

## Managing people at a workplace

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### ABSTRACT

People are different from machines which can be driven by switching on buttons. There are no switches which make them obey commands. Machines do not have mind and that makes them different from people. People work on machines at workplace and they do not find managing the machine difficult because machines are predictable; managing people is difficult because they are not predictable because of mind which is a source of thoughts and emotions. There is not a single rule which can be used for all the people all the time. In fact, single rule which worked once for a person will be ineffective for the same person in a different situation. There is theoretical literature available on managing people at workplace but this paper is different in the sense that the principles for managing people at workplace have emerged out of long and rich experience of working with people at workplace and learning from the interactions with them. The learnings have come out from a long journey spanning forty-five years. I do not want the budding managers to take so long for learning how to manage people. This paper is written keeping in mind the budding managers who have just started managing people at workplace and are struggling to find effective ways for doing so. I hope this paper will give them the basic skill and will provide them with a foundation and they can build over this base to become excellently proficient in managing people even in trying situations. Please take basic learnings from the contents of this paper and improve and build your strength further to prove a better manager than I was.

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We spend most of our waking hours at our workplace, more than what we spend at our homes with our families. At the workplace, we work with machines/equipment, as well as, with fellow employees. Working with machines is easy as they obey our commands with a tap on the respective switches. But the employees, human beings are not machines who will obey commands by switching on a button. Machines do not have a mind and that makes the difference. The Mind is mysterious and so are our actions because actions are propelled by thoughts and thoughts are a creation of the mind. The Mind creates a diversity of thoughts. The diverse thoughts, at different times and by different people make them difficult to deal with. Human beings become complex entities because of the diversity of thoughts. There cannot be a single method to deal with all the people at all times. Even a single person may need a different

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prompt to obey instructions at different times depending on his mental frame. Each human being is an individual with his attitudes and values which got inculcated in him through his past experiences and past environment where he prospered. We all grow in a different environment, enriching ourselves with whatever the environment and people around us offer. Society shapes us the way we would like to get shaped. With each interaction, something builds or snaps in us. There is no single rule to win over a person and make sure that he will continue to be our follower.

The man could create intelligent machines i.e., a part of the brain was simulated and put in the machine, so, we had robots and some other products imbibing artificial intelligence. But the man could not implant the mind in these machines. These did not have mind so were devoid of emotions. Lack of emotions made them predictable. They were algorithm driven-if this happens then do this and if that happens, then do that and so on.... But humans are not like that, hence, they are unpredictable. The unpredictability makes them difficult to deal with.

Still, since we are social animals, we have to live among people; more so in the workplace, which runs because of a group of people manning different processes and we have to deal with them. To move the organization forward, people have to be managed in a way that is best suited for its growth. Patrick Kim Cheng Low, Ali Yusob Md Zain, and Sik-Liong Ang (2012) in their research paper say that "Managers must be trustworthy and lead by example; they must communicate and listen to their employees while gaining their support and commitment. Furthermore, they should stand tall in face of adversity while being of high integrity so that they can galvanize a high sense of unity among their employees within the work unit."

Peter Ferdinand Drucker (1909 – 2005), an influential American writer and management consultant said in his book, "There is NOT one right way to manage people. For the 21st-century management challenges, one does not 'manage' people. The task is to lead people. And the goal is to make productive the specific strengths and knowledge of each individual." (Drucker, 1999: 21-22) According to that, a manager's most important, and most difficult job is to 'manage' people. He or she must lead, motivate, inspire, and encourage them to work according to the organizational culture and goals.

The leaders must impact and influence people to act in a manner the leader wants them to. Great leaders leading the nation have such a charisma that they can touch chords of people en-masse and reach the remotest part of the nation. I recall when I was a child my mother, a noble but illiterate lady used to often tell, "Son, don't spill salt on floor, else, God will punish you and make you lift the salt with your eyelids". It did not make a sense to me then. She, while, in village had been influenced by Gandhiji's salt movement and it had registered in her mind that salt is very precious and, hence, must not be wasted. Leaders have the capability to influence people and make them tread the line of their thinking. We, the managers, are leaders at our workplace and have to influence our employees to move them towards our organizational goals.

We at the managerial position have to manage people, our success/ failure depends amongst other factors, largely, on how successful we are in dealing with people at the workplace. Some learn it hard way by undergoing unpleasant incidents caused by none other but themselves and then take learning to improve their ability to deal with others. Some get guided by their inner instincts and form some unwritten principles in mind that they follow. But most of us learn by experience and

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that's how I learned and as I look back I have a sense of achievement that I have been moderately successful. I had no one to do hand-holding but the learning journey has been healthy and has gone on to add effective tips in my mind which had proven results in managing people efficiently. Through this paper, I want to share the same with budding managers who will find these immensely helpful in successfully dealing with people at the workplace. These will cut short the time of their becoming adept in dealing with people. These will provide them a solid foundation on which they would be able to build their approach to be a better professional than me to influence people to align them to organizational goals, in a way, better than me.

In the following paragraphs, I shall dwell on the principles for managing people at workplace which evolved in me during my professional journey.

We shall discuss each of the above principles and while discussing I shall take you along my journey of managing people for more than forty-five years, of which twenty-four years have been in the capacity of General Manager. During the long span of the period, I had to deal with people with diverse backgrounds and attitudes. Through experience, I hit upon my ways to effectively deal with them, that have resulted in evolution of the above principles. So let us begin the journey:

### ***Principle 1-Managers must lead by example***

Gandhiji practiced “Ahimsa” even when faced with British brutality before he started preaching non-violence; Narendra Modiji works hard for 18-20 hours a day before he exhorts the bureaucrats to work hard for the nation; Lal Bahadur Shastriji wanted the nation to forego one meal in a week and he did it himself. The credibility in the eyes of followers goes for a toss as soon as it becomes known that the leader is asking them to do a thing that he, himself, avoids doing.

My professional development was greatly influenced by MD of a company with whom I worked. He used to, often, say that problem with most of us is that we see but hardly perceive. On joining the company, MD took me on factory round. He would stop at a machine and tell me to see what I could observe. I am not a bad observer and I told him about the good physical condition of the machine, the attention of engineers who were working on the machine, orderliness maintained, etc... Then he asked me what are good and what are bad things which I am seeing? I told him that the machine appears to be working well, the operator is attentive and the engineers are alert on the job i.e., no one is wasting time, product coming out is of good quality, these are all good things and I do not see any bad thing. He did not comment on good things that I pointed out but on the bad side, the things which he showed me simply stunned me as to how could I miss to see them: he showed me that there was no lid on the hopper containing the fed raw material which stored raw material before feeding the barrel, thus, contamination was possible which will affect product quality; he put his hand on the floor inside the machine and showed me oil littering the floor inside the machine—it was spick and span outside the machine. He asked me to touch the machine to feel the huge vibration, indicating that something was wrong in fitment inside the machine; even the loud noise coming out of the machine was indicative of poor maintenance; the barrel movement was jerky indicative of some obstruction in its path, the product getting automatic ejected was not getting ejected 100% i.e., some pieces remained stuck and had to be manually removed by the operator. He ordered the engineer to stop the machine and take it for maintenance and when the machine was opened, we found that we were heading for a major breakdown had we not stopped the machine.

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Many times our eyes see but do not observe and perceive; important things simply do not register in our mind because we had cursorily looked at the things.

I remember here the famous experiment narrating “Invisible Gorilla” Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons, (2010) (if unfamiliar, please refer the details of the experiment in Appendix 1). My boss, with extreme observational capacity, would, never, have missed the chest-beating Gorilla if he was a candidate in the experiment.

Since he practiced intent observance, his advice for becoming alert and observant registered deeply in my mind and, believe me when I say that my subordinates in subsequent companies where I worked, were greatly surprised with my unmatched power of observation. The seeds sowed by my MD had grown and it happened because he led me by example.

Another memory from the same company rings a bell- On joining the company I found that employees were giving more importance to office timing than to the work that they were doing. As soon as the needles of the clock reached 6 O'clock (end of shift), each employee left his work irrespective of the state of the activity being done by him. Machine undergoing job change remained idle for the rest of the day because job change was incomplete and the job change crew left because office time was over. The machine being repaired by the maintenance crew could not get started in the next shift because the maintenance crew left at 6 O'clock. Even Managers left without bothering about the progress of work which they were busy in. The need of the hour was to make them stay occasionally, at least till the half-done work got completed which would have needed one or two hours extra work from them. I decided it had to change because it was absurd to see that machine became idle since people did not attend for an extra one hour. I was new and my ordering them would be laughed at. At 5.30 or so, I used to go to the machine which I knew would meet this fate and used to stand near the machine, and on the pretext of discussing and advising, I did not move away till the work was completed by them. Many times I had to stand with them for more than 3 hours after the office hours but we could save production for the next two shifts. The staff could not leave out of respect to me since I was also with them for those extra hours. Slowly it became a culture that people stopped looking at the watch and would not leave the work half-way. All this happened because I led with example.

Manager's behavior and actions are watched intently by subordinates and if there is inconsistency in our doing and preaching; it is noticed loud and clear, and then, the subordinates feel that we don't believe in what we say and the result is obvious. Our credibility is lost and we lose grip over our people, leading to leadership failure.

Thus, one important principle in managing people at work is to practice what you preach and ***lead by example***.

### ***Principle 2: Manager must be able to communicate clearly***

As a young QA officer at the initial stage of my career, once, I went to the cabin of our marketing manager; he was giving instructions to his assistant. The words that were being used by him were very difficult to understand and the framing of sentences was so cumbersome that I could not make out anything even though I am not bad at English and have fairly good communication ability. I

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do not know to whom he was trying to impress by using bombastic words. I was looking at the helpless face of the subordinate who was not able to understand a bit and out of fear and awe was not able to say so. The marketing manager finished his monologue and the poor assistant sheepishly went out of the cabin. I asked the manager whether he hoped that the instruction which he gave will be followed. He said, “Yes, why not? If the assistant wants his job intact, he will have to do it.” I insisted to know from him whether his assistant could understand what had been told to him. To this, the answer which I got left me stunned, he said, “that is his problem, I have given the instruction and he has to follow it”!!

Another incidence that comes in mind is when I was traveling to the next town and I had instructed the driver to take me to the Galaxy hall where we had a conference. Since travel would need 30 minutes, I had a short nap. When the driver woke me up, to tell that we have reached the destination, I was amused to see my car in front of Meenaxi cinema! My driver was an expert in driving, but was mentally slow and, often, he did not understand what I said, and always, I reconfirmed my command by making him repeat the command. This time I missed to do it and the result was that we reached a wrong destination. He did not receive the communication the way it was given to him.

The conference destination was near so no harm was done, but I learned a lesson that the communication, if not understood by the receiver, is no communication. The choice of words in communication must be simple so that the recipient can understand what we are saying.

In the first example, the poor assistant was unable to understand what was being said because complex words were being hurled at him.

Be simple and precise in what you want to say. Another learning is that it is important to get feedback from the listener whether he has received the communication the way you intended to convey. You can get the feedback subtly just by observing the gestures of the listener during the conversation. The gestures speak whether he understood, only, you have to be observant. When in doubt, it is not absurd to ask upfront to make him repeat what he understood as I did with my driver. The point is that we must be sure that the message is understood well by listeners and doubts, if any, must be cleared then and there. If not done then we may end up in wrong actions by the listener as was the case with my driver, which made me reach a wrong destination. It is often found that the root cause of conflict and clash was ambiguous communication that was misunderstood.

Communication must be clear and unambiguous and must be received well by the listener, and remember, “Communication is a two-way process.”

### ***Principle 3: Managers must be good listeners***

Someone rightly said, “God has given us two ears but only one tongue-so talk less, listen more”. Listening is an art and not all are proficient. Many of us like to talk but hate to listen. Most of us hear but not listen. We hear only to speak, so before the person stops talking, you take over and start talking.

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“The benefits of being a good listener has many benefits. This is especially true at work, but consider how family and social relationships could also be improved if you acquired great listening skills.

People with good listening skills are more productive, make better partners and colleagues, are better problem-solvers, and have healthier interpersonal relationships. There are some other, less obvious, benefits too. For example, purposeful listening helps with stress management, boosts confidence, builds rapport, and helps engender trust. Who'd have thought it! Learning to be an effective listener has all-round benefits, and there are no losers.” Barry Winbolt (2018)

I have found patient listening helps to build a good rapport with the speaker and he is encouraged to speak his heart out. This is the first step towards winning a person to your side. In cases where the speaker saw that the listener is hardly attentive to what is being told to him, he soon loses respect for the listener and the damage done in relationship building is not repairable. Focused listening instills more confidence in the speaker and prompts him to communicate effectively, resulting in clear communication. While in conflict/clash, people in agitated minds are incoherent and illogical in speech but if you lend them a patient hearing, soon the heat dissipates and they cool down after bursting out and they can become composed and talk sense to you and you can effectively help in conflict resolving. More on conflict resolution experiences will be shared later in the paper.

Here I wish to narrate an episode concerning me where I was at receiving end to the extent that I wept at the workplace. Normally, people remove such incidents from their memory and do not want to talk about it, not to speak of sharing in a research paper. Since learnings are hidden, I wish to talk about the episode.

I joined a group of companies in Gujarat as GM (factory operations) with a turnover of Rs20 crores which was merging with another group with a turnover of Rs 80 crores (The group ultimately reached turn-over of over 300 crores when I left it). In the turbulent transition period of being taken over, I was assigned to lead factory operations of the three local units constituting the smaller group which was taken over.

My journey started with these three local units and ISO systems got implemented under my leadership. I had no grooming on ISO systems, I learned while leading. Then we expanded and opened a unit in Himachal Pradesh and I managed factory operation of this distant unit as well. Our group took over another group of companies having two units locally in Gujarat and these also came under my control. Vice –President in manufacturing was, then recruited and under him I kept on doing good work managing 6 units. Then we consolidate two units of recently acquired group and I was the main person doing the integration, which was done successfully and the efficiency of the acquired group improved. We, then, expanded our operations at Uttaranchal and this unit was put under me. I was managing 4 local units and was also touring a lot managing two outstation units. I had grown in the organization and then suddenly a jolt came when MD phoned me and gently exploded a bomb in my ears by conveying the decision of restricting my span to local 4 units only and the outstation units were put under the direct control of vice-president.

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I was shattered and expressed my displeasure with all humility at my command. Now I could not concentrate on my work. The local units were well established and were working on systems implemented by me so the performance was not affected even with turmoil building in me. But my mental state was getting reflected in the tone of my mails and the improvement projects in the local units proceeded with a reduced speed. I sent him a long note to seek where I had gone wrong? I sought to go over to Head-quarter and talk to my MD; I was given an appointment after some requests from my side.

When I faced my MD, he was all smiles and greeted me with genuine praise of my work and for accepting his decision with dignity. His words of appreciation were so genuine that I could not control my emotions and wept and told him that when I was doing so good work then why this insult of shortening my span of control. He listened to my outburst, gave me a glass of water, patted my shoulder, and prompted me to speak out my heart. I kept on talking continuously for over half an hour and found him genuinely concerned and listening to me with due concentration without taking his eyes away from me. He was looking at me (not staring) with anxiety and genuine concern on his face. He did not make a single comment or defended his action, only prompted me to go on speaking. Every word spoken by me was touching him and was registered in his mind—I could gaze this from reading his gestures and body language. After bursting out my sentiments and finding him listening intently and showing genuine concern, I became calm. I was now in the right frame of my mind to listen to logic and appreciate it without bias.

He, then, took over. He started with accepting the blame that he should have explained to me the reasons before breaking the news and he is solely responsible for creating the situation that we are in. He reminded me that our relationship was not that of MD and a GM but was much more than that and was built on mutual respect and trust. This, indeed was true because he would, many times, discuss with me things beyond the work and would seek my views. This touched my heart when he spoke about it. He, then, explained that as an MD he had to optimize the resources that he had. He had recruited vice-president manufacturing to synergize the efforts and take organization on speedy improvement path but he was not able to effectively use his services whereas my span of control had grown exceptionally large. It was more than a year that VP was with us but he could not use him effectively. He could not, also, gauge his capacity and capability because all manufacturing was actively handled by me. He had felt that if my span of control is reduced and if I continue to work with same spirit and enthusiasm, improvements at local units will be at a higher pace and VP even though in-charge of overall operations would be able to prove his credibility if he handled some part of operations independently. The decision was taken not because of some doubt on my performance and MD accepted that he, himself, had gone wrong in not building a base before acting. He should have taken me in confidence before conveying the decision.

What could I say! I had gone with an intention of resigning after my meeting with MD but I returned back fully charged. I and MD remained in the organization and took it to the level of becoming 300 crore company and we left together when the promoters wanted to induct their family member as MD.

So that's it! What are the learning points? One major point is the MD's patience and his listening. Another point that surfaces up is the timing and way of communication. Communication must be

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done with an intent to have a desired positive impact. Good leaders always weigh pros and cons before communicating, especially on decisions of vital importance. The structure of communication is also important--- we must factor in the aspect of putting the receiver in the right frame of mind to accept the communication before the real crucial facts are discussed. In the above case, MD admitted this failure in his communication. But while dealing with my reaction of outburst, he was careful about this aspect and he did not start his communication till he had seen to it that I am brought in the right frame of mind before he started his communication. He did so by patiently listening—MD's time is very important but he knew the importance of listening in this instance and he devoted more than 30 minutes on just listening.

The major learning takeaways from this incident are – concerned listening is important for the managers and the managers must make special efforts while communicating to communicate in such manner that the desired impact is achieved, always communicate after ensuring that the receiver is brought in the right frame of mind to receive the communication. Show genuine concern through your actions and behavior. Be lavish in praise but not indulge in flattery.

More learning from the above episode in the coming paragraphs when I discuss more principles.

### ***Principle 4: Manager must have the courage of conviction***

As a leader, the manager must have the courage of conviction and must stand for his principles. Employees watch this trait in the manager and respect him when they find that their manager stands by his conviction even in difficult situations. The courage of conviction gets tested only in difficult times.

From the memory of my journey of work-life, I take out few pages from the unit which was struggling with difficult times when the workers' union had become recklessly strong and the workers were dominating the managers. The managers had succumbed to the violent pressure from the militant workers. Anyone trying to enforce discipline was manhandled. Violent demonstrations by the workers led by their union had become routine. Most of the managers had gone in their shell and were taking the escapist route and ignoring confrontation with workers. Till now, they did not attack me, maybe because I had always treated workers well and never hurt their self- respect. Slogan shouting at the factory gate was happening daily at the start of each shift.

One day, while coming to the factory from my residence in the adjoining staff colony, I and our personnel officer were caught in the mob of slogan-shouting workers at the factory gate. We were on a scooter and I was sitting on the back seat. Workers tried to topple the scooter by lifting it while we were seated and then one worker hit my back with his shoe. I had worn a sweater and the impression of his shoe got imprinted on my sweater. I saw the union president in the mob who was instigating the workers. Somehow, the personnel officer started the scooter and brought us out from the mob. My colleague requested me to let the incident go, else, we shall be inviting trouble. But I could not contain myself and my conviction to stand against injustice prompted me to report the incident to my director. My director asked me whether I shall stand by my statement of facts as narrated by me. I knew my fate of facing the fury of workers if I did that but my courage of conviction prevailed and I told him that I stand by the truth and the incident narrated is based on truth. The director reported the incident to top management. They were looking for an opportunity to crack down on the violent union and this came as a god-sent opportunity to them. They issued



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a suspension order to the president of the union at the factory gate when he came on duty in the night shift and there was chaos in the factory!! Factory workers left their work and came out of factory gate after spilling glass pieces all around in the factory; molten glass was left flowing out of furnaces creating a danger of fire, and workers went on a lightning strike. In the morning at around 5 am, a mob of over 200 workers led by the suspended president attacked the colony beating drums and shouting slogans. They destroyed whatever came on the way and headed towards my house, I was their main target. I had experienced mob fury for the first time. They forced open windows of my house and were hurling stones that damaged my TV and other items and they were trying to force open my house but could not succeed for 5 minutes, and then the police arrived. We had narrowly escaped from being eliminated by the lynching mob. The strike continued for more than nine months and ultimately all bad elements in the labour force were removed.

I don't claim to be extraordinarily brave but my conscious did not allow me to suppress my courage of conviction. After the strike, I continued to work in the organization for another nine years and I commanded great respect from the workers and my colleagues.

A trying time comes, indeed, in your working life when your courage of conviction is put to test and one has to decide whether to stand with conviction or compromise it. A true leader is one who stands by his conviction firmly! His conscience remains clear even if he has to face stiff opposition from different quarters.

### ***Principle 5: Manager must have a will to protect his people***

A manager must protect his team members the way the head of the family protects his family members. The team members perform at their best when they have faith that their leader is there to extract them from a difficult situation if they confront it. The manager wins loyalty by instilling confidence that they can fall back on him.

In the same company as discussed above where the militancy of labor was the order of the day, their hostility surfaced in one of the departments which I was heading. During the working hours, the workers used to slow the pace of work so that they could be put on overtime. We tried all tactics to persuade the workers not to resort to slow working but without success. Then I and my officer decided to stop overtime in the department.

One day, I was sitting in my cabin and I heard a commotion outside and soon my officer came running and hid under my table. He was followed by a mob of workers; I stood at the door of my cabin and stopped them entering the cabin. They were carrying sticks and soda bottles in their hands and were intending to assault my officer. I told them to go back but they were aggressive; the worker in lead told me to move out of the way and they will not spare the officer as he was bent after harming them. They told me that since I had never behaved badly, they did not want to hurt me and I should move aside. I stood firmly before them and told them they have to assault me because I am responsible for whatever my officer has done. The scuffle went for 10 minutes and ultimately the workers went away saying that they will see the officer some other time.

I do not know wherefrom I got the strength to stand to protect my officer; what if the mob had lynched me. But I was sure in my mind at that time that it was the only thing I should do. Needless

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to say that I gained the loyalty of my team and my team went full force in following my instructions and we could achieve our targets even amidst violent conditions.

As a leader, we cannot abandon our people in times of crisis even if we have to put ourselves in danger. Even though my action was a reflex action but it gave me learning that protecting our members is one of the important traits of a good manager.

### ***Principle 6: Managers must be good motivators***

Chandra Shekhar, Manoj Patwardhan, and Rohit Kr. Singh (2013) maintain that "motivation lies within all with the internalized drive toward the dominant thought of the moment. Rabby (2001) says," Motivation directly links to the individual performance that gains to organization performance and acts as a catalyzer for all individual employees working for an organization to enhance their working performance or to complete tasks in a much better way than they usually do. The organization runs because of people working for it, and each person contributes toward achieving the ultimate goal of an organization."

Managers must make efforts to invigorate the motivational traits of the people working in the organization. You cannot be a good leader or manager if you are not a good motivator. My belief in motivation is reflected in the following paragraph:

Give someone a real sense of purpose, the feeling that he or she is working for a valuable, mutually important goal. That's where true motivation comes from---motivation not just to go through the motions of working, motivation to excel. So recognize people. Include them. Encourage them. Train them. Ask their opinions. Seek their advice and follow it when you can. Make them understand how valued you are. Encourage them to take risks. Give them the freedom to work as they see fit, and convey your belief in their abilities by getting out of their way. Show people that you trust, respect, and care about them. Do that, and you will be surrounded by motivated people. (Dale Carnegie in "The leader in you", p.p41, 42)

In the unit, where employees were working looking at clock, needed attitudinal change. Leading by example and giving them a sense of purpose of preventing losses by leaving work half- done did make the needed change. Once people realize that their work is important, they get self-motivated to deliver. As I mentioned that when I joined the unit, we were in the process of implementing ISO systems and all departments were involved in this exercise. At the final stage in Pre-audit, QA department got maximum number of non-conformity incidences, indicating that lot of improvements were needed in their working on systems. The QA head was shown the pre audit result and was encouraged to compete with other departments and prove his capability in the final audit which was coming in fifteen days. The QA head took it as a challenge and was motivated to excel. I had only prompted him to make him interested in implementing ISO systems and he owned it. He worked, worked and worked. He did not go to his home for next seven days and worked day and night. He worked with a clear purpose of exceling in implementing the systems in QA department.

*In final ISO audit, QA was adjudged the best department!*

Motivation came by making him have a realization that his work was important and giving him a reason to excel--- Dale Carnegie's words had come true: "The people cannot be forced to do an

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extraordinary job—he/ she will do it only if he/ she wants to---the challenge is to give him/ her a reason to want to. Get people interested in what they are doing. Truly make it theirs. They will work, work and work and then they will work more.” (Dale Carnegie in “Leader in you” p 43)

During my long work life, I worked on three mantras for motivation:

- 1) Include the employees in all parts of the process, every step of the way. Teamwork is the key and not hierarchy
- 2) People must be treated as individuals. Always acknowledge their importance and show them respect. They are people first and employees second.
- 3) Superior work must be encouraged, recognized, and rewarded. Everyone responds to expectations.

I had always looked for potential in people and could locate brilliant people who could take additional higher responsibilities. Adding responsibilities to existing executives helped in the reduction of people because one person did a job of two. It turned out to be a win-win situation for employees as well as for the management. People climbing the ladder through additional responsibilities gathered tremendous motivation. Not only them alone, others also aspired to do better to come in their category. If properly rewarded, motivation gets a tremendous boost in people. Motivated people take the organization to dizzying heights.

### ***Principle 7: Manager must be adept in conflict resolving***

We have a saying in Hindi which if translated in English would mean, “If there are vessels, they will create noise by colliding” and, “Empty vessels sound louder”. Similarly, where there are a group of people, they may clash. Persons who are hollow in character shout more.

As per Tamara Lytle (2015),” Workplace conflicts happen everywhere, and ignoring them can be costly”. Joseph Grenny informs, “Every unaddressed conflict wastes about eight hours of company time in gossip and other unproductive activities. Now multiply that by all the issues not being resolved. It is an enormous drain on an organization”

Conflicts happen in all organizations and not that all conflicts are harmful. Tamara Lytle goes on to say, “According to Michael Woodward, an organizational psychologist in the New York City area, the challenge is in figuring out which conflicts are healthy and which ones are harmful. “Unhealthy conflict is when it becomes personal and emotional. Then your judgment gets clouded,” Woodward says. By contrast, good conflict can lead to higher levels of trust. If people see that it’s OK to challenge the boss, they can question the status quo, which is better for the company.”

Conflicts sometimes arise due to misunderstanding as was the case in the episode discussed in the Listening paragraph. The conflict between me and the MD was due to a misunderstanding where I felt that something was wanting in me that prompted MD to take the decision of taking me off from managing two outstation plant, whereas the fact behind MD's decision was to effectively use Vice President and gauge his performance and capabilities. We talked about the learnings that we got from the episode which I am not repeating here. But important learnings concerning conflict resolution are pertinent now.

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The first step in conflict resolution is to put the conflicting parties in a receptive state of mind. Since both the parties are agitated and as we know, in a disturbed state of mind, the capability of rational thinking reduces considerably. If there is a mediator, then he has to act in such a way that both parties are put in a receptive state of mind before we start discussing the core issue. In the episode we discussed, there was no mediator, hence, this role was performed by MD himself. He let me speak my heart out and vent out all steam, all anger and frustration in me and he remained an attentive but passive listener. Passive attentive listening is the basic first step in the way to bring the parties in a receptive state of mind so that what we communicate, the communication is rationally received and due importance is given to our communication.

The second step is to win over both conflicting persons by understanding at least one factor in each of them where they hold strong ground and begin a discussion with those factors so that a positive atmosphere gets created and an understanding develops that mediator is not partial and would give a fair justice. Such positive factors would certainly be there on both sides because in a conflict it is not that one is absolutely white and other is absolutely black, i.e., they will have positive as well as negative aspects relevant to the conflict. In the current episode since the role of mediator was played by MD himself; he found the positivity in me that my performance was not the cause for his decision; he was happy with my performance and this he told with all genuineness and force at his command. Searching a positive trait in both the conflicting persons is of paramount importance for the mediator to be successful in resolving the conflict. As soon as MD made this comment, my worries and apprehensions disappeared and there was a good relief in me which developed a curiosity in me to hear him out on what other reason could be there behind MD's decision. The simple act of easing up my mind had ensured MD that half the battle was won. So will be the case when there is a mediator.

While listening patiently, the mediator has to keep on analyzing the negative actions on either side which could have triggered the conflict. When both the conflicting sides are put in a state of mind where they can think logically then the mediator should gently draw their attention to the negative factors which could have resulted in the conflict and encourage both of them to counter each other. The mediator should only facilitate them solving through healthy and logical arguments between two of them. He should be tactful to keep the arguments proceeding on positive lines and if getting derailed he has to intervene and do proper, rational, and meaningful counseling to bring back the discussions on a positive plane. Mostly the conflicting persons themselves find out solutions through active participation of the mediator and are made to realize where each of them had gone wrong. The mediator must make sure to be only a facilitator for reaching a solution and nothing beyond that, he should refrain from being judgmental, else, one of the party would think that he has not been fair to him.

In the episode under discussions, there was no mediator but since MD had put me in a state where my mind was relaxed, he could easily convince me about his side of the story. It was magnanimous on his part for admitting his mistake that he announced the decision without first convincing me.

There could be more ways to resolve the conflict but the steps that I discussed are the bare minimum steps that have got to be taken.

***Principle 8: Manager must be fair and consistent in their actions***

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The employees take their managers as their role models and, naturally, they expect them to be fair and consistent in dealing with them. This is a big responsibility on the part of managers. Many managers forget their earlier decision to the problem when someone had previously brought the same problem to them and they don't even bother to check that and then give a decision. I have found occasions when the decision was diametrically opposite or had a wide variance to the earlier decision on the same problem.

In one of the units where I worked, people noticed that some decisions on staff welfare and performance appraisal were unfair and defied the laid down policies. These indicated bias on part of some managers. Inconsistent action on the part of a senior manager was visible when the policy on allocating cars to managers as per their cadre was violated by him due to favouritism- a subordinate manager was allocated car of a higher model whereas his boss was allocated lower model car. Such inconsistency is noticed immediately by the employees and creates an atmosphere of discontent and puts respective managers in a bad light with lost credibility. There were occasions that the Blue-eyed boys were blessed with exceptional CR (confidential report) that was not commensurate with their performance level and promotion was awarded to them, bypassing a more capable manager.

People may not speak out against unfair and inconsistent actions on part of managers but discontent keeps building up and on someday, may result in an aggressive and unfortunate incident if such instances go on increasing in the organization.

This is an important principle that often takes a backseat due to short-sightedness on part of some managers and may harm the motivation of deserving employees.

### ***Principle 9: Managers must respect the self-respect of others***

Managers must never hurt the self-respect of people with whom they come in contact at the workplace. In my long career, I had been careful to treat people the way I expected to be treated in a particular situation. This was the main guiding principle to me. I always imagine being in another person's shoes when a difficult situation arose and it guided my behaviour to effectively deal with him. Self-respect is valued very high by all the people, be it a lowly worker doing sweeping in the organization or the CEO of the company. Any hit on self-respect has a devastating effect. This prevented me from indulging in reprimanding even a defaulting person in public. The Erring person needs to be reprimanded and we must do it to improve him/her. But if we do publically, the person's self-respect is hurt and he forgets the mistake for which he is being reprimanded; only thought that comes to mind is that he is being undressed in public. A blow on self-respect is the severest damaging weapon resulting in a person losing self-control and the damage is a permanent damage. On the other hand, if we reprimand in private, a person understands the mistake and promises you to improve on it.

*At this juncture it will be appropriate to say that a manager should never use the following statements which hurt the self-respect of an employee:*

**1. "You Must do What I Say because I Pay you"** This is the most annoying thing for an employee to hear. Some entrepreneurs think that employees are their personal servants. They forget that employees do not get their salary from his pocket but they get their salary from the organization and it is not the entrepreneur who pays them. Degrading an employee to the level of a domestic

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servant hurts self-respect. Your employees are not your slaves and they have certain rights and dignity while doing their work.

**2. "You Should Work Better"** It's ok if you are not able to get the desired results from your employees that you were looking forward to. But, do not go around and curse them for it or shout at them to work better. Instead, appreciate them for their efforts and ask them to put a little more for better results. Be more specific and give them the tools they need to bring the best results. Help them and make sure that they understand what you want them to understand and avoid giving indefinite instructions.

**3. "It's Your Problem, I Don't Care What You Think"** Using this phrase will leave your employees demotivated to participate in any encouraging conversation. They would prefer to keep their mouth shut and not pour in ideas as their suggestions will not be considered by you. This will create a negative environment and inhibit the growth of employees and your business.

**4. "You're lucky to have a job"** If you hire an employee, they are hired on the basis of their skills and knowledge. They do not need to be thankful to you for hiring them. Never be rude to any employee by hurling taunts like "You are lucky to have a job", it hurts their self-respect and it will make them feel unsuitable. Instead, you should show them that you are lucky to have them as a part of your business.

Speak carefully and develop a good attitude to be a real leader. When it comes to dealing with employees, take care of the above things and you will be known as the best boss.

*Self-respect is the most treasured value by each individual, never hurt self-respect.*

### ***Principle 10: Manager must possess high integrity and be ruthless when the situation demanded***

There comes a moment in our work-life when our capacity of ruthlessness is put to test when there is an inner fight that is pulling you away from doing justice to your being a manager. The penalty or punishment must be commensurate with the gravity of misdeed and must be given without emotions coming into play especially when the strong image built over years is getting shattered in face of overwhelming evidence of the crime.

I put forward a real-life episode to clarify my point. While working as GM, managing so many plants, I was very observant to identify talent and elevate talented persons to the right place and thereby maintain crisp and efficient working at a minimal cost. Multi-tasking helped to reduce the staff and was instrumental in extracting the maximum from my people. Promotions benefitted the employees and the organization was benefitted by the best outputs from employees. It was a win-2 situation for both. One executive, let us call him X, was very intelligent and innovative in his work. You give him a task and he will make a success of it and would usher in innovative improvements. Working as Manager in Injection molding, he would not only attend his assignments in the injection molding department but would, also, be observing and learning Blow molding operations. Those who know both these processes know that injection molding is a very precise process and the actions or steps in this process are well defined, logical, and precise and a person can do well even without an innovative mind, whereas blow molding is very much dependent on the skill of operators/engineers. If we say that Injection molding is Science then Blow molding is nothing but Arts. A creative and innovative approach certainly makes difference in Blow Molding. Mr X having innovative bent of mind was attracted to blow molding and soon he was participating positively in troubleshooting when problems arose in the blow molding

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process. His suggestions often were helpful in solving tricky problems. Soon he was equally proficient in both the molding processes. Because of his competence, sincerity towards work, and aptitude to learn; he had become a blue-eyed boy for middle and top management. In my mind, I had shortlisted him for a higher position if a vacancy arose in the future. And an opportunity arose when plant manager of one of the units (having both blow molding and Injection molding) left us for better prospects. Everyone felt that he is the right person to step in as a plant manager and I for sure wanted him in that position and expected that he will, through his intelligence, innovative mind, and sincerity towards work will contribute better than his predecessor. I, in my mind, had given him three months to him to prove himself. He started well but gradually after five months, the results from that unit started deteriorating and that rang a danger bell in my mind. I was anxious as well as inquisitive to find out what was resulting in a negative trend. Through my probing and my established information channels, I learned that Mr. X was not very attentive and involved in the working of the unit. His focus had shifted elsewhere. He was not the same innovative, intelligent, and devoted manager but had drifted in the wrong path of making easy money. His innovative acumen was diverted to find the sources from where he could get his hands on money, be it from labor contractors, job contractors, suppliers, or vendors. It is said that to get power is easy but it is difficult to digest power. Power corrupts easily. Mr. X had all good extra-ordinary qualities but lacked the most vital characteristic—Integrity and Honesty. I learned a big lesson that day that all brilliance is gone if integrity is lost. It was a big mistake on my part to have put him in a position that demanded a high level of integrity and I had not tested this man on this aspect. He was excelling in the role of production manager because there was no scope for him to indulge in corrupt measures.

### *What next?*

Ethics are of prime importance and my belief is that we can tolerate mistakes and improve the person but if there is a spot on character, we can do nothing; we cannot tolerate such traits in the organization. We need to be ruthless and remove the person from the system. Though it was very hard for me to lose a brilliant employee, I understood the moment had come for me to be ruthless.

I and my director confronted him with our knowledge of his misdeeds and asked him to resign. He was first taken aback, but then composed himself and told us that he hasn't done any misdeed and he will not resign and we may go forward and sack him. I just could not believe my eyes and tears came in my eyes – I had so much soft corner for this man and how he has fallen from our eyes. He had taken that stand because he thought that procedure of dismissal requires a long tedious process and we may not go on that route. But since I had decided that he has to go and go now at this very moment and I had to act swiftly. Having uttered the words that he did as above; he started moving to the door of the cabin, when I told him, " Gentleman, before you go, just listen to few words from me, if you do not tender resignation in five minutes, I and the director shall be rushing to the police and lodging a case of fraud, cheating and misappropriation of funds and not only this we shall be releasing a press statement where your name will appear in print tomorrow. Just imagine what would happen to you when news of your shady character spreads not only in your family and friend circle but, also, in this biggest hub of industries doing the same business as we do. Nobody will touch you with a big pole. At least, it is for sure that in this and the neighbouring town you will not get a job and we shall certainly make sure that it happens. As for dismissal, that option we shall take if you do not resign in the next five minutes. Now you are free to decide and free to go, Goodbye!"

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*The resignation was received in three minutes.*

Two learnings from this episode-

1. First---Manager has to be ruthless to do surgery, just as a doctor does when medications do not work.
2. Second- Integrity is the most important virtue which must be possessed by a good manager. If he is brilliant but corrupt, he has no place in a good organization. Corruption is like cancer, it eats away the company.

### CONCLUSION

I think I have covered all the aspects which I wanted to cover. When I started writing this paper, I was not sure how many principles would be there which govern a good manager; I just went on my journey through different organizations where I worked and dug up the episodes which gave me learnings on managing people and the final result of the journey is before you.

In the above paragraphs, we went through a journey that evolved the principles to manage people. Working and managing people at the workplace for more than forty-five years, I found that if one has to think about a single way which is more important than the others is to treat them the way you would like to be treated in a situation. One has to build a capacity to imagine himself in other's shoes to understand why he behaved the way he did. Once you understand this, it becomes fairly easy to influence them.

Another thing, I, as, also, all normal persons, would like to be praised lavishly for good work done and would hate being rebuked in public for our wrongdoings. I made it a governing principle to boost the morale of my peers and subordinates by praising their good work loudly across the organization but if I had to reprimand them then I did so privately in closed walls of my cabin. If a person has committed a mistake, he will take your hard words seriously, only, in closed four walls of the cabin.

Other principles are also equally important and I do not wish to undermine them. There cannot be a single principle to influence all people because people are diversely different. The people are, also, different from machines because they have minds and they can think. There are no simple buttons which when pressed will make them do things as the machines do. They have emotions that make them unpredictable and, hence, difficult to manage.

We need managers as leaders who can reach the hearts of people at work, form lowly to intellectuals and influence them en-masse, like Gandhiji did in his "Salt Movement". The above ten tools arrived at from actual working amongst people should come handy to the budding managers. I wish that you do not take so long a journey as I did, to learn. These are being given to you on a platter, please build on these and become better leaders that shall be admirably remembered by all with whom you come in contact with!!!!

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