

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

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on problem-solving and creative ideas

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3638 VIVEK MANAGEMENT IN MUMBAI POLICE: *Mr. Suresh Pandit has been doing pioneering work in what he calls Vivek Management, Indian Ethos as applied to modern corporate management. He has kindly sent in the following report on a recent project of his.*

1992-93 riots rocked the city of Mumbai, more so the Mumbai Police. Prior to that the Mumbai Police had earned the reputation of being the most efficient in the country. All that changed overnight and they were accused of communal bias to plain inefficiency. What is the current reality? What has been the response of Mumbai Police Top Brass to the situation?

I had an opportunity to interact with them. I was impressed by the high quality and sophistication level of the Top Management. Most belong to Indian Police Service and they are highly qualified in psychology, sociology, history, science, medicine and public administration. They have intimate knowledge of people, language and culture. They speak confidently and intelligently on a variety of subjects. I was also impressed by the speed with which they capture criminals in twenty minutes or

less after being alerted.

The life of a policeman is arduous. His official duty hours of 12 can keep extending because of the endless emergencies and exigencies. His life is risk full. Often he is one against many. The lawbreakers are a well-armed cohesive gang. There is then an obsolete legal system they have to contend with, not to speak of the policial interference. Despite all handicaps, the police officers are performing well in the area of law and order. It is a pity that we get influenced by the unethical behavior of a small minority. They deserve our salute.

Nearly one third of the police force numbering ten thousand has undergone one or another aspect of training conducted by prominent people of Mumbai from within and without. The focus is to bring police and people closer. (Incidentally, have you read the fine book, *A Philosophy for the Police* by B.N. Mullik, first published in 1969? Mr. Mullik brings out the history of police from the beginning of civilization and sets it into a new and revealing perspective of social morality. A fascinating chapter is on the difference between 'People's police' and Ruler-appointed Police.)

Besides formal group training, practical steps have been taken. One is the formation of Mohalla Committees. There have also been experiments like 'Delta Force' and 'Eagle Brigade' in which youth volunteers help the police in maintaining peace, order and harmony.

Recently, the idea of a people's police has been mooted.

The police station can act as a centre of the community. We can have a people's police comprising of three types of citizen volunteers.

1. Networkers in the age group 45 + ready to devote atleast 2 hours every day, and act as guardians of the locality.
2. Team leaders in the age group 30-50, married, who can devote two days in a month.
3. Volunteers in the age group 18-40 who can devote one day in a month.

All the volunteers have to be non-controversial and acceptable. They should be willing to work at their own cost in the spirit of 'swadhyay' (self-help).

This idea is now being tried out. I will have a followup report after a few months.

POINT TO PONDER

One of the disconcerting aspects of the passage of time is the memory of how things used to be.

Paul Craig Roberts

3639 CHOOSING BOOKS: *We all love to read books. The problem is there are too many books coming and they are becoming more and more expensive. How do we choose? In the following article by David Stauffer (in W.S.J.), we find some valuable tips.*

Autumn has arrived, and bookstores' business shelves are straining under the weight of countless fall releases. Every one claims to be "essential," "unique" or "groundbreaking." If you've only got 10 to 15 minutes to browse the shelves, how do you identify the few books that are actually worth their weight? Here are some suggestions:

1. **Look up the subject you know.** This is probably the best quick test of a business book's merits. Look in the index for a company or individual you know about from personal experience. Does the book offer anything more than boilerplate or platitudes? If not, you're probably safe in assuming the rest of the book is no better. My company of choice is Marriott. I'll immediately dump any book that extols the company and its CEO only for their attention to detail and emphasis on service. Everyone knows about that. But I'll read any book that mentions Marriott's impressive but little known food and management services unit.
2. **Three's a crowd.** I have yet to find quality and substance in any business book with more than two authors. I can't say it's a problem of too many cooks, because in several cases I've learned that one person did most of the writing and the others are listed only for their marketing appeal or ego gratification. In several instances I've interviewed one or more of the authors and found them to be quite sharp. Perhaps there's just less

incentive to craft golden prose laden with stunningly brilliant insight for a measly one-third or less of the credit.

3. **Be wary of overbreadth.** Unpromising is the book that tries to cast an oceanwidth net over every management fad of the past decade. Be skeptical if the table of contents contains three or more terms from a list that currently would include "downsizing," "re-engineering," "visioning," "strategic alignment," "the learning organization," "change management" and "paradigm shift."

The most substantive business books tend to be those that focus quite narrowly on a single topic. My exemplar of this approach is William Bridges's 1994 "jobshift," an insightful work arguing that the predominance of large companies over small shops is a now-waning aberration of the Industrial Revolution. More recently, in "The Connected Corporation," Jordan Lewis meticulously dissects customer-supplier alliances to reveal what makes the best ones tick.

4. **Illustrations:Less is more.** The more matrixes, diagrams, algorithms and other such illustrations you see--and the more complex they are--the less likely you'll find useful guidance based on solid information.

5. **Watch out for hype.** Another inverse relationship: The more wondrous a book says it will be in solving your business problems, the less likely it is to deliver anything new or different. "The U.S. has a vast oversupply of consultants," says George Bailey of Price Waterhouse. "Many of them succeed not on the basis of what they know, but by most loudly trumpeting their wondrous, easy-to-swallow potion."

6. **Put no stock in the author's long list of clients.** You'll see the names of superstar companies, but no description of the author's assignment for any of them. On the few occasions that I've subsequently learned details of the author's engagement, I've been told his role consisted of something like operating a slide projector at a three-hour workshop in 1979, when he was a first-year associate with a consulting giant such as McKinsey & Co. And when an author describes himself as a consultant to "a

Number of Fortune 500 companies," you can be sure the number is two.

7. **Testimonials count for little.** I've learned from publicists that any quote from anyone identified as the author of another business book is probably provided quid pro quo and likely to have been suggested by the publicist. From the CEO at one large company and an aide to the CEO at another, I've learned that the chief rarely gives more than a passing glance to the manuscripts he's asked to endorse, and that the boss's printed praise is usually written by a PR flack.

8. **Forgo friends of Jack Welch.** I have nothing against the legend-in-his-owntime head of General Electric. My gripe concerns the veritable legion of authors who mention "my good friend Jack Welch." If each of these writers were actually to have spoken with Mr. Welch for more than a minute, the beleaguered CEO would never find time to run his company.

POINT TO PONDER

*The expense isn't what it costs to train employees.
It's what it costs not to train them.*

Philip Wilber

3640: HOW NOT TO LOSE DATA: *Computer is a great tool. Like all great tools, when handled well, they give you benefits. When handled ill, they do not show you mercy. Eternal vigilance has to be the rule. Here is a piece to help us improve our odds:*

Your teacher told you; your service rep counseled you; your system administrator warned you: Please, please, please back up your data.

But you gambled and lost. Be it through human error or act of God, your hard drive crashed and your data -- possibly years' worth of records and labor -- has vanished into the ether. Now what?

After panicking, it's likely you'll wind up talking with a data-recovery specialist, who may -- be able to help. It's a service of last resort, and priced like it: A data-rescue company's diagnosis alone can start at \$200. The full tab for grabbing the information off the typical one-gigabyte drive ranges anywhere from \$400 to \$1000.

Data-recovery experts say many home computer users still fail to make copies of their software and important files, or practice even the most basic preventive maintenance.

A survey by TNC Technology in Webster found that 40 percent of business users don't back up their data at all, according to TNC co-founder Tom Beikirch. "It's not easy to do and nobody wants to do it," he says. Beikirch cites estimates that 94 percent of computer users have some form of data loss each year. Most is small in scope--individual files deleted accidentally, for example. But larger losses--from theft, fire or mechanical failure--can be far more costly.

As a general rule, all hard drives eventually will fail because of their mechanical parts at some point--it may be years and years wear out and malfunction. Most drives built for home use have a lifespan of about 10,000 to 50,000 hours. If you never turn your computer off - many people don't that time passes quickly. One year equals 8,448 hours on your drive.

But mechanical lifespans are just part of the story. At the top of the villain list, according to Bill Hersey of Ontrack Data Recovery in Irvine, California, are dust and heat. Many people forget to keep their computer clutter-free, so it gets proper ventilation. Most never open their computer to ensure that dust isn't building up inside. Next on the list is power. Electrical failures are at the root of half of all hardware failures on disk drives. If your power so much as flickers and you don't have a surge protector (a device that sells for about \$100 and temporarily provides your computer with a consistent flow of energy when a flicker occurs), you're asking for trouble.

Drive manufacturers argue that computer users often are their own worst enemy. Human error likely causes just as many drives to fail as any mechanical issue, says Kevin Gholston, director of customer service and tech support for CMS Enhancements in Anaheim. In most cases the problem stems from the fact that the computer user is in over his or her head. People try to make a change on their computer that they don't understand. Or they borrow software from friends that is full of dangerous bugs and viruses.

The solution? "Save soon and save often," TNC's Beikirch says, and back up what you save. The company can help you with the second part with a service called Datacare, which automatically backs up a customer's data by phoning the client's computer each night and copying files via modem to a safe location. If and when disaster strikes, the company retrieves the backup and helps the customer get up and running again, says co-owner Leon Williams.

IMPROVE YOUR ODDS.

Save early and often: If your machine goes down for any reason, you'll lose whatever you haven't committed to memory.

Use defragmentation software: Disk fragmentation happens to all drives and scatters bits of memory all over, making the drive work harder to retrieve them and hastening its demise.

Check for trouble: Use a diagnostic utility program often to find signs of early trouble with your hard disk.

Shut down properly: Don't just switch the machine off; you could lose data that's stored in a disk cache, which is emptied when power is cut. Make sure to quit out of programs and follow directions on turning off the computer.

Use a surge protector. Give proper ventilation, especially around the computer's fan vents.

POINT TO PONDER

We teach everybody accounting and marketing but not enough about the world in which executives must operate.

Donald L. Harnett

3641 A HEART WARMING SURVEY: *The following report is based on a recent survey of younger people at work. A prevalent notion is that the young people lack work ethic. The survey says this is not so. In these days of virtual reality, this can be true of India too. The young people bring their best energy to the job. How we direct it is in our hands.*

A RECENT job survey shows there is a vast difference between employers' attitudes towards young people in the workforce and the amount they invest in training and developing young people.

The Morgan & Banks job index for August-October 1996 asked employers to consider whether the work ethic of young people was better or worse than that of other age groups and came up with some surprising results.

Mr. John Winter, head of economic research at Morgan & Banks, put the index together. He said the reaction went strongly against the commonly held notion that young people did not work as hard as the older generation.

"The exact question was, how would you rate the work ethic of young people you've hired against other age groups?" he said. "Surprisingly, 30.6 per cent said it was significantly better, or better than other age groups, 37.9 per cent said it was the same as other age groups while the remainder said it was poorer."

The survey was made in all States and Territories. Questions were put to employers in a variety of industries and businesses of different sizes. "Large companies with 500-plus employees had the most positive attitude towards young people, with 34.3 per cent of organisations surveyed giving the thumbs up to the youth work ethic," Mr. Winter said. One in three organisations from Victoria rated young workers as better than workers in other age groups. This was a higher approval rating than in any other State, with Western Australia having the poorest outlook towards young people.

"The advertising industry showed its support with 38.8 per cent of agencies surveyed reporting that young people had a better attitude than those of other age groups," Mr. Winter said.

No definition of young people was given in the survey, allowing employers to use their own definition, but generally the understanding was that "young" referred to under -25s. "With more people staying on at school and university, the definition of first-time job starters has become wider in terms of age," Mr. Winter said.

"With such high levels of youth unemployment, young people are having to work harder to prove themselves and establish themselves in a career and I think that is what is coming through.

"When you have a quarter of young people unemployed you really have to work hard to break the notion that young people don't work hard to keep a job in what is an incredibly competitive environment." The survey was an extension of earlier ones which had found that organisations were not hiring young people in the numbers needed to sustain a company for the next 30 to 40 years and that few offered traineeships to encourage young people. Morgan & Banks thought this might have something to do with employers' perceptions of the youth work ethic.

"Organisations have developed the strange notion that the perfect employee is aged between 25 and 35 and that misses the mark," Mr. Winter said. "It misses the input that young people have, a dynamic new outlook, the seed the organisation needs over time and the energy it needs in the future.

"Organisations want people on board who are experienced and qualified and highly trained, but (they) are not so prepared to invest in developing young people".

3642 STRATEGIC ALLIANCES: *If "merger" is the nineties' buzzword among big-name companies, "strategic alliance" is the term gaining strength among smaller ones. Such alliances are often informal agreements among companies to exchange anything from personnel to services to customer lists.*

And financial advisers are finding themselves more responsible for helping clients hook up, as they attempt to achieve long-term goals at the low costs attractive in a decade of downsizing. What makes these alliances so attractive? How do they work? What can a company in an alliance do that it couldn't through a merger or on its own? The following are some reactions that appeared in Baltimore Sun.

Charles J. Morton: Attorney. Strategic alliances are happening for many reasons, including absence of capital, concerns regarding the risks associated with forming entangled webs of alliances as well as businesses' desires in a very competitive market place to leverage their assets and skills most effectively. They are particularly helpful for emerging business, which otherwise would face difficulty acquiring the capital necessary to grow. By forming an alliance, they can more effectively respond to the needs of their clients without that capital.

Small businesses are also able to act quickly and may be more comfortable with less formal alliances. The cost associated with mergers can be staggering. One example of an ideal way to leverage people is when there are individuals with complementary skills active in distinct markets.

They can work together to acquire skills that could then be applied in their own markets. A contact of mine is exploring the possibility of working in an interim position in Baltimore which would enable him to develop skills he could apply in his company in Washington.

Dan Garfink Partner, French Accents. We import high-end period antiques and we were introduced to Joe Miller, who has a gallery in Northern Virginia. He was looking for someone with really highend pieces to offset his art, which may help sell his art. And we were going to stay away from painting because we were afraid to dabble in the unknown, but now may be Joe can put his artwork in our store. It's a very symbiotic relationship.

We just discussed it for six weeks and did it. It's very easy, very flexible.

We are starting with five pieces and paying him a commission. A more formal approach might have scared some of the parties.

3643 LAUGHING MATTER?



Edited, Printed &
Published by
N.H.ATTREYA of **MMC**
SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
3E1 Court Chambers,
New Marine Lines,
Mumbai 400 020

Photo offset by **DAKS**
COPY SERVICE PVT. LTD.
Mumbai 400 023.

Annual Subscription
Rs.190/.

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