



# Management Ideas

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**RELATIONS**

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a monthly newsletter to key executive-leaders on practices, possibilities and ideas generally for stepped up performance  
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### 3765 FROM A CONSULTANT'S DIARY

I was reading the discourses given by the late Kanchi Periyaval in the thirties and forties. (Some of these are now available in English, courtesy Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan). He refers to the traditional riches of the country in 84 branches of knowledge - from the science of breathing to the science of mysticism. Some centuries back, some of the kings took the responsibility of preserving them, supporting them, enriching them. They got neglected once the kings disappeared from the scene. The governments are too preoccupied with too many immediate things. Some of them feel old is bad and should be buried or better still burnt. Fortunately, some foreigners have seen value in them and they have taken pains to collect them for their libraries. One of the best Sanskrit literature libraries is in Germany. Now that liberalisation and globalisation have become the order of the day, we can hope to avail of these traditional riches and profit from them. Those who have the skill to do so are few and far between. Many of them are gone and the few we have are living in their bonus years. On a war footing, we have to commission their services. Not for sentiments but for substantial benefits sake, corporations will do well to avail of their services to preserve,

conserve and capitalilze on these traditional riches either.

### 3766 NEIGHBOURLY INTERACTIONS

*Enriching the society is enriching ourselves. The government can do a lot without doubt; its problem is discretionary time and discretionary resources. When industry and business can give a helping hand. It will be community relations plus. For what we do, we may not get political mileage. We can have the satisfaction of contributing thoughtfully in a micro area. Is there a precedent? Here is a story of what pharmaceutical firms did in one part of the world.*

Each year, New Jersey-based pharmaceutical companies donate millions of dollars to a broad range of social and community-based programs.

Their contributions take the form of grants to graduate bio-physics students and programs focusing on decreasing teen pregnancy in the inner cities. From blood drives to the arts, pharmaceutical companies bring both money and people to community-improvement efforts around the state.

Twelve of the state's 100 largest employers are pharmaceutical companies and they employed approximately 54,600 people at mid-year. Charitable giving by pharmaceutical firms run into the millions of dollars. Warner-Lambert provided more than \$8 million to various charitable endeavors around the world in 1996. Madison-based Schering-Plough and its affiliated foundation donated about \$8 million in grants to philanthropic and community organizations in each of the last two years. Franklin Lakes-based Becton, Dickinson and Co., one of the world's largest medical technology companies, contributed \$3.6 million in addition to product donations to disaster and humanitarian relief agencies in the U.S. and overseas.

The total contributions of the pharmaceutical industry are difficult to quantify. Often, they take the forms of in-kind services and man-hours. But when you look at the number and breadth of the programs in which they are involved, there is little doubt that the industry is playing an important role in improving the quality of life for New Jersey.

Sharyn Bearse, manager of corporate communications at Whitehouse Station-based Merck & Co. Inc., said the company's blood drives date back to World War II.

"In the last couple of years, we have tried to bring new donors into the fold. Our scientists are the largest donors," Bearse said. "We had to convince a whole new body of people it was important to give blood and we have more than doubled our participation. We recently gave a unit of blood for every employee in New Jersey for a total of about 6,000 units."

Like many of New Jersey's biggest employers, Merck also contributes to the community through the United Way. "This time, we actually got together with some community groups and, instead of giving just money, we identified individuals who are struggling to get along," she said.

Merck's employees put together 100 baskets designed to help specific families. "We did it to enhance awareness among employees of those less fortunate in our communities. Groups of employees got together and each group kind of adopted a family in Hunterdon County."

During the same week the baskets were donated, 120 Merck employees worked through Habitat for Humanity to build a home for a single mother and her four children in Franklin Township. The company purchased \$25,000 worth of building materials for the project and gave employees a day off to work on the home, which was completed in six days.

Other pharmaceutical-company programs are geared toward education.

"Most of our community-funding support is focused in health promotions and K-12 math and science," said Vivian Beetle, director of community affairs for Nutley-based Hoffman-La Roche Inc., which employs more than 8,000 people in New Jersey. "The focus targets the teacher of math and science by supporting professional curriculum and professional development. One program we support is New Choices - New Responsibilities, which provides teachers with training to teach bioethics in partnership with the New Jersey Science Supervisors Association. We already have trained well over 500 teachers in New Jersey."

Hoffman-La Roche tries to gear its programs to meeting specific community healthcare needs. For example, the company is supporting the efforts of the New Jersey Business Industry Science Education Consortium to help teachers address career opportunities in health-care and provide "mini-grants" for chemistry and physics teachers, both of which are in short supply. "We also conduct a program here once a week on site, where we have 20 employees who tutor a group of fourth graders from Irvington every Wednesday afternoon," Beetle said.

To support employee volunteerism, Hoffmann-La Roche will give a corporate gift to organizations in which an employee serves for six or more hours a year or sits on the board of directors.

On the healthcare side, Hoffmann-La Roche provides support for a number of programs geared to help HIV-positive patients. Currently, the company is providing support for two women's centers in Newark and Jersey City, for women who are at risk or have contracted AIDS. Its support can take the form of cash, in-kind contributions or the donated time of company professionals.

"Our approach to all of this is that there are needs that are critical to New Jersey. How do we prioritize them? By things that Roche knows something about." Beetle said. "Our biggest forms of support that comes back to New Jersey is through the United Way, either by employee one-time, lump-sum gifts, which are matched by the company or through payroll deduction."

In a September letter to employees, Becton, Dickinson Chairman Clateo Castellini noted that, in celebrating its 100 years in business, the company continues to take pride in its partnerships with community organizations around the world.

Becton, Dickinson supports various non-profit organizations in two ways. On a global level, the company invests in public and preventive healthcare initiatives that address unmet needs with cost-effective solutions. At the local level, Becton, Dickinson broadens its focus beyond healthcare to quality-of-life issues in communities where employees live and work.

Warner-Lambert has used its \$8 million in annual donations to provide about 350 grants in each of the past two years, said company spokesperson Leslie Hare. That \$8 million figure does not include the company's matching gift program. Hare said Warner-Lambert apportions its contributions based on the following priorities: education, health-care, social and civic organizations, and culture and the arts.

"This year, we established the Community Classic. It allows employees one day off a year to do volunteer work of their choosing." Hare said, "A few weeks ago, each member of our management team took a group of employees to a local organization to do volunteer work."

The seven to ten organizations involved included the Community Food Bank, in Hillside.

Warner-Lambert also has expanded its educational partnership program, originally conducted with the Dover school system, to several other school districts. The program brings students into Warner-Lambert to work with a mentor.

"They actually perform a job function and at the end of the program they have to make a presentation in our auditorium to

Warner-Lambert employees, school officials and other students," Hare said.

The program helps the students improve their presentation skills as well as learn about the pharmaceutical industry.

*Source: Joe Cavaluzzi in Star-Ledger.*

### **3767 WHEN OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS**

*The growing trend towards multiskilling and diversity in the workplace has been used to advantage by the creative team at Yoram Gross Film Studios in Sydney. A report.*

Employing about 80 people, the studios, in the inner-city suburb of Camperdown, house a film and animation studio, a sound-recording studio and a new multi-media production company.

And while a number of specialists work in distinct areas of each company, directors have several strings to their bows and encourage employees to do likewise.

"One thing I really encourage with our staff is being able to do as many things as possible because you really don't know what direction things are going to steer you in," said Mr. Geoff Watson, director of Forest Interactive and Track-down Digital, two of the companies housed within the studios.

"My general philosophy is (that) opportunity is probably the thing that drives most of our lives. The key to being able to take advantage of opportunity is having enough skills to jump in different directions as they appear before you."

Mr. Watson completed an arts degree in teaching and social work, while performing as a drummer in a band, before managing a recording studio.

"My initial hat as manager of Trackdown Digital recording studio was my core role for the past five years," he said.

"Alongside, I managed a couple of recording artists, did a little consulting work within the music industry and became the general manager of Forest Interactive."

The high level of multiskilling inside the organisation allowed the companies to diversify.

"They act independently and also in concert with each other," Mr. Watson said.

Yoram Gross became famous for producing animated films, such as Dot And The Kangaroo and Blinky Bill, while Forest Interactive recently released the CD-ROM, Blinky Bill's Ghost Cave.

"The film studio will work on the core part of its animation without bothering anyone else until it wants to record sounds in the studio," Mr. Watson said.

"Guy (Gross, who is also a director) will work on his music composition without worrying anyone else in the building except when he wants to record it at Trackdown, so it is very intermeshed."

People were often surprised when they heard the companies could complete their projects without leaving the premises.

"The industry is changing because as everything becomes digitised there is a convergence of what you can do in the one spot," Mr. Watson said.

"It's not just the humans which are multiskilled, it's the equipment which is multitasking. A computer can one minute be a diary, then the next record sound, the next edit a picture."

The disadvantage of multiskilling was that there was a danger of everyone knowing a lot about a few things, rather than a huge amount about one or two things, but this could be overcome by employing specialists in their fields.

"When we sit around a table (at meetings) we all put in our two cents worth about everything," Mr. Watson said.

"We recognise what our strengths are, but we don't lose touch of things that aren't so strong, so we'll still know enough to be able to contribute. "Everyone recognises that you can't bamboozle anyone because we all know a little about something, which is an unconscious result but definitely a good outcome."

### **3768 FAILING TO GET THE MESSAGE**

*If the champions of electronic mail are to be believed, this is one business tool that managers ignore at their peril.*

The slowness of European companies in adopting e-mail is holding them back, according to Andrew Grove, chief executive of Intel, the leading supplier of microprocessor chips to the personal computer industry.

"These applications let you react in minutes and hours instead of days," he said recently. "In that sense, Europe is way behind."

Grove is not alone in singing the praises of e-mail. It allows messages and documents to be sent cheaply and quickly, anywhere in the world, regardless of time zones. It reduces bureaucracy, cuts across hierarchies, and allows managers to communicate directly with everybody in the company.

But e-mail is not an unmitigated blessing. Increasingly, companies are facing up to e-mail-related problems such as legal liability, invasions of privacy, threats to confidentiality, risks to the network's security and "information overload" of its staff.

Concern about these issues is not just an excuse made by technological laggards. Computer Associates, one of the largest software companies in the world, took action to stop employees wasting time by continually checking their e-mail. Staff are only allowed to log on to their e-mail for set periods in the morning, at lunchtime and at the end of the day.

Being overwhelmed by an excessive volume of e-mail is an increasingly familiar problem. Smythe Dorward Lambert, a communications management consultancy, has just conducted a survey of 259 UK organisations which uncovered widespread carelessness in the way that e-mails were structured and distributed. It is common for managers to find 100 messages when they return to the office at the end of the day, it said.

In some companies, e-mails are sent with abandon. Every member of staff in one international company received the message: "Would the owner of a red Biro left by the second floor coffee machine like to come and collect it?"

Important messages risk going unnoticed when too much e-mail is sent. Dave de Lone, a researcher at Ernst & Young's Boston-based Center for Business Innovation, recalls interviewing a chief financial officer of a large

company based in Silicon Valley for a study on e-mail use. This executive once found 2000 e-mails waiting for him, after he had been away for a week. In despair, he deleted the whole list, without looking at a single message.

Another reason why too much e-mail is sent is that it is often used as a political tool, according to Symthe Dorward Lambert. Old e-mail messages are hoarded, sometimes for more than a year, in case they will be needed to protect an individual's position. As well as souring the atmosphere, this takes up valuable disc space and slows the system down.

The conscious hoarding of old messages is only part of the problem. Companies can find themselves in legal difficulties because old messages - which were assumed to have been deleted - were automatically backed up and discovered by a lawyer pursuing a discrimination or unfair dismissal case.

E-mail is often incriminating, says a report by Gartner Group, a Stamford-based research company. "People who would never become emotional or inflammatory in an open business meeting will sometimes express their thoughts and feelings with great frankness when typing a message on the computer," it says.

The risk that employees' e-mail could give rise to litigation means that many companies reserve the right to read their staff's e-mail - usually after warning them that the system should not be seen as private. However, many staff will view this action as an invasion of their privacy - particularly since most companies allow some personal use of e-mail.

A related issue concerns the protection of sensitive information. Information can get into the wrong hands, simply through carelessness. E-mail can easily be misaddressed; it is also easy to copy, circulate and forward. Some US financial organisations tackle this issue by scrutinising every outgoing e-mail, according to Jim Browning, a researcher at Gartner Group.

In other cases, leaks are not accidental. Safeguards such as encryption and digital signatures offer only a partial degree of protection from hackers.

Hackers from both inside and outside the organisation can be a problem. In one high street bank, a disaffected senior manager

would ask one of his IT specialists to hack into the system if he wanted to know what was happening in the human resources department, says Goodman at Smythe Dorward Lambert. He advises anyone who wants to distribute sensitive information to do so on paper.

### **3769 MORE NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS**

*Companies are finding New Year resolutions more than a ritual. They come handy to build a balanced life in an organization. Here is a story from U.K.*

It is traditional to start the new year with an abundance of good intentions, but which resolutions are realistic enough to last 12 months? The following suggestions for a happier and healthier workplace in 1998 consist of five practical ideas for the executive's own well-being, followed by five for the staff, although obviously many can benefit both.

First, let your appetite be a guide to good nutrition and eat only when hungry, not just when entertaining clients or when frustrated by a bad day at the office. That means no comfort eating, but no weird regimes of one lettuce leaf on alternate days either - yo-yo diets are unhealthy.

Make a commitment to exercise. Those with gym or sports facilities at work often have no time to use them, but anyone can fit gentle exercise, like using stairs, into their daily schedule. If nothing else, you will be in better shape for the next train or Tube strike.

Take hourly breaks from the VDU screen, no matter how punishing the pace of work. Even half-a-minute spent stretching neck, back and shoulders, and gazing into the distance makes a big difference.

When things go wrong, keep calm. Irate outbursts both alienate staff and stress the heart-research shows that bouts of temper more than double the aggressor's risk of a heart attack in the next two hours.

Inevitably, work is brought home, literally or metaphorically. To prevent insomnia, don't take unresolved worries up to bed. Instead, set aside 15 minutes or so, with paper and pencil, to debrief before bedtime.

Make health risk assessment part of everyday life. It takes only awareness and common sense to spot potential dangers such as trailing flexes, air vents blocked by artistic displays of holiday postcards, and filing cabinets placed next to desks - they tempt people to stretch and twist rather than get up and do it properly.

Make an effort to comply with legislation. Of course, most employees heed the requirements of the legislation requiring reporting big injuries, but what of less serious events and near-misses? If you take pride in your low accident rate, either your company is exceptionally safety-conscious, or there is serious under-reporting. It is estimated that two-thirds of all dangerous incidents go unreported, but businesses need to keep tabs on close calls so they can learn from them.

Tackle absenteeism. Good records may be enough to warn staff who medicalise their social problems and "take a sickle" too often. Employers who don't keep records often have 30 per cent higher absenteeism. Interviewing staff on their return is also effective, probably more so than phoning an employee at home when his temperature is 39 degrees C.

Make time to listen to employees. A happy workforce is usually healthier and more productive. Or you may spot symptoms of depression such as slowness, poverty of emotion and inability to enjoy jokes - not just the boss's quips, but genuine wit.

Suicides are rising, especially in men under 35. In a recent study about 45 per cent fell into the category of "executive suicide", where work stress was thought to be an important factor. Many companies offer in-house counseling, but employees should also see their GP.

Finally, no doctor's list of new year's resolutions is complete without mentioning smoking. At work, smokers have a higher rate of absenteeism, more low-back pain (the reason is unclear), and spend more time away from their desks, sometimes huddling outside the main entrance to enjoy a cigarette. If you still smoke too, you could give up with your staff.

*Courtesy: Dr. Carol Cooper in Financial Times*

### **3770 ELECTRONIC MESSAGES BURYING WORKERS**

*There is a connection revolution and there is much to be in favour of it. By itself, it does not do the trick. Success depends on what we*

*choose to and how we do it. Otherwise new technology adds to the burden as the accompanying item explains.*

*A local example is the MTNL, I have heard many people reporting. New technology has been brought in without adequately preparing all people concerned or even without debugging. Result? Avoidable all round frustration.*

Communication devices designed to save time are having the opposite effect because people are making redundant use of old and new technologies, a large productivity study has found.

The survey of workers in Fortune 1000 companies in the United States conducted for Pitney Bowes Inc. by researchers at San Jose State University showed that technological advancements do not replace traditional communications but add to the pile of information that the typical workers must deal with.

As a result, seven out of 10 people interviewed said they are overwhelmed in their professional and personal lives, sending and receiving an average of 178 different messages each day by more than a dozen different means, including phone, pager, fax and Post-It note.

It said that people are inundated with so many communications tools - fax, electronic mail, regular mail, inter-office mail, voice mail, teleconferencing - that they don't know which to turn to for even the simplest tasks. So the devices are bundled together to ensure that messages somehow get through.

"The motivation behind these tools and technologies is people's desire to speed up the process and to make it more convenient to their schedules," Bill Mackrell, vice-president of marketing for Pitney Bowes Canada, said after the study was released in Toronto. "Instead, more tools are sending out more and more messages."

Mr. Mackrell said that even his own company has not dealt with the problem and is included in the 69 per cent of corporations that do not have policies stipulating how different information should be sent.

"Workers are on their own," the study said, adding that the communications gridlock means that people are working harder and longer hours to wade through the waves of material that wash up each day.

Researchers continually heard the lament that people had little time for anything else but sorting through it all. "Check your E-mail, voice mail, fax, Notes database, and it's time to go home," one said. Others intentionally let the batteries run down on pagers and cellular phones so they won't be bothered by them.

But they also don't take advantage of devices or software that would make the situation better. One manager at a high technology company had three computers in his office for different, specialized purposes.

Time management experts say they are not surprised with the findings. The biggest problem that they deal with is reams of unnecessary messages that their clients receive, often duplicated because they are generated by several different technologies.

"People are insecure," said Douglas Stewart, a personal productivity consultant at the Institute for Business Technology in Unionville, Ont. "It wastes a lot of peoples' time and a company's time and technology."

Mr. Stewart teaches what he calls a "self-defence course" for people to manage all of this information. For instance, he says that electronic mail and other documents should be culled and stored in electronic form. An estimated 60 per cent of E-mail is currently copied onto paper.

David Carter, the product manager of the Internet customer unit for Microsoft Canada, said that companies should establish strict policies on the sending of E-mail and adopt software that allows employees to convert messages into stored electronic files. It may not take individuals much time to create and send electronic information, he said, but there is another side to the equation. "People forget that someone has to open that E-mail message and read it," he said.

*Courtesy: Mary Gooderham in The Globe and Mail*

### **3771 SPIRITUAL BRIDGE TO SPAN TWO WORLDS**

*In the name of secular, are we losing the substantial?*

*Let us hope this is more the bogey of the politician than that of the down to earth*

*corporate leaders. When I read the following story, I felt we have built over the centuries so much of infra structure in this regard. We are not availing of them. Perhaps we are waiting for the west to tell us it works, it is possible and in fact desirable to make the spiritual an integral part of the day to day corporate life.*

Drive 4km up a French hairpin mountain road - enough to make anyone reflect on the eternal - to the 13th century monastery of Ganogobie, and you find that Father Hugues Minguet, a former KPMG legal adviser, and his fellow Benedictine monks have brought God and Mammon together in an unusual way.

Ganogobie has an "enterprise centre" that has nothing to do with the bee-keeping or lavender-growing by which many modern monasteries keep themselves going. It holds seminars on business ethics for about 300 leading business people and students who make the pilgrimage every year to try to resolve the moral conflicts between their private beliefs and their professional careers.

Five times a year it hosts courses for students from the Institute Superior des Affaires, part of the Paris-based Hautes Etudes Commerciales management school. It also provides more specialised sessions on themes such as team building and one-off courses for companies including the Avis car rental company and the French hotel group Accor.

With views over the Durance Valley in Provence competing for their attention, Ganogobie seminarists are invited to reflect on such questions as: "How should companies behave in the context of [economic] globalisation, deregulation, corruption and rising unemployment? What ethics should be practised in the face of a plurality of cultures? What is the right social and financial ethical approach to hiring, firing, work contracts, restructuring, capital and profit?"

Father Minguet, head of the Ganogobie enterprise centre, says the aim is to help people establish some moral landmarks in an often anarchic business world. Judging from the ISA intake, he finds "great expectations of ethical standards mixed with a large measure of cynicism". Some "80 per cent of people in business expect high moral, rather than technical, qualities from their managers," he notes.

"But at the same time there is a certain cynicism that managers do not practise what they preach. Companies may have ethics charters these days, but their practices are often very different."

Ganogobie is, he says, "in a sense, at the crossroads of these two worlds - between high moral expectations that business people may have and the life into which they are plunged of hard competition, economic warfare and corruption". The open, almost worldly, approach of the Benedictines can help here, Father Minguet says. With 1,500 years experience as a "multinational", the Benedictine order has a tradition of welcoming everyone and "providing refreshment for the body, soul and mind".

To give its many hotel reception desks a new dimension, Accor, came to Ganogobie for a seminar on the theme of "accueil" (welcome), while Avis asked the monastery to give its employees a course on "service".

Business was involved at the start of modern-day Ganogobie, which was ruined during the French Revolution and only revived in 1987. The monks sought corporate sponsors to help fund the reconstruction, and 150 companies responded. "The companies were interested in Ganogobie as an example of a self-sufficient small enterprise, but also as a source of advice on business motivation and ethics," says Father Minguet. "So, we responded by setting

up a research unit with some 20 top managers and business academics, and then the enterprise centre."

Father Minguet agrees that business corruption worsened in France, but says: "I know people who used to live by corruption and have now changed their behaviour". However, the monastery has taken a precaution. "We have a rule that any member of our research unit put under formal investigation [for corruption or other offences] must suspend his activity with the unit," says the monk. This has not happened yet.

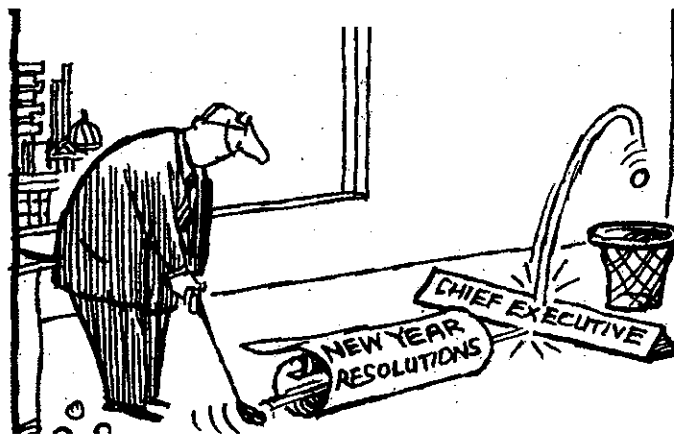
While Ganogobie courses are non-confessional - Father Minguet reckons that the majority of participants are not practising Christians - there are signs in France of a wider attempt to reconcile the free market and religion.

Jean Boissonnat, a member of the Bank of France's monetary policy committee, runs Les Semaines Sociales, a movement of lay Catholics, politicians and unions.

"Our aim is to prevent liberalism leading to dehumanization," he says. "We try to open people's minds to liberalism, a word which in the Catholic world has a very hard ring to it, but at the same time we emphasize that man is at the centre of economics and that one can't do just anything in the name of free competition."

*Courtesy: David Buchan in Financial Times*

### 3772 LAUGHING MATTER?



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