

KNOWLEDGE BEANS



TÊTE-À-TÊTE
Helal Mukhles Alam, Chairman,
HSPP Consultants and Aerolex
(UK) Ltd. enlightens us



THE CONNOISSEUR'S ORATE
Vinita Chopra, Strategic
Communication and English
Trainer shares her views



ATYAASAA CASE STUDY
'A call for wise leadership'



WISE LEADERSHIP IN TURBULENT TIMES

1. What is wisdom according to you and how is it important in handling turbulence?

Personally, I feel wisdom is a virtue built on the foundation of 'God gifted ability' to understand the world around us – material or abstract - and to use these abilities to put value against each judgment or action that we may take or lead other people to take. Knowledge is a precondition to wisdom but is not sufficient: all knowledgeable people are not wise but all wise people are knowledgeable - at least in fields that they are engaged in.

In 37 years of my business career I have confronted turbulence a few times. One was inflicted early on in my career by a life crippling heart attack of my father. Wisdom (or probably the lack of it) could not save the business. But the experience made me wiser. I learnt to always make provisions for uncertainties both internal and/or external. I was therefore prepared to confront the recession of the early 90s, after effect of Nine-Eleven and even

TÊTE-À-TÊTE

Helal Mukhles Alam



Helal Mukhles Alam was born to a business family in Bangladesh. After finishing his Masters in Economics from University of Dhaka he joined his father's Raw Jute Export business and soon expanded to international recruitment, airline, general sales agent and freight forwarding. He is now the Chairman at HSPP Group which owns Aerolex (UK) Ltd in England. The group also holds HSPP (Consultants) Ltd., Bels Security Systems, Meet & Greet Services, and as JV partner with a Swedish FMCG company holds shares in Hellenic International Ltd. Helal was the founder shareholder of Wilson Logistics Bangladesh Ltd. and Managing Director of the MNC since inception and saw a couple of M&As in the global organization. He has also played the pivotal role of Director Sales at the ABC Air Limited. His rich leadership experience and managing techniques make him the quintessential wise leader.

THE EDITOR'S BOARD



Shruthi Shanker, Associate Consultant, Atyaasaa Consulting Private Limited, has completed her post graduation in Industrial Relations and Personnel Management, graduate program in Psychological studies, Australia along with a Masters in Industrial Psychology.

Her wonderful interpersonal skills and experience in the field of psychology help strengthen quality relations. She is highly passionate about learning, teaching, and painting.



Neha Agrawal, Associate Consultant, Atyaasaa Consulting Private Limited, has completed her MBA in Human Resources and Marketing, graduation in Homoeopathic Medicine, along with MS in Counselling Psychology.

She has the right mix of understanding the human mind and body, while applying the knowledge to improve workplace behaviour and contributing to organizational effectiveness. She enjoys reading, sketching and travelling.

ABOUT ATYAASAA

Atyaasaa Consulting Private Limited is a leading Human Resource Training & Consulting Organization partnering with some of the best brands in the country and overseas. Atyaasaa has been a catalyst and a contributor in their quest for people development and business excellence. The core differentiator of Atyaasaa process is continual innovation, unique customization and use of state of the art technology tools. These are implemented through ethical and experienced operations and human resource facilitators having contribution as their core value.

Write to us

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As we celebrate Teachers' Day on September 5, the next issue of Knowledge Beans will be a tribute to the 'Gurus'. The theme of the issue will be – 'The need for a Corporate Guru'; if you share a passion for the topic and have a flair for writing, do send us a 300 word article with a brief profile along with your photograph in jpeg format.



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the economic meltdown of 2008.

2. How can wise leaders contribute to the good of their organization and society, during turbulent times?

Once again, it's very simple. A wise leader thinks of his or her followers/organization and prepares to face turbulent times well in advance. This preparation helps him fend against financial loss of the organization, retrenching staff during turbulent times and prepare for taking full advantage of the good time ahead. If winter comes, can spring be far behind?

3. What are your views on 'Idealism' and 'Pragmatism' in relation to wise leadership during turbulent times?

I see both attributes being important in a wise leader. I feel that the ability to conceptually create a situation that has no downside, an ideal world so to say (the basic tenets of idealism) gives the pragmatic leader a platform to prepare for turbulent times. There is always a night after a day, rain after sunshine; and a wise pragmatic leader knows that and hence prepares to face it, well in advance!

4. How do we manage organization's progress and process during turbulent times?

There are two types of people in this world, one - who want to cross the bridge when it comes and the other - who plan in advance to cross the

bridge before it comes. I have always been a great believer of advance planning. *Caeteris Paribus* (other things remaining same) works well in building up a model, but unless we induce new variables into the model we will be in deep trouble when things do not work as per our model. Therefore, preparing for turbulent times is crucial to any organization and drawing up contingency plans are of vital importance.

Turbulence in an organization can come from financial, organizational or human resource angles. I have always practiced a policy of building reserve of liquid funds in my organizations. Financial institutions tend to come up with finances only when they see that the company is also putting their resources on the line. I have never sacked employees during the three turbulences that I have gone through. Hence my team has never left me during good time. I have used the turbulent times to get junior employees to be coached internally by their seniors.

This has been a very cost effective way of organization building and productivity increase. But, most important thing during the turbulent times was cost cutting without cutting the number of employees. I had always tried to slice flesh off organizations' bones when faced with challenges. But I never gave up my preparation for taking advantage of the good times to come. I always talk to my colleagues about Emirates' model: they never put their expansion plans on hold during 2001 or 2008. Routes were not slashed; employees were not pushed out of the organizations, although cost optimization always remained the top priority.

5. Lastly, what would your advice be to any leader today aiming at the smooth management of organization and people during turbulent times?

Follow the cycle of Plan, Do and Review. Be it good time or bad time, unless we are on top of the situation and aware of the risks and rewards of the business, we may be caught off guard by some surprises waiting around the corner, in the dark ally.

The views expressed in this article are solely of those of the person interviewed.

LEADERSHIP THROUGH TURBULENCE

THE CONNOISSEUR'S ORATE Vinita Chopra



Vinita Chopra is a Strategic Communication trainer at DSK ISD International School of Design. She is also a guest faculty to various management colleges, and a corporate trainer. She believes in creative ways of teaching.



Leadership in turbulent times needs a little re-organization of thoughts and actions. Though leadership is leadership, in turbulent times the only difference is that the focus should be more and should be visible to the team too. It is good to understand that breakthrough performance is always contextual, and without opportunity there can be no leader and without crisis there can be no wise leader.

Let us revert to 2007, the cricket field in Australia. A cricket match is always a moment and all about quick actions. Anil Kumble was impressive in the first test as a captain in Australia. He made an intelligent decision to hand over the second new ball to Ganguly in the second innings, when India had regular seamers in the squad. The decision showed guts in the Indian Captain. He showed conviction and believed that an impact would be created. Anil Kumble showed that he could think big. His approach to allow out-of-the-box ideas on the field showed his intelligent decision rather than the tried and tested methods.

Convictions, thinking big and out-of-the-box ideas are a few abilities the leaders should have at turbulent moments. When the chips are down, a wise leader would depend on his intelligence to move ahead. A brilliant thought process is required at this moment. Now let's have a look at his bowling career; one fact is obvious, Kumble grabbed most of his wickets through an intelligent variation in pace and line, rather than turning the ball heavily. He was intelligent in reading the moves of the batsman to deceive them. He could guide his bowlers in the same manner as a captain. Here we get to experience his wisdom over knowledge that Anil Kumble

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exhibited as a Captain. We get to see his ability to take strong, bold and quick decisions and follow them with concrete actions. This decision can be taken on one's preparedness. Each situation requires a defining decision.

Kumble has set a great example as a wise leader in times of crisis. He can be well explained in General Colin Powell's words, "Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers, who can cut through arguments, debates and offer solutions everybody can understand".

A CALL FOR WISE LEADERSHIP

CASE STUDY

Atyaasaa



'Turbulence is very normal'. 'Turbulence is inevitable'. 'Organizations do not gain unless there is turbulence'. These are quotes used by executives in the Indian corporate world, each indicating a certain level of confidence of taking on the difficult times head-on and winning the battle.

It is important for every leader to stay focused on business stability and the employees who form the entire business entity, while keeping the confidence of customers, investors, partners, media, analysts, etc. intact. The ability to keep the focus forms the most vital element. At times, when information can allow for rumours and spark trust issues among employees, an open dialogue format should be shared with all the people concerned. In order to understand unique concerns and address them individually, every leader must listen to each stakeholder and keep the focus on specific targets. The remotest concerns should be addressed with complete transparency.

The ability to lead wisely has vanished in an age where discontinuity is the only constant factor. Even though knowledge is constantly growing in the world, it is never going to be sufficient to combat times of turbulence involving failures, like the one that occurred in the global financial system three years ago with the Lehman Brothers. The

collapse sent global financial markets into panic, pulling down the markets worldwide to a point of meltdown. Within days, the US Government embarked on efforts to keep the financial system from collapsing.

It then boils down to the question, "How crucial is wise leadership today?" and "Can managers make for wise leaders?" Aristotle holds an affirmative answer. Wisdom is crucial to good and meaningful leadership. Leadership is a practice that demands consistent decision – making and a wise leader is one who possesses attributes that protect the organization. This wisdom is obtained from personal experiences of success, failure and from the insight of other leaders. There are seven important attributes that define a wise leader:

- Timing** – Uses balanced and sound judgment along with patience. He is well aware of the right time to act and the time when he needs to wait
- Morality** – Emphasizes on high value on character and integrity, knowing that everything ultimately rises and falls based on these qualities
- Vision** – Understands the value of a big picture, therefore focusing on something worth attaining
- Initiative** – A risk-taker who intentionally encourages innovation, change and forward progress
- Diligence** – Knowing that reaching a goal is worth the struggle, a wise leader continues even in times of adversity
- Strategy** – Any leader who is aware of the fact that no dream can become a reality without proper planning is a wise leader
- People** – People are the key to any organizational or team success and a wise leader works towards developing and empowering others

People operate as leaders depending on their beliefs, values and experiences. How they manage stressful circumstances and how comfortable they feel about themselves in their role, determine their leadership behaviour. This is often influenced by the context, culture, strategy, politics, team dynamics, and the emotions people experience towards their work.

Conclusion

A wise leader does not adopt best models which, today have made business so comfortable. They possess qualities that require stretching mental muscle in order to grow stronger. It takes time, practice and deep integrity. While integrity seems to be the magic word appearing most often in the companies' values, it is often diluted by actual corporate behaviour. A combination of the ability to manage difficult situations and read the context skilfully is wise leadership.

PSYCHOMETRIC PROFILING

A psychometric profiling tool is based on seven highly researched professional competencies. It aids in exploring your latent strengths and weaknesses and maps your competencies around your personality type. This is a standardized tool validated across multiple geographies and cultures.

Find the link to this tool here:

<http://psychometricprofiling.atyaasaa.com/>

This is not a paid service. Your feedback on the tool will be highly appreciated and will help further improve this service.

BEANSTATEMENT

"Turbulence is interesting as long as there is competence in the organization"