Leadership With Love

Executives, entrepreneurs and business school students can expect to learn more about organizational success factors, leadership, strategy, risk management and training from studying the 474 year-old Jesuit institution than any other organization.

By Benedict Paramanand

When an interviewer asked cricketer Robin Uthappa about how he returned to top form soon after he scored a match winning innings at the 2014 T20 Indian Premier League, he mentioned how he went back to his school’s motto – ‘Faith & Toil’ for inspiration. Robin and batting legend Rahul Dravid, are the star alumni of 154 year-old St. Joseph’s Boys High School, Bangalore. Batting legend Sunil Gavaskar too was a student of St. Xavier’s, a Jesuit school in Mumbai.

It was Loyola College in Chennai that transformed late Prof. C K Prahalad, from a shy boy who came to do his graduation in Physics from a Tamil Medium corporation school, into a self-assured man. He went on to become a legend in Management and provided one of the most radical ideas in
CoverStory

recent times - of the ‘Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid’ to fight global poverty by involving the poor.

Former Indian President Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam is one of the thousands of highly accomplished people to have studied in Jesuit institutions. He is the personification of the Jesuit mantras of leadership with humility, hard work, integrity, and outcome driven.

As Jesuits celebrate 2014 as the 200th year of their coming to India and as Indians pay their tribute to the institution of The Society of Jesus (S J), it’s a good time to reflect on what Indian business executives and business leaders could learn from the less-known facets and practices of Jesuit Fathers which have made them the oldest and one of the most successful organizations. Several questions could come up during this exercise:

How did the European Fathers adapt to India so well; how did they pass on their legacy to their Indian colleagues when they left; how could they make their essentially religious goal work as a movement for social change; how could they assimilate with a deeply Hindu nation without creating religious backlash; how could they engage with the poor without making them overtly believe that they were taken advantage of; what is it in their training and talent management that makes them excel; how’s that the Jesuits come across as largely secular and progressive unlike many other Catholic congregations, and finally, how have they been managing crises for five centuries?

It’s interesting that unlike most religious orders, including non-Christian religious sects which originated before 1500 A D, the Society
of Jesus was founded by Ignatius Loyola during the Renaissance and the Reformation-Counter-Reformation period in 1540. As a result of this cultural context the mind of a Jesuit is wired differently. For example, they have been aware of the need to win individual consent of conscience and not resort to coercion or inducement for conversion. The Jesuits focused on promoting modern education as a way to win intellectual consent into the Catholic vision of the world. Their motto has been ‘For the Greater Glory of God’ which resonated well with those they came in contact with rather than preach the glory of the Church and Bible as the only holy book.

With Pope Francis at the helm, the first Jesuit to become a Pope, last year, the Catholic Church is all set to imbibe the Jesuit ethos – a more acceptable one to present day Catholics and non-Christians.

**Oldest Thriving Company**

The 474 year-old Society of Jesus could be studied as the oldest for-profit socio-religious enterprise. In a way, it can be studied just like a case study of a company to draw tremendous insights from it. In fact, the Jesuits have been applying more management, leadership and business principles than most companies can even imagine even today.

Ask Chris Lowney, once a managing director at J P Morgan in the US, who wrote ‘Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year-Old Company That Changed the World,’ in 2005. This is perhaps the most authoritative account of the history of Jesuits and from a business organization perspective. He focuses more on leadership and believes that’s what has contributed to the phenomenal success of this institution.

Today’s business leaders struggle to imbibe in their employees what Jesuits have been asking their priests to do all along – be flexible in the face of rapid change, set ambitious goals, think globally, take risks. The four pillars of Jesuit success, to him are: self-awareness (reflection), ingenuity (embracing change), love (positive attitudes toward others) and heroism (energizing ambitions).

However, during his research, Lowney found the real secret of Jesuit success to be - “Everyone leads, and everyone is leading all the time, and in which leadership consists of unlocking the leadership potential in others. And the how of unlocking
potential is rooted in an orientation to ‘greater love than fear.’”

It’s interesting to see how the Jesuits have successfully grappled with challenges that test every global company every day – forging seamless multinational teams, motivating performance, being open to change and staying adaptable.

12-year Training

With more than 20,000 priests globally and a couple of thousand in India, the Society of Jesus has been largely focusing on education and a good bit of community development. To ensure high standards Jesuits make sure that their priests are highly educated and trained in a wide range of disciplines. Almost all Jesuit priests are post graduates and doctorates are common. They undergo a very elaborate and strict education and training process for 12 years, while most other congregations don’t go beyond five. This also includes deep study of Eastern philosophy and practices like yoga and meditation.

Priests’ work ranges wildly from school masters to principals, academicians, researchers, scientists, scholars, theologians and even astronomers. They are also active in supporting communities affected by social conflicts and prejudice. The abduction of an Indian Jesuit priest working in Afghanistan recently shows the risks priests face.

In India Jesuits run schools and colleges in all most all tier one and tier two cities. They also run three business schools – the Xavier School of Management (XLRI) in Jamshedpur, Loyola Institute of Business Administration (LIBA) in Chennai and St. Joseph’s College of Business Administration in Bangalore.

What differentiates a Jesuit-run business school from many others? The idea of a ‘responsible business’ a ‘responsible manager’ is grilled into the minds and hearts of graduates here. They see that a lack of such orientation has been the bane of many businesses resulting in corporate scandals in recent years.

A closer look at the mission and vision statements of Jesuit business schools show their larger purpose. For example, Fr. Enright visualized XLRI to be a partner in the liberation and development journey of independent India when it was set up in 1949. XLRI has since then produced one of India’s best pool of human resources managers. The graduates from these institutions are well suited to adapt to the emerging business landscape which is increasingly being defined by values both by the consumer and the investor.

India’s immense knowledge wealth has emerged from a few institutions that follow similar values like the Jesuits, the Ramakrishna Mission schools and several schools and colleges run by progressive Hindu religious leaders. Yet, they all are islands of excellence in an otherwise appallingly managed education system. India’s education requires a major overhaul to make it relevant and accessible to all classes and communities at affordable fee structures.

Without doubt, the legacy and the future of the Jesuits is in their founder’s dictum ‘To Give and Not To Count the Cost’. As long as the world has a few committed givers, the future will remain promising.
Power of Reverse Learning
Excerpts of a chat with Fr. Freddy D’Silva, head of Jesuit Institutions, Karnataka

Legacy of European Jesuits
Also inherited tradition of centuries which we imbibe without our knowing it, without making so much effort. There is tradition handed from generation to generation. At the same time there is tremendous freedom for innovation and creativity.

We are also men who are torn between westernization and Indianisation, even now. European mentality and Indian mentality, in a way we are Bi-focal, bi-cultural. Though we are born and brought up in India, our mode of worship, names, some of our practices are western in origin, now of course we worship more and more in Indian language, we think in our mother tongue.

We recognize other religions as not some kind of devil worship but as authentic manifestations of the Divine. This is Indian cultural influence on the Jesuits, a kind of reverse learning for us. Also, we understand that Christianity has no monopoly on the Divine. Divine can manifest itself in other religions, faiths and traditions. That is a great influence of the 20th Century India on us.

If you fall in love with the people, you will love their culture and when this happens it becomes easy to adapt oneself.

What do you foresee the challenges facing Jesuit institutions?
If Jesuit institutions have to become relevant for the future they have to constantly evaluate themselves, constantly innovate, adapt and be creative. Face challenges both in curriculum, methodology and also the whole institutional structure, you have to think new.

Some of the challenges include explosion of knowledge, digital revolution, advances in technology. Yet there’s a need to be deeply rooted in our own culture and religious values cannot be sacrificed. We have to keep a balance between innovation and tradition, change and rootedness, that’s the challenge. We cannot bow down to tradition as a guardian of a museum but at the same time we cannot completely turn our back to it. We need to keep it relevant and that is our contribution to the future generations.

Leadership Challenge Facing Indian Jesuits
As I see the Jesuits now I think we have got quite a few managers, but very few leaders. We need a radical re-evaluation, reform of our training program to identify and develop leaders. I suppose the crisis is the same everywhere.

Natural CSR
Corporate Social Responsibility is in the veins of Jesuit institutions. The surplus from premium educational institutions is used in running schools and colleges in backward areas. For example, St. Joseph’s institutions in Bangalore fund four schools in backward areas of Karnataka – in Raichur, Gulbarga, Bijapur and Anekal.
Modi Mantra for Business Leaders

• We do not need ACTS but Action
• Once we decide we have to do something, we can go miles ahead
• We are not here for any positions but for a responsibility
• It is important how we view the youth of our nation. To simply consider them as new age voters will be a big mistake. They are the new age power

• Each of us has a natural instinct to rise like a flame. Let’s nurture that instinct
• Mind is never a problem. Mindset is
• In my life mission is everything. Even if I was a municipal chairman, I would have worked as hard as a CM
• Hard work never brings fatigue. It brings satisfaction
• Desire +Stability = Resolution, Resolution +Hard work = success
• Religion for me is devotion to work; and devotedly working is being religious
• An opportunity to work is good luck for me. I put my soul into it. Each such opportunity opens the gates for the next one
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Glimpses of previous editions of Green Power
The concept mindfulness has suddenly become popular not just in the boardrooms but also among people from all walks of life. As one’s attention is increasingly demanded at every moment by people, work and gadgets that feed into the information revolution, being alert and in touch with oneself is proving difficult.

In this fast-paced environment, everyone realises that a calm, resilient, non-judgmental inner being is the key to success. We also learn that the only corner in this universe where you have full control is yourself. This is the reason for the popularity of mindfulness as a concept, tool, and ‘to a few’ as a way of life.

What is Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a generic term encompassing a variety of methods that share some common characteristics. It underscores the importance of being mindful about one’s thoughts, emotions and actions. It also talks about being in the present moment, rather than being caught up in guilt from the past or worry about the future. It emphasises the ability to observe one’s thoughts and the present moment with detachment.

The tools used are meditation, reflection, yoga, breathwork, emotional awareness techniques, hypnosis and sometimes tools that help you understand yourself better. For example, when General Mills ran mindfulness training for a large number of employees year after year, it used Enneagram to help participants understand their personality type and fixations. Enneagram is a psychological system that describes nine basic personality styles and nine different ways in which people see the world.

According to Jon Kabat-Zinn, who wrote the book Wherever You Go, There You Are, mindfulness is simple awareness of the present moment. It is the practice of paying careful attention to what is happening Now, whether it is a sight, sound, taste, or smell, and a sensation in the body, thought or emotion. It is observation without attachment or judgment. Jon Kabat-Zinn is Professor of Medicine Emeritus and founding director of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in
Corporate Spirituality

Medicine, Health Care, and Society, at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

Jon Kabat-Zinn and Eckhart Tolly’s writings in their book ‘The Power of Now’, greatly influenced the mindfulness movement. The popularity of the Dalai Lama, and his teachings and celebrity disciples, also helped popularise mindfulness among business leaders.

Steve Jobs was a strong believer in mindfulness. “If you just sit and observe, you will see how restless your mind is,” he told his biographer, Walter Isaacson. “If you try to calm it, it only makes it worse, but over time it does calm, and when it does, there’s room to hear more subtle things, that’s when your intuition starts to blossom and you start to see things more clearly and be in the present more. Your mind just slows down, and you see a tremendous expanse in the moment. You see so much more than you could see before.”

**How Mindfulness helps you**

Pete Carroll, Head coach of the Seattle Seahawks, earning over Rs 42 crore annually, considered one of the top football coaches in America draws his inspiration from the book “The Inner Game of Tennis” written by Timothy Gallwey.

Carroll liked the book so much that the latest edition of “The Inner Game of Tennis” even has his foreword. He summarizes his philosophical take away from the book as being “all about clearing the clutter in the interactions between your conscious and subconscious mind” enabled “through superior practice and a clear approach”.

Pete says, “Focus, clarity and belief in yourself are what allow you to express your ability without discursive thoughts and concerns.”

I hope now with Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Salman Khan, John Abraham and Ranbir Kapoor taking charge of their respective teams for the upcoming Indian Super League, our Indian football players will get coaches who can help them develop and improve their inner game. The sport needs it to flourish.

The difference between your potential and your actual performance is everything that can go wrong in the chain of communication between the brain and the body. And you know it by now that the interference is not the external interference I am talking about. So think about it, how can YOU get out of your own way now and increase your performance?

To perform at your best without sacrificing yourself to achievement is to operate from a foundation that is anchored solidly in what is most important and most enduring in your life. So it is about choosing how you want to feel and be while you are doing what is required in your role.

In the book, ‘Leadership on the Line’, authors Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky offer a practical and wise solution: get off the “dance floor” (or daily operations) and get up on the “balcony”. So how can you spend sometime in the balcony everyday reflecting and choosing who you want to be that day? Mindfulness helps you to move into the balcony and make you more effective in the dance floor.

Santhosh Babu is a celebrity coach and managing director of OD Alternatives, a Leadership Development consulting firm. He works with organisations in the areas of culture transformation, managing change and capability building. He writes a column in Business Today called Buddha in the Boardroom.

The First Mindfulness retreat in Kerala is from 26 to 30th June in Kerala. santhosh@odalternatives.com
Yes, it is possible. History shows that it’s usually one man, a group or an organization’s passion and drive that have made the world a better place, not the mob. While the eco or environment movements may not have a single godfather, the green building movement certainly does.

David Gottfried is considered the undisputed father of the global green building movement. His memoir - Explosion Green: One Man’s Journey To Green The World’s Largest Industry says it all.

Gottfried’s peers say he not only accelerated the cause with contagious passion, he also provides a clear path towards delivering the transformational change. His work has been instrumental in connecting the market place to game-changing products.

He set up the World Green Building Council, the U.S. Green Building Council and also the China Green Building Council. The councils function in 100 countries. They are said to have done more for carbon mitigation than any other organization. Gottfried’s other books include Greed to Green (2004), and Greening My Life (2010).

Gottfried’s work tenure includes real estate development, construction management, building ownership and property management, strategic consulting, network management and venture start-ups. He earned his degree in Engineering Management from Stanford University, where he serves as a regular lecturer. He recently expanded his creativity into modern art painting.

Explosion Green tells the twenty-year story of the global green building movement through the eyes of David Gottfried, the man who helped start it all. It reveals the inner workings of the building industry as it comes to grips with the need for environmentally friendly practices. It describes how the industry has evolved, and how this evolution has helped fight climate change and prevent further damage to the environment while creating a multibillion-dollar industry.

Ganesh Ayyar took over as CEO of IT services firm Mphasis in 2009. His focus as CEO, he says, is to add sustainable business value to customers. According to Ayyar, the traditional time-and-material and fixed-price model of the IT services business will undergo a major change in the coming years. Customers, he says, will not want to buy IT services. Instead, they will want to buy business outcomes.

In a conversation with Knowledge@Wharton, Ayyar says that to remain relevant, IT services firms must be ready to cannibalize their own businesses. Mphasis, he adds, is on a transformational journey. “We want to be a positive disrupter — in other words, destroy the old value but replace it with new value in equal if not greater terms.”

An edited transcript of the interview follows.

Knowledge@Wharton: Can you give us an overview of Mphasis? What exactly do you do?

Ganesh Ayyar: We leverage IT services and business processes and work with our customers to help them solve their business problems. That has been our focus throughout. In terms of size, we are the seventh largest [IT services firm] out of India. I refuse to call ourselves an offshore IT services company because, increasingly, it is not about being offshore. It is about bringing business value to your customers.

Knowledge@Wharton: With six big competitors ahead of you in financial terms, how do you compete? What value do you bring to the customer?

Ayyar: I don’t compete with just those six players…. The customer chooses based on the value you bring, the approach you adopt, and the strategy and focus you have. Are you able to solve the business problem for them? Can you work with them in a partnership mode? Do you have a delivery which is top class, which does not let the customer fail? [If the answers to those questions are “yes,”] there is no discussion about, “Are you number seven? Are you number five? Are you number three?”

At Mphasis, we have selected a few customers and a few countries because, as a billion-dollar company, we cannot be everything to everyone. And to these customers — roughly about 75 [across] five countries — we bring the best of Mphasis. My job as CEO is to make sure that the best of Mphasis is better than what anybody else can provide to that customer.

Knowledge@Wharton: Could you give a specific example?

Ayyar: I’m fairly certain that many people can do something similar to what we do. The question is — are they better than us in that? Are they focused on that customer? Are you able to demonstrate a track record with that customer? What we specialize in is

“Shareholder wealth is an outcome. It cannot be the objective for the CEO.”
Knowledge@Wharton: You became CEO of Mphasis in 2009. What was your mandate and what was your vision for the company?

Ayyar: It has evolved over a period of time. Traditionally, if you are a listed company, every CEO will start saying that “My job is to create shareholder wealth.” We adopted a slightly different approach because shareholder wealth is an outcome. It cannot be the objective for the CEO. My focus as CEO is to create value for my customers, a value that is sustainable. It changes with time. It changes with technology. A solution that was good in 2010 would not be good in 2014; the business model that was good in 2010 would not be good in 2014. What I needed to ensure is that we are in tune with our customers and our customers’ customers and the changing market place.

Knowledge@Wharton: You talked about creating shareholder value. Your biggest shareholder, Hewlett Packard (HP), also used to be your biggest customer. But HP has basically cut Mphasis loose and you have had to re-invent yourself. How did you navigate this particular challenge?

Ayyar: I will give my answer in two parts. The first part is our relationship with HP. We have two types of relationships with HP, one as a shareholder and second as a customer. These two relationships are not mixed because HP, as our biggest shareholder, doesn’t want to see any dilution in corporate governance and we don’t want to see any dilution in corporate governance. There is a complete meeting of minds there.

As far as [HP as a] customer is concerned, in 2009 when we looked at the data we saw the concentration risk had gone up because 72% of our revenue was coming from HP. That was a trigger for our transformation. Many times companies transform based on certain triggers, certain events. Some of them are external and some are internal. Our trigger was that we felt that the concentration risk was very high and our direct business was not growing. These were the two triggers that caused us to step back and ask, “What do we do?” That started the first wave of our transformation. We said, “We want to bring the value of hyper-specialization to our customers.” We pegged two industry verticals — banking and capital markets and insurance. [At that time] we were operating in 16 different countries. We said, “We will focus on eight countries.” We started building value in terms of knowledge and depth. There were lots of good things going for Mphasis. Arguably, we were the birthplace of BPO from India. That was our heritage. We had a very budding and growing practice around applications and infrastructure. That was our first wave of transformation. Now, we are onto our third wave.

Knowledge@Wharton: What was the second wave?

Ayyar: In the second wave, we basically said, “The marketplace is changing. Can I change the marketplace? Absolutely not. We are too small to change the marketplace. So, how can I become of more value?” We adopted a strategy of named accounts. We said, “We want to focus on select accounts.” Initially, it was select industries, select countries. Then we went further and focused on select accounts, whether existing customers or new. We created a salesforce that is compensated only if it is able to get business from these customers. We also created a solution-specialized salesforce.

In our third wave, we are now focused on being a positive disrupter. In other words, bringing the value of the new world to our customers, re-inventing ourselves, challenging the status quo and defining that new world in the context of value creation. Disrupters are somebody who will take the value out of the
system. We want to be a positive disrupter — destroy the old value but replace it with new value in equal, if not in greater, terms.

Knowledge@Wharton: Give us an example of positive disruption and how you have implemented that for your customers.

“The way IT services are being sold and consumed today may cease to exist in the coming years.”

Ayyar: If you see the newer model of IT services consumption, what is very popular is anything-as-a-service. The traditional model in which offshore companies have operated is time-and-material and, in some cases, fixed-price. Now, the moment you move to anything-as-a-service model what it does is it brings variability into the cost from the customer standpoint. And they are not looking at offshore. They are looking at transaction-based pricing — it could be a business transaction or it could be an IT transaction. When you do that, it has the potential of disrupting the traditional model of providing people to a client or just doing traditional offshoring. So, you are destroying that value. But by bringing anything-as-a-service you are replacing it with a higher IP, higher knowledge, higher partnership with the customer. This is a classic example of disrupting the old value chain, replacing it with a new one and creating new value. You should be prepared to cannibalize your own business.

Knowledge@Wharton: What is your assessment of the global IT services market today? What kind of opportunities and risks does that create for Mphasis?

Ayyar: I have a controversial point of view on IT services. I believe the way IT services are being sold and consumed today may cease to exist in the coming years. In fact, I will go to the extent of saying that in five to six years’ time people may not buy IT services. They may be buying business transactions, business outcomes. Automation and innovation will eliminate human intervention in a significant manner. If you are in IT services business what do you do about it? When all this happens, how do you exist and how do you survive? How do you thrive? How do you prosper? How do you excel?

That’s the roadmap that we have developed for Mphasis. Our belief is that IT services in itself will grow, but not in its traditional form. As part of our third wave of transformation we have prepared the organization to take us toward being a positive disrupter, to enter the arena of the new range of services. We are leveraging our named accounts strategy because we want to do this in collaboration with our customers. Being focused on select customers gives us the opportunity to do so.

Knowledge@Wharton: Can you explain a little more about what your strategic vision is, especially in the area of positive disruption? And what lessons can other companies learn from Mphasis’s experience in this regard?

Ayyar: Positive disruption, as I described it, is to create a new value chain by ensuring that you’re taking your customers along with it. I also want to highlight one more thing. We operate at the confluence of people, planet and profit. It is extremely important for all corporates, including us, to be a responsible citizen and ensure that we take the community along with us. We are ensuring that we are balanced between profit and doing the right thing.

Regarding] sharing the lessons with others — to think that transformation will end is probably a myth, especially if you’re a technology company. Because by the time you believe that a transformation has ended, you will have to do something new. So, instead of saying, “I have transformation one, two and three,” we say that we are on a transformational journey. We did wave one, we are doing wave two and we are onto our wave three. As CEO, my job is to ensure that these
waves are interconnected and leveraging each other rather than acting in conflict.

As part of transformation, the most important challenge is changing people's mindset. Changing organization structure, measurement system, incentive schemes — these are all easier. Not easy, but easier. The physical aspect of transformation is easier. The chemical aspect is extremely tough. And to be honest, successful transformation requires you to manage the chemical transformation, which is around people, well. Initially I thought by changing the measurement system, the incentive scheme, it works. Actually that's a myth. A CEO has to be leading from the front. He has to be an enabler for the rest of the team to leverage their transformation. He cannot expect that the teams will change automatically. Workshops, communication and just changing the measurement system alone won't do the trick.

Knowledge@Wharton: How do you bring about a chemical transformation?

Ayyar: First of all, by personifying the transformation yourself as CEO and ensuring that your customers are with you, your employees are with you and your board is with you, by actually demonstrating success. You have to work on a few such cases, make them successful and be a learning leader yourself. In a small percentage of cases you will have to make a U-turn and reset the direction. You should be prepared for that because you are staring at the future without having all the data at your disposal and deciding that this is where you want to head. One of the ways in which I get assisted by my direct reports is that they are authentic, they give me feedback. I should be prepared to listen to them as to what is working and what is not working, including to the person who is right at the field level. That’s how I keep myself motivated. I have made many mistakes in this journey in the last five years. I’m certainly not proud of them, but I am not afraid to commit mistakes. If I become afraid of committing mistakes, I wouldn’t try something new.

“To think that transformation will end is probably a myth, especially if you are a technology company.”

Knowledge@Wharton: What’s the biggest mistake that you have made? And what did you learn from it? Also, what’s been your biggest accomplishment and what did you learn from it?

Ayyar: I have committed enough mistakes. I don’t know whether I can rank them. One of the things which I have learned is that many times your biggest strength is your biggest weakness. I love working with people. People are my strength, and at the same time, my weakness. I struggle to come to terms with the fact that somebody needs to be taken out. So I have a team which advises me on that. I make sure that my weakness is covered by having a good team which is able to advise me on these things.

My biggest accomplishment is to have a very capable, trusted, authentic team reporting to me. They have been instrumental in many ways in taking us from where we were. At one point of time our direct business stood at 28% of our total revenue. Today, that very same business stands at 63%. And, most importantly, as CEO of a listed company, you need to have a board which challenges you but is supportive of your strategy. I’m blessed with members who come from diverse backgrounds. They keep me honest. They challenge me. But they are completely supportive of my strategy. You have to take all these stakeholders along in your journey of transformation.

Knowledge@Wharton: What do you think should be the role of a CEO in re-imagining strategy?

Ayyar: I don’t know whether I can comment on the role of a CEO but I believe I keep myself young by learning. Being present at Wharton, I will get an opportunity to talk to the students. I spoke to some
of the faculty members. Similarly, talking to my employees. I visit schools and talk to students. When you listen to all these things, you realize what is happening in the real world. I spend a lot of time with startups. They share how they view the world. Being a listening leader, I believe, is extremely important to be successful. And if you’re a CEO, you have to demonstrate that ability to listen, learn and then lead.

Knowledge@Wharton: As a CEO, what would you say is the greatest leadership challenge you have faced, how did you deal with it and what did you learn from it?

Ayyar: The first challenge was when I was appointed CEO. This is my very first role as a CEO…. You think that what you have done and what has earned you the role of CEO prepares you well. I was in for a shock because the role of a CEO is very, different from being a senior business leader in a company because of the multiple dimensions of this role. Today, 36,000 employees are counting on me to ensure that their future is bright. There are a number of customers who look at me as “Mr. Mphasis.” And then you have shareholders who have expectations from the company.

So, first of all, the stakeholders change dramatically and you think you are prepared because you have been successful in previous roles. To me, that was the biggest eye-opener. I adopted an approach that some people found strange, but I found very useful. After completing about three years as CEO, I said, “I’m going to assume that I’m the new CEO now and I’m going to assess the performance of the previous CEO. I’m going to ask my team, ‘What did the previous CEO do well and didn’t do well?’” I went through a very structured, formal process of doing that assessment. And then I published, “What is this new CEO going to do?” I made it public to my team members. I sent out an e-mail [saying] that these are the behaviors I’m going to show, these are the objectives I’m going to achieve, these are the changes I’m going to make. When you publish it you have no choice but to change. Otherwise, you face public embarrassment. And CEOs are actually very afraid of public embarrassment. I was ready to be embarrassed if I didn’t do it. I published it. My team was supportive. In fact, some of them loved it so much that they did it themselves….

Knowledge@Wharton: When you did your mid-term assessment or three-year assessment, what sort of a grade did [you as] the previous CEO get — A, B or C?

Ayyar: I gave myself three out of five. My aspiration is — over a period of time, can I score six out of five? It’s a tough journey and I’m not cocky about it. What I’m trying to do is to be relevant with the times, to work with my team members, to listen to youngsters who are creating a very vibrant world and to be in tune. So, I would like to stay young forever — a teenaged CEO if I may.

Knowledge@Wharton: One last question: How do you define success?

Ayyar: Success is not what you do when you’re around. Success is how people rate you after you have left the scene. It is about leaving behind a legacy — leaving [behind] something that sustains. To ensure that you have done succession planning and your successor comes from within your own ranks. To have a strategy, an execution, which people talk about. To me, that is success. Many people say it is reaching [a particular] share price, this kind of total shareholder returns. To me, those are all outcomes. To me, success is leaving behind a very positive and sustainable legacy.

https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/sector-needs-positive-disruption/
In Search of Purpose

K Bhargavi recounts how she landed in her current career after meandering along and how spiritual leaders can help in finding one’s life path

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”

B.Com, BA (Economics), B.sc., Maths, B.C.A, B.B.A, B.B.M and the choices were many but I wasn’t sure what I wanted to pursue. The Poem I read in my school “Road not taken” by Robert Frost and the following lines had a great impact on me

“I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”

I never wanted to follow the crowd, I wanted to be a trend setter, make a
difference, be unique and I had the courage to follow my heart. I wanted to pursue something which doesn’t remain a degree after my name but something worthy. Thereby I started doing research and went to career guidance cell to explore options. I was keen that I will take up a degree which interest me

I used to think hard what I wanted in life and what I want to do in life. These two questions consistently surfaced and I believed the answers existed inside, reflected a lot. What makes me feel happy, satisfied and brings the sense of fulfillment? I remembered my mother saying, everyone born are sure to die, but what one does in between differentiates an ordinary person from an extraordinary man. I wanted to live not only for myself but also for others, I wanted to bring change and touch the lives of others. Then I gave a deep thought as how can I be an instrument of change? Politics – Fascinating but not my cup of tea. So the next option was Indian Administrative Service and the requirement was basic degree and now I need a three year degree which electrifies me at the same time.

Finally BSc.Visual Communication was exciting. Graphics, drawing, animation, photography and production interested me. It was a tough fight getting it in best college, but I wanted it and I got it.

University 9th Rank but I couldn’t prepare for IAS, yet gave an attempt and failed. Now what? I didn’t have so much courage to enter into movie making industry nor did I have any Godfather. I felt I was clueless
about my life once again. All I wanted now was to study further and finally remembered those questions and about my purpose which is to serve humanity. The minute I got that clarity, I found a Master program in Social Work and there I go.

Two years went by and again I topped the college, got proficiency and silver medal. With all excitement I started to work for NGOs. The NGOs I aspired were looking for experience and NGOs I got into didn’t inspire me. Then I took lectureship but I felt I was only downloading information for procuring marks and I knew marks don’t signify anything in life. From Politics to IAS to NGOs to lecturer, my options to make a difference changed but still I have not found solutions.

What is my purpose? What am I suppose to do? I found life very boring. I gave up completely, lost totally. It was said when there is a strong urge to find an answer you will get it. All I wanted was guidance, and finally when I surrendered, I got help.

It was through the program called “Youth Empowerment Program - YEP” by Chinmaya Mission, where I discovered about myself – my true nature and purpose.

Once we were asked to do short talks on Amar Chitra Katha and mine was the outstanding one and my friends discussed about it even during dinner, the talk was simple, they enjoyed it as it had a sense of humor and it was thoughtful, they got connected and started to reflect on it.

So I wondered is spirituality my purpose? Then I attended a workshop on “Swadharma” – It is that action which is in accordance with your nature (svabhava), with your skills and talents, and that which you are responsible for (karma). And to understand one’s own swadharma, Swami Mitrananda under whose guidance the program was executed gave us an exercise of introspection and retrospection – what one was really good at and what came naturally and made one feel happy, to trace a pattern right from childhood.

Then I realized that I was good at teaching but as I grew being a teacher was out of fashion but today when I was on stage, I was able to connect and create an impact, it was like all the puzzles falling into place immediately. I decided why not be a life skill trainer and make a difference through motivational talks. Through Chinmaya Mission, I reached many schools & colleges and I took value education classes. Some days I used to speak for continuous 7 hours, though it was exhausting, I felt very happy. I worked for an year and then looked for training companies. I re-started my career with a soft skill training company based on Neuro Linguistic Programming and at present I work for one of the best companies in India on life skills – Pegasus Institute of Excellence as a facilitator where I am instrumental in making others discover about themselves and others.

Today, I am with a sense of gratitude and fulfillment; I was a very shy, timid girl, didn’t know what to do with myself but had high dreams. YEP transformed me completely, it not only helped me identify my swadharma but also brought out the hidden potential and capability. A girl who was an introvert, turned out to be a person addressing thousands of participants, helping them to help themselves. I discovered that I was good at understanding others, I connect and my voice today is a means to take the journey of others inward, while I continue to reflect. Unless you explore or take risk, the dark quadrant of Johari window will not be revealed. I kept looking, never settled and when all my efforts looked like not heading anywhere, it was the Guru who gave me the sense of direction and clarity.

My journey continues, I have taken the road less travelled but that has made all the difference.
What is the central theme of your book?
The book is about the “real freedom to live, grow, lead, create and act.” It is highly relevant for every individual, family, team, organization, society, country and the world.

The book is an attempt to identify and drive out the gang of five internal villains in you and me and the world around that holds us back. The irony is we take this slavery as the new normal. And this is the limiting factor through which all of us are operating. It affects our personal, professional, social, economic and political fronts. We are not reconciled and this leads to complications in our relationship with ourselves and others.

‘Dissolve the Box’ is an idea, strategy, management mantra, movement and a way of life all packaged in the form of a book.

What do you want the reader to take away from your book?
As discussed earlier we want individuals and organizations to identify and drive out the Gang of five internal villains called LFEAD. They all come together in this order and cage our growth. Thus, we respond from the field of compulsion. These 5 villains are: Limited understanding of oneself that gives rise to Fear which triggers the Ego that further gives rise to Attachment, which finally gives rise to Dominant Mind that does not listen to us - (LFEAD).

So to sum up, the real take away from the book is “freedom from LFEAD”.

What is the process after you dissolve the box?

We have provided a framework to dissolve the box and each part of the framework forms a chapter in the book. Now we receive, process and respond to any stimuli through the Gang of 5 villains leading to a vicious cycle. This takes us to the mental cages from which we react from or outside the box. We now operate from the field of compulsion.

When we dissolve our boxes through the 3 step DTB process we do not receive, process and respond from LFEAD. We now operate from the freedom cycle that takes us to the fertile field. What we intend from this fertile field actually takes shape and manifests. We now act and do not react to situations. When we act we are on top and when we react the situation is on top. By dissolving the box we now operate from the field of freedom. This creates a paradigm shift.

The idea is we have around 60,000 thought approximately in a day. And we export LFEAD in all these thoughts. If we are able to right-size LFEAD even by 5% we release enough vital energy for a better life and a better world.
1) We do not just think outside the box but we now dissolve or box.
2) We become “intent leaders” who think deeper, wider and faster than thought leaders.

**Is it possible to have a box-less organization or society?**

Before answering the question let me explain what I actually mean by dissolving the boxes. We are all born with natural levels of LFEAD. However, as we grow we blow these LFEAD out of proportion. This blown out proportion of LFEAD creates mental boxes or mental cages leading to biases, limitations and pollutes our thoughts and actions.

By dissolving the box I mean rightsizing this LFEAD to the natural levels as that is the level at which our leadership qualities, thinking ability and execution skills are at its best as we are aligned to our nature. And this rightsizing is very much possible. And it is not only possible but practical in the short, mid and long term for an inclusive and sustainable growth. The idea is we have around 60,000 thought approximately in a day. And we export LFEAD in all these thoughts. If we are able to right-size LFEAD even by 5% we release enough vital energy for a better life and a better world.
Redesigning the Aeroplane While Flying - Reforming Institutions
By Arun Maira,
Rupa Publications, 2014

Institutions and institutional processes provide stability, are a means to progress, and thus fulfill the needs of society. This functionality, however, has been lost in recent times, and citizens around the world are losing confidence in institutions of government and democracy, free markets and capitalism. Reforming institutions has thus become the most urgent task for leaders across the world. Not an easy task: it is as risky as redesigning an aeroplane while flying in it; it shakes up the foundations of stability.

This insightful book, penned by a member of India's Planning Commission, looks at how India, the world's largest democracy, which embraced capitalism twenty years ago, has become the principal laboratory for institutional reform. It provides new ways to think about institutions and the process of reforming them, and explains how we should go about reformation as a nation. The principles given in this book apply to institutions of government and business in all countries.

What Are You Hungry For? The Chopra Solution to Permanent Weight Loss, Well-Being, and Lightness of Soul
By Deepak Chopra,
Harmony, 2014

What are you hungry for? Food? Love? Self-esteem? Peace? In this manual for “higher health,” based on the latest findings in both mainstream and alternative medicine, Deepak Chopra creates a vision of weight loss based on a deeper awareness of why people overeat - because they are trying to find satisfaction and wind up using food as a substitute for real fulfillment.

Repudiating the failed approaches of crash dieting and all forms of deprivation, Chopra's new book aims directly at the problem of finding fulfillment. When that problem is solved, he argues, normal eating falls into place automatically, and the entire system of mind and body achieves what it really desires.

Business Twenty 20: How to Build an Everlasting Company
By R. Shekar,
Productivity & Quality Publishing Pvt. Ltd., 2014

Exponential returns on investment are a business imperative today. All stakeholders bet on companies that promise non linear growth. Exponential growth is not only very much of doable, but also essential. When the amateurs of today become the professionals of tomorrow, they innovate sooner and execute faster. They build a reputation that endears them to their employers, customers and investors. Can it be done? Yes. Diligent daily practice can translate our daily experience into expertise. Business Twenty 20 is about professionalizing quickly to compete successfully and elevate the lifestyles for ever.
The Mind Make Over
By Sharon Lowe,
Piatkus 2014

What would you do if you knew you couldn’t fail? If you’ve ever doubted yourself, allowed other people’s negativity to stop you from doing what you want, or assumed that any success you’ve had in the past was just a case of ‘pure luck’, then you need The Mind Makeover.

In The Mind Makeover, Sharron Lowe shares her success strategies. She will show you how to: create a positive inner voice, stop negative influences ruling your life, and build your confidence and self-belief. The Mind Makeover is essential reading for anyone who wants to take control of their life.

The Triple Package: What Really Determines Success
By Jed Rubenfeld, Amy Chua
Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014

Drawing on groundbreaking original research and startling statistics, The Triple Package explodes the myth of innate group differences and examines three qualities that propel certain cultural groups to disproportionate achievement: 1) a superiority complex; 2) insecurity; and 3) impulse control.

Provocative, probing and profound, The Triple Package offers a new way to look at success – its hidden spurs, its inner dynamics and its costs. But ultimately, it shows that when properly understood and harnessed, the Triple Package can put anyone on their chosen path to success.

Serve to Be Great: Leadership Lessons from a Prison, a Monastery, and a Boardroom
By Matt Tenney,
Wiley; 2014

This three-part book begins with Matt’s story of going from selfish to servant while on his journey from prisoner to monk to social entrepreneur. The book shows leaders the connection between superior long-term results and serving their people and community. Matt Tenney cites numerous business case studies and research that demonstrate how servant leadership results in attracting top talent, increased employee engagement, and lower turnover, as well as a more innovative culture, better customer service, and a better ROI on marketing efforts. Serve to Be Great offers practical, actionable guidance on becoming an extraordinary leader who is devoted to serving and inspiring greatness others.
When the term “big data” first came on the scene, bestselling author Tom Davenport (Competing on Analytics, Analytics at Work) thought it was just another example of technology hype. But his research in the years that followed changed his mind.

Now, in clear, conversational language, Davenport explains what big data means—and why everyone in business needs to know about it. Big Data at Work covers all the bases: what big data means from a technical, consumer, and management perspective; what its opportunities and costs are; where it can have real business impact; and which aspects of this hot topic have been oversold.

Much more personal than standard corporate histories, David Packard's The HP Way provides insights into managing and motivating people and inspiration for would-be entrepreneurs. This bestselling classic joins the Collins Business Essentials line-up with a new Note from Steve Jobs.

Always sensitive to the needs of its customers and responsive to employee input, Hewlett-Packard earned massive steady growth that far outshone its competitors’ vacillating fortunes, even with radically different products from those responsible for its initial boom.

When he was just twenty-six years old, Sam Cawthorn’s life changed forever. A terrible car accident cost him his arm, left him in a coma, and put him in a wheelchair for the rest of his life—or so he thought. Today, Sam is one of the most successful motivational and inspirational speakers around, addressing some 100,000 people around the world each year, from some of the world’s biggest companies.

In Bounce Forward, Sam shares the tools, strategies, and psychology that anyone can use to overcome any obstacle. If Sam can bounce forward from the accident that nearly took his life, there’s almost nothing that you can’t overcome.
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