

# INDUCING PEOPLE MANAGEMENT SKILLS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE ORGANISATIONAL EXCELLENCE

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## Abstract

Studies suggest that globalization has brought drastic changes in business economy, technology and information transfer. Cultures have collaborated and so have organisations. No organisation can run without people. People of different personalities, principles, areas of interests and cultures have come in close proximity to work together and achieve their goals. Although they work under one roof, their views and opinions do not always match and therefore personality clashes occur. Their moods vary as well as their working styles. At such an expository state, managing people has become a restless job. Nowadays, managers need to possess strong people management skills with the aim of managing people, fostering productivity and achieving organisational excellence. The managers ought to possess outstanding skill sets and learn to develop approaches to coordinate work and maintain harmony in the workplace. This paper focuses on the qualities managers must carry in order to create a better work atmosphere and bring about productivity at the workplace.

**Keywords:** *Managers, Organization, People, Management, Skills.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Any organisation runs mainly with three purposes: to achieve excellence, to stay ahead of competition and to create brand image. However, it is not as easy as it seems. Studies reveal that commitment towards fulfilling these purposes has become downright competing and this has become inevitable at the workplace. Many companies set dynamic platforms at workplaces that provoke employees to stand against each other for name, fame, growth, recognitions, rewards or promotions. When competitions are constructive, employees can develop self-motivating skills to perform better, by putting in efforts, thus achieving positive results. However, when dysfunctional competitions appear, the consequences get

absolutely ugly, stressful and uneven. Relationships begin to strain affecting personal lives and health, thus hampering productivity and performance at work. Consequences can get even worse when top managers and executives fail to deal with people or situations of such kind. The work culture gradually gets soiled, thereby affecting the company's recognition.

People carry different kinds of qualities. "Some people are easy to manage while others are hard. Some are talented but not collaborative. Some are collaborative but not talented. Some are too aggressive and others not aggressive enough. Some are well intentioned but high maintenance, moody or easily distracted. Some are just plain difficult" (LIPMAN, 2014). Hence, at work places chiefly, people are not easy to quantify and control. In general, the top leaders are responsible to represent the organisation but managers are people who are directly linked or associated with the entire staff of a company. Managers thus find it difficult and challenging to supervise a varied set of personalities and working styles. Banfield and Kay consider that "despite people's interest in understanding what managing organisations and people involves, and the ever increasing amount of information and knowledge available to us, the enduring paradox is that many of today's managers still find the challenge difficult and frustrating" (BANFIELD, & KAY, 2012). Frustrating and stressful managers cannot contribute and foster much to the growth of an organisation.

Studies suggest that managers should develop and practice some strong skilled sets so that they can manage well, bring the best in others, help people learn and grow, and achieve excellence benefitting the organisation. An interesting fact

reveals that the minds of the managers are always occupied with various goals, adjustments, targets and many other such responsibilities. Baldwin suggests "the ultimate goal of learning management skills is to help create organisations that are simultaneously productive and great places to work. Organisational success comes through people, and the most powerful influence on people is their direct manager. If managers make use of critical skills and the environment is properly shaped, then the organisation possesses powerful tools in order to achieve extraordinary results" (BALDWIN et al., 2008).

Basically, managers deal and relate with people, their actions and also their emotions which is not an easy task. They often have to take care of situations that have emotional intent. Sometimes they have to take strong decisions that could have influential connotations with their personal life and also of their co-workers, further leading to arguments and strained relationships. Hence, managing people requires outstanding emotional intelligence. Sterrett feels that it is imperative to balance emotional and intellectual intelligence. She asserts "when managers think of emotions, they often focus on overreactions that they have witnessed in the workplace conflicts, hurt feelings, or even their own embarrassing moments. Letting emotions overpower our intellect is not what we mean by emotional intelligence; in fact quite the opposite is true: out of control emotions are not what we want, at work or elsewhere". This paper will delve more into emotional intelligence in the coming sections.

While emotions are one important aspect of people management skills, the relevance of communication too holds an equal distinction. The nature of communication chiefly at workplaces is very uncommon and complex. And, when managers have the sole responsibility to deal with people, the role of communication becomes more complicated and intrigued. Rees and Porter also feel that managers have to communicate positively to receive desired results. They elucidate that "managers are likely to spend most of their time engaged directly in some form of communication process. Even when they are working alone- for example, studying or preparing reports-they are relying

on other people's attempts to communicate with them or they are preparing to communicate with others. Accuracy in decision-making depends, in particular, on effective communication. If the communication process is faulty, then everything else can be affected" (REES & PORTER, 2015).

Patience or endurance is yet another virtue that managers need to possess while dealing with various kinds of people. Patience is the reflection of a good manager and it suggests that managers have respect and powerful listening abilities to the complaints and grievances of the people they are dealing with. Sometimes employees are not quick learners. Managing and treating them equally and subjecting them to proper training represents another essential criterion that managers must possess. Umiker believes "while everything is rush and more rush, supervisors must show a modicum of patience with those people who learn or adjust a little slower than others. They must couple patience with persistence" (UMIKER, 2005).

Managers often have to deal with the moral implications of their decisions, as they directly impact the organisation and people working in it. Hence, people management includes ethical obligations so as to meet the ends of employees and of the organisation as whole. Mele discusses "ethics are not only desirable for their contribution to management, but necessary for truly good management. Ethical failures are management problems, and ethical achievements are managerial achievements. Moral managers can foster cooperation and promote the moral motivation of employees beyond money and other extrinsic motives" (MELE, 2011).

People management skills requisite a strong vision in order to direct attention towards a world of interrelations among people and summing up a system well expected orbit of actions and consequences. Maintaining an open and broad mind of creative framework people management skills justify bringing the best out of everyone. "People management is probably one of the most important soft leadership skills, as it directly influences productivity via its impact on staff morale and motivation throughout an organisation" (IMD, n.d.). People management is the key to accomplish goals at the workplace. Hence, this paper studies in details the underlying

essentials of people management skills or simply put differently the soft skills managers require with the objective of delivering their roles and responsibilities inventively, maintain constructive workplace relationships for the overall success of the organisation. This paper delves deeply and in particulars about communication, empathy, patience, and values and ethics managers must pursue with the goal of fulfilling the guidelines of people management skills.

## **2. EFFECTIVE PEOPLE MANAGEMENT SKILLS ARE ALL ABOUT COMMUNICATION**

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People management skills are all about managing people, handling their situations, motivating them in need, supporting and persuading them, inspiring and acknowledging, planning and organising as well as achieving and accomplishing goals. Such a long list of tasks is communication bound. Any inappropriate form of communication or misapplication can hamper daily work activities and strain work place relationships. Hence, managers behold a driven responsibility to deliver effective and operative communication. Communication requires a skilled ability to receive and send messages in a suitable manner consummating the receiver's propositions, without hampering self-rights and obligations, hence paving a two way path for the exchange of information. Communication skills include speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. While much of the communication in people management includes speaking, the other forms of communication are also of vital importance. However, all the sub skills of communication demand clarity, conciseness, brevity, accuracy and responsiveness. Besides this, Hargie, Dickson and Tourish argue that "managers have to communicate effectively in writing, face to face, and on the telephone with superiors, subordinates, peers and people outside the organisation. Furthermore, different forms of interaction will be required for each direction" (HARGI et al., 1999). Hence, managers must be ready to carry out such roles with confidence and a cooperative approach as demanded by different levels and categories. For example, with some

senior managers and other superior executive bodies managers may opt to be confident enough using a firm voice and tone while with the subordinates and peers or any junior level co-workers the cooperative approach represents the best option.

Conflicts at workplaces are inescapable. People management includes managing iffy situations also. Managers must learn to delegate and negotiate and manage conflicts among the employees effectively. Specific styles to compromise and collaborate are some of the few best ways managers can handle conflicts guided with proper verbal and nonverbal clues. Nonverbal codes are however very delicate and should be posed very attentively as they embody lots of meaningful information even without using words.

Communication in people management does not simply restrict to speaking, listening, reading or writing. Its realm is vast and fascinating. Interestingly, much of the communication i.e. about two-third of the total communication in people management is executed through nonverbal communication which uses wordless message to convey information. While managers have to look after people and deal with them, it is quintessential to comprehend the relevance of nonverbal communication in managing people.

People management requires every day face to face communication which is associated with numerous facial expressions, gestures, postures commonly termed as body language. Other forms of nonverbal communication with staff and co-workers include maintaining distance, managing time, eye movements, tone or voice and many more. Each time he does any activity, a code is delivered. For example - when a manager makes firm handshakes and looks into the eye of the employees that suggests he/she is quite confident and eager to discuss any issue or quite positive in solving problems. When he/she maintains physical distance from another employee that suggests the receiver is a senior and that the manager is conveying respect. When a manager uses a soft tone and low voice, it suggests that the receiver's message is important and that the manager is willing to discuss on the same. A straight upright posture establishes authority and attention. A manager can definitely

use the best of time to manage time and to avoid stress which suggests that he/she possesses good time management skills. Other examples include appropriate use of facial expressions on different occasions. Griffin, in his book *Fundamentals of Management*, provides a befitting example as he elucidates the importance of facial expression. He exemplifies "giving an employee good news about a reward with the wrong nonverbal cues can destroy the reinforcement value of the reward. Likewise, reprimanding an employee but providing inconsistent nonverbal cues can limit the effectiveness of the sanctions" (GRIFFIN, 2007).

All in all, using appropriate body language and clear nonverbal clues people management becomes less stressful and conveys a lot about the personality of the manager. It also suggests that the organisation can depend upon the manager when needed. Communication has multitudinous benefits. Both verbal and nonverbal communication, if properly consigned, can promote strong interactions among both internal and external parties.

### **3.EFFECTIVE PEOPLE MANAGEMENT MANIFESTS ON EMPATHY**

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Studies are replete with examples which prove that managers who lack empathy cannot become effective managers. It is true that a manager comes daily across a variety of situations and sometimes they can be absolutely challenging. At times, a manager may feel drained out and he may lose patience to evenly pacify circumstances. This is when he/she gets defined as a bad manager. The absence of empathy becomes one of the main reasons which leads to poor interpersonal skills, further conducive to poor performance and productivity. "A formal definition of empathy is the ability to identify and understand another's situation, feelings and motives. It's our capacity to recognise the concerns other people have. Empathy means putting yourself in other person's shoes or seeing things through someone else's eyes". Empathy is one of the most essential aspects of emotional intelligence presented by Daniel Goleman in his bestselling book *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can*

*Matter More Than IQ*. Empathy is a special attribute and not all managers are empathetic. However, it is an ability that can be attained through practice.

Employees want their efforts at the workplace to be recognised or at least managers must discern their feelings and personal obligations. They expect the human element to be noticed and they must not be treated simply as workers. While it is significant for the managers to maintain professionalism and remain goal oriented, they must realise that employees need the basic touch of emotion and empathy. Listening to their matters, problems and helping them with solutions, motivating them on different occasions can ease the employees a lot and distress them. Studies also suggest that managers can foster the development of their empathetic skills by sparing few minutes recalling their actions and consequences and assuming what actions could have brought better consequences and so on. Hegar describes some of the characteristic features of empathetic managers. He claims "when the subordinate has trouble carrying out a directive, empathetic managers are quick to give assistance. They realize immediately that help is needed and do not let their employees down" (HEGAR, 2012).

### **4. EFFECTIVE PEOPLE MANAGEMENT SKILLS DEVELOP WITH PATIENCE**

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Managers feel the extreme pressure of organising, planning, and instructing with the aim of producing better teams and best quality work environment. Employees also feel the pressure of giving their best, appraisals, promotions that may oftentimes cause dissatisfaction and resentment. While employees too need to understand and cooperate with managers, it is the duty of managers to have a complete control on their impulsiveness. Hence, managers must efficiently control their impulse. Stein asserts "not being able to control your temper or blurting out hurtful things to others without thinking weakens relationships and makes you less effective" (STEIN, 2007).

Patience is an act of positive attitude and managers must learn to develop patience with the

purpose of delivering better performance. An interesting fact reveals that since childhood no body, no school, no authority has ever tutored us to tame our mind. However, lot of management programs since quite few years have started believing in the fact that our minds can be tamed, taught and handled easily. Besides this, our minds also have the potential to develop many such positive attributes which we ourselves are not aware of like building patience and endurance, developing calmness and tranquillity from within, empathising and bringing emotional maturity. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar in his book *Management Mantras* writes about breathing and meditation which are good for the brain and can enrich sharpness. He writes "the tendency of the mind to be in the present moment needs to be cultivated and nurtured, so that one can develop patience and sharpness. This can be done by attending to one's breath and by meditating. Breathing exercises help in improving our perception, observation and expression and this is vital for good management" (SHANKAR, 2014).

Developing listening skills can enhance patience which will empower managers to effectively manage people. In order to learn to be patient managers must seem to be interested in listening to the various complaints and grievances employees have and hence be attentive in listening to their problems. Baleson describes attentive listening "as paying attention and focusing energy on the words that are being said which include some of the nonverbal activities like facing the person and maintaining eye-contact, leaning slightly forward, maintaining open body-language, open palm gestures, unfolded arms, making appropriate facial gestures, making acknowledging noises such as yes, I see, okay, etc, having good posture and nodding head" (BALESON, 2013).

## **5. EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT SKILLS ARE ETHICS BASED**

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Managers have to play a dynamic role each day at the workplace. The decisions they make, the plans they execute, the situations they handle, the programs and teams they organise; each activity is contingent on ethics and values.

In turn, each activity influences the success of the organisation. Not only the managers but also the employees must understand and work in an ethical manner. However, as managers stand out from the crowd and create an image of role model for others, their obligation is to understand the ethical guidelines which the company sets out and thus work towards fulfilling the company's expectations. Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with guidelines and that differentiates right from wrong and good from bad. Schoeman describes ethics as "the right thing to do meets these criteria and is accurate inasmuch as ethics is essentially concerned with what is right or good: one of its core features is that ethics centres on matters that have a right-wrong or good-bad dimension" (SCHOEMAN, 2014).

Generally speaking ethics means morals like fairness, justice, honesty, courage, integrity, loyalty and many others which individuals incorporate in their value system. However, due to the moral development many values inherited, gradually get clouded behind inevitable situations and desires. At the workplace, for example one is always expected to be loyal and honest with his job and co-workers, perform fair competition, decide without being unbiased and so on are ethical. Similarly, not working to the confinement of values and morals is considered unethical or evil. Although, it is impossible for all the employees to abide by their value system and remain ethical, researches show that subsequent unethical practices at workplaces have given rise to workplace scandals since quite some time. Hence, many organisations worldwide have set ethical rules and codes of conduct to subdue unethical practices at workplace. Managers are expected to follow the principles as mentioned in the documents attentively and ensure that the staffs go by the documents equally well as the first person they will come to question to during doubts is the manager.

Studies reveal that today managers lead without any management ethics. Today the moves managers make lack criticality. In this regard the views of Petrick and Quinn signify "just as extreme overdevelopment and underdevelopment of management role

competencies can lead to negative managerial performance, extreme overdevelopment and underdevelopment of ethics competencies can subvert managerial integrity" (PETRICK & QUINN, 1997). Lack of ethics in management represents lack of ability and motivation to act morally. Managers who also take decisions sans ethics spoil the reputation of the organisation.

Hence, it is of utmost importance to create an ethical culture at workplace. Firstly, organisations must choose suitable managers who strive to nurture a workplace of ethics and values and further instruct them to guide and train employees on the same. Studies reveal that training in ethics can bring drastic changes. Team work is strengthened with equal leveraging in integrity, candour, sincerity and transparency. Apart from written codes of conduct and training programs on uplifting ethical principles at workplace, managers themselves must learn and practice to be accountable and must be agents of ethics.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Arguably, people are the core factors of any organisation. Organisations cannot do without people. It is people who concoct schemes and policies to promote organisations in achieving distinction. People in organisations are ever ready to alter the way organisations demand in order to make good things happen at workplaces. As the leaders of the organisations cannot and are not supposed to be directly abreast with the people, they choose specially attributed employees under them who can guide and build a bridge between the two extremes. However, it is also true that people at workplaces can become uncontrollable at times. They can be productive and non-productive at the same time with countless emotions and personalities. People management can thus turnout to be a fatiguing task. Hence, managers must possess special abilities with the purpose of managing people and achieving excellent outcomes.

This paper studied the underlying essentials of people management skills. The paper explored different skill sets like strong communication, empathy, patience and management based on ethical guidelines which, when accomplished by managers, can deliver high magnitude of people management at workplaces, thus creating a motivating environment and achieving incredible excellence.

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