

# The Business Of Culture As The Culture Of Business!

**It's time Indian entrepreneurs took pride in the country's rich intellectual heritage, and built it into their business culture. The Indian work culture could then, one day, become a model for the world to follow!**

**'a** culture is an organisation's collective mindset—its beliefs, intentions, and memories," said Mark Youngblood in his 1997 book, *Life at the Edge of Chaos: Creating the Quantum Organisation*. "Organisations that will survive and prosper in the 21st century will be fast, flexible, responsive, resilient, creative, balanced, and full of vitality." He calls these companies Quantum Organisations. Quantum Organisations, in direct contrast with the machine-like design of industrial era companies, operate using the principles of living systems. They are organic webs of life: dynamic, interconnected networks of relationships that are constantly learning, adapting and evolving.

Quantum or not, an organisational model based on this prophetic understanding of the new millennium business world is urgently needed today. A key ingredient for building the firm of the future is the setting up of a culture that can evolve, sustain and grow. Relationships, learning, adapting, evolving – are simple-to-use words – though not as simple to understand or, for that matter, to apply in a particular context. For one, the mechanistic worldview [that became the order in the industrial era] suggests the need for rigid structures. Today's realities are quite different. Relationships are being formed without any physical contact: very deep relationships are being founded on areas of common interest.

In my opinion, the Internet has promoted globalisation as a natural way of doing business in tomorrow's world. It

has also made 'individualised' infrastructure ubiquitously available. This means that the ways of working have changed from being 'mono' based to more network-oriented models. As a natural outcome, all monolithic organisations are morphing into networked enterprises; all solo endeavours are seeking interdependence.

I wonder if this could point towards building a business culture, especially valuable from my point of view, for

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small entrepreneurial ventures. Building a culture consciously, methodically and based on a value system that reflects India's ethos, history and diversity. I come from a generation that has taken pride in the American 'twang' and has been celebrating capitalism, without quite understanding that this Yankee avatar wouldn't work in India. Do we understand our own contexts? It's high time we did.

In my view, India has much more to offer besides low costs if we could do two things. First, get rid of the disposition leading to '*ji huzoori*' and, second, gain self-respect by being able to 'show' to the world the richness of India's intellectual heritage. At the risk of sounding too critical, I think the answer lies in the work culture we've come to accept. It lies somewhere in our endemic obsession with technology and our fascination for tools. We have learnt to accept that our only responsibility is to get ourselves specialised to a level.

Somehow, this narrows our potential to just remaining a headcount number for the US businessman. A commodity that he can monetise in his organisation's annual report.

In our company, we consciously built a culture based on the values I have espoused. Admittedly, we took it for granted that people who came on board along the way would automatically imbibe the founding values of our company culture. My big learning has been that one has to grab every opportunity to talk about these values while, at the same time, *living* them.

So my point here is to show the culture within a culture – my business culture within my country's culture. For centuries, India has helped shape world thinking. Concepts like '*shunya*' (zero), '*satyagraha*' (non-cooperative non-violence), '*Karma*' (motivation sans motive), and individuals such as Gautama Buddha, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Ravishankar and Zubin Mehta

have stamped enduring impressions on the world's cultures. The alluring, hand-woven carpets of Kashmir, the exquisite pottery of Khurja and the scintillating silk sari of Kanchipuram, all demonstrate a prolific unity in India's art, craft, techniques and abilities.

I am continually spurred-on by the possibilities that emerge if we combine these elements of our native ethnic character with new global technologies. And naturally, for me, our biggest contribution to ourselves would be to retain our Indian-ness. In thought, word and deed. And to build a work culture that the world would try to emulate as a tribute to the richest civilisation in the world!

On that high note I wish you, dear readers, a very happy new year! **IT**

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