

# ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

A MANUAL FOR EFFECTIVE AND ENGENDERED WORK PLACES

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## **About Confederation of Indian Industry**

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the growth of industry in India, partnering industry and government alike through advisory and consultative processes.

CII is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry led and industry managed organisation, playing a proactive role in India's development process. Founded over 112 years ago, it is India's premier business association, with a direct membership of over 7000 organisations from the private as well as public sectors, including SMEs and MNCs, and an indirect membership of over 90,000 companies from around 350 national and regional sectoral associations.

A facilitator, CII catalyses change by working closely with government on policy issues, enhancing efficiency, competitiveness and expanding business opportunities for industry through a range of specialised services and global linkages. It also provides a platform for sectoral consensus building and networking. Major emphasis is laid on projecting a positive image of business, assisting industry to identify and execute corporate citizenship programmes. Partnerships with over 120 NGOs across the country carry forward our initiatives in integrated and inclusive development, which include health, education, livelihood, diversity management, skill development and water, to name a few.

CII's theme of 'Building People, Building India' puts the spotlight on Human Resource Development: making people more efficient, entrepreneurial and innovative, to make India and Indian industry even more competitive, across all sectors of the economy and all sections of society, at all levels – Global, National, Regional, State and Zonal.

With 62 offices in India, 8 overseas in Australia, Austria, China, France, Japan, Singapore, UK, USA and institutional partnerships with 271 counterpart organisations in 100 countries, CII serves as a reference point for Indian industry and the international business community.

## **About Saarthak**

Saarthak, *meaningful*, is a voluntary organization working on the issues of mental health in the community. Saarthak provides mental health services to women and children in difficult circumstances in Delhi. Saarthak also helps organizations build their capacity to audit and mainstream diversity in to their processes.

## **About UNIFEM**

UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies to foster women's empowerment and gender equality. Placing the advancement of women's human rights at the center of all its efforts, UNIFEM focuses its activities on four strategic areas:

- Reducing feminized poverty;
- Ending violence against women;
- Reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls;
- Achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war.

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## **Author's Note**

It helps to bridge gaps. I see this manual as bridge to empower organizations and people who work there to start addressing the gender gap in our society. The manual addresses the gender gap at three levels.

First, helping managers recognize that the vulnerabilities faced by women whether they are rich or poor are similar. The way of thinking that gives rise to gender gap represented by foeticide, lack of access to education, livelihood and health is also responsible for the proverbial glass ceiling in the business organizations.

Second, by helping recognize that to address the gender gap in an organization one would need to know and challenge the way one thinks. Each individual through personal reflection may need to answer what gender gap means in his/her everyday life and what can be done by one as an individual to challenge it?

Third, the manual describes for the manager that being a gender sensitive organization does not mean doing some special things for women. It implies being an enabling environment for all people who work there. An environment that is collaborative, listening, flexible and evolving. It describes what each organization can do to achieve this enabling environment by focusing on the issues of work life balance and coaching skills for managers.

The manual has been written with the knowledge that there is dearth of research in India on the status of women in organizations. The manual relied on review of international best practices conducted by Ms. Ratna Golaknath, a qualitative e-consultation process facilitated by Ms. Meera Seth, Columnist, and a group of dedicated managers who supported her research and ongoing mental health services that Saarthak, a mental health voluntary organization, provides to managers in organizations. I will like to acknowledge these contributions as pivotal to advancing my thinking on the issue.

This manual is a part of a series of tools on the interface of mental health and gender produced by UNIFEM over the past few years. UNIFEM under the leadership of Ms. Chandini Joshi is a source of innovation and technical expertise for South Asia. It was a pleasure working with UNIFEM once again.

It was also heartening for me that Confederation of Indian Industry had a proactive stance to the issue of diversity and it recognized the need to address the gender gap in India Inc.

I will like to thank Ashi, my wife and friend, who edits all that I write and demonstrates how love generates patience. I see no other reason for anyone to tolerate my long winded first drafts.

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The Constitution of India guarantees equal opportunity and status to both women and men. It directs that “ women shall not only have equal rights and privileges with men but also that the state shall make provisions- both general and specific- for the welfare of women”. Despite all this, Indian women, constituting nearly half the population, are still subjected to various disadvantages and inequalities in our patriarchal society.

Giving this issue recognition and importance that it deserves, CII set up a National Committee on Women Empowerment, which proactively works towards creating an enabling environment for promoting gender equality at workplace.

In November 2005, CII commissioned a study on “Understanding the levels of women empowerment in the workplace”. The study came up with startling statistics related to the ratios of working women at workplace. It revealed that there were, on an average, only 6% working women across the organisations and this ratio further decreased in the manufacturing industry. This study reinforced CII’s commitment to carry forward initiatives that sensitise industry and create awareness on this issue. In April 2006, CII took up the project “ Prevention of sexual harassment at workplace” with the support from UNIFEM.

This manual - “Enabling Environment - a manual for effective and engendered work places” is part of a tool kit, which CII has developed under this project. In line with the catalyst role which CII plays, to facilitate India’s social development agenda, this manual will help companies to create balance and gender equality at workplace.

We would like to thank UNIFEM for supporting such an initiative.

We would also like to thank Dr. Achal Bhagat, Director, SAARTHAK, and his team for authoring the manual. We are sure that this manual will be useful to companies in understanding and responding to gender issues at the workplace.



## **Foreword**

It gives me great pleasure to pen this foreword. For UNIFEM, its association with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is a very special one, not only because it has been enduring but also because it has shown that new partnerships, like the one we have, can be extraordinarily fruitful. They mutually add value. Through this partnership, we have been able to successfully demonstrate that there is a convergence of interests between organizations working for the advancement of women and industry and that it is possible for such partnerships to have a bright future. Almost a decade ago, gender equality linked to industry, trade and commerce was a new idea. It may have seemed like an anathema then – but since then, it is one that has long been advocated for in both international and national settings – in the interests of balancing the results of globalization and sustainable inclusive development.

A range of factors have contributed to this kind of synergy on community engagement and action. In the main, increasing globalization of economies and trade liberalization and the resultant increase in inequalities and marginalization, which includes mostly women, was the driving factor. UNIFEM and CII felt the need to respond to this challenge and we shared a vision and the will to work together. That was how it all began in 1998. Over the years this has involved interactions with leaders of private sector companies, both national and multinational, on issues such as a gendered analysis of advertisements, campaigns on violence against women and on bridging the gender-based digital divide.

This culminated in the form of a MoU in 2005, paving the way for increased and active collaboration in future work for promoting gender equality in industry. Its ambit includes developing gender-sensitive responses to sexual harassment at the workplace, and tackling issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS as well as the implications of trade agreements for women's livelihoods.

This Manual is anchored in the MoU and it marks a special milestone in our journey together. It is a part of the induction package on promoting gender equality at the workplace and the creation of a healthy workplace environment. In line with the catalytic and innovative way that UNIFEM works, the Manual has been approached through the route of psychological well being.

For UNIFEM, this is a special landmark with regard to its work on mental health, which for the last five years is being integrated into its work on violence against women, including trafficking of women and children and disaster management. Mental health has emerged as a key area of concern in these situations, as no matter how much resources and how many opportunities we are able to provide, for rehabilitating victims of abuse, violence, and disaster, they would be rendered hollow and empty, if the intended recipient is not in a position to use them. To successfully make the journey from victim to survivor, a holistic response necessarily incorporates a mental health perspective. This Manual is thus a continuation of the process but with a different stakeholder group, in an effort to create efficiency, balance and gender equality at a workplace.

The Manual is extremely user-friendly. Through examples, it illustrates how to make change happen, unpeeling the layers to show how enabling working environments can be created and how even processes such as recruitment and communication audit, can be made more enabling. For this the entire credit goes to SAARTHAK, a very valued UNIFEM partner in the field of mental health, which has over the last seven years, conducted highly successful information and education campaigns for mental health under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Achal Bhagat, a leading professional in South Asia. UNIFEM has had the privilege of working with Dr. Bhagat and his dedicated team in areas of mental health in survivors of violence against women, trafficking, Tsunami affected women, and HIV/AIDS.

The Manual informs us that gender gaps have a cost and are to be found everywhere – in societies and in organizations. Informing us that engendered organizations are effective organizations, it shows how this can be achieved at the personal level and at the organizational level. Making linkages between thoughts, feelings and actions, it demonstrates the similarity between people and organizations, which are linked by patterns – patterns of thoughts and patterns of the way they work and the interplay between the various

patterns. It shows how significantly important these patterns and their interplay are, when one wants to help an organization change. Most importantly, it focuses on strategies, which can be used to make workplaces more gender equal.

We hope that this will be a useful tool particularly for corporate and business associations who are making serious efforts to address social concerns in addition to pursuing their business goals. This provides the “how to” for organizations which want to become change agents, and who would like to, like CII, not only acknowledge, but work towards making gender equality central to the dialogue in this sector. This is a dialogue, which is worldwide, as leaders of the business community are increasingly recognizing their role as partners with the Government and civil society, in pursuing social and human development.

I hope this publication will be widely used – in changing work environments and in making work places more gender friendly.

**Chandni Joshi**  
Regional Programme Director  
UNIFEM South Asia

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# 1

## I am a person! Who are you?

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### **One person, many facets**

It is interesting the way we define ourselves. I tend to introduce myself as, “Hi! I am Dr. Bhagat, I am a psychiatrist.” I recently met someone and he responded by saying, “I am not.” It made me think, “Is my only definition being a psychiatrist or is there more to me?”

So when you answer, “Who are you?” do you go beyond your profession? How would you really like to describe yourself? Would you describe yourself as a person or just by the work that you do? When you describe yourself as a person what are your predominant feelings? What are your thoughts and what are your needs?

Have you ever asked yourself a question, “Who am I?” When you answer that question you will recognize that you have multiple identities. These identities arise from your experiences. Each experience you have has a memory and you remember it in the form of your assets, your abilities, your entitlements and your violations. These experiences and memories make you unique. Your view of yourself is multiple. It is these multiple views of yourself that make you the person you are different than everyone else around. All of us strive for this uniqueness and protect it.

So my broader definition of myself will be that I am a forty four year old man, a psychiatrist by profession, who does not believe too much in religion, could vaguely be called Gandhian and is confused

about his economic ideology. I will also see myself as a fat person who has big eyes and eye lashes and who would want to be as tall as Amitabh Bachchan but matches Sachin in his height and quality of voice.

If people responded only to the first definition of 'me' i.e., my work and my gender, they would not know me. I am unique because I have multiple definitions of myself. My aspirations, my fears, my experiences, the way I think in any situation and the way I feel in any situation define me. What I feel when I see a child smiling and what I feel when I see a falling leaf is as important a definition of me as the definition that I am a man or I am a psychiatrist.

You are unique too. We all want our uniqueness to be celebrated and acknowledged.

## **Categories and Labels**

Our definitions of ourselves are not completely ours; they are determined by our society. The society's description of us is based on the categories in which it places us. Whenever a society or any system deals with more than one person it tends to categorize people into groups, thus overlooking their uniqueness. So we get described by our religion, our geographical context, our language, our homes, our work places, our professional groups and many other categories. As these categories start influencing the avenues that we have for further experiences, being grouped in a particular category starts defining our future experiences. Most definitions of ourselves tend to categorize us with other people who have the same characteristics as us. So we become Indians, Punjabis, IITians, and the Pepsi or the Coke guys in our definitions.

We get lumped together with the larger groups that we seem to obviously belong to by others around us. This lack of acknowledgment of our complete identity hurts us because it predetermines people's response to us without their knowing us. Our context judges us and assumes us to be of a certain kind and not ourselves.

Even when we reflect on our journeys through time, we also overlook our own uniqueness and start identifying ourselves primarily as members of the categories that we have been grouped under.

When we lose our sense of uniqueness, we lose the capacity to accept other people's uniqueness. This lack of acceptance of diversity in a society leads to conflict amongst sharply defined groups. If everyone in these groups were to be seen as a person with multiple identities, then the groups would not be sharply defined, and people across groups would relate with each other and accept each other.

## **Becoming Men and Women**

Over the centuries being grouped as a man or a woman has acquired similar strong connotations of power and roles. Such group identity has led to conflict and adversarial relations. Discrimination arising from the gender definitions determines our life at every step.

How do our identities get submerged into those of being men and women?

Let me take an example of my nephew Abeer and my niece Meher. They are twins and quite a delight. When they were two and a half years old they were playing in the ground one day. My niece fell down while playing and her frock flew up. My nephew, who was at this time busy being superman in another part of the park, ran towards her, pulled down her frock and said to her, "Nice girls do not do this." She quietly accepted this judgment and he looked around exalted, looking for applause for his brave deed. All of us laughed. At two and half years of age both my nephew and niece had learned that men are

the protectors of women. My niece had learned that she will be seen as “not a nice girl” if she was to be spontaneous and herself. My nephew had figured out that he had a right to control her behaviour.

This learning will be reinforced over and over again as they grow. It will be reinforced when he will get a motor bike as a birthday present and she will get a Barbie doll. It will be reinforced when he will be allowed to be out of home later at night, longer hours on the internet, while every such act of hers will be seen as evidence for waywardness.

When being a man becomes our primary identity then we carry a dual burden of being the protectors and providers at one end and the identity of potential violators at the other end. Both these are positions of power. We can hurt, discriminate, take charge or feel guilty for not being able to provide for our families and feel angry on being viewed as potential violators by the people we love. Being a man is ‘difficult’.

Being a woman one is made to conform to being vulnerable, at risk, meek, sensitive and caring. All these assumptions are restrictive at one end and exploitative at the other. Being a woman is difficult and traumatizing in a society where such assumptions prevail.

But remember, most of us want to be our multiples identities most of the times. We do not want to be restricted by our group identities. Group identities of being a man or a woman restrict us.

Let us now see Abeer and Meher growing up. They will be weighed down by what the society expects men and women to be. Abeer would believe that blue is his favourite colour and she would think of it as pink (she actually thinks purple is better than pink and for a long time he could not say blue and called it ‘bu’). He gets laughed at when he says he wants to marry Matthew who studies in his class and she has learned not to talk of marriage or any related things for the moment. He hates making presentations in class but he has to tell other children about his holiday to Dubai where they had a jeep accident. She loves spinning stories but is told to keep quiet by most of the adults around her.

They are both growing and learning. She already knows she does not want to be an engineer like her Dad because he is never at home and she knows that she wants to work like her mother because mom is more available to talk to the children. On the contrary Abeer has changed his choice of profession about fourteen times from being a pilot and dropping bombs to being Daddy or a Taxi Driver and he never hears ‘no’. The only time he was told ‘no’ was when my mother was aghast that he wanted to be a barber. Meher is not allowed such experiments. She has stayed with the idea of becoming a doctor.

The sense of hierarchy that is associated with being a man ensures that men get more avenues to express their multiple identities; women are enslaved by the rules, roles, responsibilities and assumptions that belong to the enforced group identity. The reality is that Abeer and Meher are people. All of us are people. We are human beings. We have a right to have access to avenues to express our uniqueness and not be treated as a label. Any assumption about us as individuals because we belong to a certain group excludes us from opportunities.

Abeer and Meher, like many other men and women before them, have aligned themselves to the group identities of being men and women. They think, feel and act at times as they are supposed to as men and women. Due to layers of reinforcing experiences they have forgotten what they thought, felt or wanted to do as people.

The difficulty is compounded because they like most of us do not get the opportunity to deconstruct how we have become who we are. We are comfortable the way we are because we think that is the real ‘us’. We do not even begin the journey of discovering ourselves without the group identity colouring us.

## **Becoming Managers**

Now imagine a scenario when Abeer and Meher would become managers in organizations, that is, only if Meher has not decided to be a teacher because teachers get two months' leave every year. What is the likelihood that Abeer and Meher would be treated as individuals? Would they behave as themselves or would they behave according to the expectations that they have carried with themselves for years? Abeer and Meher are likely to describe themselves as a man and a woman respectively. They would tend to lose their other identities.

Would the people around them in the organization, people who have grown with similar stereotypes of men and women, be any different than all the other adults that Abeer and Meher have met? Abeer and Meher would be in an environment that expects them to conform to being a man or a woman.

Just as it happened when she was growing up, Meher's avenues will be restricted in the organization as well. This will be done unwittingly as the history of an organization is more likely to have more men influencing the decisions. The purpose of work has been seen to fulfill male roles and not fulfill the human need of co-dependence. She is likely to be in an organization where the prevalence of masculine descriptions in the organization's processes and vocabulary decreases the avenues for women. It could be an international IT firm that asks for its new recruits to "hit form", with an illustration of a man reverse kicking a football as an image. This will restrict Meher's avenues. The way the nature of the business is described disqualifies and deselects people even before they consider it as an opportunity for themselves. When marketing is described in terms of warfare and positioning and when words "fight" and "battle" pepper the conversation about processes, the organizations are revealing their narrow definitions of how they view their marketing professionals. When a woman manager is asked for advice to buy presents for a visiting delegation because women have a 'better sense' of such things then similar biases are likely to travel to the boardroom. When important conversations happen on the Golf course or over beer it restricts Meher. She faces discrimination and the organization restricts its competitiveness and choices.

Women face discrimination because of a lack of avenues for them to express their identities as individuals. Each woman like each man has a right to this uniqueness and the right of being diverse, but her individuality gets brushed over by a repetitive description of expectations and assumptions that her context has for her, because her context is largely governed by the decisions and experiences of men. This starts very early on and she learns to recognize these forced definitions of her as the only definitions of herself.

The group identity of being a woman is always seen as comparative to men and is more often than not categorized as being weaker than a man. These group identities influence the interface that men and women have with the organizations in which they work. The organizations cannot help but be bound by the group identities prevalent in the society. The organizations thus have the capacity to be as limiting as the society of which they are a part. By restricting the men and women to being men and women as defined by centuries of history, organizations are restricting the talent and potential of their employees. They are restricting their opportunity for growth.

## **Are Men and Women similar?**

Let me ask you a different question. What is the similarity between Abeer and Meher? Is there anything similar between these two "categories" that are so obviously different? Are there similarities between men and women?

Abeer and Meher are more similar than not if they were to be recognized as people first. They have four similarities. These four similarities are constant in all human beings in this universe. These outweigh all differences that may exist.

The first similarity is that all living beings want **dignity** in their life. The second constant is that all living beings want their life to be **purposeful**. The third is that they want to be in **control** about the decisions about their life and fourth that they want **to belong and be included**. All human beings, both men and women, strive for these four goals and they have a right to achieve these goals because they are living beings. All of us are similar, whatever the group identities may be which we may be carrying around us. All of us want dignity, control, purpose and a sense of belonging in our lives. We also have our own ways of achieving these goals.

Can a person be similar to others yet be diverse from them at the same time? These similarities do not come in the way of our uniqueness being acknowledged. It is through the acknowledgement of each person as unique that these four goals can be achieved.

Unless each person is recognized as unique he or she will not be treated with dignity. Unless each person is acknowledged as unique he or she will not have opportunities to be purposeful according to his or her actual abilities. If abilities were to be assumed according to group identities the person would be restricted. If the person is not recognized as an individual then his or her need to belong will be seen as secondary to the larger responsibilities that the group has to perform, the way women are seen to be homemakers first and their need and right to be recognized as partners in a relationship are brushed aside. The person's uniqueness also determines whether he or she can participate in decisions regarding his or her own life or someone else or the rules that bind their group identity take the control away from them.

Unfortunately, for many centuries the human society has viewed some people as having a greater right of achieving these goals as opposed to others. This creates imbalances. The gender gap, the racial divide, the economic divide, the caste divide - all these gaps and divides result from people's rights being acknowledged and fulfilled to different levels. These gaps and divides also exist when people's uniqueness and diversity are undermined and submerged in the group identities.

If I told Abeer and Meher's parents that they were supporting imbalance between their two children they would not agree with me. If I told you that your organization might also be supporting this imbalance you would not agree with me. All of us think of ourselves as 'contemporary' and fair. We do not want to carry the burden of this imbalance. The imbalance still exists. It exists in our homes and it exists in our organizations.

All imbalances lead to exploitation. Gender Gap is a brutal reality in our society and is maintained by all of us. Imbalance is a way of sustaining the power and control of one gender over the other. The same imbalances that sell fairness creams also sustain human trafficking for sex; imbalances that contribute to violence ensure that women are absent in boardrooms and when they are in boardrooms they are not heard. Imbalance is not someone else's pitiable reality, it is a continuous process which we live everyday and it is even more difficult that we may be playing a pivotal role in maintaining the imbalance. The Gender Gap is not just a state responsibility; it is for each individual to challenge this gap.

Our organizations also reflect the imbalances in our society. Sometimes when the organizations do not address the imbalance it is quite possible for an organization to become discriminatory. A discriminatory organization cannot survive.

Each person is unique and wants to be treated as unique. While being treated as unique each person also does not want to be discriminated against or compared negatively with other people. An organization that provides avenues for such uniqueness to express itself is an **enabling** organization, but a society that regiments people and generates conformity is a society that stagnates.

Do you want to be an exploitative organization or do you want to be an organization that enables all people to achieve their full potential?

As human beings all of us have certain rights. We have the right to dignity and we want to be in control of our lives and decisions regarding our lives. We want to belong and each one of us has a right to pursue our own purposes.

I am a person. You are people. Each woman, each man is a person. As we are people and not 'categories' supporting imbalances, we need to challenge the inequity that exists due to such imbalances.

In the next chapter we explore the **evidence for the imbalance arising from the gender gap** in our society and in our organization.



# 2

## **The Gender Gap: Organisations that discriminate: In Societies which exclude**

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In this chapter we look at the evidence available from across the world that we are a society that discriminates against women. We also make a case that organizations and businesses which are a part of a society reflect the same discriminatory processes. Business cannot be oblivious of the society and cannot exist as an oasis. We draw parallels between the discrimination and invisibilization of women and their contribution that exists in the society with the discrimination and invisibilization that exists in an organization through the voices and lives of women.

### **Societies that exclude!**

#### **There is a gender gap**

Discrimination based on gender is prevalent in most countries. There is a gap, a palpable and measurable gap, between the resources and opportunities accessible to men versus women. India is amongst the worst twenty five countries on the dimensions of gender gap. Such discrimination has widespread ramifications and clear economic and social costs. The access of women and girls to education and health is blocked and this is detrimental to human capital development and labour force participation and therefore to individual welfare and economic growth.

## **The gender gap has an inter generational impact**

The impact of discrimination against one generation of women is carried forward across next generations, impairing the health, education and well-being of their children and grandchildren. Most women do not have any productive assets and this aspect of their status obstructs their social and economic participation and further adds to their voicelessness. Violence against women is prevalent in India to the extent of forty per cent. Fifty per cent of girl children report sexual abuse. Violence against women has life-long psychological costs, robbing them of self-esteem and aspirations.

## **The gender gap has social and economic costs**

There are social and economic costs of such discrimination. These costs are likely to be around \$42-\$47 billion a year because of restrictions on women's access to employment opportunities. Gender gaps in education costs \$16-\$30 billion a year. (Gender Gap Report for South Asia 2007) This does not include the cost of disability related to violence against women. Violence is a significant contributor to the cost of disability adjusted life years (DALYs). The brutal reality is that there are people's truths behind these numbers.

### **People behind the Numbers**

This is the story of Jaya you do not know well.

Jaya is a young girl of thirteen and belongs to a family coping with much vulnerability. She lives near your garment export unit in a temporary accommodation. Her mother, Sunita, works in your manager's home as a support worker. Her father, Rakesh, has recently been diagnosed to have tuberculosis; he also drinks a lot and is presently not being able to go for his contractual job as a mason. He spends most of his time playing cards with other men of the community under the tree. He returns home drunk on most days. Rakesh is violent with his wife and children when he is asked to take medicines.

Jaya has two brothers, Manoj who is fourteen and Sanjay who is eight. Jaya has recently been withdrawn from school as there has been an instance of acid throwing in the lane that leads to her school. Manoj and Sanjay continue their school inspite of the family difficulties. Sunita does not want more difficulties than she has. Jaya's father recently was tested for HIV/AIDS as his tuberculosis was not improving. The test comes out to be positive. Sunita too is asked to undergo the test. One day Jaya's father turns up at your manager's home looking for his wife and there is a fight there. The manager does not want such disruption to happen again and tells Jaya's mother that she should make sure that such things are not repeated. Jaya's mother offers that for some days she will ask Jaya to work in your manager's home instead of her as she will get time to sort out the difficulties. The manager and his family agree as they have no support for their children. Jaya starts working with them but is not as efficient as her mother. She makes mistakes. The manager and his family initial overlook the mistakes and then start pointing them out. Jaya feels bad about being there and misses her friends at school.

In the meanwhile, Rakesh becomes extremely unwell and the family is told by the doctor that he is not responding to his treatment. The family spends a lot of money for finding an alternative cure for him. Jaya's mother asks your manager for a loan. He gives her some money but not the whole amount that she needs because he is not sure whether she has the capacity to pay back. She borrows the rest from a money lender. Manoj leaves school at this point to join a motor mechanic to repay the loan. He also starts drinking in a few months and the money that he earns is spent mostly on alcohol and being with his friends. The mother plans to marry Jaya before her father dies. Jaya is married at the age of fourteen. Her husband works as a contract laborer at a building site where you have booked your flat. He too returns home and gets angry with Jaya when she does not give him money for alcohol. Jaya continues to work at your manager's home.

Sunita never got around to seeing the doctor. She has lost weight. Rakesh died recently. Jaya could not spend too much time with her family because she has to work hard to feed her husband's family. She is pregnant.

She gives birth to a daughter. Maybe her name is Jaya too!

The cycle starts again!

Jaya is unlikely to work in your organization but her life is linked to your reality. The discrimination and the violence her mother, she and her daughter would face are linked to a way of thinking that is not very different from the pattern of thinking that leads to discrimination of women in your neighborhood or your organization.

### **This is the story of Jaya you know well**

**Jaya** has been extremely sad for the last week. Jaya's husband Devesh is an Area Manager in a Pharmaceutical company and she works as an assistant manager in a bank. They have two children. Jaya did not want to have more children so for the past two years she had been insisting that her husband practices safe sex. Her husband did not agree and insisted that he did not feel good about using condoms. Devesh's friend was recently involved in a road accident, so he offered to donate blood for him. His blood was rejected by the hospital and he was informed that he was HIV positive. Jaya had her test done a week ago and it has come out to be positive as well.

Jaya is extremely angry with Devesh and cannot understand how this could have happened. She has not been able to say anything to him. Devesh continues to be defiant and says that the tests must be wrong. Devesh does not want to share this information with their families. Jaya does not know what they should do next. Their older child is sensing the difficulties at home. He is in his early teens and has recently started bunking school. He is quiet at home and is angry with his father. But he is also irritable with his mother and at times hits out at her. The family has no insurance. Jaya is confused because she wants to approach her parents and Devesh's brother for help, but cannot do so as she fears how Devesh may react. She also no way of convincing Devesh to seek help for his health problem.

The two Jayas are both impacted by the thinking about how women should behave in families and homes. It has a larger impact beyond the impact on the woman.

All people experience the gender gap at sometime in their life. The interface between gender and your organization is not limited to the way you recruit, retain and treat the women managers; it is how the society's way of treating women influences your organization and affects your organization that needs to be addressed.

The discrimination of women in a society is evident along the following five dimensions:

- Participation in economic activity
- Access to Education
- Access to Health
- Social impact and costs of Violence, Voicelessness and low participation
- Impacts and Costs to organizations

### **Lack of avenues for participation in economic activity**

Women are restricted from participating in economic activity equally. When they get to participate their roles are so defined that the direct reflection of the role they perform is not seen in the outputs. For

example, when fishermen from the coast of Nagapattinam go fishing the women who mend the fishing nets, organize the catch, scale it and sell it are not seen as direct part of the value chain. It is men who are seen as brave and it is they who take back resources from the business, women are supposed to work in the family business for the good of the family. Such barriers to female equality in employment raise labour costs and lower international competitiveness, preventing women from entering the market at competitive wages.

**Prachi** is a 44 year old married woman, who is an MBA from one of the premier institutes in India. She has not been working for the past ten years. She left her job to accompany her husband who got an international assignment ten years ago. At that time Prachi was in the fast track mode of her career and was considered a potential leader in the consultancy firm where she was working. Her husband moved three countries in ten years, she spent her time bringing up the children and being involved in fund raising for the local voluntary organizations wherever she was. Her husband who was her batch mate in the MBA course is now heading an organization in India.

Prachi wants to rejoin work but it is difficult for her to find work. Her commitment is questioned each time she goes in for an interview. She finds that the language of business has changed and her having worked in voluntary organizations is not considered 'work'. Prachi cannot approach any of her social contacts for work because they are known to her through her husband's work and asking them for help would be seen as a conflict of interest by the husband's firm.

Prachi is lost to the labour force. The cost of such loss is personal and societal.

Prachi is the person behind the number of 30-40% gap in male-female labour force participation rates which is common in the countries of South Asia. If the United States – with the highest female labour force participation rate (86.0%) among OECD countries – was taken as the benchmark and the labour force participation rate for Indian economy could be increased as per this benchmark India's GDP would increase by 4.2% a year and its growth rate by 1.08 percentage points, a probable annual gain of \$19 billion.

## Decreased Access to Education

The cost of decreased access to education for women is appalling. There is an increasing equality in primary school enrollment in India amongst boys and girls. The gender disaggregated data for secondary school enrollment is not available. Secondary school enrollment in any country is inversely correlated to infant mortality rate. The higher the secondary school enrollment, the lower is the maternal mortality during birth and infant mortality rate.

**Malini** is a twenty two year old young woman from Delhi. She is presently studying in the first year of a management program. She has always been a frontrunner in her studies. She is communicative, innovative and able to take decisions quickly. She is able to learn new skills and perspectives and integrate them into her work. She is also impulsive and outgoing in her personal relationships. Her parents see her as a difficult child who needs to be controlled.

She has a history of being sexually abused by her uncle's friend. When she shared this with her mother as an eight year old child she was told not to make up stories and that only bad girls had such thoughts. This incident makes her angry but she has outgrown it in her mind.

She is now looking for a summer placement and she has been offered a position in an organization in Pune. Her parents do not want her to go there as her boyfriend is studying in the same town. Malini is insisting on going to Pune. Her parents have talked to Malini's uncle (whose friend had abused her) to find her a placement in Delhi. Malini is extremely upset about this and is sure that she will leave her MBA program, rather than join a placement organized by her uncle.

Ruchi is the person behind the gap in the higher education between men and women. At tertiary school level only 9% of the women in the country are enrolled. As the human capital talent pool is derived from those who are educated, decreased enrollments in education has direct impact on the competitiveness of the workforce.

The educated mothers are more likely to invest in children's health and education and the returns from educating the women could exceed those for educating men as the former would create an intergenerational spillover. Greater access to education and labour force participation will lower child mortality and malnutrition and increase the education enrollments for the next generation. The continuing gender bias in education compromises progress in other important development goals (Abu-Ghaida and Klasen, 2002).

### **Cost of restrictions on access to health services**

In a recent study only 28% of the women did not have to seek permission from someone before accessing health services. The women who felt restricted and controlled regarding help seeking for health included women who were post graduates and many of them are working as managers in organizations.

Delayed access of a woman to health services increases costs of services, drugs and transport. There is a loss of income and social assets (such as social status and stigma leading to abandonment by the family) during sickness. As the women have decreased access to health, it contributes significantly to diminished productivity, reducing income and output. This may also lead to deterioration of children's health and education. All this leads to a shrinking labour force and lower life expectancy decreases labour supply.

**Kalpana** is a 27 year old married woman, working as a manager in a BPO. She is six months pregnant. She is still not registered with a doctor. She has started having bouts of breathlessness and headaches very often. She has told her husband that they need to go to a doctor. Her friend at work had given her a reference of a good doctor. Her husband has not agreed for her to go and see this doctor. His mother who lives in Jodhpur is insisting that Kalpana should leave her job and come to Jodhpur and have her delivery there.

Kalpana does not want to do that. She feels she wants to work till the time she can and then take more leave nearer her date of delivery. This conflict has meant that she has not seen a doctor through most of her pregnancy. She looks pale and now she has swelling in her feet. She did a search for these symptoms on the net and she thinks she may have anemia and hypertension.

Her performance at work has decreased as she is tired most of the time. Her VP has taken a decision not to involve her in the new transaction that the team is dealing with. This means that when she rejoins work after her leave she may have to be reassigned to a new team.

Her husband is also insisting that she starts taking herbal medicine with desi ghee so that she has a male child. Kalpana is tired of arguing and is now planning to go to Jodhpur. She feels she may have to leave her job to do so.

Good health means longer life expectancy and a larger and more productive workforce. Kalpana's loss of productivity is due to decisions regarding her health being taken by a male dominated system. Her loss of health is a cost to the organization which an engendered organization is less likely to incur. An increase in life expectancy by one year could increase output by 4% (Bloom, Canning and Sevilla, 2001).

The growing epidemic of HIV/AIDS is an increasing risk for women and the economy of the South Asia region. Women's disempowerment means that they are at greater risk. They cannot force partners to use condoms during sex or during forced sex. The cost of HIV/AIDS is indirectly borne by the

business. The region lost \$7.3 billion in HIV/AIDS-related treatment costs in 2001 – an amount that is likely to increase to \$17.6 billion by 2010 (ADB/UNAIDS, 2004).

## Social costs of gender discrimination

Gender-based violence can have an irreversible mental health impact on its victims. It leads to mistrust, blaming of self, lack of confidence and lowering women's self-esteem.

Violence also leads to *post traumatic stress disorder* (PTSD) which further leads to restriction of a person's repertoire of daily activities. Women who have faced violence have a decreased access to avenues for participation. Violence leads to decreased productivity and wages. Violence also has intergenerational costs that are paid ultimately by the children. It can lead to depression, post-traumatic stress and alcohol and substance abuse in children. (UNFPA, 2000).

Many women managers continue to face the impact of violence and abuse in their personal lives, without any recourse to help in breaking the cycle of violence. A common response to a discourse about violence which women face from their husbands is to brush it aside by saying that an organization cannot enter the personal lives of the managers. An *aware response* will be to provide support for the survivor of such violence through confidential counselling services and a zero tolerance of violence against women by your own managers, irrespective of the place of violence.

**Jatin and Punita** have been married for 3 years. They are both managers in an organization that is a strong proponent of value based performance. They are both champions of values like integrity and dignity in their organization.

Jatin and Punita are angry with each other. Jatin feels that Punita does not respect his family and is rude to him. Punita is extremely upset with him as he has become violent with her a few times. He has slapped her on a number of occasions and has pushed her around many times. He also stops her from going to meet her friends without him being around. After each such episode he feels extremely guilty and apologizes to her and says that he will not be violent again. Punita believes him. He continues to say that to Punita that she should also try not to provoke him. Punita has also started believing that only if she did not provoke the violence would stop.

Punita approaches her HR manager for support. She is told that this is a personal life issue and the organization values both Jatin and Punita and cannot intervene.

Millions of Indian children, mostly girls between 5 and 15, are lured, forced or manipulated to work in the commercial sex market every year. The commercial sexual exploitation of women and children reaches your organization everyday through pornography on the Internet. Does your organization have a policy on inappropriate use of office Internet? Similar numbers are trafficked for child labour. Does your organization have vendors who maintain child labour?

The psychological damage of such acts against women last a lifetime and perhaps into the next generation, with resentments passed from mother to child. Diminished self-esteem and aspirations restrict opportunities; it is a sense of *optionless helplessness*.

Mothers are the most important protectors of children. In the context of poverty a mother is more available to protect a child against malnutrition, abuse, exploitation, prostitution, substance abuse, crime and child labour. Loss or unavailability of a mother either through high maternal mortality, low access to health or through violence and exploitation unfortunately is an unrecognized significant cost for a society. The children of the managers do not face the same risks. But risks exist for these children - the risks to health, lack of attachment, parental discord, parental substance abuse and lack of role modeling

exposes the children in your manager's family to similar impact on their physical, psychological and social well being. Managers who are parents in your organization can be protective of their children. Does your organization break the inter-generational impact of gender stereotypes by facilitating parenthood by both men and women managers?

## **Organizations that discriminate**

Organizations do not exist in a vacuum. The societal context influences work. An organization cannot but be affected by this gender gap in a society. The link between the societal gender gap and organizational objectives is threefold:

- First, social and economic costs ultimately are costs shared by the economy and thus by the business. The social and economic costs of the gender gap have been outlined above.
- Second, the employees of an organization come from the society and bring with them either the discriminatory assumptions or impact of discrimination. This impacts organizational effectiveness.
- Third, a discriminating society influences the products and consumer decisions. The business is geared to largely address the masculine needs. This restriction of the consumer base has an opportunity cost for the business.

## **Cycle of Discrimination and Demotivation: The Ripple Effect**

There is a cycle of discrimination and demotivation due to the gender gap. The cycle is reflected in work situations as well. In a recent World Values Survey (WVS) it was found that there is a significant '**gender perceptions gap**' – women are more likely to attribute success to luck rather than hard work. This perceptions gap is consistent across countries: for example, it is as strong in Sweden as in Argentina. More generally, the gender gap is uncorrelated with a country's level of economic or social development.

The perceptions gap was linked to one's place in the workplace hierarchy. It was seen to be wider for those in supervisory positions. There are also gender differences in attitudes in the closely related domain of workplace competition, based on a WVS question that asks subjects whether competition is harmful or beneficial. Significantly more women report that competition is harmful. This gender difference again was seen to be more pronounced among those in supervisory positions. It is not the culture in these organizations that has led to this demotivation and determinism; it is the impact of the way the society forces the women to think.

## **The Measurable Gap in Organizations: Discrimination in Recruitment, Retention and Parity**

The gender gap is thus visible in the processes that the organization has in place to recruit the women, the processes to ensure parity and fairness for all its employees, the support systems and the reward and recognition system that are in place to increase the possibility of retention of staff.

Gender disaggregated data in the Indian workplace is hard to come by. The latest statistics available on the ILO database LABORSTATS dates back to 1981. A recent study completed by CII reports that women managers are 6% in the total number of managers.

It is still a news paper headline when IIM Calcutta tries to correct the gender imbalance in its faculty by adding three more faculty members. It is also news that these faculty members will not be teaching Organization Development but will be teaching subjects like marketing.

India is not unique in its lack of growth for the woman professional. The ILO's *Global Employment Trends* (2003) has reported that "the overall employment situation of women across the globe has not evolved significantly since 2001. Women continue to have lower labour market participation rates, higher unemployment rates and significant pay differences compared to men. Women represent over 40 per cent of the global labour force. There has also been little change in share of women in professional jobs in the last few years. Women occupy around 30 to 60 per cent of professional jobs in the sample of countries from which new data were available. This represents an increase of 0.7 per cent between 1996-99 and 2000-02.

There is segregation at the level of the secondary school into streams for "male" or "female" jobs. It is social and cultural realities that lead to this segregation. There is also a significant drop out rate at graduation level. Women are mainly concentrated in the "feminized" professions such as caregiving and teaching (vertical occupational segregation). For example, it is difficult to find cardio thoracic surgeons who are women, but it is easier to find gynecologists who are women. At the same time women remain in lower job categories than men (horizontal occupational segregation). For example, more women are likely to be nurses than doctors.

There is some evidence that things are changing and women are opting for non feminized careers like engineering or ICT. However, women who choose non-traditional jobs can face special constraints in the workplace, not least of which are isolation, limited access to mentoring and female role models, and sexual harassment. There is a recent report by Catalyst about women in the ICT sector which talks about how the discrimination persists and the glass ceiling still needs to be challenged.

As per ILO data from sixty three countries women's share of managers' jobs varies between 20 to 40 per cent and the rate of growth of their share over five years is between 1 and 5 per cent.

Men still remain a majority amongst senior management. Women still form the lower end on the managerial hierarchy.

## **The Invisible Gap: The Male Norm**

The organizations think like men and for men. There are visible and invisible rules around the "male" norm, which women sometimes find difficult to accommodate.

Women have to repeatedly prove themselves. Male and female colleagues and customers do not automatically see women as equal with men; women tend to have to work much harder than men. At times they have to adapt to "male" working styles and adopt "male" styles.

Women also tend to be excluded from the informal spaces and networks. These informal networks seem to determine the process of career development. This together with the assumption that women are not able to devote enough time to work as they are preoccupied with family leads to a block in their growth.

Women are not given as many opportunities as men and this happens throughout their careers. The outcome of this discrimination is that when women compete with men for senior management positions they are not seen to have the requisite exposure and repertoire of experience. It is then a self-fulfilling prophecy that women cannot do the more demanding and responsible jobs.

There is also evidence to show that women do not have women role models but even when they are present, these role models are likely to view other women from a male standpoint and not through the gender lens.

The stacks are up against the women and this is not a paranoid delusion, it is a measured reality.



# 3

## The Way We Think

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We have learned that there is gender gap in our society and there is gender gap in our organizations. We have also learned that this gender gap has a cost. But why is the Gender Gap sustained? To be able to understand this let us take a step back. Let us first understand what controls any behaviour.

Let us play a game. It is called “Apples and Oranges”.

If I asked you to close your eyes, gave you a box which contained both oranges and apples and asked you to separate oranges from apples without opening your eyes, would you be able to do that task? I am sure you would and with ease.

If I asked you, “How were you able to achieve this?”, you would obviously say that it was because of difference in the shape, the consistency, the temperature and the feel of the fruits that you were able to separate them.

How did you know the features that define oranges and apples? You would answer that you knew them due to your past experience of oranges and apples. Now if the past experience of oranges and apples has influenced you to the extent that you distinguish between the two fruits almost automatically, will not a similar facility come into play when you are dealing with human beings?

Imagine if you had a math teacher in your fourth grade, who used to be extremely upset with you, and used to punish you by asking you to hold a pencil between two fingers and then pressed them together. (Ouch! It is painful. It still reminds me of my math teacher who used to do that.) How will you view

your subsequent math teachers? Your mind will remember this experience as a thought. The thought will be, “math teachers are cruel”. This thought will remain with you till the time you experience another math teacher who is appreciative of you.

Now imagine your daughter has a math teacher who writes negative remarks in your child’s dairy. What will be your response? You may be extremely angry and say, “How dare she do that?” Or you may be extremely compliant and say to your child, “You must keep your teacher happy all the time.” Both these behaviours are a response to your thought that math teachers are bad and not to the situation your child is facing. If you have been able to challenge your thought that math teachers are bad, you may say this to your child, “It is alright. Math is nothing to be afraid of and we can work on it together. Your teacher is not angry with you, she is trying to help you learn math.”

## **Permanent Thoughts**

All of us have experiences in life. Some of these experiences are significant and they determine the way we look at similar experiences, events or people in the future.

In all our interactions we tend to use past experiences of similar kind to assess the present interaction. The conclusions from past experiences are stored as thoughts in our mind. These thoughts become the *windows of our mind* and determine the way we look out on new experiences. These windows of the mind come into play automatically. We do not have to remember our math teacher to respond to our child’s math teacher. We just do. As these responses are automatic we are not able to trace them back to the original experience. We rationalize these responses on the evidence available to us through the current interaction.

Some of these windows are formed even without our having an initial personal experience. These are ways of thinking that that are with us because we have heard them described in the stories that our grandparents have told us, the rituals we have been a part of, or the experiences we seen other people go through. These secondary experiences have also become our thoughts through which we examine our world and relate to people. Both the primary experiences and secondary experiences become permanent thought and are very difficult to change.

For example, I carry a strong belief that people from Dera Ismail Khan in Pakistan are very simple and honest people. This is what my mother has told me over and over again. I have not been to Dera, my mother was born there and she too left the place when she was eight. Whenever I meet someone even remotely from Dera Ismail Khan I do so with a sense of trust and fondness. So does my brother.

I also have a permanent thought that Sikhs are brave people with a lot of pride. I do not know the origins of this thought. Is it from the stories of Guru Gobind Singh or the stories of Bhagat Singh? Whenever I meet a Sikh, my first thought about him is his sense of valor. I have no personal experience of their bravery, but I view them as brave.

We do not recognize these permanent thoughts and we do not acknowledge the link between them and our everyday behaviour. Our behaviour is automatic, like opening an umbrella the moment it is raining. We do not seem to think, we only seem to act. But the reality is that behind the opening of the umbrella there is a permanent thought, “If I get wet, I will become unwell.” This links to the next thought, “I must protect myself all the time.”

We have permanent thoughts about every arena of life. Mostly these permanent thoughts are of three kinds: we have permanent thoughts about *ourselves* and our relationships with our environment, we have permanent thoughts about *the other people and their relationships* and we have permanent thoughts about *time*.

So, if I were to describe my permanent thoughts about myself, these would be:

*I always have to be fair.*

*I have to succeed at everything that I do.*

*I have to be liked by everyone.*

*If you trust people you may get hurt.*

*You have to do right by people whatever they may do to you.*

*It is possible to love most people.*

Similarly thoughts about other people would be:

*People who are violent need to be punished*

*People can make mistakes.*

*People do not say what they actually mean.*

*People have hidden agendas.*

My thoughts about time would be:

*Past was better than the present.*

*Future will be better.*

*You can control what happens next.*

*You can learn from what went wrong in the past.*

Sometimes our permanent thoughts get expressed as 'shoulds' that we have for ourselves:

*I should be able take care of my family all the time.*

*I should excel at my work.*

*I should be good son.*

*I should be a good father.*

*I should be a good wife.*

*I should be a good daughter in law.*

Our definitions of the ideal person we should become is also fixed and determined by more permanent thoughts.

The way we think, feel and interact everyday is determined by these permanent thoughts; these are templates and our everyday experiences are built around them.

## **The Way We Think About Men and Women**

A common area for people to have permanent thoughts is about *gender roles* and *gender relations*.

Our thoughts about gender roles are our most commonly reinforced permanent thoughts. We apply these thoughts about men and women to everyday relationships and work. Our common thoughts regarding women are:

*Women are sensitive.*

*Women ought to be sensitive.*

*Women are highly emotional.*

*Women are caring.*

*Women ought to be caring.*

*Women like to initiate rumors.*

*Women are weak.*

*Single attractive women are available.*

*Single old women are frustrated.*  
*Women need to be controlled.*  
*Women dress up so that men should admire them.*  
*Women cannot take tough decisions.*  
*Women must fulfill the needs of the family.*  
*Women must care for their children.*  
*Women must make sure that the home is clean and attractive.*  
*Women cannot manage difficult situations.*  
*Women shirk work and make excuses.*  
*Women are loyal.*  
*Women cannot manage aggression.*  
*Good women do not talk about sex.*

### **Similarly all of us carry some common thoughts about Men:**

*Men are brave.*  
*Men must take charge.*  
*Men can manage difficult situations.*  
*Men can handle all threats.*  
*Men must be respected.*  
*Men must be in control.*  
*Men must take decisions about more important things.*  
*Men have a high sexual need.*  
*Women must understand men's sexual needs.*  
*Men must know how to tame their women.*  
*Men are efficient.*  
*Men do not waste time and are more productive.*  
*Men do not bring their personal life to work.*

Each of these templates controls the way we respond to ourselves and other men and women. The effect of these permanent thoughts on the culture of the organization is significant. These thoughts are a part of people's personality and it is impossible to dissect them out in work scenarios. The impact of these thoughts is higher in any closed system such as organizations and institutions because there is a chance of repetitive reinforcement of these thoughts. We continuously find evidence to reinforce our permanent thought. We also continuously overlook evidence against our permanent thought.

Let us see how these thoughts play out in the organizational arena.

*Ajay is an HR manager. He was interviewing a woman for recruitment to the post of an Assistant Brand Manager. She was extremely communicative and was able to give appropriate answers to the questions he asked. When she left the room he turned around and said that she would not be able to focus on the job. He was asked by his colleagues what made him say that. He said, "I know it. People like her spend too much time on inconsequential things." When further asked what made him say that he said, "Well, did you look at the intricate mehndi pattern on her hands? How much time would she have spent on that and how distracting this will be for the clients and the people who report to her."*

Which of Ajay's Permanent Thoughts are reflected in this story?

Remember, permanent thoughts are only *indicated* by our behavior, they are not always overtly voiced by us.

The permanent thought that Ajay has is that women who are feminine cannot focus on work. He overlooks the competence of this person. He overlooks her communication skills. He jumps to a conclusion that she would be distracting and would not be able to focus on her work. There is no evidence for the same, but he uses a part of her identity as evidence against her.

Would he say the same about a man who has gone for an interview after Holi and has color behind his ears? Would such a man's commitment to work be questioned?

What if Ajay had met the same person in her friend's marriage the day before? Considering that he found her distracting he might have looked at her and admired her. So another permanent thought in his mind may be that attractive women are better off not working.

Let us take another example. A multinational organization goes into a joint venture with a family owned manufacturing company. They bring in two senior leaders to join the company, a man who joins as the President and a woman as the Vice President Organization Effectiveness. The existing team is quite angry with these changes. The team is questioning the intention of the new management. They say to themselves, "Oh! Now a woman would tell us how to run this company. One labour unrest and she would forget all this talk about effectiveness." The woman is the target of these comments. The man does not face similar resistance. Whenever she opens her mouth or sends a memo it starts a smirking campaign against her. People are in constant mental argument with her. She is the only woman manager in a team of nearly seven hundred managers. She can hear peels of laughter after she has passed from the corridor. What is the permanent thought behind this mass anger that this woman faces? It is a basic thought, "I am a man, and a woman being my boss is humiliating." It is an archaic thought, but it is a common thought. It is the same thought that leads men to be violent in their relationships. It is the same thought that leads to a woman Sarpanch to be humiliated by her village elders.

It is not only men who have these thoughts about women; the permanent thoughts that men have about men and that men have about women also become the "normal" thoughts for that society. Women also start carrying the same thought about themselves. They comply with men, they compromise with men, and they try to be co-opted in the man's world.

Many times women who have faced discrimination end up discriminating against other women. An oppressed person becomes an oppressor only to address his or her helplessness by identifying with the oppressors. If you become an oppressor the thought that develops is, "Now that I control other lives, my life is in my control." However, this is only an illusion, not a reality.

These thoughts are difficult to challenge. One, these thoughts are not recognized by people as the underlying cause of disparity between men and women. Second, when people interact with women they use the following *distortions* in their thinking to reinforce the permanent thoughts.

## **Thinking Distortions**

The commonest distortions used by us are:

- Arbitrary Inference or Jumping to Conclusions
- Selective Abstraction or Selective Focus
- Dichotomous Thinking or All or None thinking
- Personalizing

### *Arbitrary Inference or Jumping to Conclusions*

It implies that we arrive at conclusions with little evidence to support them. These conclusions are very similar to and reinforcing of our permanent thoughts. This is the most common distortion that is used.

For example, a woman manager is due for promotion in an advertising agency and the promotion would mean that she may have to change cities. The line manager and human resources department discuss the issue and recognize that she is just the right person for the job but decide not to offer it to her thinking that she would not want to move. This conclusion is based on the permanent thought that women are home makers first and professionals second. Their decision is not evidence based but will become evidence for the thought in their mind that women cannot move cities. The next woman who would have a similar opportunity would be denied it based on their 'experience' in this situation.

### *Selective Abstraction or Selective Focus*

Our permanent thoughts guide us to look at experiences, situations and problems in a selective manner. We tend to either *minimize* things based on our permanent thoughts or *magnify* them. For example, if a male manager changes his team meeting in order to attend a parent teacher meeting, he will expect the team to understand. They do and in fact call him 'Super Dad'. They will say that there should be more Dads like him. This *magnifies* the Dad's effort based on our permanent thought that men are not normally supposed to be involved in parenting, at best they are supposed to be involved in disciplining children when things go wrong. On the other hand if a woman manager were to do the same thing, the permanent thought that women bring their homes to work becomes magnified and her everyday effort in managing two roles is *minimized*. The organization sees the man's behaviour as a one off privilege and feels good about providing it and the woman's behaviour is seen as an ongoing difficulty that women bring to workplace. The reality is that both men and women are in parenting role. Ideally both should have the right to be able to fulfill their parenting responsibility without it being viewed as a problem or a feat.

### *Dichotomous Thinking or All or None thinking*

All of us use dichotomous thinking and it comes in the way of our functioning and being happy with ourselves. By using all or none thinking we become unkind to ourselves. This way of thinking means that if do not achieve all that we set out to do we rubbish ourselves and others. One of the consequences of this way of thinking is that this narrows the definition of success. For example, "If I do not get into IIT, I am good for nothing." "If everyone is not pleased with my cooking, then I am a selfish mother who is spending too much time at work." We forget that more often than not, despite being a busy manager and without any support from anyone we have been able to get food on table for the family for years together. We forget this because of the permanent thought that women ought to be caring. If we replace this thought with "Women have to care for the family as do other members of the family have to care for each other", the guilt that a woman is made to carry decreases considerably.

There are many other examples as to how this distortion comes into play in the organization. For example, look at the process of matching our diaries and getting a team meeting going in a multi location team. If we work with the thought that if all the team members are not present in a face to face situation then team meeting is not possible, the meeting will take a long time to organize. Similarly another dysfunctional example of all or none thinking is, "if the boss does not see you leaving late from office on all days then you are not performing well." This goes against women who have to draw a boundary between work and life goals more often than men. It is based on a series of linked permanent thoughts, "We are doing important work which cannot wait." "Only those who go beyond their defined responsibilities are committed." "Men will do whatever it takes to achieve their goals". These thoughts form the foundation of a culture of working late. Anyone who does not conform is seen as good but 'not good enough for our organization.' 'We need that something special.' What might be forgotten is that some people who are sitting late may have had a lot of 'downtime' during the day or that those women who left early are more efficient because they have to perform multiple tasks at home and work.

### *Personalizing*

This is a distortion in which personal meaning is attributed to every behaviour and situation. For example, two lawyers, one woman and one man, both single and equal in seniority would often meet in the corridor in the court while waiting for their matters to be put up. One day the man asked the woman out for dinner. The woman replied that she could not go. He asked again another time and the woman said 'no'. The third time he asked the woman said 'yes' as she did not want to be rude. At the dinner the man proclaimed love to the woman. The woman was overwhelmed and said that she did not have similar feelings towards him and anyway she was committed in a relationship. The man became extremely angry and started accusing the woman of leading him on and then rejecting her. The man was personalizing the fact that she was rejecting him as a person, whereas she was not rejecting him but she was saying 'no' to a relationship with him. He had already jumped to a conclusion that the woman had said 'yes' by agreeing to come out for dinner. The permanent thought was that women have to respond positively to men when propositioned.

Women also personalize. Women who have been through violent or exploitative situations tend to have a permanent thought wherein they blame themselves for all that goes wrong. So a mother whose son had spent the year not studying, being with his friends on the net and taking it easy may blame his non-performance on her not being available to him during his examination days. The father and the son and the grandparents would also reinforce this personalizing process by blaming the mother.

### **Changing the way we think!**

It is important to learn strategies to identify permanent thoughts.

Remember thoughts, feelings and actions are linked. Our experiences direct and indirect influence our way of thinking. It is unhelpful to let past experiences color our way of looking at our present experiences.

Our thinking can come in the way of achieving success. When our thinking is biased it can be limiting for those who interact with us.

To know your thoughts start by keeping a 'Thought Recorder'. A thought recorder is a diary. Try and write it every day for a month.

This recorder has four columns. The first column is the record of situations in a day that made you feel bad or upset. The second column describes how you felt in that situation. The third column is a description of what you thought in that situation. The last column describes what she did in the situation.

Review the recorder every week. There is a pattern to these thoughts. The patterns tell you what thoughts you have in which situations. There is a pattern to these thoughts. If you compare this pattern with the list of distortions given above you will recognize that there is a resemblance between your thought patterns and the distortions.

Parallel to the thought recorder, discover your judgments

What are your "shoulds" about the following groups of people?

- *Men must:*
- *Men must not:*
- *Women must:*
- *Women must not:*
- *Children must:*

- *Children must not:*
- *Managers should:*
- *Managers should not:*
- *Employees should:*
- *Employees should not:*

What do you think about these groups of people?

- *People living with disability:*
- *People who are dependent on Alcohol:*
- *People living with mental illness:*
- *People living with HIV/ AIDS:*
- *People living with cancer:*
- *People living with obesity:*
- *People with a history of crime:*
- *People who are corrupt:*
- *People who are abusive physically, sexually and emotionally:*
- *People who cheat:*
- *I have a special liking for some people. I am likely to go out my way to help these kind of people:*
- *These are the kind of people that bring out the worst in me:*
- *These are the kind of people I get most angry with:*
- *These are the kind of people who I think need more help than others:*

## **Challenging your Thoughts**

The thoughts you have documented above and in the thought recorder influence your everyday decision making and interaction with people. It could even be leading you to avoid some people in your life. It is important to know your judgments and recognize them if they come into play if there is no evidence for these assumptions.

Use the following questions to challenge your thoughts and judgments:

*Is this thought helpful or unhelpful for me or for others around me?*

*If this thought is unhelpful, what will be a more helpful thought?*

or

*What is the evidence for the way I am thinking?*

*Am I making an error of thinking in focusing on this evidence?*

Also ask yourself the cost of your judgments. Do you generalize your judgments and jump to conclusions about people you have no information about? Is that helpful? What is the impact of your judgments on the people around you? Did you know it is judgments like these that are the cause of discrimination, exploitation and war?

Your judgments may also be influencing your professional decisions.

Watch the way you think and you would be enabling people around you.

Watch the way you think and you would be accepting yourself.

Watch the way you think and you will be a better manager.



# 4

## Engendered and Effective Organizations: Patterns that Connect

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People think in patterns and organization work in patterns. We discussed the patterns of our thinking and how these were connected to each other in the last chapter. We also discussed how these patterns influence the way we work and relate to others.

Just as people have patterns of thoughts organizations have patterns of the way they work. Patterns in organizations provide a framework for all the people in the organization to align to. This process of alignment helps create a degree of consistency in the way the people in an organization work across time and across locations. These patterns determine and predict how an organization works. Some of these patterns are helpful and other patterns are unhelpful. Helpful patterns further the goal of the organization, the people in the organization and the society; unhelpful patterns hold back one or all of these.

Patterns in an organization are not isolated. There is interplay between the various patterns. They are linked together. Some patterns cancel each other; others are in resonance with each other. These patterns and their interplay are significantly important when you want to help an organization change.

For example, Integrity is a pattern that is reflected in various organizational processes. The way the organization communicates is another pattern, the way the organization decides is a pattern, the way the organization treats people is a pattern, the way the organization responds to change is another pattern and the way the organization responds to disparity due to gender is a pattern.

Kapil works for a law firm. His boss is a senior lawyer. Kapil and his boss are drafting a corporate deal. The deal has to be ready by the day end. Tomorrow the head of the organization has to fly out to London with the papers.

Kapil's boss Sanjay suddenly gets a call from his wife that she is in labour. It has been a difficult pregnancy for her. She is waiting for him to get to the hospital. Sanjay leaves everything to Kapil and rushes to take his wife to the hospital. Kapil tries to complete the papers to the best of his ability. When he is ready he presents them to the head of the organization Ram, Ram looks at the papers briefly and asks for Sanjay. He is informed that Sanjay is not available because of a personal crisis. Ram loses his cool, throws the file at Kapil and says, 'He is not the first one having a child.' Ram threatens to give the work to someone else if Sanjay is not back to complete it.

Sanjay cannot return, Kapil feels helpless and Ram calls in another team to rework the documents. The new team members take up the work and do not involve Kapil in the process. Sanjay returns the next day and just shakes his head.

Kapil leaves his job the next month. This is what he said to his friend on the last day, "Nothing is right with this organization. People are not respected. There is no communication. Young people are left to fight their own battles. Teams are made to compete with each other ruthlessly. I do not think I can learn anything from my experiences in this organization."

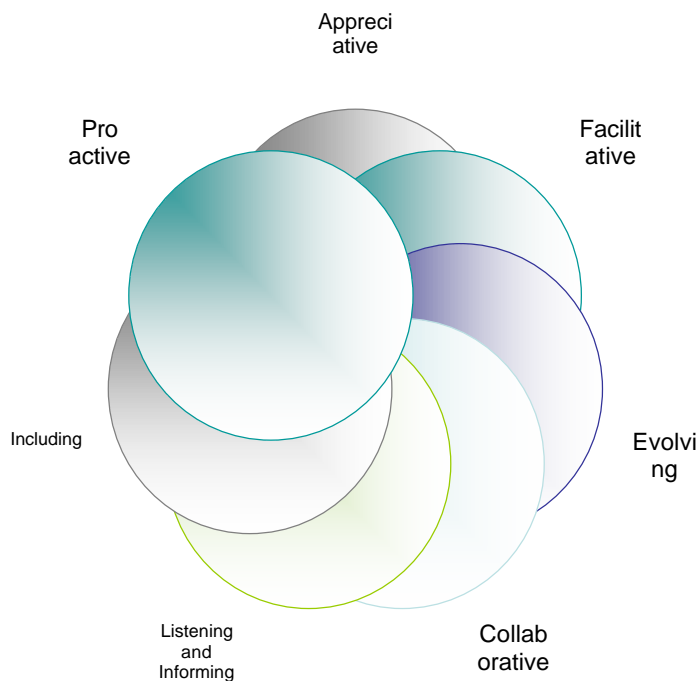
Priya who had joined the organization around the same time as Kapil leaves in a week too. For the next five years during the campus interviews not many women lawyers opt for this firm.

The organization does not get the contract for the corporate deal that it was hoping to get.

Kapil's organization is not a proactive organization. The organization plays one team against the other. The organization does not trust. The organization does not communicate. The organization also does not value its people.

Priya does not experience any of this but she feels threatened by the tone of the patterns. If the organization has to change its patterns it will not benefit by adopting facilitative rules only for women managers, it will have to look at the way it does its work. It will have to understand the patterns that are unhelpful and change all of these and add gender sensitive words to its vision and mission document.

**Some Patterns that Connect**



These patterns connect as underlying these patterns of *how* the organizations work are some collective thoughts called **mental models**. Mental models determine the organization. These mental models are much like the permanent thoughts that people have.

It is not possible for an organization to have a targeted intervention on changing a pattern without working on the other patterns. It is similarly not possible for one pattern to change while the other patterns remain the same. The work on changing the pattern of gender inequity reflects this as there cannot be gender equity without changing the organizational patterns of decision making, communication, respect for others, bureaucracy and openness to change.

Similarly, if one impacts the organization through an engendering process the other patterns in an organization will also be impacted. There is a *linked impact*. The process of changing these patterns is a linked process and has to be *circular*.

Patterns are indivisible and not mutually exclusive.

## **Engendered Organizations are Effective Organizations**

Engendered organizations are not just women friendly organizations; engendered **organizations enable all humans and humaneness**.

Engendering is a process that correlates positively with the effectiveness of an organization.

Engendering is a process that derives from a mental model that **respects people by accepting them**. It addresses people as people and accepts them. The mental model of acceptance is important for effective use of resources. Acceptance implies that every person has certain strengths and abilities that they bring to the organization.

The organization has to begin by accepting these strengths, celebrating them and **creating avenues** for these to be expressed. An engendered organization accepts people's limitations and sees them in the context of their abilities and reframes them as agendas for growth. Engendered organizations **listen to people** about their needs, their experiences and help them integrate these with their work.

Engendered organizations **do not prejudge people on the basis of their singular labeling identities** as man, woman, disability, race, creed, caste, the institution that they trained etc. In an engendered organization each person is valued for who they are beyond their labels. What they bring to the organization is less important than the fact they are human.

An organization that values being human **recognizes that people have domains of life beyond work and respects them**.

Accepting people, not judging people, learning by listening to people, respecting people's abilities as diverse, respecting their identities as diverse are **linked patterns**. The pattern in such an organization could be "all people matter by just being." This pattern has composite in it element of trust in people and thus an acceptance of them. This nearly ideal pattern coexists with many other contradictory patterns of mistrust, thoughts of doubt, and thoughts of control, helplessness and fear.

These patterns are in a constant battle.

## **Enabling Patterns Vs. Constraining Patterns**

An organization is an arena where these patterns are expressed as behaviors towards others. Sometimes the organization is enabling and brings forth the patterns of acceptance and trust and at other times the organization is constraining and brings forth the patterns that challenge our humaneness.

Based on the nature and frequency of the patterns in an organization each organization can be placed on the **Enabling Environment versus Constraining Environment continuum**. When an organization is an enabling environment it is likely to be more effective and engendered. The behaviours on the following dimensions contribute to the organization being enabling or constraining.

- Collaborative Vs. Directive
- Appreciative Vs. Hostile
- Facilitative Vs. Restrictive
- Proactive Vs. Reactive
- Listening and Informing Vs. Assuming
- Including Vs. Excluding
- Evolving Vs. Fixed

## **Collaborative Vs. Directive Organization**

### *Collaborative Organizations*

The mental model in a collaborative organization is that all individuals are valuable and have the potential to contribute to the organization's excellence.

Collaborative organizations take decisions as a team, but they also have the capacity to trust each other's decisions and follow them if the situation so demands.

In these organizations feedback from everyday operations can influence the strategy.

People take responsibility as a part of the team and the individual accepts accountability for team processes and outputs.

All people are able to recognize their role as important to organization's success. People go beyond their roles to ensure that tasks are completed.

Information is available to all people. People are involved in decision making regarding their objectives and they influence the way work should be done.

Collaborative organizations are effective organizations, as these generate a sense of ownership of the process and the tasks are not left incomplete because people go beyond their specified role and ensure that the objective is completed.

Collaborative organizations have a positive impact on diversity. As the culture and processes are jointly determined, it is difficult for the team to be collaborative yet be discriminatory to some members.

### *Directive Organizations*

Directive Organizations, as opposed to collaborative organizations, derive their decision making, role assignment and responsibilities through a top down approach.

As most hierarchies in our society are patriarchal it is quite likely that these organizations mimic the male dominance in being directive. In these organizations managers determine the team decisions and in doing so at times overlook the evidence from the ground.

Boardroom assumptions and dynamics influence all operations.

Some people are seen as more important for the success of the organization.

Some people are blamed for the failures of the organization. This blame attribution rotates amongst team members. The team members themselves start attributing blame to others and being defensive about their own roles. There is an expectation that people do only what they are asked to do.

Information is held by some people and at times. This creates conflicts between leaders and team members have to be told what to do most of the time.

The moment the organization functions in this manner the teams are split and discrimination and lack of effectiveness and diversity set in.

The mental model in such a team is likely to be that some people are worthy of opportunity and others are not.

Is your team collaborative or directive? If you are a member of a directive team it is likely that there a lurking risk of gender inequity in your organization. Rate your organization on the Collaborative vs. Directive dimension.

## **Appreciative Vs. Hostile**

### *Appreciative Organizations*

The mental model in such an organization is likely to be, “We have to ensure the use of the abilities of our managers.”

An appreciative organization is focused on people’s strengths and abilities. Such an organization recognizes the strengths of all its employees through objective methods. The appreciative organization also listens to manager’s view of themselves.

The opportunities and challenges given to the employees are determined by their skills and enthusiasm. The organization is able to appreciate all efforts individually. For example, the team members who support the leader in achieving the task are individually recognized for their contribution.

Each failure is seen as a time to learn lessons for the future and not as a time to find faults. If people do not have information and knowledge they access it to complete their goals.

Such an organization which is appreciative of and recognizes all its managers is also likely to be sensitive to the issue of diversity and challenge the discrimination that women face in an organization.

Such organizations are also likely to be effective organizations because of the high sense of worth that their managers have. The belief of the organization in the managers is directly visible in their motivation and a lower attrition rate.

### *Hostile Organizations*

Hostile organizations work on the mental model that there is no place in the organization for those who are weak.

There is a sense of focusing on limitations and weaknesses. There is also a focus on fault finding. The organization finds it hard to recognize each person’s effort.

Accountability equals assigning blame for each failure, rather than correcting processes and systems. The limitations of employees are pointed out repeatedly without any support to address them. The employees

feel a sense of bitterness. They also tend to count opportunities given to other people, rather than focusing on their own opportunities. There are no processes to increase the motivation of employees. The team leader is left to his/her own devices to motivate the team members.

While appreciative environments are conducive to respect for diversity, hostile environments are constraining and discriminating.

## **Facilitative Vs Restrictive**

The mental model in facilitative organizations is, “All managers are more than the work they do. If they live their lives to the fullest they will be better resources for the organization.”

Facilitative Organizations encourage people to seek help if they face difficulties at work. They have a policy which defines what help is available to people when they face difficulties in their personal life.

Such organizations have ‘no nonsense’ non negotiable practices in cases where any colleague is harassed or discriminated against by another.

Such an organization has an induction program for all new employees or those who change roles. These organizations provide resources for individual professional development, so that employees can decide what skill enhancement is need by them. The organization provides resources for work/life balance, without making it seem as a special favour to an employee or a group of employees.

### *Restrictive*

The mental model in a restrictive organization is, “What matters is the bottom-line and the rest is soft stuff.”

Restrictive organizations overlook that a person has a life and role beyond their work. They view what they do for their employees as charity, not as a right. The process of seeking help needs to be sanctioned on a case to case basis. Such an organization expects an employee to be able to manage his/her personal life without it affecting their work performance. Work/life balance is seen as a staff welfare activity which only the more vulnerable amongst the staff avail.

Such organizations do not encourage colleagues reporting against each other, even if they are feeling harassed. They believe in throwing people in the deep end as a way of helping them learn. Continued professional development is decided at the organizational level in a pot luck manner, without assessing the needs of individuals.

## **Proactive Vs Reactive**

### *Proactive Organization*

The mental model for such an organization is that solutions are possible when problems are addressed early on.

In a proactive organization time is allocated to plan the objectives and activities, and the organization is able to predict the possible obstacles which will be faced in the process. There is a response plan for most crises that the organization is likely to face. The impact of each change is analyzed and addressed. There is a process to review if there is a pattern to the crises faced by the organization.

Individual crises are respected to the extent that they bear an impact on the organization. Individual managers feel that there is a framework of policies that they can fall back on in case of a crisis.

### *Reactive Organization*

The mental model in such an organization is that people perform best when they are under stress.

In a restrictive organization a lot of time is spent on fire fighting. The organization does not review its process after a crisis. The employees perceive changes as being hurried through and thrust upon them, rather than being thought through.

Reactive organizations tend to postpone difficult decisions due to fear of wrong decisions being taken. The organization is not able to respond quickly to opportunities.

## **Listening and Informing Vs Assuming**

### *Listening and informing*

The mental model underlying such an organization is that each person has a right to be heard and may have a different point of view.

Listening organizations are able to create avenues for all employees to feel heard. The managers are trained in communication, so as to enable employees to give and accept feedback.

Employees are able to recognize strengths in their colleagues and are open to feedback about their own limitations without getting defensive. They are able to hear each other's perspectives.

Confidentiality is assured to all employees regarding their personal difficulties. The organization creates avenues to resolve conflicts amongst colleagues.

In case of violation of integrity or harassment/ exploitation of any employee it is possible to resort to whistle blowing.

### *Assuming Organizations*

The mental model in an assuming organization is, "We know what is right. Whatever the evidence, we must protect that right at all costs and keep secrets when there is evidence against that 'right'."

Assuming organizations jump to conclusions, not observations. Such organizations rely upon communication in informal situations more than the formal avenues. Managers encourage informal information to flow to them from selective sources. This can lead to partisan decision making.

There is also pressure to agree with each other. It is difficult to give positive feedback and it is difficult to talk about limitations/ failures in the organization.

When there is incomplete information about a conflict the organization and the managers conclude without clarifying. Managers also take sides in conflicts which require them to be neutral and remain neutral even when evidence is clearly available.

In an Assuming organization there is no challenge to assumptions that are made about people on the basis of gender, religion, caste or geographical origin.

## **'Including' Vs 'Excluding'**

### *Including Organization*

The mental model in such an organization is that each person has rights and the organization is a duty bearer to these rights.

Including organization make the effort to value all people. Including organizations recognize the principle of equal and similar rights with diverse ways of addressing those rights for each person. There are universal policies in the organization which try and address the diverse needs of the employees.

The environment and space of the organization is accessible to all employees. Employees have a right to information regarding all processes and are included in any decisions that are taken regarding them or involve them. Such an organization allocates resources for changes in infrastructure and processes to ensure all employees feel equal part of the organization.

The organization has a predictable, transparent and consistent performance appraisal process. Employees are able to give inputs for their own appraisal and can seek input and feedback from multiple sources for their appraisal.

The organization conducts capacity building on issues of diversity. The organization recognizes and rewards champions for diversity. It is non negotiable for this organization to protect the rights of all its employees.

## **Excluding Organization**

The mental model in such an organization is that it is important to nurture only those who are of direct benefit to the organization

In an excluding organization some people get treated preferentially and others get excluded due to subjective judgments. Opportunities are given to people on the basis of influence networks, and not on the basis of their skill sets.

People tend to get labeled in the organization. People's limitations are focused upon without offering solutions or supports to them. The role of the context of the people being limiting is not considered as a reality.

There is only verbal commitment to diversity and it is difficult to find examples for the claims that diversity is encouraged. Some people are repeatedly discouraged from taking a challenge. There is no role modeling on the issue of challenging exclusion. There is no method to recognize people's talent and abilities.

## **Evolving Vs Fixed**

### *Evolving Organization*

The mental model in this organization is of seeing change as an opportunity.

An evolving organization recognizes the need to change and grow through change. The organization looks out for feedback from its customers and employees to enhance its processes. The organization has benchmarks for each process and endeavors to evolve towards these benchmarks. The organization reforms itself and changes perspectives with the development of the society in which it works.

The evolving organization allocates time and resources to be able to incorporate new and different ways of addressing the same problem. Although there is a predictable and consistent method for all business processes, managers are encouraged to innovate within the values of the organization.

### *Fixed Organization*

The mental model in a Fixed organization is, "If we change we will lose our role and way of working."



It is difficult to challenge the fixed method of doing things in such organizations. In the name of tradition, culture and continuity some processes which do not fulfill their objectives any more continue to be performed. It is taken as an affront when people go beyond their lines of reporting.

Each change is seen as a major task which requires sanction or effort. The first response to change is, “How can we do it?” There is a delay in decision making due to the inflexible method of working. Deviation from protocol, even when aligned to the objectives and values, is questioned at all levels.

These descriptions of enabling and constraining factors in an organization can be used as a basis of assessing organizational environments and the mental model underlying them. The process of becoming an enabling organization requires it to discover the frequency of the enabling and constraining behaviors as perceived by its employees. The following tool helps the organization explore the organizational environment and also set the agenda for change.

## Understanding the Patterns

The following case study (written by Meera Seth and first published in Business World reproduced here with kind permission from the Editor and the author.) is about an organization Calpro. It outlines the links between the patterns and the impact on women when the environment is not enabling.

Please read the case study and then rate the organization Calpro based on the information which you have from the case study on the Enabling vs. Constraining Environments Scale that follows it. You could also use the Enabling vs. Constraining Environments Scale to understand the patterns in your own organization.

### An Exit

Aarti Joseph stared at the note on her table. “Whistle blowing, eh?” The note was unsigned. It amazed her how rapidly and radically, the scene was building up. Aarti had resigned last week, today morning had been her exit interview and already there was one hate mail on her table. But why? She wondered. What was it with Calpro India, she wondered.

The day after she had resigned, her friend Sharada Nair had said, “If you have to quit, don’t waste time going over it again and again. Examine and study the next step and get on. Calpro hereafter is history.”

By terms of her contract, Aarti had 23 days of notice period left of the mandatory 30 days. But her director finance and accounts, Sameer Vaidya, was invoking the clause which said, “The notice period may be waived or altered at the discretion of the management.” Accordingly he had told her she would have to serve a three month notice period! Aarti had been surprised. Yet she said, “I will let you know tomorrow.”

Aarti thought about it. If it was critical, she could request her new employers Freehouse Inc; they would agree to a 15 day delay. But three months? And why? “There are lots of loose ends,” her boss....explained. He wouldn’t say what loose ends. Aarti had never felt this bad before. Despite the goings on of the last 3 years she had been patient and hoped things would improve. The recession had only made it worse. The job at Freehouse had been a lucky one, she could not ruin it.

She sat at her table, fingering the numerous photographs under the glass top of her table. Team building workshops, leadership building, succession management, time planning, delegation achievement, personality enhancement....programs she had attended with 9-10 of her colleagues since she had joined Calpro 12 years ago. These were the regular Swamis, Vaidyas, Singhs, Boses and Shirkes - 3-4 years apart in age, all ate together at the lunch hall, exchanged anxieties in whispers and shared relief in whoops, fought over ideals and ideologies, left post-its on shared books with messages: ‘Trout should visit Calpro for a book on brand abuse!’, left rude graffiti outside the door of Product Development, ‘Corporate Undertaker’; bonding and bending together, suffering and smiling together.

Then the roads forked; some led to the fast track, some to the slow. Swami became VP HR, Bose VP sales, Vaidya became her boss as VP finance and accounts. Aarti herself was seated on the fence by a management committee which was unsure what to do with her.

As it happened, Aarti had blown the whistle on Vaidya's predecessor, Desai, for sending lewd messages to his secretary over the email. For sometime, the lady had borne it quietly and then broken down and told Aarti all. And Aarti had used the genius of the systems people and trapped the man.

Desai was not sacked, but transferred to Indonesia, with a promise that he would behave himself or lose his job forever. But what this had done was create a flutter and tremor at Calpro of a different kind: it put people on guard against Aarti. Until then the dust was usually swept under the carpet. More critically, Aarti's asset value was depreciated by a set of wary seniors.

That was when Vaidya replaced Desai to become Aarti's boss; the move was glaring for more reasons than one; Aarti was the only one who had not risen up the ladder. Ok, this is what happened. Early in the year, there had been a job evaluation exercise after which financial accountant and payroll accountant's jobs were upgraded to 3A. In Systems and MIS, which was 'headed' by Aarti, (in daily parlance it was carefully described as 'managed by Aarti') Calpro created a new position above her, thereby subtly downgrading her job. Of course this had nothing to do with her whistle blowing on Desai, but an old conservatism at Calpro over allowing women in sales and accounting. CEO Dasgupta had once put it thus: She is not board room material. The ones with maximum sense of humour were the secretary folk; fish-curry-in-cheek they swore, 'At Calpro we wait for the men to grow first.'

To be fair Aarti had registered her protest in a quiet and calm way. She had told HR that her job did not qualify to be a 2A class, it was 3A in all other Calpro companies world over. But she was told that job classes also derived their weights from the internal customers it served, implying that her customers had rated her services poorly. Which didn't make sense because in the last two 360 degree feedbacks she had been rated A++ from every senior who received her reports in the global chain. Soon the argument changed to 'Information systems is a tough portfolio requiring a lot of lateral thinking.' Yet, in the two years since that position above her was created, it was not filled, which made Aarti press harder for her rights. She now asked to be promoted to 3A.

During each of the last 5 quarterly assessments, Aarti asked about her promotion. At this juncture, Deepak Vaidya, her boss, in characteristic fashion, usually stood up, swung his chair and hands in pocket, looked down at her from vantage position and smiling said, "There has to be an organizational justification, no Aarti?" which really meant nothing.

It was early this year that Arnawaz Davar, a senior manager in internal audit whispered to her, "If I were you, I wouldn't waste my career and youth in this place." Aarti smiled. Of course she had seen through the management's game. But equally Aarti had been very preoccupied with developing a very interactive and dynamic brand performance tool. Not at the behest of Calpro, but together with her students at the management institute where she taught marketing finance. What started off as idle hypothesis now became a very involved exercise. They were testing the hypothesis of one student that advertising to sales (A:S) ratio was not a linear relationship; that increase in ad expenditure beyond the retail fatigue point was bound to result in a more than proportionate fall in sales, what the student called the Fatigue Value Curve.

At first this claim had seemed startlingly far fetched. But Aarti over time had studied some examples and began to feel the need to test it. She then set about applying the theory to simulate a model that would reveal the optimum ad expenditure level for varying levels of sales, under three scenarios of optimality testing.

But then that was Aarti. While any stray spectator of her career would have called halt and asked her to focus on her dwindling fate at Calpro, Aarti felt a compulsive need to give the fatigue value curve all attention. No, she wasn't meaning to put her career on the slow burner; it was just that she was daily battling with the variables in her model which caused her to think about her immediate life less. Yet there was something structured and educated about her moves; she had sent out her resume to just two placement firms stating clearly her desire to be in a medium sized organization as head of management accounting.

Last month the proverbial last straw played its bit. Calpro's subsidiary Alpine needed to replace its head of finance. Janak Dave had quit over some 'irreconcilable' differences with Vaidya. Calpro had an internal job posting cell, where employees aspiring for a vacancy could send in their application and then interviewed for the job. Aarti therefore applied for the post vacated by Dave. Davar who was interviewing candidates for this job, told Aarti: "Silly girl. It's all nicely rigged. Jaggi Suri has been informally chosen!"

Aarti did not follow up with HR. She called the placement firms instead. Bright and Thakur who were hiring for Freehouse grabbed her for two-and-a-half times her income. In their recommendation note they observed, "twelve years in one organization, steady, highly regarded at the management institute, emotionally intelligent."

On 13<sup>th</sup> May when Aarti resigned, all hell broke loose at Calpro. Various reasons: a) Six others had resigned from Finance between October 2003 and March 2004 b) With the elections in May, the finance budget would happen in June/July; if Aarti served a one month notice period she would not be available for the budget simulation exercise – a job she had done with great finesse the last so many years.

It was with this in mind that Vaidya, through Calpro's VP HR Swami, demanded Aarti to serve three months' notice. Very calmly Aarti said, "Don't be absurd Swami." Swami: her partner during the 'Building teams through trust' outbound development program last year. That Swami now said tentatively, "Don't be rash Aarti, there can be unnecessary complications. Calpro can bring a breach of confidentiality charge against you. Everyone knows about the model you are working on."

Aarti was immeasurably stunned. That model? It was a tiny research attempt among first year management students which she was helping with. How was that breaching any confidentiality? "This is disgusting," said Nair. And sure enough, Swami led an attack campaign against Aarti. "What worries me about this whole episode is," Aarti told Nair, "how quick everyone is to point fingers and to distance themselves from me! Some are even trying to use this opportunity to settle scores with others they may have a problem with, by associating their names with me! And all in the name of probity and transparency and accountability. I find it nauseating and deeply depressing."

Sure enough Aarti's subordinates were questioned and probed. "Who has been helping her? What data has she siphoned out from here? Heads will roll!"

For all her initial bravery with Swami, Aarti was now deeply pained and disturbed. This was Calpro where she had worked 12 years, addressed the Board on many occasions (despite her not being 'Board Material'), arbitrated for them with the CLB and auditors, advised them on public issues....she was no mean employee who giggled her way through life!

15<sup>th</sup> May, 6 pm, Aarti sat alone and shell shocked in her room. Why were they doing this? For three years they wouldn't promote her, wouldn't explain to her why; Three years ago 'they' were made up of different people, her seniors. Today, 'they' were made up of peers who had become her seniors in the hierarchy. A slow feeling of misery welled up inside her.

The next day she was given a date for her exit interview, 19<sup>th</sup> morning 10 am. The rest of Aarti's story will be best understood from her late night chat over Yahoo with Nair, who was away in Kuala Lumpur.

Aarti: I just had my exit interview and I spoke as objectively as possible - my causes of frustration at Calpro - no promotion, slow decision making, lack of inspiration, ineffective information usage. For the most part, I was on stand – 'maybe you have high expectations, you are being unrealistic, how can you say 'ineffective usage' etc. I told them that the only reason I was sitting there was because I want to make a difference.

The after taste is acidic. I wonder, have I become vitriolic? I let the people here affect me so much that it has totally poisoned my being. Today I was called a whistle blower! Because today I told them I was being sidelined. I first blew the whistle on my former boss here who was harassing his secretary. Now this. I am wondering if I have a personality problem.

Sharada: I understand your feelings re these exit interviews. How does stating it as it is, blowing the whistle? You think they do not know what they are doing? If they don't, then it's time they knew. Sometimes when 10 people get together and try and run a place, their individual actions which are

aimed at individual agendas only, personal goals only, result in situations like this. If even one of those 10 worked towards corporate good, then that one person would have had the guts to stand up and ask, what is going on? But clearly none of them was aware of what was happening to the careers of even 2 or 3 people, if we go by the fact that only women were being sidelined. No, emphatically no, you have not been ascerbic, vitriolic or whatever...you simply said what you were subject to.

Aarti: Then why do I feel this misgiving?

Sharada: I will tell you why: you are the kind who will not protest immediately. You allow people to do harm for as long as you can take it. Then when you can't take it, you opt out...and even then you won't tell anyone why you are opting out...but, BUT...if at that stage someone asks you, Aarti why are you leaving, like they did thro' the exit chat...then it all comes up like a froth and u let them have it.

And that makes u feel bad because you wish they hadn't asked; u wish you didn't have to be the one who showed them their corns and warts...wish you didn't have to tell them that you had seen through their game. Not that you want to be goody two shoes...you just don't want to be part of the 'I am here to set the world right' caravan. But if they maul you and force it out, then u tell them ...but then you weren't planning to tell anyway...so what happens is, u don't have a script ready and as a result it all tumbles out in any manner...then u feel bad...

That's all that happened. They are all big boys; Running an organisation is also about taking responsibility. If something is wrong, they need to see it....Relax, start focusing on the next step...don't waste time and energy...look at the world from the top...see the road u have to take and get on it quick....don't waddle ...say your byes quick and don't anymore waste/spend time discussing Calpro. You understand? There will be many who will come to you and say, "Oh we heard you said x-y-zee to the management'....don't don't don't dont get into this...smile and say that's between them and me...a) you don't need to dissect the issues, because you are not management anymore b) You don't need a sounding board, you have sounded them off in the most formal forum. Now pack up, sing a song and carry on...

Aarti: Ya, I agree. But there is a part of me that is feeling very worn out, attacked, mauled. Guess it's part of growing up!

Sharada: Listen, I think an exit interview is the most selfish act of mankind. It's like an autopsy..cruel. While living, no one wants to be alert to feelings; then when someone wants to leave, they look for self aggrandizement cues in the innards of the leaver. This is mankind, baby. Calpro is a fearful organisation. As a favor to yourself, sit down and write about your feelings.

Aarti: It is a painful thing really. Funny isn't it, you actually tell a company what its doing wrong when you are leaving!

Sharada: No...you have been saying it for 3 years, they chose to hear it now, thus making it doubly painful for them.

Aarti: There is no measurement mechanism for exit interviews at C. And it is usually handled by HR which does not really have much clout within the company. So, an exit interview remains just a transcript, without any action points and deadlines.

Sharada: Pah! Fearful organizations will not save exit interviews into their records. Fearful orgs are made up of fearful people! Who were the stars that morning?

Aarti: Primarily the VP - HR. He was getting hyper because 6 people have left C's finance and accounts in the last 8 months. That is tremendous turnover. And its not like they are leaving for plush jobs - it was more like - get me out of this place - normal lateral jobs, one became a consultant, one joined his dad's practice. Apparently all of them gave similar feedback - lack of inspirational leadership, poor leadership, slow decision making, poor empowerment etc.

Sharada: That is tremendous turnover. Yes...this can be upsetting...so who carries the can? An emasculated HR? A tyrant top management that will not empower performers? So really, when we see 6 people leaving finance you need to ask: why is there this dichotomy in the way finance is being managed? Now when 6 people have left, there is this huge cry over why people are leaving; why do they care? Is it becos someone is asking why people are leaving or is that person asking why people from Finance are leaving? There is something there! This is getting very interesting as there is an

angle....were those 6 men? Two, what was HR and top mgmt's reaction to their exit interviews? Did they use strong arm tactics with them too? Or did they get away lightly becoss they were not joining some other company? If you are joining dad's business, or going into teaching, or migrating...none of these directly affect image of company or HR...but you leave to join/strengthen finance in another company...ooooooh, that's not nice! Yes?

What else happened?

Aarti: Then I was sent to the MD who was briefed by Swami. He put me on stand - how can you make a comment on our expertise ? Your experience is less than theirs, we are such a big brand because of the good financial management we have. I think your comments are vitriolic because you haven't got promoted. The tirade went on and on till I simply said, 'I am sitting here not because this is my problem, it is the company's problem. I have no stakes with this company any more, I want to make a difference, that's why I am telling you why I am leaving.'

Sharada: What was his response overall?

Aarti: It was difficult getting through to him; he was totally in denial...not willing to believe that there can be people related issues at C, after all, we are posting profits year after year. And in his mind, I am just a bitter woman trying to get back at the company for some perceived hurts. His words were scathing!

After the discussion, I was totally drained and depressed...because I felt violated and my emotions cheapened. And Sharada, I have been feeling quite sick about the way my immediate superiors are behaving. You won't believe this, they wanted me to hand over all my workings on the A:S model with detailed notes, and...this will sicken you, they want to put it on record that the whole thing is a property of Calpro. The horrible word he used was intellectual property!

Sharada: Utter nonsense...if your brain was so critical, why didn't they promote you? Meanwhile I am startled by your feelings, coming to that in a moment, For now, do a handover note, but on matters related to your work. The A:S thing belongs to your students! As for Calpro, you have done what they paid you for and part of that is the handover note, which yes you must do diligently. But the A:S model? No way! Sure enough your boss is going to claim authorship and leverage his next posting to Switzerland or wherever. Sometimes its best to let people learn the hard way. That's the way to make a difference!

But wait a minute, in all this I don't see any chat with your immediate boss....did HR ask your immediate boss why you were leaving and what had he done to retain you? If I were MD, I would like to know what your immediate boss had done to retain you...after all he is the first customer. So was there any tripartite chat between HR, u and boss?

Aarti: None at all. Vaidya did not show up nor asked to be there.

Sharada: This is bizarre! More and more I want to know if they will record your statement.

Aarti: I told you HR is weak here, a pawn. Tell me, what is to stop them from not recording my comments and feelings?

Sharada: Who is the conscience of the organisation? Who plays God? To whom does it matter whether you said anything or not? Clearly your MD is out of sync with HR, people and market realities....he is happy looking at money in the hand and saying, 'arre itna paisa hai then why are people complaining?'

Aarti: I was mistaken that a difference could be made. On net it was most unnerving.

Sharada: One makes a difference to life by taking a stance, Aarti; it's for people to pick up the opportunity and use it or not. You made no mistake. What you thought or didn't think is not the issue. The issue is, a duty is owed to the company during the Exit and that has to be done; you did it; whether the company does anything or not, is their call...not yours anymore.

Later Sharada scrolled up the chat page and read that one line which bothered her immensely. Aarti's words: 'I was totally drained and depressed...because I felt violated and my emotions cheapened.' Each time she read it, it startled her. Why did Aarti feel violated? What made her feel her emotions were undermined, cheapened? What was it about the environment, about the questions, about the tone....did she feel pushed against the wall? Was it that they did not in any manner recognise anything she had done all these years? Why did Exit Interviews have to be shameful and painful?

**ENABLING Vs. CONSTRAINING ENVIRONMENTS SCALE**

<b>Collaborative</b>	<p><b>Rate the impact on the organizational environment on scale -5 (extremely constraining) through 0 (No Effect) to + 5 (Significantly Enabling)</b></p> <p><b>Please also give examples as to how these factors are reflected in your organizational processes.</b></p>	<b>Directive</b>
Our organization takes decisions as a team.		Managers determine the team decisions.
Feedback for the operation can influence the strategy.		Strategy influences all operations.
Collective responsibility is a part of the team culture.		Some people are seen as important for the success of the organization.
People are able to recognize their role as important to organization's success.		Some people are blamed for the failures of the organization.
People go beyond their roles to ensure that tasks are completed.		There is an expectation that people do only what they are asked to do.
Information is available to all people		Information is held by some people and at times this creates issues between leaders and team members have to be told what to do most of the time.
<b>Appreciative</b>	<p><b>Rate the impact on the organizational environment on scale -5 (extremely constraining) through 0 (No Effect) to + 5 (Significantly Enabling)</b></p> <p><b>Please also give examples as to how these factors are reflected in your organizational processes.</b></p>	<b>Hostile</b>
The organization recognizes the strength of all its employees.		There is a sense of bitterness amongst employees regarding who gets the most opportunities.
The opportunities and challenges given to the employees are determined by their skills and enthusiasm.		The limitations of employees are pointed out repeatedly without any support to address them.
Efforts of the team members who support the leader in achieving the task are individually recognized.		It is up to the team leader to motivate his/her employees.
Each failure is seen as a time to learn lessons for the future and not as a time to find faults.		In a large organization like ours it is hard to recognize each person's effort.

<p>If people do not have information and knowledge they access it to complete their goals.</p>		<p>Accountability means that someone has to take the blame for each failure.</p>
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<p><b>Facilitative</b></p>	<p><b>Rate the impact on the organizational environment on scale -5 (extremely constraining) through 0 (No Effect) to + 5 (Significantly Enabling)</b> <b>Please also give examples as to how these factors are reflected in your organizational processes.</b></p>	<p><b>Restrictive</b></p>
<p>Organization encourages people to seek help if they face difficulties at work.</p>		<p>The process of seeking help needs to be sanctioned on a case to case basis.</p>
<p>Organization has a policy that defines what help is available to people when they face difficulties in their personal life.</p>		<p>Organization expects people to be able to manage their personal lives without it affecting their work performance.</p>
<p>Organization has demonstrated non negotiable practices in cases where any colleague was harassed or discriminated against by another.</p>		<p>Organization does not encourage colleagues reporting against each other, even if they are feeling harassed.</p>
<p>Organization has an induction program for all new employees or those who change roles from one process to another.</p>		<p>Organization believes in throwing people in the deep end as a way of helping them learn.</p>
<p>Organization provides resources for individual professional development so that employees can decide which of their skills need to be enhanced.</p>		<p>Continued professional development is decided at the organizational level.</p>
<p>Organization provides resources for work/life balance, without making it seem as a special favor to employee or group of employees.</p>		<p>Work/life balance is seen as a staff welfare activity which only the more vulnerable amongst the staff avail.</p>

<b>Proactive</b>	<b>Rate the impact on the organizational environment on scale -5 (extremely constraining) through 0 (No Effect) to + 5 (Significantly Enabling)</b> <b>Please also give examples as to how these factors are reflected in your organizational processes.</b>	<b>Reactive</b>
Time is allocated to plan objectives and activities.		We seem to spend a lot of time fire fighting.
We are able to predict the possible obstacles we will face in the process.		We are able to respond to changes that happen around us.
There is a response plan for most crises that the organization is likely to face.		It takes us a lot of time to take decisions when we see opportunities.
Individual crises are respected to the extent that they have an impact on the organization.		It is difficult for us to review our process each time there is a crisis.
Individual managers feel that there is a framework of policies that they can fall back on in case of a crisis.		Change seems to be hurried through and thrust upon.
The impact of each change is analyzed and addressed		Difficult decisions are postponed due to fear of wrong decisions being taken.
There is a process to review if there is a pattern to the crises faced by the organization.		

<b>Listening and Informing</b>	<b>Rate the impact on the organizational environment on scale -5 (extremely constraining) through 0 (No Effect) to + 5 (Significantly Enabling)</b> <b>Please also give examples as to how these factors are reflected in your organizational processes.</b>	<b>Assuming</b>
Organization is able to create avenues for all employees to feel heard.		Communication in informal situations is relied upon more than the formal avenues.
The managers are trained in communication so as to enable them to give feedback.		Mangers encourage informal information to flow to them from preferential sources.
Employees are able to recognize strengths in their colleagues and are able to give positive feedback.		There is pressure to agree with each other.



Employees are open to feedback about their limitations without getting defensive.		It is difficult to give positive feedback.
Confidentiality is assured to all employees regarding their personal difficulties.		It is difficult to talk about limitations/ failures in the organization.
There are avenues to resolve conflicts amongst colleagues.		When there is incomplete information about a conflict the organization and the managers conclude without clarifying.
In case of violation of integrity or harassment/ exploitation of any employee it is possible to resort to whistle blowing.		There is no challenge to assumptions that are made on the basis of gender, religion, caste or geographical origin.

<b>Including</b>	<b>Rate the impact on the organizational environment on scale -5 (extremely constraining) through 0 (No Effect) to + 5 (Significantly Enabling)</b> <b>Please also give examples as to how these factors are reflected in your organizational processes.</b>	<b>Excluding</b>
Each person's talent is recognized and utilized.		Opportunities are given to people on the basis of influence networks and not skill set.
There are universal policies in the organization which try and address the diverse needs of the employees.		People tend to get labeled in the organization.
The environment and space of the organization is accessible to all employees.		People's limitations are focused upon without offering solutions to them.
Employees have a right to information regarding the processes that affect or involve them.		The role of the context in people not being able to deliver is not considered.
Employees are included in any decisions that are taken regarding them.		There is only verbal commitment to diversity.
The organization allocates resources for changes in infrastructure and processes to ensure all employees feel equal part of the organization.		It is difficult to identify claims that facilitate diversity in teams.
The organization conducts capacity building on issues of diversity.		Some people are repeatedly discouraged from taking a challenge.

The organization recognizes and rewards champions for diversity.		There is role modeling on the issue of challenging exclusion.
It is non negotiable for this organization to protect the rights of all its employees.		There is no method to recognize people's talent and abilities.

<b>Evolving</b>	<b>Rate the impact on the organizational environment on scale -5 (extremely constraining) through 0 (No Effect) to + 5 (Significantly Enabling)</b> <b>Please also give examples as to how these factors are reflected in your organizational processes.</b>	<b>Fixed</b>
Change is seen as an opportunity in the organization.		It is difficult to challenge the fixed method of doing things in the organization.
The organization looks out for feedback from its customers and employees to enhance its processes.		Some processes that do not fulfill their objectives any more continue to be performed.
Organization has benchmarks for each process.		It is taken as an affront when people go beyond timelines of reports.
Organization reforms itself and changes perspectives with the development of the society it works in.		Each change is seen as a major task which requires sanction.
Organization allocates time and resources to be able to incorporate new and different ways of addressing the same problem.		There is a delay in decision making due to inflexible method of working.
Although there is a predictable and consistent method for all business processes, managers are encouraged to innovate within the values of the organization.		Deviation from protocol, even when aligned to the objectives and values, is questioned.

Compare your analysis of Calpro with my analysis that appeared in the same issue of Business World. It is reproduced here with permission from Business World.

### **Analysis of the case study as published in Business World**

Here is a message for Calpro. Loud and Clear! You can either learn from the patterns in your organization or you can repeat the patterns to justify your actions and be defensive.

People who want to learn from patterns in their organizations believe in the organization. People who want to deny the reality believe in themselves. Calpro has a problem. The problem is that it has too many people who only believe in themselves.

Calpro has three patterns that it needs to change.

One, it is not gender-sensitive. There are broader implications of this than not looking after the welfare of its women employees. An organization which is not gender sensitive is an organization that is not equal. It is an organization which discriminates and thus ignores reality. Thus, there is a question about integrity. If you discriminate against someone on the basis of gender, then you are intentionally overlooking their potential and evidence for it. That is an integrity issue.

Two, Calpro is an organization that believes in status quo and not changes. When you believe in status quo, you are actually very aware that you are about to fail. You do not want to upset what seems to be successful. You do not want to do that because you do not know how you got there in the first place. It is like something clicked and you want to sustain it at all costs. You do not know if you would be able to recreate it.

Three, Calpro is an organization which is ritualistic. It goes through the rituals of 360 degree, team building, delegation achievement, transparent “collaborativeness” and exit interviews. Transparency ends with the glass that covers the photos on Aarti’s table. There is haze beyond that. The haze is a strategy. If Calpro were to make these events and activities ongoing processes that determine the organization, it would be a transparent organization. But then the power will be spread and will not remain in the hands of a few. There is a need in Calpro to control; the need for control comes from fear of disarray.

People who defend their actions when there is an opportunity to learn have reason to do so. There are pay-offs for denying the reality. If Calpro was to begin learning from the reality of its patterns, it would have to accept the need for change. If they defend themselves, they would only decay. The pay-off would be that no responsibility would be assigned for failure except through a graffiti through a post-it! Denying the reality does not change it.

Let us now look at the specific issue of the exit interview and its objectives and the process.

In my opinion an exit interview is a tool for learning, not a tool for resolution of conflict. The conflict resolution and debriefing of the leaving employee is the function of the line manager and the HR team and should precede the exit interview. This is so that the current issues between the organization and employee do not sully the learning that an exit interview offers. The exit interview should ideally be conducted by a third party. Just as the recruitment is a process which gains objectivity through third party participation, such a third party collaboration in exit interview is extremely important.

The questions of the exit interview should not just be about the conversations and arguments about perceptions of certain events. The questions should try to bring out three things.

What are the patterns in the organization that the employee found helpful for achieving the organizational growth?

What are the patterns that the employee found to be unhelpful?

What could the organization have done differently to retain the employee and also to further its own goals?

Even if there is a difference of perception about the issues raised by the employee, it is best left unaddressed. An exit interview is a customer feedback. You do not challenge customer perception. You learn from it, even if what the employee feels is not the reality. It is a perception of reality that the employee has. If others have the same perception, it needs to be understood and not challenged.

A brand ad spend, a product, an organization and its leadership all have their fatigue curves. The law of diminishing returns is controlled by the minds of people! If you accept your strengths and limitations your mind allows you to correct course. If you accept only your strengths then your limitations get the better of you eventually. If you accept only your limitations you become paralyzed. Aarti has the knack of accepting her strengths and limitations; she will grow wherever she is. Vaidya and Swami are the corporate undertakers. They will smarten up what is dead but cannot revive it.

Calpro is too focused on its limitations. It is an organization with a low self-esteem. Sometimes you become violent to prevent coming face to face with your inadequacies. Calpro has become a violent organization. Sharada, the emotions felt by Aarti are strong because she is feeling violated. They are quite understandable. Calpro's violence makes me angry. It should make all of us angry and restless! Restlessness is the beginning of change.

# 5

## Creating Enabling Environment: The Process

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### Before You Start!

It is important to remember four key facts outlined in the preceding chapters of this manual before embarking on an organizational change to achieve an engendered organization.

One, an organization is a microcosm of the society it lives in. It is impacted by the prevalent trends in the society and it impacts the society through its influences. The society is discriminatory towards women and this is reflected in each organization's metrics. It is denial to say that discrimination against women does not exist in our organization. It is possible for each organization to make a difference in the way society becomes an inclusive society by demonstrating and adhering to strong principles of treating human beings as human beings at all points of interface that it has with the larger world.

Two, if an organization wants to work towards being an engendered organization it needs to work towards being an **enabling environment**. The link between engendered, effective and enabling processes has to be clear and reflected in the planning process for being an engendered organization. Targeted interventions only for women may be necessary but are not likely to achieve an engendered organization. Changes achieved by targeted interventions are not sustainable; all business processes need to be reviewed and addressed for the organization to be engendered.

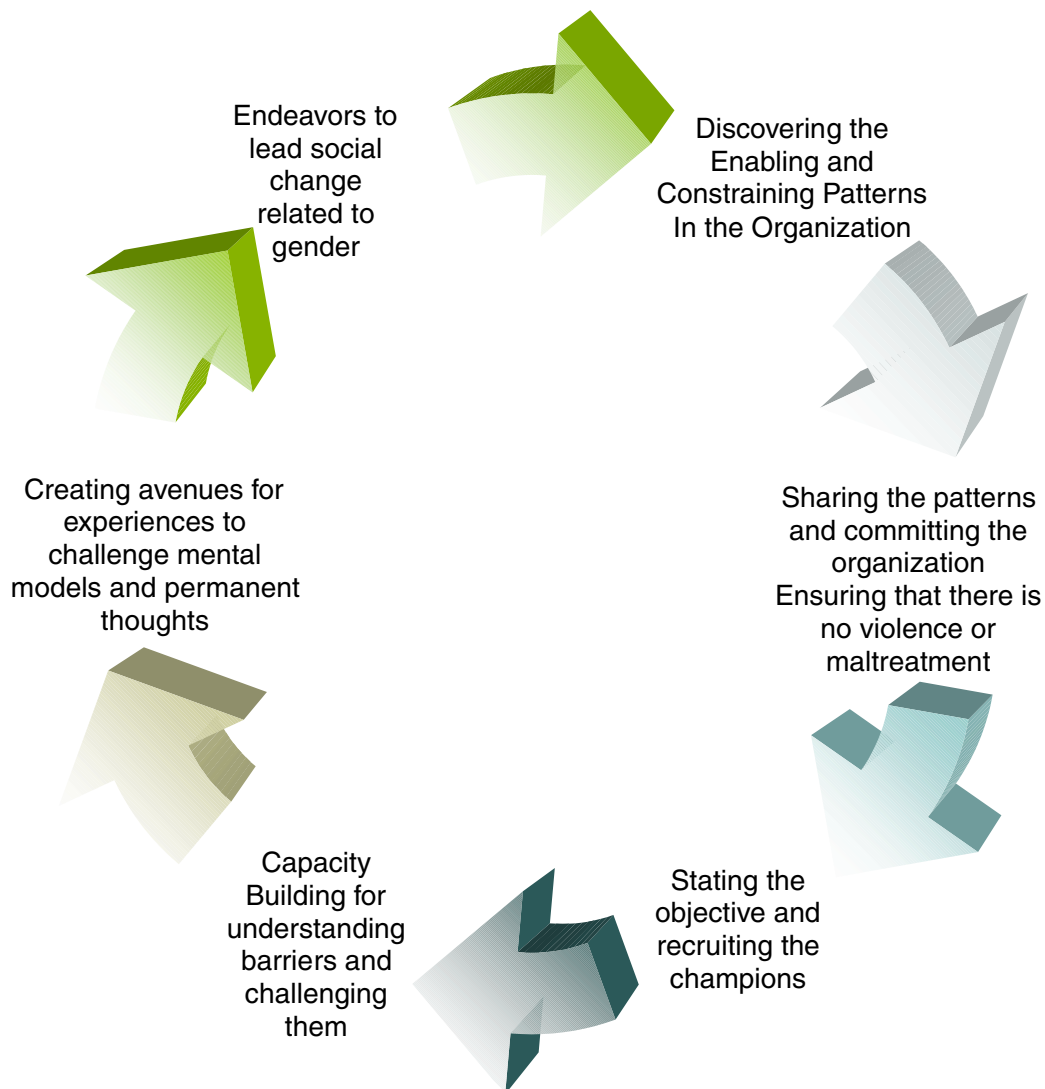
Three, it is also important to remember that whatever tools and processes that we use may themselves be colored by the biases of people who use them. These biases are **individual permanent negative thoughts** and **organizational mental models**.

Every individual brings a history of permanent thoughts with him/her to the organization and these permanent thoughts influence and mostly resist the process of change in an organization. The change agents for the engendering process must be willing and able to question their own permanent thoughts.

Similarly, each organization has a history of its own patterns which reflects its mental models. Plans for change should question these mental models and provide avenues for experiencing a different way of thinking. A change process without questioning or challenging the mental model will be temporary and last only till the time there is a sustained focus on the issue.

Four, the change process would need to be sustained for many cycles before it becomes internalized. It is like any other cross-cutting process that one wants to achieve in an organization. For example, a six-sigma process does not stop after it achieves success in the first year. Engendering is not a look out for crisis like harassment or discrimination; it is an ongoing process that runs parallel to other organizational processes.

It is a way of thinking.



## Preparation For Change

It is important that the organization assigns the process to a cross functional team with a flat hierarchy. This team could be called the **Enabling Environment Team** or the **Inclusive Environment Team**. The team needs to be inclusive in its process. It needs to define its objectives and the ground rules for the process. The first objective for the team would be to make a case for change. The first level evidence

exists in looking at the available metrics for the organization through the process of gender disaggregating:

- How many women work in the organization?
- How many women applied to the organization in the last two years?
- What is the difference in the proportionate cost to company for women employees and male employees?
- What is the average length of employment of men and women?
- When women leave what are the reasons for their doing so?
- Is there evidence of vertical segregation of women as evident from the fact that there are more women in certain functions?
- Is there an evidence for horizontal segregation of women as evident from there being disproportionately higher number of men in the most senior positions?

This evidence can be compared with industry benchmarks. It is useful for the organization to take a lead and work together with two or three other organizations to create Sectoral data.

The evidence can be supplemented by international data which shows that though the numbers of women in the organization are increasing, there is still significant evidence of there being a bias against women.

The evidence can be further supplemented by looking at the Gender Development Index for the country and also looking at the Gender Gap Index for the country.

Once this data is ready the next level of exploration needs to start by talking to the managers in the organization.

## **Discovering the patterns**

To discover patterns an organization could use three sets of tools simultaneously:

- Interviews with managers
- Focus Group Discussions
- Employee Survey

### *Interviews*

The organization could interview women and male managers individually to explore the experiences that they have related to their gender. These interviews can be informative about the way the managers think and also about the processes that exist in an organization. An ideal method of conducting these interviews would be to involve a third party to ensure confidentiality about personal issues if these are brought up by the managers.

Such interviews need to be done in an empathetic manner and with a definitive plan to intervene if there is a disclosure of abuse, maltreatment or exploitation in the organization during the interview process. Nothing could be more insensitive if the process of engendering an organization itself is seen to sanction abuse or maltreatment.

The areas that need to be explored in such an interview could be:

- Organization Structure
- Organization Business Process
- The formal roles that women perform in the organization

- The informal roles that women perform
- Organization's definition of success
- Process of communication
- Avenues for decision making
- Process of allocating Opportunities
- Experiences of women in the organization

### *Focus Group Discussions*

The organization could have focus group discussions on the issue of gender. The starting points of these discussions could be the caselets that appear at various points in this manual. The themes of the focus groups could highlight the mental models in the organization. In order to be useful focus groups need to be cross functional and with external facilitation to make them safe. If there are very few women in an organization it may be useful to have a women's group separately. Focus groups could also be held as e-groups in multi location organizations, but these discussions should be in real time and close ended.

### *Employee Survey*

The organization could also conduct an organization-wide confidential survey using the Enabling vs. Constraining Environments Scale (see Chapter 4) to be able to assess the enabling and constraining patterns prevailing in the organization.

These patterns will also point towards the mental models in the organization and provide the agenda for ongoing change. The data from these three processes should be shared with the larger team to make a case for change.

## **Sharing the evidence and committing the organization**

Data from the preliminary research mentioned above should be shared with all people in the organization. The data should be shared to highlight the need for an enabling environment, the mental models that are enabling and constraining and the process for change.

## **Recruiting the champions**

The Enabling Environment team needs to be expanded at this stage to be able to have a larger representation in the organization. This wider team should be involved in the review of all business processes and brainstorm changes which need to be made to the processes to make them engendered and enabling. The champions should design interventions in a participatory manner such as work life balance interventions, flexible time interventions, mentoring processes and a value watch tool. The champions could also design capacity building processes for the organization roll outs for changes to be implemented. Suggestions for Work Life Balance Interventions and Mentoring follow later in this chapter.

## **Review of Business Processes**

The enabling environment team needs to review all business processes for their impact on diversity and inclusion.

Some of the key processes that need to be reviewed in an ongoing manner include the following:

- Recruitment
- Communication



- Avenues of Success and Leadership
- Decision making
- Concept and Use of Time
- Change
- Other Processes

*Recruitment (includes employees, vendors, contractors, suppliers, interns and volunteers)*

All recruitment processes need to be based on equal opportunity. It is the first interface of the organization with the employee. The experiences of recruitment determine the ongoing relationship that an employee may have with the organization. Recruitment is also an interface between the organization and the society and is a method of communicating with the society. Recruitment is an opportunity to convey the importance of diversity and inclusion to the larger society.

**Questions which may help in the review of Recruitment Process**

- What is the process of deciding job descriptions?
- Are there job descriptions that carry an inherent bias against a gender?
- What is the process of communicating the opportunity?
- Is there a special effort to facilitate women to apply?
- Does the communication about the job make it covertly or overtly restricted to one gender? (Check the words/illustrations/implied meaning)
- Are there items in the application form that are not universal i.e., there are questions in the form answers to which may lead to discrimination against one gender?
- What is the selection process?
- Who are the people in the interview panel?
- Has the interview panel been formally trained to look out for gender insensitive questions?
- How many of general information questions asked are for traditional male roles?
- If any recruitment consultants are used to complete the process, are they aware of the organization's values of diversity?
- Is there a monitoring process for ensuring that the recruitment process is engendered?

**Possible Indicators**

- How many women apply for the jobs?
- How many of them are selected?
- Post Recruitment Customer Satisfaction Feedback
- Availability of checklist for interviewers
- Availability of objective measures for recruitment
- Availability of redress mechanism for any candidate who feels unfairly treated.

*Communication*

The process of communication reveals how an organization thinks. The communication with the external world may mimic the stereotypes that exist in the wider world. For example, the communication from the accounts department to suppliers may be addressed routinely as “Dear Sir”, the communication through advertising may adhere to male and female stereotypes and the product range and the positioning of the brands may be bound by stereotypes. The corporate communication efforts or events and interaction with media may all reinforce the stereotypes about gender roles.

When external communication reinforces the gender roles the process of internal communication, which is not the visible face of the organization, is likely to be similar, if not more discriminatory. The difficulty in internal communication would be reflected through the bias in the access to information and the opportunity to communicate and be heard.

There may be a differential level of difficulty and the bureaucratic process that woman might have to face to access information about processes and changes. The same information may be accessible to men through informal channels from which a woman is excluded.

The formal communication processes like meetings and discussions may repeatedly ignore, pass over or dismiss comments made by the woman manager. The communication in meeting either may become patronizing sharing of experiences which men have or the communication processes have inbuilt vocabulary of male metaphors and analogy which women may not relate to. The communication process also may have distracting red herrings inherent in the process due to turf issues that men may have.

The enabling environment team needs to audit the external and internal communication processes. The content and process of communication need to be analyzed. The overt and covert meanings in the communication need to be understood.

**Suggestions for a Communication Audit**

- List all methods of external communication
- Sample and document examples from all forms of communication
- Question the impact from the point of view of reinforcing gender roles
- Question the mental model in each communication
- Make a list of changes that need to be put in place
  
- List all avenues and methods of internal communication
- List all avenues of access to information
- Research the ease of access to information as perceived by the woman manager
- Process watch for group communication, focusing on man to man communication and man to woman communication and group response to communication by women members
- Evaluate the role of informal communication

*Avenues of Success and Leadership*

How an organization views success and leadership may come in the way of it being an enabling environment. The images and definitions associated with success and leadership may be restrictive and may dissuade women from participating in growth towards leadership.

To review how success and leadership are defined in an organization it is important to review the following:

- Metrics for Success
- Vignettes of success
- Descriptions of qualities of a leader
- Performance appraisal processes
- Performance appraisal tools like self assessment forms and 360 degree feedback forms
- Process of project level recruitment for leadership roles
- Repertoire of experience available to women manager so as to prepare them for leadership roles
- Measures of how women contribute to performance of the organization in terms of return on investment and total earning for shareholders

Following the review there would be a need to modify these definitions, tools and processes so as to ensure a wider definition of the invisible roles that the women perform that contribute to the success of the organization.

The performance appraisal systems need to address the Horizontal Segregation and Vertical Segregation of women in an organization. The performance appraisal process needs to ensure that use of work life

balance provisions like flexi time or parenting leaves should not affect the possibility of growth within the organization. Any decisions regarding future should not be based on assumptions about people's life cycles. There should be a constant review to ensure that people are graded according to predefined objective measure of performance, as opposed to general impressions of commitment and loyalty.

Salary Structure will need to be reviewed to ensure that there is no disparity between the salaries and benefits due to women and men for the same job.

### *Decision Making*

How decisions are taken in an organization are reflective of the organization being enabling or constraining. Sometimes organizations have unsaid rules and conventions that women in leadership positions need to confirm their decisions with male colleagues for acceptability and practical application. Sometimes women are co-opted in the decision making process without being given a voice in the process. Sometimes areas of decision making between men and women are demarcated (house keeping and catering decisions are left to women and transport decisions to men)

#### **Questions that help**

Who takes decisions in the organization?

On what information are these decisions based?

Who takes which decisions in the organization?

How many times are decisions taken by male managers changed by their line managers?

How many times are decisions taken by women managers changed by their line managers?

Are there any unsaid rules about how decisions regarding some areas have to be confirmed by the senior management?

Who sanctions the financial implications for the decisions taken by male managers? Who sanctions them for women managers?

### *Concept and Use of time*

The concept and use of time in an organization may also be structured around male stereotypes. It is a norm for working time to be between 9.30am to 5.30pm. This eight hour day is a remnant of an era when men used to be the primary human resource for an organization. A number of women take up teaching jobs so that they are more available to children when they return home from schools. What stops an organization to function according to a school time? What stops organizations from a mixture of on-site time and off-site time? How does organization value effective use of time? How does the organization help its employees draw a boundary between the personal and professional time?

The flexibility in how the organization looks at time and its ability to trust its employees to use it effectively determines the openness of the organization to challenge its constraining role in its employees' life.

### *Change*

The time of change in an organization is the time that tests the strength of its patterns. In most times of change the enabling patterns give way and the constraining patterns are more likely to be demonstrated.

### Questions that Help

Does the organization plan change proactively or does the organization react to changes?  
If it plans changes, does it base change on evidence derived from its own operations/those of others or is it driven by ideas from the past?  
Do the change managers ask themselves, “Who will lose what?” because of the change?  
Do the change managers view the ripple effect of change on linked processes?  
How is each person affected by the change involved in the change?  
How is change communicated to all people?  
What is the redress for people who stand to lose because of the change?  
How is the human impact of change acknowledged?  
Is there a ‘value watch’ during the change process, especially considering the gender dimension?

### *Other Processes*

Apart from the processes outlined, you may want to also review the process of procurement, the design of your office facility, the transport policy, the policy on safety during travel, processes of marketing, advertising and positioning of your products and services.

## **CAPACITY BUILDING FOR ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS**

Preparing the team for enabling environments requires a reflective and experiential process.

It can not be a onetime roll out process; it is a process of **guided discovery**.

### *Building a Case for Enabling Environments*

The process needs to establish the business case for enabling environments. It needs to provide information on the link between enabling environments and engendered environments. It also needs to highlight the link between the permanent thoughts we carry to the gender gap in the society. Next step is to help the organization understand the mental models and the linked enabling and constraining factors. It will be useful for the organization as whole to recognize the cost of constraining factors.

### *Changing Processes*

The process of capacity building would then support different functional team to devise changes in their existing processes and watch for them. These changes would be then celebrated to create a sense of ongoing ownership for the enabling environment.

### *New Support Processes*

Parallel to the capacity building process there will be introduction of the new support processes like Work Life Balance Interventions and Mentoring

### *Lessons Learned*

The organization may then want to help their managers take these lessons to other organizations or to the development of the community in which they are based or work.

## **Creating avenues for experiences to challenge mental models and permanent thoughts**

It is useful for the organization to be able to involve in activities to challenge the beliefs that they carry. Such avenues challenge the norm and move away from stereotype. These avenues also help teams work in a collaborative manner, be listening, appreciative and evolving. These may be small experiences integrated into the existing work or these maybe specifically designed projects that help the teams adopt another way of thinking. This experiential capacity building in this form is essential to help people challenge their permanent thoughts and the mental models in the organization.

Let us consider an organization where the mental model is, “if you trust and listen then you would be taken advantage of.” The challenging experience for such a model could be where the team members necessarily have to trust each other. The experience could be of shared goals and linked activities, activities which cannot be completed without communicating openly e.g., a relay treasure hunt.

Repeated experiences will allow the team to experience a different way of thinking and thus a different of behaving in their everyday work.

## **Endeavors to lead social change related to gender**

If the team is given the opportunity to understand and lead social change to address the gender gap in the community it helps them understand the issue of diversity better within the organization. Just as it is difficult for the organizational value of respect for diversity to survive the patriarchal hierarchy in one’s social context, similarly it is difficult for the managers to be champions of social change related to gender outside the organization and remain insensitive to gender issues within the organizational processes.

Such endeavors may include working with young men on their view of themselves, working with women’s group through microfinance, working with the young women to learn vocational and communication skills. There could be many other avenues to work with the community to address gender based discrimination.



# 6

## Work Life Balance Interventions

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### **Understanding and Achieving a Balanced Life**

Most people's reality is an existential question that has no right or wrong answers. Life is inadvertently seen as a competing priority with work. All of us create our own webs of rationalization and survive this competition.

But are we able to fulfill our purpose of life? What makes us successful? What do we really want from life? Should our ends be able to justify all our ways and means? And who should sit on judgment? Balancing life is not stealing a few moments away from work; it is a philosophy of life.

These are questions which Buddha, Guru Nanak, Kabir, Ghalib and Bulle Shah have all tried to answer with varying degrees of success which cannot be replicated here. Here is one web of rationalizations. See if it fits your view of yourself.

All of us travel on four dimensions in parallel.

- Abuse to dignity
- Helplessness to Control
- Alienation to Togetherness
- Suffering to Purposefulness

We travel through these journeys in many domains of life:

- Relationships
- Participation in Living Spaces
- Work and Livelihood
- Health
- Participation in our communities
- Creative Pursuits
- Leisure
- Professional Development
- Identity

We spend our lives charting course on these dimensions in each of the domains, celebrating events that allow us to feel a movement forward and feeling sad when we stagnate or move backwards. This feeling of stagnation in any domain or on any dimension is the sense of *imbalance*.

We only remember events as discontinuous points and not the *process* of our journeys. When events become distant and we lack focus on our journey we feel at a loss and without a purpose. We strive to create further tangible, ‘celebrateable’ events on one or the other axis. We need that event. It is desperation. It is an event or nothing. We try too hard. We break our images of ourselves. We break relationships. We break the rules. We force the movement. Forced movements can contrive events of success but have a cost attached to them.

Such a forced movement on one axis affects our movement on other axes. We cannot feel happy even when we have a tangible reason to be so. It seems to be incomplete. Life seems to be pointless. We get tired of this pointlessness and try and break this by movement on another axis. We achieve again. This time perhaps movement is on another axis. The event and its pointlessness keep on hitting us time after time and then we either become reckless or indifferent. There are no contingencies and no consequences. We are in an addictive trap of more events and in the larger picture these events seem inconsequential.

If we force movements and only remember our journeys as events then too it is imbalance. If we concentrate more on one domain or one dimension it is imbalance. As the commonest imbalance is caused by work taking so much time in our life that is the most recognized imbalance. But to understand the imbalance we need to *question* the imbalance rather than focusing on work and life as competing domains.

It is only occasionally that we move forward on all axes. That is blissful but rare.

All of us are caught in this ‘one step forward three step backward’ trap. Our movement on purposefulness by achieving the sales target probably makes us feel more alienated. As we feel more isolated we need to control our environment more and more. The more we do that the more we suffer because we are going against what we think ourselves to be. We are in a spiral trying very hard to shoot our way out of it.

Obviously the harder we try the more difficult it becomes. What can we do? How do we create the balance? Perhaps we need to stop and define the imbalance before we create balance. We need to ask ourselves, “What are the patterns that seem to be holding me back? How can I learn from these patterns?”

But the questioning has to consider patterns on all dimensions and in all domains simultaneously, not one at a time.



## LIFE DOMAIN BALANCE INDEX

**This is a tool which helps you rate your own activities and their outputs in six domains of life. The assumption is that each person can contribute to the outputs of Dignity, Purposefulness, Belonging and Control by having balanced activities in each domain.**

**The index gives a list of indicators for balance and imbalance in each domain to help you compare your own activities. This is a personal index which does not have to adhere to a norm. You have to see if you are satisfied with the levels of dignity, purposefulness, belonging and control that you have in your life.**

### Participation in Living Spaces and Processes

If we contribute to a space or a process we become attached to it. It helps us develop a sense of belonging and it also helps us create ownership and movement by changing our living spaces. We also need to communicate with others who use the same space. If we do not participate in our spaces and processes we remain detached and as if in a vacuum.

Please score your movement in this life domain on these dimensions on a score 0 to 10, where 0 implies no movement and 10 implies movement about which you feel extremely happy	
	Dignity
	Purposefulness
	Belonging
	Control

#### *Indicators of balance*

- I take interest in my living space
- I spend time looking after and contributing to my living space
- I have a sense of belonging in relation to my living space
- I spend time and contribute to processes of everyday living like cooking

#### *Indicators of stagnation or imbalance*

- I am indifferent to my living space
- I find my living space to be only a place for sleeping
- I notice everyday processes of living only when they go wrong
- I have to look after the living space without support from my family
- I feel unsupported as a caretaker for my living space

## Relationships

When we contribute time and resources to forming and sustaining relationships with significant people in our life we contribute to our own sense of self worth. We develop a system of being acknowledged. By negotiating our needs in relationship we develop a sense of control and we decrease our alienation through the togetherness offered by such experiences.

Please score your movement in this life domain on these dimensions on a score 0 to 10, where 0 implies no movement and 10 implies movement about which you feel extremely happy	
	Dignity
	Purposefulness
	Belonging
	Control

### *Indicators of balance*

- I am able to focus on people with whom I have relationships.
- I listen to people actively.
- I take interest in the lives of my partner and children.
- I share parenting responsibility for my children.
- I am able to discuss my children's needs with my partner and take joint parenting decisions.
- I have knowledge about everyday events and concerns of key people in my life.
- I am able to enjoy being with my family.
- Most of the time in my relationships is spent problem solving, rather than sharing positive experiences.
- I am able to draw a boundary between my work and personal time.
- I am able to sustain my old friendships.
- I like meeting new people even if they will not help me in my work.
- I am able to share my feelings with my partner.
- I am able to accept negative feedback from my partner.
- I am able to spend time with my friends on my own.
- I am able to create time to be with spouse and family on occasions that are important for them.

### *Indicators of stagnation or imbalance*

- I avoid people because they might ask me favors.
- I feel key people in my life do not appreciate me.
- My needs are always secondary to those of my family.
- I find it difficult to trust people.
- I feel I have to keep secrets from my partner.
- I fear my partner's anger.
- I feel bitter towards my partner.
- I am not able to disagree with my partner for fear of hurting her/him.
- I tend to make generalizations in my communication with my partner.
- I find myself mentally arguing with my partner.
- I accept my partner to be able to know what my expectations are without having to share them.
- I feel bored in my relationship because I do not find anything new.
- I have to seek permission from my family to be able to meet my friends.
- There is a sense of pressure that we have to do everything together as a family.
- I feel divided in my loyalty towards my family of origin and my spouse.
- I find myself being busy every time there is an important event in the family.
- I feel embarrassed seeking time off work for my need to be with the family.
- I have experienced violence in my relationship with my partner.
- I have been violent in my relationship with my partner.

### *Participation in community*

Participation in the community regarding the decisions that may influence us or the resources of the community helps us feel in control of our lives. Such participation also furthers a sense of belonging and strengthens the sense of inter-dependence. It also helps us negotiate and communicate with a tolerance and acceptance of diversity. It helps us recognize purpose beyond work.

Please score your movement in this life domain on these dimensions on a score 0 to 10, where 0 implies no movement and 10 implies movement about which you feel extremely happy	
	Dignity
	Purposefulness
	Belonging
	Control

*Indicators of balance*

- I am able to take interest in and contribute to the community that I live in.
- I see it as a personal responsibility to conserve natural resources and habitat.
- I keep myself informed about political debates.
- I exercise my right to vote.
- I express my opinion about important issues in my surroundings.
- I express my opinion on current political debates.
- I keep abreast with the news.
- I am likely to voice my dissent if I see someone being discriminated / abused.
- I take initiative and make myself available as a resource person to the community.

*Indicators of imbalance*

- I have no interest in the community.
- I cannot spend too much time on the issues of the community.
- I find the involvement with community a waste of time.
- I am alright if other people take decisions about issues that affect my life.

**Health**

Health and well being are significant determinants of the quality of life of any person. Working towards a healthy way of being allows the person to feel in control of his/her own life. It adds to the sense of self worth and dignity. It helps the person become more purposeful and have a better sense of belonging as he/she has more resources and more time to contribute to all domains of life.

Please score your movement in this life domain on these dimensions on a score 0 to 10, where 0 implies no movement and 10 implies movement about which you feel extremely happy	
	Dignity
	Purposefulness
	Belonging
	Control

*Indicators of balance*

- I am able to exercise regularly.
- I do not postpone seeking advice regarding my health.
- I try alternative methods and treatments before I seek help from doctors.
- I like to keep myself informed about my physical condition through health checks.
- I am able to eat nutritious food.

*Indicators of imbalance*

- I have been told by people around me that I should cut my drinking.
- My drinking is gradually increasing.
- I smoke.
- I have experimented with drugs.
- I use drugs.
- I sleep fitfully.
- My mood is sad.

**Leisure**

Use of time for leisure and non goal directed activities allows a person to be with himself/herself and those he/she loves, without worrying about performance or perfection. Leisure allows you to express yourself, be spontaneous and caring. It allows you to dissociate from reality and problems related to it. As it gives you time without focus on work it adds to your ability to work. It is 'recovery time'.

Please score your movement in this life domain on these dimensions on a score 0 to 10, where 0 implies no movement and 10 implies movement about which you feel extremely happy	
	Dignity
	Purposefulness
	Belonging
	Control

*Indicators of balance*

- I am able to allocate time and resources for activities which I find enjoyable.
- I have access to avenues to be able to do things that I enjoy.
- I have the ability to let myself experience unstructured time with out trying to fulfill a goal.
- I have the ability to draw a boundary between work and my personal time.
- I am able to include people who are not related to me through work in my leisure time activities.
- I am able to be on my own for a part of my personal time.

*Indicators of imbalance*

- My leisure time is built around work based activities and relationships.
- I use my leisure time by passively watching television rather than doing something else.
- I let the use of alcohol or addictive substances determine all my leisure time activities.
- I seek to compete, perform and excel in my leisure time activities.
- I find it difficult to draw a boundary between work and my personal life.
- I find it difficult not to use my leisure time for problem solving.
- I find myself lonely during my leisure time.

**Identity**

Please score your movement in this life domain on these dimensions on a score 0 to 10, where 0 implies no movement and 10 implies movement about which you feel extremely happy	
	Dignity
	Purposefulness
	Belonging
	Control

*Indicators of balance*

I am able to focus on my abilities.

I seek new adventures.

I am able to spend time with myself without being restless.

I am able to enjoy myself.

I am able to do what I like doing.

I am happy.

I am quite accepting of people.

I am able to accept criticism without becoming defensive.

I am able to accept praise and credit without being sheepish or arrogant.

I am able to laugh at my mistakes and myself.

*Indicators of imbalance*

I introduce myself to people as what I do.

I think of a time when I will retire and do what I really want to do.

I find myself preoccupied with my thoughts about difficulties.

I find myself magnifying the possibility of negative consequence in most situations.

I find myself minimizing my achievements.

I find myself taking risks.

I get bored easily.

I find it difficult to take decisions.

I am confused when faced with choices.

I doubt the decisions which I take.

I get angry.

I am sad.

I suspect people.

I cannot stand inefficient people.

I cannot stand people who lie.

I find it difficult to admit when I make mistakes.

I am rigid in my opinions.

I seek approval of people.

## **Work Life Balance Interventions in Organizations**

Most organizations have some Work-Life Balance Interventions.

Some common mistakes made in providing these interventions to employees are as follows:

- **Employees do not utilize them enough.** The assumption is, “What if they think I am weak? I will not be on the fast track.”
- **Services are not aligned to the needs of employees and are inaccessible at times.** Even when services are provided from within the organization these are not flexible enough.
- **Organizations do not work with the trends that may be easily available to them.** For example, if majority of women employees have shorter career spans because of parenting responsibilities, the question to ask is what parenting support can be offered to the existing employees, rather than spend money on re-recruitment and re-training.

- **The services offered are incomplete.** When you analyse the health reports of your employees, a significant proportion of them recommend changes in lifestyle. The lifestyle changes require 'work life balance' interventions. As the 'how to' is missing, the report is kept aside and generates only guilt, not change. People go for the tests every year but do not change. Sending people for blood tests is probably the most inefficient way of bringing about a health behaviour change. The most common areas of risk behaviour: smoking, alcohol, obesity and stress are linked to work life imbalance. Perhaps one can add to it unsafe sexual behaviour.
- **Gender specific work life balance issues get overlooked.** There is either a denial of the problem or there is a ritualistic tokenism to deal with it. The reality is that gender specific needs in any organisation are significant enough to impact the productivity of that organization. Some relevant data gathered by Saarthak while working on corporate gender specific issues support the point.
  - 60-70% of the workforce talks about stress in everyday processes.
  - Stress is more prevalent in organizations that are changing.
  - 20% of the employees have depression.
  - 30% of employees report problems like marital discord and some of these homes have evidence of family violence.
  - 50% of the workforce is dissatisfied with their quality of life.
  - 30% of employees feel that work comes in the way of parenting.
  - Around 40% of women managers face violence at home.
  - Out of the top ten causes for being off sick, at least five are stress related.
  - Most people who have work life imbalance may show risk behaviors for physical problems e.g., smoking and alcohol/substance abuse and also a significantly higher incidence of physical problems.

Stress and Alienation due to work–life imbalance are realities in fast growing and changing organizations. These can decrease the motivation leading to a continuous state of helplessness. It could decrease the sense of belonging to your context .

Work-Life Balance Interventions in an organization, therefore, should be seen as an *organizational development* intervention, as opposed to a *welfare* intervention.

## Principles of Work Life Balance Interventions

The principles of a Work Life Balance Intervention in any organization should be the following:

- **Work Life Balance Interventions should be available to all employees, and not be women specific.**
- **Work Life Balance Interventions should be positioned as personal growth strategies** available to the whole workforce, and not only to those asking for help.
- **Confidential third party service providers should provide Work-Life Balance Interventions,** so that the workforce is able to use the service without fear of stigma or impact on their work.
- **Work-Life Balance Interventions should link people to their communities,** so as to create a sense of empowerment to influence their own lives.
- **The interventions should be multi-modal and need based.** Though there can be some systemic changes within the organization about how work is done, there also needs to be an effort to develop *adaptive coping strategies*.

## **Components of Work Life Balance Interventions**

### **Increasing awareness about work life balance**

- Awareness about work life initiatives during the induction process
- Ongoing awareness about and access to a Work Life Balance Assessment and Intervention Plan
- Positioning of work life balance as an organization effectiveness strategy for empowered teams with good quality of life
- Participatory Processes for the development of the work life balance project and the work environment in general

### **Work Life Balance through Support and Reasonable Accommodations**

- Facilitating time with family
- Creating Social Safety Nets and Support Systems
- Mentoring to enable a person to feel a sense of mastery over work and life and learn new skills for the areas he or she finds difficult to cope with
- Support Groups to decrease alienation
- Activities to create a sense of ownership
- Recognition and respect of cultural roots
- Goal Setting and Career Development Opportunities

### **Work Life Balance through Skill Building**

*Adaptive Coping Strategies* are multi-modal and may include the following:

- Activities which break the monotony of work
- Support for alternative ways of Problem Solving
- A forum where you could be heard without judgment
- A training program for coping with stress
- Support for interpersonal and stress issues beyond work
- Activities which increase the sense of belonging in the organization
- Lifestyle Change and Behavior Change Communication
- Identity Development personal growth programs
- Capacity Building of the workforce:
  - Communication Skills in Families
  - Participatory Processes in Decision Making, Gender Sensitive Business Processes
  - Reflect: Knowing one's judgments
  - Challenging Negative Thoughts
  - Engendered Change Management

### **Influence the community through Work Life Balance Initiatives**

- Community Development Initiatives
- Adopting a community to facilitate development in partnership with existing processes
- Loaning Managerial Time for Community Development
- Encouraging and rewarding social enterprise and leadership





# 7

## Mentoring Skills for Gender Sensitive Managers

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### **You Can Do It**

You are a manager who believes in people, who accepts that people have abilities, who accepts that people face limitations due to their context and their thoughts. You have the ability to help people discover their abilities and learn methods of coping with their limitations.

You are gender sensitive. It means that you know how people have assumptions about men and women. You are also aware that you may carry such judgments yourself. You have the ability to discover these judgments and challenge them. You are gender sensitive because you do not blame women for the discrimination they face. You challenge violence and harassment that they may face. You also help men challenge their assumptions about control, hierarchy and privilege.

You are a mentor because you are able to draw the boundaries between your needs and the need of your mentee. You work without expectation of change or acknowledgment. You have means of addressing your emotional responses to the situations that people bring to you through supervision processes.

You have the ability and the skills to mentor people to have long term excellent performance. You can do it.

By being a mentor you can help people to have sustainable excellent performance, performance which is:

**Self-correcting**

**Self-generating**

You think. You feel. You perform. You watch yourself as you mentor people. This gives you a skill to look at what others may be going through from their point of view.

You can do it because **you don't have to tell people what to do.**

You **do not have to be a judge** of them.

You **do not have to 'do' anything to them.**

You **just have to be with them as they discover a way.**

They are like you.

Like you, they also feel confused sometimes. Like you, they too are anxious. Like you, they are critical of themselves and like you, they have their own ways of performing. Like you, at times they believe that they are not heard and blame their context. Like you, they sometimes feel that they do not have the power to determine their performance. Sometimes their permanent thoughts about themselves and the people around them come in the way of their performance. Sometimes they do not have access to information and at other times they need to be reassured of their skills. Mentoring helps all managers. All managers also have the potential to be managers. Through mentoring you will help the mentees to:

- Align their goals to the organizational vision
- Set realistic goals beyond their own expectations
- Assess which skills help them excel and also what comes in the way
- Help them discover these barriers to success and challenge them
- Help them take corrective steps and generate new ideas to exceed themselves
- Support them through difficult times when they doubt themselves

Their ways may be different, their jobs may be different and their solutions may be different, but you are more similar to them than you think.

They have certain strengths that will make them overcome their limitations. **You are not better or more intelligent or more able than they are.** You don't have to play God or a magician. You just have to be with them as they say what they want to and may be guide them in discovering their direction.

The *principle* is to listen to people and dare them to hope and dream.

### *What Is Mentoring?*

Mentoring is a series of dialogs with a mutually agreed agenda. Both the participants – the mentee and the mentor benefit from it. Mentoring is not an informal network or lobby of people who think alike.

**Engendered Mentoring** is a process of organizational development. It makes the organization proactive, collaborative, appreciative and inclusive. This increases the effectiveness of the organization and prevents gender inequity in an organization. It addresses the gender inequity by working with both men and women, it is not a space for blaming men.

It is a formal process of **inter-generational transfer of knowledge, values, culture and skills.** It helps the organization be an inclusive organization and mitigates the risk of some people being excluded. For example, if support was informally available to people who ask for guidance then it will be available

to a very few people. Such support may be seen as partisan and may also lead to alignments and politics. Some people who cannot form relationships or may not have safe avenues to form relationships, especially women, may not have access to this informal support network. As mentoring is available to everyone in the organization it helps the organization use each leader as a resource to support a new leader. It is not dependent on personal choices of some people. It becomes an organizational strategy.

It is also a **process of ensuring that the value framework of an organization is not diluted**. As it provides as a context for role modeling and discovering answers for ethical dilemmas, it becomes an **ongoing value watch** for the organization. It creates a sanctioned space for people to disclose and seek support if they feel they have been treated unfairly or if they feel that the values of the organization need to be questioned. The mentor's responses helps the mentees shape their own response and feel empowered that they would be heard and be a part of the change in the face of ethical dilemma.

Mentoring as a process also **helps the mentee recognize the permanent thoughts** that they bring to work and their own patterns that become obstacles to achieving the objectives of the organization or remaining aligned with the vision of the organization. Such reflection helps the mentees grow to have a more mature response in difficult situations. They develop a greater sense of accountability for their own behaviour. So, if a male manager brings to the organization a permanent thought that men are better at problem solving and decision making, the mentoring process will help him discover this pattern and help him challenge it. The mentoring process will also help monitor the managers so that he or she does not end up discriminating against women within the organization or their teams.

The mentoring process is also a space for **problem solving and focusing on solutions which may be innovative**. The mentees can use the space to flesh out solutions and consolidate their strengths. The mentors benefit from the mentoring process as each session adds to their repertoire of experiences and skills. It also enhances the capabilities of their teams. Mentoring is a leadership function.

There are four basic principles of mentoring:

- Knowledge
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Care

### *Knowledge*

To be able to mentor people you have to know them, their abilities and their work. This knowledge is never complete nor does it have to be, but it is important to prepare yourself before you start mentoring. It is important to sit down and compose your thoughts regarding the person before you meet him or her.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What do I know about this person?
- What is it that I do not know and will need to know?
- What is it that the person expects from me?
- What are the key issues in their function that I am aware of?
- What do I know of the issues that they bring to me? Do I have access to information about these issues? Can I refer them to someone who knows about their issues better and will be willing to support them?
- Write down the response to these questions and you have already set your agenda for the mentoring session.

If you feel negatively about a person, rather than attributing it to an intuition or gut feeling ask yourself some further questions:

- Am I jumping to any conclusions regarding them without complete information? Am I labeling them due to my past experience of them? Have I considered any new evidence that may be available to me? Am I labeling them due to my past experience of people like them?
- Have I already made up my mind about them or their issues before meeting them?
- Do I have any hidden agenda to pursue with them?
- Am I transferring any feelings that belong to other people unto them?
- Am I guiding my conversation so that I can get political support for my ideas within the team

If the answer to any of the questions is 'yes' then you have to challenge your assumptions about the person. Even if you do not answer 'yes' to any of these questions and you have a strong feeling towards a person or you tend to use extreme adjectives for them you have to challenge your assumptions. Further, if you try to avoid meeting them you should caution yourself, as all these are indicators of your acting on your prejudice rather than your knowledge.

### *Respect*

There has to be mutual respect for each other during mentoring. You cannot mentor a person whom you disrespect and you cannot be mentored by a person whom you do not value. This respect is not something that is automatic or something which is due to age or hierarchy, respect needs to be nurtured. To be respected as a mentor you need to do the following:

- Create adequate time
- Create a safe and comfortable place
- Seek permission to mentor
- Allow freedom of expression
- Give an opportunity to disagree
- Offer choices, not fixed solutions
- Be consistent
- Do not promise what you cannot deliver
- Do not trivialize matters and give pat solutions
- Do not show sarcasm, anger, impatience or indifference

### *Responsibility*

Mentoring is a task that has to be done with a great sense of responsibility, it is not just any meeting that can be pushed around. You are telling another person how things may not have worked for him or her and how he/she can recognize his/her strengths. This might be your tenth session, but for the person sitting in front, this meeting is their worst nightmare or their best hope. You cannot take it lightly.

- Be prepared for the meeting.
- Be attentive.
- Say clearly what the purpose of the meeting is and what they can expect as an outcome.
- Ask the person if there is anything that he/she will like to add to the agenda and also his/her expectations/understanding of the process.
- Specify the time you have for the meeting.
- If you make a mistake during the meeting own it and be ready to change your view.
- If you have something negative to say, do not fumble around, say what you think clearly with behavioral examples.

- Choose your words sensitively.
- Do not generalize.
- Do not label.
- Do not tell stories of your boss's interaction with you or your interactions with other people.
- Summarize your views at the end of the meeting.
- Ask the person what was helpful in the meeting and what could have been said differently.
- Do not talk about mentoring sessions across the corridors. Maintain confidentiality.

### *Care*

You have to be caring towards the person you mentor. The method of being caring is by:

- Listening to them actively.
- Acknowledging and picking up their feelings.
- Allowing them to explore solutions for the issues.
- Pointing out any obvious unhelpful patterns of thinking.

Though the mentor benefits from mentoring, the mentoring session is essentially the mentored person's 'space'. Do not try to take it over by doing detective work about what other people think about you.

### *Process of Mentoring*

Mentoring can be seen as an ongoing relationship with a series of interactions. While the mentoring process continues it is obvious that a personal relationship we evolve between the mentor and the mentee. It is imperative that the mentor is aware of their responses to the mentee and maintains the boundaries of the relationship. Mentee may bring issues from personal life into the conversation and it is for the mentor to look at the impact of these personal life issues on work and help the mentee involve other support systems like human resource managers, third party counselling services and the line manager of the person.

The following is a description of a one mentoring session.

- Preparing for the session
- Building trust and relationship
- Listening and clarifying issues
- Giving feedback
- Brainstorming to resolve breakdowns
- Challenging assumptions that may be obstacles
- Helping in prioritization of goals
- Helping the process of doing cost benefit analysis of solutions
- Summarizing
- Asking for feedback for the process

### *Skills of Listening*

There are five important skills of listening:

- Affirmative Punctuation
- Summarizing
- Paraphrasing
- Reflecting
- Questions that help you listen

### *Affirmative Punctuation*

This means responding to what the person is saying with affirmative sounds that imply that your thinking is in the same direction as their narrative. Let us hear the following conversation and observe the use of affirmative punctuation:

**Deepti:** I had a bad day today.

**Mentor:** Oh, I am sorry to know that (*softly, 'Oh' without the exclamation mark, with concern but not pity, followed by a pause*)

**Deepti** remains silent.

**Mentor:**(*waits and then adds with same softness but with no pressure to respond*) Do you want to share with me what made it bad?

**Deepti:** It was so bad. Do you know what Asha from HR told me? (*her voice has started to rise and quiver*) She said that I am troubling everyone by not being able to settle travel claims in time.

**Mentor punctuates:** Hm. (*short, inaudible so as not to break her flow*)

**Deepti:** What does she think? Am I doing all this intentionally?

**Mentor punctuates:** Hmm.. (*longer, louder, yet giving space to continue and at the same time implying 'I understand that was a difficult situation to be in.'*)

**Deepti:** I have always trusted her. She was the only one who I thought always understood me well. The way she burst out today I doubt if people are worth trusting. I feel miserable. (*Gives space for Mentor to punctuate*)

**Mentor:** It must have been difficult for you. Tell me more about it

As the conversation proceeds it is useful to summarize what you hear. This allows the mentees to:

- Recognize that you are listening.
- Correct you if your description of the event does not match their experiences.
- To think of their problems as “copable” defined categories, rather than as an ‘amorphous mass’.
- To elaborate some aspects of their problems.
- It also provides some movement to the conversation. Once you summarize and the mentee feels that they have been heard, they can then move onto the other areas of difficulties that they face.

To be able to summarize while you listen you should try to make a mental note of issues being narrated

It is like while traveling in a new town you try and find landmarks that are familiar to you. You remember your journey from landmark to landmark. So, when you try to summarize, remember the landmarks in the conversation.

#### **Refine your summarizing skills**

- ✓ Switch on television or radio. Try to choose a melodramatic soap that twists and turns.
- ✓ As you see or hear the show try to summarize what you have heard every two minutes.
- ✓ It will test your skills while you are trying to do two things at the same time, trying to listen while you summarize.
- ✓ Avoid falling into the trap of pre-empting what the character may say because you know the story. Mind reading is not good listening.

### *Paraphrasing*

This is a skill in which you express in your own words the thoughts that you have heard from the mentee.

Paraphrasing can be done through a single word or a sentence.

For example, let us hear a conversation between Suhail and you.

**Suhail:** *I am unable to focus on anything. Things seem to float past me. I start one thing and give it up soon and start something else. I cannot do anything right.*

*This situation offers enormous potential for paraphrasing.*

**You can paraphrase to continue the conversation and gather more information.**

**You:** *Something like, you switch on and off. Is that right?*

**You can paraphrase to categorize the problem.**

**You:** *You are finding it difficult to concentrate on one thing and that is making you doubt your abilities.*

**You can paraphrase to put things in perspective.**

**You:** *I hear you saying that the way you feel right now everything looks bleak, though you do see there being some times when you can start something but it is difficult to sustain it.*

**Paraphrasing can also be used to start putting things in perspective.**

For example, the last answer is essentially a way to start challenging 'all or none thinking' by subtly replacing words like 'anything'/'everything' with other realistic words like 'sometimes' or 'mostly'.

**You:** *I hear you say that many times you feel anxious and cannot start working. I wonder if sometimes you do feel brave and do start.'*

## *Reflecting*

This is a skill in which you sensitively:

- Give feedback to the person as to what you perceive him/her to be feeling.
- State your understanding of *how* they are saying things apart from *what* they are saying.
- Present your understanding of their problems as a hypothesis. Looking out for patterns in people's behavior generates hypotheses.

Sushant was asked, *'How are you feeling about being in this performance assessment session?'*

He replied, *'Good! Brilliant!!'* but kept on scratching the notepad that he was holding in his hand while talking to the mentor.

The mentor heard the scratching so he reflected, *'I hear that you feel good but wonder if there is something amiss because I also see that you are restless. Is there that help you be more comfortable?'*

Sushant stopped scratching the pad but continued to sit on the edge of the chair and said, *"No, no. I am fine."*

The mentor said, *"I recognize that it can be difficult to be here. It is natural to be anxious about such sessions. Perhaps it will help if I started by answering questions that people normally have about such sessions."*

Reflecting as a skill may also be used to put forward hypotheses that explain the mentee's predicament.

If the hypothesis that you offer fits the person's view of himself or herself they may either feel understood or they may be able to express their feelings and experiences openly.

If your hypothesis does not fit their experience then they have a right to say, *"This is not what I think."* It helps them clarify for themselves and for you how they feel and think. You can say,

*"I was putting forth one explanation of what might be happening. If it does not match your experience then I am sure that there could be many other ways of looking at the same thing. If you do not agree with my perception let me try to understand how things are for you again."*

## Questions that help you listen

There are many ways of asking questions to clarify the information that you get.

### 1. Tips for asking good questions

#### **Ask questions only after the person has had time to say what he/she wanted to say**

*‘I will first like to hear from you how things have been for you and then if I have some questions I may ask them later, if it is alright with you’*

#### **Ask questions only when you need to clarify what the person is saying**

This is how you may interrupt the flow of their narrative, *‘I will like to stop you here and see if I have understood you correctly...’*. Summarize what you have heard and then ask for details, *‘Can you tell me some more about what difficulties you faced when you tried to negotiate a cost reduction with HR?’*

#### **Do not ask multiple questions**

You will only get the answer to the last one.

**You:** *‘Tell me what do you think of the new CPMS? Do you think it will be accepted by people? Is there any difficulty in using the form?’*

**Sushant:** *‘Good.’* Pause. *‘I don’t know.’*

#### **Do not ask questions for which people have to choose the answer from the choices that you give them**

*‘I think you have three choices, confront the man, wait and watch or take the matter to HR.’*

#### **Do not ask questions for which you suggest the answer to the person that you want from him/her**

*‘I think you need to go to HR on this. What do you want to do?’*

*‘You were helped by my talking to you, weren’t you?’*

### 2. Some helpful questions

#### **General information questions**

*‘I heard you mention how people do not seem to do what they promise. Can you tell me more about it?’*

#### **Questions to heighten the mentee’s awareness**

For example, if the mentee is extremely angry, *‘I know it must be hard for you, but do you want to share with me what it is about this situation that makes you angry?’*

Other related questions may be:

*‘Can you share how you feel when things do not seem to work the way you want them to?’*

*‘When you feel angry what are your thoughts like?’*

#### **Circular questions**

*‘I wonder what your team thinks when they are not able to meet the commitments that they make?’*

*‘If your manager were listening to what you are saying, what is she likely to say?’*

By asking circular questions you get to know the mentee’s thoughts about sensitive issues without actually asking him/her.



This answer provides a starting point for further conversation. Once the person has answered what the manager may say, they are then likely to clarify whether they are likely to agree or disagree with the manager.

### **Choice questions**

*“What could you have done differently in this situation?”*

*“If there is a similar situation next week, how will you respond to it?”*

*“What options do you have for dealing with this situation?”*

### **The guru question**

*“If your friend was to come to you with a similar problem as yours and you were an expert in solving such problems, what advise would you give to your friend?”*

### **The time line question**

*“Where do you see yourself in five years’ time?”*

*“In five years’ time when you look back at this time what would you think about it?”*

### **Scaling questions**

*“On a scale of zero to ten, how would you rate your use of the value of integrity, zero being not being able to exhibit it at all and ten being able to influence other people to demonstrate it as well?”*

## **Skills of Giving Feedback**

Feedback is a process; it evolves during the mentoring process. To be useful any feedback process should be sensitive and based on behavioral observations.

- Affirmative statements
- Validation
- Categorizing and Prioritizing Problems
- Highlighting Patterns
- Encouraging Ownership for change
- Discovering and Challenging Assumptions

### *Affirmative statements*

*“It seems to me that you are trying very hard to reach your targets. This is clear from the instances you told me about your efforts to work together with customer”*

Use “I” statements. Clearly express what you think and what makes you think so. This will enable you to say even the most negative things without hurting people.

Do not use adjectives.

Do not generalize.

Do not raise your voice.

Do not point fingers or gesticulate.

### *Validation*

Validation is skill of letting people know that their feelings are justified. Everyone has a right to his/her feelings. So if a mentee feels angry with his/her line manager and feels that he/she has been treated

unfairly, it is important for the mentor to acknowledge the feelings of the mentee. The mentor cannot get into the role of an investigator as to whether the mentee's feelings are justified.

A mentor should help the mentee explore the situation and possible solutions e.g., from direct communication with the line manager to involving the human resource manager. It is not the mentor's role to sort things out. If, however, there is a pattern in what the mentee is saying that reflects a possibility of discrimination or harassment, it is role of the mentor to involve the human resource department himself/herself.

In the above scenario the mentor's response may be something like this:

*"I can see that you are extremely angry about what was done to you. What you have been through seems to be wrong and discriminatory. You have the option of taking this matter further with human resource, I, for my part, will do so anyway."*

### ***Categorizing and Prioritizing Problems***

*"Let us stop and summarize what the issues are and then look for solutions. The key issues seem to be that you think that your team is not enthused to deliver on time targets set as hey perceive them as being too high, the expectations from you change quickly and you spend too much time in meetings. So, you seem to be looking for answers to the following questions to be able to excel:*

*'How can I energize my team this quarter?'*

*'How can I set more realistic goals for myself?'*

*'How can I manage my time better?'*

*Which one of these do you think will impact your performance the most? Let us try and solve that first."*

### ***Highlighting Patterns***

*"You seem to be trying hard to reach your targets, but each time it seems that you are not able to enlist the support of other functions. Last quarter it was Marketing, and this quarter you could not recruit in time because of delays with HR. I wonder if there are similarities in the two situations that can help us find a solution?"*

### ***Encouraging Ownership for change***

*"It seems that from your point of view other people's lack of commitment is coming in the way of what you have to do. I wonder what it is that you can do differently?"*

### ***Discovering and Challenging Assumptions***

We all carry some assumptions in our minds that come in the way of our performing better. Some common assumptions for a company in transition are:

*"Nothing will change"*

*"It is pointless saying anything because people do not listen to me"*

*"They keep on changing what they want"*

*"I do my bit. if only other people were to do their share of work."*

The best way to help people discover the assumptions which they carry in their minds is to ask them the following questions:

*“What do you think comes in the way of change or achievement?”*

*“What is it about other people that hinders your work?”*

*“How does it affect you?”*

*“Do some of your own thoughts come in the way of your performance?”*

The best method to challenge these assumptions is to ask the following questions. These are called the **Downward Arrow questions**.

*What can you do to create the change?*

*What is it about this task that others cannot do it?*

*How can you support others to help you achieve goals?*

*Are you being able focus on goals rather than activities?*

*Is it helpful to think in this manner? Are there other ways of thinking that can help you achieve your goals more completely?*

## **Closing A Mentoring Session**

The mentoring session needs to be ended as well as you started it. So, once you have heard and helped the mentee on the main issue or problem and it seems that the conversation is beginning to drift to other topics or slow down, it may be time to end the session. Here is a checklist of the key things you should do when ending.

- 1. Make sure a conclusion has been reached** and the main question of the mentee has been answered, for example, an action point has been decided upon.
- 2. Summarize the main points** of your session.
3. Ask if the caller has **any further clarification about the issue or concern**. Clarify any confusion or doubt that may be mentioned by the mentee. If he/she starts talking about other, new issues, suggest that he/she should focus on the first issue and take next few steps to address that issue at this point, and arrange some other time to discuss other issues. If a person brings up too many things at once, he/she can get confused and not really move further along or take action to address the situation that is most pressing. If a person starts mentioning a number of new issues it could be also be a way to just continue chatting with you and there may not be a real, pressing issue.
4. Sometimes people do tend to bring up the most important issues at the end of conversations. Give them feedback about it and arrange another session to take it forward. Even if the next session has to be ten minutes later, do not dilute the first session by continuing to discuss the new issue.
- 5. Express your appreciation** and that you feel glad that they came for the session. You can also acknowledge it as a positive step they took.
- 6. Say “bye”**. Do remember to have that warm smile in your face!! Do not look away or look past them as if you are already preoccupied with something else.

## ‘What IF’ Situations

### **IF THE MENTEE CANNOT SEE ANY OPTIONS and plays ‘YES...BUT’**

- Sometime it feels like you have to try very hard to please the mentee.
- The person has already tried whatever you suggest and has a rebuttal about what will go wrong.
- This is a difficult situation but it only means that the person feels that his/her difficulties are too many to be solved in one session.
- It could also mean that he/she knows the solutions that will work and is just exhausting you for the time being.
- The best way to deal with a ‘yes...but’ is to identify it early. Say something like,
 

*“It seems that you have tried a number of solutions and you are insightful about what works and what does not work. I think having tried so many times and not finding a solution has made you feel exhausted. At least I do feel exhausted and it seems for the moment that there is no solution. However, It is imperative to find solutions. I wonder if it will help if you think with me rather than trying to remember what has not worked in the past. Maybe we will evolve a new solution from exploring what has not worked in the past.”*

### **IF THE MENTEE TALKS TOO MUCH**

- If you are with a mentee who talks too much and brings in issues which are unrelated into the conversation, you have to clearly define the time available and the agenda.
- Like a broken record, after five to seven minutes of the conversation summarize what was talked about, remind the person of the agenda, and however interesting it may be to talk about other issues, it is important to stay with the agenda to complete the task.

### **IF A MENTEE BECOMES ABUSIVE OR AGGRESSIVE**

- **If the mentee is abusive or aggressive** it is your right to end the session. Say,
 

*“I can see you are extremely upset. It is difficult to continue a conversation while you are upset. I will like you to meet when I am able to understand you better.”*

  - ✓ Do not respond to what he/she is saying.
  - ✓ Do not justify yourself.
  - ✓ Just repeat what you have said about having another meeting when it will be possible to spend more time on the issues.
  - ✓ Get someone to join you to rearrange the meeting and help the person leave.
- **If the mentee criticizes the session** or you, say that you hear what the person is saying and you will think about what he/she has said. Meanwhile ask the person to help you understand his/her view better by giving you examples of what makes him/her uncomfortable about the session or you. Offer the person a chance to invite another person to the session if this is what he/she wishes. If you find the person’s criticism reasonable thank him/her for the feedback and try to correct what the person found difficult. If you find the person’s criticism unreasonable, thank him/her for the feedback, say why you find it unreasonable and invite him/her to give you further specific feedback.

### **IF THE MENTEE IS SILENT**

#### **DO NOT ASK THE PERSON TO LEAVE**

Tell the person the purpose of the session.

Give him/her space to say some thing.

If the person does not speak, repeat the information using a different method.

If the person does not talk:

- Reflect:

*“You may be finding it difficult to say what you want to. It is difficult to talk in such sessions. May be it would help if you knew that others too have difficulties starting out but later on find the session useful.”*

- Give space, if the silence continues.
- Highlight confidentiality and the non-judgmental nature of the session.
- Reestablish credibility and normalize the experience of not being able to talk.
- If the mentee has not responded for a significant time,

*“Maybe you are finding it difficult to take a decision whether to use this session right now. Do you want to think about it for some more time? Let me know if you want more information about this session. In the meanwhile I could arrange for you to talk to someone who has used this session and found it useful.”*

### **IF THE MENTEE IS TOO ANXIOUS**

You will have to take more control.

If the mentee is unable to say what he/she wants because of anxiety, say to the person,

*“I know things may be difficult for you. You sound extremely anxious. It would help me to understand you better if you were to slow down a bit and tell me what you want to say one step at a time. I have the time.”*

The person will slow down after this and then you could use the technique of summarizing to keep on letting them know that he/she is being heard. It might also be useful to do frequent feeling checks with the person.

If the mentee does not slow down it may be important to try and make him/her go through a breathing exercise.

*“I am going to help you breath fully so that you feel less anxious.*

*Put one hand on your abdomen. Open your mouth.*

*Take a deep breath and see your hand rise. Do not breathe through the chest but through your abdomen.*

*Let the breath out now, slowly. Let us try it once more gradually. Take a breath in and then slowly breathe out. You must try to do twelve breaths per minute.”*

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Gurgaon, Haryana
2. Anirudh Joshi works for Azrecsoft Ltd. He is shortly moving to Seattle as a Sr Director to help US software companies in their outsourcing strategies.
3. Alka Puri, working as an Associate Consultant with Erehwon Innovation Consulting (Bangalore) out of Singapore, as well as the Chief Nurturer of her own firm, Bimla's Ideas (Creativity Consultant). Believe unflinchingly in the power of Innovation and Creativity — at work, in life, all across.
4. Vijayalakshmi Viswanathan  
Until a year and a half back, was a Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer at NIS Sparta Limited. Based in Delhi and currently doing a Phd on 'Alternate Education Sector of Corporate Universities' at FMS, Delhi
5. Umesh Shrikhande  
Contract Advertising (India) Ltd.  
Executive Vice President  
Mumbai
6. Arun Katiyar is the CEO of a Bangalore-based start up, SEraja Technologies. He is deeply involved with the media.
7. Dr. Mala Sinha  
Associate Professor  
Faculty of Management Studies  
University of Delhi
8. V Rajesh, is a retail marketing professional with over 16 years of experience. He has been a part of the pioneering effort of establishing organised retail in India and has led the brand building efforts for several chains like Foodworld. He is operates out of Bangalore and is VP Marketing with one of India's largest retail endeavour.
9. Sharanita Keswani  
Director on the Board & Marketing Advisor, The Lemon Tree Hotel Company, New Delhi  
Sharanita Keswani was last Director, Marketing, KFC (Yum! Restaurants International) where she was responsible for the relaunch of the brand in India. She earlier set up Quadra Advisory - a marketing consultancy JV of WPP, UK- with the late Shunu Sen. At Lemon Tree Hotels, Sharanita provides brand and concept development inputs to the group.
10. Rima Gupta, Executive Vice President, Solutions Integrated Marketing Services Ltd.; Delhi
11. Pranav Rachh is the head of Right Flow, a corporate training and consulting firm based in Mumbai. Pranav has an International Diploma in Teaching and Training from City & Guilds from UK and is also a certified EQ Coach.
12. Neharika Vohra, IIM Ahmedabad, Associate Professor, Organizational Behavior Area, India.
13. Saurav Adhikari is Corporate Vice President Strategy at HCL, a global Technology-IT firm, based in NOIDA.
14. Meenakshi Madhvani: Meenakshi Madhvani, Managing Partner, Spatial Access Solutions, India's first media audit & analytics company. Over 26 years experience as a working woman in a man's world!
15. Tina Uneken is the Director, Alliance and Corporate Responsibility Bharti Airtel Ltd

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