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Inverter for the poor

*Su-Kam's proposed Rs. 1,000 inverter will light up a power-cut hit country resulting in huge gains to the rural and urban poor. It's the latest in **Kunwer Sachdev's** daring innovation journey*

By Benedict Paramanand



The number of entrepreneurs getting bitten by the bottom-of-the-pyramid bug is growing by the day. The latest to join the bitten list is the 40-year old Kunwer Sachdev who is planning to launch a Rs. 1,000/- inverter next year. With this he hopes to open up a latent market which is currently managing with emergency lamps and noisy generators in the urban areas and lanterns in villages.

The initial cost to the consumer will include a battery which could be priced at around Rs. 1,500/- Even at Rs. 2,500/- initial investment, the low-cost inverter, Sachdev believes, will be a hit among small shops, which run into a few million in India. With only five percent of urban households having access to generator back-up, Sachdev believes the demand for this inverter will be tremendous. With the capacity to light up two CFL lamps for 48 hours, this inverter can be a boon in remote areas where power supply is erratic.

With the new offering of Sachdev's Su-Kam Ltd, a 1,200 people, Rs.600-crore

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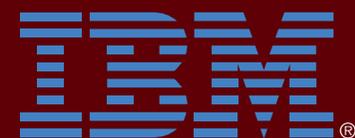


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Venkatesh Roddam's transformational business focus since he joined in 2005 ago, has resulted in a radical acceleration of 90% year-on-year growth for Satyam BPO. At present, Venkatesh's goal is to align the company with Satyam, to form an integrated IT-BPO conglomerate. His result-oriented philosophy and an in-depth understanding of IT-BPO market dynamics have transformed Satyam BPO from a vendor to a strategic partner.

In a freewheeling chat with **ManagementNext**, Venkatesh Roddam, CEO, Satyam BPO, unveils the secrets of keeping management level attrition to bare minimum.

Leadership style



Venkatesh Roddam

Throughout my career, I have learnt just one thing – Effective delegation. All I do at Satyam BPO is give people the vision, and let them take decisions. A few mistakes will happen; that is part of learning. But majority of the decisions will be correct and that will add confidence to the team. Apart from that, I am always there to help and assist them. After delegating, the one key message that I drive across teams, is to leverage me whenever they have to.

What I did at Satyam BPO is no rocket science. In any organization the top management leads and the bottom management executes. But between these two layers is the middle management where there is lack of buy-in into the leadership's vision. The distributed leadership model at Satyam BPO is called 'Foresight' and addresses this core issue.

The Foresight group is Satyam BPO's extended management team and is responsible for all actions in the company. The Foresight team at Satyam BPO comprises of approximately 70 senior and mid-level managers and is lead by the top management. The top management merely shows the direction to this team. It is this team which collectively takes decisions which impact the organization. It is this team which is also responsible for implementation of these decisions. Inclusion in the Foresight

At a time when managers in middle management are regaining their strategic role, organizations are struggling to retain them. At Satyam BPO, Venkatesh Roddam has been effectively applying the art of distributed leadership and the results are stunning.

team at Satyam BPO is a matter of merit and depends on the criticality of the work being handled by the particular individual.

Why Foresight group?

Clarity of vision! People do not mind going through pain today, if they know what's in store for tomorrow.

People leave an organization because they do not know what's in store for them tomorrow. By tomorrow I mean the long term vision which is essential to keep middle and top level management satisfied. If I am told, as a CEO of a company, 'look if you row this company to this stage then this is your reward'. Then there is reason for me to go through all the pain, toil and hardships. Lack of clarity of thought is actually a fundamental problem. All I do with the Satyam BPO's Foresight group is give them a vision to begin with and follow it up with effective communication.

How do you ensure cohesiveness and sense of responsibility among the Foresight group?

Every month beginning, we have the monthly Foresight call which addresses/lays down the thought process for that month. The team contributes to it and by the end of the call decisions are made and action plans formed. That is the speed at which the team works.

Apart from the regular monthly calls, we also have regular meets which helps us bond together. These meets are conducted offsite so that work disturbs us as little as possible during this time. There is defiantly the usual sessions during the meet. Apart from that there are a number of interactive sessions where positive thoughts flow and discussions on the future course of action done.

Benefits of the distributed leadership model

I will put the benefits derived by launching the Foresight group into two categories – Actual and Perceived. The actual benefits include a retention rate I am proud of. Other than that there is more systematic execution. In perceived benefits, there is more butt-in from the middle management, more ownership and the free flow of ideas to and fro. Apart from this there is increased transparency and cohesiveness within the team. As I see it now, each individual in my Foresight team is geared-up to take on bigger challenges as they know that it is not the individual working towards the goal, but seventy of us collectively working towards that very same goal.

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power back-up company, may again compete for the ‘Innovator for India’ award of Marico Foundation next year. **This year the company won the award for business model innovation – for taking the unorganized power back-up industry from the paradigm of noisy diesel gensets to clean, green, efficient products and solutions that provide self-sufficiency to industrial users and home users alike.**

After ten years in business which started off by selling dish antennae, modulators, satellite receivers and amplifiers, Su-Kam today is a market leader in India in inverters and other power back-up products. Today, it sells in 40 overseas markets including the United States and Europe. Its wide product range includes 17 newly launched Digital UPS Systems, which are amongst the most technologically advanced in the market. The entire range comprises Su-Kam Digital Inverters, Su-Kam DSP Sine Wave Inverters, Su-Kam On Line UPS Systems, Su-Kam Digital UPS Systems, Su-Kam Digital Long Back-up UPS Systems, Su-Kam DSP Sine Wave UPS Systems, Su-Kam Power Bank Batteries and Su-Kam Point of Sales Systems.

Innovation is a way of life

Clearly, Su-Kam’s journey to market leadership can be attributed to fearlessness and a aspiration to compete with the best in the market. Going by the response in competitive markets, Su-Kam could have got the formula of top quality and service standards right.

Sachdev, a non-technical, non-MBA entrepreneur has made it big due to sheer enterprise and hard work. Innovation to him, he told **ManagementNext**, “is a way of life”. “I tell people not to be afraid of big names. I find fighting with big brands very easy.” Su-Kam has been able to establish market leadership by taking on big global brands in the power back-up sector in India.

Sachdev says Su-Kam was the first to introduce technologies such as Mosfet, micro-controller based, and DSP Sine Wave into inverters. Focus on power saving and other convenient features seems to have made Su-Kam more relevant and cost-effective for Indian consumers. Su-Kam’s products are largely homegrown and its emphasis on R&D has yielded a few patents as well.

But Su-Kam’s larger innovation is in its ability to effectively challenge a badly unorganized industry. The 2008 Innovation Award citation reads: “It has repeatedly challenged notions of ‘what can be achieved in India’. Its software solutions, for example, that complement the power hardware, are truly advanced, where power back-up products can be manned centrally, via the internet from all over the world.”

Sachdev says his secret of success can be distilled into two strategies – adopting innovation as a way of life and allowing a sense of ownership among people.

Sachdev’s future plan is to put Su-Kam on “self-sustaining mode” and start some new and interesting businesses, preferably in the food sector. Before that, he wants Su-Kam to be a Rs. 2,000 crore company by 2012. “There’s opportunity in every field. I won’t do things just to make money. I will do things where I can add value,” he says.

By integrating seamlessly with hardware, software and different energy sources, such as solar, Su-Kam’s innovation journey may have just begun. It appears that the size of the opportunity is limited only by the size of Su-Kam’s imagination.

Is it the end of customer service?



When the world is obsessed with customer service, customer delight, customer is the king/queen debate, there's a new trend which indicates the gradual demise of customer service as we know it.

In a recent article in Time, which looked at big trends in 2008, the author predicts that self-service technologies could nearly eliminate physical contact between customers and the product/service offering staff.

"Today, companies love self-service for the money it saves, and with consumers finally playing along, the need to interact with human beings is quickly disappearing. Now that companies have gotten you used to the idea, they are poised to go all the way."

There are a good number of examples today to back-up the forecast. The British retailer Tesco has opened dozens of its Fresh & Easy grocery stores in the U.S. where all the lanes are self-checkout. By summer, Alaska Airlines will finish building its "Airport of the Future" in Seattle. The ticket counter has been obliterated; only islands of self-check-in kiosks remain. In Britain, NCR, a company that sells self-service systems, is trying out machines that let customers not only buy merchandise on their own but also return it. In Malaysia, IBM has outfitted a chain of sushi restaurants with ordering screens linked to the kitchen; so much for waiters/waitresses. And in Pennsylvania, Heritage Valley Health System will soon join the ranks of hospitals using check-in kiosks for emergency-room visits.

What's more, increasing efficiency and cost savings aren't the only result. Slowly, we are separating services from the places where we are used to receiving them. Continental Airlines is testing a program that would allow PDA users to wirelessly check their flight's standby list. No need to talk to a counter agent anymore, let alone be in the same terminal. For supermarkets, Motorola makes a handheld scanner that customers carry around; it lets them ring up and bag groceries as they go. Yet, clerks aren't completely going away. You just don't have to see them.

Here's the big question. Aren't we doing the work of employees without being paid? And by adding all these new tasks to our daily routine, are we overstressing ourselves and reducing our quality of life? The debate has just begun. It's worth waiting to see where it goes!

'Simple' risk management reason for crisis: Alan Greenspan



The current financial crisis in the world markets has again brought popular risk management models into question. And when Alan Greenspan, previous Fed chief, writes, the world sits up and takes notice.

Writing in the Financial Times recently, he said much of the financial system's risk-valuation models failed, not because they were too complex but because they were "too simple to capture the full array of variables governing global economic reality".

He expects many casualties from the unfolding financial market crisis, which will lead to a large-scale overhaul of international banking regulations, codes and risk management.

"The crisis will leave many casualties. Particularly hard hit will be much of today's financial risk-valuation system," he wrote.

While insisting that current risk management models and econometric forecasting methods remain "soundly rooted in the real world," he said risk management can never be perfect.

What's more, Greenspan warned that "It (current risk valuation models) will eventually fail and a disturbing reality will be laid bare, prompting an unexpected and sharp discontinuous response." He hoped that one of the casualties from the worst U.S. financial crisis since World War II would not be the spirit of broad self-regulation within financial markets.

Yet, Greenspan warned against over-regulation and said the Basel II international banking regulatory framework would almost definitely be revamped and financial institutions' financial models would need to be re-drafted.

"It is important, indeed crucial, that any reforms in, and adjustments to, the structure of markets and regulation not inhibit our most reliable and effective safeguards against cumulative economic failure: market flexibility and open competition," he said.



Green collar jobs on the rise

The white collar workers are increasingly turning their collars green by taking up eco-friendly jobs

The saturation with the white collar jobs is already here and many mid-life career shifts have been happening at an increasing rate. This is universal knowledge by now. But it's interesting to see the direction of these shifts. Entrepreneurial shifts are well known. What's highly noticeable as an evident trend is the shift towards environmental jobs.



With the climate change concerns mounting, environment seems to be lapping up most of these track changers at mid-career point. Industry professionals are

increasingly seeking to put their skills in a green context. The US which has 8.5 million jobs in the energy sector (renewable energy and energy-efficiency industries) is going to see it increase to 40 million jobs by 2030, according to the November report commissioned by the American Solar Energy Society. The rest of the world, including India – though no figures are available – is showing early signs too.

While saturation with the white collar job acts as the push factor, the promise of a really fulfilling and meaningful work that creates a positive change in the world – albeit smaller paychecks – is pulling many a professional to 'greener' pastures. The shift must surely be of a considerable magnitude – since professional consultants for such placements are coming up to facilitate the transition. These consultants assess the skill sets and advise a proper fit with cause-related projects/assignments/organizations.

So, if you're done with the corporate rigmarole, you can turn your collar green. And who knows, breaking away from the boring white, green will be the new color of fashion soon, and then you'll be able to flaunt it too!

Immelt's Ecomagination pays off

Should CEOs always go by consensus of their executive committee or does it pay to push plans on them at times?

At the C-suite level, these are the days of management by consensus, network approach rather than hierarchy, deploying soft skills and taking your board along with you. Successful organisations are adopting these new-gen approaches.

But it's important to notice exceptions. A CEO need not take this consensus approach too seriously all the time, it seems. An effective leader must know when to take charge and push his plan irrespective of opposition. And that's exactly what Jeffrey Immelt did.



Ecomagination, a green initiative by GE is today successful but not many know it was the brain child of Jeffrey Immelt which he forced his executive committee to adopt.

When Immelt came up with his detailed plan in 2004 to coordinate the independent green initiatives of GE's different business units, his executive committee shot it down mercilessly. The long-term goals behind his plan which also included audit green score cards, was to grow its spending on clean tech R&D to \$1.5 billion in 2010, reduce its absolute greenhouse gas emissions by 1% before 2012, and generate \$20 billion in revenue from green products. He called it Ecomagination.

The plan was shot down in the executive committee meeting of 35 heads of business units, for being too expensive, too soft and vulnerable to being undermined by other programs of GE. There were only five or six who supported Immelt. But Immelt, being absolutely sure of the significance of the plan, decided to push it. The business heads had no choice but to follow. And today, Ecomagination has proved to be a successful plan for GE and has run right on track, meeting all its targets for now. Thanks in part to the marketing of ecomagination initiatives, the value of the GE brand has grown 16.9%, to \$51.6 billion, and Immelt estimates shareholders have benefited about 5¢ to 10¢ per share as of 2008, says the case study on *Businessweekonline* (March 4th, 2008.)

Warren Buffett's 'Moat'

The Sage of Omaha's letter to shareholders this year, replete with rare wisdom and wit, is perhaps his last. Here's an excerpt:



Buffett's annual letters have been a treat to its readers. It is replete with anecdotes, wit and lines from country music. Perhaps the best is in this line which announces his successors: "I reluctantly discarded the notion of my continuing to manage the portfolio after my death – abandoning my hope to give new meaning to the term "thinking outside the box."

A truly great business must have an enduring "moat" (a metaphor for the superiorities some companies possess that make life difficult for their competitors) that protects excellent returns on invested capital. The dynamics of capitalism guarantee that competitors will repeatedly assault any business "castle" that is earning high returns. Therefore, a formidable barrier such as a company's being the low cost producer (GEICO, Costco) or possessing a powerful world-wide brand (Coca-Cola, Gillette, American Express) is essential for sustained success. Business history is filled with "Roman Candles," companies whose moats proved illusory but were soon crossed.

Our criterion of "enduring" causes us to rule out industrial companies prone to rapid and continuous change. Though capitalism's "creative destruction" is highly beneficial for society, it precludes investment certainty. **A moat that must be continuously rebuilt will eventually be no moat at all.**

Additionally, this criterion eliminates the business whose success depends on having a great manager. Of course, a terrific CEO is a huge asset for any enterprise, and at Berkshire we have an abundance of these managers. Their abilities have created billions of dollars of value that would never have materialized, if typical CEOs had been running their businesses.

But if a business requires a superstar to produce great results, the business itself cannot be deemed great. A medical

partnership led by your area's premier brain surgeon may enjoy outsized and growing earnings, but that tells little about its future. The partnership's moat will go when the surgeon goes. You can count, though, on the moat of the Mayo Clinic to endure, even though you can't name its CEO.

The worst sort of business is one that grows rapidly, requires significant capital to engender the growth, and then earns little or no money. Think airlines. I should emphasize that we do not measure the progress of our investments by what their market prices do during any given year. Rather, we evaluate their performance by the two methods we apply to the businesses we own. The first test is improvement in earnings, with our making due allowance for industry conditions. The second test, more subjective, is whether their moats have widened during the year.

Weak dollar

The U.S. dollar weakened further in 2007 against major currencies, and it's no mystery why: Americans like buying products made elsewhere more than the rest of the world likes buying products made in the U.S. Inevitably, that causes America to ship about \$2 billion of IOUs and assets daily to the rest of the world. And over time, that puts pressure on the dollar.

Our country's weakening currency is not the fault of OPEC, China, etc. Other developed countries rely on imported oil and compete against Chinese imports just as we do. In developing a sensible trade policy, the U.S. should not single out countries to punish or industries to protect. Nor should we take actions likely to evoke retaliatory behavior that will reduce America's exports, true trade that benefits both our country and the rest of the world.

I should mention that people who expect to earn 10% annually from equities during this century – envisioning that 2% of that will come from dividends and 8% from price appreciation – are implicitly forecasting a level of about 24,000,000 on the Dow by 2100. If your adviser talks to you about double digit returns from equities, explain this math to him – not that it will faze him. Many helpers are apparently direct descendants of the queen in Alice in Wonderland, who said: "Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast." Beware the glib helper who fills your head with fantasies while he fills his pockets with fees.

Guest Edit

Innovation first, strategy next



By Bhupendra Sharma

On March 19th, at an evening full of innovators and top honchos of the business community, the Marico “Innovation for India” awards were announced. Erehwon, along with the Marico Innovation Foundation had recognized the Tata Nano as the “Global Game Changer”. Speaking at the event, Dr. Mashelkar, had recommended an Innovation day to be announced for India and it could be the date of the Tata Nano launch at the January Auto Expo, and **Why Not?** For Indian entities to stand up and get noticed, Innovating is the only way and innovating of the kinds Nano did. *Innovation must do for India what quality did for Japan.*

It’s time we stop romancing with incrementalism and low end ‘jugaad’ innovations. It’s time companies/entities and their leaders display intellectual and emotional courage to take on innovation challenges not attempted before. Therein lies the secret of liberating Indian aspirations and dormant talent, not only for the good of the business but also for the good of the society.

It calls for leadership to act from an abundance mindset rather than a scarcity mindset, thereby unleashing a whole lot of charge, passion and ownership in the people who are convinced about the newer ways of doing things.

Innovating is a MUST for all entities. Businesses need to innovate to redefine growth and value creation Models, governance need to innovate to carve out relevant and impactful policies, social groups need to innovate to fundamentally redefine the ‘Quality of Life’ for the citizens. We have seen too many painful and pedestrian ideas floating around yielding almost nil value. Mumbai still doesn’t have an answer to Mithi river debacle. Bangalore can’t find innovative ideas to overcome its crumbling infrastructure and Delhi’s courageous stance of cleaning up illegal structures have reclined back to dark ages. Someone is just not aware of the power of Innovation.

Positioning Innovation: Like many other things, Innovation in most companies is subservient to strategy and that position itself is a killer to the liberating power of Innovation. There needs to be a pre-strategy process. If Innovation is what creates great strategies, then one could look forward to a very high consistency and quality of breakthroughs in that company. Very often, when companies look for Innovation to fulfill strategy, game changing ideas are orphaned leading to variety of misnomers.

- a) These kinds of things happen once a decade.
- b) The markets are not ready for the break through Innovation.
- c) We have to be smart; we cannot do things that don’t fit strategic directions, etc.

The Leadership Challenge: Recently, while presenting a breakthrough to a board member of a large company, I had an interesting experience. The board member, who has been a veteran in strategy creation in successful companies quipped, “How can we do something like this, this is not us. Our company doesn’t stand for this kind of work”, and I responded: “Precisely why we need to do something like this, even if it means decimating the previous identity and Business Model”.

Most breakthrough innovations are never a story ready to be told. It calls for the leadership to engage in decodifying from the abstract and unreal, a picture that would create excitement and value for their customers/markets. Many leaders who

become roadblocks to breakthrough innovations, citing reasons which are ‘economic OR readiness’, are basically displaying decay in their abilities to create a new future. It calls for leadership to act from an abundance mindset rather than a scarcity mindset, thereby unleashing a whole lot of charge, passion and ownership in the people who are convinced about the newer ways of doing things.

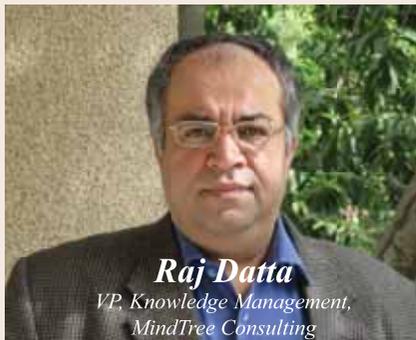
Innovation Ownership: Here is my invitation to the board of large corporations, chairmen & ceos, ministers and policy makers. Other than just looking at operational performances, take charge of the innovation agenda for the companies you are responsible for. Build your rhythms of engaging with the people in your companies on that single point agenda. The message that the key stakeholder of the organization is interested in crafting a mind blowing future for itself and the people it employs must be made clear.

India has a chance to fully own the Innovation space globally, let that not go a begging.

*Co-founder, Director, Erehwon Innovation Consulting,
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INNOVATING INNOVATION

MindTree creates an innovative eco-system for Knowledge Management to enable the passionate to innovative. Raj Datta shares MindTree's vision and the process he has painstakingly built to take his company ahead



Raj Datta
VP, Knowledge Management,
MindTree Consulting

How did MindTree get the NASSCOM Innovation Award this year?

We got the award for the knowledge ecosystem we've built in MindTree. Specifically, we have innovated in two key ways: the

overall holistic approach and breadth we've taken to knowledge management, and the level of emphasis and depth we've given to the participative social approach to KM. We've gone beyond the typical KM approach where KM equals a centralized repository and content management.

We believe that KM is socio-technical in nature, which means that you have to stress social solutions and back them up with technology. Such technology should feel liberating, not constraining. We have built many collaborative systems to accomplish this and thereby connect people together. We have deployed physical, social, virtual and mind-level interventions. Our approach is not prescriptive; instead we lay out a set of possible pathways for involvement of people in knowledge management. They choose where they want to contribute e.g. some people participate in some community, some like building software, some like idea generation, some like idea implementation, etc. The basic idea is to provide multiple opportunities for passionate and knowledgeable people.

Overall, our KM strategy is to create the enabling conditions within which knowledge is created and flows. With such an ecosystem in place, you cannot help but innovate. In short, we have created an innovative ecosystem which in turn helps us innovate, and catalyzes a double loop learning organization. This allows for effectiveness, in addition to efficiency, innovation and productivity.

What is the relationship between knowledge management and innovation?

Knowledge management without innovation is like saying that

we should reuse software without worrying about building good software, or like saying we should harvest crops without yielding the best healthy crops. Too often, knowledge management is equated with just knowledge sharing and reuse from the past. But in MindTree, Knowledge management is also about innovation which, by definition, is about the future. It is about creating new knowledge and then being able to exploit this new knowledge for the benefit of stakeholders. The buzz we are seeing about Web 2.0 is precisely about this. It is about harnessing the collective intelligence of people to generate new knowledge and economic value.

The entire lifecycle of knowledge needs to be taken into account here. The mind needs to become more fertile and creative to generate ideas, the ideas need to be transformed into inventions through solid engineering competences, and the inventions need to create impact to become innovations. The minute we look at

Overall, our KM strategy is to create the enabling conditions within which knowledge is created and flows

knowledge management as just a process for sharing best practices and lessons learnt, we are limiting our vision to the past. Being forward looking is a necessary condition for sustainable success in a knowledge-based approach.

Isn't the impact of KM difficult to measure?

A: For certain defined and measurable parameters, KM impact can be seen. For example, measuring the performance of a project team using KM interventions vs. the average performance of a team can be juxtaposed. Or we can look at very specific parameters like cost. For example, in one case, we reduced our customer's bill of materials cost by 10%. Or you can look at some other slightly more tangible outputs (e.g. patents generated.)

But by and large, the knowledge economy is all about intangibles, and it's trivial to put a dollar value in a purely deterministic manner. KM gurus like Leif Edvinsson and Debra Amidon have been pointing out for years that up to 85% of market value of a knowledge enterprise is determined by its intellectual capital which includes competency, capability, capacity, social networks, know-how, etc.

All the variables are interdependent and have a fair amount of uncertainty. That is precisely why creating a knowledge ecosystem for KM makes more sense to build and leverage intellectual capital.

Can CIO be the new innovation leader?

Innovation is normally seen as 'radical' or 'disruptive' change. This view of innovation may be limiting, according to some experts who see the value not only in transformative innovation but also in non-transformative, continuous, incremental innovation too. And some part of this sort of innovation can happen in the IT departments.

Organizations may be looking only at transformative innovation and neglecting places like IT where continuous innovation can stem from

Are organizations using CIOs' potential to lead business innovation through technology? Doesn't look like it! In 2007, an IBM study found that CIOs see technology as 'significantly or profoundly' important in gaining competitive advantage. But only 16 percent of CIOs surveyed felt their companies were taking advantage of technology.

IT departments are seldom consulted on matters pertaining to innovation and that they wear the tag of 'problem fixers' rather than that of innovative, creative sorts.

Indeed, IT touches all functions and interfaces of the organization. It has a ground view of how things interact, how they can be improved at different points in the organization and how the improvements can connect with each other across functions, departments and processes. And this can be a huge enabler for competitive advantage.

It's time for organizations to think more 'innovatively' about how to use IT departments for business innovation and trust their CIOs to lead business innovations through IT.

Innovation is a 'recombinant search'

Innovation happens by combining several ideas

Many a time, innovation happens by combining several existing things, and hence, each innovation is really not fundamentally radical from that point of view. But that really doesn't reduce the value of innovation.

An emergent view of innovation acknowledges this fact, and sees innovation as a process of 'recombinant search'. That is, innovation as assembling a new combination of components, ideas or processes. Lee Fleming, a Harvard Professor, is a proponent of this view. His theory is not only about innovation

being a recombinant search but also about the skewed distribution of innovation.

It takes several shots to hit a goal. Similarly, it takes several attempts before innovation comes through. And across these attempts, you'll have several failures, some moderate successes and very few breakthroughs, he says. Therefore, in the journey of innovation it's quite 'normal' to have a 'skewed' distribution!

Fleming's article, published in the Fall 2007 issue of MIT Sloan Management Review must come as an eye opener to many an organization that is impatient on innovation or question the wisdom of betting huge monies on innovation labs which seem to produce so little breakthrough innovation. Indeed, this is one field where the ROI is low in numbers of breakthrough innovations generated. But, after all, that's not what you need to look at; you need to look at how you deploy the returns that are low in number but huge on potential.

Power of visual thinking



Power of visual thinking *The Back of the Napkin: Solving Problems and Selling Ideas with Pictures*, a new book by Dan Roam explores the power of visual thinking and how it can be brought to bear on a

variety of business challenges.

The premise behind Roam's book is simple: anybody with a pen and a scrap of paper can use visual thinking to work through complex business ideas. He believes this skill is much needed today, as knowledge workers increasingly struggle with information overload, the need for fresh, new innovative ideas and the need to understand and solve increasingly complex challenges.

The book opens demonstrates how to put visual thinking to work, using a series of six practical examples and how to use visual thinking to sell ideas. Even if you're not a visual thinker by nature, you owe it to yourself to check out this book!

Innovation Reporter

Here's an opportunity to report or share your innovation experience. You can also ask questions or doubts, our innovation experts will answer them for you. benedict@managementnext.com

Learn from the small



Amtrex, Twitter and Southwest Airlines have powerful and distinct lessons on innovation for the big. Read on...

By Ashok Korwar

Is innovation something only for the big players, with deep pockets and large R&D budgets? Or is it something a smaller company can also aspire? Nobody can dispute the fact that having a large R&D budget definitely helps. IBM, AT&T, the great innovating companies of the past century, have all invested billions of dollars in R&D. The pharma companies today do the same. The US Department of Defense, owner of the world's largest budget, is also the world's most significant R&D center. The famed 'military-industrial' complex of the US is no myth. Even the Internet came out of one such R&D project.

But, do small companies need to give up?

SMEs have their advantages too!

What are the forces that constrain innovation? A rogue's gallery would line up something like this:

- Resistance from the established product or market regime. It was not for nothing that GM created a separate unit called Saturn to design and build its next generation car – it knew quite well that its existing status-quo-loving units could never do it. IBM resorted to a similar device to create its own PC. Obviously, the smaller you are, and the less successful you are, the less resistance you will have to deal with when you want to do something new!
- Bean counters know the cost of everything, and the value of nothing. Such corporate nay-sayers are much more common in big companies than in small ones!
- Too many layers between the 'ideas person' at the top (usually the founder/CEO) and the front line troops who have to execute the new idea. Again, won't SMEs be much better off here? Strangely enough, it has been my experience that the CEO/founder is usually the one brimming with ideas – which is why he is the founder, after all. His/her problem usually is, getting people to take his/her ideas seriously! Anyone familiar with the way companies actually work would understand what I am saying – only the naïve think a CEO just has to issue orders, and the job gets done!

It almost looks like SMEs have an unfair advantage!

What is innovation, anyway?

One of the most innovative companies I have ever studied was a small company in Ahmedabad called Amtrex. While other companies were merely running management development

courses on BPR, Amtrex was actually doing it – redesigning its business processes, so a customer could get an air conditioner in 24 hours (In India, mind you!), reconfiguring its new product development process to cut the time from concept to market by more than half, and so on. Why was it able to do such things? Because a small group of people at the top dared to think it could be done, had nothing to lose by doing things differently, and in fact, realized that the company could only expect to survive by doing things differently.

After all, innovation can be in business processes, business models, too.

The best recent case is of Twitter. The founder, Evan Williams, worked at Google, supposedly the most innovative large company in the world, and found the processes there, far too stultifying to come up with anything new. He realized very early that most new ideas cannot be



easily understood by anyone other than their creator, and that they happen mostly by accident, not by design or management process. Though Google consciously builds management processes to encourage innovation, it wasn't enough for Mr. Williams.

Listening to the unvoiced voice of the non-customer!

Finally, where do the most innovative ideas come from? From the market, yes, but not necessarily the one we mean. Blue Ocean ideas come from listening to non-customers, not to customers. Southwest Airlines, to quote an obvious example, could never have come up with its innovative business model by asking airline travelers what they wanted. If that had been the way to get ideas, American and Delta would have been much better at it, since they have millions of captive customers. Southwest created their business model by listening to non-airline-travelers.

Now, who would be better at listening to the non-customer? The one who doesn't have any customers in the first place! I rest my case.

Ashok Korwar, formerly professor at IIMA, runs Growth Catalyst. ashok@yourgrowthcatalyst.com

INNOVATION FOR INDIA AWARDS 2008

Marico Innovation Foundation gave away the 'Innovation for India Awards 2008 in March 2008'. The award, formed by visionaries like Dr. Ramesh Mashelkar in 2003, aims to fuel innovation in India by providing the nation with a belief that Innovation is possible and is the way to leapfrog India into the center stage of global business leadership. Here's the list of winners:

Maharani Paints (India) Pvt. Ltd.

This Haryana-based company won the top award for Business Process Innovation. Its director, B.R. Bhatia has introduced clean technology for recycling of industrial paint sludge.

Innovation Impact: It prevents deterioration of environment as well as land fertility which could have got polluted if the paint sludge could have been incinerated or might have been dumped at TSDF site. recycling of paint sludge protects the planet and the flora and fauna of the area. And the protection and benefit is directly proportional to the volume of paint sludge being generated or is directly proportional to the quantum of paint being consumed by any industry. In the year 2006-2007, estimated paint sludge generation was 46305 kiloliters.

Evalueserve.com Pvt. Ltd.

This Gurgaon-based company won the award for Innovation in Business Model. Its unique business model is based on creating and maintaining a cost-effective knowledge pool from which clients can pick and choose relevant, tailor-made services/solutions at a fraction of the cost they would otherwise incur, if they procured them in-house or from other on shore vendors

Innovation Impact: Sparked off the KPO industry in India.

Kirloskar Brothers Ltd.

The award was for the Product - Business Innovation category for developing the world's largest pumping scheme.

As a direct result of this, the Sardar Sarovar project suddenly became affordable and could be kicked off, gradually benefiting nearly 60% of Gujarat's population through availability of water in its most arid regions - Saurashtra and Kutch. In terms of the savings of 8.5 MW a year, translates it into lowering carbon footprint by that amount.

Bhinge Brothers

The Nashik-based company won the award for business innovation in the social sector for developing Ecoflo Pump - only foot operated treadle pump.

Innovation Impact: The pump is sold for Rs. 2400 as opposed to the regular pumps that sell at Rs. 7500- Rs. 8000. This pump is virtually noiseless and does not use any power. Also Bhinge has taken care of the fact that mud and other particles might get into the pipe and block the water and has come up with a very smart cover for the base.

Motor Industries Co. Ltd. (MICO)

Innovation: Common rail system

Innovation Impact: Engine manufacturers and commercial vehicle buyers have got a new lease of life as they don't have to go in for far more expensive engines to meet the next level of emission norms. Instead, they can get the same benefit for as little as 45 Euro (the cost of the pump). Euro 4 and now Euro 6 norms will be met using existing engines.

Su-Kam Power Systems Ltd.

Innovation: The Power Hardware is truly the first in the world, where power back-up products can be manned centrally, via the internet from all over the world. These innovations have taken power back up from the paradigm of noisy diesel gensets to clean, green, efficient products and solutions that provide self sufficiency to industrial users and home users alike

Innovation Impact: Challenges the power backup industry in India, populated with gensets by creating reliable, cost effective access to alternate sourcing of power. Su-Kam helped organize an otherwise unorganized sector of gensets and local products available in the market.

Titan Industries Limited

Innovation: Slimmest water resistant watch of the world

Innovation Impact: Created the slimmest water resistant watch of the world. This is the slimmest working water resistant watch in the world launched in 2002. Titan Edge contributed nearly 10% of Titan's revenue in 2002. They have impacted an entire ecosystem: for example the Sapphire Glass making company who have developed the top glass cover and the Indian Strap manufacturer who have made a customized thin strap for the watch have both gained visibility and increased clientele.

Azim Premji Foundation

Innovation: The learning guarantee program is a joint initiative between the Azim Premji Foundation and five state governments, Karnataka, MP, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Innovation Impact: Scaled up to cover 50,000 schools across five states. Overall, there is a quantifiable increase in students' competencies. For example:

- In Uttarakhand – from 34% to 49% in one year
- In MP from 19% to 33% in one school year
- In Rajasthan from 27% to 39% in one school year
- Last quartile students: % Improvement over one year
- In MP – 16% / In Uttarakhand – 13%

Tata Motors

Tata Motors was given a special award in the category - **The Global Game Changer Award** for an affordable automobile and yet built to meet safety requirements and emission norms, to be fuel efficient and low on emissions.

Maverick innovator in distress

Poverty doesn't spare a true innovator and recipient of many national and international awards. A recent BBC report might just do the trick



In 2005, *The Wall Street Journal* chose Mohammed Saidullah, a resident of Motihari in Bihar, among the 12 finalists for the Asian Innovation Awards. The same year, President, APJ Abdul Kalam, presented him with the National Innovation Foundation's (NIF) lifetime achievement award. He has won so many awards that he has lost count of them all. But today, Saidullah pushing 60s, has put his modest house

for sale because he has no money to support his family and keep his innovation streak bubbling.

Saidullah became famous for his amphibious bicycle which could easily negotiate the perennial floodwaters in Bihar. Everyone was so impressed with him that his demonstrations across Ganges and other places turned out to be popular public events.

So much so, an impressed National Innovation Foundation took away his bicycle and offered to get it patented. Three years later, Saidullah has neither got the patent nor the bicycle back. Saidullah who, his son claims has squandered his wealth on 'foolish' experiments, is selling honey to feed his family of 16. Saidullah told a BBC correspondent recently that he intends returning all his awards. He has even said that "If you want to destroy someone, give him an award."

However, Saidullah's bitter experience has not stopped him from moving on to newer things. After the amphibious bicycle, he developed a key-operated table fan which can run non-stop for two hours, a mini-water pump that needs no fuel and a mini-tractor which can run for two hours on just five litres of diesel.

He even claims he's making a helicopter and a car that would be powered by air energy. The maverick innovator says he draws inspiration for his innovations from his everyday experiences. He has named all his creations after his wife, Noor Jahan. "Noor means light and Inshallah a day would come when there would be light in our life too," Saidullah told the BBC.

Missing the lab to market loop

Saidullah's story illustrates the vital confluence of necessity, doggedness and a creativity that makes innovation possible. But it also highlights the reality that without adequate funding and sponsorship many innovations remain obscure and used only by their inventors and a few lucky neighbors.

It's clearly a case of either the managers at NIF not able to market the concept to the industry or the Indian industry does not have confidence in grassroots innovation. If not anything, the bicycle appears to be a cool ride for kids and couples in several of India's lakes and rivers. And with floods affecting India every year, this bicycle could come in handy for rescue and relief operations. It's the market's turn now to give the bicycle a good look and reward the maverick innovator.

Saidullah's story illustrates the vital confluence of necessity, doggedness and a creativity that makes innovation possible

After the BBC coverage of Saidullah's story, the Indian administration might just wake up and support an innovator of the kind India needs aplenty.

TWO DAY WORKSHOP

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The workshop involves the fundamentals of Corporate Social Responsibility, case studies and analysis of best practices in CSR. Participants will learn to design and manage their CSR programs effectively.

CRBiz (Corporate Responsibility in Business) is the only publication devoted exclusively to Corporate Responsibility in the country. CRBiz is the media wing of the Global Gandhian Trusteeship and Corporate Responsibility Foundation, a registered Trust.

Contact Shashikala at 9213133042 or email shashikala.crbiz@gmail.com, shashikala.crbiz@rediffmail.com, or suresh.pramar@gmail.com

Unconference

An unconference is a conference where the content of the sessions is created and managed by the participants (generally day-by-day during the course of the event) rather than by one or more organizers in advance of the event. The term is primarily used in the geek community. Open Space Technology, however, is an unconference process that has been around since 1985 and is now in widespread use. Open Space Technology is an energizing and emergent way to organize an agenda for a conference.

Wiki

A wiki is software that allows users to easily create, edit, and link pages together. Wikis are often used to create collaborative websites and to power community websites. These wiki websites are often also referred to as wikis; for example, Wikipedia is one of the best known wikis. Wikis are used in many businesses to provide affordable and effective Intranets and for Knowledge Management.

Millennials

Employees between the ages of 18 and 31

Design management

It refers to an approach whereby organizations make design-relevant decisions in a market and customer-oriented way as well as optimizing design-relevant (enterprise) processes. It is a long, continuous, comprehensive activity on all levels of

business performance. Design management acts in the interface of management and design and functions as a link between the platforms of technology, design, design thinking, management and marketing at internal and external interfaces of the enterprise.

In-tunnel advertising

For a long period of time, advertising focused only on print, channels and outdoor hoardings. Now with underground metros and tunnels along the highways in India, opportunities for using newer technologies for advertising have opened up.



C2E Technology Labs, in collaboration with the Delhi Metro Rail Corp. (DMRC) and Submedia, a US-based company which patented the technology for this kind

of communication, spotted an opportunity in the dark tunnels through which Delhi Metro trains run.

The company has tried the concept of a 'reverse movie': The audience is moving, while animated film frames are lit up in the tunnel spaces. The first advertiser to try this new kind of advertising is Kotak Life Insurance.

In-tunnel advertising will revolutionize the thinking of advertisers and the perception of people towards a brand. In-tunnel is the first of many avenues this new medium of advertising will allow companies to embark on.

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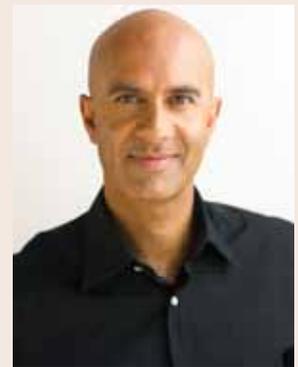
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By Robin Sharma

Own your power

I was in Vilnius, Lithuania. Fascinating culture (this place was first inhabited in 200 B.C.), an interesting economy and great people. I'm on my lunch break at the full day Lead Without Title event I'm delivering here for businesspeople.

Here's the idea: own your power. Please don't tell me you don't have any power within your organization (because you don't have a big title). Please don't tell me you can't have a remarkable impact and leave everything you touch better than you found it. Please don't tell me you can't make a difference. Because you can.

Anyone can show leadership - whether they work on the boardroom or the mailroom. Because leadership really is a way of thinking (and being). That transcends position and spills out into action. And to deny that power to lead - in whatever it is you are paid to do - is to deny your power to influence things for the best.

Leadership is not about position - it's more about passion. It's not about the size of your title - it's more about the depth of your commitment. And it's not about where you sit-it's about how big you stand.

From Job to Mission

To Lead Without Title is to make a leap. From accepting ordinary to crafting the extraordinary. From blaming others to looking in the mirror. From going to work to chasing a Calling.

Your greatest power is your power to choose. Own that power (versus saying that you can't see your job as your mission). Yes, right here, right now - you can elevate what you do to some kind of a Crusade of Excellence. Some kind of an Agenda for Mastery. Some kind of a Revolution for Remarkability.

But you "just work in human resources" or "sell milk" or "work in a grocery store" you say to me. Own your power. You have the power to be excellent in that work. To inspire everyone who intersects your path. To innovate and make things better than ever before. To wow customers. And to stand for the best. Will you?

The Diet of excellence

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*Excerpts from Robin Sharma's
recent writings
www.robinsharma.com*

Boom! 7 Choices for Blowing the Doors Off Business-As-Usual

by Kevin Freiberg, Jackie Freiberg, Thomas Nelson Publication, September 2007

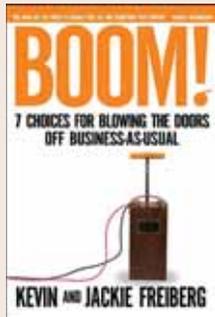
'You are designed to choose and defined by your choices' is the powerful message the book starts with.

The book presents seven key choices waiting to be made by each person. Whether you are the leader or those being led, these choices will determine the quality of your life and the significance of your contribution to the world in which you work. In BOOM the Freiberg's have distilled 20 years of collective wisdom into seven essential choices that cause culture, service, success, and business to BOOM:

Be a Player; Be Accountable; Choose Service Over Self-Interest; Focus Forward; Play to Your Genius; Get It Done; Risk More - Gain More.

These seven choices are further split into many themes and elaborated with inspiring anecdotes and case studies. All with the purpose of inspiring people to rise up to their potential and at the same time create organizations that can blow the doors off business as usual and cure the Dead People Working syndrome.

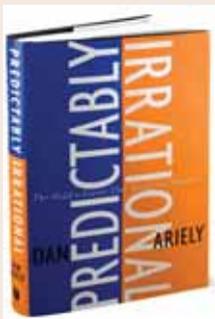
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Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions

by Dan Ariely, HarperCollins, February 2008

Irrational behavior is a part of human nature MIT professor Ariely has discovered an element of predictability in it. In his 20 years of researching behavioral economics, he finds that people tend to behave irrationally in a predictable fashion. According to him, our understanding of economics is based on the assumption of a rational subject; but it should, in fact, be based on our systematic, unsurprising irrationality. Ariely argues that we need to understand the previously ignored or misunderstood forces like emotions, relativity and social norms, for they influence our economic behavior. Understanding them brings opportunities for re-examining individual motivation and consumer choice, as well as economic and educational policy.

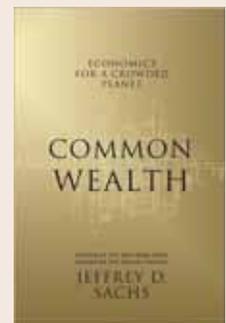


Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet

by Jeffrey D. Sachs, Penguin Group (USA), March 2008

From one of the world's greatest economic minds, author of The New York Times bestseller *The End of Poverty*. The global

economic system now faces a sustainability crisis, Jeffrey Sachs argues, one that will overturn many of our basic assumptions about economic life. The central theme of Jeffrey Sachs's new book is that we need a new economic paradigm-global, inclusive, cooperative, environmentally aware, science-based-because we are running up against the realities of a crowded planet. The alternative is a worldwide economic collapse of unprecedented severity. The "soft issues" of the environment, public health, and population will become the hard issues of geopolitics. If we do the right things, there is room for all on the planet. We can achieve the four key goals of a global society: prosperity for all, the end of extreme poverty, stabilization of the global population, and environmental sustainability. *Common Wealth* points the way to the course correction we must embrace for the sake of our common future.



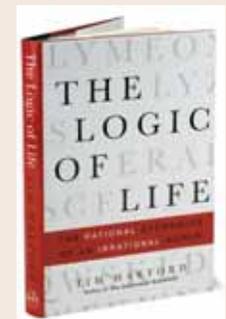
The Logic of Life: The Rational Economics of an Irrational World

by Tim Harford, Random House Publishing Group, January 2008

Life sometimes seems illogical. On a larger scale, life seems no fairer or easier to fathom: We have lots of questions about the illogical nature of life. And you might be surprised to hear the answers coming from an economist.

Tim Harford, award-winning journalist and author of the bestseller *The Undercover Economist*, argues that life is logical after all. Under the surface of everyday insanity, hidden incentives are at work, and Harford shows these incentives emerging in the most unlikely places.

Using tools ranging from animal experiments to supercomputer simulations, an ambitious new breed of economist is trying to unlock the secrets of society. *The Logic of Life* is the first book to map out the astonishing insights and frustrating blind spots of this new economics in a way that anyone can enjoy. *The Logic of Life* presents an X-ray image of human life, stripping away the surface to show us a picture that is revealing, enthralling, and sometimes disturbing.

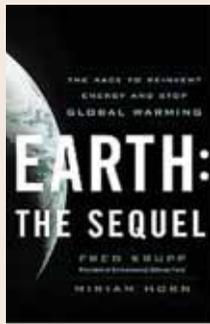


Earth: The Sequel: The Race to Reinvent Energy and Stop Global Warming

by Fred Krupp, Miriam Horn, W W Norton & Co Inc, March 2008

The forecasts are grim and time is running out, but that's not the end of the story. In this book, Fred Krupp, longtime president of Environmental Defense Fund, brings a stirring and hopeful call to arms: We can solve global warming. And in doing so, we will build the new industries, jobs, and fortunes of the twenty-first century, the book says.

In these pages the reader will encounter the bold innovators and investors who are reinventing energy and the ways we use it. Among them: a frontier impresario who keeps his ice hotel frozen all summer long with the energy of hot springs; a utility engineer who feeds smokestack gases from coal-fired plants to voracious algae, then turns them into fuel; and a tribe of Native Americans, for two thousand years fishermen in the roughest Pacific waters, who are now harvesting the fierce power of the waves themselves.



These entrepreneurs are poised to remake the world's biggest business and save the planet—if America's political leaders give them a fair chance to compete.

Senior Leadership Teams: What it Takes to Make Them Great

by Ruth Wageman, Debra A. Nunes, James A. Burruss, J. Richard Hackman, Harvard Business School Press, February 2008

Many a times, success or failure of a company is unduly attributed to the CEO and we all have this larger than life image of the CEO who is lonely at the top. Reading *Senior Leadership Teams* is a first step to changing this view. Teams ease the feelings of isolation associated with being at the top while providing a well-rounded sense of knowledge.



The four authors are on a mission to guide leaders in the creation of great senior leadership teams. Over 100 teams around the world were researched. Their findings: six conditions for successful senior leadership teams. Three of which are essential: compelling direction, right people, real team. Three of which enable the team to be more efficient: solid structure, team coaching, supportive context. One chapter is dedicated to each condition, peppered with real-life examples.

Built to Serve: How to Drive the Bottom Line with People-First Practices

by Dan Sanders, Stephen Covey, Ken Blanchard, Tata McGraw-Hill India, 2008

In *Built to Serve*, the authors make this bold claim: the prevailing business culture is broken and a radical transformation is required—a paradigm shift that reshapes our understanding of the true purpose of work. Leaders have a choice—continue to chase a broken price-profit model and suffer the consequences or build a culture committed to servanthood and discover the fulfillment evident when people see their work as a ministry.

The choice leaders make will not only determine economic success and failure but also will determine their organization's long term impact on humanity.

The book reveals how your people can adopt Ultimate Service, Superior Performance and Positive Impact. The book distills valuable lessons from nine decades of a people-centered culture that consistently delivers outstanding customer service and reveals how you can develop a fully engaged, productive workforce. When you're built to serve, employees come to work because they want to, not just because they have to. Built to Serve is your hands-on guide to seeking this higher purpose.

The Inside Advantage: Be the Driving Force Behind Your Company's Growth

by Robert Bloom, Dave Conti, Tata McGraw-Hill India, 2008

Robert H. Bloom has discovered that every enterprise has at least one strategic asset—one existing strength—that can form the foundation for future growth. He calls this an Inside Advantage. This strength usually lies unrecognized in an activity the business is currently performing or in a concept or an idea that the business already owns.

Finding this hidden potential and becoming well known for it will grow the business. Through his Growth Discovery Process, he is making his strategy available to all people who know their craft but don't know how to craft a growth strategy.

Bloom's process is a plain-language path of discovery with only four steps. Whether you are a business leader, a manager, or an entrepreneur, this Growth Discovery Process will enable you to gain a profound insight into the core values of your enterprise. It will guide you to a clear understanding of who your customers are and what your special offerings to those customers should be.

Finally, the process will stimulate a host of ideas—what Bloom calls Imaginative Acts—for highlighting your Inside Advantage and making it well known to current and prospective customers.

Doing what you're good at and doing it better than anyone else will create growth. The Inside Advantage will help you capture that magic moment when customers will select your product or service over those of your competitors.



Avail 15% Special discount on Tata McGraw-Hill books if you order through ManagementNext. Call 80-41714161. info@managementnext.com

Elders more liberal than the youth

A new research has debunked the long-held belief that people grow more conservative in their attitudes and political beliefs, as they age. The research is the first to show that people around 60 and over become more liberal faster as they age than youngsters.



The study, conducted by sociologists Nicholas L. Danigelis and Stephen J. Cutler of the University of Vermont and Melissa Hardy, a sociologist at Pennsylvania State University, strongly suggests that this long-held belief about older citizens being more rigid isn't true.

The study is based on U.S. General Social Survey data from 25 surveys between 1972 and 2004 that measure the changes in attitudes that occur within cohorts at different stages in life.

Results showed that although change occurred in both the 18-39 and 60-and-over age groups, the movement among the older group was greater and was most often toward "increased tolerance rather than increased conservatism."

The high cost of presenteeism

Attending work despite being sick is the hallmark of a committed employee, right? Wrong, if you go by the latest thinking on the subject. Several management thinkers, backed by research studies, are arguing that it's better to stay home when sick.

Ever since Cornell University research concluded in 2006 that sickworkers attending work account for 60% of organisational health costs, the issue has been gathering the much-deserved attention and has found many proponents for advocating sick leave instead of presenteeism.

The logic is that when sick, especially with a respiratory illness, you will pass on the virus to your colleagues and then to their families, not work efficiently yourself and stretch your time of recovery—thereby not being fair to your colleagues, to your clients, to your organisation and to yourself. So, ethically, 'presenteeism' is not fair. Rationally it's no good either since it pushes up health costs—organisational,



personal and social. Hence, good management ensures sick employees stay home and safeguards overall organisational and societal health.

Indian managers would probably be shocked at this idea. Here, in many organisational cultures, it's expected of an employee—who prefers to be seen as committed—to attend work while being sick. Why, even his boss does it to 'set an example'! With so many 'sick' role models around, it's not easy driving the point home for overall organisational health.

Coke vs. sim card

Coca-Cola's advertising will no longer be directed only at its archrival PepsiCo but other products/brands that vie for consumer's pocket share, said Neville Isdell, Chairman and chief operating officer of Coca-Cola, the world's largest beverage company.

In India, its strategy is no longer about competing with global rival PepsiCo or other local soft drink brands. Instead, it's about influencing consumer choice away from such purchases as rock-bottom pre-paid mobile cards to buying a Coke product.

"What you are fighting over is the money in the pocket of the consumer. Our competition is not as narrow as people think. We are in a broad competitive set," said Isdell. Indian managers would probably be shocked at this idea. Here, in many organisational cultures, it's expected of an employee—who prefers to be seen as committed—to attend work while being sick. Why, even his boss does it to 'set an example'! With so many 'sick' role models around, it's not easy driving the point home for overall organisational health.

Karnataka slips to 9th place in e-governance

That's what happens when governments fight to survive rather than stay to govern. The Karnataka government's famous political instability in the last two years meant that many e-governance projects have not taken off or are in a limbo. It has dropped from the second place as the best e-governed state in 2006 to ninth in 2007. Its rank in 2008 will depend on the forthcoming elections. Keep your fingers crossed!

Penalty on state governments?

S M Krishna, former Karnataka chief minister, called the recent state governments' ineptness in completing road network to the new Bangalore international airport on time a 'cruel joke' on the citizens. What can citizens do about it? It is high time the public-private-partnership projects laid out strict compliance norms even on the governments which have responsibility to the viability of projects.

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