

Abstract

Hello to *virtual workplaces* with no hierarchical reporting but teams working together in tandem through social media collaboration and network without any inhibition in contributing to innovative ideas and thought processes through platforms that promote free brain storming. Leaders today are *adapters, adopters and aligners* keeping abreast with the dynamic technological environment that has considerably reduced face to face interaction and physical meetings but yielded higher levels of engagement and connect resulting in enhanced performances and recognition. Work is evolving and ever changing and the new age leaders are agile, responsive and collaborative. The cardinal principles of leadership and organization have seen a dramatic change as tasks have replaced work and products and services have to be made available on demand. With technology invading every sphere of activity supplementing and augmenting the knowledge quotient of the people at the helm but at the same time, the Damocles Sword of replacement hanging like an Albatross's cross on these task and employee oriented leaders. Leadership style is inclusive as it has to accommodate a global workplace across different nationalities and cultures and must possess influencing abilities that move away from imposition towards sensitivity and the fine art of the power of persuasion backed by strong emotional intelligence quotient. Building trust and credibility with the team has become the crux of effectiveness more than aggression and command and control. Leadership has become a two way process of unleashing innovativeness and behaving inclusive by drawing in the arguments, advice and feedback. The inputs from the team can never be ignored or brushed under the carpet and leaders have to be facilitators and artful negotiators. Risk taking and bold initiatives form the foundation along with communication in both real and virtual space as a key tool to success.

Key words: Agility, Collaborators, Communication, Virtual

Introduction:

The competencies of leaders, today, in a domain which is witnessing a congruence of technology, intermingling of world cultures and collaboration have undergone a sea change and the market place is a witness to the exhibition of excellent interpersonal relationships aided by demonstration of traits and values. These core competencies have seamlessly been incorporated into the dynamic environment to create successful swift footed leaders who have made businesses to flourish. What is the magic wand wielded by the key leaders that have made them to be collaborators bringing value to the organization, creating teams, promoting self awareness and instant adaptability? This conceptual paper has made a concerted attempt to examine, analyse and outline the tell tale qualities of the contemporary collaborator. A deliberate pursuit in this research endeavour has resulted in the author replacing the word 'leader' with "collaborator" as business today calls for a model that is networked and so the word leader has become redundant in this massive shift. The celebrated and remarkable people heading organizations apply and engage strategies with

their uncanny ability to adopt, adapt, align and influence packed with the power punch of a fantastic vision for the future. They never stagnate and evolve with a shared approach that moves away from the traditional vertical style of leadership. This perspective of inclusiveness may mean multiplicity of leaders and not relate to a single formal leader which will encourage independent action alongside opportunity thinking, collaborative action that can be highly empowering. The single most measurement of effectiveness and leadership behaviour is undoubtedly the outcome, but the role of the members as individual small leaders cannot be underestimated and their contribution cannot be brushed aside. In today's complex agile environment dictated by technology and collaborative models successful outcomes no longer rest on identifying the turbulence in the environment and then finding solutions in the form of core competencies of leaders but on the instinctive attitude and strategic thinking brought about by engagement, team inputs and adaption. Accommodating newer thoughts that have traversed over time from the conformist to the achiever to a resilient leader who can think in multi dimensions, mindsets and outlook has become the hallmark and it is time to embrace a new cult that is truly agile, adaptable and inclusive.

Purpose and objective:

The underlying aim of this non empirical paper is to study the traits and attributes of the new leadership style that is emerging in this technology driven era with the assumption that leadership is the pivot to an organization's success.

This paper tries to understand the dynamics of collaborative leadership style attributed by four key terms – *adoptive, adaptive, agility and inclusiveness*.

An earnest attempt has also been made to analyse the mental and emotional characteristics that define contemporary styles of leadership.

The focus on the power of influence shaping the new realities of leadership's results is also attempted to be examined and understood here.

Literature Review:

The discussions in this paper is based on research papers and observations on top leaders' performances using key tactics that are an eclectic mix of experience, insights, intuitiveness and collaboration. The foundation study for this paper has been Daniel Goleman's works on leadership that has always been path breaking and innovative. The book "Emotional Intelligence" written by him in 1996 has had a tremendous influence on the contents of this conceptual paper and the author has tried to link the behavioural aspects of self to the emerging leadership traits. A threadbare analysis of the components of the contemporary traits has been made possible with the help of reference material from Primal Leadership: Realizing the power of Emotional Intelligence written by Daniel

Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee in 2002. The bulk of the insights into the development of the paper owes its credit to the works of Daniel Goleman who is Co-Director of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations at Rutgers University, co-author of *Primal Leadership: Leading with Emotional Intelligence*, and author of *The Brain and Emotional Intelligence: New Insights*, *Leadership: Selected Writings*, and *A Force For Good: The Dalai Lama's Vision for Our World*. His latest book is *Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body*.

Inferences and Rationale

It has never been easy to define the qualities of a successful leader and time and again, this question has given numerous answers and among them hard work, problem solving and decision making have stood out as the most prominent attributes to good leadership. This paper is constructed on the beliefs that leaders are both task oriented as well as employee inclined and that they have evolved over time to suit the present scenarios of technology driven businesses on the fabric of a shared economy.

- As this paper is an outcome of reports and observations, with varying perceptions, the implications of this study may be based on circumstances, situations, environment and culture.
- The cornerstone of leadership attributes is assumed to be collaborative
- The power of influence on the team which may or may not include followers is based on focus on self, spotlight on the team and at the core, the organization and its vision.
- The thrust has been on four key components of qualities required for leading today's organizations and the use of words have certain special significance.
- The word "adoptive" is chosen to stress on the acts of commitment by the leaders to the extent that they tend to almost "parent" the organization. This is understood with real life examples of great strategic thinkers of the contemporary business world.
- "Adaptive" denotes the flexibility and resilience to switch, change, modify and reboot to conform and suit appropriately.
- The perception of the author about today's leaders also includes the use of the phrase "agility" because it is believed and understood that newer business models to enhance business is a result of a threefold action that is directed from within, from outside and from the organization.
- The convention thinking of authoritarian leadership which is vertical is replaced by "inclusiveness" as reports have suggested collaborative engagement to be the watch word for today.

Analysis

Global Collaborators – Adoptive, adaptive, agile and inclusive

In the current context of global businesses propped up by technology, shared economy and virtual teams, collaboration is the buzz word that is not restricted to the confines of the organization but expands to the realm of customers, vendors, suppliers and the Government. A hyper charged environment that is ruled by connectivity and network and these new realities have dawned on the leaders who have swapped themselves from the command and control position to one of inclusiveness. Linking people, ideas and resources has become the pivotal responsibility of a leader and to strategically align with the societies is beyond doubt the consequential action. Developing crucial dyadic and networked relationships creates value addition in the form of creative and innovative ideas and alliances that could be beneficial for more than one player. The collaborative influence of leadership in behaviour and performance of group members leads to a multiplier effect that embraces different perspectives, brings an outward focus and a shared vision. The synergy of those who influence, those who are influenced and those that get the fruits of the influence is the consequence of artful manipulation, negotiation and appreciation. The shared power concept is indeed the new reality and is the soul of any organization. The fine art of persuasion and understanding of self and others, blend to take a decision whose outcome can be sweet. Researchers over 60 years have realized that convincing and consensus have yielded results to a very large extent that is intently backed by giving back what one may have received unexpectedly, using scarce tactics to increase the uniqueness and benefits, honesty, credibility and the knowledge quotient to a greater degree. The crucible of persuasive leadership is filled with the share of one's and other's achievements and credentials, consistency and negotiation with smartness. [Robert Cialdini (2001)]

Four adjectives have been deliberately selected to describe the collaborators of modern era by the author and each of them is analysed to understand the impact and consequence of these traits, attributes, actions and ideas.

The dictionary meaning of **Adoptive** is a parent who has adopted a child or a parent who is caring and parenting and it may be understood that this word definitely signifies a parent and not the child. The primary duty, responsibility of any parent is to care, nurture, ensure all round growth with utmost dedication, passion and commitment, someone who is the fountainhead of everything and superimposing this beautiful term to a leader defines the new age leader. He is a person who may or may not be the founder or creator or progenitor but automatically becomes adoptive. A Tim Cook may not be the founder of Apple Inc but a collaborative leader who is adoptive or a Shantanu Narayan who may be at the helm of affairs at Adobe

Systems or Harald Kruger of BMW or Sundar Pichai of Google Inc and the new world is full of such adoptive leaders who have carried on with the legacy of the founders and made carved a niche for themselves. The fine act of taking something as your own, embracing the system, the ideas, habits and culture with utmost commitment can best define adoptive in leadership theory. The all knowing superhero image of yesteryears has become obsolete; an image of a commanding officer who is authoritative is replaced by an adoptive collaborator in the 21st century dictated by globalization, digitization, transparency, faster and abundant flow of information. There is total involvement of the adoptive leader in a complex matrix with critical and timely thinking, collating and sharing data and information from the team members to anticipate hiccups or barriers that may impact the business. A kind of tracing the path of trajectory to rectify corrections and put the plan back on track, bringing down the gaps or deviations to reduce the friction. Working with cross cultures and diversities is the major role that an adoptive leader would be entrusted with and the differences can be enormous, particularly in the fields of biological, physical, functional, socio economic or ethnicity. It is often noticed that one is comfortable and very much compatible with similar and like minded people and can easily draw a common ground but this is no longer the ground reality of modern business or life even, as a successful leader can draw patterns from diversity and differences as in adoption. The elements of risk and uncertainties that exist in parenting a child whose background and ancestry is unknown is characteristic of daring initiatives that could be correlated to leadership; exploring uncharted seas and not doing the oft repeated successful acts of the past but simply daring to be different and not treading the road taken always and it is not often “treading” but “hopping”, “skipping” and “jumping” in the unknown path that eventually leads to the destination. These adopters do not rest on the laurels and the comfort zones but set up innovativeness to conquer the obscure.

They work from the inside out to accomplish with a shared relationship that marks out the very existence of the company, organization or Government, helping to realize the value and goodwill of the products, services, ideas or concepts that could easily turn the tide in their favour with enhanced customers. The societal reaction to these adopters who arrive early is also immense as public recognizes the dedication of the people with a clear and focussed vision. The belief of the society is entirely based on trust, loyalty and rational thinking. This is where the behavioural aspects come into play to follow the adopter like a Pied Piper; a person who has impacted lives even in small measures not with power and position but by acknowledging real ideas and expressing them at the right moment. This leader here is a giver more than a taker who does small favours that may be simple but the metric of measurement of success to this is huge.

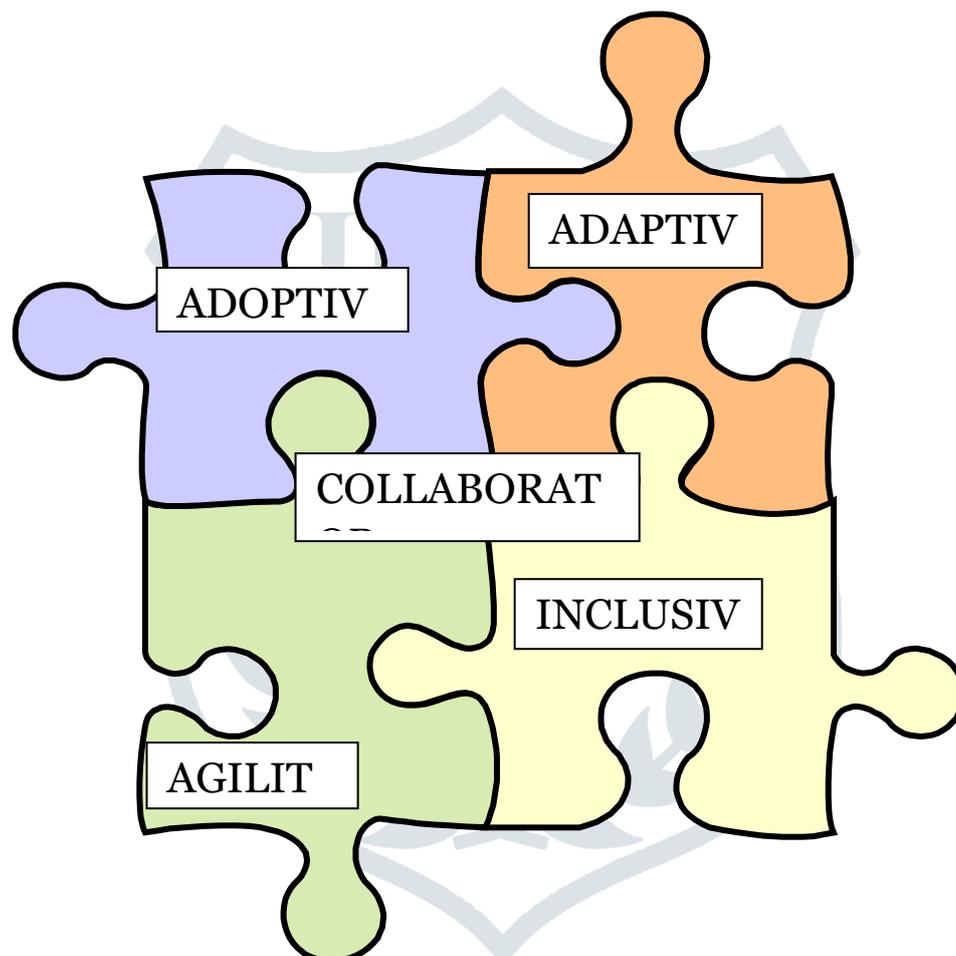
Adaptive – Transformation of the self is always exciting as there is so much to look forward to, in terms of up scaling one’s intelligence, emotional and knowledge quotient but to keep pace with the transformation of the organization at accelerated speed and velocity is a daunting task that a leader has to keep pace with. This

transformation is really exhausting and sometimes a leader cannot act unless in a crisis that makes situations more complex. There is always a tendency to look at the short term solutions and ignore the larger picture and eventually a leader may burn out in the process of change. The collaborator obviously looks at putting people first underlying the primary purpose of the organization that may push, increasing revenues as a secondary goal and the imperative maybe to deliver something inside out, that is starting from the inner core and working outward. Therefore, it matters to enable talents to be developed, enhance the capabilities to attune with the rapid changing times and habituate people to transform despite the adversities accompanying them. A right leader would use new tools, skills and techniques to overcome the barriers that may put the team on the back foot. Adaptability is to provide the required infrastructure, give the skills necessary to tackle problems arising because of the change and also to continue the collaborative process and imbibe the culture of learning. A good leader who is adaptive is beyond an iota of doubt able to take this change head on and make the environment conducive to learning. He has a road map that clearly defines where the organization will head with clear cut tasks that make the members accountable and responsible. Every milestone is reviewed and appreciated to initiate further change or revert to status quo.

Agility – In this age of radical thinking and algorithmic decision making with the interactions happening with the help of digital media and social networking, agility is synonymous with leadership. We are in an age competing not only with our rivals but there is this weird competition from computer and systems that can get more data and information, process information and take decisions at the blink of an eye without any emotions attached to it. The future of work is looming large in the horizon where machines are all set to replace humans who are supposedly more complex. How can this threat of speed and efficiency be countered? Of course, one can adapt as already stated but agility could also mean dexterity and alacrity to think differently say making the organization more human in the face of Artificial Intelligence by giving back to the society and the members or employees would be stunned at the out of the blue bounties. Next is creative agility that unsettles the conventional thinking on leadership styles such as innovation becoming the sole proprietorship of the leader. On the contrary, this agility can never come solo, it has to be a cohesive group effort backed by strong sense of advocacy for their thoughts. This means that one has to be quick footed to perceive in a new dimension and communicate this to the peer group.

Inclusive governance - Open debates and discussion that solicit opinions, suggestions, thoughts, feedback and expressions of strengths, flaws and inhibitions make up the most important criteria for testing the success of a leader in the new world order. Inclusive governance is the trademark badge that a leader would wear as even a dumb or a stupid suggestion or idea from anyone in the team could be the winning master stroke that tilts the organization towards victory. And the collaborator's job does not end there, not

definitely limited to accepting an idea openly but to implement it boldly and give due credit to the person for the favourable outcome. The strings of micro interactions in small measures with all ingenuity stamp a leader's triumphs. The artificial barriers are broken down with the connectedness established and bonded. This inclusive behaviour is one of the secret recipes for deleting autocratic hierarchical ruling. Creative and innovative thinking comes when all voices are heard however small they are. Providing that vital space is the essence of great leadership, maybe a bottom up approach that could turn a triangle upside down and the incubators for new ideas could be there.



THE GLOBAL COLLABORATOR – ADOPTIVE, ADAPTIVE, AGILE AND INCLUSIVE – AN AUTHOR'S PERCEPTION

Conclusions

Leaders are no longer directors but actors along with co performers on a stage that brings everybody on the same page and levels that are not dictated by power, position and place. The new breed cuts through hierarchy, culture, convention to create a space and domain not only for self but for all to bring out their

latent talent and release their capabilities to bring glory to an enterprise. Leaders today are collaborative and make others to feel safe and secure albeit not in a comfort zone or cocooned shells but in total trust and belief. It is the strong foundation upon which the accomplishments of leaders rest because they believe that if they do it for others; other would reciprocate in equal measures. Sense of belongingness supported by the pillars of cooperation and collaborative community exemplifies futuristic leadership. In the era where dangers lurk in every corner in the form of recession, sudden and massive changes in technology, smart rivals catching the organization off guard or simply rivalry within the organization, leadership roles have assumed greater proportions of adoptability that has a general dose of commitment, adaptability which sees transformation which is not a one off affair but a continuous one, agility relating to transformation in every dimension that ranges from technology to creativity and inclusiveness, a trait that is unmatched and non pareil!

A leader needs to reboot to be an adoptive parent more than a biological parent as the former is bundled with a conscious effort to being committed, sacrificing, accommodative, adjusting and providing the right opportunities.

The world has undergone a paradigm shift in the use of technology to communicate, a leader boosts confidence, builds trust and faith, rectifies mistakes, takes charge and control all in a virtual paradise through video conferencing, chats, E mails and other tools all working towards a shared purpose. No direct face to face interaction with sympathetic looks and a hand on one's shoulder to show rapport and with absolutely lesser amount of skill sets that his followers may have in the present era of digitization. This inversion of expertise makes the leader to face an uphill challenge to combat the ignorance and he may have to upgrade and upscale to the higher levels by learning from the lower order and this reverse osmosis of learning makes a collaborator. To be cumulative in action through inclusive behaviour is a rudimentary requirement for today's leader who operates in a zone of greater autonomy with higher mastery and faster reaction and response time. The joy and success of leadership rests on enabling oneself and others as a football coach or a music conductor would, subtly, vociferously, adroitly and harmoniously – the perfect blend of leadership styles!

Impediments to the conceptual study

The opinions, thoughts and perception are purely based on the understanding of the author and the inferences drawn are limited to the knowledge capacity of the researcher. Among the myriad variables that have a vital impact on contemporary leaderships, only four major components have been analysed in depth. As this is a conceptual study based on reports, books and essays, the hypothesis has not be proved with the help of an empirical analysis.

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