

The Statesman

26 December, 1999
The Sunday Statesman

'21st Century manager should be the people's man'

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Statesman News Service

CALCUTTA, Dec. 25. -"I had a dream to lead from the front, to predict the future of management, to reach the top and not find time to reflect into the past. This dream took shape and I made it across the finishing line."

Powerful words indeed, but then they are coming from Subir Chowdhury, executive vice-president of American Supplier Institute, dedicated to improving the competitive position of industries.

This 33 year-old Michigan-based VP's claim to fame stems from the fact that he is a novelist whose book, 'Management 21C,' was rated by Amazon.com as this year's best business book of Europe, above Bill Gates' 'Business@speedofthought'. Published by the Financial Times, London, the book was released a month ago and within four weeks has reached the third bestseller spot in the non-fiction category in Europe.

We spoke to Chowdhury about his book that yet to hit the Indian shores and on management in general. Some excerpts:

Question:

How did the concept of a book on management come about?

Answer:

It all started with a book I read called the Future'. Though this was touted as a comprehensive piece of work, it touched only a few sections of leadership. I felt the urge to cover a broader spectrum in the realm of leadership. This all started three years ago, when I was 30 but never let it impede me because to predict the future of management one does not have to reach the evening of his life.

Question:

The cover displays an impressive list of contributors from Peter Senge of MIT and Christopher Bartlett of Harvard Business School to Peter Moran of the London Business School. How did you manage to coordinate with 26 thinkers at the same time?

Answer:

Yes, it was not a simple proposition, but the bridge between us was constructed via the Internet. I contacted them on the net, corresponded with them, phoned and discussed ideas and concepts. I personally did a lot of research and background reading and can proudly claim they worked under me to predict the future of management.

Question:

Your book is all about what you term as the "future of management". Could you

explain this concept in a nutshell?

Answer:

What my book says is that a 21st century leader cannot be confined to the four walls of his cubicle. He has to be a people's man. Interacting with the labor is as important as taking policy decisions. Their problems have to be perceived from their angle and decisions taken after considering their opinions. My book tries to project that success can be achieved by those who transfer their weakness into strength.

Question:

In your section on talent you have said attracting talent is as important as keeping it and then you go on to state that one must constantly be on the look out for talented individuals. Could you explain?

Answer:

Getting talented persons in today's scenario is no doubt difficult but if we find someone suitable enough, we must certainly not let go of him. At the same time, we should not get complacent and end our search there. In this modern world, one has to relentlessly search for ideas and people who can make them happen. To get optimum efficiency from harnessed talent, they must be reshuffled. This gives them the opportunity to innovate, move forward and hone their skills.

Question:

You have tasted the fruits of success at an early age. Are you satisfied at this sense of achievement?

Answer:

One must have a never satisfied attitude. Just because my book is at the top today, the buck should not stop there. Now I am a somebody because what I wrote has been appreciated. After a few months, that is once the book has been brought down from the shelves, I will be a nobody. Celebrations should not be indulged in for very long. One must leave the past behind and keep moving forward. This is the hallmark of any progressive individual or society.

Question:

So, you have already started planning a new book?

Answer:

Most certainly. The ideas are all there and I am slowly building on them.