

THE HINDU

As effective as a crash MBA course, so don't miss Subir

TWO most important things for organizations are talent and environment, says Subir Chowdhury in *Organization 21C*, published by Pearson Education (www.pearsoned.co.in). In the book he brings together "28 of the world's eminent thought leaders, covering all four key drivers of organizational success."

For Subir, the main job is to create a "united talent workforce" — with people "who will work together to bring out better products faster or deploy better processes in the workplace." They excel at the routine tasks and the "high-leverage components of their jobs" too. "Talent is wasted whenever it is not recognized, developed, expressed, refined, and leveraged."

A take-away idea is that all talents are knowledge workers, but not all knowledge workers are talents. Sadly, "Knowledge workers may become talents through dedication and a well-defined goal, but most don't make the transformation." KWs (you know we're not talking about kilowatts) take orders; "they are studious and obedient people." But talents take initiative. You need, therefore, a TMS — that is, talent management system.

Also check if your company has a "global mindset". "Not all companies have to become transnational to do business across borders." Elsewhere, the book talks about "X-engineering", where x is not extra or extreme, but denotes "the crossing of organizational boundaries". "Reengineering will have seemed simple comparison. After all, that was work done within a single company whose managers were ostensibly in control. X-engineering requires a mastery of change across multiple enterprises."

A common lament is that accountability is lacking. Go one step further to look at "two-sided accountability". "Bosses practicing one-sided accountability often put a good deal of effort into getting themselves informed. They ask questions, hold briefings, conduct reviews, and diligently monitor results. In fact, they generally attempt to solicit all points of view prior to making up their minds and stipulating action. However, if a boss were to practice two-sided accountability he or she would do appreciably more."

It may sound as rhetoric but vision is a powerful source of influence, notes the book. It can move people "who would otherwise just keep their heads down and think only of their own function or projects." In today's organization, don't bet on directions from above. "More work will be accomplished by ad hoc teams and groupings, formal and informal, that will in effect choose their members. When important tasks are on the line, people will want to work with others who can actually deliver, and not just with those who look right and know which fork to use at a formal dinner."

Towards the end of the book, one comes across a "double S cub" showing four corporate forms, viz., networked, mercenary, fragmented, and communal. Networking is good, but it has its spots — such as gossip, rumor, negative politics, endless debate about measures, long meetings with no action, manipulation of communication by copying e-mails, and so on. Mercenary organizations are "focussed" but are so internally competitive that there is no time for cooperation; they are "high energy, task oriented" groups but they do "only what is measured"; and their quick response may even end in quick suicide with a final march over the cliff in step. Fragmented cultures have low sociability and solidarity; so there is no knowledge sharing.

Communal is usually a bad word, but communal cultures, as the book discusses, are passionate, committed, high energy, creative and loyal. But they may suffer from an inability to see strengths of competitors, and may rely excessively on charismatic founder figures. Wait! Have we digressed into politics? Almost as effective as a crash MBA course, so don't miss Subir.