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ALL INDIA MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

# indian management

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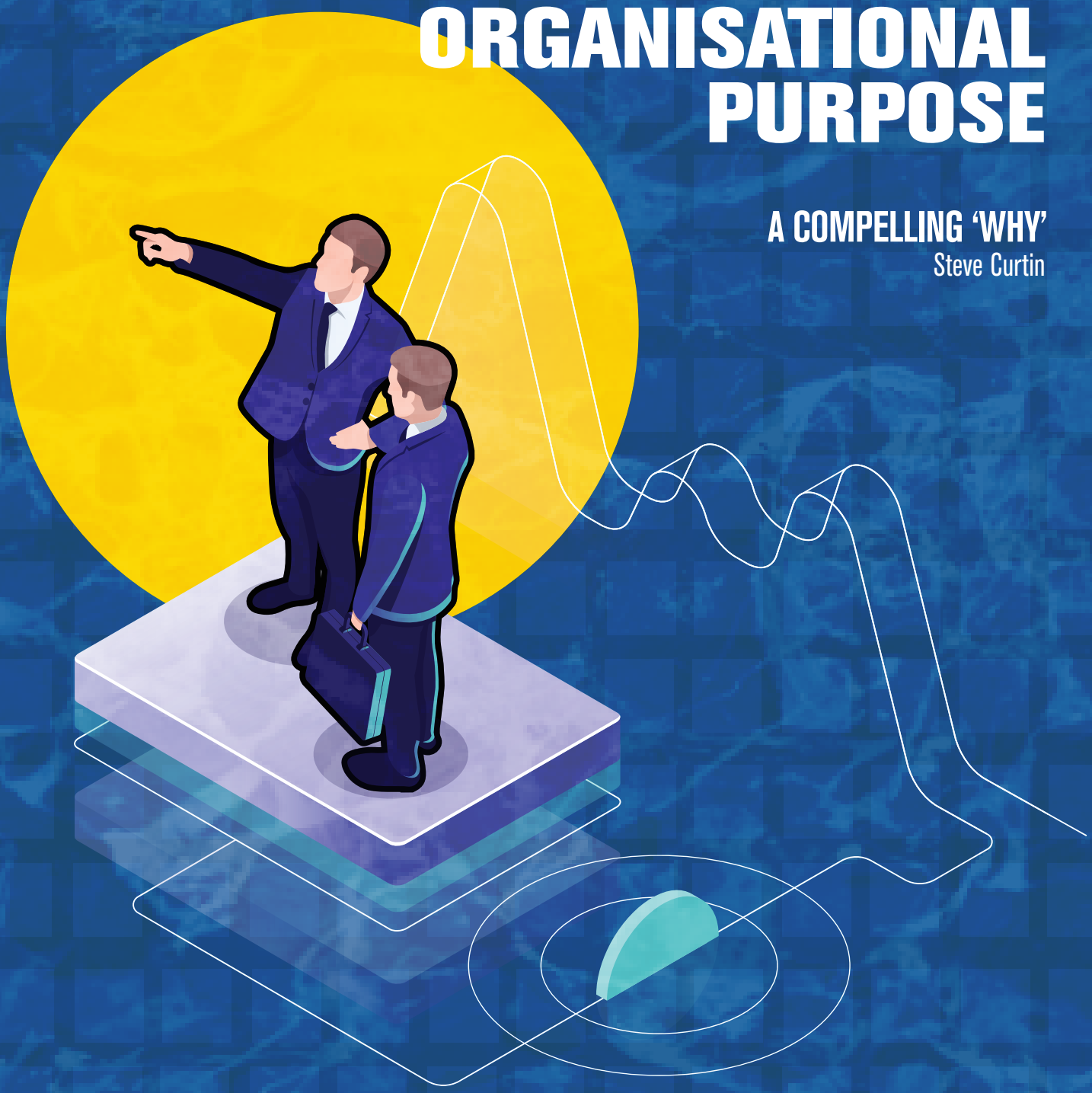
## ORGANISATIONAL PURPOSE

### A COMPELLING 'WHY'

Steve Curtin



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President, AIMA and Chairman & MD, CavinKare Pvt Ltd

**Jyotiraditya M Scindia**
Minister of Civil Aviation; Steel Government of India

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Chief of the Naval Staff

**V Anantha Nageswaran**
Chief Economic Advisor (CEA), Government of India

**Amitabh Kant**
India's Sherpa for the G20

**Rishad Premji**
Executive Chairman
Wipro Limited

**Harshvaradhan Neotia**
Chairman, Ambuja Neotia Holdings Pvt Ltd

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Author at Harper Collins Publishers

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Vice President, AIMA and Vice Chairman & Managing Director, Triveni Turbine Ltd

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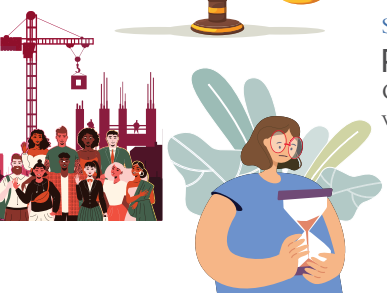

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## Programme Director

**Solomon Darwin**
Executive Director, Garwood Center Corporate Innovation, Haas School of Business, University of California, Berkeley

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- Examine the latest concepts, ideas and tools to help them align their business practices with global economic developments and conditions.
- Learn to build sustainable and innovative business models.

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- Keynotes by Silicon Valley Startups and CEOs
- Visits to and interaction with the top management teams of some of the iconic and innovative companies like Nvidia, Cisco, IBM Research, Wells Fargo Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, PayPal, Fujitsu Open Innovation Gateway, Chevron Corporation, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), Calpine Corporation, Dupont Innovation Centre, UC Berkeley Campus amongst others.

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Mansoor Hassan
M: +91 9540060166 | E: mhassan@aima.in
All India Management Association, Management House, 14 Institutional Area, Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 110003
Tel: 011- 2460 8524 / 24608511 / 43128100 | Website: www.aima.in

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# The importance of knowing the purpose

**C K Ranganathan** is President, AIMA and Chairman & Managing Director, CavinKare Pvt Ltd.

Typically, business leaders struggle to motivate employees to do more than the contracted minimum. Employees tend to see the vision and mission statements as perfunctory propaganda and receive the leaders' rallying calls as inconsequential noise.

The leaders tend to harp on business targets and ambitions whereas the employee search leadership communication for their own perspective. Employees see little connection between their world view and that of the leaders and they tend to leave much of their energy and enthusiasm out at the gate.

Often, the communication of the organisation's purpose is packaged in consultant jargon and is too esoteric to make a clear connection. When employees do not grasp the vision, mission, and other slogans, they do not care about them. Employees deduce the organisation's purpose from what they see the organisation doing and the way it treats them. In hierarchy obsessive organisations, employees understand their purpose through the designations and privileges bestowed on them and their leaders.

**Narrative is everything. Leaders need to provide meaning to business actions and events in the context of the larger moral, social and national good.**

While it is impossible for even the most enlightened leader to offer a please-all organisational purpose or to click everybody's personal triggers, it is still vital to provide employees something more than just a function and growth. Everyone entertains visions of how the things should be and what they would do about it given a chance and the means, and leaders need to channel such reservoirs of passion into the business.

Narrative is everything. Leaders need to provide meaning to business actions and events in the context of the larger moral, social and national good. People have an innate need to feel correct, connected and beneficial, and leaders need to satisfy this need. They must get employees to believe in the purpose of the organisation and give them a role in achieving it.

Leaders need to voluntarily include social and environmental impact targets in business performance metrics and embed organisation's purpose in its brands' positioning and communication. In a purpose-sensitive atmosphere, both inside and outside, leaders must create and project the organisational narrative accordingly.

Establishing and communicating a larger purpose is particularly important for the young employees. The energy and the idealism the young employees bring to an organisation is its most powerful resource and leaders need to have something more to offer than just salary and growth. The young tend to be dissatisfied with things as they are and they seek channels to change the world. They also expect authenticity from the seniors and they are quick to change loyalty if they conclude that their leaders are hypocritical. To prevent quick and deep disillusionment among young employees, it is important that leaders align the organisation's purpose with the realities of the business.

A viable organisational purpose is necessary to attract and retain talent, especially after COVID. The forced isolation and change in behaviour during the pandemic has affected people's priorities and increased their sensitivity to the collective causes. Many employees can no longer justify continuing to work for organisations with questionable business practices or blasé attitude towards health, social and environmental issues. Bribing key employees with bigger pay and promotions into staying is not working as well as it used to.

**While designing the organisation's purpose, it helps to involve the employees, as it makes them a stakeholder in it from the start and achieving it becomes binding on them.**

In the emerging scenario, organisations need a moral profile along with a financial one. Leaders need to integrate popular causes into business objectives and include those in employees' key responsibilities. For example, environmental pollution and climate change issues are now important personal matters for many people and employees expect their organisations to both avoid and prevent waste and carbon intensive practices. Leaders need to address the concerns of employees and other stakeholders by introducing clean and green approaches in work, products, processes and even extending the upgrades to the supply chain.

While designing the organisation's purpose, it helps to involve the employees, as it makes them a stakeholder in it from the start and achieving it becomes binding on them. It also prevents the usual disconnect between the vision-mission statements and the employees. Leaders may even link employee evaluation and fresh hiring with the individual's involvement and achievements in cause-linked business activities.

However, causes can also be divisive and polarising, and leaders must take great care in forming and communicate those. An organisational purpose must be such that everyone can identify with it and participate without hierarchical or social coercion. Picking a cause that caters to the radical employees but alienates others is a sure way to lose talent and taint organization's brand.

Having a powerful organisational purpose and getting the employees to relate to it can be a potent competitive advantage. An emotionally charged workforce can achieve bigger wins than a better equipped but indifferent one. IM

*The opinion expressed is personal.*

**EDITOR'S** NOTE

Dear Readers,

Ask your employees if they know what their jobs entail, and you will get quick, affirmative responses. But if you ask them why they do what they do—or why your business does what it does—you'll meet with many confused expressions and dazed silence. Giving your people a compelling 'why' is what transforms organisations from mediocre to remarkable. And all it takes is a simple, clear conversation.

Purpose is like a common, binding factor…an overarching, higher goal that drives employees to work for that what lies beyond profit and financial growth. It gives employees motivation and the organisation a sense of fulfilment. When employees know (where) they belong in the greater picture, they not just take more interest in their work, but also aim to achieve higher and higher benchmarks, thereby benefitting the organisation.

The middle management—those who act like intermediaries between all tiers of staff and the upper management—plays an important role in ensuring that employees are aligned to the purpose…the vision set by the founders and being carried forward by the current management. Employees seek value in their work, and their managers are responsible to create an environment that delivers it.

Apart from this, management is also expected to act as role models for employees to get inspiration from. As Steve Curtin, author, Delight Your Customers and The Revelation Conversation, writes in the cover story of this issue, "Employees are pretty observant; they do not miss much. The actions and behaviours they see modeled and the ideals their immediate supervisor appears to value will inform their decisions and behaviour at work."

What is your take on leveraging generational diversity? Do write in with your views to **imeditorial@spentamultimedia.com**

Maneck Davar

Maneck Davar


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sanjaychawda@gmail.com

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Robert Gomes | 022-24811024 / 31
robert@spentamultimedia.com



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# Democratising marketing through humour

## Don Munnabhai as Professor of Gandhigiri Positioning

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Prof Rajesh K Pillania,** MDI, Gurgaon.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

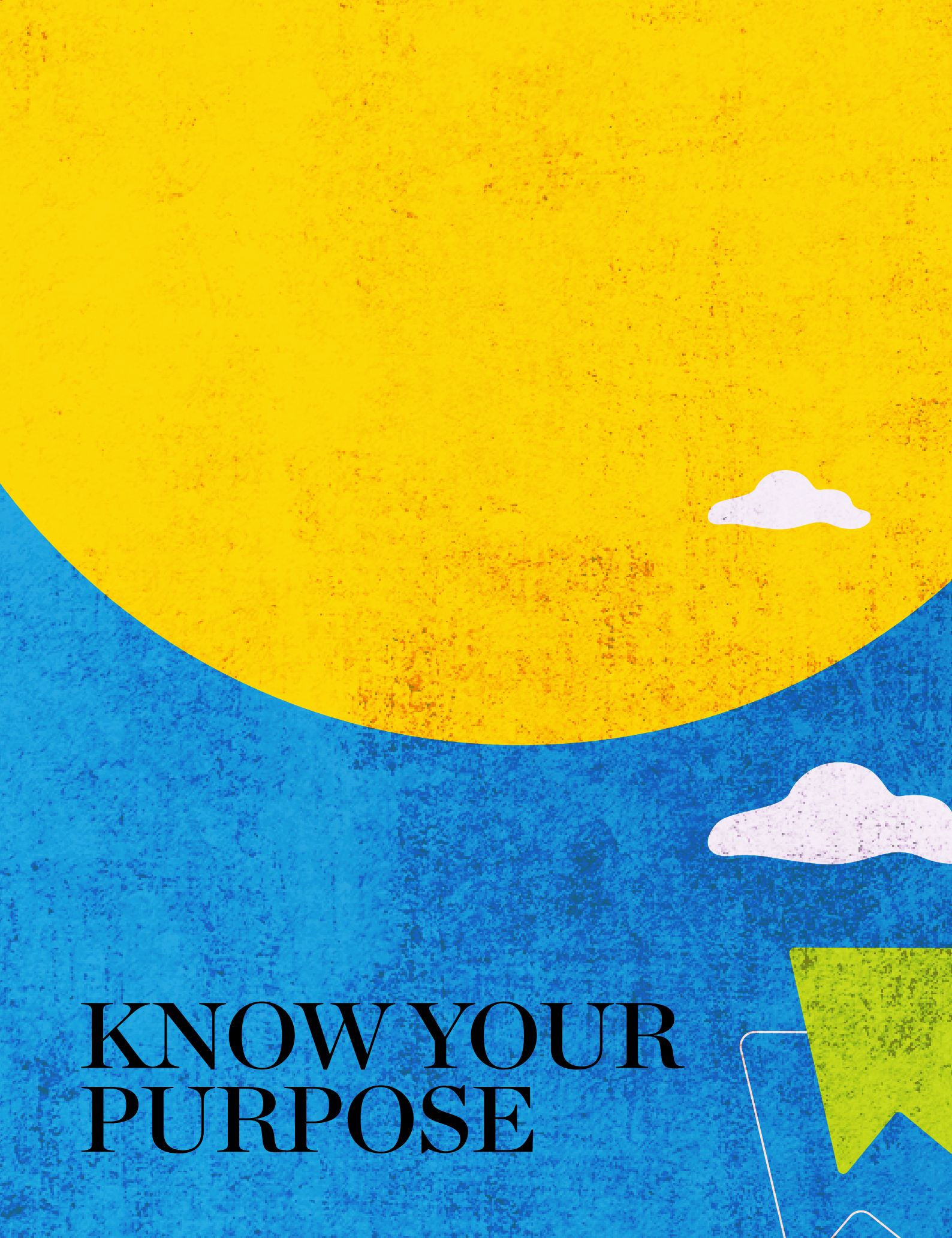
**Prof Jagdish Sheth,** Emory University.

You have a very interesting question. Let me share a funny scenario with you.

In the popular Hindi movie *Lage Raho Munnabhai*, the protagonist Munnabhai, who is a gangster, falls in love with a girl- the lead actress of the movie. To impress her, he tries to position himself as a professor who believes in Gandhigiri i.e. the methods of Ghandhiji such as of non-violence. However, there is inherent contrast in his real personality, which is basically a violent and his positioning of himself as a non-violent person, which creates a lot of funny situations in the movie. This also creates a lot of problems for him, and eventually, leads to a break up in his relationship with the her.

You might have enjoyed the laughter by watching the movie, but sadly, companies make similar mistakes in the market positioning. It is important to understand the product, customer, market, and competition and follow the right market positioning.

**Marketing Guru**


KNOW YOUR
PURPOSE

Yash Chittal

# A matter of purpose

*When the relevance of meaning diminishes in the workplace, employees start lacking purpose and motivation*

✦ STEVE CURTIN, AUTHOR, *DELIGHT YOUR CUSTOMERS AND THE REVELATION CONVERSATION*

Yash Chittal



In 2016, I held a learning exercise with 222 senior leaders from a sophisticated billion-dollar technology company. I asked attendees to jot down the company's single-sentence corporate mission statement on an index card. Less than 2 per cent of the leaders in attendance could do so.

On a second index card, I asked leaders to describe their job role in five to seven bullet points. The vast majority of responses—86 per cent—had to do with job functions, the duties and tasks associated with their roles: managing, staffing, problem-solving, forecasting, strategising, traveling, and so on.

Only 14 per cent of the responses related to their job's purpose—their single highest priority at work. These responses included relationship-building, delighting customers, and going the extra mile.

On a third index card, I asked the group to record their employees' single highest priority at work. Roughly 70 per cent of their responses were—you guessed it—about their employees' job functions.

Later in the presentation, I revisited this question, suggesting that these leaders pose the question to employees: "What's your single highest priority at work?"

Then I asked the group, "What would you want them to say?"

The group came alive as people shared aspirational responses they hoped to hear from their teams, such as safety, customer service, quality, productivity, cost containment, and teamwork.

Then I asked the group, "But how would they know to say that?"

The room grew quiet as these leaders faced a sobering realisation.

### Employees model their leaders

Employees are pretty observant; they do not miss much. The actions and behaviours they see modeled and the ideals their immediate supervisor appears to value will inform their decisions and behaviour at work. If they see a management team that prioritises tasks, efficiencies, and productivity (job functions), then that is what they will focus on—often at the expense of the company's own mission.

### Jobs are more than 'what' and 'how'

In every organisation, there is a systemic relationship between purpose (why we do something), the work itself (what we do), and the methods used (how we do it).

In the absence of a clearly defining 'why we do something', other priorities (usually job functions) fill the void. In these instances, employees go to work

with the objective to reliably execute job assignments rather than with the mission to achieve a higher purpose. They are given a task to work on rather than a purpose to work toward.

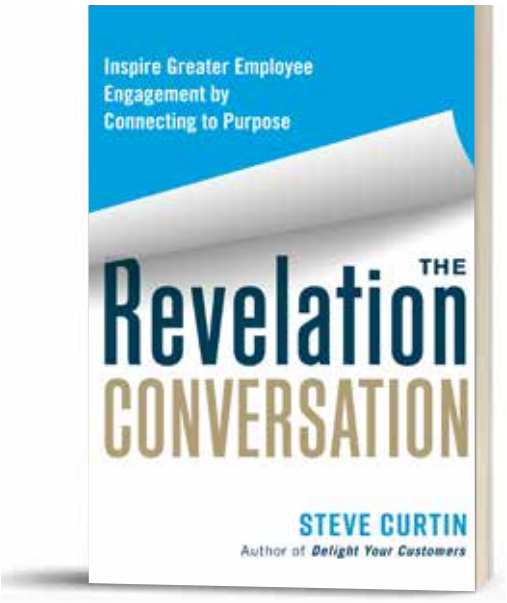
But work is more fulfilling when employees know what they do makes a difference, that their jobs have purpose and meaning. This is not a romantic notion. The problem is that in most organisations, purpose and meaning are elusive and difficult to define, measure, and pursue.

### Why your employees don't know their 'why'

Leaders and managers who discount the relevance of meaning in the workplace may lack it themselves, as my example above shows. And if these leadership teams are disconnected from their purpose at work, then how can their subordinates reasonably be expected to consistently reflect their own purpose in their actions and behaviours? They cannot. Your employees don't know their 'why' for three very real reasons:

- **Job functions are visible and concrete.** Managers can see them, touch them, and measure them daily. They are a real, relevant, and credible part of managers' world of work, whereas job purpose is nebulous, abstract, difficult to see clearly, and tough to articulate. And it comes up only now and then (eg, annual all-employee meetings, customer service week, or new-hire orientations).

  Ongoing conversations about job purpose are rare. We are all too busy talking about job functions and concerning ourselves with quotas, productivity, and other metrics. Additionally, managers tend to focus almost exclusively on job functions because they are what their bosses tend to focus on.
- **Job purpose is poorly defined—if at all.** Job purpose is seldom articulated in words, modeled by leadership, or intentionally connected to employees' daily job responsibilities. At most, it may be relegated to the employee handbook, a laminated wallet card, an annual report, the company website, or a plaque in the executive corridor.
- **Managers lack tools and processes that highlight job purpose.** Because managers lack these tools, any early progress or enthusiasm following an event that showcases job purpose quickly loses momentum as job functions reassume center stage.




### Creating job purpose starts with you

Reflect on your own focus at work. What questions do you tend to ask? What priorities do you emphasise? What expectations do you convey? Consider your last meeting agenda. What percentage of it pertained to job functions versus job purpose? Creating purpose for your employees starts with you. IM

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Steve Curtin** is an expert and speaker on customer service management and leadership. He is author, *Delight Your Customers* and *The Revelation Conversation: Inspire Greater Employee Engagement by Connecting to Purpose.*

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**Spenta Multimedia wins four awards at the 57th (ABCI) Association of Business Communicators of India-Annual Awards 2017.**

John Rosso, Principal of a Sandler ® Training Center in Charleston, South Carolina and Mark McGraw, Principal of a Sandler ® Training Center in the Greater Atlanta, Georgia area, discuss the enduring and destructive myths in the realm of prospecting. John and Mark are co-authors, *21st-Century Prospecting: The Authoritative Playbook for New Business Development.*

**MYTH BUSTER**

# An ideal prospect

You get rejected. That is just part of the job. Whether you feel like prospecting matters. When prospecting, your job is to sell. Your clients and customers know what your ideal prospect looks like.

Once you hear "No," the discussion is over.

Salespeople are great at selling themselves; sometimes they sell themselves on beliefs that are untrue. In, perhaps, no other area of professional selling are there more enduring and destructive myths than in the realm of prospecting. Here are the five biggest myths we see salespeople buying into.

### MYTH 1: You get rejected—that is just part of the job.

This is the big one.

If someone says "No" to you during a prospecting exchange, are they really rejecting you? Think carefully about that question before you try to answer it. A lot of us have built up big piles of head trash over time, disempowering beliefs that have convinced us that our identity, our validity as a person, our self, is what's at stake when we talk to people about working with us. That head trash may get piled so high that we feel rejected personally when a discussion does not go the way we want.

But have we been rejected as people—really? The right answer there is, 'Not unless we choose to be.'

We have noticed something interesting that can help us to process this. Have you ever watched a boxing match? What happens at the end of the fight? At the end, no matter who thinks they won or who thinks they lost, no matter how the fight went, the boxers stand in the middle of the ring, tap their gloves together again, and give each other a hug.

What happens before the final bell rings? Major competition! Fists are flying, they are trying to knock each other down, sometimes they do knock each other down. They are going after each other, and in a way that is a lot more intense than any prospecting discussion we have ever been involved in. No one has ever tried to put a fist in our face during a sales call, and I hope no one has ever tried to do that to you.

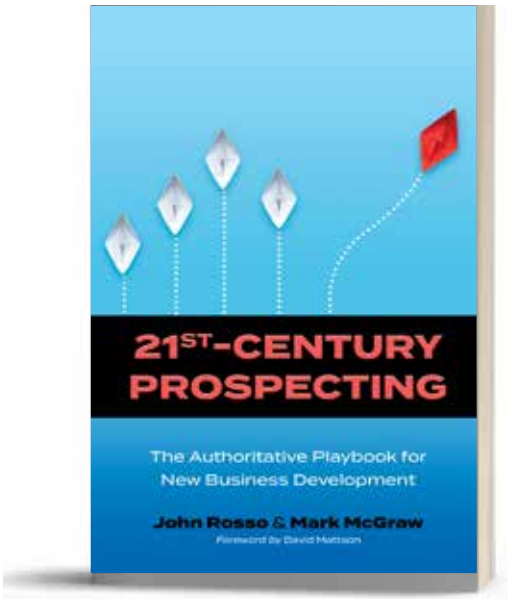
But here is the point. At the end of the fight, they hug it out. They do not take anything personally. What they just did is their job—their role. And yet, on a sales call, we can get hung up on whether somebody

said something rude to us. Now, that is very far from having somebody put a fist in our face. And yet, somehow, we can take what they said personally. Why? Because we see ourselves as the ones being rejected. We lose sight of the fact that everything we are doing and hearing and experiencing is just part of the job. It is not us. Unless we choose to make it that way.

### MYTH 2: Whether you feel like prospecting matters.

We share a saying with our clients: You don't have to like prospecting, you just have to do it.

The big difference between salespeople who are successful and salespeople who are not is: the successful ones are willing to do the things they know they need to do, in spite of how they feel about doing them. If you wait until you get comfortable with prospecting before you commit to executing a daily prospecting plan, you will never leave the gate. You will think about how you feel, and you will decide that it is not quite the right time, or that it is more important to clean the bathroom right now, or that you need to focus on some other distraction. None of those distractions matter. Whether you feel like it right now doesn't matter. Doing it is what matters.



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The superstar author Stephen King said something along these lines about the craft of writing, something that is just as important when it comes to the craft of prospecting. He said, "Amateurs wait for inspiration. Professionals just get to work." He was right.

Do not distract yourself. Do not wait for inspiration. Just do it.

**MYTH 3: When prospecting, your job is to sell.**

Actually, your job when you are prospecting is to audition people for the role of your client or customer.

You are not trying to sell them on anything. You are trying to disqualify them, so you do not have to waste your time talking to someone who is not serious about working with you. Some people will qualify for the job you are hiring for. Some people will not.

**If a prospecting discussion does not result in a qualified lead, is the relationship you have just created dead? No! The relationship is just beginning.**

This is a career-transforming, life-transforming idea. When you are talking to people about whether it makes sense to have an in-depth conversation about the value you deliver, you are qualifying them. You are not trying to convince this person about anything. You are not aiming to talk them into accepting the proposition that you are a good fit for them. You are trying to figure out whether they are a good fit for you!

We call this "Going for the no." Whenever you are prospecting, go for the no! Think of yourself as confirming that the person you are talking to really does not match your criteria for a good client or customer. Once you get enough information to make a sound determination that they are not a good fit for you, it is time to move on politely. Do not try to sell them anything. That is not the goal here.

**MYTH 4: Your clients and customers know what your ideal prospect looks like.**

Here is how we typically ask clients and customers for referrals, "Hey, by the way, if you ever come across anybody who might be interested in what we do, please let me know." Then what happens? Nothing!

If we are serious about generating quality introductions—and we should be—we will take a look at their LinkedIn connections (or review any other evidence we can track down about who is in their circle) and ask for an introduction to a specific person who matches our ideal prospect template. The research time we invest will be time well spent!

**MYTH 5: Once you hear "No," the discussion is over.**

If a prospecting discussion does not result in a qualified lead, is the relationship you have just created dead? No! The relationship is just beginning. All you know is that they are not a good fit for you today. That does not mean you cannot stay in touch, and it certainly does not mean you cannot ask for a referral, right then and there.

Some of our biggest clients came to us via referrals from contacts who told us "Thanks, but no thanks." This fact blows the minds of a lot of salespeople, but that is just because they have bought into the myth that says that once the contact is disqualified, there is no possibility of a business relationship. That is absurd.

This is not a binary world. There are other outcomes beyond "Yes, we should definitely talk more" and "No, we don't see an opportunity right now." When we are talking to contacts we have disqualified, we like to say, "Hey, maybe you can help me. If you were in my shoes, and you fixed these kinds of problems, who would you want to be speaking with?"

So, why not start asking that question? You might just be surprised at the answers that start coming your way. IM

Yash Chittal

*Dan Ariely's ground-breaking work can help organisations understand the basic nuances underlying employee motivation.*

✦ AMIT MISHRA, INDIAN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, HYDERABAD



# The ideal motivation

## Why is Dan Ariely important?

Dan Ariely is a professor at Duke University, a trained psychologist, and a behavioural economist who is widely regarded as one of the most important scholars in his area. He is noted for his wide-ranging and incisive research on human behaviour and psychology and has authored three best-selling books- Predictably Irrational, The Honest Truth about Dishonesty, and The Upside of Irrationality. Principal ideas emanating from his research on Behavioural Economics and Psychology are held in high regard in the academic circle.

Dan Ariely shot to notice when he challenged the basic notions of motivation in the organisation through his research. One of his most famous experiments was conducted at a semiconductor factory of Intel in Israel (Research was published in the paper titled- It's (not) all about the Jacksons: Testing different types of short-term bonuses in the field, 2014) where employees, at the end of their workday, were given either a bonus of $30, a pizza voucher, or a text message complimenting their work by the boss. Pizza turned out to be the best motivational reward but eventually as the week passed, Ariely and his team found that the compliment received from the boss had the best effect on the employees. The study concluded with the notion that employees prefer to be valued and appreciated, and their performance primarily dwelled upon appreciation by the boss over monetary benefits.

Ariely's research on organisational motivation rocked the management diaspora and paved the way for several management theories revolving around the ideas of intrinsic motivation at work. Ariely has argued that monetary benefits do not actually motivate employees in the long run; a sense of purpose, work autonomy, and optimum acknowledgments are the key forerunners for employees' performance. The article put forth his intricate theories in a simple form, and if imbibed well, can help organisations understand the basic nuances underlying employee motivation.

## Ariely's genesis of organisational motivation

Dan Ariely's prior inspiration to work in motivational theories dates back to his teenage years when he was horribly injured in an accident, wherein 70 per cent of his body succumbed to third-degree burns. Consequently, the next few years of his life were spent in hospital beds with nurses trying their best to heal his wounds. Miraculously, Ariely survived the ordeal and attributes this period of pain and tribulations as his

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inspiration for his lifetime work on human behaviour and motivation. Finding meaning in tough times helped him sail through the agonising trauma of the psyche afflicted by the wounds of dismay. He has always emphasised the fact that human motivations are affected by several dynamic variables and one among them is whether we generate a sense of meaning in whatever we do or not. Research conducted by BetterUp labs in 2017 corroborates that employees' motivation at work is directly proportional to them finding their work to be meaningful. (Reference- https://www.betterup.com/press/workers-value-meaning-at-work-new-research-from-betterup-shows-just-how-much-theyre-willing-to-pay-for-it)

According to a poll conducted in 2019, involving more than 3,500 workers in the United States and the United Kingdom, meaningful work outranks income, bonuses, and other criteria in career relevance across all age groups. Meaningful work becomes increasingly essential to us as we age, concluded in a poll commissioned by a software company called Workhuman. Those who had a sense of significance and purpose in their work were four times more likely to enjoy their work and live a productive life. (https://www.workhuman.com/press-releases/meaningful-compensation-employee/)

Money is not always the best motivator, since it puts a monetary value on qualities like dedication, zeal, punctuality, politeness, and ambition which are not easily quantifiable. Good incentives, on the other hand, focus on acknowledgment and the development of relationships. People who are rewarded for quantifiable achievements are more likely to search for methods to accomplish the goal from various means which can be unscrupulous and dishonest; this is also one of the reasons that monetary rewards do not add much value to employee motivation after a certain point.

## Ariely's Four Laws of Organisational Motivation

### Law 1: Meaningful work is the source of employee motivation

A. Generate a sense of meaning. Employees are more motivated when their work has meaning. Simply understanding that there is a sense of purpose in the work they do is

enough to enhance employees' productivity. The productivity boost is even greater when people find intrinsic enjoyment in their work, and they will continue to do that work even when monetary rewards have diminished.

B. Motivating an employee is hard, demotivating him/her is easy. People can be forced to do meaningless work or can have their existing work become meaningless when they are asked to dismantle it. When work is meaningless, the performance of people who enjoy the work is as low as that of people who do not. When projects are abandoned because they are no longer in a company's best interests, its employees can lose motivation if they feel that their work on that project is viewed as meaningless by the management. The research by Ariely revealed that it is easier to destroy meaning for employees than it is to create it.

C. Accountable leaders. Many business leaders fail to reinforce meaning in order to create motivation. Companies that reinforce employee hierarchies fail to make employees feel unique and valuable. An added investment in meaning generates increased productivity. It is the leader with whom the onus lies to create motivation at the workplace.

### Law 2: The desire to create is one of the deepest yearnings of human soul

A. Creativity is next to divinity. People associate value with the things they put effort into even if those things are not particularly unique. The greater the effort, the more value they assign to the results, even if they are of objectively worse quality. Employees feel a greater attachment to products they assembled or chose to design themselves. Thus, creativity at the workplace is an important cornerstone of employee motivation. Workers who are motivated to be creative are often more productive and inventive than those who are not.

### Law 3: Non-monetary rewards are the true motivational rewards

A. Personalised rewards. The offer of a reward can be a strong motivator as long as the reward supports the meaning of the work. Leaders must think constantly about the rewards they give to their workers and how they are motivating their teams. It is recommended that rewards should be personalised rather than keeping it the same for every person regardless of interest or suitability. This ensures that employees feel that the leadership recognises them individually, is interested in them specifically, and cares that they feel comfortable and accepted in the workplace.

Some rewards are unquantifiable. Applying monetary value to interpersonal relationships is often upsetting to both parties because it can imply that the entire relationship has been about an exchange of goods rather than about helping one another to achieve a mutual goal. Rewards like attention, recognition, responsibility, credit, equity, fairness, freedom to exercise creative independence, growth opportunities, etc. can never be equated with money. The human brain deals with money differently than it deals with other objects of value. Even if someone brings a pie worth $60 to a family dinner, the impact is more rewarding to the relationship than if that person wrote a check for $60 and gave it to the host.

### Law 4: Nothing lasts forever, not even motivation.

A. Beyond ephemera. We all know the eternal truth, that everyone who is born on this planet shall see an end, and that

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death is a stealth motivator. The reality is that we are perishable, and somebody no sooner can replace us and take our place in the organisation when we have reached fate's end. Being able to work on something meaningful is a very crucial aspect between life and death. Employees may ease emotions of worthlessness in the job by generating purpose for themselves and others. Building meaning can also be connoted to leaving a legacy, it does not necessarily mean doing something great that no one else has done. This could also mean repairing ties with colleagues in the organisation, revisiting the way we approach our work, or establishing a program or foundation that continues to assist others after the originator has passed away.

The desire to make a lasting impact shall motivate employees to do meaningful things as employees, in the end, are more scared of a pointless existence than of death.

## Epilogue

The crux of Ariely's idea of motivation revolves around 'meaning'. If employees find meaning in their work and are valued for whatever they do, their motivation levels will always be at their peak. The best that any organisation can do is attach meaning to the employee's work as a sense of meaning will win over the impediments that hinder employees' growth in the organisation.

A great psychiatrist and author, Viktor Frankl, has noted how the inherent human yearning for meaning is so strong that people search for their life's purpose even in the direst of circumstances. As a result, meaningfulness is more important to employees than any other aspect of their job, such as pay and perks, growth opportunities, or working conditions. Work that is meaningful, will always be very motivating, resulting in greater productivity, devotion, and satisfaction. Organisations that instill the notion of meaningfulness in employees will always outlast and triumph over the organisations that don't. IM

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Amit Mishra**
is an academic associate, Indian School of Business, Hyderabad



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Yash Chittal

*Companies should embrace lopsidedness—which is beneficial to not just their employees but also their brands*

✦ CHRIS DESANTIS, AUTHOR, *WHY I FIND YOU IRRITATING*



# Perfectly imperfect

Millennials were raised to believe they are special. This is where the 'generation me' moniker comes from. Millennials were the first generation to routinely receive awards for participation—for something as simple as just showing up. Parents raised their millennial kids to believe that, while they could not excel at everything, they could excel at something. Millennials internalised this message, and they frame their lives, including their work lives, as a search for meaning, self-discovery, and constant, healthy self-improvement. This is a path, if taken with proper consideration, we might all benefit from.

Being distinctive is a given, we are all distinctive in our own way. What we are so often missing is being in a place where we can leverage and be recognised for our special and unique distinctions.

What follows is a way forward to reshape the workplace that recognises that which is unique in each of us. Smart companies differentiate themselves by being 'lopsided'. They focus on what is unique about their brand. It becomes a logical next step to cascade the concept throughout the organization. Once the concept is common parlance, the next step is to identify and focus on individuals' strengths and their potential contribution to teams. If, as a result, teams perform better, start rewarding them and subsequently evaluate each person's unique contributions to them.

## Embracing lopsidedness

In her book *Different,* Youngme Moon, a professor of business at Harvard Business School, applied the concept of lopsidedness to brands. She noted that when companies implement the same strategies in pursuit of being all things to all people, their products collapse into mediocrity. Brands become generic when they go down this path, as no brand can be everything to everyone. Those brands that stand recognise that they are just really good at certain things.

Smart brands are lopsided in that they focus on certain aspects while intentionally ignoring others. They identify and embrace their one competitive anchor. It is inefficient to pursue unnecessary skills. Well-roundedness is not its own virtue.

The same goes for people. We are not needed or remembered for all that we do, but we are memorable for a few things we do well. Winston

Churchill was not remembered for his dance moves, in the same way Britney Spears is not known for her oration.

**Keep in mind, raw talent will only take one so far. Desire is what drives the commitment needed to turn talent into skill. Nature can give you a head start, but nurture is how we develop strengths, and eventually, how we achieve greatness.**

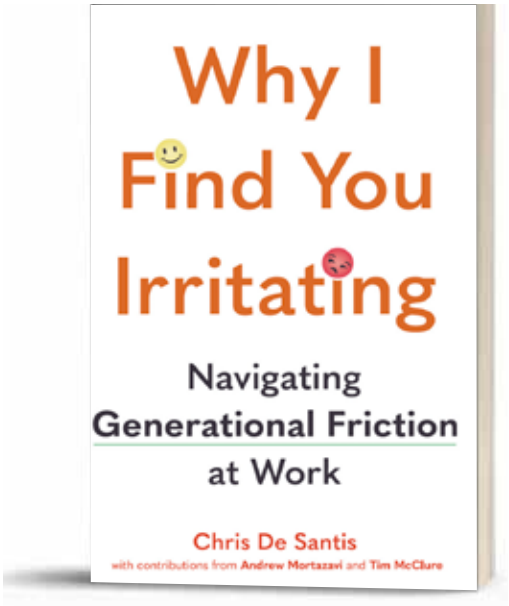
### Cascade lopsidedness

Companies should embrace lopsidedness at every level of operations, including human resources. Lopsidedness is a by-product of specialisation and every bit as beneficial to employees as it is to brands. The trick is to have the right combination of specialised workers in roles that play to their strengths. You want good public speakers in public relations, meticulous, detail-oriented people in accounting, and tech savvy people working over in IT. More importantly, you want people excited about public speaking working in PR, people who want to be detail-oriented in accounting, and those who enjoy technology in IT.

In other words, the individual should be assigned work, whenever possible, that is in line with their particular 'super power/s'.

### Identify and focus on strengths

We all start with certain talents that make us naturally good at some things, not so great at others. The gap between our strengths and weaknesses becomes further delineated over time as we pursue interests, education, training, and on-the-job learning. We hone the skills that we are good at and enjoy doing. Our skill sets eventually become our own, but the uneven development of skills makes us ever more lopsided as we advance. This is completely natural and merely the inevitable outcome of focusing on and enhancing our natural innate talents rather than committing to the development in areas where we initially struggled.




Keep in mind, raw talent will only take one so far. Desire is what drives the commitment needed to turn talent into skill. Nature can give you a head start, but nurture is how we develop strengths, and eventually, how we achieve greatness, even if we were not so good to start with. Lopsidedness, in this case, is a sign of personal growth and improvement. It is the prioritisation and investment in what you think best defines you.

### Reward teams

Companies tend to evaluate individuals rather than teams, typically on some informal bell curve that measures their performance across all of their skills. This has team members competing with each other to prove they are in the top 10 per cent. This undermines people's self-worth and team commitment. Companies should, instead, reward the best performing teams, not the best team members.

### Evaluate relevant contributions

Evaluating employees by a one-size-fits-all generic rubric incentivises employees to be either similar or more well-rounded. This means that everyone, even those at the top, dilute their potential by allocating their time and energy to areas that may not be relevant to the work at hand or they may not be leveraging their full capabilities in the areas where they could add the greatest value. They spend so much time attempting to improve weaknesses that they cannot exploit their full potential.

**Dealing with complexity is a team sport. It requires deep expertise across a range of topics, each of which may be possessed by different individuals on your team.**

Rather than evaluating employees across all variables and rewarding them for staying ahead of each other according to measures that may not matter in terms of meeting team goals, companies could evaluate workers on the skills that are actually needed and most valuable in their current roles. Modern, white-collar work often requires deeper expertise in a narrower range. Today's workers are the most specialised ones to ever exist. They should be judged on their relevant and unique contributions.

### The path forward

Embracing lopsidedness will—and it must—become more prevalent. The modern business world is complex. Dealing with complexity is a team sport. It requires deep expertise across a range of topics, each of which may be possessed by different individuals on your team.

It still means we all have to do some things we do not like or are not great at. The workplace is dynamic. We are not cogs or automatons. Sometimes we have to make do and get something done. In those times, it is good to be flexible and adaptive. But the true value that employees bring to a team is in applying their strengths toward meeting shared goals. The more time workers spend on things they both do well and find engaging, the happier and more productive they will be. IM

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Chris DeSantis** is an organisational behaviour practitioner, speaker, and podcaster. He is author, *Why I Find You Irritating: Navigating Generational Friction at Work.*

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Yaal Ornitai

*The issue with our triggers is that in a bid to get it all, we can end up losing it all.*

✦ UCHE EZICHI, AUTHOR, *COUNT THE COST*

**STRATEGY**

# Draw the line

Millennials were raised to believe they are special. This is where the 'generation me' moniker comes from. Millennials were the first generation to routinely receive awards for participation—for something as simple as just showing up. Parents raised their millennial kids to believe that, while they could not excel at everything, they could excel at something. Millennials internalised this message, and they frame their lives, including their work lives, as a search for meaning, self-discovery, and constant, healthy self-improvement. This is a path, if taken with proper consideration, we might all benefit from.

I burnt out catastrophically in April 2017. It was the worst time of my life and an experience I don't want anybody else to go through. Thankfully, I recovered with the help of family, friends, and therapy. One critical discovery during my recovery is that there are habits that trigger in us the potential to act in ways that are not in our best interest and eventually lead to burnout. I have observed common triggers in myself and hundreds of coaching clients I have been privileged to work with worldwide. One of these triggers is the unrealistic deadline trigger.

When I was 24, two years after finishing university, I shared with my mentor that my goal was to be 'made' by 35. I explained how I would be a millionaire, tour the world, the car I would drive, how well my family would be living, etc. He listened, smiled, and said, "Nothing is impossible, but remember, it isn't wise to lose yourself in your pursuit." I never stopped to think about what he meant by "it isn't wise to lose yourself in your pursuit." I found out the hard way when I was in marriage therapy early in my marriage and after I burnt out.

I was stressed and was starting to hate my dream for putting me under pressure. I selfishly felt my wife's role was to help me achieve my dream. She could take care of me whilst I doggedly pursued my goals. I know how naive and self-centred this sounds, but it was where I was. The issue with our triggers is that in a bid to get it all, we can end up losing it all.

To overcome our triggers, we need to know their roots. One significant benefit of therapy was discovering the source behind my desperation to meet my deadline. The more we zeroed in, the clearer it became that I was desperate to give my wife and children the best life. Although this is a noble cause, the driver

was wrong. Growing up, I saw my dad achieve success early on and then lose it all. It was not his fault; it was simply unfortunate. I did not know I feared the same thing happening to me and what seemed to be an arbitrary deadline—made by 35—was my attempt to ensure it wouldn't.

The discovery helped my wife understand that my pursuit was not because I cared more about my dream than her; I wanted the best for her. It also became clear that if I had achieved the lavish dream I described to my mentor by 35 at the rate I was going, I would have lost it all: my wife, important family and friends, my health, my soul.

**The unrealistic deadline trigger is a relentless enslaver that consistently wants more. It aims to push you over the edge and eventually kill you. I have seen 40-year-olds look 60 because of the mileage they put on their bodies due to excessive demands placed on themselves.**

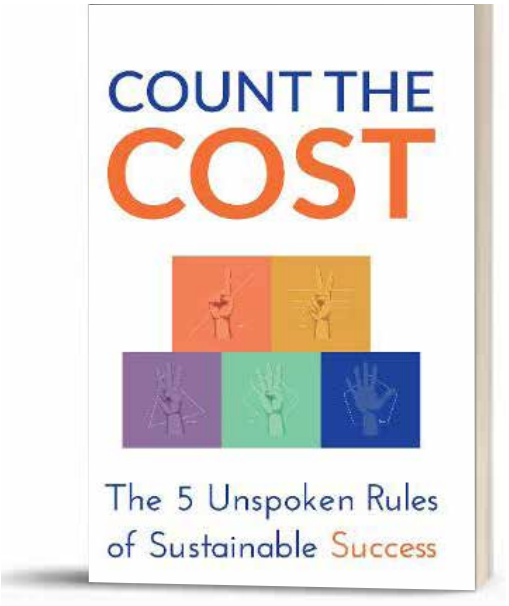
Is setting unrealistic deadlines for the wrong reasons a trigger for you? If so, let's find out the danger/'why' of this trigger and discuss how to change it.

The critical danger with unrealistic deadlines is that we approach life like a sprint instead of a marathon. Life is a marathon, and the strategy for winning a marathon race differs from that of a sprint. Imagine Usain Bolt, who set a new world record in the Olympics for the 100m race adopting the same strategy if he were doing a marathon. He gets on his marks, gets set and goes, sprinting like he was trying to set a new 100m world record. He might keep that pace for 200m, but soon after, he will slow down, and if he keeps pushing himself, burnout is inevitable even before the first 1k.

### The why of unrealistic deadlines

The overriding cause of setting unrealistic deadlines is impatience.

I do not subscribe to the adage that the patient dog gets the fattest bone. If you throw a bunch of bones to dogs, the dog that waits for the other dogs to have their share does not get the fattest bones; they get no bone. However, impatience or eagerness to succeed often leads to bad choices and eventual loss.




"Patience is a virtue" simply means it pays to wait. This type of waiting differs from the idle waiting of the aloof dog waiting for its fat bone by being active. During a season of active waiting, you are taking purposeful action, making wise choices and believing that your efforts will yield a harvest in due course.

### Overcoming the unrealistic deadline trigger

The unrealistic deadline trigger is a relentless enslaver that consistently wants more. It aims to push you over the edge and eventually kill you. I have seen 40-year-olds look 60 because of the mileage they put on their bodies due to excessive demands placed on themselves. In one case, a friend's nephew called him daddy more than once because his brother was rarely around, and he was there frequently. Another lady in her 40s

had health challenges typically found in people in their 70s, and the doctor said it was due to the stress she put herself under and how hard she drove herself. These saddening examples remind us why we should resist this trigger.

Below I suggest a few ways we can keep this trigger at bay.

- **Know your motivation**

  Firstly, assess what your motivation behind the goal/deadline is. I was driven by fear, which is always a bad motivator. It does not matter how much you achieve or how close you are to your goal; fear will place more demands at any sign of your plan being delayed or just in case the 'worst' happens.

- **Understand you can have it all with time**

  Adopt the mindset that you can have it all, just not simultaneously. I was coaching a client, and as she described her goals—how much success she wanted in her career in addition to a thriving family, the best children with fantastic grades, excellent health, and so on. I smiled and was thoroughly inspired.

  In response, I said, "You can have everything you have described, but if you tried to get it all at the same time, you might end up with none of it." I explained that she needed to prioritise what was most important to focus on now, given her resources and stage in life.

  Although we want career success, we must accept that sometimes we cannot push as hard on the career front because our family requires more attention at this time. So, when you find yourself stressing about not moving fast enough, assess your priorities and remind yourself that you can have it all, not just at the same time.

- **Realise life is a journey**

  Never forget that life is not about the destination, but the journey. This significant insight helped me start living a more balanced life and enjoying the life I already have.

I once heard a speaker say, "It is foolish to be so focused on a destination called 'success', that we miss the opportunity to enjoy all that life has to offer along the way. Take time to smell the roses." I made a list of everything I wanted to do when I reached 'successville' and committed to start enjoying these things, even if it was in the smallest way possible. I would try to knock at least one item off the list or do an aspect of it each year. I also made a list of smell the roses activities that would allow me to enjoy everyday life and committed to enjoying an activity each week that I found fun.

I cannot put into words the impact this change in philosophy has had on my life and will have on yours if you adopt it. The only words that come to mind are that I am living my best life now despite the problem and challenges I face. So can you. IM

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Uche Ezichi** is an executive coach, speaker, and facilitator. He is author, *Count the Cost: The 5 Unspoken Rules of Sustainable Success.*

Yash Chittal

*Allaying concerns regarding digital transformation is the responsibility of both the management as well as the employees.*

✦ STEVE PRENTICE, AUTHOR, *THE FUTURE OF WORKPLACE FEAT*



# Offset the fear

Technological innovation has an annoying habit of moving faster than most people can handle. It compels organisations to add more technologies into the work cycle—technologies that are more intelligent and more connected than ever before.

Organisations undertaking digital transformations tend to focus exclusively on the newer, greener pasture that lies ahead. But with any new change, people will experience it through the filter of "What do I stand to lose?" as opposed to "What do I stand to gain?" No matter how great and innovative a transformation appears, it has monumental obstacles to overcome within the minds, hearts, and instincts of the people for whom it's designed.

We humans are motivated primarily by fear. Our brains are prone to following primitive superstitions and denial as ways to counter the fears that drive them. Facing a digital transformation conjures up a host of deep-seated fears—of change, of the unknown, of losing control, or even of losing our job. And, when we fear something, we seek to avoid it, which leads to procrastination, push back, or even sabotage. Therefore, those in charge of leading others through a digital transformation must be careful to establish a process of comfort using awareness, exposure, and reinforcement that addresses people's doubts and fears.

For example, learning the skills required to use new technologies takes effort, and we naturally will do things incorrectly as we learn. This dredges up still another fear—our fear of looking foolish. Learning means we are required to craft a new sequence of procedures and carve them into mental and physical memory. But if people remain afraid of looking stupid as they learn, many will simply withdraw.

When leading such initiatives, it is vital to follow a careful plan that allows habits to transform in league with gradual emotional acceptance. This means establishing a drip feed of reinforcement, delivering vision and facts in advance, focusing on small wins, and supplying appropriate amounts of emotional and practical support.

What can you do as an employee or an employer to help offset the many fears that will stand in the way of your company's digital transformation efforts? Consider these strategies:

■ **Share the vision early and often.** For projects that involve change, you cannot keep everyone in a state of blind compliance up until the moment of the 'big reveal'. Humans need vision and sustenance regularly throughout a transition. Successful change management strategies involve some sort of acclimatisation process. Set out the vision, the steps, the plan, and the perspective—in that order—to help your staff move toward this future.

**People undergoing a transformation in their lives will encounter doubts and fears along the way. If those thoughts are left alone to brood internally, they can turn negative and even more fearful.**

■ **Counter fears with facts.** The monster of fear dines on instinct and emotion. Facts will help to tame it. To overcome the fear of change, facts must be presented at the right time and in the right way. As you help people look toward the future, it is vital to help each individual identify and acknowledge the change, the corresponding loss, and at the same time, to identify what is not changing.

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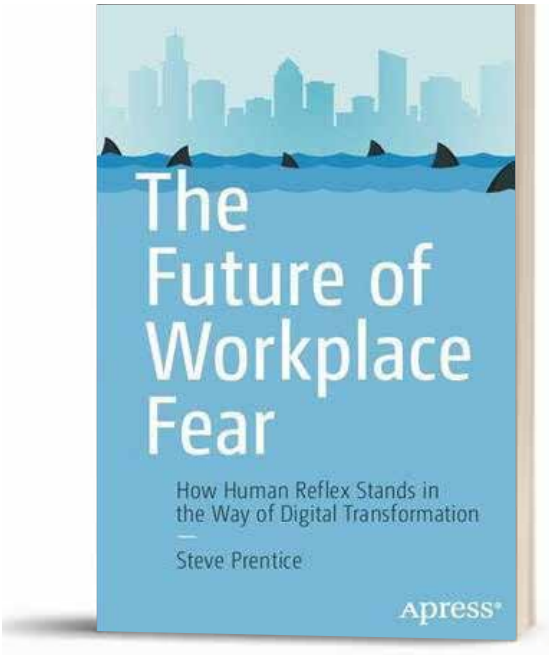


■ **Invite people to air worries and concerns.** People undergoing a transformation in their lives will encounter doubts and fears along the way. If those thoughts are left alone to brood internally, they can turn negative and even more fearful. But when they are allowed to be aired, especially in live dialogue, a remarkable catharsis occurs. Every problem needs to be brought out into the open and placed on a tangible surface—like a whiteboard, paper, or computer screen. When thoughts and ideas are placed on a physical space, the mind gets a chance to vet them, process them, and take them in afresh. Any time there is a worry that is creating fear, it helps to tangibly lay out all of the items, facts, and potential actions in text form. This helps to dissolve 'analysis paralysis' and replace it with actionable items.

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- **Account for different learning styles.** When attempting to explain new technological concepts to people who are not subject matter experts, consider presenting issues in various ways to account for different types of learners, attention spans, and attitudes. Some may prefer visual formats and will relate better to graphics or videos, while others may be more receptive to stories and case studies as opposed to theory and tech speak. Recognise that in this era, every learner is different.
- **Allow for mistakes.** The fear of failure starts during the formative years, which guarantees it will remain indelibly stamped on one's psyche for life. Fear of failure is a key obstacle to successful change. But mistakes during learning should be embraced for what they are: part of the learning process. Treat every action—successful, partially successful, or not at all successful—as an opportunity for both student and teacher to learn and move forward.

To allay fears around change, make people aware that there is another side to this mountain and help them move toward it and around it. Remember that many innovations brought into the workplace throughout the twentieth century—the telephone, the computer, the internet—were greeted with resistance until they, too, became the new normal. IM

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Steve Prentice** is a speaker, writer, journalist, and university lecturer. He is author, *The Future of Workplace Feat – How Human Reflex Stands in the Way of Digital Transformation.*

*Culture can best be defined as a way of life and the way we deal with perfect strangers.*

✦ KRISHAN KALRA, CLIMATE PROJECT FOUNDATION INDIA



# A way of life

Having decided to write on a complex issue like 'culture', I decided to first do a little research about what exactly this commonly used charismatic word means. Oxford English Dictionary defines culture as 1. the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively - a refined understanding or appreciation of this. 2. the customs, ideas, and social behaviour of a particular people or group - besides of course biological meanings relating to bacteria, etc. It goes on to define the verb 'cultured' as "refined and well educated" and another noun 'culture shock' as the 'feeling of disorientation experienced when suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture or way of life'.

I found the last phrase 'way of life' as the most interesting—and logical. So, clearly, culture is not just literature, arts, music, dances, theatre, scriptures, mythology, or our literary festivals; not even just the way we dress up, eat, conduct ourselves with close family and friends; neither is it merely our ancient temples, forts, palaces, cave paintings, sculptures…it is actually a combination of all these and more…it is our 'way of life', the way we live! There is culture of individuals, societies, communities, religions, corporations, institutions and countries as a whole. In short, culture is all pervasive. A close analogy from the world of business will be IT (information technology) that is now an integral part of all businesses—small or big—from standalone shops to gigantic market places, education, manufacturing, services, research, healthcare, governance, elections, public procurement, and distribution systems…..everything depends on IT. To my mind, in a simplistic manner, I think 'culture is the way we deal with perfect strangers'.

Before proceeding further, let me illustrate my point with couple of personal experiences from my travels — first about America, that land of opportunities, once the greatest democracy in the world, a depository of best education and research, etc. Sadly, their culture is not something to be proud of. I received my first shock many years ago. I was staying with friends in the suburban New Jersey town of Wayne. I was to take a flight from Newark airport. My host was getting late for his office and so dropped me

some place not far from the airport — "5 minutes by taxi," I was told. I tried to hail many cabs but all were occupied in the peak hour traffic. The clock kept moving and it was getting dangerously close to the flight departure time. I became panicky and started waving at every passing car. Soon a beautiful long limousine stopped, the driver pushed a button to lower the right side window glass and asked where I wanted to go. As I started to pour out my tale of woe - "Never mind", he said, "I can take you if you pay $20." The guy looked prosperous and I thought he was joking. Nevertheless, I got in and sure enough he drove straight to the departure terminal at Newark. I thanked him profusely and as I was getting out "Hey, you are forgetting the twenty dollars" reminded my benefactor! Anyway I managed to check in for my flight. It's a different matter that the taxi would have cost just a dollar.

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The second encounter was worse. I was entertaining a Swedish friend and his Indian wife in restaurant restaurant in New York. From the moment we entered this glittering place, we were treated like royalty. Elegant females flitting around the place, ushering guests to their tables, beautiful damask linen, gleaming silver and crystal, wine steward suggesting the best that France and Scotland could offer, and an even more snobbish captain to help you order. Everything went off like a dream sequence and after 2 and a 1/2 hours, we were truly sozzled and satiated. I asked for the check and it was placed before me on a sparkling silver salver. That was when I noticed a bold printed slip right on top: "To appreciate the good service, may we suggest you tip a minimum of 15 per cent for the waiter and another five per cent for the captain." I was dumbfounded by the audacity of it all so looked askance at the Indian lady; she just shrugged and muttered in Hindi "Guess you have to pay otherwise these guys will create a scene." So I counted out the money - I had no international credit card those days and wanted to pick up the printed sermon and the bill. "That's not for you, Sir, I will just get the receipt", bellowed the big bully from behind as he whisked away the salver from under my nose. Soon he was back with the tear off counterfoil of the receipt, duly stamped and signed but without mentioning any amount. With a benevolent grin, our worthy captain announced that it was my prerogative to fill up the same. Exploit the company expense account and hell with the IRS! As long as you pay them 20 per cent, they didn't care what you claimed from your employers.

And now, I will narrate about a very different country—equally great as far as technology and manufacturing are concerned but the opposite in many other ways.

Circa 1974 - as invitees on the inaugural JAL jumbo flight, from Bangkok to Tokyo, we had been put up at the spanking new Hotel New Otani. After a delightful teppanyaki lunch at the Rose Gardens, we took the elevated monorail to Tokyo Central, from where we would take the tube to our hotel. Armed with the address of the hotel in Japanese, we were quite ready to venture out on our own. A motley group of 14 to 13 men and a lone woman, from India and Pakistan—most of us were in this wonderful country for the first time. No one understood a word of the Japanese language. Perfect colour coding of the metro lines made transiting underground fairly easy. We were discussing

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whether it would not be better to get down at an earlier station from where the hotel should be closer. Despite looking around frantically we could not locate anyone who would follow English and guide us. Suddenly a young school girl—perhaps 10 or 12 years old—got up from her group, came up to us, curtsied—as only the Japs can—and in halting English asked us to disembark at the next station from where she would put us in taxies for the New Otani nearby. Gratified with her gesture, we followed her out of the train. She called four cabs and gave instructions to the drivers. Out of politeness I asked her if one of the cabs could drop her at her house before going to the hotel. Her answer floored us completely; "No, I thank you, I go back, take next train to my station." Imagine a young kid, leaving her school group and her train to help strangers—and that too without asking. This was definitely a different world!

On another occasion, I was roaming around the Shinju-ku area looking for a particular store. I stopped two teenagers and showed them the slip of paper on which I had written the store's name. Very apologetically they shrugged and showed their ignorance, all the time mispronouncing 'sorry' as 'solly'. A few minutes later, I heard someone me out, and looked back to find the same boys running up to me, all smiles and bidding me to stop. I was amazed when one of them said "We telephone, we find your store, we take you" and beckoned me to follow till we reached the place I was looking for. "'Solly', we did not know first," was their parting sentence, leaving me completely stumped with their extra ordinary painstaking decency.

In yet another encounter, it was the taxi driver who was just too good. I wanted to visit the Taiwanese Consulate for a visa. The hotel concierge had written the address in Japanese and asked me to show it to the driver. This place was located in some Godforsaken, crowded area and with their funny street numbering system, there was no way I could have found the place on my own. The taxi driver saw the address, nodded affirmatively, and started. Throughout the half hour that we were on the road, going through a million turns and intersections, he must have spoken to his office on the radio phone at least twenty times, always looking at the address slip and obviously making enquiries. Not once did I notice any hint of annoyance on his face. There was a big grin when he finally pulled up and pointed out the small signboard in an old office block. I thanked him, saw the meter and handed over enough yens to cover a generous tip. As I tried to open the door, it was locked. My good man turned back, smiled, and motioned for me to wait. Only after he had fished out the exact change from a conveniently hung pouch in front and handed it over to me,

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did he unlock the doors, indicated a firm no to the tip and bowed a hundred times, apologising for the long time it had taken him to find my destination. How do you explain such humility?

A friend tells me of yet another pleasant experience. He lost the handbag containing his passport, money, tickets, etc. on a shopping trip. His frantic call to the Indian embassy received a cool response; there is no need to worry, just leave your contact number with us and relax; you will get your bag. Sure enough, there was a call from the embassy within half an hour. Someone had found the bag at a shop, seen the Indian passport, and called our embassy to tell them from where it could be collected. Nothing was taken from the bag, not even the cash. There are numerous such cases of the Japanese sense of concern for others, their helpful nature, their disdain for gratuities and tips, and their desire to go out of their way to help aliens. All this co-exists with their blatant sense of overkill in business, their use of all overt and covert measures during negotiations, which only strengthen their enigmatic image for the rest of us lesser mortals.

There is of course much more to 'culture' than just these stories. I have recently come across an excellent write up about the '1944 Bombay Plan' conceived by Mr. J R D Tata and some other industrialists including Mr. G D Birla and Lala Shri Ram, who had all anticipated India's imminent independence from the British and thought about the need to tackle the country's economy—brought to zilch during the 200 years of British rule. The detailed paper—which naturally stung the British viceroy and even the Secretary of State in London who tried to stifle wide circulation of the same—is a beautiful example of the 'corporate culture of the companies involved' who took it upon themselves to prepare the yet-to-be-born nation. The document emphasised on 'prosperity for all' and talked about 'food with adequate nutrition for all', textiles, edible oils, leather and basic industries like power, mining, engineering, armaments, transportation, and also consumer goods mentioned above.

'Giving to the needy' is yet another important aspect of culture. Traditionally, our ancestors always believed in philanthropy—some were known to regularly assign as much as 10 per cent of their earnings (daswansh)

to charity. But some of our present-day individuals like Azim Premji have been more generous donating almost 10,000 crores in 2021 alone and that too without much fanfare. Recently the families of Mind Tree co-founders have donated 450 crores to the Indian Institute of Science for building an 800-bed hospital and a medical school in Bengaluru. Also, from the same city, founder chairman of the same company (now heading another company) has set aside 250 crore for research in the neurological field.

For over a century, Tatas have made giving a tradition. Starting the country's first ever pension scheme in 1887 at Empress Mills, Nagpur (one of their first businesses set ups in 1877), India's first Provident fund in1901, maternity benefits for workers in 1921, funding ASI's efforts to do archeological excavations in 1912 that led to the discovery of Mauryan-period construction of Patliputra (near what is now Patna) including the fabled 100-column throne room of emperor Ashoka, financing India's first ever Olympic team to Antwerp in 1920, backing of the Sarda Act in 1929 that made child marriage illegal, setting up Tata Memorial Hospital in 1941, Tata Institute of Fundamental research in 1945, deputing personnel from Tata Institute of Social Sciences for registration of refugees in 1947, and persuading Nehru ji to initiate the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund in the same year. Not to forget the setting up of the National Centre for Performing Arts (NCPA) in Bombay in 1969. That's 'corporate culture' at its finest. No wonder there are often cases of 'misfits' in a company due to difference in culture and serious issues when two companies try to merge.

As I have mentioned in the beginning; arts, music, dances, theatre, scriptures, mythology, literature festivals, ancient temples, forts, palaces, cave paintings, carvings, and sculptures are all part of our glorious heritage and culture, but if I was asked to name just one phrase to describe culture, it would definitely be 'Way of life' and the manner in which we deal with perfect strangers.

To end the write up, permit me to recall an amusing incident, at a friend's dinner, almost half a century ago. The host was introducing me to one of the guests—head of a big British company in India. As we were shaking hands, this venerable gentleman pulled out the pen in my jacket's front pocket and tucked it into one of the inner ones, saying "Krishan, never put your pen in the front pocket even, if it is a Mont Blanc. This pocket is only for a silk square." We met many times after that and he enlightened me about using shirts with double cuffs and links, no pocket on shirts worn with suits, matching socks with ties, belts with shoes....and also "don't ever cut your bread, you only break it, your breakfast eggs should always be sunny-side-up with a rash of fried bacon, some mashed potatoes and grilled tomato halves on the side, let your tea brew for 10 minutes before pouring it into your cup, never sip it at a temperature higher than 140 degrees Fahrenheit, of course without adding any milk or sugar.....". Excellent primer for British culture—how to dress up and eat—but totally wasted on a rustic like me, who avoids wearing suits as far as possible and enjoys his piping hot *kadak* chai with malai from a glass; also, often eats his masala omelet for breakfast rolled up in bread or a parantha while being driven to the office!

I will stick to 'way of life' as the best definition for culture. Amen. IM

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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

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