesies. My Assistant Commissioner, a seasoned and diplomatic officer, sensed that they were feeling left out. All my self-congratulation vanished when a local newspaper blamed the new lady Deputy Commissioner (who had spent hardly a few months in the district) for the district's poverty and other longstanding ills!



The demands were many, and I was facing severe resource crunch. But I found myself touring all over this supremely beautiful district, which I felt, was my own. I became competitive and battled with department after department for a share to my district. My district had to be the best, and soon the District Minister and others were happy. In fact, the District Minister became my strongest ally whenever I needed to skirmish with the state government for Udupi's needs. But political support could become embarrassing, and when an opposition MLA openly criticized the government for not supporting and "helping out" the Deputy Commissioner, the Chief Minister was quite irritated with me! But it worked out, and soon Udupi was the only new district to have an office, staff, and a functional district administration.





Flash forward twenty-five years. On 25 August 2022, Udupi district celebrated her Silver Jubilee. On that occasion, I was invited to participate in the celebrations, and was felicitated by His Excellency the Governor of Karnataka on the dais, before the polity and bureaucracy, and most importantly, the citizenry of Udupi. Only those who have an experience of public service will realise how rare an honour it is, that an officer is remembered for her service after 25 years! I thanked the present District Collector, my junior colleague, for remembering me. His reply was: "Madam, I did nothing. The demand for your presence and recognition came spontaneously from the people of Udupi!" What a heart-warming moment it was!

In hindsight, I think I did well in places and badly in others. My enthusiasm and commitment I would repeat, and it was my good luck that Udupi had an aware populace, which recognized my efforts. Today I would recognize that a team of non-officials and citizenry has greater potential to support me. I hesitated to relocate my Assistant Commissioner (whose sub-divisional headquarters was the neighbouring town of Kundapur) because I did not want to make too many administrative changes at one go; but thereby I failed to benefit on a daily basis from his experience. I got too involved, the district became my 'baby' and sometimes I was bogged down in trivialities. Though there was no serious negative fallout I would probably be more objective and

today. I was uncomfortable with the discomfiture of my counterpart in Mangalore; but my way of coping with it was to ignore personalities and concentrate only on the task. If I had, on the other hand, shown sympathy non-verbally at least, he could have helped me much more because of his greater resources. On the other hand, it is also heart-warming that some of the initiatives I took up have sustained until today. The Clean Malpe campaign I began was continued by the Udupi Municipal Council, and Malpe is a popular tourist destination today. I was happy to sanction a mechanical beach cleaner to Malpe many years later under the challenge fund.



I inaugurated a restored heritage house in Udupi in 1997, today heritage restoration and heritage tourism is a thriving activity in which initiatives like Hasta Shilpa Trust are engaged on a continuing basis.



Today, as I look back 25 years, I want to share with you why Udupi is so important to me, both professionally and personally. After all, as an IAS officer, I have worked in many locations, experienced unique opportunities, met so many

interesting people. But despite this diverse experience that so many IAS officers have, you will not even a handful who have had the opportunity to actually set up, to create, a new district. Today, we are very familiar with start-up culture...swiggy, zomato etc. Well, Udupi was our very own start-up experiment in the public sector, something that the then government went ahead bravely and created. I remember one senior officer telling me as he sent me off... "Kalpana, wherever you stand, that is the district!" It was treading into the unknown, and I just went and did it. That is what we were in those days- brave in our innocence and our faith.

And that brings me to the second reason why Udupi is so special, not only among the new districts, but among all districts. Because the start-up of 1997 is today a unicorn of 2022. Just walk or drive the roads of Udupi, it has the look, feel and spirit of an international city. Whether as an education hub, a health sector nerve centre, or a tourist destination, Udupi has tremendous potential and in has outstripped not just the new districts, but also many of the older district headquarters. This in 25 years, and there is so much more to come!

What is the reason for this? The primary reason is the constructive, creative, peaceful and law-abiding nature of the people of Udupi. I remember that when I was Deputy Commissioner, there was a strike notice by private transporters of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi. I, along with the police and the transport department, called for a meeting immediately and came to an understanding that there would be no untoward disruption. And they kept their word. Even though the strike took a serious turn in Mangalore, Udupi remained quiet and life went on as usual. In fact, our colleagues in Dakshina Kannada were quite irritated with us, but this was to the credit of Udupi's ecosystem, not just government or us.

The people of Udupi are also very critical and questioning. In this context I recall the late Shri. V.S. Acharya, who too contributed so much to this district. Mr. Acharya's nature was, like so many of Udupi's people, that he would never accept anything just like that. He would ask questions about everything until he was satisfied. One day, Shri. Acharya came with his followers and

colleagues to my office. I had ordered new furniture for the DCs office, and it had been delivered. My staff had neatly cleaned and arranged it so well, the furniture was very good quality, looked very nice, Mr. Acharya could not find anything to question. But he had to, so he asked me "DC Avare, neevu yaaake blue colour furniture tagondideere?" ("DC Madam, why have you purchased blue upholstered furniture?") The furniture was upholstered in blue, so he asked me why I had chosen blue upholstered furniture! Fortunately, I had some presence of mind, so I told him "Sir, blue Udupi Krishnana colour allava, Neela Megha Shyamalanallava Sir, adakke neela colour tagondideene Sir". (Sir, isn't blue the colour of Udupi Krishna? After all, isn't he known to be as dark as the dark rain-cloud! That is why I have bought blue furniture" And thus Acharya Sir, being personally and politically a devout Hindu, was satisfied!

I gained valuable lessons in Udupi, and it has a permanent place in my heart. Today I take pride in the smooth functioning of the district administration, and glow when I am recognized when I travel in Udupi, even after a gap of almost two decades. 7. I would like to close this walk down memory lane with one final anecdote of Udupiya Shreshtathe (Udupi's fame), which highlights another quality of the people of Udupi. However, questioning and critical they may be, they recognise and acknowledge honesty and hard work. In my last visit, an advocate approached and introduced himself. He had been practising in my court Deputy Commissioner's court. These are his words: "Madam", he said, "When Udupi was formed, so were several other new districts. Udupi eshtu beledide nodi, eshtu pragatiyaagide. But Udupi has developed into such a vibrant city, it has outstripped not only all the other new districts, but so many older district headquarters ... Do you know why? Yaakandare, neevu olleya manasininda ii Jillege adipaayahaakidiri. It is because you laid its foundation with a good, honest heart!"

I, along with all of you, look forward to the golden jubilee of Udupi Jille, when it will have its rightful place on the map of the world.

# QUO VADIS OD? AWAKENING INSPIRED LEADERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Prof. Sanjoy Mukherjee



Associate Professor  
Sustainability and Liberal  
Studies, IIM Shillong

Sanjoy Mukherjee (60) is Associate Professor of Sustainability and Liberal Studies academic group at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Shillong. He is the Chairperson of the Institute's Annual International Sustainability Conference (SUSCON). A Mechanical Engineering graduate from Jadavpur University Kolkata, he did his post-graduation in Management from IIM Calcutta and PhD from Jadavpur University. After a corporate experience of nearly seven years, he had a long stint as a Faculty at the Management Centre for Human Values of Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Calcutta. His areas of interest and research include Wisdom Leadership, Management by Human Values, Enlightened Management and Spirituality, Sustainability of the Self and the Organization, Management and Indian Ethos, East-West Synthesis in Management, Business Ethics, CSR, History and Philosophy of Management, Management and Liberal Arts, and Alternative Sources and Methods of Learning. He has lectured and presented in Conferences worldwide including such prestigious forums like Aspen Institute, Oxford Roundtable, Globethics Geneva, International Society for Business Ethics and Economics, Harvard Business School, Copenhagen Business School, Stockholm Business School, Corvinus University of Budapest, Norwegian School of Economics at Bergen, UNESCO Paris, China Europe International Business School, Collier Business School, Tel Aviv University, Israel among others. For nearly a decade he was the Editor-in-Chief of Journal of Human Values, the bi-annual international journal from Sage Publications. He has published several papers and articles in national and international journals. He has jointly edited two books from Oxford University Press and Globethics Publications. Presently two of his books have just been published:

**'Global Perspectives on Indian Spirituality in Management: The Legacy of S K Chakraborty'** edited jointly with Laszlo Zsolnai from Springer Nature, July 2022

**'Looking East: Indian Wisdom for Modern Management'** (sole author) from Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, Oxford, U.K., April 2022

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# Quo Vadis OD? Awakening inspired leadership in organizations for the future

Prof. Sanjoy Mukherjee

The current global economic situation has created massive vulnerabilities, with far-reaching implications for business organisations. The adaptive and corrective strategies constitute changes to be made both at macro as well as micro levels. A creative learning voyage based on non-conventional sources and methods of learning along with state-of-the-art delivery mechanisms can go a long way in helping the would-be-leaders. Participation in dialogues rather than debates help in collaborative learning and a childlike learning quest within the leaders make learning possible, easy, and embedded.



**W**ith the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, leaders of business organizations or otherwise are increasingly finding themselves compelled to grapple with turbulence and paradoxes. All calculations and predictions going haywire in the face of a global economic meltdown, time has come to take a deep look and seriously question some of our fundamental principles and dominant assumptions on nature of work, purpose of life, role of business and leadership in social and environmental sustainability. This marks a transition from managerial obsession

with techno-economic imperatives towards an expanding and inclusive perspective of business with diverse constituencies in a much broader global setting. At a micro level it also marks a transition from our limited notion of the self as an economic entity to a deeper understanding of our emotional and spiritual identity and viewing ourselves deeply interconnected in an organic relationship with others in space and time.

Learning to live with uneasy questions that challenge the conventional mental models and

stereotypes and finally embarking upon an adventurous odyssey into search for the real answers are the characteristics of this unsettling transition. We are compelled to take a fresh look at ourselves and the world at large with an element of creative tension and irresistible discontent. The beginning of this journey in search of light from new horizons also heralds the hour of transformation from a mad, 'brave new world' of speed, information, and numbers towards a sustainable earth with a passion for excellence, commitment to quality, concern for harmony in relationships, a quest for enduring values and an earnest seeking for wisdom.

In response to the multi-dimensional challenges of the prevailing global reality in the post-Covid era, time has come when HRD experts among academics and professionals need to focus special attention on the crucial dimension of values and ethics. We need to take a holistic view of the organization beyond its profit motive and offer an integral model for all round human development transcending the limited notion of the techno-economic man. Through various courses, management development programs and in-company workshops, there is an urgent need to foster values-based organizational culture which enhances holistic leadership effectiveness for an ethically sound, socially responsible, and ecologically sustainable future business scenario.

### **Towards a Creative Adventure**

This will imply that we unfold a learning voyage from the abundance of information (in mental as well as cyber space) through different disciplines and frameworks of existing knowledge of the self and the organization towards new vistas of wisdom with the twin purpose of enlightenment of leadership consciousness and transformation of our organizations, society, and the planet at large. The focus and field of action is the mind of the leader that must be equipped with multiple levels of complementary competencies to be able to navigate through the turbulence, manage the transition with elegance and finally reach the enlightening experience of quantum transformation. Timely enough, the theme of the Annual Meet of Academy of Management 2008 in Anaheim was 'The Questions We Ask'. Shall we be able to ignite our minds (like Dr. A P J Abdul

with such burning questions?

"Where is life we have lost in living?  
Where is wisdom we have lost in knowledge?  
Where is knowledge we have lost in information?"  
(T S Eliot, The Rock)

This will challenge us to open ourselves to a whole repertoire of alternative as well as non-conventional sources and methods of learning beyond books and classroom lectures. Let us hear from Wordsworth in 'The Tables Turned':

*"Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife,  
Come, hear the woodland linnet.  
How sweet his music! On my life,  
There's more of wisdom in it...."*

*...Come forth into the light of things,  
Let Nature be your Teacher."*

The uniqueness of such learning will be in its conceptual diversity, cross-disciplinary character, pedagogical innovations, and state of the art delivery mechanisms that expose the would-be leaders to a whole repertoire of alternative sources and methods of learning (Eastern and Western, ancient and modern) beyond the conventional modes of classroom lectures and case studies and discussions.

These include:

- Learning from Nature
- Immersion in Silence and Contemplative as well as Meditative practices
- Sharpening the Art of Seeing and Listening as a means to enliven experience and role effectiveness
- Lessons from Illuminating Conversations
- Integrating inputs from Arts, Literature, Music, Theatre and films for Leadership Excellence
- Insights from Wisdom Literature of Oriental as well as western traditions, cultures and philosophy
- Storytelling and Experience Sharing
- Guidelines from Lives and Works of Thought as well as Action Leaders from different fields, both Eastern and Western



## Participation in Dialogues rather than debates for Collaborative Learning

Beyond the cliché of changing the mindset, there must be thrust on alternative learning barriers to holistic perception and widened perspectives methods will help the participants to expand the mind space and thereby overcome the barriers to holistic perception and widened perspectives created by our dominant limitations of linear thinking and trap of binary and judgmental functioning of our mental faculties. As William Blake puts it so succinctly in 'Auguries of Innocence':

*"To see a world in a grain of sand  
And a heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand  
And eternity in an hour."*

## The Learning Path for Leaders in Future Organizations

Organizations in future will need to chart out a multi-tier learning path for leaders of tomorrow to graduate from **information** through **knowledge** to **wisdom** as outlined below.

- \* Creating a platform of shared understanding through awareness creation and sensitization for ethical revitalization (**Business Ethics**)
- \* Opening up the leadership mind to broader issues beyond the limits of the self or the organization through creative stakeholder engagement and dialogues involving diverse constituencies (**Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainable Development**)
- \* Igniting the fire or spirit within the deeper self, prior to harnessing and unleashing our unlimited potential (**Human Values in Management, Spiritual Insights and Leadership**)
- \* Raising our consciousness to an adventurous flight to scale the height of leadership wisdom for effective and elegant management of turbulence, uncertainty and crisis in future (**Enlightened Corporate Citizenship and Responsible Corporate Governance**)

## Quest for the Child Within

But where is the mind that chooses willingly to face turbulence, navigate through transition, and embrace the quantum transformation? It cannot be a mind merely confined to limits of

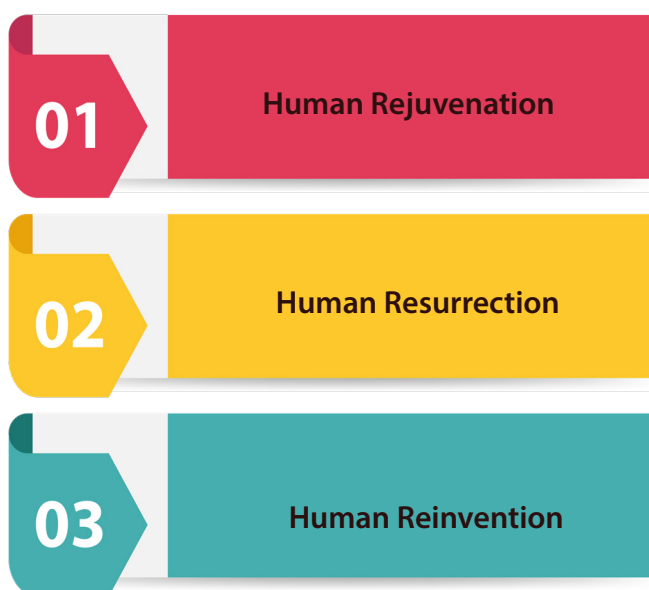
calculations around worldly affairs. "Let not earthly prudence whisper too closely into thy ears for this is the hour of the unexpected..." remarked Sri Aurobindo while heralding 'The Hour of God'. But how would the notion of God appeal to a rational, technical, and sceptical 21st century mind? So where do we find God? The best answer comes from Sri Aurobindo himself:

"What is God after all - an eternal child playing and eternal game in an eternal garden?"

The child within us may have the magic mantra for this transformation but it has hardly been tendered for long years. Even great masters like Mozart or the volcanic Indian monk Swami Vivekananda were childlike in disposition. But we have sacrificed her beyond redemption at the altar of education. Tagore was sensitive enough to quit schooling in childhood so that that the child in him with a vibrant and beautiful mind could ever flow in abundance like "Awakening of the Waterfall" (Nirjhorer Swapnobhongo):

*"I shall run from one mountain peak to the other,  
And roll from a bed of earth to the other,  
Laughing aloud, singing amuse,  
Clapping with every rhythm of life!" (translation mine)*

## Quantum leaps of transformation in contents and connotations:



## Whither HR and OD tomorrow?

With the awakening of the **Childlike Leader** in us HR may pass through the following quantum leaps of transformation in contents and connotations:

- a) **Human Rejuvenation** - for an awakening of our multidimensional leadership potential
- b) **Human Resurrection** - for rediscovering our innermost being and purpose in life
- c) **Human Reinvention** – for creating organizations with a vibrant life-force radiating new light

The last published article of Peter Drucker in Harvard Business Review (January 2005) was titled 'Managing Oneself'. Much later in his academic life, Abraham Maslow had his Pyramid model culminate beyond Self-Actualization in the last and final stage – Self-Transcendence. And more than a century back, the thundering voice of Swami Vivekananda arose in the West at the World Parliament of Religions, Chicago in 1893: "Ancient religion proclaims that a man who does not believe in God is an atheist. Modern religion proclaims that a man who does not believe in Himself is an atheist (emphasis added)."

Quo Vadis OD and HR? Are we guiding and inspiring the potential future leaders in that direction?

*The beginning of this journey in search of light from new horizons also heralds the hour of transformation from a mad, 'brave new world' of speed, information, and numbers towards a sustainable earth with a passion for excellence, commitment to quality, concern for harmony in relationships, a quest for enduring values and an earnest seeking for wisdom.*

# Viewing feminist organisations using OD Lens

## Reflections on Nature, Challenges and the Way-Ahead

Lalitha Iyer



Managing Trustee  
Plustrust and Consultant  
in Change Facilitation for  
Social Sector

Lalitha Iyer holds a Ph.D in Economics and an M.Sc. in Statistics. She is an accredited EMP practitioner from Eckerd College, Florida. She is a consultant, working towards institutional change facilitation in social sector development for almost a decade and a half. Since 2010, she has also been heading Plustrust, a non-profit organisation that provides micro-incubation support to women from rural resource-poor communities through fellowship opportunities. Plustrust aims at building an ecosystem to inspire and nurture the entrepreneurial minds of women as changemakers. Formerly, Lalitha has worked as an officer in SBI for over two decades (1976-1998), and moved to head Vidyaranya, a progressive school in Hyderabad for three years (1998-2001). She has also served as the Director of Bharatiya Samruddhi Financial Services Ltd, Director of the Basix group, a Board Member of Sathi (Ananda Bharathi Hyderabad), former Dean (Professional Excellence) of the Indian Society for Applied Behavioral Sciences (ISABS) and an external anchor for the Roopantaran initiative of Sir Ratan Tata Trust.

She is co-editor and contributor for the recently published book “T-Group Facilitation: Theory and Practice of Applied Behavioural Science” (Routledge 2022). Her other books include “The Strategic Business Spiral” (Sage, 2001), “Institutions Consultants and Transformation – Cases Studies from the Development Sector” (Sage, 2009), and “The Learning Crucible” ISABS (2015).

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# Viewing feminist organisations using OD Lens

## Reflections on Nature, Challenges and the Way-Ahead

Lalitha Iyer

The feminist organisations of today have emerged out of feminist activists of late 80s and 90s, who were striving to work towards a fair and just distribution of power and resources. These activists gradually built organisations around specific tasks and issues that they were closely engaged with. Feminist organisations project some typical similarities and traits, and hence are faced by similar challenges and conflicts that emerge out of their common traits and recur across these organisations. Even though an OD lens could be helpful in getting to the roots of these conflicts by working on systems archetypes and accidental adversaries and creating role clarity and boundaries, these organisations see OD practices reinforcing the patriarchal structures and thus are quite apprehensive in availing them. However, basis the experience of conducting OD interventions and the useful results thereunder, the author puts up a case for using OD interventions in feminist organisations for correcting many organisational flaws.

### FEMINISTS AND FORMAL ORGANISATIONS

In the late 80s and 90s, feminists were (understandably) wary about conventional organisations with a pyramid-like structure, clearly symbolic of patriarchy. They had in fact moved out from mainstream organisations as well as 'alternate' ones such as unions, political parties, cooperatives, and the rest. They had called out the way that organisations ignored gender and other forms of marginalisation, despite a stated commitment to equality and justice. As their work grew and some organising was needed, these feminist leaders began to build organisations in ways which lived up to their beliefs and values. Consequently, a whole body of practice and conceptualisation emerged from these experiences.

The feminist organisations I am now observing from close quarters have emerged from the work of these activists striving to move away from exclusion and inequality in society. They worked towards a fair and just distribution of power and resources. They were voices that questioned status quo in diverse fields such as politics, literature and art, law and justice, academia, healthcare, economy and so on. They gradually built organisations around specific tasks and issues that they were closely engaged with.

### TYPICAL FEATURES OBSERVED IN FEMINIST ORGANISATIONS



### TYPICAL FEATURES OBSERVED IN FEMINIST ORGANISATIONS

I summarise the aspects I observed in 10 organisations I had the opportunity to study recently, as a part to my work with them in various capacities. These included taking up external assessments, OD consultations, mentoring and project design. While the cross-section is certainly



too small to generalise from, there are striking similarities. These features are quite unique to them and very different from the features in corporate settings and other large systems.

### Shared Leadership

The governance is collective and inclusive. The organisations are not founder driven or family based. The executive leadership is shared and distributed rather than concentrated in one 'CEO'. The structure of the organisation is 'flat' with many collaborations across teams. They work on holistic programs and projects. The core values espoused are usually around Justice, equality, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI). The strategies for scale and impact are typically built on networks, coalitions, and movement building.

### Intergenerational collaboration

Today these organisations have seen two or three cycles of self-renewal and change since their inception- around two to three decades ago. The founders were feminist stalwarts, and the next (second) generation leadership was usually drawn from their younger colleagues or students. Today the third generation of professionals is stepping in. The political issues the organisations are engaged with are changing very fast. Thus, I often hear the terms 'young' or 'gen z' feminists. There is a relationship which acknowledges the foundations built by the seniors. Yet there are rumbles about their presence, power, or salience in the system. The pressures of multi-generational collaboration are tough to handle, without taking resource to the convention of 'respecting elders' or an organisational hierarchy.

### Feminist Culture

The feminist principles of 'personal is political' and 'sisterhood is universal' is taken seriously. The members of the organisation are held together by strong and intense personal friendship. Team members support each other through difficult moments at a personal level. For example, a team member facing an oppressive or abusive situation in the family is rescued by colleagues, and legal and emotional support is organised through feminist networks. Women from marginalised and vulnerable communities are included whole heartedly, going beyond tokenism. Similarly, the

LGBTQ community is treated with respect and nurtured.

### CHALLENGES AND CONFLICTS



### CHALLENGES AND CONFLICTS

These very features that define these feminist organisations also create challenges. Some of the conflicts that recur across the organisations that I saw closely are described below.

- At times the **founding group breaks apart**. This is a traumatic event in the history of the organisation and both sides have their points of view. It polarises the ordinary membership and the community itself. Of course, it creates bad press, undermines the cause and the feminist movement. Potentially, it could lead to two equally strong organisations, but usually one thrives and the other declines.
- Often there is **conflict within the leadership team** as well. The very intensity of the personal relationships becomes the cause for heartbreaks. Mutual demands and expectations are very high and over time, there are a few critical incidents which breakup years of deep acquaintances.
- Another conflict is the **mistrust** that grows between identity based subgroups within the organisation. Often the sensitivity to these

issues in the world outside creates strong reactions and political correctness becomes a big issue. Identities could be majority vs minority, class, caste hierarchies and so on. Gender is no longer a binary term and feminist organisations are grappling with the reality.

- Given the culture of **unstinting support to the members** of the organisation, managing day-to-day issues become difficult. For example, exciting tasks like events get managed well, while the routine tasks are allowed to pile up. Any questioning on the resulting delays becomes a personal issue. Often there are a few who hold everything together and feel martyred in the process. Others react by saying they want to take on work, but are not 'allowed'.

## REFLECTIONS

Using an OD lens can be helpful in getting to roots of these conflicts. Yet, feminist organisations have their reservations about OD practice. They see OD as a neoliberal approach to make it easier for people to adjust within the market and social structures in a more humane way. When consultants recommend typical fixes, these are seen to be reinforcing patriarchal and authority structures. I share here, some of the models and tools that I have found helpful in understanding these issues.

"Using an OD lens can be helpful in getting to roots of conflicts. Yet, feminist organisations have their reservations about OD practice.... When consultants recommend typical fixes, these are seen to be reinforcing patriarchal and authority structures."

## Systems Archetypes and Accidental Adversaries

Systems thinking is clearly useful in looking at feminist organisations because they are working on systemic issues of patriarchy and gender. One process that is often at work within the leadership or founding group is the 'accidental adversaries' archetype. Two people (or more) who begin working towards a common goal gradually fall apart. If the trend is ignored, it deteriorates to a situation where friends turn permanent foes.

How does this happen? ...

In the beginning, there is complete harmony and excitement as friends get together to bash the common enemy, say patriarchy. As the work grows, each member has so much to do. Alongside the work of creating and holding these feminist spaces- together, they are building their credentials as writers, teachers, lawyers, doctors, engineers, bankers, or dancers. As individuals, they gain expertise and credentials and find themselves pulled into many tasks in the other realms they are engaging with. In parallel, there are challenges from the personal sphere, with expectations from family, partners and so on. With this comes distancing in the leadership group. There are rifts and a sense of being betrayed. This could be personal or professional and often a mix of both. There are disagreements about the strategies to use. Activism does not mean the same thing for each of them and there is a fatigue which seems to set in. Individuals begin to focus on their 'own' work or project rather than the organisation. Gradually, the spirit of being in it together is lost.

Viewing this as a systems archetype is helpful because it takes a step back from blaming individuals. It takes the focus back to the common goal. It allows the individuals to explore how they see each other and work through the mistrust that has developed.

## Role clarity and boundaries

Another dimension that OD brings in is that of role clarity. The practice of collective and shared decision making is often misunderstood. Ideally it should be seen as a shared accountability for outcomes that flow from the tasks completed. However, it is perhaps conveniently interpreted to mean shared accountability for task completion, with no individual who can be 'fixed' to complete the task. This mental model is very powerful. When taken too far it allows individuals to avoid personal responsibility both for routine tasks and for risk taking. Thus, routine or 'boring' tasks are ignored as it is hoped or expected that they will be done by someone else. Simultaneously, any risky task is pushed on to a few 'brave' activists. In the absence of role clarity, it is easy to emotionally 'set up' a few people to carry the risk or the burden that others do not want to touch.

With poor accountability, internal coordination begins to rest on interpersonal equations. The processes of exchange of information, knowledge, and resources within the role-set and the team, as well as with other teams, begin to suffer. When the pressures mount on the interpersonal linkages, the situation turns close allies into accidental adversaries, discussed above.

The lack of a boundary between the personal and the official is another consequence of this lack of clarity. It generates expectations and demands a kind of loyalty which goes with slogans like "All for one and one for all"! At a simple level, there are no personal time boundaries and intense discussion go on beyond the office spaces, from home or elsewhere and beyond office hours as well. Those willing to be included in such conversations become an ingroup, irrespective of their role. This creates an outgroup and an ingroup. Many power games then begin to unfold around the informal groups in such organisations.

## CONCLUSION AND THE WAY FORWARD

To conclude, I share some of the interventions that have proved useful in the situations I saw.

I found participatory work on role clarification and negotiation a powerful starting point. This could be based on a role mapping to review the existing roles and the task distribution. With role clarity, performance goals can be set for individuals and the entire tone of the performance management system can shift to a more professional plane.

Another intervention that proved extremely helpful is gender mainstreaming. Organisations which adopted a conscious policy of recruiting all genders and nurturing individuals to flourish in the profession found this useful and practical. This reduced gender stereotyping and threw up role models for others.

Feminists have highlighted the challenges of intersectionality. Therefore, valuing diversity and inclusion in the organisation is an important way to dismantle informal power structures.

At an individual level, interventions to help managers and team members become more assertive are very relevant. They help individuals

to establish boundaries between their personal needs and official work.

Another important intervention has been the access to mentoring and coaching, especially for key role holders.

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# Interview: Challenges faced by Women today and how to overcome them

Sakshi Kashyap



NatWest Group , Vice  
President- Lead, Talent  
and Learning

ICF Certified Transformational coach, Inclusion champion, Sakshi Kashyap has over 14 years of corporate experience in Human Resources. She believes in driving purpose led goals and throughout her career has derived joy and motivation in enabling people and teams to scale new heights. Currently with Natwest group, she leads the Talent management agenda and also partners with businesses around learning and development. In the past , Sakshi has worked with Citibank, Axis Bank and TCS and has handled multiple roles across HR. She's a pro bono coach and mentors young and mid level women. She has been awarded the 'Top 40 Emerging Leaders in HR' Award by ETHRWorld in 2022 and 'Vedica Women Leader Award' for Top 50 HR professionals in India in 2021. Sakshi loves traveling, interacting with new people and spending time with her family.

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# Interview: Challenges faced by Women today and how to overcome them

Sakshi Kashyap

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**W**hat are the challenges you face as a leader in the area of communication?

Communication in business is important to convey clear, strong messages about strategy, relationships, customer service, branding and in achieving results. Leaders hold power in using this tool adeptly and artfully. Whilst there are some great communication mechanisms like storytelling, much of the leadership communication can be fraught with challenges.

Some of these challenges are:

## **1. Use of ineffective communication channels**

Most often, as leaders, we tend to use communicate important information and announcements through channels that aren't much used or don't deliver the right value.

It's important to select the right channels be it emails, intranet, company social networking site etc. A combination of few channels could also be leveraged to deliver the message in the intended form and fashion

## **2. Over or under communicating**

Poor or under communication creates an environment of uncertainty and confusion, which can lead to decreased productivity and morale. On the other hand, bombarding the team with information can have the opposite effect of what is intended.

It's important to keep the information succinct and keep the message tailored to the audience. It may also be helpful to ask the audience how they'd like to be communicated.

## **3. Not communicating the context or why**

In addition to communicating the "what," leaders also need to communicate the "why. Over time, consistency in the "why" will become ingrained in the culture, which will empower people at all levels to make better decisions. - Denise Mills, The

The Leader Fuel Centre LLC

## **4. Avoiding difficult conversations**

Many times, leaders tend to avoid or procrastinate difficult conversations. It is important to have courage to let people know where they stand or communicating to hi-pos that we are invested in them as an organisation. To be able to have these conversations, leaders need to learn the art of radical candour.

## **5. Inauthenticity**

When leaders aren't authentic in their intent and communication, the team doesn't treat the communication as important and moral. Hence, they are less likely to accept and adopt it.

In the post pandemic world, more than ever, people are led by Purpose and it's important to have meaningful and authentic conversations to win over hearts and minds.

## **6. Directing rather than including**

Most often leaders adopt an authoritarian style of communicating which shuts out views, feedback and concerns. Assertive communication is about mutual listening, mutual respect and mutual sharing of expectations and needs. - Jerome Zeyen, InsightHR Consulting

## **Psychological Safety has become very important, what can leaders do to ensure its embedded in the culture?**

Prof . Amy Edmondson from Harvard Business School Professor who coined the term psychologically safe workplace culture defines it as "one where people are not full of fear, and not trying to cover their tracks to avoid being embarrassed or pushed."

Traits of a psychologically safe culture are marked by *curiosity, trust between employees, Open-mindedness to change & different perspectives, resilience and a sense of purpose*. There's enough research to show that psychologically safe teams see higher engagement, collaboration, innovation, conflict resolution and wellbeing.

Any cultural change needs to start at the top of the organisations. Leaders need to create the right climate, mindsets, and behaviours within their teams. Positive team climate can be cultivated when leaders demonstrate consultative leadership and act as a role model in setting the right tone within the team. When leaders demonstrate care, compassion and empathy, there's greater trust leading to psychological safety at work.

**Reframing the relationship with failure-** Failure is a part of success and when we adopt a learning mindset from failure, we grow and evolve. Leaders need to accept and embrace failure as an important part of the journey at the organisation and allow room for the same.

**Role modelling-** When leaders role model inclusivity and authenticity, employees feel confident and comfortable in bringing their true self to work. This enables in championing their potential and contributing more productively at work.

**Developing leaders at all levels-** Investing in leadership development or teaching leaders how to create psychologically safe environment across an organization is an effective method for cultivating the leadership behaviours that enhance psychological safety.

## **WHAT STRATEGIES HAVE YOU FOUND THAT WORK WELL TO MANAGE REMOTE AND HYBRID TEAMS, TO CONFRONT THE TRUST CRISIS?**

The pandemic forced organisations to adapt to new business models and leverage new ways of working. However, increased changes in both macro and micro environment, toxic work cultures and others led to "The Great Resignation" and "Quiet Quitting". All of this is underscored by huge amount of trust deficit amongst colleagues, leadership and can permeate the whole organisation unless the leadership is conscious

about addressing it.

Some strategies that could be used are:

**1. Inclusive Culture-** Companies need to maintain an inclusive environment ensuring that colleagues across gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation can bring their authentic self to work. This would mean the right leadership behaviours and mindsets, inclusive policies, infrastructure, and colleague sensitisation.

**2. Humane Leadership-** Leaders need to lead with both the head and the heart, demonstrating empathy, showing curiosity, and listening. Simple questions like, "How are you doing? How's your family? What are you learning about yourself?" By listening, leaders can appreciate team members' circumstances. That then prompts leaders to demonstrate their own vulnerability. Leaders who communicate with empathy and compassion build trust and create a culture that encourages employees to share challenges and ask for support.

**3. Increased Communication** - Since hybrid and remote work have reduced physical interaction which help build intimacy, it's important that the organisation adopts transparent and increased frequency of communication around org Purpose, priorities, challenges, and support. These interactions should be occasions for leaders to build trust by demonstrating: Credibility—using their knowledge and experience to be a helpful coach; Reliability—showing they can be counted on to show up and follow through on commitments and Intimacy—demonstrating that they care for the person

**4. Psychological Safety-** Creating psychologically safe environment helps with employees feeling comfortable around challenging the status quo and collaborating with each other through trust and harmony.

## **What do you think is the Future of leadership development in our country?**

The need for leadership development has never been more urgent. To sustain and thrive in today's VUCA world, companies recognise they need leadership skills and organizational capabilities different from those that helped them succeed in the past.

Organisation need to change their approach of

leadership development from mere “tell” learning sessions to investing in **leadership-development experiences that are emotional, sensory, and create aha moments**. Learning experiences that are immersive and engaging are remembered more clearly and for a longer time. It’s critical that learning programs prompt leaders to engage with and shift their underlying beliefs, assumptions, and emotions to bring about lasting mindset changes. This requires a learning environment that is both conducive to the often-vulnerable process of learning and also expertly designed. Companies can begin with facilitated experiences that push learners toward personal introspection through targeted reflection questions and small, intimate breakout conversations. These environments can help leaders achieve increased self-awareness, spark the desire for further growth, and, with the help of reflection and feedback, drive collective growth and performance.

With AI tools like GPT and others, human skills are at a premium and are the only reasons for irreplaceability of jobs. Leadership development efforts should be focused around creating more self-aware, authentic and confident leaders. Leadership development should enable in cultivating broader perspectives and mindset for inclusion of different views and identities. Leaders who are purpose led and strive to create positive social impacts around communities and societies they operate in.

### **How can leaders get ahead of leadership burnout?**

“Burnout is the index of the dislocation between what people are and what they have to do. It represents an erosion in value, dignity, spirit, and will – an erosion of the human soul. It is a malady that spreads gradually and continuously over time, putting people into a downward spiral from which it’s hard to recover.” ~ Maslach and Leiter  
Leadership can be a lonely and stressful place. It can come with its own pressures, challenges and stresses. In a world, where delineation between work and life has become thin, leadership burnout exists globally. Some ways leaders can get ahead of the burnout:

1. By becoming self-aware, leaders can spot early signs of stresses and action before it becomes

a burnout. In addition, practising self-care and allowing oneself permission for imperfection helps one to tide over stresses and pulls of the job

2. Cultivating resilience and adaptability to change helps leaders to prevent everyday stresses and lows

3. Building social connections, developing a hobby and setting time aside to pursue it diligently all can help leaders, practising mindfulness/ meditation -all of these can help leaders to prevent burnout

4. When leaders delegate work thoughtfully, they empower employees to take on new responsibilities and expand their skill sets. In turn, leaders can prevent burnout and stress. Hence, this is a win-win for everyone

5. The last one being my favourite, having a multidimensional life means that our identities aren’t overly tied to just work. Also, having a larger view of life as we navigate things, helps to put things in perspective and avoid burnout.

**We had the pleasure of interviewing Ms. Sakshi Kashyap to learn more about challenges faced by leaders in today’s VUCA world and how to overcome them.**

**Thank you, Sakshi, for sharing in detail your thoughts on the topic. I am sure that other leaders relate to these challenges a lot, and have gained much from your sharing.**

# Lead by Character, Not by style

Saurabh Gupta



Chief Product &  
Technology Officer at  
FroGo

Saurabh is the Chief Product & Technology Officer at FroGo, a foodtech startup. He is an alumnus of Harvard Business School and BITS Pilani, India. As a techpreneur, he is passionate about building innovative digital products that drive business growth and cultural transformation, and inspire by presenting technology in simple, yet powerful ways. Prior to FroGo, Saurabh was the CEO and Partner at Naviz Analytics. In his career spanning more than 15 years, he has served at various leadership positions at GE, Michelin, and Oracle. Saurabh has authored three technology books with leading publishers like Packt and Apress. He was felicitated with the prestigious NEXT100 CIO Award by IT Next magazine in 2018.

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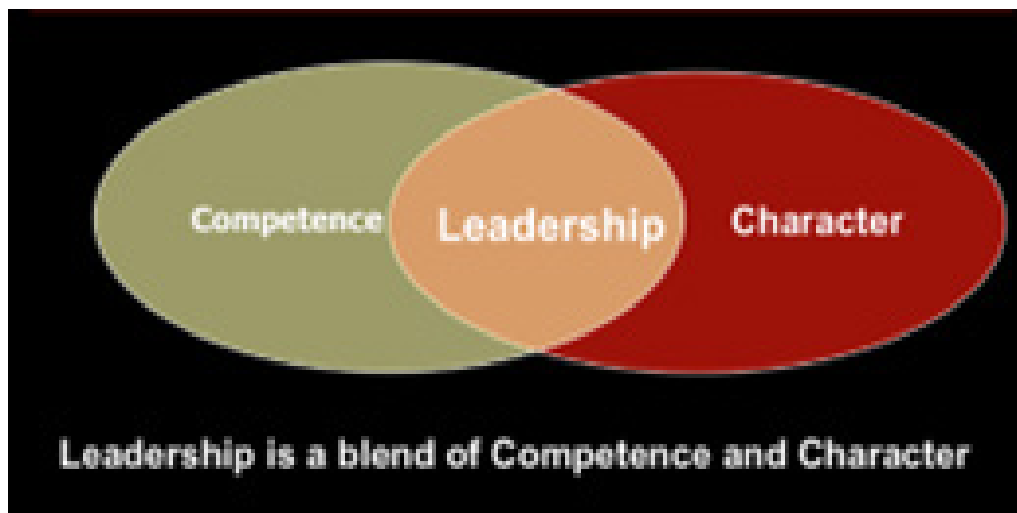
Saurabh Gupta. 2023. Lead by character, not by style. OD Quarterly, 5, pp.39-42



# Lead by character, not by style

Saurabh Gupta

In today's VUCA world, the use of innovative management practices undertaken by leaders, along with 'softer' control systems like strategy development, strategic planning, statistical decision making, and process management are highly instrumental for business survival, growth, and sustainability. This combination makes for an authentic leader, who is capacitated with thinking beyond core competencies, and skills to deal with external volatility, both in an efficient and effective manner. The trait that underlies an authentic leader, thus, is not any specific style of doing business, but a character- strong enough to outlive the vulnerabilities.



The era of constant change is here. We are at a point in history where there is more disruption happening than ever before. Post-pandemic, the ever-in-demand digital transformation, globalization and technological advancements in AI are creating unique challenges for leaders who must adapt or perish. In the face of global uncertainty, what should a leader do? The answer to this question is not clearly defined.

Managing the balance between creating an environment for creativity and maintaining control could be challenging. The challenge in front of leaders is that their companies are buffeted by global uncertainty, requiring them to think on their feet. They are pushed to strike the right balance between managing their teams and giving them room to innovate on the job, while keeping them motivated and engaged.

If you are striving in the space or had a chance to read through the leadership columns, you must have come across the term VUCA. In 1998, the United States War College developed a report to

train upcoming officers, had included a new term that is "volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous" —VUCA, for short. No one would have ever thought that this new term would perfectly define what is happening in the global business world today.

Uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity are combining to drive leaders to take an innovative approach to management. The traditional tools of control systems and financial forecasting now need to be augmented by a deeper understanding of what has historically been considered the "soft" side of business – strategy development, strategic planning, statistical decision making and process management. In short, business leaders must not only develop their own strategy but also implement it to be effective in today's turbulent environment.

## Authentic Leadership in VUCA world

*In the last 10 years, authenticity has become the gold standard of leadership. This is a sea change from 2003 when I wrote Authentic Leadership. Back then, many people asked what it meant to be*

**authentic.**

– Bill George

Authenticity in leadership is the fundamental ingredient. Authentic leaders not only have a sharp vision, but also the vital knack of communicating that vision and inspire others to follow. This enables a culture of trust and accountability, which leads to better productivity and hence, high performance. This requires the ability to maintain high ethical standards, properly direct others and make decisions that are right for the organization as well as for themselves.

The following are the elements of authentic leadership:



### What makes a VUCA leader?

**Vision** – An effective leader has a vision. Vision is vital; it helps you know where you are going and what needs to be done. Its purpose is not only to guide the actions of your organization but also drives the behaviour of those who work for you. It can help provide boundaries around decisions, and create consistency within teams, departments, and geographies.

**Understanding** – The best way for leaders to understand the world around them is through direct conversation. This can take place in a variety of settings, ranging from brainstorming sessions with key employees to walking the floor of a factory or research lab. Leaders need to make

sure that their employees and customers feel heard, as well as hear themselves understood. The best way to do this is by gathering information from multiple sources, including other company leaders, customers, and employees themselves.

**Courage** – In a time of unstipulated change and uncertainty, leaders must lead with boldness. They cannot afford to keep their heads down; they need to use new management techniques that dare to take risks and embrace criticism to take advantage of this new era.

**Adaptability** – The current environment is challenging for leaders, who must adapt to rapid change and rising uncertainty. Robust leadership skills are needed to maintain the balance between agility and stability, while adapting from long-range plans to frequent short-term actions. This requires them to have several contingency plans in place, while preserving strong balance sheets so they can cope with whatever comes their way.

A changing world is forcing business leaders to think beyond their core competencies and acquire skills that help them deal with external volatility. The only way to succeed in this new competitive landscape is by staying focused on your mission, values, and strategy. Those who abandon their core values or fail to adapt will wind up the mediocre.

### Spotlight on Authentic Leadership

*Leadership is a potent combination of strategy & character. But if you must be without one, be without the strategy.*

– General Norman Schwarzkopf

Empathetic leadership needs to map the behaviour with the context. An authentic leader practices inclusivity towards their teams. The empowerment, flexibility, and adaptability entitle the team to build an innovative mindset and not worry about their positions or promotions.

Amidst the chaos of a global pandemic, the executives had to deal with great uncertainty and unprecedented employee stress. The worst scenario would be if employees don't have time to take care

of themselves. The former Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern has been criticized for not being aggressive or assertive, but she says that's not the case. She says, "Maybe somehow, because I'm empathetic, it means I'm weak. I totally rebel against that. I totally rebel against that," adding that she refuses to believe that you cannot be both compassionate and strong as well.

*Bill George is Senior fellow at Harvard Business School, former CEO of Medtronic, and the author of: Discover Your True North*

Self-leadership moves beyond the surface behaviour. Authentic leaders look at themselves and the leadership roles they play with an open mind. They are in a constant state of development - learning from their mistakes and adapting to changing situations. This is what enables them to take on new challenges, successfully navigate changes within an organization, and thrive in some of the toughest situations possible. Leaders need not to be perfect, and so do their approach. However, the sheer acceptance of their mistakes and rectifying them before they leave a deeper dent is the key. This attitude of continuous learning enables them to move forward with confidence, wisdom, and humility.

Becoming authentic leaders means processing the crucibles you have experienced in your life: the people, situations and events that inspire you. Through self-reflection, discovery through feedback from your peers and organizations, and resulting action plan, you can discover more about who you are and what motivates you.

Howard Schultz, the CEO of Starbucks, knew about style. This young executive grew up near a discount store that would give away cups if you bought a meal, and that experience made him into an expert at the art of deal-making. The same is true for Steve Jobs in his return to Apple nine years after his 1986 termination. He had to pick up a path back to leadership that matched his potential and experience.

Authentic leaders can practice employee-centricity and customer-centricity at the same time because they are not afraid to be vulnerable. Sheer awareness that being real helps people trust you, and they will be more receptive to your ideas. People follow authentic leaders because they instinctively know that they can rely on them in good times and bad. Authentic leadership is built on character, not the style or strategy.

# Challenges faced by Women Leaders

Renuka Sajjan



Chief Technology Officer  
at Increasingly

Renuka Sajjan, CTO of Increasingly is a seasoned and accomplished technology industry professional with over 15 years of proven expertise in digital advertising, ecommerce and AI. She oversees all aspects of the product creation including research, design, infrastructure, architecting and defining the AI algorithms to deliver a sustainable and scalable strategy. The business has seen phenomenal growth over the past 5 years. Now serving over 60 clients across the globe in fashion, electronics, DIY and beauty. Including the likes of Samsung, U.S. Polo, Avon to name a few.

Prior to Increasingly, she was working at AdJug, Europe's leading display advertising exchange platform that connects buyers and sellers of digital advertising. Renuka has vast experience in open-source technologies and cloud platforms, having prototyped and built several e-commerce products from scratch. She has gone above and beyond to help startups grow by channeling her engineering vision to scale product development while continuing to innovate. She has trained and mentored global teams and provided technical leadership.

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# Challenges faced by Women Leaders

Renuka Sajjan

Women in leadership roles often face multiple challenges in asserting themselves in their roles and struggle to make their voices heard as against their male counterpart. The tech industry in specific, is often male dominated, with norms and styles that may not always align with those of women, making it hard for them to find their voice and be heard at the workplace. Phenomenon like confidence gap, lack of representation, double-bind dilemma and work-family conflict put a heavy burden on women leaders, barring them to effectively manage their professional roles. DIE comes here as a rescue as by addressing these challenges and empowering women to find their voice, a more inclusive and diverse tech industry may be created where women's perspectives and contributions are valued and recognized.

The Harvard Business Review article "Women, Find Your Voice" by Kathryn Heath, Jill Flynn, and Mary Davis Holt focuses on the challenges that women face in asserting themselves in high-level meetings and offers strategies for overcoming these challenges. The authors draw on their research, including 360-degree feedback from female executives, surveys of female managers in Fortune 500 organizations, and interviews with top executives from various companies, to shed light on the issue.

The article highlights that many successful and ambitious women struggle to make their voices heard in meetings, with their male counterparts often perceiving the issue. Men reported that women sometimes fail to articulate a strong point of view, allow themselves to be interrupted, apologize repeatedly, and do not back up their opinions with evidence. Women, on the other hand, often feel unsupported, outside their comfort zones, and unable to advocate forcefully for their perspectives in male-dominated environments.

Women tend to be uncomfortable with conflict, find it unsettling when receiving public rebukes, and may interpret dismissive behaviour from men as being "put in their place." Timing, rather than lack of ability, is often cited as the main challenge for women in articulating their views effectively.

The tech industry is often male dominated, with cultural norms and communication styles that may not always align with those of women.

Women tend to underestimate their abilities and hesitate to speak up or assert themselves, even when they are highly competent, this can create challenges for women in finding their voice and being heard in a workplace that may prioritize assertiveness and confidence in communication.

A study by McKinsey & Company found that 60% of women may feel pressure to conform to the dominant male culture, adopt assertive communication styles, or downplay their femininity to be taken seriously or be heard in a male-dominated environment. This can lead to a sense of dissonance and discomfort in expressing their authentic voices.

One challenge that women may face in finding their voice in the tech industry is the phenomenon known as the "confidence gap." Research has shown that women tend to underestimate their abilities and hesitate to speak up or assert themselves, even when they are highly competent. This can be due to various societal and cultural factors, including gender stereotypes, societal expectations, and imposter syndrome. Overcoming this confidence gap and finding their voice can be a significant challenge for women in the tech industry.

The natural result of low confidence is inaction. When women hesitate because they aren't sure, they hold themselves back.

Lack of representation and role models for women in leadership positions is a challenge faced by

women leaders. Women are significantly underrepresented in the tech industry, both in terms of the overall workforce and leadership roles. According to a report by the National Centre for Women & Information Technology, as of 2021, women held only 26% of professional computing occupations in the U.S. This lack of representation can lead to a sense of isolation and hinder opportunities for career growth and advancement.

Women in tech may struggle to find female leaders who they can identify with and look up to as role models. This lack of representation can make it difficult for women to envision themselves in leadership roles and can affect their confidence in speaking up and asserting their opinions. Additionally, women in the tech industry may face challenges related to workplace culture and dynamics.

Tech companies have historically been male-dominated, and women may face unconscious bias, microaggressions, or even outright discrimination in their workplace interactions. This can create a hostile environment where women feel unsupported or discouraged from expressing their opinions or ideas openly.

The Double-Bind Dilemma is a significant challenge faced by women leaders, as they navigate conflicting expectations and stereotypes that can impact their leadership effectiveness and career advancement opportunities.

The Double-Bind Dilemma refers to the challenge where women leaders often face conflicting expectations and stereotypes. They are expected to exhibit qualities traditionally associated with both femininity and leadership but are often penalized for not adhering to these contradictory expectations. For example, if women leaders are assertive, confident, and assert their authority, they may be perceived as aggressive or bossy, which can result in backlash and negative evaluations. On the other hand, if they exhibit traits traditionally associated with femininity such as warmth, nurturing, and empathy, they may be seen as lacking in leadership qualities or not being serious enough for top leadership roles.

## Challenges faced by women leaders in tech industry



Research has shown that the Double-Bind Dilemma is a real phenomenon faced by women leaders in various organizational contexts. For example, a study by Eagly and Karau (2002) found that women leaders are often expected to display both agentic (assertive, decisive) and communal (nurturing, empathetic) traits, but they are evaluated more negatively when they display assertive behaviours compared to their male counterparts. Another study by Rudman and Glick (2001) found that women who were perceived as highly competent were also seen as less likable, which further highlights the double-bind dilemma, as women leaders may face a trade-off between being competent and likable.

Furthermore, research has shown that the double-bind dilemma can impact women leaders' career advancement opportunities. A study by Catalyst (2007) found that women who were perceived as competent but lacking in likability were less likely to be promoted compared to their male counterparts. Another study by Heilman and Okimoto (2007) found that women who exhibited agentic behaviours, such as advocating for their own promotions, were evaluated more negatively compared to men who exhibited similar behaviours.

Research conducted by Pew Research Centre in 2020 found that women in the United States are more likely than men to report experiencing work-family conflict. This conflict arises when the demands of work and family life clash, leading to challenges in managing both effectively. Women leaders may face difficulties in managing their professional responsibilities while also fulfilling caregiving responsibilities, which can include managing household tasks, taking care of children, or providing care for elderly parents or other family members.

Work-family conflict can have negative impacts on women leaders, as it can result in increased stress, reduced job satisfaction, lower productivity, and decreased engagement in their leadership roles. It can also lead to challenges in advancing their careers, as they may have to make difficult choices between their personal and professional responsibilities, leading to potential career sacrifices.

Achieving a satisfactory work-life balance can be particularly challenging for women leaders due to societal expectations and gender norms that often place a heavier burden on women for caregiving responsibilities. This can result in a disproportionate share of caregiving responsibilities falling on women, which can create additional challenges in effectively managing their professional roles.

To address these challenges, it is important for companies and organizations in the tech industry to actively promote diversity, inclusivity, and gender equality. This can involve implementing policies and practices that support and encourage women to speak up, providing training on unconscious bias and inclusive communication, creating safe spaces for open and respectful dialogue, and promoting diverse representation in leadership roles. Additionally, women can also seek out mentors, allies, and supportive networks within and outside their organizations to help them find their voice and navigate the challenges they may face in the tech industry. By addressing these challenges and empowering women to find their voice, we can create a more inclusive and diverse tech industry where women's perspectives and contributions are valued and recognized.

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# The Well-Being Framework

## An Aditya Birla Group's Initiative

Vishal Sharma  
Shreyashree Dutta



Global head of HR-  
Manufacturing operations,  
Supply chain and quality  
-Glenmark Pharmaceuticals

Vishal is a global HR professional and has worked across Asia, the Middle East & Africa, Russia & CIS, and parts of Europe with over two decades of experience. He has expertise in large transformation initiatives across cultures, leading multiple M&A integrations, creating HR strategies, and partnering with businesses and stakeholders. Vishal has worked across sectors like Information Technology, Pharmaceuticals, Banking, and Chemicals, that has given him a unique perspective to lead people practices.

Vishal is a firm believer in skill-based organization and is passionate about promoting skill-building initiatives at work place. At present, Vishal is the Global Head of HR for operations, manufacturing, and quality functions at Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Ltd.



Lead Organizational  
effectiveness, HR strategy and  
special projects- Aditya Birla  
Chemicals

Shreyashee Dutta is an industrial/organisational psychologist who has a keen interest in organizational effectiveness, talent management, and organization development. She is currently leading the organization effectiveness and employee well-being portfolios for the Aditya Birla chemicals.

She has a rich experience in people processes under Talent Management, Learning & Organizational Development and Employee Engagement. She also leads projects aligned to HR Strategy from CHRO's office involving designing, executing and sustenance efforts.

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# The Well-Being Framework

## An Aditya Birla Group's Initiative

Vishal Sharma & Shreyashree Dutta



**E**mployees spend a huge amount of time at work and it is assumed this should give them a sense of satisfaction, and purpose, and be a source of their overall well-being. In reality, and on the contrary, employees draw most of their stress from the workplace, that adversely impacts their personal lives and well-being.

Employee well-being is a strong pillar for future of work. We at Aditya Birla firmly believe in well-being of our employees as a business imperative and the only way to help sustain ourselves in the years to come. The overall goal is to take employee well-being to a level where employees experience well-being at a Eudaimonic level.

Care for employees and their well-being is the underlying philosophy of Aditya Birla Group, and an integral part of our organisational goal. Driven by this spirit, we ensure we go beyond to provide holistic well-being opportunities to employees at the Chemical, Fashion Yarn, and Insulator (CFI), as a gesture of employee care. Our well-being

journey started much before pandemic arrived, and the need only strengthened during these times.

For us, employee well-being has expanded beyond physical well-being to focus on building a culture of holistic well-being. The journey from just physical health check-ups to firming up the overall contours of well-being has been challenging and also the execution has taught us a lot about how to attempt to create a culture of well-being.

The dilemma for us was to go full hog or go incremental. While on one side, we were keen to see our employees enjoying their work and going home with a happy mind, we were also aware that causes of stress have to be minimized at the workplace.

Given this background and after studying various models of well-being and happiness like PERMA model from the positive psychology side or Richard Layard's Ten keys of Action, we decided to launch our own framework of Well-being.

The framework acknowledges the necessity of providing a workplace that prioritizes employee health and well-being. Our commitment to a healthy and effective workforce is reflected in the policies and overall initiatives. This employee well-being framework applies to all our employees across cadres and their families and communities depending on the target audience's needs, the overall purpose stays the same.

This well-being framework provides the foundation for introducing interventions and modifying work environments, policies, and practices to support the health and well-being of all employees. Positive benefits are also likely to extend beyond employees to result in better well-being for families and the community. The employees can benefit

from workplace-supported health and well-being initiatives.

The workplace's well-being is enhanced by:

- Enhancing employee engagement
- Increasing employee productivity
- Decreasing healthcare costs
- Reducing employee absenteeism
- Improving employee morale and loyalty
- Supporting employees to adopt and maintain healthy behaviours and reduce unhealthy behaviours

### Aditya Birla Group's Chemical, Fashion Yarn, and Insulator (CFI) Sector Well-being Framework

Well-being as defined by us refers to how employees experience different parts of their life, including their home, health, interpersonal connections, work, and other activities.

*Employee Well-being at CFI is defined as the state of being happy, healthy, and prosperous. It looks at employee experience at work from a holistic view and sees to the fact that the employees are happy, productive, motivated, and have everything that they require to do their best at work.*

#### Dimensions of Well-being at CFI



#### • Physical Well-being

Physical well-being is listening to and taking care of your body for optimal health and functioning. At CFI, It particularly addresses workplace health risks such as stress, obesity, smoking, and high blood pressure.

Some of the initiatives, such as Group Health Plans, OHC Facilities, Healthcare Policies, Maternity Support Programs, Well-being Assurance Policies, etc., have already shown success in implementing Physical Well-being for employees.

**Distance to Disease Model:** Every year, employees at all levels go through comprehensive medical checks and these check-ups generate a huge amount of data year after year. But this data was

never used for any meaningful intervention. We created a model which will measure a particular employee's health indicators to the reference range and based on the ranges after the check-up, each employee was put into one of the three categories: No risk, Potential risk, and At risk.

For example, under lipid profile, we test Cholesterol, HDL, Triglycerides, and Cholesterol/HDL ratio and against the reference range, we measure the distance to disease for an employee and classify the employees based on their categories. All employees who have crossed the distance to disease and are classified at risk are provided medical consultation and their health is monitored periodically.

We test around 20 indicators and basis these indicators we now have a physical health indicator of our organization.

Every employee's data is maintained under very strict confidentiality and employee consent is taken for every use of data.

#### • Emotional Well-being

The emotional well-being dimension recognizes and accepts one's feelings. Emotional well-being includes the degree to which one feels positive and enthusiastic about oneself and life. It includes the capacity to manage one's feelings and related behaviours, including the realistic assessment of one's limitations, the development of autonomy, and the ability to cope effectively with stress.

The focus is on creating a psychologically safe environment, building resilience, and simply understanding mental health and addressing the needs of our employees.

Important initiatives under this pillar are:

- A support line **Life Unlimited** is a counselling service where one can freely talk about any issue or challenge and get guidance. It is like a friend, guide, and confidant for the employee and their immediate family members.
- We also have run multiple sessions on treating mental health as a health challenge and not a stigma. We have tied up with leading psychiatrists and psychologists for employees who want to share their challenges personally.

The organization provides leave to attend these sessions and there are regular check-ins to see if the concerned employee is feeling safe and is on the way to recovery. Needless to say, all such data is maintained very strictly.

- **Social Well-being**

Social well-being is a state in which people are able to coexist peacefully in communities with opportunities for advancement. The social dimension encourages contributing to one's community. It emphasizes the interdependence between humans and its surrounding. It aims to encourage individuals to take an active part in improving our world by encouraging healthier living and initiating better communication with those around them. Thus, enhancing personal relationships and important friendships, and building a better living space and community.

Important initiatives under this pillar are:

- Volunteerism is CFI's way of giving back to the community while also developing essential social skills and gaining valuable experience. All employees are required to do a minimum of 5 hours of volunteerism per year.
- CFI Hobby Clubs is another avenue to enhance social well-being at CFI by connecting with people of similar interests and hobbies and learning from one another.

Various engagement activities like celebrations, cultural events, and celebrations of the success of employees are also carried out.

- **Financial Well-being**

The financial well-being dimension refers to an individual's overall financial health and the absence of money-related stress. It will provide holistic support and advice to employees so they can meet short-term needs while working toward long-range goals.

The intended objective of this dimension is to create a finance acumen, keep spending within one's means, be prepared for financial exigencies, have access to the information and tools necessary to make good financial decisions, and have a plan for the future.

Important initiatives under this pillar are: Awareness sessions of ABG policies to support financial well-being are conducted. Sessions by experts on savings planning, tax planning, and also budget planning are conducted. These sessions are tailored to age groups, gender, and other demographics.

Just before the annual merit increases, sessions are held to talk about how to manage more money.

- **Environmental Well-being**

The environmental dimension encourages individuals to live a lifestyle that is respectful of their surroundings. This pillar encourages us to live in harmony with the Earth by taking action to protect and enhance it. The aim is to promote interaction with nature and their personal environment by adopting sustainable practices both at home and in their workspaces.

Important initiatives under this pillar are:

- 3Rs (Reduce, Re-use, and Recycle) of waste management and environmentally friendly guidelines have been implemented, along with a focus on sustainability.
- A series of campaigns across the organization around cleanliness, plantation and more are conducted.
- No car/ bike policy on a particular day is being practiced

- **Intellectual Well-being**

The intellectual well-being dimension will encourage individuals to recognize their creative abilities and find ways to expand their knowledge and skills. Using intellectual and cultural activities in the classroom and beyond, combined with the human resources and learning resources available at CFI and in the larger community, enables intellectual growth and stimulation.

Important initiatives under this pillar are:

- Leverage on Learning and Development Initiatives: Sector's L&D team works hard to align employee learning requirements, goals, and performance with that of organization. The goal is to encourage employees to learn on the job, through courses, and via interactions with some of the brightest minds

- Learning Wallet: All employees have been given an amount to pursue a course of their choice or buy a subscription to a journal etc. The idea of this initiative is to enhance the intellectual well-being of the employees.

There are many quizzes, sessions from experts which are carried out periodically and all employees have been provided access to huge online content for them to learn.

### • Occupational Well-being

Occupational well-being balances work and personal time in a way that encourages personal and professional growth. It is about creating personal growth, fulfilment, and satisfaction at work. Employees should have a sense of purpose and productivity, and they should feel proud and accomplished in whatever work they do by striking a balance between their professional and personal lives.

Important initiatives under this pillar are: Adding More To Life (AMTL) – plant infrastructural transformation projects, code of conduct, ergonomics sessions, no-meeting Thursdays, Rendezvous leader connects, and goal setting, which have helped improve occupational well-being.

## The Institutional Setup

To implement the Well-being framework across organization, we have constituted a **well-being committee** with enthusiastic and driven well-being champs. They play a critical role in driving the agenda across the locations. Their roles are:

- Make sure that the well-being journey is being implemented
- Encourage long-term commitment to the workplace well-being
- Assessing employees' and workplace needs
- Developing, implementing, and evaluating well-being strategies in consultation with employees and management
- Support fellow employees in their awareness of this policy and its ensuing activities

To ensure smooth execution and expected outcomes of well-being programs, every party involved will play a critical role in sustaining a culture of well-being.

## Senior Management Team

- Ensuring the health of employees is valued
- Recognize that the workplace culture and environment contribute significantly to an individual's ability to make healthy lifestyle choices, including emotional well-being along with other identified pillars
- Committed to providing all employees with a safe, healthy, and supportive environment in which to work. Providing workplace environments and systems that are supportive of employee well-being.
- Act as advocates and role models for workplace health and well-being
- Participating in, and encouraging employee participation in, the well-being programs
- Contributing ideas and expertise to the work of the well-being committee or well-being representatives

## Human Resource Representative

- Ensuring that the health of employees is valued
- Ensuring workplace environments and systems are supportive of employee well-being
- Ensuring employees get the opportunity to participate in well-being activities across the employee lifecycle
- If required, review, revise and develop unit-level human resources policies that support workplace well-being in consultation with the well-being committee members
- Ensure that all employees are made aware of this framework

## Managers

- Ensure that all team members are made aware of this framework
- Actively support and contribute to the implementation of this framework
- Encourage team members to participate in the well-being programs by allowing them time and space

## Employees

- Recognize that health is more than just the absence of illness and injury
- Understand this policy and seek clarification from management where required
- Support fellow employees in their awareness of this policy and its ensuing activities



- Seek opportunities for involvement and advancement of ideas in planning
- Contribute ideas
- Participate in the Well-being program

Well-being framework is universal in appeal and in need but due to certain cultural adjustments, not all dimensions can be given equal focus. For example, while in India basic awareness of savings and planning for retirement is present, in certain parts of the world in which we operate this sense is missing and employees tend to spend a lot more. At the end of the month, they get into borrowing and get stuck in a debt trap. Here our focus in terms of well-being is financial well-being and a lot more engagement is done with the employees to educate them on savings and help them create savings habits.

Similarly, the ability to handle and cope with stress differs from culture to culture and this is why we are mindful of focusing our initiatives as per the country-specific requirements while keeping the overall framework intact.

Apart from cultural differences, implementing a wellness framework has seen its own challenges. The issue of just focussing only on physical health was one of them. Educating the employees about the entire framework and its potential benefits was a long process. Creating an environment of sharing about mental health challenges was a big learning and the messaging to treat mental health as a health challenge was a huge task. It has been more than three years since we have been driving our well-being agenda and these years are full of learning, empathy, and compassion for employees, treating wellness as a business imperative, and getting support from leadership as a critical success factor.

We have administered our first Well-being Scorecard and the results are encouraging which propels us to do more and do consistently. Apart from our well-being initiatives, we have been focusing on issues that are stress creators in the workplace. We constantly audit behaviours that are detrimental to the overall smooth functioning of the organization and create stress.

We run various programs which

educate managers about the challenges of micromanagement, and this kind of management style leads to a toxic workplace. We also train our first-time managers before they take over the role as managers and the focus of such programs is to make managers aware of behaviours like micro-management, unrealistic expectations, favouritism, etc.

We strive to ensure our workplace is friendly and employees enjoy working with us and not because they have to work with us.

*Our employees deserve the best and ABG is doing its best to support its employees in their journey of being happy and enjoyment of well-being.*

# How Learning Improv made me a better Leader

Ankur Sardana



Nautankibaaz Improv Collective (NIC) and Head of Design at Tata Digital

Ankur is the founder of the improv group - Nautankibaaz Improv Collective (NIC) and heads design at Tata Digital. He has always been enamoured by storytelling and was a part of amateur theatre for the longest time, till he discovered 'improv'. His journey in improv is a 6-year-old passionate pursuit into community building. A community which is based on empathy, play, opportunity and sticking to one's personality. He firmly believes that improv has a lot of answers to tough societal questions that we face currently. The group NIC, regularly conducts workshops and shows across NCR (and now streaming online across the world) for kids, adults and elders alike. He is an NID (National Institute of Design) and CBS (College of Business Studies) alumnus. He got most of his initial improv chops in Seattle and NYC at the Unexpected Productions.

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# How Learning Improv made me a better

Ankur Sardana

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If you would like to be a leader who is all about ruthless pursuit of goals and metrics, where product matters more than the process, where you spearhead with force, and where hustle is about work fetish without play, read no more. For improv is for mentors, who don't see themselves as the Boss, where the process is the product, where play is embedded, and where there are ensembles instead of teams, and where mistakes are celebrated as opportunities.

In this article, I'll take you through some of the tenets of improv (or improvisational theatre) which I've experienced through my journey learning, performing, and teaching improv in India and the US. Before we start let's understand improv. Improv is a performance art form made famous by the super hit comedy series – 'Who's the line is it anyway', which brought short-form improv to the masses in US and UK. A short-form improv show is made up of multiple unrehearsed 3–4-minute scenes which are created on the spot using audience suggestions. Long form is an advanced version in improv. To construct these scenes, improvisers follow some basic tenets, which help them create this world out of thin air.

The tenets described below have helped me and will surely help you to become not just a good improviser but also a good mentor in your leadership journey.

So, let's begin!

## **Tenet 1: Fail proofing vs Being fearless**

To create stories without a script or rehearsal on stage in front of a live audience is a clear path to failure. There are many times during a show where the stories don't come together or as we say, the scene 'bombs'. As an improviser we understand this completely, and instead of brooding over the bombed scene, we are ready on stage to enact another, not just accepting our failure, actually celebrating it. This makes improvisers more spontaneous and fear less, and they take more risks during their scenes.

If we want a fearless culture in our team, we need to not just be open to mistakes but almost

encourage these. This will ignite the spontaneity and risk-taking capability of the team.

## **Tenet 2: No, But vs Yes, And**

Improvisers on stage, trying to construct a scene can only do it well if they're feeding off each other. If they are constantly agreeing and adding to the reality constructed by each other. Together they will create a reality which none of them initially thought, but could not have been created without their positive jamming.

This Yes Anding of each other's ideas is not what we generally do in life.

We are hardwired to find loopholes in arguments and ideas of others. As if the only way to a solution is through negation. Improv, suggests that we take an opposite approach. Imagine a team meeting where every other sentence starts with a Yes, And instead of a No, But. It leads to immense positivity and more often than not, great solutions to the problems we couldn't have solved easily.

## **Tenet 3: Team vs Ensemble –**

In an improv show, the audience usually comes back and talk about the performance of the group and not an individual. They talk about the coordination of the players, their chemistry and harmony. It's never about one single person standing out.

And the reason is that Improv is about an ensemble before anything else. Improvisers learn to perform together as a unit, they learn to make their partners look good, to stand by the choices made by their partners, to support and always be there.

Creating an identity of our team, a common playground and then performing together as an

ensemble will bring strength and power to any group.

#### **Tenet 4: Professional vs Safe –**

Being stoic at workplace is not a bad thing, though for improv it might not work. In improv due to its spontaneity, we might find improvisers in zones where they are vulnerable. In that state they can only succeed if they feel safe from judgements and biases. It needs loads of empathy from each other to create that space, which once created can unleash a lot of hidden potential.

Imagine these safe spaces at work.

#### **Tenet 5: Hustle vs Play –**

You know when a group is close knit, when they are playful with and around each other. Improv is at most times, play. The audience loves the improvisers enjoying and thriving in this playful environment. Sometimes there is play of humor, play of words and other times emotions.

Play at workplace can be brought in through adding and enjoying humor, gamifying your work to the degree possible and taking your hustle a little less seriously.

So, fellow mentor, it's time for you to taste improv and become addicted for life. Find a group near you, or reach out to us to help you give a quick start.

Happy improvising!

**The tenets described below have helped me and will surely help you to become not just a good improviser but also a good mentor in your leadership journey.**

**Fail proofing  
vs  
Being fearless**

**01**

**02**

**No, But  
vs  
Yes, And**

**Team  
vs  
Ensemble**

**03**

**04**

**Professional  
vs  
Safe**

**Hustle  
vs  
Play**

**05**



# Role of Strategic Leadership in a Tech powered World

Pravin Hungund



Cofounder & CTO, Avinya Tech  
Technology Strategist, Startup  
mentor, Industry Advisor

Pravin has inspired & motivated multiple teams to deliver outstanding outcomes in Engineering and Emerging Technology projects. He has built several large, multi-skilled technical teams and has successfully integrated project management and development strategy with external innovation ecosystems comprising of strategic partners, Start-ups, Academia & industry bodies. He is an expert in leading Deep tech H2, H3 strategic development programs. He has helped customers solve complex technical challenges, impacting topline & helped them increase market share. Working with & influencing Board & CXO's, his management & leadership skills have helped solved many complex business challenges for both the organizations he has worked for and for his customers. As a Chief Technologist he has developed & implemented Technology Strategy & Vision across multiple organizations. Leading innovation focussed Software development & Engineering teams; he has excelled at processes & frameworks for SDLC & agile methodologies for project management. He has led several global program managements initiatives & delivered complex programs like Technovation, Bangalore, India (2013-2022) & SVIC, CA, USA (2017). He is a keynote speaker in global Conferences & published several Thought leaderships articles & Podcasts.

Advisor & Mentor- Grand jury CII India Industrial Innovation awards 2022

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# Role of Strategic Leadership in a Tech powered World

Pravin Hungund

**As** the saying goes, 'AI will not take your job away, however, a person using AI surely will'. This is true at an operational level as it is for strategic areas. The AI led strategic disruptions have led to creation of a Dynamic *Digital World*. *The Dynamic Digital world is an exponential surge of complex information systems, with real time live data that is generated directly at the edge from people, process, operations or an activity.*(1,2)

The real time live data is a catalyst for disruptive innovation leading us to a new era of innovation in sectors like Banking, Retail & Healthcare. Further, technology convergence across multiple aspects of capital-intensive industries like Oil & Gas, Manufacturing, Utilities, Pharma, Construction etc is resulting in a massive scale disruption at both strategic and operational layers. The potential for super-exponential growth is creating a new genre of disruptive innovation platforms. The market value of such disruptive innovation platforms could scale 40% at an annual rate during this business cycle, from \$13 trillion today to \$200 trillion by 2030. In 2030, the market value associated with disruptive innovation could account for much of the global equity market capitalization (5). The current wave of Digital transformation will play a major role in productivity gains and efficiency improvements. It will also contribute to the net zero goal that has now become a mandate for every organization.

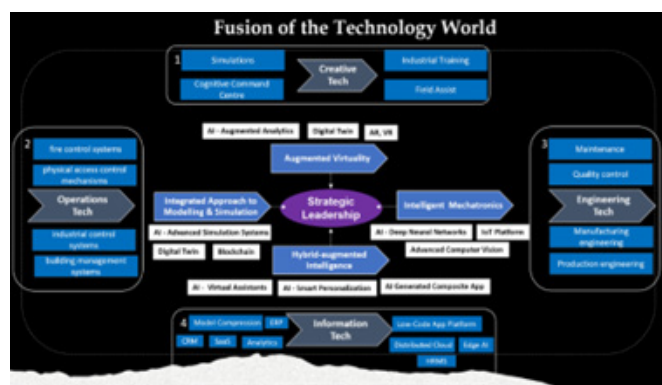
## Technology trends and evolution

Over the last decade, technology world has democratized information, data, skills and now we are experiencing democratization of technology itself. Technology has codified money, markets, and trust. All major components of technology are today software defined. This has resulted in technology being affordable and accessible for everyone, including at the bottom of the population pyramid.

Since technology is at the core of these disruptions, let us review the current state of technology. The most interesting assessment today is to study how much of Cognition is computable? (4). Computable aspects like Reasoning, linguistics, statistics, inferencing etc have enabled automation of 3D (dull, dirty, dangerous) (8) jobs. In its best-case scenario, technology today is incompetent of predicting social behavioural outcomes. Technology fails to create Consciousness, Belief, Emotion, Sensation. These cognition skills are not computable and hopefully never will be. However, technology is set to integrate world of creative intelligence (9,10) into day-to-day activities of business operations.

## Why Leadership in the Digital world is complex?

Our most valued commodities have gone from 'slat & sugar' to 'Chemicals & Fuels' to 'Data & Services'. This splurge of data and Services, and advancement in Technology will lead to faster permeation of technology across industry sectors. It has made the world move from creative toolsets to composable environments and from proprietary data to interoperable data. These societal shifts impact Technology, Economic models Business models, Human behaviour, and today's industrial control systems. *The digital world has matured into a multi-dimensional and a hyper-interconnected ecosystem.*



## Economic Models

**Discontinuous changes** in macroeconomic growth have become a new norm, thanks to Technology. The gap between Consensus forecast and projections consistent with technological history is showing an increase from 3.7% growth rate in FY 2021 to 6.1% growth rate. If you consider consensus forecast, the growth rate is a meagre 3%. It will be a thrive or perish game for large global corporations, and the spate of bankruptcies in the last few months reflect the reality.

## Industry Disruptions

The world is experiencing Industrial shifts from reactive strategy to Preventive to Predictive and now to Condition based monitoring systems. While the benefits are many, it brings in tremendous focus on strategic Leadership. It enables forced feedback across every stage of business operations and demands real time strategic recalibration. We are shifting from the traditional '*just in time process*' to a '*just in time strategy*', a strategy that is dynamically adaptive. Traditional process driven systems are easily computable. This wave of AI adoption has predominantly enabled productivity improvement by automating the **blue collared jobs**. These automation tools can be considered as superhuman intelligence that solves the problems they have specifically been designed for. Technology is now showing us the path to create superhuman intelligence in some white collared jobs. We have also heard of Robots have been inducted into company Boards and for Country governance.

We can soon expect a domain specific codified Human Brain that can perform sector specific decisive tasks in Oil & Gas, Manufacturing, Pharma, Construction etc. Sector specific Singularity (13), when an AI system will outperform a human brain in tasks can soon become a reality (9). In such a scenario, tasks like Blow Out prevention in Oil Rigs, Scheduling & planning in Oil Refineries, Materials planning, Supply chain optimization, turnkey project management, Building Information Modelling etc can all get transformed. However, Technology does bring in its own challenges due to the algorithmic black-box approach and lack of explainability of machine learning models of the machine age. These challenges are that Leadership needs to be aware of and address

from a strategic point of view.

There are other sectors also that are seeing progressive innovations like discovery of designer drugs that melt away certain forms of cancer; Computer code being used as international currency; Computer code being used as a weapon to destroy physical infra halfway around the world. The fundamental realization of Autonomous systems will drive the business models of tomorrow. Such complexities challenge the competency of leaders, where decisions need to be made first time right, in smallest possible time windows and continuously varying situational realities.

## Human Behavioural aspects

The character flaws in Leadership, gaps in integrity and lack of knowledge can be fatal to the society. We have seen examples of such misdemeanours- be it socio-political influences during election campaigns and the Cambridge Analytica's whistle blower incidence or the geo-political influences during the Russia – Ukraine war. Leadership Governance becomes a very important aspect under such circumstances. Cost, reach and simplicity of technology has made this a more plausible concept (3).

## Need for Technology driven leadership!

The world is shifting from a machine age to a system age, from a mass production strategy to a mass customization, from an Information economy to a platform economy to a tokenized economy, and Digital leading to shift from Automation led to an Autonomous world. Leadership takes a new meaning, a new definition, and Technology led leadership needs to come together to drive ethical, sustainable, and resilient growth for all forms of business operations. ***It is important for all Leaders to be tech savvy and become aware of digital nuances.***

## Productivity Enhancement

Technology would increase the productivity of knowledge workers by more than 4-fold by 2030. At 100% adoption, AI spend of ~\$41 trillion could increase labour productivity ~\$200 trillion, dwarfing the ~\$32 trillion in knowledge worker salaries and rivalling current projections of global GDP\* in 2030. If vendors were to capture 10% of value created by their products, AI software could generate up to \$14 trillion in revenue and \$90

trillion in enterprise value in 2030 (5). Today, AI can create a graphic design for just \$0.08\*\* in minutes — a di minimis cost compared to \$150 for human labour. Software engineers completed a coding task in less than half the time with AI coding assistant GitHub Co-pilot. The inference costs to run the model at scale are ~\$0.01 per query, Wright’s Law suggests that by 2030 ChatGPT-style applications will be deployable at the scale of Google Search, processing close to 8.5 billion searches per day. Breakthroughs associated with Energy Storage and Robotics alone could add 30% to real GDP by 2030, and AI could dwarf both their contributions (5) .

In this context, the conventional title led Positional leadership become an inhibitor for growth and for Business survival. Knowing when people need motivation, and when a team member requires a reprimand is a wisdom dependent function.

### Business Ethics, Biases, and Integrity

The rise of unethical, antisocial and biased behaviour are gaps in leadership competencies that can have a ripple effect on the entire world today. Many undesired repercussions like the collapse of Lehman brothers, recent fall of FTX exchange and the fall of Silicon Valley bank are due to either improper or a lack of use of Technology. While Technology is not necessarily the cause of such failures, we can attribute it to the unethical leverage of Technology by a few people in Leadership positions, people in power.

### Global Risks, Climate change and Sustainability

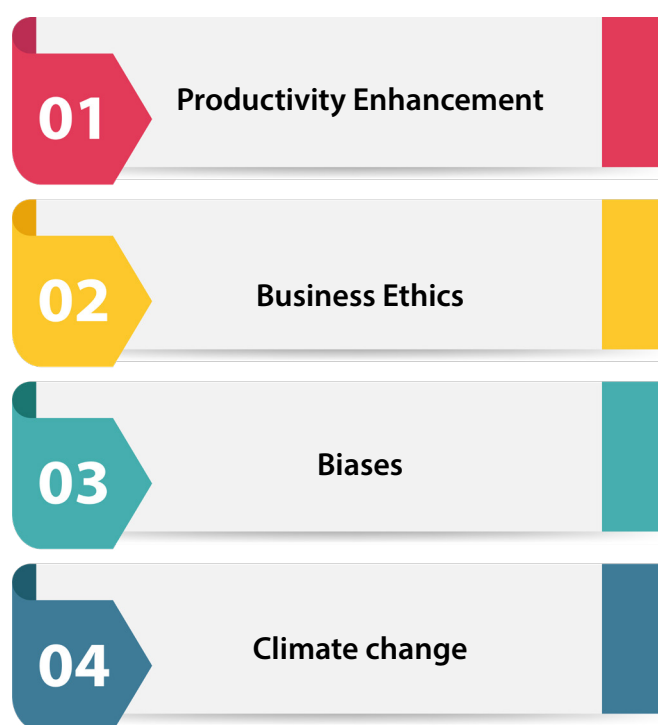
Global challenges relating to rapidly depleting natural resources, climate change, sustainability etc are far more complex and with no earlier precedence for Leadership to emulate. This brings in tremendous responsibility on the Leadership teams making their world a lot more complex. In situations of misplaced judgment, the repercussions can be exponential and can impact for years to come. The Gulf of Mexico Oil spill at the Deep-Water Horizon is an example of the extent a damage a bad decision by Leadership can create, and damages continuum is observed for more than a decade. The window to make a decision on one’s feet, in real time and be authentic & confident at the same time is very small. In the Digital led low latency and near zero response times, it’s about confidence and authenticity.

**Leveraging Technology intuition for strategic direction to demystifying the world has become a basic need for all Leaders.**

### Visionary Leadership

Visionary leadership is about seeing the art of possible and developing a strategy around that art of possibility. A technology empowered visionary leader will see a different form and function of a working system when technology is a core competency. The day of a Boss is over, and welcome to a new Leadership centric world. Managing business and people in a Leadership centric world needs a rigorous correlation between both tangible and intangible functions closely related to the context of the topic. It makes people management, especially of Digital natives much more complex. Digital world needs embedding visionary thinking right from the ideation phases and bring in *one vision – one mind* synergies for every player on the team all through the implementation and execution phases.

#### Need for Technology driven leadership



### Leadership empowerment

Leadership skills need to step up and step out to tame this wild, dynamic, volatile, uncertain, complex and unpredictable environment. It is important to empower, augment, enable, teach, familiarise Leaders with the right set of tools,



wisdom, intuition, experience, knowledge, insights, habits and character to lead in the Digital world.

### **Leadership development programs**

Set up programs to enhance Strategic technology Leadership competency that enable complex decision making. Enable Strategic leaders to develop Operational Leadership Competency. Establish processes to leverage Business Technology architectures to educate, enable and govern DEI, ethics and integrity for business resilience.

### **Leadership Co-pilots and Mentors**

Establish leadership co-pilots and mentor programs, onboard advisors, and mentors. Strategic CTO's can be appointed to the advisory board to advise the CEO on an ongoing basis.

### **Technology orientation programs**

Undergo Deep tech solutions orientation programs to demystify the art of possibilities that Tech can deliver.

### **Leverage Industrial Simulation and modelling environment**

Invest in Technologies for Room scale industry realistic simulation worlds like CAVE and Holograms to help visualize the impact of multi-dimensional industrial and environmental situations. Enable leadership to leverage these as a precursor to validate decisions and computed data points.

### **Leverage Ecosystems**

Set up and leverage extended ecosystems and open programs to leverage the **Wisdom of Crowd**.

### **Conclusion**

Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality, and Leaders are expected to know it all, be it all and do it all. The Dynamic Digital world is an exponential surge of complex information systems, with real time live data that is generated directly at the edge from people, process, operations, or an activity. (1,2). The digital world has matured into a multi-dimensional and a hyper-interconnected ecosystem. Leadership competency must evolve from leading organizations in the Machine age & develop competencies to lead organizations in

the System age. Leaders must learn to be tech savvy and become aware of digital nuances. The role of Leadership needs to be fine-tuned; technology intuition should be at centre stage in every form of leadership– Industrial, Financial, Social, Religious and Political.

The key to successful leadership is about being both Data driven and intuitive at the same time. During rapid change and massive scale transformations, like the way we are in during this decade, the reliance on intuitional leadership will be critical. There will be many unknowns, the impacts noticed in days if not seconds and at global scale. In the ultra-complex world, where the capabilities to resolve the challenges need a superhuman intelligence, are our Leaders empowered to leverage Technology to lead us in the right way. And are we preparing Leaders to leverage technology ethically and for its best possible efficiency and effectiveness? Leadership role to leverage Technology to humanise the society will be the key path to a sustainable living. Will super intelligence technology create a new Software Defined Leadership. We will have to wait and watch. However, for now, the key to avoiding the ever-threatening Armageddon that Earth can encounter leading to human extinction is for leaders to be with a mindset that-

- **there is no concept of - this is not my job**
- **there is no concept of this skill is not relevant to my job**
- **there is no concept of a lone warrior, the Rambo style Hero concept has long died**
- **there is no concept of know it all- learning will never end, curiosity will thrive**

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