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## NHRDN E-Connect : March-April 2010

4 messages

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Dear Member,

Greetings!

Earth Hour, celebrated by the world recently, reminded me of the rich legacy **Dr. Uday Pareek** has bequeathed to the HR fraternity in India and globally, in more ways than one.

During the Hour, having turned off the switches at home, I walked down, curious to see for myself how aware the neighborhood was and how many actually would choose to act. I met several resident youngsters walking amid the buildings, chatting away excitedly. At regular intervals, they shouted their requests loudly up in the air, "Participate in Earth Hour and save electricity". I noticed the lights going off in quite a few apartments.

It seems Earth Hour had given these boys & girls a cause to stand up for and instilled in them a sense of urgency and passion for action, directly translating into positive results. It may be celebrated for one hour in 365 days; but it stands for something larger – collaboration across the globe to create a better world - a world we'd restore with pride to our children, from whom we've borrowed it.

Several decades ago, when the HR function was synonymous with 'Personnel, IR & Administration', Dr. Pareek came in as a beacon for the HRD movement. Like the Earth Hour galvanizes the world into action, Dr. Pareek inspired several HR professionals to be the catalyst for action and evangelizing HRD across organizations in a nation whose economy was waking up post-liberalization. Like the youngsters would have learnt about the global environment, several of us not only learnt more about HRD and got deeper into it; we were also able to translate this newly gained expertise into meaningful results for our organizations, and a robust growing economy for the country...Dr. Pareek has also been a tour de force behind NHRDN...!

Under the **NHRDN Virtual Learning Series** based on 'OD for Organizational Success', K Ramkumar, Executive Director, ICICI Bank dispelled common misconceptions of what OD is perceived to be or achieve. OD is about managing change, and hence a political, subjective process, and not rational and cognitive. Ram averred that OD is a business process, has a lofty sense of purpose and long term. He shared how the principles of OD were applied in the reverse merger of ICICI Bank, where five different entities came together for the first time.

The Article of the Month is '**OD via Cultural Transformation**' M.R Arulraja, Trainer, Arulraja's NLP, Bangalore Chapter. Congratulations!

The NHRDN Learning Centre saw five workshops conducted in Hyderabad, Delhi, Pune, Bangalore and Kolkata on a diverse set of topics – Performance Management, Building HR Strategy, Competitive Advantage Realized – Talent Management and Appreciation of Culture-based HR Strategy.

Dear facilitators, thanks for your continued support to the Learning Centre!

Under the Learning Centre, the first **Meet a Mentor** session was held in Delhi. P. Dwarakanath, Director – Group Human Capital, Max Healthcare shared his thoughts on 'The Art of Tough Love – the HR Perspective'.

As we reflect - our heart still heavy - we must remember that Dr. Pareek would like us to carry his legacy forward...it would be the best way in which we can offer our tribute to this greatest of great HR Thought Leaders!

Regards

**Madan Srinivasan**Hon. Editor - HR Talks, NHRDN  
and AVP - HR, HCL Technologies

### Discussion Forums

[Often the HR of a company and its employees have different views on what constitutes a "good company to work for". What causes this divergence and how can it be addressed?](#)

In general, what "makes a good company" is derived from two sources: A survey designed to evaluate the company and its HR, and the perception of the c[...]

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Judged by NHRD Network as  
The Article of the Month!

## Organizational Development via Cultural Transformation

*Rethink, Redesign, Rebuild Beyond Culture Set Limits!*

by Arulraja M R , published at the NHRD Website on: 10-Mar-2010

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In ordinary times, we are mostly unaware of the burden of culture one brings into an Organization. Only when you interact with someone from a different nationality/culture, the idiosyncrasies of cultures come to the fore.

Business negotiations, Mergers and Acquisitions are specific contexts where expert advice is sought for to help you overcome cultural barriers to achieve your goals.

This paper argues that the limits to Organizational Development could be stretched far and wide with a better understanding of our culture, and with training focused on helping one to break free of psychosocial (cultural) blocks to personal and organizational development.

### **Culture binds and blinds us:**

As babies, we learned to think and behave by imitating the ways of those around us! And, those around us got to do things the way they do by imitating their elders, when they were babies! Thus, culture takes us backward to live in a world that has long ceased to exist!

Also, when we were very young, we just copied into our heads (moped up like a sponge) the myths, values, beliefs peculiar to the culture into which we are born, in order to make sense of the world and to act in it. Thus, our behaviour, relationships, and the values and beliefs they represent are dictated by the culture to which we belong.

Naturally, when we build Organizations, they reflect sharply the values and beliefs of our ancient culture, despite the swanky appearance of steel and glass on the outside. Little wonder that Edward De Bono could say that we have not changed our way of thinking for more than 2400 years!

### **How we construct our business:**

For instance, when a new technology is invented and applied, an opportunity for a new business could emerge. But the style of utilizing that opportunity will greatly be influenced by the culture of each nation: on how that nation organized its work and workforce for thousands of years.

Hence, the leverage point for Organizational Development of Indian Organizations is in becoming aware of the ancient cultural burden we bring into modern Organizations and changing those that conflict with the demands of the times.

### **An Example:**

Take for instance the BPO Industry: Technology made it possible to get work done from far way places.

Typically, Indian BPO leaders did not start out to build great teams in the mode proposed by Peter Senge to meet the requirements of the 21st century business environment:

...organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. (Emphasis added)[1]

Our Business Leaders only calculated the margins they could make by employing cheap labour that is abundantly available in India.

For all the distinctions that our Managers get in their MBAs, they are yet to grasp the basic link between productivity and pay. For instance, most BPOs that took up data entry jobs had a mindset of paying their employees not more than Rs.5000 for work done in cities like Bangalore, and Rs.2500 in cities like Coimbatore!

This situation is a typical reflection of the age old caste system, where the lowest in the hierarchy has to do all the hard and/or dirty works in society for a pittance or for no pay at all.

Our Managers are yet to get out of this age old caste mindset that did not understand the link between work and pay: You work because that's your karma; and your coolie is not what you are entitled to as your right but it is an expression of your boss's generosity that makes him throw into your begging bowl after you have done all the work to his/her satisfaction!

Modern Indian Management thinking goes the same way, even today: Why should I employ one for a higher salary when there are hundreds others ready to do the same job for lesser pay? How can a BPO employee with only a Higher Secondary Education aspire to earn more than a bare sustenance wage?

The result is a very high rate of attrition in BPO industries that is detrimental to maintaining quality standards. And, BPO as an Industry is an opportunity lost to India, with competitors from other nations doing a better job!

Low pay has discouraged the young employees and prospective employees from investing in further sharpening of their skills. When students are less willing to invest in further learning, schools and colleges don't invest in improving quality of education!

And, at this stage, NASSCOM will march in to pontificate on the issue of quality: "Schools and Colleges are churning out unemployable youth!"

Just imagine the number of young people who went bankrupt because they went after Data Entry BPO jobs: They bought computers, connected to the Internet, and took up online data entry jobs after paying an entry fee of a few thousand rupees to many Online BPO Companies!

And, after doing a meticulous job of data entry, they found their work was 'rejected' and no payment was made to them; and they also lost the 'advance' money paid to the Company to secure the job. There is no NASSCOM to complain to when every one of the software companies fail the youth!

Can not NASSCOM certify one single online data entry Company in India that is fair in its practice of trade?

### **Culture of Employees:**

Indian Employees: As much as employers, employees, too, bring in elements of culture not very helpful to producing quality goods and services. Typically, the sense of belonging to the Organization is hard to come by for an Indian. There is no sense of the 'common' good. Anything common does not belong to anyone. Be it common roads, common toilets, or telephones – they are more easily abused than properly used.

Another cultural trait is that Indian employees have a tendency to 'settle down'. Once the job is secured, they 'settle down' in marriage. Next, the new couple 'settle down' in a newly bought home purchased on EMI. And, in an attempt to scale up their social status and 'settle down' at a higher social rank, they purchase a car whether they need one or not, thus, they gloriously 'settle down' among the population that has learnt to get worried about EMI payments month after month.

In a competitive and fast changing world, Companies need to be Learning Organizations. The employees who feel 'secure' and 'settled down' don't see why they need to learn any further. And, Organizations they work in run the risk of getting wiped out, threatening to wipe out their dreams. The Maya of settling down!

One other serious cultural set limit among Indian employees is an inability to work as team. At a deep level, one belongs to one's caste. One teams up with caste identities. Be it in finding a marriage partner or in exhibiting one's affiliation to one's political party, it is caste that decides one's affinity and allegiance. Aren't universities are created and maintained along caste lines?

If we can't work as team, we will certainly lag behind other nations in our quality of products and services.

When we talk of quality, we have to consider another serious mind block we have to take up and do physical labour. We think of hard manual labour, particularly those that deal with cleaning jobs as something to 'low'. The harder the job one does, the lower one goes down in the hierarchical social system – all the way down and out – cast out of the system as an out caste!

But there is hope to this hopeless situation! Certainly, breaking free of these serious mind blocks holds the key to unprecedented opportunity to Organizational Development.

Culture operates at the unconscious: We are not aware of its influence, and yet, its influence is huge because it is unconscious.

Culture controls us through 'feelings' that arise in our minds and hearts, almost automatically and beyond our control. It projects itself as a deep belief system that can't be questioned. And, it is embodied in every cell of one's body as energy or chemicals.

Modern psychological science is advanced enough to help us deal with the impact of culture, and to transform ourselves beyond cultural fetters.

Yet, most trainers are weary of challenging the culture of trainees: After all, who am I to change the culture of another, which is embedded in one's belief system – so goes the thinking among trainers.

But, there could be nothing more entertaining and enlightening than one's becoming aware of how our lives are but plays in which we act out outdated scripts written by others, for an age that has long ceased to exist!

If you could shake one up from one's deeper most being at the level of spirituality, identity, belief, values and attitudes... then you have giving him/her an opportunity of a lifetime to Rethink, Redesign, Rebuild his or her life! Your trainees will ever be grateful to you!

Once you have helped your staff through training to rebuild their lives on a cultural plane that is higher, open and learning in nature, then your Organization, too, will not only develop, but also transform!

We need to offer such deep level induction training to transform employees, managers and employers that will first help them break free of their cultural blocks to building 21st century Organizations. Such training should take the bull by the horn: the mindset that disregards work and workers, and anything that is held as common property, and is reluctant to play as team. That will be the Indian way of thinking laterally: As of now, it's highly hierarchical and vertical!

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[1] <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/senge.htm>