

MANAGEMENT: CRAZE, MAZE & HAZE

By Himanshu Kulkarni

In the somber, tight lipped corporate & academic corridors, some humor is a welcome breeze. So here it comes-

If you are in the business world & don't wish to appear dumb in the board rooms or cocktail circuits, you must be able to flaunt the latest management gizmos and gimmicks. If you have to impress an audience dumber than you, you must bombard them with the latest management jargon. Never mind if the essence is trivial. Never mind if it's the same old, stale wine in a jazzy new bottle!

Business and Management have co- existed for more than two centuries. And yet there is so much confusion about these fundamental concepts. If you wish to define Management would you define it by an acronym: POSDCORB [a mouthful word, isn't it?]:

Planning

Organizing

Staffing

Directing

Coordinating

Reporting

Budgeting

If you are a successful manager, you may wonder if you are actually doing all these functions. If you look at the acronym more

closely [because it is easier than pronouncing the word] you might like to add I OR E to the acronym and coin a new jargon: POSDCORB]. Isn't it more pronounceable? By the way I stands for IMPLEMENTATION.

So you see, if you are smart you can coin your own jargon.

Is management Science, Art, Craft or Philosophy?

I am sure if you are a practicing manager or a pragmatic academician you will agree it is a combination of all. It encompasses all disciplines. So why not define it as CASP

Craft

Art

Science

Philosophy

And of course it is a lot easier to pronounce and really grasps you.

There has been a crazy haze of jargon and new jargon flooding the market place. Every year a new Management Guru appears on the scene & the corporate world puts him on a pedestal.

Much before BOP became a cliché people were already selling bicycles, pickles and sickles to large consumer bases. But they did not know that there was a fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid. Or did they? What was the very basis of the Sears business

model? But you needed a new jargon & CKP gave you BOP.

Now-a-days it is the in thing to sprinkle Execution in your cocktail circuit discourses. I am amazed to see how execution which is so fundamental to business success can become a nuance and the latest fad. The first time when I heard it I thought it was a new painless method of delivering the death penalty. But later on I realized that suddenly all the honchos of the corporate world woke up one fine morning and shouted Eureka! They realized that without execution vision is futile. What a revelation!

Then I looked back over my career as a Managing Director of companies in India and abroad. How come, I led these companies successfully without execution? Isn't execution commonsense? But then, isn't commonsense most uncommon? But if you have to impress the galaxy of your peers & subordinates you must know about Ram Charan and Execution. Whatever you were doing effectively to achieve results, if it is called execution, it will sound impressive. Have you heard of this story? :

A US- educated, sophisticated young man marries a beautiful but unsophisticated village lass. They go to Switzerland for their Honeymoon. After a week the girl asks the husband – What about the Honeymoon, when are we going to taste the honey and see the moon? The husband explains – whatever they were enjoying doing is called Honeymoon. The disappointed village girl says - Oh! These simple things? We used to enjoy these in the fields in the village. So much for the jargon!

Let me just take you through the ever changing management jargon. What is your management style? Autocratic? Dictatorial? Democratic? Benevolent? Do you follow MBO? By the way it stands for management Beyond Organization. MBC? It is not management by crisis, it is management by chance. And have you not yet practiced MBWA? It is not management by walking around. Which bosses would like to walk? So it stands for- Manage but without Achievement

What sort of an organization do you have? Is it a pyramid or an inverted pyramid? Is it functional, divisional, flat or de-layered? Are you confused? Then try the Matrix version. And finally the anti-climax-apparently the Japanese corporations do not have a formal organization chart!

Then suddenly the Quality Tsunami hit us and the cocktail circuits were abuzz with Quality Circles SPC (Statistical process control). Suddenly Deming and Juran attained Godhood. But if you wished to pretend to be smarter, how could you miss six-sigma? You thought that with all this scotch induced Quality-Mantras, consumers will be thrilled. Are they? Just look at the power – failure every time it rains. Just find out how much real tomato you get in the instant soup. Of course the Toyota recall is too complex, isn't it?

The Japanese jargon like a dragon speedily engulfed us. Kanban to Kaizen to Zen was not in vain. You had to focus on waste. How revolutionary! Bosses started to wear the same corporate uniforms. Common cafeterias sprung up. But bosses never stopped bossing and managers never

attempted to be leaders. Did it improve the Bottom – line? Who knows, because already the craze has moved on to TBL(Triple Bottom Line).

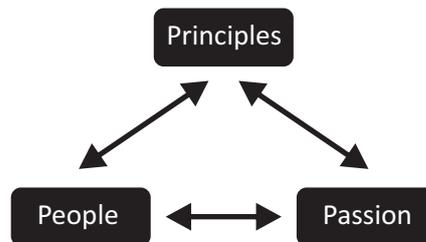
CSR & Sustainability became the hottest topics over cognac & Exxon – Valdez OR now BP were discussed in hushed tones. Innovative Finance & Accounts – Reengineering caught our fancy. Never mind we got Enron & Satyam in return. Lehman, Morgan vanished. Ford, GM collapsed. But the jargon prevailed.

Times are changing , will ever change. Of course, change is the only constant. And yet the eternal fundas of Business will never ever change. My only request to practicing managers is go beyond the jargon. Capture the essence. Keep it simple.

So here are a few suggestions or jargons if you like ;

- 1 KISS : KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID
2. 1. NOCUNOBU : [sounds Japanese isn't it] No customer No Business
3. 1. FCUK : Foster Change Unleash Knowledge
4. 1. PF : [Not Provident Fund]
People First
5. 1. TOMALTOP : Too Much Analysis Leads to Paralysis
6. 1. UCOMSENSE : Use Commonsense and finally
7. 1. PISS : PLEASE IMPLEMENT STRATEGY STUPID

Are you with me so far? Are we on the same page? I offer my simple 3-P Model for Business Excellence:



You want to build a great business, try this out.

