Seeking the Calm in the Storm – Managing Chaos in Your Business Life

Introduction

Borderlessness, which is the opposite of stability, has created continuous accelerated change as well as opportunities. The International trading treaties, deregulation and transportation, have opened up new vistas of growth. Outsourcing has helped in better time and cost management. Fierce competition has become a new challenge. Huge layoffs due to restructuring, swift creation and destruction, 'adaptor die' situations are resulting challenges to cope with the competing organizations. Stress and anxiety have captured the individuals due to uncertainty; multi-tasking, demanding jobs paved no straight line path for the future. The author, with an optimistic note in her introduction, examines how best to balance individual lives with economically productive lives and she is committed to underline the need for work and life to be joined as human goal. The first ten chapters exhaustively cover the individual dealing with web speed and complicated Information Technology while the latter four chapters focus on the organizations which are trying to achieving the best fit, managing technology outcomes and projecting their progress and success in the change process while the last chapter discusses the need for balancing the individual organizations.

Efficiency is Gold, Innovation is Platinum

The author highlights that there has been overload of data, emotional overload, sensory overload and responsibility overload. In the US, 123 million people are married to their mobile phones. The jobs have become flexible and yet overloaded though the laptops, cell phones and high speed modems provide due assistance. Home offices emerged and the work is moving to the worker. Work became 'family-friendly' to take care of children, aging parents at home while simultaneously attending to work from home. Nonetheless the borderlessness made the life suffocating with 24/7 accessibility. Flood of information and high performance requirements created a situation that is too close to burn out.

The maxim "efficiency is gold, innovation is platinum" focuses on speed, change and creativity. Benchmarking is yesterday's news. Organizations need people who can imagine new products and services which were not thought of before.

Information Technology is unfortunately becoming too complicated for common person because of the over-engineered products and at times the complexity is

counterproductive. Contrarily 'simple works best' as in the case of palm handled computers (palm-pilot). But simple doesn't stay simple. It tends to get complicated and thus more expensive. The goal is that anything that works should be reliable and user-friendly.

Technology vs. Human Needs and Transformation

The technology has moved from improving productivity to creating infinite

About the Author

Dr. Judith M Bardwick is the Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at University of California. She has also written several articles on optimizing and performance, leadership and conditions necessary for the personal and business success. She is the author of the first psychoanalytic book 'Psychology of Women'. The author's best selling books include Danger in the comfort zone *and* In Praise of Good Business.

combinations such as joint ventures, mergers, partnerships, etc., though on emotional front the employees had drawbacks. Managing people relationships, team building and leadership issues posed problems. If best fit between organizations and people is achieved success follows. Therefore technology should take care of the people also. So is the case with the people's right to privacy in work. Often the monetary value of information creates intrinsic conflict between personal privacy and organizational profitability. Web-detectives can really throw open one's life open to public which at times is detrimental. The 'right to be let alone' is intruded by the technology very often.

That is why the stable organizations are rarely transformed into borderless ones thus attaching value to the basic human needs within the organization that would avoid anxiety and chronic stress. The Information Technology is not emotionally neutral, not aligned with many basic human needs and transforms reality blurring the boundaries.

In part II of the Book (Ch. 9 onwards) the author explains how to convert the vague anxiety into specific problems and address them so that the organizations can regain control over their individuals. This calls for both individual and international initiatives. The individual must be truthful and the organizations should take care of the employee's personality, ambition and character. Then only the 'best-fit' would be possible. Of course it varies depending on different kinds of organizations.

The organizations should keep the technology simple yet focused, create rules of etiquette by correcting the people part. The organizations should not leap into major changes especially where the failure chances are more and the success chances are not designed into every change effort. They should reward the angels and fire the snakes in the process.

The last chapter "Individuals: Create A Profoundly Satisfying Life" advocates the individual employee to create one's own profoundly satisfying life, to live life vividly with a sense of adventure. The 'me' goal of making money is to be combined with an 'us' goal like building the company.

The two brief annexed 'Afterwords' by J Peter Bardwick and Stephen R Hardis are quite stimulating which talk about how confidence and intuition can be helpful in managing the unmanageable systems by a social contract which implies mutual benefits, obligations, and understanding. But implementation of IT tools in different organizations has also moved away the faith of consumers as in most of the cases the organization is not able to keep its promises and has been struggling how to satisfy the employees and customers. Thus, symbiotic relationships between the organization and the individual help each other to grow naturally.

Other Issues

The book is all about how effectively the organizations and the people can keep responding to the fast paced change environment especially when Information Technology is fast changing and achieve the goals. It talks about different issues like IT has revolutionized the business as it can be done from any place but its complication cannot be ignored as simple does not stay always simple. The web speed and efficiency of IT are always the matter of concern. Technology improves the productivity of the organization and so the Information Technology does and thus has impacted the global business greatly. The organizations can make the partnerships with far

Excerpts

1. In stable times, we were occasionally overloaded. Now many people are overloaded all of the time. We have data overload, emotional overload, sensory overload, and responsibility overload.

2. The Internet destroyed the limits of the client-server technology because the Internet gives computing open standard and the possibility of an infinite number of connections.

3. Young people are the leaders of technological innovation, but they are not prepared to be the managers and executives of organizations that are larger than an informally managed, small start-up.

4. Today, fleeing from challenges and trying to stay safe is a very poor blueprint for managing in reality. People need to resist the temptation to "stay safe", to continue doing what they've already learned because it's easy and they never make mistakes.

5. Best fit, compatibility what the organization requires and the employee desires, leads to high motivation, comfort, and success. Bad fit leads to discomfort, high stress, and failure. Without best fit, the chances for success and retention plummet, with best fit, the chances for success soar.

6. The best use of IT does not come from a sophisticated understanding of IT. It comes, instead, from really understanding the needs and priorities of the business of the business. The best use of IT and the best measurements come from knowing what's most important to the business at this point in time.

away countries and the phenomena like mergers, acquisitions and alliances are now simple matters. This can help in knowing other cultures and overseas businesses and improve the revenue. Information Technology has been successful in accessing huge amounts of information and now the businesses cannot run in isolation. They can be integrated by Information Technology and the products can be advertised by portals or web sites can be marketed which help in selling the products in overseas. However, it has decreased the privacy of the social beings and created many problems like anxiety and overload to the employees concerned. But it has increased the confidence and satisfaction levels of the consumers as these IT tools serve for assessing the dynamics of the businesses at micro and macro levels. However, IT must be used as a facilitating tool irrespective of making the person slave to the system. The use of such technology depends on the types of organizations and the people working there, even if it differs among service sectors. ✠

– Dr. G S R Somayaji
Consulting Editor,
The Icfaian Journal of Management Research.
and
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Associate Consultant,
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