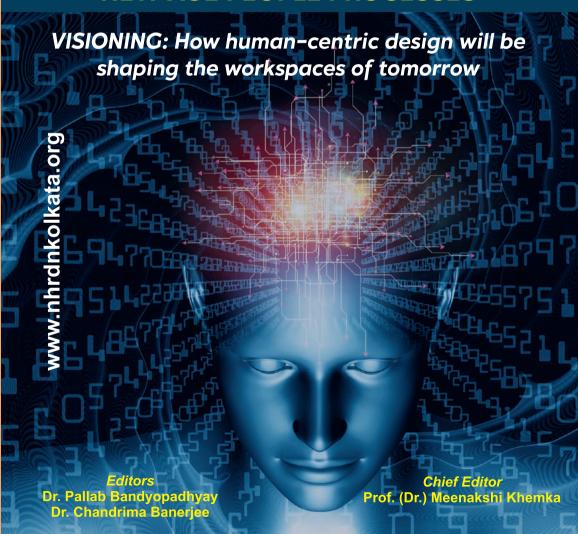


BEYOND TOMORROW

NEW AGE PEOPLE PROCESSES



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Beyond Tomorrow

New Age People Processes

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IGNITING A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP: BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

T.T. Srinath

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ABSTRACT: Creating ownership in an individual requires leaders in the organization to help the individual understand his behaviour and fundamental beliefs. The behaviour demonstrated reflects the individual's belief, which is a consequence of the experiences that have become embedded in the individual. Building an inclusive workplace facilitates the process by positively impacting the work environment and the experience.

Keywords: Ownership, Inclusive Workplace, Positivity, Iceberg Model

INTRODUCTION

As a consultant in the people area, I have often been given the brief, 'People do not seem to show ownership, neither towards the work they do nor towards the organization; how do we kindle ownership in my people?'

Ownership is a noun and may, therefore, be static. While it means to possess, it does not indicate movement or dynamicity.

Therefore, what is static may have potential, yet it can only be latent or dormant.

How does ownership, which lacks vibrancy, become dynamic and energetic?

Life's experience teaches us that 'where there is focus, there is growth.'

Hence, if we shift a person's focus to feel or know what 'owning' means, this will surely build in a person the desire and reason to 'own.'

HOW DO WE DO SO?

When I completed my postgraduate program in personal management and industrial relations at XLRI, Jamshedpur, I was recruited as a management trainee. In the interview, the CEO of the organization told me that I was the first graduate from a management school to be recruited. Therefore, he wished that I would bring freshness and offer my whole self to the growth of the organization.

I began with the belief and hope that I would be respected, appreciated, nourished, nurtured and supported.

Within a few days of being inducted into the organization, my first pushback was from the Secretary of the CEO, who told me that I was young, inexperienced and needed more organizational knowledge. I must tread carefully and not think that my ideas are better than those who have served a long time in the organization and perhaps know better.

This constant chipping at my roots happened with senior colleagues throughout the next six months. I tried as much as I could to seek time from the CEO to explain my dilemma and challenge. I found him impatient, with little time for me or my need to be heard.

Thus, within the six months that I worked for the organization, my sense of belonging and my need to be included suffered a setback, and shortly after that, I parted ways with the organization.

When I entered the organization, I felt I should do my best to help the company and its people achieve results. I was grateful for the employment and the opportunity. Yet shortly after I started working, my feelings altered, particularly towards my colleagues. I felt distant, perhaps distrusted, and suffered from a lack of empathy.

The model below explains the feelings with which I, as an employee, entered the organization and, thereafter, how my thinking altered owing to the experiences I encountered. The consequence of altered feelings impacted my sense of belonging and ownership towards the organization.



Figure 1: Feelings and Experience as an Employee

Betrayal happened when I began to feel a cog in the wheel and tended to believe that people in the organization looked at me not as a person but as an object whose purpose in the organization was merely to achieve organizational goals and not necessarily meet my ambitions. The result was:

Tal	ble	1:	Self-betraya	ıl

H I	How I saw		
How I saw myself	colleagues/organization		
Victim	Lazy		
Hardworking	Inconsiderate		
Important	Unappreciative		
• Fair	Insensitive		
Sensitive	Lousy managers		
Good Manager	Lousy workers		
Good worker			

The resultant outcome of such perceived self-betrayal for me was:

- Lack of commitment
- Lack of engagement
- Conflict
- Lack of motivation
- Stress
- Uncooperative
- Backbiting
- Misalignment
- Lack of trust
- Lack of accountability
- Communication problems

When I was trapped into being viewed by my colleagues and the organization as an object, I entered a collision course with the organization:

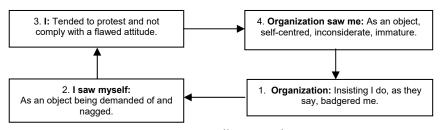


Figure 2: Collision Cycle

As I experienced constant devaluation (imagined or otherwise), my behaviour, which was impacted by my belief, tended to manifest as above.

This behaviour of mine and consequently my showing up as having a lack of ownership and a sense of not feeling belonged is best explained through an iceberg model:

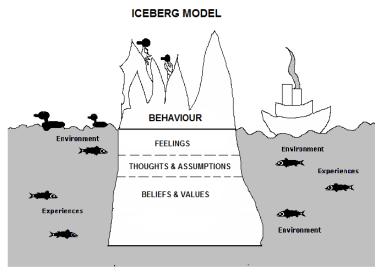


Figure 3: Iceberg Model

The model that presents itself is like an iceberg. What we see above the reflect in my behaviour waterline is behaviour. Below that are feelings that are generated in me, which. Below that are my thoughts and assumptions, which impact my feelings, resulting in my behaviour towards the organization and my colleagues. At the bottom of the iceberg are my beliefs and values, both of which are generated through my experiences and perhaps lessons I have learnt, and they affect my thoughts, assumptions, feelings, and my consequent behaviour.

When I consistently experienced rejection, I concretized my beliefs into being devalued, and my desire to be respected and nourished was compromised.

Hence, this manifested in my complete lack of ownership and sense of belonging.

Later in life, as I progressed into consulting, I became aware of the need to understand an individual's beliefs and values, which, as the iceberg model notices, form the basis of manifest behaviour.

Generating ownership and belonging in an individual is best explained by amateur theatre.

Paul Mathew, a seasoned exponent of 'Corporate Theatre', emphasizes the advantages of educating employees to appreciate how ownership and belonging can be cultivated in every person if they choose to.

In a paper that he has authored on 'Corporate Theatre and its relevance to organizations', he says that amateur theatre does not pay its actors, yet every day for almost 2 to 3 months before a play goes on stage, amateur actors show up for rehearsals at prescribed times, as rehearsals cannot commence without all actors being present. There are no stakes yet, and every actor shows commitment. This is because the actor knows he is valued and important, and his presence will make a difference to the ensemble.

Once the date of public performance is announced and the first ticket sold, irrespective of what may be an amateur actor's other priorities, the actor will have to be ready to perform as audiences have paid for their tickets and cannot be let down. This, again, is because the actor feels like a significant part of the effort and also feels a sense of belonging.

In both of the above examples, amateur actors are willing to give their time and effort and take responsibility for their part in the success of the play. They reiterate that they feel valued and a sense of belonging. They are also passionate about what they do, even if it is done voluntarily.

A famous film star and thespian from the Tamil film and theatre was a cast member of a play in which he had a prominent role. On the day of the premiere, several dignitaries and political figures came to witness the play. Two hours before the play was to commence, the actor's aged mother suddenly passed away owing to a heart attack. Despite this, the actor went on to perform in the play.

When asked what had made him perform, knowing that his mother had expired, the actor is purported to have said, "I own my role as an actor, and I owe it to my co-actors not to let them down, just as I own my role as a son and know my mother would want me to not abdicate my responsibility. At this point, my role as an actor demands that I be present."

Owning, therefore, is an 'inside-outside' process rather than the other way about.

Ownership cannot be thrust on an individual and must be evoked from within the person.

Japanese psychologist Michiko Kumano has said that *Ikigai*, a Japanese word which means 'the reason for our being; that which gives meaning to my life,' when experienced by an individual, brings a sense of well-being and a sense of fulfilment. Well-being and fulfilment are the touch points of owning.

Western psychology and its compelling theories, such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Positive Psychology, Appreciative Inquiry and Neuro-Linguistic Program, all agree on the need for an individual to experience a sense of mastery and enjoyment in whatever the person does, be it work or leisure.

Organizations that are willing to invest time and effort in developing their associates, colleagues, and employees can, therefore, infuse people with ownership so that the incumbent experiences competency, congruency, and capability.

Four questions that *Ikigai* urges individuals to ask themselves, which, when expanded, can also be employed to achieve organizational objectives, are:

- What do I love to do?
- What am I great at?
- What will I be paid for?
- What does the world need?

The Venn diagram below with four intersecting circles below explains this:

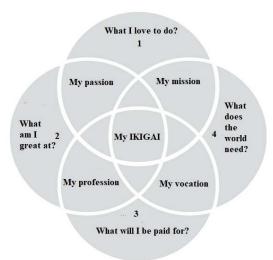


Figure 4: Ikigai

'Circle 1' may be populated with responses to the first question, and 'Circles 2, 3, and 4' may be populated with responses to questions '2,3 and 4.'

Where circles 1 and 2 intersect, i.e. 'What do I love to do?' and 'What am I great at?' reveal 'what the individual is passionate about'.

The intersection of circles 2 and 3, namely 'What am I great at?' and 'What will I be paid for?', indicates 'one's competence in the profession the individual is in.'

The intersection of circles 3 and 4, i.e., 'What will I be paid for?' and 'What the world needs?' offers individuals the opportunity to 'pursue the vocation of choice.'

The intersection of circles 4 and 1, 'What does the world need?' and 'What do I love to do?' suggests the 'mission an individual aspires to pursue.'

The point at which the four circles intersect, i.e. the central position, is the *Ikigai* or 'that which gives meaning to one's life.'

When the organization helps an individual recognize an individual's purpose, helps the individual blossom, and furthers the individual's progress and growth, the individual then discovers one's mojo.

So, how does the workplace set the tone for interactions among its members/employees and create ownership?

Organizations do this by nurturing individuals and providing nourishing values for individuals to practice in the organization. Organizational values are the principles and beliefs that guide an organization's culture and behaviour. The tone for interactions and relationships is set by the values that the organization defines and practices.

By supporting and nourishing individuals, the organization can help its members discover the connection with something bigger than themselves, experience positive emotions and peace, feel a sense of gratification, relate with harmony, give and receive with grace, and recognize the need for ownership and belongingness.

It can be a shop floor producing products, a software company, or a research institute; if it helps individuals evolve from feeling any form of self-betrayal to feeling honoured, its members will find purpose and fulfilment in what they do.

When employees feel a sense of ownership and belongingness, they keep the workspace clean and unpolluted; a front office desk clerk would look at his job as one that serves people rather than hide behind the desk; a research engineer would continually strive to find creative ways to innovate new solutions; a cost accountant would discover meaningful ways to manage costs, and a machine operator would give their best to work. Instead of being self-centric, members will be organization-centric; there will be trust, bonding and synergy.

Organizations that understand the need to marry individual competence, preference, capability and attitude with organizational requirements and can do so will surely witness an increased sense of participation, involvement, enthusiasm and perhaps ownership or a sense of owning the organization by the individual. In time, the question, 'How does one ignite a sense of ownership?' will become irrelevant.

CONCLUSION

As discussed, shared and understood expectations can lead to igniting ownership. Tapping into an individual's passion and encouraging expression will also ignite ownership. Helping individuals recognize that they are 'life's longing to be lived' and, therefore, have a purpose will help them realize they are significant. Assisting individuals to recognize their roles and their impact on the success or failure of an organization will encourage taking responsibility. Creating space for dialogue within the organization will flatten hierarchy and thus increase involvement and, with it, a sense of belonging.

#

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Gen Z. Workplace Spirituality. Talent Acquisition. Remote Working. Leadership. Artificial Intelligence. Career Management

This book is a ready reckoner for theoretical and practical guidance on the above-mentioned topics and many more. It aims to give a holistic perspective on issues surrounding the current and incoming era characterized by changing workforce demographics, hybrid working, technological upgradation, the interplay between each of these variables and the challenges involved. A wonderful combination of experience sharing, best practices, and theoretical framework; this book is a must have for anyone wanting to deeply understand the nuances of the changing times.

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