

## Address delivered at the HR Confluence of UltraTech Cement on Nov 24.

Friends,

I am honoured to be invited to speak at this HR confluence. And there is a reason why I readily accepted this invitation though I was hard pressed for time; I have to address the seminar of Industrial Relations Institute of India tomorrow. It is that I have never been asked to speak on People Development which is my favourite subject.

Let me at the outset clarify that I am speaking mainly in the context of managerial development issues, although many statements will hold true for other categories of employees too.

We begin by asking a very simple question. What is meant by Development and when will HR say that they have done their job?

### *What is 'Development'? And when can we say that it is complete?*

What do we really mean by 'development of people?' And when can we say that it is complete? These were the two questions to which I sought answers, and my search continues. Let me tell you what I have understood so far and present my thoughts to you to generate a good debate and discussion which is the purpose of this confluence.

We will appreciate that development is spoken of in the context of an organisation and, within it, in the context of a specific job. The job of a head of Sales in an FMCG company like say Godrej Consumer Products will be very different from say his counterpart in UltraTech. The market, the products, the company's financial position and policies, the government regulations are some factors that will pose different challenges, not to mention the future plans.

The HR function wants to develop an employee so that he can handle the job well. In other words, the HR must help him to be more effective on the job. There are many models about basic competencies required, but I prefer a simple one which says there are four types of competencies: [a] Managing Self, this includes planning and analytical abilities, managing work life balance etc., [b] Managing People which includes leadership, and communicating and influencing, [c] Managing Change which includes strategic thinking, project management and [d] Managing Environment which includes customer orientation.

Imagine a situation where a person has just been promoted to a higher level job. I have coached a dozen such managers. The immediate concern of such managers is how to manage people and how to influence customers in order to achieve immediate targets. Think of another situation where a person is moved to another role. A colleague of mine who was a sales manager was asked to take over training function. His concerns were no different. At this stage they want to tell the organisation that you have made a right choice in selecting me - they want to tell this through sheer efficiency on the job. After all if you promote a person as a sales manager who has big dreams but cannot achieve the sales target then he will be marked down immediately. Efficiency is what is focused first, and must be achieved first too.

I have always felt that we have to *first* learn to be good managers - in other words we must know how to set goals for our team, review and assess performance of team members, make recommendations for their reward and train them. And we must evolve as good leaders. By being a good leader I mean we must have a dream about how things must

look in future - be it certain functions that we perform or all of them together. Think of an effective manager, say a Production Manager who has left an indelible mark on his job. People might say that he was the one who implemented kaizen or 5S. He is a manager who is evolved from achieving his daily production targets to being an effective manager.

Such an effective manager, by virtue of doing a remarkable job, is deemed to be developed for that role. He leaves a mark on his job. This happens because he is able to provide leadership. I beg to submit that 'development' is this journey from being a manager to being a leader; it is a journey from the efficiency to effectiveness.

I looked up the Merriam Webster Dictionary to understand meaning of 'Development.' There are many meanings but the one that resonates with me is this:

*To Develop: To go through a process of natural growth, differentiation or evolution by successive changes.*

Referring to the two questions which I asked, I beg to submit that the development is a process of growth, differentiation and evolution. We may say that it is completed in a specific context when a manager transforms from being a manager to a leader.

The word 'leader' here is not used in the sense that a person who leads a group of followers. I am using it to denote an employee who has a dream to transform at least one area of his responsibility and who is able to influence juniors, peers and seniors to subscribe to it. So he may be a sales manager who leads a large team or he could be a Technology Manager who becomes a thought leader.

*Having said that let me share my thoughts on why some development efforts fail. That may hold a key to success.*

In order to understand efforts fail we may understand the process itself.

If you ask any manager contributed maximum development, the her parents. Now we ever tells child "Come develop you." We would if anybody ever did it, immature attempt. point.

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*'Development' is this journey from being a manager to being a leader; it is a journey from the efficiency to effectiveness.*

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why development begin with nature of development

to identify who to his or her answer would be his or know that no parent here, I am going to actually laugh heartily and would dismiss it as That actually is the

The point which I place for your consideration is that the processes of growth, evolution or development are essentially unobtrusive. If we do not retain this characteristic of unobtrusiveness in our development efforts then we would lose the essence of it.

Just consider what happens when we tell a manager that he is nominated for a certain program. The first question he asks 'Why me? What is lacking in me?' So he enters the training room with a doubt in his mind.

**Who owns the process of development?**

Let us consider how we organise people development in our companies. We organise Development Centres, measure the competencies of managers, and get them to make a

Personal Development Plan. And then HR is supposed to keep a tab on their compliance. We begin with good intentions and then move the onus of people development to HR, instead of keeping their role as facilitators of people development.

After my 360 degree appraisal, I was required to prepare a Personal Development Plan. I did not know how that was done so I downloaded an article from the internet which has step by step instructions on how to do it. At the initial stage itself I had to answer a question to myself: "*What will I miss if I did not implement the Personal Development Plan?*" It is a rude question. It was not easy to answer that question. I had to think about it for hours. But the answer brought out my stakes in the development process clearly. I believe every manager who is undergoing development must be asked to answer this question - What will I miss if I do not work on the Personal Development Plan! That question forces you to think how accountable you are to yourself.

### You cannot develop everybody!

This is also important because we very often project our ambitions on others. I have met many employees who were happy with their position in the organisation and they did not have any particular drive for promotions. We must accept their decision. There are always limits to development and there is a final destination for all of us in a given organisation. If an employee concludes about not getting into a rat themselves skilled for the

The point I am making is act as a facilitator and people development; but must always remain, a employee. The onus of alone.

*"What will I miss  
if I did not  
implement the  
Personal  
Development  
Plan?"*

that he has reached it, we There is nothing wrong race as long as they keep job they hold.

that the HR function must resource provider for development remains, and personal agenda of the developing himself is his

### Why Coaching fails and what should be done to make it effective?

Executive coaching is catching up very quickly now and it is a welcome trend. But this good initiative can yield low results if not introduced by HR properly. Let me explain. When we advise an employee that [s]he can undergo coaching if so desired, the concerned employee does not think that a choice is available. The employee will say 'yes' to coaching. Getting in to coaching situation when an employee has not felt the need for it, is one of the reason why coaching does not deliver to the fullest.

Just as in the case of training, he also asks 'Why me?' or worst still he does not ask at all but meekly accepts. The coachee opting for coaching with a suspicion in mind is the worst situation to begin coaching.

We ought to appreciate the need for voluntary choice in coaching. It is also necessary, for success of the coaching program, that it is seen as a tool available to those who wish to use it. It should not be mandated. *It should not even be suggested!* What we need to do is to make people aware that HR is ready to make a good coach available if one requires it.

One way to launch the coaching program, keeping these basics in mind, is to explain to a group of managers that HR can make good coaches available for coaching in case anyone would like to opt for it. You can perhaps share profiles of coaches who HR proposes to

engage. This avoids making specific suggestion to anyone and yet makes them aware that the organisation is making a resource available. It avoids making suggestion about coaching as well as the choice of a particular coach. This procedure surely makes a prospective coachee very comfortable.

Usually a very small number of managers opt for it in the beginning. Some others, who are curious, watch whether coaching is beneficial to them. They enter when they discover that it helps. My experience is that the number swells over a period of time. The best aspect about it is that it is driven by managers who realise that it helps. They come in with more realistic expectations. This also helps in building a very effective coach-coachee relationship.

This way of introducing coaching essentially creates a situation in which a [prospective] coachee makes a choice of coaching; it does not come as a result of HR's initiative. It also does not come as a result of a mechanical procedure which says 'arrange coaching inputs for all those who have been promoted or are likely to be promoted.' Essentially it recognises that coaching will succeed where the need is felt and where the employee makes a choice voluntarily.

Unobtrusive and Reflective processes hold the key to development of individuals and organisations.

The skill of the HR function unobtrusive processes. I unobtrusive process of It is central to people text book will tell that by reading a book, and that through experience. experience but through that experience.

It is possible for a manager workers must not be received the best Employee must not be trusted because they formed a union which was an anti-management action.

*What matters is not the action but the assumptions they hold on which they act.*

lies in creating such must talk of another development - 'reflection.' development. Any standard managers learn just a little maximum learning comes Actually not through what sense he makes of

in Maruti to conclude that trusted, even workers who Award like Sonu Gujjar

On the contrary it is possible for another manager in Maruti to think that this situation would not have arisen if they were in touch with the feelings of workers.

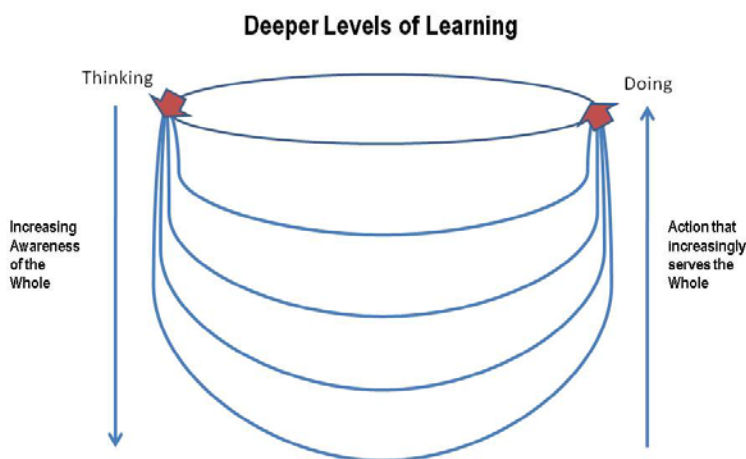
The consequent action will be different, because the meaning they make of the situation is different. What matters is not the action but the assumptions they hold on which they act. The point I am making is that the same experience can lead to different perspectives, different personal conclusions and different actions. It is for this reason that it always becomes important to reflect and promote collective learning. Such collective learning results when we disclose our assumptions and allow those to be amended, discarded or reinforced. After all we in HR take pride in saying that we are creating a learning organisation.

So if we wish to promote development, we must promote a culture of reflection - reflecting on our actions, researching and disclosing our assumptions, culling out lessons for future and creating awareness of what works in a situation and why. We must promote understanding through a process of collective reflection.

I am tempted to quote Osho on the subject of understanding. He says "The word 'understand' is beautiful. When you are in meditation everything "stands under" you, you are far above it. That's the meaning of understanding. Everything is there far below you, so you can see....you have a bird's eye view. You can see the whole from your altitude. Intellect cannot see it; it is on the same plane. Understanding happens only when the problem is on one plane and you are on a higher plane. If you are functioning on the same plane as the problem, understanding is not possible. You will only misunderstand."

We as HR managers must help our managers make a sense of the past and also gain an awareness of what will work in future.

In their book 'Presence' Peter Senge and others explain that all learning integrates thinking and action. They say "all learning is about how we interact in the world and the types of capacities that develop from our interactions. What differs is the depth of awareness and the consequent source of action. If awareness never reaches beyond superficial events and current circumstances, actions will be reactions. If on the other hand, we penetrate more deeply to see the larger wholes that generate 'What is' and our own connection to this wholeness, the source and effectiveness of our actions can change dramatically.



Let us think about these words in the context of the dialogue between Arjun and Krishna. Arjun has travelled a certain distance and now thinks about his actions. And as he thinks along with Krishna he discovers a deeper meaning. I am giving this example only because it is too well known. Those who have had the experience of collective thinking and reflection will readily appreciate what Peter Senge said.

Let me give you another story. Baba Maharaj Satarkar is well known in Maharashtra for his exposition of dnyaneshwari. I was told that Baba Maharaj's father who was a barber, read dnyaneshwari 108 times and gave talks. This cycle of thinking about the message of the book and the repeated action of exposition [nirupan] gave him deeper understanding which his audience immensely appreciated and benefited from.

There are at least two managers known to me who have held several workshops on the book 'Seven Habits of Successful People.' They have told me that this thinking about the book and the action of explaining to people had led them to discover far deeper meanings.

In other words, their action in a given situation would have differed before and after their discovery of meaning. [Discuss REBT, 'Mee Albert Ellis]

In the Bhandup Factory of Asian Paints where I worked there was a strike for almost six months and there were two murders. After the strike we held meeting of concerned managers and asked ourselves whether we could have averted the strike. No firm conclusions were reached. But that our decisions shaped and impacted lives of nine hundred men was a realisation that changed the way we behaved with employees thereafter.

We as HR managers know that groups have immense potential to develop their members. Anybody who has attended the T group sessions at ISABS would readily endorse it. I believe that all the directors of Infosys have undergone such T group sessions. It perhaps explains why they emerged as better and sensitive leaders and more authentic persons.

So we must create reflective dialogues within the organisation. This also means that the development of managers is so inextricably linked to development of the organisation. And therefore we cannot keep the focus on development of people alone. We must actively engage in organisation development.

*Let me recap what I am saying:*

- 1. Firstly, we must appreciate that there is and should be a clear beginning and end to the people development process. It ends when a manager is effective on the job.*
- 2. Secondly, we must appreciate that development is essentially an unobtrusive process.*
- 3. Thirdly, the onus for development lies squarely on the shoulders of the manager, with HR function acting as a facilitator.*
- 4. There is a need to create a culture of people development and towards it, reflective dialogues must be encouraged and facilitated.*

Thanks,

Vivek