

CAN MAHATMA GANDHI FIND A PLACE IN TODAY'S CORPORATE AND MANAGEMENT WORLD?

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Abstract: There has been prolonged debate with some of my friends in understanding the applicability of Gandhism in the modern corporate world that talks of stocks, prices, stop-losses and margins every day. To worsen the state of their minds, a question of what is there in today's modern management principles and leadership skills, has also been started lingering around. One would have to go through the whole history to study Gandhian methods and leadership principles and come out with an answer to convince my friends who really want to know the "truth". But it could not be possible as there are very few management and leadership related books and resources during the beginning of the last century. Also, most of the practices and leadership skills are formulated only in the later part of the century. A thorough and definite understanding of Management and Leadership is required to further explore in this direction. In the above context, the current research paper tries to find out the relevancy of Gandhian principles in today's corporate world, to what extent they can be applied in Indian as well as global business houses and most importantly how can managers benefit from these principles in improving their way of working.

Index Terms - Team Building, Networking, Brand Building, Unique Selling Proposition, Ahimsa.

Introduction

The name, Mahatma Gandhi evokes the image of truth personified, who has been adored by masses and classes uniformly. He is known to be thinker, philosopher, leader, politician and many more roles for which he donned the caps simultaneously and his lessons have become all the more consistent in contemporary world. They actually act as a source of timeless wisdom which will illuminate till perpetuity. As a scholar of commerce, I see a great CEO in Mahatma. The management principles that his life teaches us, are an inherent part of current management framework.

I have always been a huge admirer of the way and the approach, how Gandhi – using civilian means – lead the heterogeneous Indian cultures towards greater solidarity, liberty, accountability, and unity standing firmly till date the gigantic potential of his people, an outcome, we quietly acknowledge today, decades later. This is what truly makes him "Bapu", the father of the nation.

If Gandhi is alive today, how would he fit himself in corporate suits to make important decisions on more important problems what the business houses facing every day? Does He do well for the bucks and perks the companies spare? Could he be capped as a true leader in the corporate sector? Do His principles still be valid in current day's electronic- enabled business world?

What made his leadership well-turned were a resolute intention and his ability to listen to the inner conscience. Both, intent and psyche were built on values like truth, justice, love, non-violence, and charity. He neither attended personality development- nor communication-, organization-, management- or leadership-trainings and lectures. What made him sturdy was his inlying voice, his faith and convictions, which were giving him pilotage and reliability, because he lived up to what he preached: one man can make a difference; strength comes not from physical competence but from an untamed will; leadership by example is most effective and impactful.

Gandhi's experiments with truth are a way to find self-management and self-reflection techniques, the prerequisites of sublime leaders. Gandhi's values, beliefs and convictions are an indication to a leader's attitude shaped by care and by profound motivation. They are also a strong means for conflict management, basically a daily reality of every manager or leader around the world. Let's take a look at some key leadership lessons any and every manager can learn from the life of Gandhi..

I. WALK THE TALK (DO WHAT YOU SAY)

Mahatma Gandhi lived a fairly undemanding life. His thought was "do as you say". Practice and preach was not distinct for him. His life was an open book which anybody could read into. Irrespective of the situation he always held up to his moral values that he used to preach any and everyone. His "walk the talk" found many admirers in British camp as well, and many swear by his integrity.

In today's organizations, people respect and give due regard to leaders whose words are no different than their actions. Companies, who have deep rooted culture of walk the talk, win over customers and prosper beyond pre-stated lines.

II. BUILD VIABLE TEAM AND WORK FOR A COMMON CAUSE

Mahatma Gandhi had built a great team of leaders hailing from diverse beliefs and ideas.

Jawaharlal Nehru, Valabbh Bhai Patel, Mahamana Madan Mohan Malviya, Abul Kalam Azad and many others worked in proximity for a common cause; independence of India. They complemented each other. The team also had mighty bench strength.

Great leaders build great teams with fellows who complement each other. It has leadership at all levels. It has great bench strength which grabs the baton and continues the race for ultimate cause. Organizations with great teams have dominant force to conquer the market.

III. NETWORK AND CONNECT WITH EVERYONE

Mahatma Gandhi was a PR agency in his own self. He knew how to push the right buttons with almost everyone he confronted. He went down to clean lavatories with harijans and stayed with the business class when he travelled. He even made himself popular when he visited England in his trademark white dhoti look. As a brand, it is important that you don't stick to one particular niche. In a country like India that banks on diversity, one must do a Gandhi and reach out to as many people as doable to achieve half the popularity Gandhi achieved in his life.

IV. MANAGE BY MIND BUT LEAD BY HEART

It is a ritual of human relations that is regarded as utmost requirement in an organization. A visionary leader perennially amplifies the relationships with his fellow employees thereby enhancing his leadership virtues. Above all, he must know how to lead them by dint of his heart. He needs to capture the hearts of the people by displaying sympathy and listening closely to them. A great leader like Mahatma Gandhi ruled the hearts of billions of people through his benevolent listening attitude. He cautiously listened to the needs of people, their worries and their struggles. He spoke words that touched deep in to the masses hearts.

V. BUILD IMPECCABLE AND HONEST BRAND

The brand "Mahatma Gandhi" is one of the most trustworthy brands which have been influencing and moving people since decades now. This brand was not built in a day but was built on several years of integrity, quality and connectivity with every single person. It had emotional connect rather than rational connect with the target audience.

Great brands commands emotional connect with its consumers. The great brands build on the impeccable platform of transparency and truthfulness. Even you are also a brand personified; the Brand You.

VI. REWARD ROUTINELY AND RECOGNIZE RELENTLESSLY

In a team-work, there are always rewards and recognitions. Visionary leaders never fail to appreciate positive behaviour and peak performance as they are linked directly to the customers. If you keep your employees' utmost happier with steady compliments, it would in turn reflect in their handling of the customers. Half of the work in achieving customer satisfaction already stands done this way.

Gandhi said "Customer is the king in your premises..." He had gone the extra mile for many of his clients to seek justice in their cases. Many of his clients then became co-workers and took active part in his rights movements. Volunteers who did work for him used to get some sort of rewards as a token of appreciation.

VII. SEE WHAT ALL SEE BUT THINK WHAT NONE THINK

Creativity and Innovation are the cornerstones that put any business in an implausible place. While executing a truly factual thought, risks and failures cannot be written-off altogether. A playground of ideas and original thoughts would help people in the workplace to nurture and flex their minds and imagination power.

"Ahimsa" or "Satyagraha" is one of the greatest innovations made by Gandhi that endures and settles any conflict even today.

VIII. ENGAGE PEOPLE

One of Mahatma Gandhi's enduring virtues is how he could manage to rally the support of the entire country for his ideas. Masses responded to him instinctively and classes exchanged favours with him all through the long freedom struggle the country participated in. Gandhi's principles, if applied at the workplace, can potentially yield identical results. Gandhi played in a league that many of us could not even dream about. He influenced and unified a diverse set of millions of people with no formal authority to win India's independence.

Gallup Inc., a research-based performance-management consulting company, has shown that engaged employees are more productive and are likely to stay with the organization. Engage them with common cause, a common goal, and a common mission which must be lived every moment by them. Engaged employees are key to greatness for organizations. Mahatma Gandhi exhibited this lesson long ago. It is still as much relevant as was at that time

IX. CREATE A KILLER USP

The term USP stands for the Unique Selling Proposition of an individual or a product. As far as Gandhi ji is concerned look at non-violence, Gandhi's most powerful weapon, as a product and think what made it so dangerous for the British. The answer is simple: fasting. If he did not like any offer from the opposition, Gandhi was quick to announce a fast and gather the support of his followers to pressurize the opposition to give in to his demands. What is your brand's killer USP? Apple has innovation, Amazon has customer service and Virgin Atlantic has a maverick attitude that makes them all winners. You need to give your own brand one killer USP to work it on the crowd and differentiate it from the opposition.

The pertinent question now is that at the end of the day, what do you get? Things are not over with the work and results. Leadership should leave a footprint which others could embrace, a sense of satisfaction in contributing to the world during the life, a purpose with a significance and distinction. Fulfilling the duties for a worthy cause stands for ever.

For the entire world, Gandhi Ji's life is a message. He left us the great principles of nonviolence, peace and truth. He left his success with billions of people who sensed what freedom is, what life is and what human is. A legacy of Gandhians across the globe would speak for him even today and forever.

Gandhi is "Mahatma", the greatest of souls. He had his soul mended and perfected to defy all insults, criticisms, salutations, appreciations, successes, failures and everything else and treat them all as one.

XI. CONCLUSION

The following points conclude the idea presented above and can be followed by managers of the present day corporate world:

- Gandhi was known for the trust he used to grant to everyone. He always saw the right things in people and firmly believed in them.
- What he developed were caring relationships which –apart from trust – were based on mutual respect for one another.
- While managing relationships Gandhi showed a great deal of integrity – towards himself and towards others, who were sometimes harshly opposing stakeholders. Like this he remained relevant, credible and worth following.
- He could openly and freely follow his path and his purpose without any hassles.
- He was a master in changing small things with an enormous effect for the big picture. This is how he reached his vision: with short term targets and great patience.

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