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What is the future of 'work' and the 'workplace' as we know it?

The basics of management will never change. [But] managers would do well to remember that there is no replacement for diligence, even if the workplace gets increasingly automated. This is because human interaction is inevitable at some point or the other—either [during] purchasing, selling, receiving or spending money. So diligence can never be replaced.

I believe that as we move forward the workplace will have to be able to preserve the analytical [thinking] of managers to succeed. [This is because] technology, on many occasions, dulls the brain and makes [one] complacent. [To counter this ] human interaction should be as analytical and diligent as it was in the past. In fact this requirement increases after one has crossed a [certain threshold] where it [becomes] difficult to control processes if they are automated.

The issue today is that even though people are becoming smarter and more aware, [in some ways] they are completely dependent on technology. So even if there is some [error] with a calculator, the [user] doesn't know how to multiply on paper! In businesses, more often than not, huge losses happen if these things are not [observed].

Given the rampant invasion of technology in learning and education, what do you think is the future of human interaction and personal mentorship?

In a country such as India, there is an increasing requirement of high intervention and interaction between good managers, leaders and mentors. Technology dependence in education is increasing in the country. The reason is that in a place like India—and I am more [concerned] about India than the world—there are no role models or personalities [today] who will overcome [barriers] such as geographical distances to motivate and inspire people to perform better, or [inculcate] certain value systems, in the Indian business environment for the development of the country.

One of the biggest differences we see today [compared to the past] is that people are not really treating corruption or speed money as an ethical issue anymore. There are [looming] issues of individualism, selfishness, lack of team spirit and individual discipline that actually mar the Indian workplace and result in insecurity and politics. There is also a lack of a moral science and social or civil behavior. But the [right attitude] has to [be cultivated] right from [days of] schooling through higher and professional education [for it to help] these people [once they] step into the work environment.

With the automation [of technology], you can learn from [anywhere] but personal interaction and mentorship are extremely important because they actually make people understand things much better. [With only technological] communication, the more we do the less people understand. The biggest misnomer in this over-communicating world is that we feel the other person understands [what we mean to say] but the same words mean different things to

different people. So the interaction, mentorship and guidance of good mentors, managers and leaders is more than essential in this highly technology-dependent and automated world today.

### **Ten years from now, in your opinion, what will be**

the most overrated and overused management principle that will lose its relevance

The most overused management principle is that of the vision and values to be aligned in an organization. [Management] feels that with a couple of workshops here and there, [employees] will understand [the vision and values connect] easily. But in fact, leaders themselves do not live those values and visions on a day-to-day basis.

So if this [expectation from the management] continues then obviously there is a huge gap between what companies are portrayed to be and what they actually are. It also reflects in their performance and culture at the ground level.

[This attitude toward] vision and values alignment actually will let down a lot of companies [and result in] lost opportunities. Ten years down the line, many Indian corporations—big companies that are doing easy business today—will be left behind and they will then rue the fact that probably they should have aligned their people from their hearts and minds rather than only controlling them with the automation of processes.

the single most important thing that a manager will need to know in order to succeed

The single most important thing a manager should know is that action and responsibility starts with them, and that cannot be replaced by anybody. The ownership and accountability that will be majorly responsible for their growth or the organization's growth cannot be replaced by anything else.

Today if you look at Indian organizations, the middle management is the weakest. [However], the strongest part that acts as the spine of bigger organizations worldwide is the middle management. Whereas in India, the middle management, or middle manager, is more insecure [and constantly looking to] increase [their] salaries or job hop. I am generalizing but that is the trend [I see]. That is how they want to survive and progress.

But ten years down the line they would need to know that the only way to progress on a long term and sustained basis is to know that their actions, authority and responsibility go hand in hand, something the Indian middle management does not understand today.