

Category: Self help/Self-improvement

This is a compilation of Kamran's recent articles published in Blue Chip Magazine.

Concepts and Philosophies shared here are to stimulate your thinking. You are encouraged to challenge your prevailing management and leadership paradigms so that you make better decisions when it comes to getting the best out of people.

REFLECTIONS ON MANAGEMENT PARADIGMS

About the author

Kamran has made a unique place for himself in the history of a young nation straddled with a burgeoning population of around 190 million people. He has pioneered the self-improvement and organizational development movement in Pakistan in 1991, with amazing support from his teams in School of Leadership and other organizations he is a part of. Through his writings, workshops, seminars and inspiring speaking engagements, he has, directly and indirectly, helped in positively transforming the lives of millions in Pakistan. A flourishing learning and development industry has taken root making education and success an unstoppable agenda for change in the country.

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Preface

This is a compilation of my recent articles published in Blue Chip Magazine.

I hope that the concepts and philosophies shared here will stimulate your thinking and encourage you to challenge your management and leadership paradigms that guide your decision making and actions.

Enjoy the readings.

Kamran Rizvi
Dec 31, 2014

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Being priceless

Oct 02, 2013

The idea of 'Not for sale' implies having an unswerving commitment to codes of conduct one believes in wholeheartedly.

Is being priceless a practical proposition for managers in this day and age? In my view, it is. The idea of 'Not for sale' implies having an unswerving commitment to codes of conduct one believes in wholeheartedly. It is crucial if one is to live a life of dignity that inspires. History is replete with shining examples. For example, Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) life is a beacon for humanity.

Ethics, principles, morality, beliefs and indeed, values have much to do with concepts enshrined in corporate governance and corporate social responsibility. Yet, high-sounding words like integrity, commitment and respect are often greeted with lip service in some corporations, families and social circles. Consequently, enduring principles get sacrificed in the face of expedience, when organizations resort to pursuing desired results at any cost.

Barry Holstun , an American essayist asserts, “How is one to live a moral and compassionate existence when one is fully aware of the blood, the horror inherent in life, when one finds darkness not only in one's culture but within oneself? If there is a stage at which an individual life becomes truly adult, it must be when one grasps the irony in its unfolding and accepts responsibility for a life lived in the midst of such paradox. One must live in the middle of contradictions, because if all contradiction were eliminated at once, life would collapse. There are simply no [obvious] answers to some of the great pressing questions. You continue to live them out, making your life a worthy expression of leaning into the light.”

Wouldn't it be nice if we were free from all kinds of heart-wrenching dilemmas? Imagine a life where what is right was easily distinguishable from wrong; it was easy to do what we believed to be right; there were no 'grey' zones to navigate through. Alas, this is not the case. Living by integrity is a fine balancing act.

You need not look too far to know what you consider important in life. Your everyday decisions reveal your values. No matter what you claim, it's ultimately the thoughts you entertain and actions you take that reflect what you believe in and what you truly value.

Dilemmas are usually ethical in nature, and are largely self-created. This is not to say that you will never face ethical challenges in your surroundings. You will! So how do you successfully navigate your

way through the fog of complexities and contradictions? If you are looking for easy answers, I am afraid, I don't know of any.

We can gain practical insights on how to become priceless by living a life of integrity from a variety of sources. Hollywood is one! There are films which depict rich human drama in a variety of contexts that have inspired and enlightened many. In this article, I recommend a few that will help you reflect on some of life's challenges.

Wall Street (1987)

This is a beautifully woven tale of human strength and weakness. The movie is set in the 80s - the 'yuppie' phase in the financial industry. This was the time when young urban professionals did their best to make as much money as they could as fast as possible, and sometimes through illegal means like insider trading. The idea of retiring at 40 seemed attractive, but those same people with such thoughts are still working today. A number of them made their money and ended up going into a lifetime of debt because they spent their earnings quicker than they could make it. Ultimately the 1980s was good while it lasted, but boom times like these don't last forever. This becomes painfully clear as Charlie Sheen's character becomes a warning to all those who believe they can out-think and manipulate a strained economic system.

Wall Street is about those for whom material wealth takes precedence over ethics, and those for whom it

does not. Moreover, it is the story of one who is struggling to decide which of the two he is: greedy or ethical. In this movie, Bud Fox is a young and ambitious stock broker who wishes to excel in life. His father, Carl, provides a strong moral foundation that values human life and well-being over the profit motive. However, Bud's mentor, Gordon Gekko, is a ruthless and legendary Wall Street player whose values seriously conflict with those of Bud's father. Caught in the middle is Bud, who pitches his father's airline to Gekko with the intentions of saving the company while everyone gets rich in the process. This business deal sets the stage for the conflict of interests Bud faces. He has to decide whether in the end it is his morally upright father or his avaricious mentor he would most like to become.

Finally, we learn how, when Fox discovers Gekko has double-crossed him and intends on shutting down his father's business, he uses everything Gekko has taught him to turn the tables around thus being authentic to who he really is.

Becket (1964)

In this film, King Henry II of England in the 12th century AD has trouble with the Church. When the Archbishop of Canterbury dies, he has a brilliant idea. Rather than appoint another pious cleric loyal to Rome and the Church, he decides to engage his old best friend, Thomas Becket, technically a deacon of the church, to the post, so that he can control the church. Becket begs for him not to. This is because he (Becket) does not want to risk losing his integrity

and cares about his soul more than his country. If he's supposed to do something, he will, without submitting to corrupting influences.

Soon, Henry II and Becket are at odds with each other over church business and become bitter enemies. Students of history know that the king ultimately had Becket murdered. Becket paid a high price for being priceless. But his legacy lives...

Glengarry Glen Ross (1992)

Those who must rely on their wits to make a living are often prone to desperate measures born of the insecurities inherent in their field of endeavor - a commission salesman, for example; or in this instance, a real estate salesman. To what lengths do people go when under increasing pressure to deliver on the numbers?

Writer/director David Mamet goes to great lengths to answer this question in this film, an unflinching, hard-edged movie that examines the motivations of those who would readily and eagerly separate you from your hard earned income, and whose least concern, apparently, is the value of their product or that parcel of land, which according to them is situated in just the right place for you. If you've ever trusted a big-ticket salesman in your life, after visiting Mamet's film, you'll be more careful.

In this story, the Company wants results; the hierarchy expects their salesmen to produce, and they don't care how. Towards that end, a 'motivator'

(Alec Baldwin), has been dispatched to this particular office to put things into perspective for those who would sell their wares. The deal is that at the end of a given period of time, the salesman whose name is at the top of the tote board will get a new car; those who fail to meet their quota are out the door. End of story. They will, however, be supplied with 'leads,' but from the 'old' file. The new, 'fresh' leads are reserved for those who first prove themselves worthy by doing whatever it takes to make the sale, without qualm, reservation or conscience. This film clearly provides important pointers to corporate leaders on how not to create a working environment that results in employees leading lives of quiet desperation.

Judgment at Nuremberg (1961)

This film is of enduring significance as it highlights the age-old dilemma of whether to follow orders of one's superior or to live by one's all-abiding conscience. It is so much more telling today than it might have been back in 1961, particularly in light of the post-9/11 world we live in today and the ensuing infringement of civil liberties that are being experienced by citizens in many countries. Even though this movie is a fictional drama about actual history, it tells a compelling story while asking searching questions we can ask of society.

Stanley Kramer (director) successfully communicates how the Nazi's used every facet of civilization, no matter how minute, to facilitate the extermination of their enemies, to inculcate it as an ordinary part of

life. That was why judges were chosen to portray the issue of "obeying orders" versus "human decency." Herr Rolf is "forced" to defend the worst criminals imaginable, and yet his very defense and the principles behind it are abused in the process, used as a weapon against the very law they represent. Thus did the Nazis prevail with the willing acquiescence of the German people, and the abominable disregard of the rest of the world.

Crimson Tide (1995)

A more recent film, it contains intense moments: two great actors, eye-to-eye, portraying characters absolutely certain of their actions, absolutely convinced that the other's course of action will lead to sure disaster. A submarine commander (Gene Hackman) and his second-in-command (Denzel Washington) are both shouting at the same time, each ordering the next ranking officer (Dzundza) to arrest the other. Washington believes, with good reason that Hackman is unfit to command because he is disregarding naval procedures. Hackman believes, with good reason, that Washington is disobeying an order and instigating a mutiny. A possible nuclear exchange and the deaths of billions hang in the balance. Dzundza knows that he must make the correct decision, regardless of his like or dislike of each of his superiors.

Conflict in the story is between very different Naval Officer types. The captain is the old Cold Warrior (don't think about the order, your job is to just do it) and the EO is the "new breed" (educated and taught

to think about the actions they are asked to undertake). Both respond very differently to the same order. Paradigms vary.

Commands come through for the captain to detonate the weapons from their ship, but then another message after that one which is incomplete splits the entire crew. The captain thinks it is time to take control with aggression while the EO believes that this is way too important to act without knowing everything there is to know. Both are convinced that they are in the right. The captain fears that any delay in launching will leave America vulnerable to a first strike by the rebels. The EO fears that launching the ship's missiles without waiting for clarification of the second message will lead to full-scale nuclear war. There is, however, little doubt that the film's sympathies lie with the EO.

Conclusion

We wouldn't need leaders and managers if life and work were a series of simple choices. There are dilemmas that confront us routinely. How we deal with them determines our personal and professional trajectory. Adherence to a set of principles and core values guide us through tough negotiations in a variety of situations. One may lose in the short-run, but the gain is assured, if we remain steadfast, secure in the knowledge that good will prevail. From the examples above, it becomes clear how important it is for us to carefully analyze each conflicting situation we face, before hastily taking steps we live to regret. Such analysis involves

consideration of alternatives open to us, and there potential impact on all those involved in the story. Trying to balance competing interests and demands is vital. Flexibility, patience and consultation are essential while staying firm on principles one holds dear.

If you are not priceless, you are worthless. Think.

People come – people go

Nov 09, 2013

Managers who are motivated only by job security, by perks and compensation levels, by a higher status or position in society are driven by their egos rather than principles. They are 'net-takers'. They tend to cling to power, play on personal loyalties, and seek out subordinates who are subservient. Sounds familiar? Such managers are bad for business.

It's high time we realized that organizations today are no longer in a position to provide people the comfort of job security. This was a practice of the early 50s and 60s when the business environment was more stable and predictable. This is no longer the case. The fact is that people come and people go. The sooner we realize this, the better. Times have changed radically.

Loyalty in the past was seen as number of years served in an organization. While loyalty as a quality is

still valued, its meaning has shifted dramatically. Today, a loyal professional is viewed as someone who adds value every day, takes personal responsibility for self and career development, keeps relevant colleagues, including HR in the loop with plans, finds and grooms successor, in order to move on to a new role or level within own organization or outside.

It is hard to believe that only a few decades ago, organizations chose not to invest in people for fear of losing them to competition. Now, it is exactly the opposite. You'll lose talent if you don't provide them with the opportunity to learn and grow. In fact, HR departments in leading organizations now proudly proclaim that they help employees improve their CVs. They also state that every job has an expiry date! Leadership practices aligned to the laws of nature are more likely to be sustainable. No self-respecting and aware employee would like to stick to one job for too long. It is therefore important to acknowledge the need for change and plan for staff turnover. This not only ensures having continuous inflow of new blood into the system, but also creates a motivating and challenging environment in which people don't get the opportunity to fall into their comfort zones.

What gets rewarded gets done. This often-used phrase warrants serious reflection. It has been a long-held tradition that employers, in their desire to attract talent, inadvertently play on human weaknesses. These include: security of tenure, desire for status and attractive compensation packages. As

a result, terms like 'golden handcuffs' became fashionable. Instead, we ought to, “*Reward reliability and execution of strategy AND those who are honest about failures. Recognize and promote emotional intelligence, and make every leader face up to and deal with failures, lack of effort or dishonorable behavior.*”¹

Why retain managers who are not adding value? No wonder such employers suffer dissonance when they find managers hired on this basis, ill-suited to meeting the challenges of the rapidly changing and increasingly competitive business environment. Such companies find themselves over-managed and under-led. They end up becoming unresponsive to customer needs and inflexible.

The message is loud and clear: Focus on employability, by investing in your people. This way you will build their capacity to deliver and contribute value. As the word spreads, others seeking growth will be attracted to your organization.

Managers and leaders today need to constantly reinvent themselves. An attitude of responsibility, flexibility and commitment will make your enterprise more adaptive, competitive and resilient.

To this end, build an enterprise culture. This demands a high degree of daring and risk-taking, combined with a vital dose of wisdom and emotional intelligence. How do you find such people? By playing on their strengths that match yours! Look out for people who will help create and nurture a high-trust and a high-performance culture where

¹Excerpt from *The Business General*, by Deborah Tom & Richard Barrons published by Random House.

empowerment and leadership at all levels are very evident. This is particularly true if you are in a fast growing and intensely competitive industry like the telecoms, pharmaceuticals, FMCGs and banks.

To attract the kind of talent you need, look for people who exhibit passion to embrace challenges, show keenness to contribute by making a positive difference, and are committed to continuous learning for their personal and professional growth.

It is not surprising to come across examples of disgruntled employees who are caught up in a quagmire of mismatched expectations. Tragically, there are many companies that demand receptivity to change, while their managers seek to protect their hard-won turf. This kind of perpetual internal tussle causes acrimony and waste of valuable energy and time.

What can be done about this self-inflicted dilemma? Employers, whether commercial enterprises or non-profits, need to revisit their recruitment strategy to ensure the right fit between vision, strategy and people. I recall a meeting with a board member of a sizeable non-profit engaged in healthcare. He shared the difficulty his organization was facing in hiring and retaining a CEO. In the previous five years, five CEOs had come and gone within one year of joining! On enquiring as to why this may have happened, I got a confused response, “You see, we have tried our level best to attract a suitable candidate. We have researched CEO salary packages of top multinational pharmaceuticals and have tried to match it. Despite

our efforts, we just can't seem to find someone who is committed enough to serve in our organization!” What we can glean from this example is simple. If you attract people on the basis of high pay, they'll leave as soon as they get a substantially better offer. It's only to be expected. The very premise of hiring was flawed.

During a selection interview in an inspiring organization, a candidate was asked, “Other than your personal/family circumstances, what job-related factor/s would cause you to leave this company?” The candidate answered emphatically, “If you don't let me grow and express my talent, I'll resign.” fifteen years on, this gentleman is continuing to grow the business, while furthering his career ambitions in a variety of entrepreneurial roles within the organization. He is achieving this by empowering his team and giving them all the headroom they need to perform magically.

Managers who are motivated only by job security, by perks and compensation levels, by a higher status or position in society are driven by their egos rather than principles. They are 'net-takers'. They tend to cling to power, play on personal loyalties, and seek out subordinates who are subservient. Sounds familiar? Such managers are bad for business.

Find 'net-givers' instead. These are individuals who don't see loyalty as the number of years served, but by the value they add each day. Net-givers share their knowledge with their colleagues freely and encourage candor in their subordinates. They are

always on the look out for successors, so that they can delegate and move on to higher levels of responsibility within, or outside their organization. Net-givers find security in their skill and competence, instead of assurances of job security and the next promotion from their seniors.

When 'net-givers' go to the next level or a new role, they leave talent behind that not only continue their legacy, but improve on it.

What we expect from our bosses

Jan 30, 2014

I have seen many examples of business leaders who failed to adapt themselves to the demands of their context – internal and external. They were rigid in their thinking and victims of their habits. They could only give orders and never encouraged dissent.

We want our bosses to perform wonders as managers and leaders. Our overwhelming wish list includes a variety of skills and competencies that we feel our leaders should possess and demonstrate. Not only should they be technically sound in areas like marketing, supply chain, manufacturing, resource allocation, finance etc., but they must also be competent in strategy, execution, persuasion, negotiation, listening, speaking and writing. At times, expectations run even higher i.e., they should express vision, passion, sensitivity and live by ethical standards and show commitment. As though all this wasn't enough, subordinates demand a caring

attitude, a healthy dose of humility and a hand of friendship as well!!

It is only natural to have such high expectations from our bosses, but it would be useful to temper these with a healthy dose of realism and self-reflection. Bosses with such a wide repertoire of skills and competencies are very rare. They are definitely not super human. Indeed, they are as fallible as the rest of us.

And for this reason it is advisable to surround yourself with talent by building a strong team based on the strengths of individuals who comprise them. The job of CEOs is rich in challenges and full of infinite possibilities. This entails them taking responsibility for their day-to-day decisions and actions which have immediate and long-term consequences. Studies of how senior executives lead shows that bosses must have a clear philosophy about how they can make a difference and add value to their organizations. Their strategic intent must be known and understood by their constituents.

Bosses need to continuously strengthen and polish their act. Here, I would like to highlight the power of flexibility that you can deploy in your thinking in order to adapt yourself personally and strategically to different people and situations you face. Having a clear philosophy of your own is a good starting point. It will help you determine the different ways in which you can help frame policy, engage in strategic planning and determine what to delegate and to whom. Your thinking will also guide the selection of

your leadership style which is according to the needs of your organization and individuals you lead, and not one that is your dependent on your natural instinct alone.

There are a number of methods you can consider in developing your own outlook. Here are a few:

The 'big thinking' method: Big thinking comes in handy when your organization needs a change in direction in light of the changing market dynamics. The core components of your job include, 1) strategic steering; 2) managing human relations; and 3) operations.

Mediocrity arises when you lose your focus and spend most of your time in 'operational matters', mostly engaged in 'fire-fighting' and in being reactive, when strategic thinking is of the essence. The higher up you are in the organizational ladder, the more time you need to devote to strategic thinking. This means looking ahead with a keen eye on the opportunities and threats prevalent in your business, social and political environment, while being acutely aware of your organizations' strengths and weaknesses. To give more time to strategic thinking you need to delegate more. This will free your time and will enable you to look ahead with greater confidence and clarity. You therefore must ensure that competent people are on board to take care of the day-to-day operations of the business at every level.

The 'people-centric' method: Here your emphasis

will be more on the people who are closer to the market realities in their autonomous business units. Your belief will be that such individuals and teams are better able to contribute to strategy formulation. Your philosophy here could be guided by the ideal of 'leadership at all levels'. This will entail you spending bulk of your time aligning human energies through frequent interactions across functions and vertically – top-down and bottom-up.

The capability method: In considering this approach, you will be driven by the need to strengthen a particular set of capabilities throughout your organization to attain a competitive advantage. Your focus of activities will be on driving home the message of continuous bottom-up improvement (Kaizen) and frequent meetings with technical experts and customers. You will spend time ensuring that appropriate systems and procedures are designed and implemented. Training of people in the selected skills and competencies will be another priority item on your agenda.

The 'standardization' method: If your organization needs to offer its customers a uniform and predictable experience, then standardization will be advisable. You will need to create, communicate and oversee control mechanisms covering financial, quality and cultural parameters of your organization. In this scenario, you will find yourself spending more time in dealing with periodic monitoring and evaluation of activities, attending to missed deadlines and areas of non-compliance. In such a climate, you will be more inclined to promote people

from within the system, rather than risk lateral entries.

The 'change' method: Here your focus will not be as much on how to reach a desired vision, but on the process that will get you there. Innovation will be your rallying cry. You will expect people to be comfortable with ambiguity and chaos that are a necessary part of any change effort. You will find yourself making speeches, motivating people and attending meetings with colleagues and key stakeholders. Seniority will not matter much to you. Instead you will be looking for passion, energy and openness in people around you.

None of these methods can work in isolation. There are overlaps. However, you need to have a dominant philosophy and strategic intent reflective of your particular context and challenge. Your choice of method should not be based on your personal level of comfort, but on what will strengthen your organization in your specific industry and in its market environment.

To survive and thrive as a leader, make flexibility in your thinking a key element in your repertoire, before it's too late. I have seen many examples of bosses who failed to adapt themselves to the demands of their context. They were rigid in their thinking and victims of their habits. They could only give orders and never encouraged dissent. They did not entertain alternative perspectives with ease.

Calm in troubled waters

Feb 28, 2014

“In navigating our lives, it is our fears and envies, our rages and depressions, our worries and anxieties that steer us day to day. Even the most academically brilliant among us are vulnerable to being undone by unruly emotions.”²

When the going gets tough, the tough get going. This may be a hackneyed phrase, but it is not to be taken lightly, particularly in the chaotic times we are facing in Pakistan today. The word 'tough' sounds like an understatement these days. What we are confronting is nothing less than an economic, social and a political tsunami, on a scale never known before.

Dealing with crisis is not new to our corporate leaders. Stories, albeit, few and far between, of their resilience are laudable. However, this time round our country is particularly vulnerable. It is in the throes of a convoluted war waging within and on its borders, inflation is skyrocketing and the energy crisis is

worsening with each passing day. And all this just get magnified when you add poor governance in the mix. How do companies survive, let alone prosper, in these hostile conditions? What are our organizational leaders doing in such circumstances? Some are wasting time sharing half-baked opinions on the unfolding geo-political scenario; while others are steering their ships safely through these stormy waters with an uncanny calmness and eyes focused on the goal.

Of course, should we, God forbid, witness a complete breakdown in law and order, our survival instinct will be triggered. The ones with means will try to seek refuge in another country abroad, if they are lucky to find seats on commercial flights that are still running; others will hunker down in some safe corner in their homes with basic ration of food and water, praying for safe times to return. But this is the worst case scenario.

In conditions of high risk and uncertainty that are likely to remain with us for many more years, business and government leaders with cool heads are wanted more than ever before.

Such leaders are very intuitive and emotionally intelligent. It is in such horrific and testing times, that true leaders emerge. They have the temperament to prepare for the worst, while expecting the best. They manage to stay calm and alert to opportunities. Those less prepared are paralyzed by fear in the face of threats to their lives and business.

Leaders with a healthy sense of perspective have a pre-disposition to the coexistence of opposites. They believe that our desire for peace and stability, while natural, needs to be balanced by the acceptance of disturbances of all kinds in our environment.

What we need is clear thinking, which can only come from a mind that is serene amidst surrounding chaos, in short, stress free. How is this possible? I hear you ask. You may also be saying that it is only human for a person to loose his nerves in ambiguous and dangerous conditions. Stress, when left unattended causes blurry vision and fog in thinking. We get unduly stressed when our 'present' is crowded out by our fear of what might happen in the future, and by the guilt or remorse we harbor from our past. This includes what we did, and how we now feel about what we shouldn't have done or should have done, but did not do.

To allow our fear of the future and guilt of the past to hijack our 'present' is a grave mistake. We need to recognize the value of the present moment and create the space for it in our mind. A calm disposition helps us makes quality decisions in the present that positively impact our future outcomes. While I can see you agreeing with this train of thought, please ask yourselves, how many times you, your friends and associates, end up suffering from tensions, wasting precious time blaming and complaining about the ambient conditions.

Wouldn't it be wiser to be proactive in tough times and engage in serious analysis of the socio,

economic, and political environment? On-going strategic thinking and review will help you uncover ways to mitigate the impact of threats and you will be better able to profit from opportunities for your enterprise. Only an agile and responsive organization can survive in such turbulent times.

This calls for exemplary leadership characterized by confidence for decisiveness, deep understanding of internal and external challenges, and an appreciation of the genuine hopes and fears felt by key stakeholders. As the pace of change increases and the world of work makes ever greater demands on your cognitive, emotional, and physical resources, this particular set of abilities will become increasingly important.

To remain effective and inspiring, keep your cool. To this end, consider learning how to meditate. Meditation is a mental discipline by which you can get beyond your conditioned, "thinking" mind into a deeper state of relaxation and awareness. Do not be swayed by those who peddle fear by painting a doom and gloom scenario, and neither be carried away by comfort of the soothsayers that all will be well soon.

Illusion of physical permanence

Apr 14, 2014

***“Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a
very persistent one.”***

*Albert Einstein*³

We are living the ultimate virtual reality! This realization became even more intensified when, on my son's insistence, my wife and I joined him on the Simpson's Ride at Universal Studios in LA a few years ago. I made nothing of it at first, thinking its going to be fun in an animated environment. After all, the Simpson's family, a popular cartoon, will be harmless and hilarious. The queue for the ride was long and it made me wonder how something like this could draw such a large following. When our turn finally came, we entered this small and simple room, around 12 ft x 12 ft. It had what looked like an open top bus inside, with three rows of benches. The warning announcements and posters seemed like a gross over reaction, verging on paranoia. We took our seats and fastened our seat belts.

Within minutes the lights went out and it was completely dark and eerie. The simulator, in which we were seated, started to move a little, and a full-

screen, 360° animation came on. Instantly, we were transported into a different world filled with dramatic scenery right before our eyes. It was as though we were gently floating in a boat through some of the most picturesque sights on earth. This serene and enchanting environment turned ugly within minutes. The river on which we were floating was coming to a fall bigger than that of the Niagra! Our boat dived into the abyss and the emerging sign before me read “the end”! My heart was almost in my mouth, as all of my kinesthetic, visual and auditory senses were effectively and fully engaged by the simulator. What followed was a never-ending series of horrific maneuvers through unimaginable and terrifying terrain. My entire body was stressed out and adrenalin in high flow. I couldn't bear the horrifying experience any longer, so I shut my eyes for short respite. I breathed deeply and prayed for nightmare to end, and it did, ten minutes later. I came away realizing how simple it is for us to be taken in by what we see. How easily fiction turns into a virtually real personal ordeal?

The Simpson's Ride wasn't a reality as we know it! It was supposed to be a superb simulated adventure creatively designed and executed to maximum effect. The feelings it evoked in me were of the kind you would get from a supposedly real bungee jump! Yet, even full knowledge of the fact that I was in a make-believe world of animation, didn't help me and I conveniently surrendered my emotions to my senses and almost died of fear.

What the Simpson's Ride taught me is this; we take

the short span of our lives too seriously. What do the seventy or 80 years of our lives represent in cosmic time? The time we spend on this planet is a minuscule fraction of a larger whole – a blink of an eyelid. We came to this world, only to return to where we came from. Our stay on this planet can best be described as us being in transit. We get stressed out mainly because we forget that this transient moment on earth is not permanent or everlasting.

We foolishly think that if we lost all of the things we possess, we would be finished. As if, somehow, our entire existence depended on the tangibles in our life – our properties, cars, jewelry etc. While our future is full of uncertainties, the one thing that is certain is death. We'll all meet with our fate, sooner or later – and this is a fact no one can deny – young or old. When the time comes, we'll leave behind everything material we treasure and cling to today. But, interestingly, no one quite knows when that time will come! Death is the only reality and certainty. Death is the guardian of our lives and teaches us how to live each day to its full – a life such, that when we move on from here, we are remembered fondly for our deeds by our loved ones. Sadly, it is the illusion of physical permanence that holds us hostage, preventing us from being who we really are – eternal beings spiritually, with immense potential.

Reality to each one of us is based on how we perceive it through our five senses. How we interpret and attribute the daily events in our lives is what matters in the end. For example, the uncertainty and instability we are experiencing in Pakistan these days

is being seen by most of us in ways that are unhelpful. These self-inflicted stresses severely impair our capacity to think rationally and creatively. We end up making massive errors in judgment. As you know, poor decisions, made in haste and under duress of circumstances, can be fatal. It is the cumulative effect of our tactical and strategic decisions that take our organizations into the future. But this is not always true. Even when companies are doing well, and their markets are booming, they unwittingly fall into the trap of complacency. It is the feeling of invincibility that blinds us and marks the beginning of our fall. Titanic's story continues to serve as a poignant reminder to us all!

Complexities in management arise out of an intricate web of interdependencies created by organizations the world over. Large corporations thrive on this. They attract people by offering them a sense of security on the basis of their heritage, size and market dominance. They play on this 'persistent illusion', which endures for a while, only to unravel in time, as we are witnessing today. How can any organization have the audacity to make godly claims such as protecting your future, when it has no way of assuring its own? AIG was once the world's largest insurer. Greenberg, who ran AIG for 38 years before being ousted in 2005, told congressional investigators that the company was healthy when he left and that controls he put in place were weakened or eliminated. "When I left AIG, the company operated in 130 countries and employed approximately 92,000 people," Greenberg said in a written statement presented to the House

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform in Washington. "Today, the company we built up over almost four decades has been virtually destroyed."⁴

See how GM, the world's largest automaker, has landed itself in a crisis with its crippling legacy costs that came out of promises made by its management to its people when the times were seemingly good. In April 2005, the Los Angeles Times on Sunday examined the difficulties facing General Motors, which reported a \$1.1 billion loss for the first quarter in part because of the increased cost of providing health care coverage for 1.1 million employees, retirees and their dependents. According to the Times then, GM had "ample financial reserves" to fund this year's health care costs but must find a way to address so-called "legacy costs" - \$60 billion in retiree health benefits and \$87 billion in pension obligations.⁵

Only last week, GM reported that it lost \$4.2 billion. That's up from the loss \$1.6 billion it reported a year earlier. Shelly Lombard, senior high yield analyst at Gimme Credit, an independent research firm, estimates that GM will need to get between \$10 billion and \$15 billion in federal assistance in order to avoid bankruptcy by 2010 and that the chance of bankruptcy without help is probably 80% to 90%.⁶ The company's problems have been building for many years. It has not made money on its core North American auto operations since 2004, and since that time it has run up \$72 billion in net losses, including this latest period.

⁴ http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&refer=home&sid=aW_Sb0P2np.k 36
⁵ <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/printerfriendlynews.php?newsid=23430>
⁶ <http://money.cnn.com/2008/11/07/news/companies/gm/index.htm>

However, the story of BHP (now BHPBilliton) inspires. BHP, a leading Australian company with its operations spanning the globe in the fields of mining, oil and gas exploration and steel, was riding the wave of success till it wiped US\$ 3.05 billion off the value of its assets, turning an after-tax operating profit of 1.3 billion dollars into a loss of US\$ 1.47 billion in 1998, its first loss since 1923!! Its shares fell in stock markets around the world.

From being Australia's biggest company by market capitalization in 1997, BHP had slipped to sixth place.⁷ In less than ten years BHP Billiton recovered, thanks to Paul Anderson's visionary and gutsy leadership. When Anderson took over as managing director and chief executive of the poorly performing BHP conglomerate, he made it clear he would be unsentimental about disposing of non-core assets and cutting costs to increase profits and reduce debt. The company has steadily grown stronger, posting operating profits of US\$ 4.7billion in 2007.

At GM, people have become a liability due to the commitments the company made to them. Whereas at BHP, people became a source of strength, as only those who added value remained and delivered what was expected of them. GM continues to fight for its survival, while BHP Billiton is back amongst the movers and shakers. Both are reaping the fruits of their paradigms...one bitter, the other sweet, at least for now.

Life is about enjoying, learning, contributing and celebrating. This will be possible if we seek strength

⁷The Herald Tribune: MARCH 25, 1999. Article: New Chief Has Work Cut Out as BHP Tries to Overcome Commodity Cycle, by Michael Richardson.

from what is real. The only way of knowing what is real is by asking ourselves, "What will last forever?" Nothing will. Everything we see around us will perish one day, even this planet, what to speak of dynasties, companies of all shapes and sizes and nations.

In this ultimate virtual reality we are part of, live each moment as though it is your last, and plan as though you will never die. This magical contradiction presents us with bliss that comes from a sense of detachment and a fulfilled life by being 100% engaged in the 'Now'... the future will take care of itself! We can empower ourselves if we change our beliefs about our current reality and connect with the promise our unfolding future holds for us.

Enjoy the ride

May 13, 2014

“We don't accomplish anything in this world alone ... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something.”

- Sandra Day O'Connor⁸

Most of our problems stem from lack of applied commonsense! The most common example is our failure to delegate and empower. We don't get help from those who are there to help us! Stephen Covey, a well known self-development and leadership expert once said in an interview, “Common sense is not common practice”. He was referring to the unhelpful managerial behaviors and practices prevalent in many organizations worldwide. I find this to be the case as well.

A young and dynamic manager, in his early 30s, took charge as head of sales and marketing in a local company at the end of last year. He started by

quietly reviewing the working practices and processes in the department, before introducing any changes. He went by the book, silently observing the state of play in the business, without ruffling any feathers.

A few months later, he called a meeting with his team of twelve. Three of them were pretty seasoned and experienced, while the remaining had been with the company for just over a year. The reason for the large induction of young talent was that the company was anticipating significant growth in its industry, and had therefore gone on a major hiring spree.

The manager adopted an informal style in the meeting to get a handle on the problem of eroding market share due to, what he thought, was the ever-increasing competition in the industry. This company had been a market leader for a decade or so, and its dominance was now threatened. He felt that if this downward trend continued, the company could face bankruptcy in less than five years. After candidly sharing the big picture with the team, he brainstormed with them to identify the root causes of the problem. People opened up to him and were quite forthcoming with ideas. In short, the meeting was a success, as it involved everyone in the identification of the core issues. The manager successfully gained early acceptance by his team, but he still needed to build credibility in their eyes.

A few weeks later, the manager announced a revised plan and strategy for 2007 based on the inputs he

had gathered from the meeting and his take on the market dynamics. He emailed this to all his team members and also copied his email to the CEO of the company, concluding with the comment: ***“I just hope that my team starts implementing these plans as anticipated.”*** Mindful of the company's history of poor execution and the manager's new role as head of sales and marketing, the CEO picked up on this remark.

In his reply, the CEO started by congratulating the manager on taking this timely and bold initiative and then went on to say:

“Your remark, “I just hope that my team starts implementing these plans as anticipated” merits reflection.”

“Ask yourself; what gets people to do the things you want them to do, willingly and with enthusiasm? I have found that logic, force and/or reason alone do not work most of the time. Why? There is something deeper in people that we need to find and address! In my humble view, just “hoping” is never enough. The essence of superb execution lies in creating a 100% buy-in for all our plans and strategies in people whom you have developed.”

“Knowing you as I do, I have full confidence that you have what it takes to obtain the best out of your team! The source of this power is within you. Find it and use it!”

“All the hard work we put in, and the midnight oil we

burn, points to what we are not doing (developing people), in order to have a life free of negative stresses. Wouldn't it be great if we could, one day, sit back and enjoy the fruits of our labor in the form of brilliant performances from our team? Such a day awaits us, provided we do what is needed today.” “You know well that I have slipped on this score many a times, and you too, will have your fair share of setbacks. But each failure is a teacher!”

“Please feel free to check-in with me on any matter, any time!”

Sure! Wouldn't it be great if we could, as the CEO says, “one day, sit back and enjoy the fruits of our labor in the form of brilliant performances from our team?” But how can this ideal picture ever be accomplished?

First we need to realize that alone we accomplish next to nothing. Sandra's quote at the top of this article makes this point beautifully clear.

A desired fruit of the kind the CEO is suggesting in his communication comes from labor, but only if it is intelligent. Consider this thought: “Besides the noble art of getting things done, there is the noble art of leaving things undone. The wisdom of life consists in the elimination of non-essentials.”⁹ This invites us to consider what should be done, and what ought to be left undone.

Corporate tragedies are often created by managers themselves who fail to consider the ramifications of

⁹Lin Yutang, (October 10, 1895 – March 26, 1976) was a Chinese writer and inventor whose original works and translations of classic Chinese texts became very popular in the West. Source: www.WisdomQuotes.com

their short-sightedness and don't delegate enough; and what little they do pass on, is often abdication, and not delegation. Such managers remain excessively busy getting things done!! They endlessly burn the proverbial midnight oil and their work-life balance remains completely up the creek! This causes immense stress not only on the perpetrator of this bad habit, but on everyone working with such a person. Exhaustion leads to irritations. Angry outbursts ensue, poisoning the ethos of the business.

Such managers are forever tactical and operational in their approach, mindless of the consequences of their strategic blindness and their resultant erratic behavior. They have no time left for “...weaving of individual threads from one to another”.

A classical manager's framework comprises three dimensions, 1) Strategic Steering; 2) Developing people and Internal/external relations; and 3) Operations. In my observations of 500 managers from twenty companies in Pakistan over a 5 year period, I found that majority of them spent close to 90% of their time in day-to-day operations, virtually fire-fighting each day – surviving from one crisis to the next. Why? To my mind it's a combination of unhelpful perceptions and bad habits.

Changing a house is easy. Changing a job is also quite easy. Changing a relationship is relatively easy. But changing habits and perceptions is the hardest of all. This is one reason why organizational growth is stunted, particularly in local industries.

We have learned from our childhood to see things as we do. What we see may not be true, but it has become a fact for us due to our habitual way of interpreting reality. Our beliefs guide our perception of reality. The most common belief prevalent in the corporate sector is that jobs are hard to find; career choices are limited. Therefore, many managers think it is wiser to cling to the job they have, instead of genuinely coaching someone to succeed them. As a consequence of such a belief, a number of managers remain insecure, and tend to keep information to them to protect their turf. They fear delegating as it may result in blunders by subordinates, for which they will personally be held accountable.

Let's look at another example of how our faulty perception blinds us to the obvious. I recently asked a senior manager in a multinational company, how many hours he had in a day, and he said, "You see! This is the problem!! I only have 24 hrs in a day, and I am expected to do 40 hours of work. Look - I only have two hands! I report to two bosses, one in Dubai for profitability and the other in Singapore for administrative support. You can well imagine the stress I am under on a daily basis. I barely get time to be with my family!" The sad fact was that this qualified and educated manager had five people in his team. He had ten additional hands!! He had more than 40 hours of their time daily in addition to his own. Yet his team did not figure in his thinking!

What's the point of having helping hands, when you don't have the capacity or the vision to taking help from those available to you? Your job is to get your

team up to speed by enabling them to do what they have been hired to do – to succeed you and perform even better.

Identify and groom successors. It's a slow process at first, but the rewards are incalculable. Just imagine if we traversed 40kms a day by car on mud tracks, we might make the daily journey in an hour and ruin the car in the process. Now if we want to save time, prolong the life of the vehicle, and also enjoy the ride, we will need to build a road. It may take a month of greater inconvenience, but once the job is done, we will enjoy years of quicker, more comfortable and safe journeys!

Developing enduring organizations

At the core of any self-respecting and admired organization lies integrity, which lends it vitality and endurance.

The field of learning and development and OD (organization development) is always pregnant with astonishing possibilities. There is always room for improvement whether in individual capabilities, team working, systems and processes, leveraging of technology, redesigning structures or shaping the culture in any organization. Tinkering with any of these elements is futile, in the absence of an overriding context provided by the organization's vision, mission, values and code of conduct.

Whether you are about to launch a start-up, or are working with an organization that is established in a particular sector or industry, it is expected of you to be clear about 'why' the organization exists in the first place. Its reason for being needs to be clearly understood and felt by all its stakeholders. If the organization's *raison d'être* doesn't engage our heart and soul, we have a problem.

At the core of any self-respecting and admired organization lies integrity, which lends it vitality and endurance. Integrity is “adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty. It is the state of being whole.” Integrity sets the tone and necessitates that all efforts to grow, manage, and lead an organization be based on a set of ideas and a philosophy that is transparent and leaves no doubt in the mind of all its stakeholders in terms of what the organization stands for.

Any organization development effort which lacks integrity is bound to fail in the long-run and is ultimately unsustainable. In this article, I take the view that an organization thrives when its vision invites a genuine commitment from all its internal and external stakeholders. An organization's endurance comes from the strength of commitments people, working in it, make to each other, in the service of its mission.

The foregoing may seem far-fetched to many. Quite a few would silently wish their organization's leadership would take heed, while there are also those amongst us who ardently believe in such ideals and do their utmost to manifest the same in their immediate spheres of influence.

The fundamental premise here is that organizations grow, only when people working in them continuously develop their capabilities and devote themselves passionately to serving its mission. Such a thought will remain a pipe dream if the ruling paradigm for hiring people remains, “We hire people

to perform tasks.” Instead, what is needed is a declared intent which suggests, “We hire people to grow them through tasks.”

Unfortunately, several organizations are still driven by the former paradigm. They survive only because they enjoy a monopoly position or some sort of protection from competition. Organizations of this kind don't inspire, let alone motivate. Instead, they breed mediocrity and subservience to higher ups. They are mostly opaque and people work in well guarded silos, suffering from fear and insecurity.

Such organizations are not developed. Instead, they are deliberately created to benefit the few at the cost of many. Here, the biggest stakeholder is the shareholder and the few managers who serve their interests diligently, neglecting the needs of others they are also meant to serve i.e., customers and employees. Entities of this nature survive by playing on human weaknesses such as insecurity and greed.

Making money for personal gain is the key priority without due regard given to strengthening the organization by caring for the environment, the community, its employees and other stakeholders.

In mediocre organizations, working environment is hostile. Members of senior management and the rest do not interact openly. Lip-service is often paid to principles of corporate governance, codes of conduct, policy guidelines and SOPs which are displayed where needed, yet discreetly flouted.

Inflated egos rule. A compliant and manipulative culture evolves in which employees apparently do what they are told, but in actual fact, keep passing the buck to the lowest level. Blaming is common place and accountability non-existent. I realize how hellish this description sounds, but millions in Pakistan, and no doubt elsewhere, suffer the indignity of struggling in such organizations.

Thankfully, we can breathe a sigh of relief, as there are plenty of emerging entrepreneurs and business leaders who are nowadays busy developing and transforming their organizations based on the latter paradigm, “We hire people to grow them through tasks.” Even though this is a liberating idea, it is not everyone's cup of tea, and understandably so. Many of us become victims of our self-constructed 'comfort zones'. We like to be in a familiar place, doing what we have learned over the years. It can be scary to work in a place that demands excellence and sets high standards of performance. And this is the tough reality leaders need to confront within them and also help others realize that continuous learning and improvement is an imperative of life, and not just a business requirement.

There is no room for apathy in a culture that thrives on principles of excellence. Individuals need to discover and exhibit their inborn greatness in everything they do at work and in society. The main task of OD is to help top leadership in organizations shape, facilitate and nurture a culture that elevates human dignity, gives people a voice, and encourages responsible leadership at every level of the

organization. None of this will be possible in the absence of candor and transparency. A culture of compliance is mediocrity. A culture of commitment is excellence.

For far too long we have unwittingly embraced half-truths. This has led to a lot of workplaces becoming mundane. Earning the monthly paycheck becomes for many the sole reason for going to work.

Half-truth	The whole truth
- "I am happy with what I have." This is seen as contentment.	- "I am happy with what I have AND I strive for more."
- "I am a leader."	- "I am a leader AND a follower." Great leaders are great followers and vice versa. Who do we follow? Our ego? Our boss? Or, do we follow principles and ideas we believe in and signed up for? Strong and enduring organizations foster principle centered leadership. Weak organizations are personality dependent.
- "I need greater freedom and control"	- "I need greater freedom and control AND I am willing to be self-disciplined and responsible for these privileges."
- "I am firm when dealing with people."	- "I am firm AND fair in my dealings with people."

Left hand column illustrates commonly held notions amongst most managers working in mediocre organizations. One of the key challenges for OD practitioners and organizational leadership is to systematically elicit the 'whole truth' in all individuals who will be hired or are already part of the enterprise that is poised to become an enduring and admired organization.

Be clear about your vision, mission and values of your organization. Let those who are working with you decide if the idea and philosophy appeals to their inner core. Make sure everyone lives by the agreed values and is fully engaged by its vision.

Playing on human strengths lies at the heart of OD, and integrity is a strength that must not be ignored.

Getting to good

Jul 17, 2014

Unbridled intellectual sophistication and cleverness in people has lead to vile acts of deception to attain selfish ends at any cost. The prevalence of 'hidden agendas' in some organizations is an ugly manifestation of this. One is forced to read between the lines to decipher the true meaning of what is being said. The amount of wasted time and energy and the ensuing inefficiency this causes is scandalous.

When I started out as a trainer in Pakistan in 1991, I saw that the country's ambient culture was generally not conducive to honest and meritocratic behavior. This I thought was in sharp contrast to what I had learned and observed in the UK, where I lived and worked for twenty years. But I was wrong. What I

have come to realize is that ethics and morality are not an east west thing. Good conduct is valued in all societies the world over. But lately, we have witnessed many lapses with shocking examples of deviant corporate behavior surfacing all over the world, in countries like South Korea (Chung Mong-koo);¹¹ India (B Ramalinga Raju),¹² and many more.

The recent global economic meltdown forced me to reflect on what's at the heart of such a phenomenon. What I found was the workings hubris and greed in the highest levels of decision-making in governments and in the corporate world in general. Countless examples of arrogance, pride and greed have been exposed in recent years causing havoc in the lives of ordinary human beings.

We have been lured by the charm of superlatives used in our management vocabulary. Terminologies like 'excellence', 'greatness', transformation etc., are appealing, but we have, in the process, somehow, lost sight of the basics.

Basic goodness is missing, particularly where it matters, at the top! When I looked up the simple word 'good' in the dictionary, I found that it means all those things, the lack of which has caused immense worldwide grief.

Good implies virtue, decency, morality, proficiency, ability, competence, helpfulness and so much else. In this context, title of books like Good to Great by Jim Collins seem to jump the gun. They assume we are 'good', and now need to find ways to greatness.

¹¹Chairman of Hyundai Motors. "State prosecutors are investigating the creation of slush funds worth tens of millions of dollars. They say the secret money was used to bribe politicians and government officials to reduce the debts of troubled subsidiaries." http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/with/2006/04/060426_hyundai.shtml

¹²Founder & chairman of Satsyam Computer Services confessed to a US\$1.47 billion fraud on its balance sheet. The Economist, Jan 10, 2009.

Such a thought lulls us into complacency. The fact is we have not 'arrived'... there is still much to be done, just to be good!

Here is an eternal question for leaders like you to keep in mind: What can you do and how should you behave to achieve ever greater effectiveness in your organization? Learning from nature helps.

Let's commence by considering an attribute most of us desire in a leader... credibility! Imagine people eagerly and habitually seeking you out for feedback. Listening to you intently, and acting on what you have told them, without any reservation. They always leave you feeling more reassured, confident and satisfied. They trust you implicitly and know beyond doubt that you have their best interest at heart and would never speak about them behind their back. They also know that you only speak to the person or people before you and simply state what you see, without adding or taking away anything. They find comfort in the fact that their secrets are safe with you. Do you know an individual whose standing is as sound as this in his/her community or organization? Is it possible for anyone to aspire to such height?

What I have shared above are the attributes of a mirror... and a straight one at that! Only the image it reflects is inverted.

Your effective and efficient conduct boils down to one simple fact... you cannot be a good manager or a leader, without first being a good human being.

Slightly over a decade ago, a participant in a workshop asked me, “I thought this was a 'management' course! Then why is my company so keen to invest in my personal improvement and grooming?” I thought that this direct question, although tinged with cynicism, was very relevant and timely. It probed corporate intent and made me think, as I am sure everyone in the room at the time did. “I cannot speak for the company's intent.” I responded. “But one thing is clear... the more the company cares for you, the more you are likely to care for it by displaying a greater sense of ownership in the tasks you perform.”

Interestingly, such a virtuous circle also makes commercial sense. The greater the level of trust people enjoy with each other, across functions, and vertically, the better will be the efficiency and quality of the enterprise. Higher productivity and speed to market translates into competitiveness, which is vital for enduring success. But to build trust with your people in order to engage them, you must act with integrity. This is why being a 'good human being' becomes all the more important.

The above discourse led to a brainstorming exercise in which I asked the managers, what according to them, were the qualities that constituted a good human being? What they expressed came as no surprise, and included words like honesty, confidence, genuineness, sincerity, caring, optimism, flexibility, commitment, responsibility, courageousness, decisive, visionary, curiosity, empathy, consideration, generosity ... and a lot

more! Can you imagine a 'good' manager lacking in any of the above attributes? I hope not! These virtues need to be present in varying degrees in everyone for a society to function. Aren't managers hired in organizations, not only for their skills and competence, but also for such intrinsic and essential qualities?

At the heart of good corporate governance lies ethical conduct imbued by a belief in managers of the value of corporate social responsibility. It remains a real challenge for companies to conform to the demands of building and nurturing principles that capture the soul of good conduct. Obama's philosophy of leadership brings us back to the forgotten fundamentals:¹³ “I have a low tolerance of nonsense and turf battles and game-playing, and I send that message very clearly. And so over time, people start trusting each other, and they stay focused on mission, as opposed to personal ambition or grievance. If you've got really smart people who are all focused on the same mission, then usually you can get some things done.”

Consider this hypothetical scenario: What would you be willing to pay for a 15 seconds course that could change your life forever? The amount of money you decide to fork out will go into a bucket. The total amount gathered will be given to a worthy cause of your choosing! I hear you asking, “How can a lesson of 15 seconds be so transformative?” It can be! Just be honest to yourself and others and fair in all your dealings! How long did that take? And is this short edict not life changing?

¹³. Time Magazine, - December 29/January 5, 2009 (p.40)

Back in 1994, I was addressing a senior management team of a well-known local company in Karachi. At one point during the discussion, I remember posing this question: Can you think of a person who exhibits qualities of loyalty; stamina; strength; cleanliness; speed and dignity in his/her everyday conduct? At first there was a thoughtful silence. Then one of the directors pointed to the portrait in the boardroom and said, "Our Chairman!" Another remarked, "Jinnah!" I went round the room and heard more notable names. Once everyone had had the opportunity to contribute, I invited further reflection on the theme. "Gentlemen, imagine an organization in which every employee – from top to bottom - was a living symbol of these six attributes. What kind of organization would that be? Outstanding remarks instantly filled the room: "An excellent organization!" "An admired and respected enterprise!" "A profitable company." "A growing and successful business!"

By now I could see a look of puzzlement and amusement in the dozen. Time was ripe for me to share what I had in mind. "Gentlemen, the six attributes I just mentioned are embodied in a horse! Based on what you have said, why not fire most people and hire horses instead?!" Stunned silence followed. There was a touch of embarrassment on a few faces. What ensued was a lively discussion on what it meant to be human.

Our faith tells us that if we wanted to, we could be better than angels, or worse than animals. The foregoing discourse served to highlight a serious

malady prevalent in our society. Why is it that we tend to look far and hard for a few prominent names who in our view encapsulated the six attributes and that too, of a horse? Why don't we see such qualities and many more, within ourselves and in people around us?! Could it be that some of us have fallen below the level of animals? Could our ignorance be blinding us?

It's worth bearing in mind that animals behave as they are programmed to by nature – they lack free-will. A snake is a snake. A lion is a lion. A deer is a deer. A fox is a fox. A sparrow is a sparrow. A dog is a dog. They only project what they are intrinsically. In short, animals remain true to their nature by default. Can human beings honestly project of themselves what they have chosen to be on the inside? Unbridled intellectual sophistication and cleverness in people has lead to vile acts of deception to attain selfish ends at any cost. The prevalence of 'hidden agendas' in some organizations is an ugly manifestation of this. One is forced to read between the lines to decipher the true meaning of what is being said. The amount of wasted time and energy and the ensuing inefficiency this causes is scandalous.

Investors, and the public at large, were left further bewildered after Bernard Madoff's mega swindle was exposed. "Lawmakers took a hard look Monday at the alleged \$50 billion investment scam engineered by Madoff that had sent shock waves across the nation's already fragile financial system."¹⁴ It left us wondering who to trust? Who to believe?

¹⁴ CNNMoney.com, Jan 05, 2009. Article titled: Congress looks for answers in Madoff scandal. Lawmakers ask how regulators missed the alleged \$50 billion Ponzi scheme.

In these dramatically uncertain times, what we need most of all, is people in organizations that can be relied on, not only for their capability, but for their authenticity. Is this asking for too much?

Simply getting to good is what we need today in order to become better in the future.

The defining quality

Sep 24, 2014

"I think all business practices would improve immeasurably if they were guided by 'feminine' principles like love and care and intuition."

Anita Roddick (Founder of Body Shop)

Great works are born out of the gift of intuition. In his famous biographical novel¹⁵ on Michelangelo, Irving Stone describes the legendary artist at work: "It was his task to impregnate the marble with manifest spirit; yet even in a religious theme he felt deeply for the whole man, alive to every nerve, muscle, vein, bone, to the skin and hair, fingers, eyes and mouth. All must come alive if he were to create power and monumentality by incorporating into the marble the strength of man. He carved upward, using his knowledge of the forms already released below, and an intuition as old and deep as the long-buried marble, to achieve the expression for Mary that emerged not only from her emotion but from the feeling of the whole sculpture."

A more recent example is that of Steve Jobs. In his well-known commencement address he shared three stories.

The first one speaks volumes for the impact of intuition in our lives. He says, “And much of what I stumbled into by following my curiosity and intuition turned out to be priceless later on. Let me give you one example: Reed College at that time offered perhaps the best calligraphy instruction in the country. Throughout the campus every poster, every label on every drawer, was beautifully hand calligraphed. Because I had dropped out and didn't have to take the normal classes, I decided to take a calligraphy class to learn how to do this. I learned about serif and san serif typefaces, about varying the amount of space between different letter combinations, about what makes great typography great. It was beautiful, historical, artistically subtle in a way that science can't capture, and I found it fascinating.” “None of this had even a hope of any practical application in my life. But ten years later, when we were designing the first Macintosh computer, it all came back to me. And we designed it all into the Mac. It was the first computer with beautiful typography. If I had never dropped in on that single course in college, the Mac would have never had multiple typefaces or proportionally spaced fonts. And since Windows just copied the Mac, it's likely that no personal computer would have them. If I had never dropped out, I would have never dropped in on this calligraphy class, and personal computers might not have the wonderful typography that they do. Of course it was impossible

¹⁶ Quoted from the Commencement address by Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple Computer and of Pixar Animation Studios, delivered on June 12, 2005. 67

to connect the dots looking forward when I was in college. But it was very, very clear looking backwards ten years later.”

Jobs went on to say that, “You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something - your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life.”

In my article, “Rethinking Strategy” published in June 2005 in Blue Chip, I had asserted: “In light of the immense imponderables we face when venturing into the future, intuition becomes the defining quality in a great strategist.” Some friends, mainly practitioners of management, have since asked me to expand on the role intuition plays in our lives. I have been encouraged to see such interest in the subject amongst corporate leaders like you.

Our greatest power lies in our ability to feel. By becoming emotionally literate we make the development of intuition possible. Emotional Literacy means your ability to interpret experience and process your emotions which arise as you go through life every day. It means learning how to direct and process feelings, rather than allow feelings to overwhelm you. Your emotions are your allies. By making use of the information your emotions feed you with, you can create daily change and harmony.

¹⁷ Ilene L. Dillon, M.S.W., L.C.S.W and M.F.C.C., is the author of a series of self-help booklets, “The Bounce Back Series,” and maintains a private psychotherapy practice in Fairfax, California. 68

According to Ilene L. Dillon¹⁷ Learning emotional literacy [and developing our intuitive capability] involves these assumptions: 1) that we visualize the earth as a giant school wherein the primary lessons are love and faith. The name of our teacher would be experience; and each experience presents an opportunity for personal growth/transformation; 2) We see our emotional reactions involved in each experience. Emotions operate as signals calling our attention to the areas needing examination and growth; and 3) View emotions as a form of energy. Each emotion is of a slightly different form and, therefore, needs to be understood and processed differently.

From these three assumptions we can plainly see that emotions are resources at our disposal waiting to be leveraged intelligently.

Emotions are energy and they need to be moved. You need to act as a channel for the energy of emotion, much like the river bed acts as a channel for water. To this end it is important for you to notice it; allow yourself to feel it; and recognize the lesson taught by the emotion. This will be evidenced when you develop and follow a new course of action as a consequence of lesson/s learned.

Mind and emotions are equal partners. In this relationship, emotional literacy helps restore emotions to their rightful place in our minds, hearts, and daily lives. They become a valued part of our life. To achieve this mind-emotion balance involves going all the way in the opposite direction, i.e., valuing

emotions and feelings over thoughts and ideas, as we saw in Steve Jobs example of “connecting the dots.” You need to trust in this process which inevitably leads to natural re-balancing by placing your mental and emotional state on an equal footing within you. What you gain through this equilibrium is personal empowerment arising from connection with your true inner power.

To further illustrate this point, I share below an extract from a report by a divisional head (appraiser) about one of his appraisees. This appraisee¹⁸ became CEO in the same company ten years later. Can you tell who this person might be?

In the memo, the divisional head concluded that (name of appraisee) deserved the promotion but that the appointment “carries with it more than the usual degree of risk. Despite his many strengths, (name of rep) has a number of significant limitations. On the plus side, he has a driving motivation to grow a business, natural entrepreneurial instincts, creativeness and aggressiveness, is a natural leader and organizer, and has a high degree of technical competence.

“On the other hand,” continued the appraiser, “he is somewhat arrogant, reacts (or overreacts) emotionally – particularly to criticism – gets too personally involved in the details of his business, tends to over rely on his quick mind and intuition rather than on solid homework and staff assistance in getting into and out of complex situations, and has something of an 'anti-establishment' attitude toward

(company name) activities outside his own sphere.”

Appraisee's reflections on this report thirty years later:

“I'm glad I found this evaluation later or I might have done something stupid – even if he had some pretty good points. At the time, I probably wouldn't have accepted the criticism. My boss chalked up my “limitations” to “youthfulness and lack of maturity” but fortunately didn't block me for the division job. Thank goodness (a mentor's name) supported me.”

“Looking back, there were enough reasons for my boss and others to have reservations. Obviously, I wasn't a natural fit for the corporation. I had little respect for protocol. I was an impatient manager, especially with people who didn't perform.”

“I was blunt and candid and, some thought, rude. My language could be coarse and impolitic. I didn't like sitting and listening to canned presentations or reading reports, preferring one-on-one conversations where I expected managers to know their businesses and to have the answers.”

“I loved “constructive conflict” and thought open and honest debates about business issues brought out the best decisions. If an idea could not survive a no-holds-barred discussion, the marketplace would kill it.”

Most of you may have guessed the CEO's name and his company in this example. Yes, it's Jack Welch,

former CEO of GE. Jack excelled largely by using his intuitive capacity, which is the defining quality of leadership.

This thought is further amplified by what Andrew Weil said so beautifully: “The greatest advances in man's understanding of the universe are made by intuitive leaps at the frontiers of knowledge, not by intellectual walks along well-traveled paths.”

Say what you mean

Oct 15, 2014

What we say serves to shape our identity in the minds of others and creates expectations. By living the values we profess i.e. talking our intended walk, we build credibility over time – a reward worth having.

New perspectives were gained from managers while I was conducting 'Walk your talk' workshops a few years ago. At first, 'Walk your talk' seemed a simple enough idea, but this was not to be. Situations we face every day do not lend themselves to simple 'black and white' thinking. There are infinite shades of grey in between.

Saying what you mean in the 'grey' zone requires a much deeper analysis and understanding of a situation and with a good sense of timing to boot. There are occasions when speaking the truth is not advisable, particularly if it harms someone, and also yields no benefit. At times a 'white lie' may be the best course of action to solve a particular problem. All this, however, should be done without in any way

being unethical.

'Walk your talk' is about execution; it's about your personal leadership that is imbued with integrity as you make things happen. It takes confidence to deliver on promises you make by walking your talk. Saying what you mean is a crucial aspect of professionalism, which remains a crying need in organizations. Professionalism invites us to 'profess' or lay a claim to some types of expertise we possess. It is about us declaring our capability.

What we say serves to shape our identity in the minds of others and creates expectations. By living the values we profess i.e. talking our intended walk, we build credibility over time – a reward worth having.

You don't have to go very far to discover your real values. Decisions you make in every day life reveal what you actually consider important. Just this morning, outside International Arrivals at Islamabad Airport, I saw a group of passengers getting off a bus. One of them was a smartly dressed gentleman in a dark suit. It was surprising to see this seemingly refined and educated individual casually drop litter on the floor as soon as he set foot on the tarmac. I wondered whether, if asked, he would claim cleanliness to be one of his values!?

Some values are personal to us, while others have to do with the collective. Observe how people keep their homes clean, yet litter is strewn outside their boundary walls. Many drivers, chauffeurs or owners,

clean their cars, yet mindlessly chuck the rubbish outside on the street. We talk of discipline, yet lose our temper at the slightest mistake made by others. Try sharing your values at home, in your organization and amongst friends. Be prepared to receive feedback in the form of criticism from those who care for you. They will convey inconvenient truths every time your conduct varies from your stated creed. In this context, what you claim is just like your 'specimen signature' at the bank - a pattern of your writing – a description of your identity. Your 'cheque' (your actions) will not be honored; if your 'signature' on the cheque varies from the 'specimen signature' (your claim) you gave to the bank at the time of opening your account.

It is easy to enter the world of self-delusion by espousing one set of values, while living another. Organizations and individuals often have the tendency to embrace values that sound and feel good. This is a useful starting point. At least there is something to go by. It is easy to see gaps in behaviors and practices when the expected standards are clearly laid down. It's only when gaps are known that steps can be taken to narrow them. I recall a local company which had this sentence at the beginning of its mission statement: “Seeking Allah's pleasure in all that we do.” It soon became apparent to its management team that this was too big a claim to live up to and retracted it.

Choose whatever values you like. What is important is that you remain true to them by role modeling them. It is sad to see people compromising their

principles, and consequently their credibility, for securing short-term gains.

For building greater credibility it helps to remember the following:

1. Acquire and develop greater personal and professional expertise in your chosen field of interest
2. Develop personal attraction by working on your key relationships (family, work and community) and
3. Make consistent efforts directed to an end (a worthy goal).

While making tough decisions, don't lose sight of wisdom. Wisdom is making correct use of knowledge. We have always known that honesty is the best policy. Yet, why is it, that despite us having this knowledge, we conveniently risk losing our credibility, by flouting it?

It will not surprise you to learn that cheating and deceiving has become a widespread practice amongst politicians, lawyers, businessmen and other professionals. In fact, ethical violations have conveniently been relabeled as 'practical' and 'expedient' - a way to succeed in demanding situations. By anaesthetizing our conscience through transformational vocabulary, doing wrong becomes 'painless'.

The habit of deceiving self and others stems from our fears, which are mostly unfounded. People who

are risk-averse prefer to sit on the fence and delegate upwards. There are others who suffer from the fear of losing their job and avoid disagreeing with their bosses when needed.

Managers who find themselves paralyzed by ambiguity and chaos become a liability for any organization. Change by its very nature leads to varying degrees of uncertainty. We are living in times characterized by massive social and technological change which demands credible leadership. To add value in these challenging times, you need to be a professional with adaptability; resilience and risk-taking as your visible attributes. If we don't address our fears caused by our infected beliefs about people and life in general, we will not only harm ourselves but also those around us.

To fear doing what you know to be good is a form of evil. Therefore, by overcoming your fear and developing greater self-confidence you will eliminate your tendency to commit this subtle evil – of not doing what you know to be good. It's not enough for you to say, 'I have never harmed anyone!' Instead, ask yourself what good can you do and then do it! Start by saying what you mean. This way you will commit yourself in public to a course of action that will be a positive challenge for you to live up to.

Expand your mindscape

Nov 15, 2014

In the spectrum of time, which stretches from nano-seconds to eternity, why do our minds hover around just hours, days, weeks, months and years only? It is when we widen the area of our imagination, and hence our mindscape, that true and enduring leadership begins.

Eternal books like the Quran, the Bible and others came for our eternal minds. Their presence amongst us is evidence enough. We are mortal. Yet as human beings we can become immortal through our deeds by continuing to live in the memories of coming generations, long after we are gone. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and other legendary figures from our recent and ancient history go on having a pervasive impact on us to this day.

The thought behind the need to expand our area of imagination, in other words, mindscape, was inspired by a well known saying of Prophet Muhammad

(p.b.u.h.) who says that when we plan, we should plan as though we will never die; but when it comes to doing things, we need to act, as though we may not get a second chance. Life is not only the time we have from birth to death. Life is more about what we have imbibed from our past and how long our legacy reverberates through time, once we are dead and buried.

Back in 1987 in the City of London, I met a colleague and friend of mine, Shahid Doha, in his office. He had recently returned from his honeymoon in Italy. Not having visited the country till then, I asked him about to share some highlights from his experience there. He took his time describing the beauty of the different cities visited. When he remarked, “We spent half a day marveling at the grandeur of St Mark's Cathedral in Venice”, I was taken a back, “Half a day?!!! I said. Staring at bricks and mortar? You could just as easily have bought a few picture postcards of the cathedral and drawn delight from them!” He smiled and when on, “If only you knew the remarkable history of this cathedral, you would not have said this.” “What can be so unusual about its past?” I asked.

As the story goes, there was a man called Mark, who, in 1100 AD, when he was 50 years old, dreamt of a magnificent cathedral that glorified God. When he woke from his dream, he felt compelled to share with the world what he saw. He commenced meticulously working on drawings and plans for constructing this beautiful structure, which he had seen in his mind's eye. This process took him five

years. By now he was 55. He shared his vision and plans with family and friends and tried to recruit as many hands as he could muster to construct this grand cathedral. According to Marks' estimates, it would take around 350 to 400 years to build it. He knew at the outset, that the task that lay before him went well beyond his expected lifespan. Yet, despite the odds, he managed to get the project started with trusted and able members amongst his family and friends. He passed away a few years later as the massive foundations were being dug. Despite this, through several generations, his team continued working relentlessly. The job was finally done, and today, the cathedral stands tall over a thousand years later in testimony of a man who had faith and a great vision.

Imagine how he must have recruited help and obtained unwavering commitment from people who continued to work on the task through several generations till this mega project came through. Feel the immensity of his mindscape and belief. Try and visualize the succession process in which incumbents passed on what they knew to those who followed, and that too, without any dilution in quality of effort! No wonder Mark was labeled a saint. He thought of the possibility way beyond his lifespan, in the faith that a process once commenced, will endure through people touched with the same eternal spirit.

Pakistan is just over just under seventy years old. Where are the leaders who have a compelling vision for our nation that extends beyond their mortality? You need not look around for such leaders. You

already are, if only you knew. "Be the change you want to see in this world." This saying from Gandhi has almost become a cliché, but its significance rings true to this day. What stops us from living this creed? History illustrates enduring leadership principles handed down through centuries by individuals from a variety of cultures and traditions. Courage, honesty, flexibility, vision and persistence are timeless nuggets worth keeping in mind in our repertoire of leadership.

Michael Anthony Jackson¹⁹ brings to the surface 21st century lessons we can learn from prominent personalities of the past. His book contains revealing short biographies of five well-known individuals, namely, Alexander the Great; Changez Khan; Hannibal, Elizabeth I, and William the Conqueror. These personalities died centuries ago, but are they really dead? Lives of those who are no longer with us continue to guide us to this day. The ideas they embraced, nurtured and shared endure.

Not to see leadership as an enduring phenomenon is to miss the point. Not entertaining eternity in your mind is to steal the 'soul' from the vital act of leadership that we can and must demonstrate in all walks life. Our souls are eternal. What Dr Wayne Dyer says is paradigm shifting: "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience."

Think about it. You admire people who faced great odds and challenged status quo wisely. They shared a daring and a beautiful vision, demonstrated

¹⁹.Author of Life Lessons from History's Heroes

courage and compassion in the midst of adversity and made lasting contributions to society. In an HBR interview,²⁰ David McCullough pointing to the need for leaders suggests: "We need leaders in every field, in every institution, in all kinds of situations. We need to be educating our young people to be leaders. And unfortunately, that's fallen out of fashion." He refers to leadership not being in fashion these days, particularly in the American context. I fear this trend is more widespread than we would like to believe. Pretense, fear and apathy are our worst enemies. The real challenge we face is not outside of us, but inside us. Leadership is about facing this tough reality to fully leverage our expanded mindscape.

We all have dreams, some clearer and more beautiful than others. What's their use if we don't care to write them down and share them with those who are dear to us? Writing anything down is the first step to making it happen. Don't let your dreams die with you. Act now.

²⁰.Harvard Business Review, March 2008

Tapping trust

Dec 15, 2014

Begin by entertaining the thought of letting go; by trusting yourself and others; and feeling secure in the fact that laws of nature will only work for you, when you truly believe in them.

It is a given that people perform best in a climate where everyone feels trusted through timely sharing of relevant information. Having fair and transparent processes means taking employees into confidence and listening to them.

To shed some light on this, here is an extract from an article²¹ that appeared in Harvard Business Review: “It is easy to see fair process at work on the plant floor, where its violation can produce such high visible manifestations as strikes, slowdowns, and high defect rates. But fair process can have an even greater impact on the quality of professional and managerial work. That is because innovation is the key challenge of the knowledge-based economy, and innovation requires the exchange of ideas which in turn depends on trust. Executives and professionals rarely walk the picket line, but when their trust has

not been won, they frequently withhold their full cooperation – and their ideas.”

People come in all shapes and sizes. They are the most complex of all of God's creations. How different people respond to a variety of stimuli can at times be mind-boggling. They tend to get stressed and frustrated easily; some even lose their cool under pressure; while others don't cooperate when needed which is most unproductive. Economic theories do a good job of explaining the rational side of human behavior, but they fall short of explaining why people act negatively.

A quick fix is not the best way to approach human and cultural problems. As a consequence, life of top managers these days is almost like repairing, servicing and refueling an aircraft in mid-flight.

Amongst the myriad problems we face in companies, there are a number of technical and systemic solutions on offer. For technical problems, most experts come up with 'easy' solutions. This is not the case when dealing with human challenges at work. In the same article we learn how power dynamics played out by managers in the workplace can ruin results. “Some managers continue to believe that knowledge is power. That they retain power only by keeping what they know to themselves. Their implicit strategy is to preserve their managerial discretion by deliberately leaving the rules for success and failure vague. Other managers maintain control by keeping employees at arm's length, substituting memos and forms for direct, two-way communication, thus

avoiding challenges to their ideas or authority. Such styles can reflect deeply ingrained patterns of behavior, and rarely are managers conscious of how they exercise power.” Such behaviors have become exceedingly counter-productive in this era of technology, where free flow of information is commonplace. Witness the recent radical shifts in power led by youth and technology in countries of the middle-east and North Africa.

Analogies and metaphors are very useful in illustrating human complexity effectively. According to Peter Schwartz, finding a way through the rapids is tricky. He goes on to say, “The bottom of the river may only shift slowly, but the water level changes with the season and the weather. The rapids in late spring can be a raging torrent of white water, while in the late autumn they can vanish as the water level drops. Rafting in the spring requires great skill and courage. The thrills are intense but the risks of falling out and being swept away by the current are great.

Rafting in autumn requires persistence in a slowly meandering river. The risk is running aground. The ride may be less thrilling, and the water stagnant; but there is the steady satisfaction of endurance and balance. Navigating the future means being prepared to act in any season, and to shift from the mindset of one season to another as the environment changes. It means learning to recognize the rhythms of change before us, to avoid denial about them, and to practice our responses to them before they are upon us.”

Dimensions of human psychology remain under explored in conventional management practice. Visible dimensions of human behavior we see is only the tip of the iceberg. A much greater truth lurks below the surface of the water – the individual's beliefs, values, habits and perceptions. We ignore these at our own peril. Only through empathetic listening and keen observation can we begin unearth the hidden mysteries and start to appreciate the other. This requires huge reserves of patience. Yet managers seek to obtain, almost instantly, voluntary cooperation of its people without first going through the pain of building trust through processes that are fair and transparent.

Trust building can be tough in the best of times. As though this was not enough, consider the fundamental shifts taking place in organizational life nowadays: From discipline to the need for greater adaptiveness; from planning to discovery; from 'hard' assets to knowledge; from structure, to process; from controlling to values; from techniques to meaning; from size to speed; and from management to leadership. All this means that we need to change the way we think. This, too, is not easy!

Remember the time when office automation gradually crept into our working lives in the 70s and 80s? Introduction of technology was a novelty then, but it is commonplace today. As with most changes, environmental, technological or structural, they are greeted either by shock, skepticism or denial. This is not unusual. But these impediments to change can

be reduced significantly through proactively communicating and providing clarity of what is to come and how to collectively deal with the unfolding challenges.

It is common knowledge that changing a car, a house or a job is quite easy. But try changing your habits!! This is tough, if not impossible. Any new idea or trend in the socio, economic and political environment faces a barrage of resistance.

Consequently, our job as managers and leaders is to become champions of change and transformation. You will make mistakes, and even get burnt in the process. Learn from them and move on. By doing so, you will establish trust with people and will be better able to successfully lead change initiatives.

Begin by entertaining the thought of letting go; by trusting yourself and others; and feeling secure in the fact that laws of nature will only work for you, when you truly believe in them.

Kamran Rizvi

Kamran is trainer, executive coach, keynote speaker and an OD consultant and brings with him a wealth of cross-cultural management and leadership experience having worked in Europe, South Asia and the Middle East for over thirty years.



He specializes in behavioral and organizational change and is a well-known inspirational speaker. Kamran facilitates learning programs locally and internationally for the corporate sector, non-profits and youth to enhance their managerial and leadership effectiveness, covering inspirational and visionary leadership; out-of-box thinking; change leadership; team performance; mentoring & coaching for excellence and the like.

Kamran has authored four books on personal improvement and leadership, and regularly contributes management articles that are published in Pakistan's leading business magazine, Blue Chip (www.bluechipmag.com).

Clients he has served in Pakistan include the non-profit and public sector organizations and leading multinational and local companies in the following industries: FMCGs, beverages, packaging, oil & gas, telecoms, engineering, manufacturing, textiles, banking and finance, pharmaceuticals, travel, and hospitality.

His learning and development interventions abroad include facilitating sessions with young community leaders in the UK, speaking in Toastmasters clubs and conducting workshops for clients in the Middle East, Europe and North America. Kamran has also rolled out localized versions of international programs for multiple clients in Pakistan; these include MOL, BHP Billiton, ICI/AkzoNobel and Pakistan Tobacco Co,.

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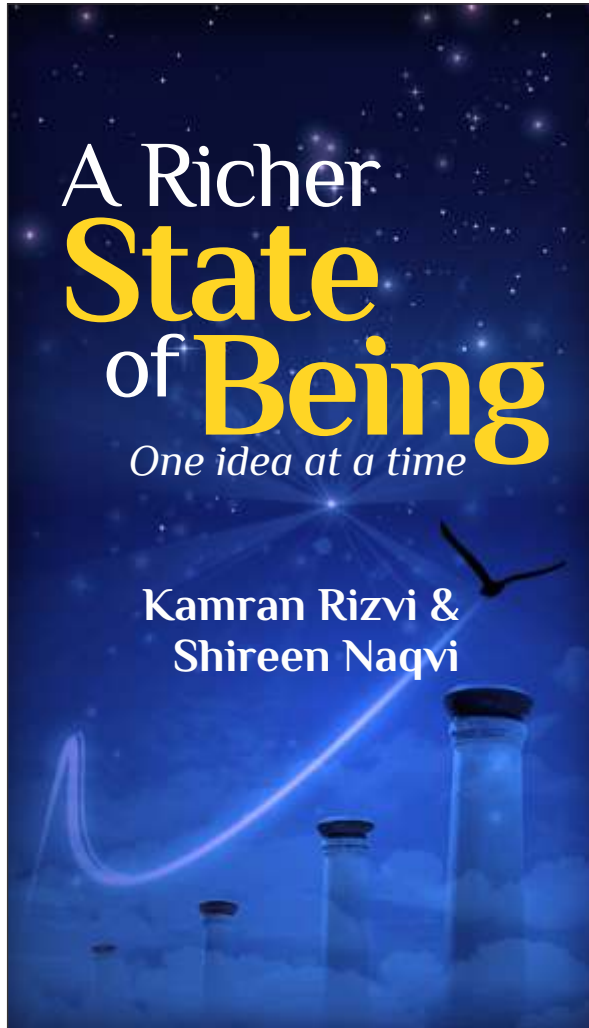
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