

Thursday January 17, 2019

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Hierarchy of desire in organisations

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Appreciating the various stages of evolution, which an organisation may have to go through, is very important.

Abraham Maslow is credited with having delineated human needs as being hierarchical, rising from the bottom of a pyramid, where the fundamental need is physiological to the top of the pyramid which is about self-actualisation.

In a workshop for a start-up where a facilitator was invited to help team members understand how an organisation evolved as it forayed into the world of business, he



employed an approach, the concept of which, he credited to a mystic called 'Om Swami', which spoke of what he termed 'hierarchy of desire.'

"All startups begin with desire", he said. Elaborating on the

word he then plotted the different phases of evolution of an enterprise as it moved through the various levels of "a pyramid".

At the bottom of the pyramid forming the base of an organisation is 'physical desire'. Physical desire represents the hard facts of the enterprise. This is seen as the 'brick and mortar' stage; infrastructure, physical space being created and the organisation, firm or institution being located as a tangible presence. This is most certainly true of manufacturing facilities, service facilities that need infrastructure support and even the office space required for a group of organisation persons to assemble.

Having passed that phase, the next level of desire, one notch above is 'social desire', or the need to populate the prospective enterprise with people; create a social network to foster human interaction.

Rising above this level is then 'intellectual desire', or the putting of heads together to think through needs and possibilities for the organisation or institution to become viable.

When stability has been achieved, survival and growth ensured, the next level of desire 'kicks in', of need to embody both 'transactional and transformational desire.' The transactional desire is one of maintenance and the transformational desire is to add freshness to products and ideas; in short, to bring in creativity, innovation and novelty in the offerings being made by the business.

When transactional and transformational desires are fulfilled or at least reveal a sense of consistency and the organisation is assured of survival, profit and growth, "transcendental desire" becomes a possibility, with the organisation or institution beginning to offer to pay back through programmes such as CSR, a large measure of its gains to society and the environment.

The template offered, the facilitator emphasised, was to give those participating in the start-up a perspective on how organizations evolve.

Individuals desiring to start and build an enterprise most often tend to run one level into another without recognising the current stage of their enterprise. Thus appreciating the various stages of evolution, which an organisation may have to go through, is very important.

As in Maslow's model of 'hierarchy of needs', without one level of need being met another level cannot be satisfied, similarly startups must realise that they have to 'thin slice' their task so as to move seamlessly from one level to another without distortion or interruption.

Organisations and institutions that attempt to circumvent one level will find themselves floundering.

Unless the desire for a solid, firm infrastructure is met, people who are enrolled may find themselves struggling through a maze. Unless the social desire to populate the organisation or institution with requisite talent is done appropriately, intellectual desire of ideation, development of products and process will suffer. Likewise moving up the levels will also falter if investment at each level, building from the bottom is not adhered to.

The facilitator, in offering this model for consideration, effectively communicated the marrying of two powerful ideas, namely 'needs', which most often represent a human aspiration and 'desire', which can also be a human want, yet has the possibility of 'action' embedded in it.

Those who pursue and propagate the value of creativity and innovation in organisational and institution building emphatically stress 'Desire' as the premise from which 'action' can manifest. :

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<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/specials/new-manager/hierarchy-of-desire-in-organisations/article26011116.ece>