

Empowering TIMES



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Editor's DESK

Dear Reader,

In our daily life we are faced with myriad decision points, some simple and some complex. On many occasions we find ourselves lacking to take the optimal decision and we end up discussing the same with family, friends or external experts who help us in arriving at the right decision; in essence what we are doing is trying to gain from the best of the people around us. Similarly, businesses too face situations where a collective decision may be much more powerful than an individual's thinking. In order to maintain effective performance, organizations should practice Collaborative Decision Making and this month's Empowering Times deals in depth on this concept.

In **Thinking Aloud** this month, Prasad Deshpande tells us that organizations strategize effectively, but sometimes a disconnect arises due to a lack of effective collaboration when problems arise, thus leading to inefficient decision making. He opines that if organizations apply the principles of Collaborative Decision Making it is possible to synergize team members' individual 'bag of tricks' and turn the organization into a high performing one.

Podium this month features Mr. Rajiv Mishra, Managing Director - CLP India, who shares with us his experience of sustaining learning and development initiatives at CLP India. He asserts that Collaborative Decision Making is an invaluable management tool and certainly the way forward!

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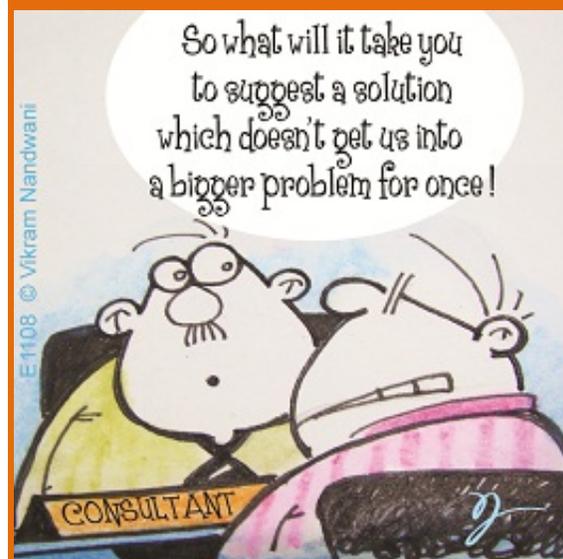
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'The Checklist Manifesto' a book authored by a surgeon, public health researcher and writer - Atul Gawande, is reviewed by Meeta Lee in ***Between the Lines*** this month. The book sends out a strong message to the reader that checklists are essential to minimize risks of ineptitude.

This month's ***Standing Ovation*** features 'ETASHA', a not-for-profit organization which provides career guidance, employability and vocational skills training to the disadvantaged, thus helping them to gain sustainable employment in the organized sector.

In ***Figures of Speech***, Vikram eavesdrops on a senior manager's discussion with a consultant!

As always, we value your opinion, so do let us know about how you liked this issue. To visit our previous issues you can visit the Media & Archives section on the website or simply [Click Here](#). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#).



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Why Collaborative Decision Making (CDM) matters more than ever - Prasad Deshpande

I read an extremely insightful article the other day by Richard Rummelt on the 'Perils of bad strategy' – an article that really got me started to think out aloud.

'A good strategy does more than urge us forward toward a goal or vision; it honestly acknowledges the challenges/problems we face and provides an approach to overcoming them. A bad strategy on the other hand has four key hallmarks - the failure to face the challenge, mistaking goals for strategy, bad strategic objectives, and fluff.'

In the organizations we work with, the lament across the halls isn't about the lack of strategy, but effective implementation by the custodians of the strategy - managers. One of the keys to successful implementation is how to solve problems/challenges that a good strategy has acknowledged. This got me reflecting on how managers in an organization actually go about solving problems and taking decisions.

Most of us, as managers, start developing our private bag of tricks right from school, university and the first job that we took, the bosses we worked with, training programs we all attended and the certifications that we have collected. This is the bag of tricks, the package of insights that we draw upon to deal with situations as they arise. We also know intuitively that we need to use the experience and knowledge of our best informed people, if we are to deal successfully with the complex problems and situations that we face.

When we start working with teams and other people or at times are forced to work in cross functional teams in matrix organizations, we assume that the others know the same things we do and are surprised when it turns out that they have different notions about working together and how to go about solving problems and taking decisions. The outcome at times is slow, built on too much consensus or not at all, the only decisions that everybody agrees to is to push the decision 'upstairs'; a frustrating process that slows implementation.

What is the solution? Working collaboratively to solve problems using a common visible process of problem solving

and decision making that allows all of us to share our private bag of tricks in a structured way which keeps things moving forward. This allows everyone in the team to bring in the best of what they have learnt and yet learn the best from others.

What are the hallmarks of collaboration that leads to decision making, what we call Collaborative Decision Making (CDM)?

- It is process driven, very visible and designed to get the best thinking from people. Managers who understand this are far ahead of other managers.
- All stakeholders are involved, everyone, period. The involvement can vary - but no one is overlooked. It could be the operator at the plant or the vendor.
- Everyone who would be working together shares a complete understanding of what is the problem situation. No more reason to say: "I didn't know that" after it is all over.
- Draws upon the experience of the best informed people. With the situation and the goal known and established, contributions are relevant and useful.
- Conclusions that were reached using a structured process represent the best thinking of the best people who know the most about the problem, beyond what any manager working alone could put forward. By best we mean anyone in the hierarchy. They work at this until they arrive at a substantial agreement.
- The focus is on working the plan and not just making the plan. The team looks at the plans for implementation with a critical eye, searching for flaws and oversights. The people who know the most about the problem now look for any reason why their actions wouldn't work.
- The manager decides but based on the best input that he can get. The quality of decision making and therefore implementation is bound to improve.

To put it simply, high performing organizations, have high performing teams who are able to sustain performance because the teams are focused on the problem, have a common way of approaching it and a common understanding of the content of the problem. It is the approach that holds teams together and not only the comfort level with each other.

The good news is that CDM can be taught and the ability to implement 'good' strategy can be increased substantially across the organization.

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Mr. Rajiv Mishra - Managing Director,
CLP India

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Mr. Rajiv Mishra, Managing Director at CLP India, is responsible for asset management and business development of CLP's investments in India. He joined the CLP Group in 2002 and has over 15 years' experience in the power industry - both in India as well as in several overseas markets - mostly involved in project financing, investment appraisal, finance and accounting and general management.

Before joining CLP Power International in 2002, Mr. Mishra was the Finance Director of PowerGen Plc's Indian operations and, on joining CLP, became the Project Finance Manager responsible for the financing of the BLCP power project in Thailand, and

continued as BLCP's Deputy Managing Director/Chief Financial Officer until July 2004.

He was previously the Finance Director of a PowerGen joint-venture in Seoul, Korea and assumed his current role of Managing Director - India in July 2005.

Mr Mishra holds a Bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from BIT Sindri and an MBA from the Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow.

ET: It has been seen that organizations often do not sustain their learning and development initiatives for a long period. At CLP, how do you address this issue?

RM: At CLP, our endeavor has been to create a culture of learning with a variety of initiatives. Recruiting the best people with diverse backgrounds is the starting point. Young Graduate Engineers and Management Trainees are given an exposure to all facets of the business for a year before they are assigned to regular jobs. For the others, opportunities to work in cross functional teams, participating in peer reviews, stretch assignments for HiPOs, a structured succession planning and development exercise besides company specific initiatives like the Young Power Program, the CLP Group Challenge, involvement in community development activities and mentoring by experienced seniors, etc., are some of the learning opportunities that are provided. Each individual is encouraged to take responsibility for and actively participate in his/her development with the leadership team helping provide a facilitating environment. This approach fosters an environment that's not only sustainable but also one that generates several innovative and relevant opportunities for our employees.

ET: In your experience, is it useful to have a common and structured methodology for solving problems and arriving at decisions?

RM: The approach to managing or addressing business issues today has undergone tremendous change over the past few years. The new breed of managers, with access to a whole new world of knowledge resources, is constantly reinventing itself and finding innovative ways to solve problems.

While a structured approach to arriving at decisions is still very relevant and useful, organizations today need to also have the ability to take quick and intuitive decisions when called for. Creating an environment that stimulates innovation and openness to diverse approaches is absolutely imperative for organizations aiming to compete in strong domestic and global business spaces.

ET: It is said that collaborative decision making will be the way forward in today's times. Please comment.

RM: That's absolutely true! At leading organizations today, you will find an invaluable diversity in backgrounds and experiences of people who, collectively, have the potential to make a magical impact.

A dynamic and complex business environment throws up several unprecedented challenges that require unconventional approaches. Collaborative decision making not only helps companies deal with these challenges but also enables innovation, which is no longer a luxury or an option!

ET: Could you please share some of the significant steps that CLP has taken in creating a culture that fosters growth and accepting challenges?

RM: Some of the significant steps in this regard include strengthening capabilities at the junior most levels, both in term of technical and managerial skills, assessment of individuals' potential and interest, giving them exposure to relevant training and development opportunities, and facilitating cross-functional movements. This ensures that we create the required leadership capabilities and bandwidth to address the challenges of a growing business. Needless to mention, like in other spheres, our fundamental approach in this space is also long-term.

ET: As part of your people development initiatives at CLP, what are the key competencies that you wish to inculcate in your leaders?

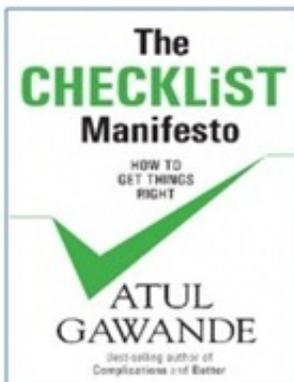
RM: Besides the ability to think (strategic and lateral), team work, superior execution skills and developing talent are key leadership competencies that I believe will help people and businesses grow. Over and above all these would be personal credibility.

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Between
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The Checklist Manifesto: How to get things right, Atul Gawande



The Checklist Manifesto by Atul Gawande conveys a simple but strong message: You are taking great risks if you don't have a checklist. He explains this by sharing war stories from the medical field. The author is a surgeon, writer, and public health researcher. He practices general and endocrine surgery at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, USA. He is also an Associate Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School and Associate Professor in the Department of Health Policy and Management at the Harvard School of Public Health.

There are mistakes we make because we don't know enough and mistakes we make because we don't make proper use of what we know. These are the two kinds of errors, the former being ignorance and the latter being ineptitude.

Gawande, through the examples in the book, highlights that failure in the modern world is about ineptitude. He writes about how the routine tasks of surgeons have become so complicated nowadays

that mistakes are inevitable. A classic example of this is how doctors skip at least one of the basic steps in more than a third of the patients. The basic steps being washing their hands with soap, cleaning the patient's skin with chlorhexidine antiseptic, putting on sterile drapes over the entire patient, wearing a mask, hat, sterile gown, gloves and putting a sterile dressing over the insertion site once the line is in. Gawande also cites examples of pilots and builders who fail to plan properly for every eventuality - all due to the lack of a checklist.

Gawande beautifully explains about the three common elements of the code of conduct followed in all occupations which are selflessness, excellence in skill and trustworthiness. The fourth one added by the aviators is discipline. According to Gawande this is the hardest of all and we all need to work at this.

The author's challenging journey for a checklist takes him to World Health Organization where the objective was to develop a global program to reduce avoidable deaths and harm from surgery. This checklist was made public on 14th Jan 2009.

"Good checklists are precise. They are efficient, to the point, and easy to use in the most difficult situations. They do not try to spell everything – a checklist cannot fly a plane. Instead they provide reminders of only the most critical and important steps – the ones that even highly skilled professionals could miss."

This is the explanation given by Daniel Goodman, a Boeing aviation checklist expert who develops lists to avert human error during flight.

The explanations of a READ-DO and a DO-CONFIRM checklist are very interesting. This book reveals the surprising power of the ordinary checklist in an ever increasing complex world, where experts too struggle to master the tasks they face. Even though, technology has grown in leaps and bounds, the serious errors cannot be prevented – all this because we fail to see how a simple checklist can do wonders and make a tremendous life-saving difference.

This book is a must read for anyone who wants to get things right. Who doesn't?

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ETASHA, A Society for 'Enabling and Training adolescents for Successful and Healthy Adulthood'



Established as a not-for-profit organization in January 2006, ETASHA (Enabling and Training Adolescents for Successful and Healthy Adulthood) provides market-oriented career guidance, employability and vocational skills training and organized sector placement to the disadvantaged. Their career guidance workshops and short-term programs equip individuals for entry-level jobs in industries such as retail, hospitality and business process outsourcing. Unlike many vocational training providers, ETASHA aims to get its

trainees started in a career and not just a job. ETASHA's part-time, short-term courses allow them to upgrade their

skills without giving up their current sources of earning.

ETASHA launched its pilot project for 19 disadvantaged young people in 2006 and since then has grown to a faculty strength of over 20, has run programs in six states across the country and is currently working in Delhi, UP and Haryana. As of March 2011 almost 2,000 young people from low socio-economic backgrounds have benefited from ETASHA's programs, being regularly placed in organized sector companies such as NetAmbit, DaVision, Reliance, Shoppers' Stop, Café Coffee Day and Giani. In their 5th year of operation, ETASHA has witnessed its students progressing through their careers to positions of seniority.

Founded by Dr. Meenakshi Nayar, ETASHA currently operates from 2 dedicated Career Development Centres, dynamic local hubs of learning in slum communities, and with NGO and Vocational Training Provider partners in other areas. Partners include Maruti, Barclays Shared Services, Aga Khan Foundation and Om Foundation.

For its purpose and its efforts, ETASHA deserves a Standing Ovation!

If you want to get more information and support ETASHA you can look up their website <http://www.etashasociety.org>, 'like' their page on www.facebook.com/etashasociety or write to etasha@etashasociety.org.

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