Ravi buys the Monk's Ferrari

Two bestsellers in six months and a third one in the pipeline, Ravi Subramanian, a senior banker with HSBC, has taken on Robin Sharma's spirituality and the work-life-balance brigade

Ravi Subramanian, senior VP and Head of Consumer Finance at HSBC, Mumbai, is turning out to be a serial author, and a successful one at that. He has given a new twist to Robin Sharma's blockbuster – *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* with *I bought the Monk's Ferrari*. While Robin Sharma's self-help narrative asks stressed-out professionals to throw their worldly pleasures and go to the Himalayas, Ravi implores them to aspire for and acquire a Ferrari. "Do not be a "Monk" and sell your Ferrari. After all, isn't the Ferrari something worth dying for?

The fact that Ravi's book is already a bestseller in a matter of weeks, means that many Indians are hungry and ambitious and are not in a mood for spirituality yet. In his first book, *If God was a Banker*, Ravi captures the undercurrent of a clash of values of two bankers with opposing personality traits and values.

Ravi shares his passion for writing, while at a high-pressure job, with **Benedict Paramanand.**

What inspires you to write books?

I have always worked in large corporates with teams which consist of diverse sets of individuals. The complexity in every individual, the human quotient and the intricate web of emotions has always tickled my curiosity. I have often been accused of harboring strong notions and beliefs. Writing provides me with a means to communicate my thoughts with the society at large. Both my books – *If God was a Banker* and *I Bought the Monk's Ferrari* have a very strong and important underlying message.

The success of my first book, which, within a matter of six months, sold over 12,000 copies and went into its seventh print within six months. This has inspired me.

Learn strategy from entrepreneurs

*To **Tom Davenport** entrepreneurs successfully blend scientific and anarchic approaches to strategy*

Strategy, despite tomes of literature, meanders between two extremes – strategy as engineering approach and strategy as an anarchic approach. Neither extreme is very useful for organizations attempting to perform well in difficult and changing business environments. The engineering approach neglects the fact that front-line employees do have to innovate and improvise much of the time, as any strategy, process, or metric won't always correspond with what it takes to be successful in the real world. The strategic anarchists ignore the need for organizations to move in a consistent, planned direction.

Tom Davenport, in his December 11, 2007 posting on HBR blog says: "Obviously the right answer to effective strategy execution lies somewhere in the middle, but how can these extreme views be reconciled?"

Davenport, President's Chair in Information Technology and Management at Babson College, where he also leads the Process Management and Working Knowledge team, says, many organizations would benefit from a blended approach that combines entrepreneurship with execution.

"In small startup companies, successful entrepreneurs innovate, take risks and solve problems as they arise. The same approach can work in big companies. 'Entrepreneurial' acknowledges the need for local invention and risk-taking, but places it in a broader context of strategy execution. It presumes that all workers have something to add to the success of their organizations (and in this age of well-educated knowledge workers, it's likely that they do). But in addition to innovation, high-performing organizations need some degree of alignment around strategic goals and objectives. Many aspects of this approach are similar to the strategy execution of Toyota, which is clearly the most successful automobile firm, and one of the world's most successful companies."

A company focused on entrepreneurial execution would have a culture based on experimentation and learning, so that no major strategy or initiative is undertaken without extensive testing, the use of a control group, and other aspects of the scientific method. In this sort of culture, any particular strategy, process design or performance metric is only a hypothesis about how the world works.

Entrepreneurial execution is an effective compromise between the overly deterministic approach of strategic engineering, and the overly chaotic approach of strategic anarchy. Indeed, this approach may be the only one that can help large organizations succeed in the long run while harnessing the intellect and passion of employees in support of larger goals.

Build leaders with Ram Charan's apprenticeship model
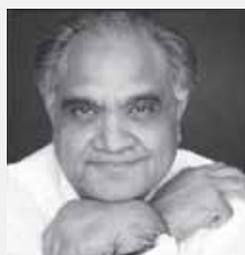
India is facing a leadership crunch both in politics and in business. The obvious reason is that the present leaders are full of themselves and care little about what happens after they leave. But for the few who want their legacy to be continued or strengthened, there is fresh help.

In his latest book Leaders at All Levels, Ram Charan addresses a pressing problem—a shortfall of leaders prepared to face the complexity of today's business challenges. This book presents a radical and controversial remedy for the succession crisis: the Apprenticeship Model. This new approach to succession and leadership development makes it a hands-on activity for leaders and their bosses.

Under the Apprenticeship Model, people with the talent for leadership get stiff challenges hand-picked for them. Their bosses play a crucial role in accelerating their development. And HR gets a new job, as trustee of the Apprenticeship system. As a result, leaders at all levels develop faster and better, and boards have better choices when it comes time to choose the next CEO.

The book describes how and why the Apprenticeship Model works and provides the tools you need to adopt it. Based on Charan's decades of experience and keen insights into how leaders actually learn and grow, this book is filled with down-to-earth advice and real-world examples. It shows how you can leave an enduring legacy by building your company's leadership bench strength. It also gives a road map for taking charge of your own growth. And it is a useful reference for best practices in choosing successors for leadership jobs at all levels, including the CEO.

How are you able to write despite a very demanding job?

Whenever you feel passionately about anything, you will find the time to do it….you just have to feel passionate enough. I have got into this discipline of writing everyday at night. I give up a couple of hours of sleep to follow this passion of mine. 10.30 PM to 12.30 AM is writing time, almost everyday. Weekends are always there to supplement your efforts.

An entire chapter in my second book, *I Bought the Monk's Ferrari* is dedicated to the concept of work life balance. Contrary to what most of the management gurus will tell you, my view is that **Work Life Balance is for wimps**. If to achieve what you have set out to achieve, you have to squeeze 26 hours out of a 24 hour day – so be it. Unless you give it that extra, you will be among the "also ran" but never a winner.

What would you tell those who have this urge to write but have been procrastinating?

If you have the urge to write….just begin by writing the first three or four pages. If it is not in any particular sequence or format…do not worry. If the language is not great, ignore it. Keep going. Once the first few pages are through, the desire to see your work to completion will automatically propel you. Some are worried about failure and hence do not begin the task. Remember, we often tend to be self critical. **Most people can actually write better than what they think they can.**

How has writing on success influenced your work?

Oh yes! It has made me more disciplined and be planned in my approach. My second book, *I Bought the Monk's Ferrari* is all about achieving success at your own terms. How can I preach something that I do not myself follow? Imagine what happens to your own credibility if someone walks up to you and states – "You said so and so in your book, but you yourself don't seem to be doing it"?

The response to my books has made me a more humble human being. It also brings you into the limelight. More people know and recognize you, which also has an impact in the work environment. It's a great plus.

Why should executives read more despite work pressure?

Actually, if busy executives need to read….it is not despite work pressure, but on account of work pressure. Reading will help them destress and get away from the daily grind. Depending on what you read, it also helps broaden your vision, get different perspectives to life. Good self help books often help you improve. And on a cynical note, if you haven't read a book which gets casually discussed at various forums, then you tend to get left out of the conversation. If one finds it difficult to read heavy stuff like the Anita Desai's and Jhumpa Lahiri's of the world, try reading some easy authors like Chetan Bhagat and Ravi Subramanian.

What Next?

My third book, a satire on the Indian family system and values has been accepted for publishing and should be out in the second half of 2008. The success of *If God was a Banker*, has inspired me to start thinking of a sequel.

When the new appears, the old improves

When superior technologies emerge, old ones usually don't simply fade away. To the contrary, their performance often leaps suddenly, thereby extending their lives and slowing the adoption of new technologies. Daniel C Snow, in an article in the January 2008 issue of the *Harvard Business Review*, has come up with interesting reasons for this phenomenon.

The conventional wisdom for this phenomenon was simple – when old technologies faced extinction, they worked harder so that it becomes less attractive to buy the new. More recent examples of what he calls "last gasps" include manual versus computerized typesetting, CISC versus RISC architecture for computer processors, steel versus aluminum bicycle frames, automobile carburetors versus electronic fuel-injection systems, and coronary artery bypass graft surgery versus angioplasty.

But Snow found something more interesting. He writes "Most of the technologies that experienced a last gasp were being sold in markets that were intensely competitive before the new technology arrived. So the existing players already seemed to be doing everything they could to improve the old technology, calling into question the old assumptions. When I delved deeper, I found that two overlooked mechanisms were at work:"

Existing technologies often borrow components of the new technology and by incremental performance improvements tend to stall the introduction of the new. This has spurred the saying – When the new comes, the old improves. These insights into the causes of last gasps have major strategic implications for firms in industries where technology transitions

Ambassador Grand

are underway. This is one of the key reasons why new tech start-ups miss their numbers.

The biggest danger, Snow warns, is for established players that have managed to breathe new life into old technologies, a danger is mistaking the last gasp for sustainable improvement. "This can lead them to overestimate the prospects of their products, overinvest in trying to enhance them, and wait too long to switch to the new technology."

Telecommuting's side effect

One thought telecommuting and other forms of virtual work was a good thing going for both the employees and the employer until Timothy Golden, Professor of Management at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, America's oldest technology university based in New York, found otherwise.

Strangely, telecommuting is adversely affecting those who are not telecommuting in the office – those who stay put within the four walls and watch their colleagues barge in and out. **This study shifts the research lens to investigate the impact of telework on non-teleworkers in the office.**

The university's Lally School of Management & Technology, which published the findings in the November issue of the journal *Human Relations*, used 240 professionals as its sample size. It found that people who work where other employees telecommute from home are more prone to be dissatisfied with their jobs.

Why does this happen? The research suggests several reasons. Non-teleworkers who are less satisfied with co-workers may tend to find the workplace less enjoyable, have fewer and weaker emotional ties to co-workers, and generally feel less obligated to the organization. "These people who work from the office full-time are also more likely to leave the company," Golden found.

However, Golden cautioned that the results may have been influenced by a variety of factors, including the fact that some teleworkers may find the workplace less enjoyable and may have weaker emotional ties to co-workers. It also depends on the extent of face-to-face interactions and the amount of job autonomy given to employees.

Meet the activist consumer

It's now cliché to say 'consumer is king'. And this assumption hasn't taken marketers too far. They still haven't understood what the 'king' wants. And what they know the least is that the consumer has morphed into an activist, much like the political type. Do marketers know how to market to an activist?

Here are a few trends that Matthew Freud, PR guru, sees in the 21st Century consumer in a recent (January 2008) article in Campaign India.

• Now what consumers say can be more important than what they are told. Once the only way that a consumer could influence a brand was by not buying it, effectively a passive pressure. With the power of the internet, and the quantum increase in the opportunities for public participation in the media, the consumer can proactively intervene to influence a corporation in unprecedented ways.

• Every consumer has the power to be an activist, creating, in effect a new form of corporate democracy.

• Consumers are now citizens demanding values as well as value, seeking influence not just through the power of purchase, but through the use of power in ways conventionally associated with politics.

• We have moved from an age of image and celebrity into an age of reputation and cause, where brands are increasingly seeking to associate themselves with more meaningful, social and responsible initiatives, causes and organizations.

• One thing that has become the make or break attribute for all consumer interaction: trust.

• People are no longer linear consumers of communication. They hyper-task. They watch the news while surfing the web. They check facts online as they read the paper. They listen to digital radio as they browse magazines. They pick up samples as they read the billboards on the way to work. They change their opinions hourly. They are smarter, more investigative, more informed and more powerful than ever before.

Here's what marketers can do to stay in business: To Freud, "We must be more fluid, more consistent and faster-moving. We must be more transparent, more collaborative and less controlling,"

Innovation on a high gear in India

It's heartening to hear that the Indian patent office is over working. In the first three quarters of this fiscal, India's patent office issued over 10,000 patents, more than double the annual number granted just two years ago. This from an overflowing application number of 30,000.

India is known to have one of the most stringent patent regimes after Germany and Japan. Yet, this hasn't stopped it from issuing 50 patents a day.

IIMB launches CSR site for faculty

In a pioneering move, IIM Bangalore recently launched a portal aimed at enabling the faculty of Indian B-Schools to teach corporate social responsibility (CSR). Since CSR content is not easily available, the site would be of immense help. The larger objective is to imbibe CSR mindset to managers right at the college level. www.teachcsr.com, www.teachcsr.net

WIPRO WINS GLOBAL MAKE AWARD 2007

Wipro Technologies has been recognized as a winner of the 2007 Global MAKE Award and was ranked first in the Information Technology sector in 'Creating an environment for collaborative knowledge sharing' and 'Creating a learning organization' categories, thereby delivering value based on customer knowledge. MAKE stands for Most Admired Knowledge Enterprises and the awards were instituted in 1998. This is the second time that Wipro Technologies has been recognized as a Global MAKE winner.

A panel of Global Fortune 500 senior executives and internationally-recognized knowledge management and intellectual capital experts chose the 2007 Global MAKE Winners. The panel rated organizations against the MAKE framework of eight key knowledge performance dimensions which are the visible drivers of competitive advantage.

The missing link between strategy and execution

By Lakshminarasimhan

Have you ever pondered why it is difficult to implement or execute a grand strategy in any organization? Even if there is a fool-proof strategy, implementing it across the entire breadth and depth of an organization is a huge challenge.

Dr. Eliyahu Goldratt, the father of the famous Theory of Constraints (TOC), has the answer. To him, any effective strategy has to answer the following three fundamental questions:

1. What to change? 2. What to change to? 3. How to cause the change?

None of these three questions is trivial. Most of the strategy formulation exercises are stuck in the first two questions and hence, it is no doubt a challenge to execute such strategies.

Over the last 20 years, Dr. Goldratt has come up with some startling observations to answer the first of the two questions. And this forms the huge body of knowledge covering all areas of organization from production-operations, sales/marketing, people management, project management, accounting methods, and technology decisions. Almost everyone who has read Dr. Goldratt's books will readily agree that these are simply based on common sense. Thus, for any organization, coming up with answers to the first two questions was made possible and this made it a bit easier to develop a good strategy. But without the answer to the third question of how to cause the change, implementation of the strategy will still have big challenges. Until recently, TOC had very little to answer this question.

To implement a change within any organization, one has to first realize that he/she is dealing with a human-social system. One of the least understood phenomena in these systems is that of people resisting change. TOC has always been in the forefront in trying to uncover the reasons behind this. It has been able to deal successfully with this because one of the core tenets of TOC is that 'People are good'. Hence it is able to tackle the

> **Dr. Eliyahu Goldratt** has improvised his powerful Theory of Constraints to not only find the missing link but also on how to achieve excellence in execution

third level challenge – How to cause the change?

Dr. Goldratt, after years of working on this problem, has finally an answer to this puzzle. In order for a strategy to be implemented the people involved should understand fully why they have to do things that they are being asked to do as part of any change initiative. Without this understanding they may not be fully convinced and hence may not take the necessary correct actions. The full knowledge will propel them into action because NOW they see a clear purpose to their action. And they at last find a meaning in what they are doing in relation to the organization as a whole.

However, understanding this alone would not suffice. The next important question is how to go about doing this. The powerful Strategy and Tactic tree – one of the TOC thinking process tool, is the answer to this question. For the first time we see a new way of building a strategy. This is based on an important insight that strategy and tactic are, at all levels, a tightly coupled pair in a logically laid-out hierarchy. Sandwiched between each hierarchical level and between each strategy-tactic pair are the important explanations which strive to address all of the people's doubts, apprehensions and fears would pop up in their mind as they read the strategy. So, the end result after reading a Strategy and Tactic tree is that, they are totally convinced about the action they need to take. Thus, the strategy and tactic tree does the important job of masterfully communicating the strategy via a coherent and a comprehensive structure.

Till date, this tool is being used in executing Goldratt Consulting's viable vision projects. **Starting Feb 2008, Dr. Goldratt will be sharing important developments based on this tool via a series of webcasts.** The first in this series will be on projects – HOW to implement TOC's Critical Chain Project Management in an enterprise. This knowledge series is highly recommended for anyone who wants to build and execute winning strategies.

The author is with Odyssey Solutions Group. Lakshmi@odysseysg.com

nano & $100 laptop

will spur innovation ecosystem

C K Prahalad wants managers to use constraints as levers for breakthrough innovation

These are truly days of scratching the bottom-of-the-pyramid. Ratan Tata's Nano and celebrated MIT Professor Nicholas Negroponte's $100 laptop (announced last November) are not merely car and PC projects for the poor. They are, to use Negroponte's words, "big, disruptive, and counter-intuitive."

Mere announcements of these projects have set the cat among the pigeons. If auto and IT CEOs are not already feeling the fire under their well-cushioned chairs, they will have fewer places to go to douse it.

What the two landmark projects indicate is well articulated by Prof. C K Prahalad, the father of the BOTP theory. He wrote in *The Times of India* recently that "the growth (for Nano) will not materialize without a fundamental rethinking of the price-per-performance (value equation) in the entire industry." He also said that Nano sheds light on how to leverage emerging markets as innovation hubs. "We can continuously complain about constraints but also use constraints as levers for breakthrough thinking." He calls this constrained innovation working within the Innovation Sandbox.

What Nano and the $100 laptop, called 'One Laptop Per Child' (OLPC), will spur is innovation around the entire eco-system involving suppliers, vendors, supply chain management, human resources. This experience will also encourage introduction of several BOTP products.

More than anything, what Nano and the laptop-for-the-child projects have shown is supreme leadership qualities in the face of extreme challenges. For Ratan Tata it was keeping his promise, made four years ago even when material prices have moved up significantly since then. And the recent about-face of blue-chip companies Intel and Microsoft, which brandish

values on their sleeves, has made Negroponte even more resolute. He said: "We view the children as a mission; Intel views them as a market. Negroponte predicts 3 million units in year one (2010) and says "that is what we will hit," "There has been a lot of talk, pretty gratuitous talk (by IT giants and business press) about the $100 laptop. Big IT companies see this as an "industry disrupter" and as a laptop project, versus a humanitarian, non-profit, educational project," the MIT professor said in a recent interview with *Fast Company*.

The OLPC concept is a marvel. It has no caps lock key because one child told the designers that it was a pain in the thumb. The laptop has a wiki in 20 languages with 4,442 pages, and 2,000 files and 2,000 registered contributors. Expectedly, it depends on Open Source OS and children are encouraged to do their own programming since the source code is not a secret.

> **"The benefit in the departure of Intel from the OLPC board is a renewed clarity in purpose; we will continue to focus on our mission of providing every child with an opportunity for learning"**
>
> *-Nicholas Negroponte*

People funding people

Has this been tested or is it a fantasy project? "We have seen it work all over the place: Cambodia, Costa Rica, Brazil, just to name a few. In one school, 100 percent more kids showed up for 1st grade the next year.

Negroponte has come up with an innovative two-for-one strategy – allowing consumers to buy one OLPC laptop for themselves and one for donation. He says it has been a knock-out success, generating almost $3 million per day, for 45 days.

Will Indian IT companies see this as an opportunity to work with MIT? It's a challenge a few courageous ones should take up not so much for profit in the short-term, but to make a difference to the millions of poor Indian children. Remember, India has most of them. And for companies that can't figure out how to spend their CSR budget, this is a good option.

BPM unravelled

Ranganath Iyengar looks at the benefits and the flip side of business process management solutions that are on offer

By Ranganath Iyengar

How real time is the software solution in line with your business needs? Most software and technology we use is usually 'dated' since business needs change constantly. Since code-based software was always complex to write and maintain, software designers wanted to give end users a 'Process Management' tool as businesses use processes to manage their day-to-day activities.

Business Process Management (BPM) was brought in with a dual purpose – to define industry standard processes and also define toolsets to automate and measure these processes.

Why BPM?

Traditional software had several limitations – input forms had to be custom designed frequently and this involved changes to the database which called for huge effort; since forms could not be seamlessly grouped and linked as maps, data could not be quickly manipulated to reflect these changes; queries and reports required 'n' levels of drill down as management asked more and more questions on basic data.

Additionally, workflows became more complex as the same user became mobile with several points of access; event triggers and rule-based decision making was not fully implemented into traditional software systems which was contradictory to the real world; extensive usage of the web changed the way software was built and instead of large centralized systems, frequent re-organization of businesses called for complete revamp of user access rights and permissions.

Data to Process independence – domain expert knows the process

Using BPM, theoretically an end user should be able to define software since the domain knowledge of a business is best known to the end user and not the software programmer. Serious efforts in this direction started when relational databases emerged thus effectively 'freeing' up the database from software.

Process independence is about the next level which allows the domain expert to define, create and change processes as often as needed and manipulates data as frequently as needed to make necessary decisions. BPM as a concept addresses this aspect and good BPM tools sit at a higher level of abstraction than ERP, CRM, SCM and interchange data with such applications. You can also use BPM tools to build niche enterprise class applications as well.

BPM requires change in thinking

With concepts like Agile, Scrum etc., came a new way of thinking software which addressed key problems of traditional software creation by involving end users in software creation, creating working software instead of perfect documentation, real time change management etc., BPM is an excellent concept tool to work with these methodologies since it deals with real world business processes which actually change everyday. BPM tools also have process modelers to facilitate standardization of process definition which has been a long-term software challenge and for this efforts have also been made to specify common definitions (BPML, BPXML etc.)

Some of the mainstream companies that offer BPM tools and solutions include Appian, BEA Systems, Cordys, EMC (ProActivity), Global360, HandySoft, IBM, IDS Scheer, Lombardi Software, Metastorm, Pegasystems, Savvion, Tibco Software and Ultimus—offer suites that include modelers, asset managers, business rules engines, and process management and deployment tools. Vendors like Casewise offer dedicated modeling tools. In India, a few companies that offer BPM include Accpol from Polymorph Technologies, Agile Labs, Herald Logic and Strapp BPM Solution. Others like Siemens have customized it for domains like healthcare. Narrower deployments of BPM include vendors like EMC, Adobe and Interwoven who offer it for document and workflow automation. Microsoft's Share Point and Oracle are other product vendors who have built add on tools and suites for BPM as part of their product enhancement.

Pros and cons of BPM

As with any technology, BPM has both benefits and flip sides. Companies that have invested in large traditional enterprise systems are looking at only partial deployment (form-based process automation for simpler administrative tasks) and pull in data into their main systems. Since many BPM tools involve process modelers and business rules, it is still not truly an end user's tool which only puts in additional overhead on a company's resources by adding business analysts to software teams.

BPM standards have not also fully settled down, which is one reason for its slower rate of adoption. BPM's biggest beneficiary will be a better approach to deploy, secure and maintain web services which are mostly form and rule-based applications. BPM also needs robust quality systems and 'process thinking' in the organization without which it can turn out to be yet another fad especially if one can't measure and improve process efficiency through ongoing changes after automating the same!

e-mail: ranga@siiplconsulting.com

Want to outsource your CXO?

SMEs today have the luxury of tapping high quality senior talent at a fraction of the cost by adopting the CXO outsourcing model

By Jayant K Tewari

What is an Out-Sourced CxO – We are all aware of CEO, COO and CFO as fairly universal and have also come to terms with the CTO and CIO. We can also envisage the CMO [Chief Marketing Officer] and the CPO [Chief Personnel Officer] though these terms are rarely used, but we are yet to come across the CxO. And to further challenge the comprehension, I choose to prefix this unknown animal with a prefix which is an anathema to the 'C' level positions I refer to, i.e. 'Out-Sourced'.

Stepping back to examine the various kinds of entrepreneurs we see today it becomes fairly evident that the Out Sourced CxO is here to stay. Let us examine who, as an entrepreneur, would need what to take his business vision to fruition:

✳ The techno-entrepreneurial promoters with the experience of handling large teams would require the services of an O-CMO (Marketing) to better define his potential client space, and an O-CFO to develop the Corporate Structure and Financial Strategy.
✳ The Marketing and Sales guru with his own product / service vision would require an O-CTO (Technology) to architect and implement his vision, and later an O-CFO and an O-CPO to take it to the next level.
✳ The retailer with a vision to harness technology and grow his business would also require an O-CIO to develop his Technology Infrastructure and effectively utilize his meagre resources.
✳ The HR expert venturing into the BPO / KPO industry would need the specific expertise of the O-CTO to facilitate the process effectively.

While all the CxO positions would need to be filled individually in the medium term as the business grows, the importance of the expertise at the nascent stages cannot be ignored. There are only two real constraints, one, that the business does not require the expertise for 30 days a month and two, that the business cannot afford the level of competence required on a full time basis.

The crux of an O-CxO engagement is the emphasis on responsibility rather than on the activity. My own experience has been that it is the responsibility, with its concomitant 24x7 availability, which must be taken up by the O-CxO.

The crux of an O-CxO engagement is the emphasis on responsibility rather than on the activity

In conclusion, I would just like to examine the necessary qualities for an Out-Sourced CxO, over and above their professional expertise in their own area of specialization:

✳ Substantial experience in Start-up Street – To me this is an absolute essential. The O-CxO must be a hands on, boot-strap oriented individual with a strong tendency to make each Rupee go that extra mile. Large corporate cultures inculcate a tendency to throw money at every problem – an advertising budget to cover product deficiencies, a PR budget to silence unhappy customers and a consulting budget to meet technical challenges. The SME sector, on the other hand, must always work smart to survive. Technology shall be developed on low-end servers, applications shall be tested on outdated desktops and Open-Source is all that they can afford.
✳ An inherent ability to deal with uncertainty and chaos – SME's have neither the luxury of time to wait for complete information, nor money to invest in extended research and subscription to research reports. The O-CxO must have the ability to work effectively with partial and deficient information, to anticipate rather than know the world around him.
✳ The ability to be 'on-the-ball' – SME's neither provide structure nor hierarchies. Each individual must earn the respect, not only of his peers but also of the entire team. This respect comes not from what he's done in the past, but from what he's doing on a day-to-day basis. While the honeymoon for a new full time employee may stretch to a quarter, this kind of engagement gives a maximum of 2 meetings in which he has to earn his place in the team.
✳ And last and certainly not the least, an extremely strong ethical and values based personal framework which permits him to wear the same hat in multiple forums without compromising himself and his client organizations.

I believe that with the emergence of the Out-Sourced CxO, the entrepreneurial ecosystem in India will actually be complete and we can look forward to many more entrepreneurial success stories in the days to come.

*OutSourcedCFO@GMail.Com,
Url http://OutSourcedCFO.GooglePages.Com*

CSR reporting should be made mandatory

Viraf Mehta
CEO, Partners in Change

The CSR buzz has really caught on in India. The challenge is to extend competencies gained by large companies to SMEs. Viraf Mehta, head of Partners in Change, a CSR support organization, shares his thoughts with Sangeeta Mansur

What are the key trends emerging in CSR in India?

We initiated a formal survey way back in 1996 to capture and measure trends happening in CSR in the context of what businesses are doing. Our fourth national survey on CSR in 2007 clearly show a strategic shift in the way businesses are increasingly looking at CSR more as a core business process.

The recent global code for companies to provide more information about the impact of their operations in the public domain has led to better reporting. RTI (Right To Information) Act is another welcome step in this direction that marks an important trend that will have an impact on corruption and will empower people.

Large companies are already into reporting on CSR. How can small companies begin doing it?

Organisations like CII (Sustainability Centre) are already setting up mechanisms to help. We're engaging with three other organizations and are in the process of getting accredited by Global Reporting Initiative, for training companies, big and small, on reporting. We're also organizing a meet on reporting issues. It is important to focus on what reporting means to communities that lack language and mechanisms to engage with businesses and to make reporting relevant to their needs.

My sense is that many organizations in civil society do not wish to leave it as voluntary but want to make it mandatory. We do support the idea that some minimal reporting should be made mandatory. I'm sure, over the next year, there will be an upsurge in the number of companies reporting.

How serious is the shift from 'percentage-of-profit' philanthropy to strategic CSR that engages with communities?

Percentage of profit philanthropy is an inadequate model. Profits may vary, can be reported in a number of ways, and may take a long time to come or fluctuate wildly. Some sectors, by definition, are subject to limited margins. We cannot pledge the valid needs of the communities to these sorts of considerations. We're not against philanthropic activities but we need to recognize the fact that they are not sustainable. Yes, the discussion has definitely moved from 'How much do I donate?' to 'What competencies can I lend to core issues?' and this is a serious trend.

Your recent study on CSR in Management Education in B-Schools shows a gap between positive disposition for teaching CSR and actual teaching of CSR

There are bottlenecks. Knowledge is lacking when it comes to course curriculum development since B-Schools do not get into the field of CSR. Quality of research in CSR is depressing. CSR information for teaching is a huge need. We're in talks with other countries in South East Asia to conduct similar studies and to forge a network among academicians for teaching CSR. There's a lot media can do too. It's our challenge to include CSR as a part of the measurement parameters for B-School rankings in the media.

Could you tell our readers how businesses can engage with Partners in Change?

Engaging may mean formulating a CSR strategy for a company, measuring the impact of CSR, training, consultancy on an issue or even just linking up with other civil society organizations through our network, and we may not do all these ourselves. We want a hundred PiCs in India. Our goal is not to have a million corporate clients. But when we engage with clients, we look for connection with marginalized communities, seriousness about the change the company wishes to make, its leadership initiative, and the context of replicability and our sectoral emphasis.

My message to companies is to take advantage of the increased help and systems available today in the domain of CSR. There is a strong need to create a knowledge bank in this area and I urge IT or Knowledge management companies or an apex body or B-Schools to take this up and set up a comprehensive knowledge bank on CSR in the country. I really hope to see some progress on this front in the years to come.

How to get higher ROI on training

To get the maximum out of your training programs, you need to look at it strategically and follow best practices

By Yesasvini Ramaswamy

For many executives who consider leadership development the responsibility of the training department alone, this is the time to rethink. Increasingly, training has become the responsibility of supervisors and managers to set the direction and tone for how it will be used (or abused) in their organisations. Some critical questions that need to be asked as a reality check are:

❖ Does our training align with the typical characteristics of the life cycle of our organization?

❖ Does the training we do in-house align with our corporate vision and values?

❖ Do we make sure that outside training consultants align their programme with our corporate vision and values?

❖ Do we use any kind of formal assessment to ensure that the problem to be remedied can be fixed with training vs. process improvement?

❖ Do people regularly use the training ideas they receive at our expense?

❖ Are people positively reinforced when they do apply the learning they received during training?

Training departments are often asked to justify their training efforts to show a return on investment. Unfortunately, trainers present programmes as requested by management but they are only able to affect the time employees are in the classroom. Prior to training and after training, it is management who has the most impact on whether the training provides any return on investment. Even the most energetic, awe-inspiring, knowledgeable presentation is subject to the final chapter written by management involvement.

Following are the best practices that some of the most learning centric organisations do to ensure maximum benefit out of the training they impart:

❖ **Align your training with Corporate Values and Vision**

All training that is conducted inside the organisation should be aligned with the organisation's Vision and Values. The content of multiple courses can be dovetailed so the information is reinforced from one segment to another. Repetition is important to learning.

❖ **Ensure development efforts are planned with a purpose**

When someone asks to attend a training session, four questions should be asked:

1. What makes you think you need training?
2. How would training improve your ability to perform?
3. How did you decide on the training you are proposing?
4. How will you use the information you receive?

Many people believe training is the first line of defence in fixing a problem. However, an astute manager knows that training only works if there is a lack of knowledge or skill. If the problem is the process, there will be no way that training can fix the problem. Ask this question, "Could the person do the task if his or her life depended on it?" If the answer is yes, then it is a process issue and training would not be recommended.

Follow-up after the training

When the employees return to work after the training, they must be asked whether they learned the information or technique they expected to get and how they plan to use it at work. (Encouraging them to think in terms of Return on Investment)

If it is appropriate, the employee could be asked to give a report to others in the department or to say a few words at the next staff meeting to share what they learnt with others. For large scale training initiatives throughout the company/department, it must be ensured that people know that they are expected to use the training.

Reinforce use of acquired knowledge and skills

There should be a constant 'lookout' for skill improvement, which should be reinforced by communicating positive vibes towards positive behavioural change. Writing a note or mentioning it in a staff meeting could be a start. The important point is to do something that will promote more 'good behaviour'.

*The author runs **e2ebusiness solutions***

Go after big deals

The growth mantra today is to dream big and gun for big deals. You cannot inspire your people if you don't have big orders staring at them

By Ashok Korwar

W hat does it take to change orbits? To go from being a 'monkey' in the industry to being at least a 'chimpanzee'? If you are a Rs.100 crore company dreaming of becoming a Rs.1,000 crore company? We all know the usual answers: scaling processes, a big dream, good management. But how to acquire them?

Scaling before the Jump?

Imagine trying to scale your processes, whether it is your product innovation process or your people development process, in advance of their being needed. All the textbooks will say that is how it should be done. But such 'scaling' is always painful and always bitterly resisted. After all, you are asking people to stretch, and for what? There is no fire, why should they jump? Desirable as it may seem, I have yet to see a company actually being able to do it in anticipation of the coming growth.

Slow and Struggle?

A growing company can always try to scale its processes and management capabilities, as it grows, sort of inch-by-inch. If the growth is slow enough, it will not be disruptive, like an oak tree growing by adding rings every year. But will it result in scaling the you need? Probably not. The old processes will keep getting stretched and patched up, and they will creak and groan till they break. Then there will be chaos, hustle bustle, an army of consultants will swarm all over the place to fix the broken process, and the company will limp along till the next crisis.

The One Big Win

When EDS, now a global giant, was a much smaller company in the early 1980s, it went through a life-changing experience. After this event, its share price went to another level, from which it did not fall for decades. The event was the winning of a deal with the US Army – project VIABLE. It was a several hundred million dollar deal – more importantly, it was won against IBM. Nobody, including the team that worked on the bid, really thought they were going to win, they just thought it would be a good learning experience. Until then President Mort Meyerson paid the team a visit. He went to the board and wrote on it the three criteria the customer was going to use to award the contract: Technical excellence, price, and management. Turning to a bemused group of EDSers Mort told them, we know we are better in each category. The customer doesn't know it, but that's a problem we will have to solve. But we are going to win this deal, not narrowly, not by 2 to 1, but in every category! And they did.

This is partly a story about leadership, and its ability to make people realize their own potential. But it is more a story of what the team had to do to win – it learned how to subcontract to vendors much larger than itself, it learned how to market to a customer who was bound by strict rules of engagement, it learned how to take risk, it learned how to write a proposal, how to price contracts. After the deal was won, it learned how to execute something far more complex and risky than anything it had ever done before. It learned because it had to, because it won that deal.

Simple as that. No amount of corporate training, BPR efforts, no army of consultants, could have forced the organization to learn the essentials of playing with the big boys, so quickly and so thoroughly, as that single win did. On future deals, nobody had to create a process – all they had to do is say 'do it like we did at VIABLE'.

There are other examples, closer to home. Polaris Software, another company I know well, learned how to handle large deals by bidding and winning, a huge deal with NEC. It was forced to create a new SBU, to learn how to recruit hundreds of people, how to make them productive, how to manage customer communication, how to monitor projects, and a new technology, all at the same time. It learned because it had to. No amount of corporate prodding or task forces or strategic initiatives could have taken the company's capabilities to the next level, as that single win did.

The point is – people, and organizations, learn when they have to. Make them have to, by going after, and winning, a deal one orbit further than what you are used to. There is no better way to scale. There is no other way to scale.

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

learnings from

By Sadhguru

There's no such thing as perfect management. If you give yourself absolutely to what you're doing, things will happen.

Being a manager means that we are going to create whatever we see as the most beautiful thing to happen right now.

Once you step into the world, there's going to be a lot of filth. There is corruption and much nonsense happening everywhere. There is a set of people, who will develop an allergy for this filth — they can't take it. They usually run to the Himalayas.

If you want everything pure, it's not possible because the filth of the world has, one way or the other, entered our minds. So those who are allergic to filth try to run away but they cannot. We cannot avoid filth, it is there. Another larger segment of people unfortunately have come to think that anyway the world is full of filth, let me also become filth. So they merge into the filth.

What we call filth, however, can also become great manure. Indian spirituality often uses the lotus symbolism. A lotus flower blooms best where the filth is thick. We, too, have this option, every moment of our life. If the atmosphere that we live in makes us, we cannot call ourselves managers. If we make the atmosphere that we live in, only then we can call ourselves managers.

Being a manager means that we are going to create whatever we see as the most beautiful thing to happen right now. Allowing situations to create you is not management at all; creating the situations that you want is management.

Let's say somebody got a job. On his first day at work, his table is the most fantastic place in the world. But within a few years, behind the same table, what is being manufactured are blood pressure, diabetes, ulcers and what not. It's not that there's something wrong with the job or the world in which we live. This is simply because we have not paid enough attention to ourselves.

You need to make yourself capable, not only in terms of management and other skills, but also capable as a human being. You need to be like a lotus flower, to be able to go through situations untouched; maintain your beauty and fragrance even if you're in the filthiest of situations. Then you can float through life untouched. Otherwise, life will eat you up.

There's no such thing as perfect management. If you give yourself absolutely to what you're doing, things will happen. Management is your ability to be capable of inspiring people to do their best. If everybody around us is doing their best, that's the best possible management that can happen.

Manipulation won't work; good management comes with dedication and love. You should be willing to give yourself one hundred percent to the person who is sitting next to you at that moment. Learn to touch the core of his humanity, you see that every human being is willing to do his best for you, always. Only if people around you love you and they want to do their best for you, will you not get ulcers doing management.

Only when people around us really want to do their best for you can management happen wonderfully. Our lives become beautiful not because of what we do, our lives become beautiful simply because we have included everybody around us as a part of our dream of well-being.

Couple Yoga

Do you feel the need to reconnect with your partner? Do you want to recover the freshness in your relationship? Do you and your partner long to be part of the same activity? Do you want to have fun with your loved one? If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, then, Couple Yoga is for you!

Yoga is traditionally seen as an individual practice. Couple Yoga with Yogalife, breaks away from this cliché and paves a path for you to reconnect with your loved ones while having fun all the way!

Couple Yoga uses dynamic and innovative yoga techniques specially designed by Yogalife to elevate relationships from the physical to the spiritual level. Yogalife is a Delhi-based firm that is experimenting with newer ways to extend the appeal of Yoga with the younger generation.

Popular poses in Couple Yoga are Lotus Pose, Turtle Pose and Moon Triangle amongst many others, to help you discover fun ways of stretching, bending and working out with your partner.

Couple Yoga asanas can be performed with a partner at home, office, college or anywhere. It is not just for couples or lovers. It could be your father, mother, children, colleague, friend, anyone.

Corporate Yoga

For executives, Yogalife has a special program called Corporate Yoga. It is designed by a psychologist, a management Trainer and a Yoga facilitator with focus on stress management.

Yogalife was born 11 years ago with the intention of spreading good health and well being through yoga. Over the years, under the expert guidance of founder Sanjeev Kumar Bhanot, Yogalife has grown into an established yoga institute.

Contact Details: Manoj Sharma, Yogalife Studio, C-366 Defence Colony, New Delhi – 110024
Ph: 09899882880,41554679;
info@yogalife.org, www.yogalife.org

INDIA'S CENTURY: The Age of Entrepreneurship in the World's Biggest Democracy

Kamal Nath, Tata McGraw Hill, Jan. 2008

Kamal Nath, the country's dynamic minister of commerce and industry, is one of the key intrepid reformers who have led India on its journey to its present status as a formidable entrepreneurial democracy. No other Indian leader has told the dramatic story of India's economic transformation. With a unique insider's perspective gained from 30 years in India's parliament, ministries, and economic sphere, Nath provides an exclusive inside look at India's rapid economic turnaround and its impact across the globe. Offering a riveting blend of narrative, history, analysis, and reflection, India's Century tells the story of how policy is made, how India's people embraced the entrepreneurial spirit- and how India's private sector is becoming ripe to compete internationally. Nath also relates stories of his negotiations with major national and international figures, providing guidelines for how foreign companies can do business with the 21st century's most important new democracy.
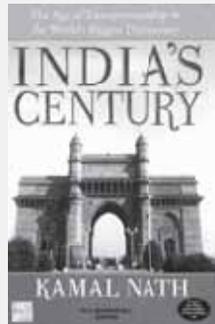
Think Better: An Innovator's Guide to Productive Thinking

By Tim Hurson, Tata McGraw-Hill, Jan 2008

Think Better is about Productive Thinking — why it's important, how it works, and how to use it at work, at home, and at play. Productive Thinking is a game changer — a practical, easy-to-learn, repeatable process that helps people understand more clearly, think more creatively, and plan more effectively. It's based on the thinking strategies that people we celebrate for their creativity have been using for centuries. Tim Hurson brings Productive Thinking out of the closet and presents it in a way that makes it easy for anyone to grasp and use — so you can think better, work better and do better in every aspect of your life.
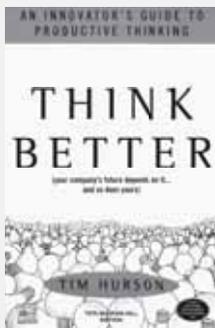
Think Better demonstrates how you can start with an intractable technical problem, an unmet consumer need or a gaping chasm in your business strategy and, by following a clearly defined, practical thinking process, arrive at a robust, innovative solution. Many **companies** use the Productive Thinking model to generate fresh solutions for tough business problems, and many **individuals** rely on it to solve pressing personal problems.

Chindia Rising: How China and India will Benefit Your Business

By Jagdish N. Sheth, Tata Mc Graw Hill, Jan. 2008

This book moves beyond the current consensus that China and India (Chindia) will become the world's next economic superpowers and, instead, argues that this development is to be universally welcomed. The Authors thesis is that the rise of Chindia is a vitally important thing, not only for China and India but also for the rest of the world—developed and developing nations alike. Just as America did in the 20th century, it is incumbent upon Chindia in the 21st century to serve as the engine of the global economy—an economy which otherwise would falter.
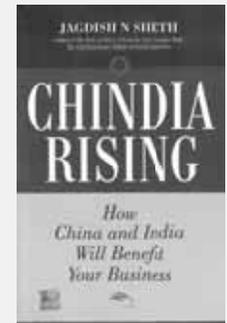
I BOUGHT THE MONK'S FERRARI

By Ravi Subramanian, Dec. 2007

Inspired by real life incidents and stories of people whom the author has met and worked with in his 15 year career, this book is all about achieving success and staying successful. It's about aspiring for success and not being defensive about it. It's about real people who, in today's day and age have dared to be different and step out of the clutter and have dreamt big and achieved big. The author has outlined the traits each one of the individuals in the book has demonstrated in order to emerge as champions in their quest for victory. He implores people to aspire and acquire a Ferrari. Do not be a "Monk" and sell your Ferrari. After all isn't the Ferrari something worth dying for !
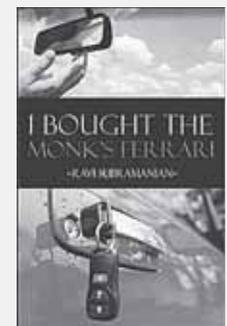
This book, offers interesting and simple insights into the personality traits required to be triumphant in today's world. It has actual examples from the lives of people like Naina Lal Kidwai, who have reached the pinnacle of success.

If God Was a Banker

By Ravi Subramanian, Dec. 2007

Two young management graduates, with nothing similar in family backgrounds and temperament, join the New York International bank on the same day and take two entirely different routes to success. Both rise up the ranks at breakneck speed: the fast and aggressive Sundeep, who will stoop
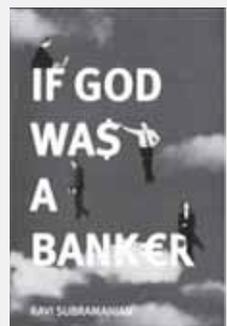
to anything to get ahead, and the mature and sensible Swami, with a high regard for good old ethics. The racy narrative set in the high-pressure milieu of competitive banking carries the undercurrent of a clash of values, in the intermeshed realms of the personal and the professional. This is a story peppered with ambition and frustration, defeat and malevolence, love and lust, and the desperate struggle for status and power. And, above all, ther is a top-notch banker who plays the benevolent god whenever crises loom over the young guns... An insider's fictionalised account of how Indian professionals experience the world of foreign banks, the story spans three continents.

Brand New China: Advertising, Media, and Commercial Culture

By Jing Wang, January 2008, Harvard University Press

One part riveting account of fieldwork and one part rigorous academic study, *Brand New China* offers a unique perspective on the advertising and marketing culture of China. Wang's experiences in the disparate worlds of Beijing advertising agencies and the U.S. academy allow her to share a unique perspective on China during its accelerated reintegration into the global market system.

Brand New China offers a detailed, penetrating, and up-to-date portrayal of branding and advertising in contemporary China.

TOTAL MANAGEMENT BY RATIOS: An Analytic Approach to Management Control and Stock Market Valuations

By Hrishikesh Bhattacharya, SAGE India, Sep. 2007

This is a pioneering book that integrates functional analysis of a business enterprise with stock market valuation. It moves beyond the convention of financial statement analysis to first evaluate every function of management and then integrate this into the total corporate functioning of an enterprise, leading to its valuation in the stock market. Comprehensive sets of ratios are provided for broad managerial functions and their sub-divisions like production, sale and distribution, working capital, debt-service and management. All the ratios are explained and worked out with live examples.

This book is invaluable for the students pursuing post-graduate management courses or appearing for professional examinations such as those conducted by ICAI, ICWAI, ICFA, ICSI. It will be of considerable interest to professional managers, both at the operational and corporate level and to bankers and institutional lenders for credit appraisal and to stock market investors as an aid to analysis of a company's share price movement.
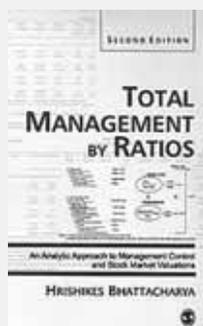
How to Retire 10 Years Early: Your Plan for Less Work and More Life

By Martin Bamford, Dec 2007

Take control and retire when you want to on your own terms with How To Retire 10 Years Early.

Personal finance expert Martin Bamford has developed this unique step-by-step and highly practical programme to show every reader how it is both possible and realistic to take control of your financial future now to enjoy greater wealth earlier on in life.

From budgeting and debt destruction, through to risk taking and tax, Martin Bamford shows you how to take control and define your own retirement terms.

No Caps Lock please

While MIT Professor and digital guru, Nicholas Negroponte was driving a $100 dollar laptop per child project, he sought out suggestions from diverse users. The best one came from a kid who shouted "remove caps lock please'!

Most people hit the caps lock key by accident. It is particularly likely since it is close to the "a" (often used in English and Latin languages) and just above the "shift," itself an act of making uppercase. It is said that 99 percent of the world's users spend time deleting uppercase letters that have inadvertently appeared because they accidentally hit "caps lock."

Indeed, the low-cost laptop will not have caps lock when the project unfolds shortly.

Men buy more clothes than women in India

As in many markets, in India, women are the primary decision makers in apparel purchases for the entire family. But, **Kartik Sheth** and **Ireena Vittal** of McKinsey's Mumbai office, find that India's men also have an important role. Indeed, half of their survey respondents said that their husbands had a major influence on which stores they frequented—a proportion far higher than the one for Brazil (3 percent), China (8 percent), and Russia (18 percent). What's more, India is unusual in that the market for men's apparel is larger than the women's market, where traditional Indian apparel still dominates.

Also, to a greater extent than elsewhere, shopping is a family activity in India: nearly 70 percent of its shoppers always go to stores with family, and 74 percent—more than twice the average of Brazil, China, and Russia—view shopping as the best way to spend time with family.

Tom Peters books in his own voice

Sure, you're a Tom-fan. But have you read all the books he's written? Did you miss one? Or perhaps you'd like to find your favorite Peters classic read aloud by the man himself (chances are good since he's recorded almost all of them). Find it all on the newest page at the site www.tompeters.com.

Google is everyone's competitor

Despite all the media attention Google has received, it remains an enigma. People can't even agree what industry it's in. The many businesses that see Google as an actual or potential competitor include software houses, advertising agencies, telephone companies, newspapers, TV networks, book publishers, movie studios, credit card processors, and Internet firms of all stripes. Even financial advisors, doctors, and librarians eye the company warily.

The sheer breadth of Google's influence and activity can easily be interpreted as evidence that it is indeed an entirely new kind of business, one that transcends and redefines all traditional categories. Scary!

Starbucks' enemy is Starbucks

No business seminar worth its PPT is complete without a mention of Starbucks. Indian executives or MBA students attending them with drowsy eyes could be spared for a while. Starbucks is in trouble and its owner has thrown out its CEO and has appointed himself to run the company.

That's not the interesting part. In fact, the Starbucks story can be scary. Why? Because, nothing seems to have gone wrong! Yet, its stock is crashing. Tom Peters seems to have an answer. According to him, it's not a surging competitor with a disruptive strategy that generates a star's tailspin, but a star's inherent entropic drift, away from innovativeness and towards mediocrity. To him, Starbucks enemy is Starbucks. Hope the founder Howard Schultz knows where to start stemming the rot.

MBAs rejoice

Married but available (MBA) men and women have something to rejoice. Staffing company TeamLease's latest survey shows that one-third of the executives see no harm in romancing married colleagues.

Romance and love are not the same for them. It's clearly romance with a tinge of love but with an eye focused on the growth ladder. Why not? The new India has its newer ways of looking at life and work. One fifth of the surveyed believe that an office romance is a fair way of getting sex for fun. What's more, 59 percent feel that women are equal partners in office romances and they even make the first move. Proof that India is indeed getting neutral.