

Management Ideas



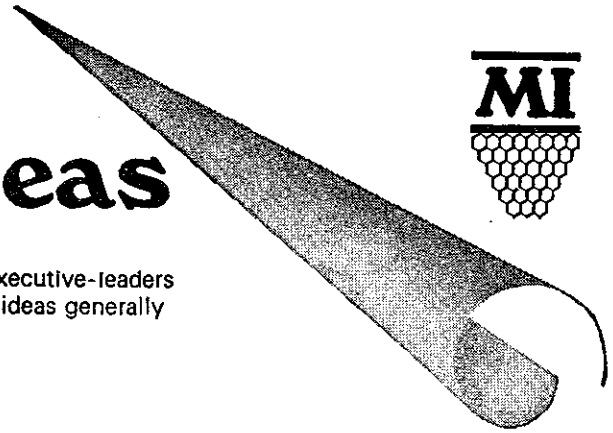
FOR STILL BETTER

RESULTS

RELATIONS

REPUTATION

a monthly newsletter to key executive-leaders
on practices, possibilities and ideas generally
for stepped up performance
edited by
N. H. ATTUREYA MA PhD
author, educator & consultant
on problem-solving and creative ideas



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3073 **SUCCESS STRATEGY:** In a recent interview to The Week, Shri Dhirubhai Ambani said, among other things:

The point is that I allow my managers to take that extra 10 per cent risk which makes it worth it all. That way you motivate a person to get the best out of him. The problem in India is that if a person does nine things properly and goes wrong in one, they question him about his failure in one small thing. Only a person who works makes mistakes. People who don't work don't make mistakes. I give my boys leeway so that they don't become drudge labour but real workers.....

"My motto is that I must have the full confidence of my shareholders. I don't work just for myself. I want India to be a great and grand country. Better than Japan or Korea or any of those small nations which today the West respects. We Indians have it in us but there is nobody to encourage us. I will take up that task.....

"How do I operate? Well, I'll tell you. At Patalganga I have now men working for me who have been heading Indian Oil, RBI and other public sector firms. They are great guys. When they go to Delhi, Washington, Moscow, I don't question them how much have you spent. I'm not interested in analysing their vouchers. I want the work done. I'm not a bloody clerk to question whether they have had one drink or two drinks. That is where I am different from other industrialists. My men take risks and I am proud of the professionalism they bring to my organisation. That's where I am different....

"(Talking of RELIANCE - L & T merger) In every other merger recorded, it has always been a case of grabbing' another company's assets. The other party was always frightened to death of such mergers. I am not pouncing on the weak. What I have done is to raise both our companies in the eyes of shareholders. The shareholders and employees in both

companies through hard work and diligence contributed to the country's progress. Can anything be better than that?.....

"Remember that famous story of Bernard Shaw and the actress? He was asked by her how wonderful it would be if they married and got children. The children would get his brains and her beauty. Well, Shaw had replied: What happens if the children get your brains and my beauty?

"In this case, I'm hundred per cent sure that the children will get both our beauty and brains. How do you like that for confidence?"

3074 HOW TO CUT COMPUTER DOWNTIME : You may not realize how much your staff depends on electronic equipment until it breaks down - a question of when, not if; "Anything with moving parts has problems sooner or later, especially printers and disk drives," says Ken Bosomworth, President of International Resource Development Inc. Proper preventive care helps, but if payroll's printer goes kaput on payday, you'll need more than a high-tech Band-Aid.

Having an emergency-repair procedure in place will prevent equipment glitch from wreaking havoc with office productivity. You can be prepared by buying an on-going service contract from the manufacturer or a third-party maintenance organization, or you can wait until disaster strikes and then pay for whatever parts and labour costs are required to fix the ailing gizmo.

The service solution that's best for you depends on your budget, your appetite for risk and how much help you need to keep things working. According to a recent study by IRD, 45 percent of service calls are for mechanical failures, another 45 percent are for user misunderstanding, and only 10 percent are for electronic failure (the inner circuitry). If you or someone on your staff is technically astute and has time to spare, it may be more cost-effective to skip the expensive contract and pay for time and materials as needed. "If you're a highly experienced user, you can fix most mechanical problems yourself," says Bosomworth. "However, if you're a naive user, you probably should sign up for a service contract."

Even if your staff can do the fixing, it may not be the best use of their time. A comprehensive service contract with a reliable vendor means that repair is only a phone call away - instant delegation. It's like insurance. If you've already paid for the service, you won't hesitate to call, and you can demand immediate attention.

The cost of service contracts varies greatly. One should shop around, starting with the dealer who sold you the equipment. Sometimes you can get a better deal if you sign up after the warranty expires. However, the manufacturer's contract may be cheaper than the dealer's. When you're comparing agreements, make sure you're not comparing apples and oranges. Consumers think that all service contract routinely cover everything, but they don't. Read the contract first to make sure it covers the whole system, not just part of it, and that yearly preventive maintenance is included.

If the vendor claims to be an authorised service outlet for the manufacturer, find out if it is authorised for the specific piece of equipment you're buying, not just for TVs or VCRs.

Although you may think you're too busy to worry about equipment that's working fine, you can't rely on breakdowns to happen only when they're most convenient for you. Setting up your service plan now, whether by buying a contract or just identifying the best drop-in service center near your office, means you can act quickly when the machine goes on the blink.

3075 CRITICIZING A COLLEAGUE: According to Jack Keil, author of *How to Criticize a Colleague Without Rocking the Boat* there are ways to cordially criticize a colleague.

You know exactly how to review and criticize your subordinates' work. You're used to that; it's your job. But what happens when you've got to switch gears and criticize a peer's work? Say the head of another department in your organization asks you to look over and comment on some work she's done-it's flattering to be asked, but it can sometimes put you in a tough position.

You want to give honest, helpful comments; at the same time you want to avoid offending this person. When you first agree to review the work, it's a good idea to say something like, "I'll be glad to look it over, but my opinions might not agree with yours. You're the one who's created this, and you have a feeling for it. After you've heard what I and others have to say, you should do what your instincts tell you to do." This leaves both of you some breathing room.

Then once you begin, keep these ideas in mind :

- * **Switch modes.** The first thing you should do is shove your natural manager role aside. You're no longer the editor, graphic designer or composer. Now you have to become an impartial jury. The stuff you're looking at may not be done the way you would do it, but that's not the point. You must react as an audience and then become a critic.
- * **First the good news.** Start with something positive. Anything. But make it as positive as possible. "Boy, you have a great style." "The subject you've chosen is just right." "I admire your subtle wit." "I can see you put a lot of long hours in on this." The positive start registers very high on the tact meter.
- * **Approach the problem gradually.** If, in general, you like the overall project, begin with the accolade. This makes the specific criticisms easier to take. But if you're having problems with the concept, start with the details that you like and then ease into the big problem. This positive approach keeps the listener from becoming defensive and arguing every point, which negates the whole purpose of the exercise.
- * **Tell the truth.** In your search for kindness don't skip over honesty. In fact, try not to shade it. The person has asked for your opinion. If you agree to give it, then give it.
- * **And nothing but the truth.** Don't try to solve the problems as you see them. Just state them. If she asks for suggestions, that's different. Then think it over and offer the solutions you decide would work.
- * **End on a good note.** No matter what you've said before, at the end tell her you respect the time and effort she's put into the project and that you'd really like to see it turn out a success.

3076 EXPERTS SAY : GOLD will lose much of its lustre. Prices could slide from the recent \$450 an ounce to \$300 an ounce by the 1990s. Reasons: A sharp increase in gold production.....investors' reduced sensitivity to inflation and political uncertainties... lackluster industrial demand.....saturation of the coin market.....additional sales by China and the USSR.

3077 IF JAPAN CAN, WHY CAN'T WE?: PUBLIC MONITORS: In 1970 electronic-display pollution monitors were first installed in fifteen places in Tokyo to show noise levels and the percentages of carbon monoxide (the components of photochemical smog.). The idea was to draw the public's attention to problems of the urban environment. Most monitors are in front of train stations and ward halls, places where people are likely to gather. When the pollution level gets too high, loudspeakers sound out warnings that advise young children and seniors to stay indoors. The monitors also double as newsboards for important public service announcements.

3078 HOW IS YOUR INPUT? A few years ago the Stone-Brandel Center in Chicago, Illinois, conducted an experiment to learn the results of negative versus positive thinking. The leader of the experiment was Dr. Lacy Hall, who believed that people are the product of what comes into their lives, especially the thoughts that come into their minds each day. A large number of persons were recruited for this study, and each individual was asked to keep a diary of his or her daily life by recording everything that came to mind. One goal of the study was to discover what percentage of input into the human brain in the course of a day was positive and what percentage was negative.

For eighteen months, the participants in the study dutifully recorded everything that came to mind each day. Their diaries began with the opening of the day. If they turned on the television set, they had to write down exactly what they watched. Whether it was a newscast or a talk show, they logged it into their diaries and noted whether the input was positive or negative.

If they worked or had to go out during the day for any other reason, every encounter had to be recorded, whether positive or negative. If they listened to a radio station, read a certain newspaper or book, visited with family or friends, participated in any kind of entertainment, or went to church, everything had to be documented.

After a year and a half, Dr. Hall and his staff collected, calculated, and computerized, under controlled research conditions, all of the data in the diaries of the study participants. The results were startling.

For the most part, the people who kept the diaries ended the experiment feeling discouraged or depressed most of the time. But is it any wonder? Most of these diaries recorded 90 percent negative input. Only 10 percent of the thoughts and concepts that came into the lives of the study participants during that year and a half were positive!

There were a few people who had a high percentage of positive input, but they were rare. For the most part, these were people who had unique relationships in marriage, in the office, and at home. And they also had connections with outstanding positive-thinking churches.

But on an overall average, the entire group of study participants had 75 percent negative input from life over an eighteen-month period. Dr. Hall's summary of this study observes that everyone is fighting against tremendous odds. The average human being who is trying to be positive is fighting a losing battle, unless he's associated with something unusual that constantly feeds him positive thinking which results in positive emotions.

3079 LAUGHING MATTERS? After biting into an egg and making a terrible face, the customer asked the waitress, "Miss, what's wrong with these eggs?"

"Don't ask me," snapped the waitress, "I only laid the table."

News & Notes of Human Excellence & Welcome Breakthrough

A saviour of the destitutes

NEW DELHI, April 2 (UNI)
A messiah is born.

At least that is how Shantilal Mutha has come to be perceived by thousands of destitute tribals in the coastal province of Maharashtra.

Of the 650 couples who entered into wedlock this January in an unprecedented community marriage at Pune, 600 were tribals. Apart from the mirthless, backbreaking business of daily life, nothing is viewed by a tribal with greater trepidation than the ceremonial requirements of a marriage that can gobble up to a year's wages earned by him.

The godfather of this collective matrimonial fare is Shantilal Mutha, a real estate developer and builder from the Pune whose fight against the cruel demands of traditional Indian marriage has acquired evangelical fervour over the years.

"You have seen the news reports. In many districts of Gujarat not a single marriage has been solemnised in the past few years. Successive droughts have left millions of daily wage earners without a job there. Living on subsistence relief from the Government, it is just not possible for hundreds of eligible boys and girls to contemplate marriage," Mutha says.

In his wiry frame and bespeckled face you look for scars that usually get tattooed on a social crusader's skin and find them in prematurely greying strands of his hair. Mutha is only 31.

Orphaned at an early age, he sought patronage for his board in a community hostel, did his schooling by the day and held a

job at night. All this while he saw ostentatious marriages in his community and felt enraged by the conspicuous consumption which did nothing but gratify the venities of the parties concerned.

Marwaris, the community to which Mutha belongs, are comparatively the affluent lot in India and are often equated with the Jews of the West for their uncanny business acumen.

"On an average 25 per cent Marwari families spend Rs 400,000 on a marriage. Even the humblest must spend Rs 50,000," Mutha says.

"Anger led to youthful protest. As a college student in Pune, he would gather youngsters and invade marriage venues with a barrage of slogans, denouncing wasteful expenditure and dowry system. Nothing happened. Nobody paid heed. That was 12 years ago.

Mutha reminisces: "You have to be somebody for your voice to be heard. Otherwise you would be taken to be looney, a crank. Frankly, I was a nobody then."

Temporarily jettisoning all ideas of social reform to the back of his mind, Mutha went about setting himself up financially. A series of dead-end jobs with construction contractors brought him in contact with the real-estate scene. He saved money, borrowed some more, and launched his own construction outfit.

Circumstances were in his favour in that the industrial boom just then taking place in Bombay-Pune belt called for more, better and quicker housing facilities. Mutha seized upon the

opportunity and the business prospered. Today, the turnover of Mutha associates is worth Rs 10 million annually.

And then, in 1985 the bug turned again. The immediate impetus was provided by his own niece who had attained marriageable age. A groom was located whose parents found the idea of collective marriage acceptable, though a bit queer.

But when Mutha returned after sometime, with a list of other pairs who would be married on the same day at the same place, his niece being one of them, the prospective in-laws began to waver. "We thought you were just joking," they said.

Mutha annulled the marriage, saying charity must begin at home and his niece must be married in a collective marriage ceremony without fireworks and lights, without lavish dinner under the canopied enclosure, without exchange of gifts and provision of dowry.

In May 1986, the Marwari community of Pune witnessed 25 couples tying nuptial knots at the same time and Mutha's dream of collective marriage was a reality.

Although dowry is prohibited by legislation in India it is more in breach than observance that the law operates in the broad spectrum of Indian society: dowry has been a part of Indian marriage for long. But it was not always exacting. With the consumer mentality striking deeper roots in the past few decades many of the traditional norms that ensured filial harmony before are now easily set aside.

The mounting dowry deaths

have shaken the Indian media where such incidence are regularly reported, sometimes in lurid details of the appalling savagery. Feminist groups have sprung up in big cities and they keep a watchful eye on court proceedings of the reported cases of bride-burning. Although many tribal societies in India are still free from the grip of the dowry system, those having increased contact with city life have picked up the virus.

"Many tribals and even non-tribal wage earners fall in debt trap for life on account of a single marriage," Mutha says.

Mutha followed up his first break with a more thorough going preparation for the second. In January 1987, 51 marriages of the Jain community arranged by him did away with whatever opposition there was from the orthodox section of the society. It was not flash in the pan and the prodigal had arrived in force.

It was now time to broaden the base. Next came the widows, one of the most ostracised people in the traditional Indian society. He persuaded 17 widows to remarry and begin afresh.

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YUPRASA - an organisation started in 1966 and headquartered in Buldana - has achieved outstanding results in many innovative projects. One of them is their School Nursery Programme which resulted in the plantation of 50,000,000 saplings over 5000 acres of land all over Maharashtra and Goa, involving the positive student power. You may write to Director, YUPRASA Buldana 443001.

Dear Reader: When you come across such news items, published or otherwise, please send them along for sharing with other readers. Good news is good business, from our cheer, confidence, energy and outlook angle. Editor.

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