



# The Oxford Review

Volume 1 Number 9  
September 2016

Learning,  
Organisational Development and  
Human Resources Edition



## Research This Month

- Manipulation and why it is a core part of business
- The role of IT in Human Resources Development (L&D)
- Reimagining (dis)ability through science fiction
- The employer brand identity effect in mergers
- Podcasting as an organisational learning tool
- Why knowing things is less important than creativity and planning
- Melting pots meld cultural norms
- Why leadership begins at home
- The importance of dignity in leadership
- Industry 4.0 - How new factory technology is improving on Lean Product Development
- How digital storytelling can empower those without other means of expression
- Driving factors behind organisational innovation
- Does gratitude have a place to play in resilience?

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## Manipulation and why it is a core part of business



An interesting research paper from a team of researchers from the Dimitrie Cantemir, Faculty of Touristic and Commercial Management and the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Faculty of Marketing, Bucharest, in Romania has just been published in the Journal Calitatea.

The researchers looked at manipulation in organisations and had some surprising results.

### **Manipulation - a negative trait?**

Manipulating people is usually seen as a negative trait associated with

syndromes such as Machiavellianism which is using cunning and duplicity to meet your own ends and achieve things. The problem in manipulating people is firstly that they may end up doing things they wouldn't normally accede to and secondly that the feeling of having been manipulated normally lead to a lack of trust and a lack of willingness to engage in future interactions with the manipulator.

### **Machiavellianism – the ultimate manipulators**

In modern psychology, Machiavellianism is one of the dark triad personalities (narcissism,

Machiavellianism, and psychopathy), characterised by a duplicitous interpersonal style, a cynical disregard for morality and a focus on self-interest and personal gain.

### **Manipulation – a respectable history**

Most organisations try to develop assertiveness and influencing skills at least with their leaders and managers. These are considered to be worthy and respectable pursuits, but are in effect resorts to manipulation.



One of the virtues and prized skills of the ancient Greeks and Romans was the art of rhetoric or oratory. This skill and ability to use language with eloquence, expression and power to change people's minds and in particular their beliefs, was highly prized as an activity. It was the ability to inform, persuade, and motivate people that those such as Aristotle studied and tried to perfect.

### **The ancient art of Rhetoric**

There were considered to be three ancient arts or foundations of discourse or communication:

1. Grammar
2. Logic and
3. Rhetoric

### **Aristotle's 3 rules for persuasion**

Aristotle defined three rules or heuristics for understanding, discovering and developing persuasive arguments:

1. **Logos.** Logos is the reasoned discourse or the ordering of knowledge into logical and comprehensible sequences or argument so that people can follow and understand what your argument is.
2. **Pathos.** This means either appealing to people's emotions or eliciting feelings, emotions and passion, often to get them to act.
3. **Ethos.** This is an ancient Greek word that means character, ideals and morals. So in terms of argument, Aristotle and the ancient Greeks considered that a good argument or persuasion had to be moral or ethical.

### **The 5 canons of rhetoric**

The classical Romans considered that there were five canons or laws of good rhetoric or persuasive argument:

1. Invention
2. Arrangement
3. Style
4. Memory and
5. Delivery

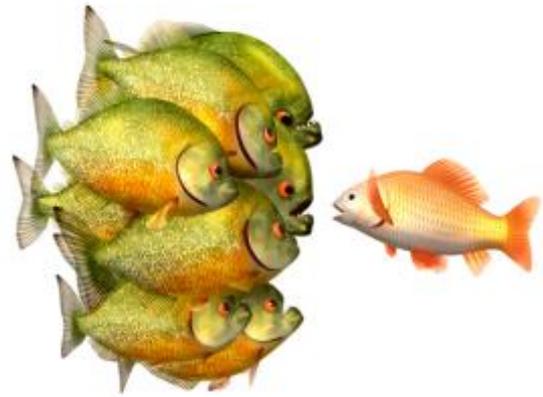
## The core idea of persuasion

The core idea of persuasion is to change people's beliefs about something. The distinction we make these days is between what is now termed (bad) manipulation and (good) persuasion. The main distinction we are making here is usually one of Ethos or a judgement of whether we have manipulated to the other person's own ends, self-interest or personal gain, or persuaded because the new belief or idea is actually a better course of action than what we had previously believed, or is more moral or ethical than the previous belief.

## Findings

What is interesting is that the researchers found that success in both persuasion and manipulation require high levels of both IQ or intelligence and EQ or emotional intelligence.

**Editor's note:** I would define emotional intelligence slightly differently to the researchers: It is true that good manipulators, like good persuaders, can draw on and use Pathos or an appeal to the emotions to help convince another. This does require a level of emotional intelligence not only to appeal to someone else's emotions but also to recognise and change the other's emotions. This necessitates the ability to control both your emotions and those of the audience.



However, this is only one level of emotional intelligence. A deeper level is to be able to see and understand the moral and ethical implications often over long periods of time into the future to estimate the consequences of any actions. This means doing what is best in the long term for the individual being persuaded (empathy) and society in general (moral responsibility).

In effect deep emotional intelligence includes moral and ethical forethought and empathy and the ability to make judgements about what is best for others and society rather than just the current situation or ourselves. Now this from a personal perspective, is what leadership education should be focusing on.

## Reference

Popescu, M., Tascu, A. V., & Coconoiu, D. (2016). Manipulation and Emotional Intelligence in Business. *Calitatea*, 17(S3), 225.

## **Overview**

New research has found that manipulation has both positive and negative sides – persuasion and manipulation - and that to be successful in both requires levels of intelligence (IQ) and emotional intelligence (EQ).

## The role of IT in Human Resources Development (L&D)

A new paper just published in the Journal of Social Science Studies has shed some light on how information technology (IT) can improve human resources development. Broadly, the research found that IT helps L&D in four different ways:

1. Professional development
2. Institutionalisation of change and innovation
3. Strengthening of cognitive skills and
4. Strengthening decision making skills.

The research looked at existing research on the fundamental ways that IT can be and is being used for professional development in organisations.

### **Professional development**

Firstly, and most obviously, the researchers found that IT is used in



direct skills development and knowledge acquisition. However, what they also found is that the use of IT in professional development is also creating new expectations of immediate access to information and “how to” information that can be

accessed in bite sized chunks and when required.

Essentially with access to the internet, IT is increasingly being used in organisations to replace training courses by giving people instant access to knowledge as needed.

### **Institutionalisation of change and innovation**

The researchers found that through continuous IT interaction, people are having an impact on the design and development of the IT systems which are becoming more and more user friendly. This in turn is having a significant impact on organisational change and the development of innovations both of products but also of organisational systems and processes.

In effect IT systems are starting to become the definers, barriers and enablers of organisational change. Additionally, it is largely through IT systems that organisational change is becoming enacted and embedded.

Further, the more accepted and integrated any IT system becomes the more ingrained and institutionalised it also becomes and it affects change by becoming a definer of aspects of change.

### **Strengthening or depleting cognitive skills**

IT systems have the ability to strengthen employees' cognitive skills by helping them solve problems they may not have tackled previously or by helping and giving them the confidence to innovate. However, it is also the case that IT systems can remove the need to think and so deplete the cognitive skills of the staff. An example of this are tills that not only tell the customer how much to pay by adding up the price of each product but also remove the need of the checkout person to work out how much change to give back. In many cases the tills also tell the operative when to smile, make eye contact and say things like "I hope to see you again soon".

### **Strengthening or depleting decision making skills**

Whether as part of leadership training or in standard personnel development, all organisations seek to develop the decision making skills of those that work for it.

The authors found, "People have to make decisions based on accurate information and in fact management information systems such as Management Support Systems and Decision Support Systems can offer updated, quick and proper information in order to make decisions with the minimum mistakes. Accordingly, people benefit from scientific decision-making skills and it leads to decision-

making skills in practice." However, it can also take decisions away from people as more and more 'intelligent' systems develop that can tell us what decisions to make and more and more



people rely on IT systems either to provide the data for decisions (often unquestioningly) or to tell them what decision to make.

### **Conclusions**

IT is reaching a level of maturity in much of the Western world to offer possibilities and issues that reach just about every corner of every organisation around today. In terms of human resources development (L&D) there are opportunities and challenges that IT presents that need to be thought about on a wider scale.

### **Reference**

Alami, R et al (2016) The Role of Information Technology (IT) in Development and Increase of the Efficiency of Human Resources" Journal of Social Science Studies ISSN 2329-9150, Vol. 3, No. 2

## **Overview**

IT is changing the way human resources development is occurring in organisations and changing the ways organisation change and develop. It is having both a positive and negative effect on things like decision making and the development of cognitive skills. It is also changing the expectations of employees in terms of the immediacy of information available.

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## Reimagining (dis)ability through science fiction

Much of the world we live in now was first imagined by science fiction authors 30 or more years ago. A classic example was from Star Trek, the mid 1960's programme, with imaginings of communicators that enabled the ship's crew to communicate with each other and the ship, some 30 years before the advent of the mobile phone.

### How science is creating a different world for the disabled

Many years ago, at the dawn of consumer electronic technology, it was almost taken for granted that those with physical and mental impairments would be enabled through technology. In the 1960's the TV programme, The Bionic Man, envisaged people having their abilities enhanced through assistive technology. Only now are we seeing 'exoskeletons' being tested by the US Military to enable their soldiers to carry more equipment for longer distances and more quickly. This technology has been back-adapted to support people with mobility issues and, in 2012, a disabled woman completed the London Marathon in one such suit.

A later version Star Trek had an otherwise blind character with a pair of special glasses, which, whilst he could not see in the same way as ordinary people, enabled him to perceive the world in a different way. A paper just published in the journal, Futures, looks at how science fiction, science and innovation are combining to change

people's perspectives of disability.

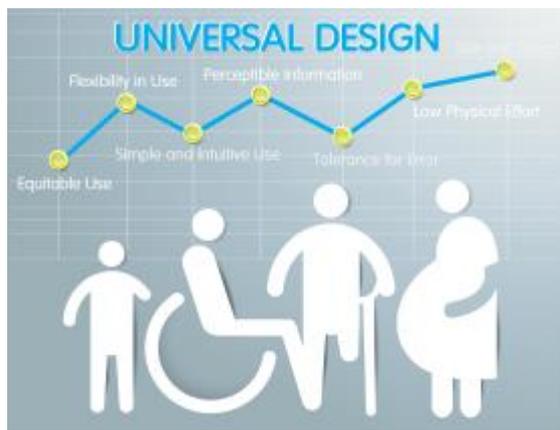


The author of the paper, DeeDee Bennett, from the Georgia Institute of Technology, has found that by using examples from science fiction and linking them to scientific and current product developments, it was readily possible to change people's perspectives from one of 'disability' to one of different abilities.

Bennet uses the example "With the use of VISOR, Lt. La Forge (A Star Trek character) is able to 'see' but not how we typically see, instead the glasses gave him the ability to detect energy wavelengths of animate and inanimate objects allowing him to effectively complete his engineering job."

## Universal design – not just for impaired ability

An important step forward in the design of equipment that enhances human abilities is that it should enhance everyone's ability. Why should only blind people be able to use La Forge's VISOR technology?



The research paper looked at a new ocular implant that was originally designed to help blind people see: “researchers have begun field-testing their design of Argus II, which is an FDA approved ocular implant that will hopefully allow blind users to see. This technology currently conceptualized as an assistive device, may instead be designed as a universally

designed technology to help anyone have better eyesight and both longer and closer ranges”.

By having equipment or implants that can be used by everyone – not just the disabled – so the idea is that people with disabilities will no longer be disabled by comparison to those considered ‘able bodied’. In effect science fiction, science and product innovation are really starting to blur the lines between the previously often

polarised world of the disabled and abled. As these developments progress, people with disabilities are starting to find themselves on a more level playing field with everyone.

## Perceptions of ability in organisations

One of the things that often holds disabled people back in organisational contexts is nothing to do with their disability or abilities. Often it has more to do with the perception of both the person with the disability and critically those around them. A number of studies have found that unconscious disability discrimination is often a product of the perception of people and managers in the organisation putting limits where actually there are none.

Using the techniques used by Bennet it is very possible to positively change perceptions of ability across organisations to the benefit of both the organisation and the disabled.

Bennett suggests that as new technologies are developed to suit everyone – not just disabled, so the cultural perceptions associated with disability will change. She wrote, “the cultural shift of people with disabilities can be achieved through universally designed technologies that equally assist those with and without a disability, or more likely both. This is an important concept to understand, the idea of universal design would be more prevalent if our societal culture was one of inclusion.”

## Conclusions

People with disabilities often just want a level playing field on which to found a productive contribution in the workplace. Changing people's perceptions of disability is a vital part of that. Using these examples to reframe disability in organisations could well be the key to destigmatising

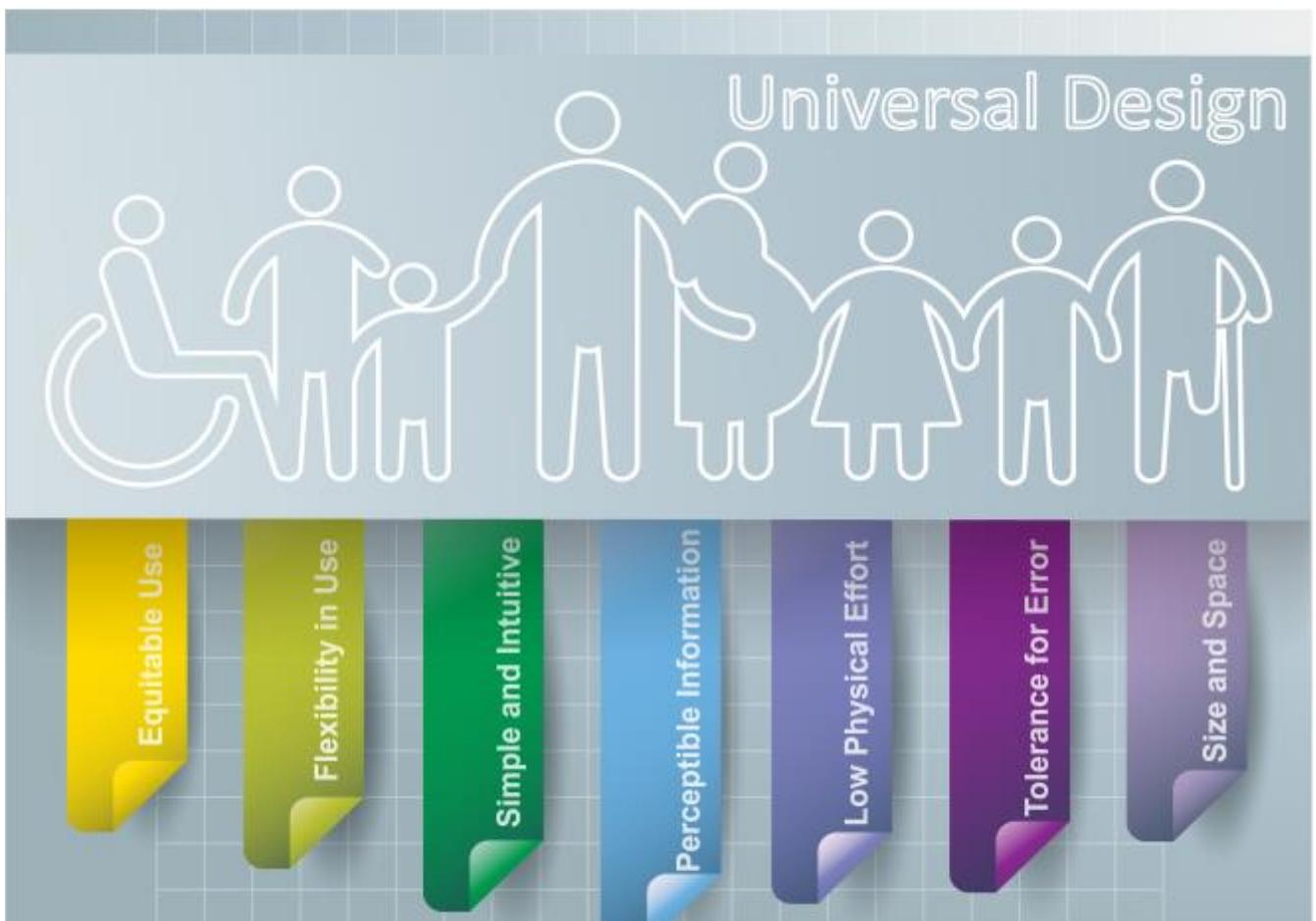
disability and to focus on abilities instead.

## Reference

Bennett, D. (2016) Scientific eventuality or science fiction: The future of people with different abilities, *Futures*  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2016.07.003>

## Overview

Often organisations focus on a person's disability as opposed to their abilities, which is frequently the foundation for unconscious disability discrimination. Examining and exploring how science fiction, science, product design and innovation reframes the idea of ability can help to change people's and consequently an organisational culture's perceptions of (dis)ability. This can have a deep and beneficial impact on the issue of disability discrimination in the workplace.





correlation with the resilient people and their propensity for gratitude.

What the researchers think is happening is that the resilience helps to prevent or minimises negative outcomes to a traumatic event (Post-Traumatic Stress) and that the act of gratitude, (thankful to be alive and thankful for their friends, health, objects etc.) promotes positive outcomes following a trauma.

### **Recommendation**

The researchers recommend that resilience and gratitude are considered to be general health and educational interventions, which they predict will minimise the strain on the increasingly

costly provision of mental health services.



### **Reference**

Vieselmeier, J., Holguin, J., & Mezulis, A. (2016). The Role of Resilience and Gratitude in Post-traumatic Stress and Growth Following a Campus Shooting. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, Aug, 2016

### **Overview**

Looking at a sample of people (students, teachers and staff) who have experienced a college shooting the researchers were able to confirm that there were two emotional responses to trauma:

1. Post-Traumatic Stress and
2. Post-Traumatic Growth.

People who had higher levels of resilience and gratitude tended to experience Post-Traumatic Growth compared to those with lower levels of resilience who did not have a gratitude mind-set.

Resilience helps to prevent long-term negative reactions to trauma and gratitude helps to create the conditions for realisation and a positive life change following a trauma.

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## 14 Driving factors behind organisational innovation

Innovation is what sits under most if not every competitive advantage gained and it drives success and growth.

An interesting paper just published by researchers from Brazil looked at the drivers for innovation in organisations.

14 key precursors for innovation were found across a basket of companies from banks to motor vehicle manufacturers and service industries.



### The 14 organisational innovation factors

In short it was found that the following situations could give rise to innovations if the organisational climate (a learning culture) is right to garner the data and turn the learning into change:

1. Workers' involvement at the frontline. When individual employees have the ability to work with the organisation's clients innovations often result, as they interact with and learn about shifting patterns of clients' needs.
2. Innovation often stems from free and open information sharing between people in organisations. This is particularly the case where information is shared across functions and externally with clients and peers in other organisations.
3. Multifunctional teams are often the instigators of innovation. The ability to bring together teams of people with different skills who complement each other's work often produces the climate for innovation.
4. Examining and thinking critically about the tools being used across the organisation by the practitioners is another avenue the researchers found often led to innovations.
5. The use of and need for information technology again often leads to innovative IT tools but also new uses for IT, often in ways IT and software developers hadn't envisioned.
6. If the organisation is listening and watching, actual internal organisation is frequently a hotbed of innovation as it adapts and creates fixes to real-life problems. Just looking at how informal networks get things done is a very useful source of innovation... if someone is watching and if people have a freedom to innovate and solve problems.
7. Training and education. Both external and internal training and education are frequent sources of innovative practice. This is often because either people are making new contacts and being exposed to new ideas or because people have the time to sit back and reflect on their practice and what is going on. Again the

question is whether the organisation actually collates the thoughts and ideas from this source.

8. Striving for excellence of service can be another source of innovation in an organisation. Involvement of collaborators, especially those who have direct contact with service users often develops new practices and ideas for improving service and processes. Additionally the knowledge of collaborators can be useful in generating information on the requirements and functions of the services provided, enabling an adequate level of service personalisation and recognition of market opportunities.
9. Where employees have increased levels of autonomy the level of innovation in an organisation is almost always increased. This enables people to test new ideas and come up with new ideas for improvements.
10. Market research is an obvious source of innovation. However, it is not often recognised as a core source of innovation, rather it is usually considered as a reactive activity.
11. Extending the strategic focus of employees almost always develops greater innovative practice. This is because it places people into a space where they need to develop the ability to spot opportunities and competitive risks. The organisation should have a systematic management process for examining the relationships between the organisational citizens and users. Additionally, involvement in medium- and long-term

planning and thinking about the vision and sustainability also increases innovative capability within the organisation.

12. External contacts are often good sources of innovation which are frequently overlooked.
13. The availability of resources is an important factor in innovation. Resources are both an enabler of innovation and a detractor. The organisation must have resources to innovate, including people, management models, methods and work practices.
14. Managerial support is seen as a key enabler of innovation. Without managerial support creativity is often stifled and innovations go undiscovered. Support from management also fosters risk taking and experimentation.

## Conclusions

Organisations often overlook opportunities and sources of innovation, usually because they aren't paying attention across the organisation. This list is a handy starting point for monitoring, documenting and developing innovative practice.

## Reference

Junior, P. C. R., de Oliveira, A. R., & Fujihara, R. K. (2016). Driving Factors of Organizational Innovation. *Journal of Modern Accounting and Auditing*, 12(6), 330-343.

## How digital storytelling can empower those without other means of expression

New research is showing how digital storytelling is giving people a new channel to express themselves, and thereby gives them a voice particularly in social and organisational justice issues faced by them.

This is an interesting tool that organisations might want to consider to gauge what is really happening in their organisations.

### Digital storytelling



Storytelling has passed through the ages in a variety of forms. New evidence is showing for example that the New Testament was most likely first tabulated in AD900 – prior to this it was passed by word of mouth. With the printing press came the socialisation of literacy and now with the global digital age there is a new opportunity for people to tell their stories in media rich formats, using images, music and voice in 2-3 minute packages to explore their situations.

### The research

21 people were invited to produce digital stories about themselves, using freely available Windows Movie Maker, a free picture editor and a widely available, free audio editor.

They were interviewed individually and as part of focus groups to assess the effectiveness.

The three core questions of the research were:

1. What impact does digital storytelling have on self-expression?
2. How do people end up use digital storytelling to create meaning?
3. Do people see digital storytelling as a means of self-expression that helps them to feel empowered?"

### Impact

The author of the study, Khebbaz, observed that digital storytelling “helps people express and navigate issues of identity and belonging more easily and clearly. By interacting with each other during the process students also built a sense of community; when they shared their stories they empathized with each other and felt connected. This, in turn, could lead to the mobilization of people around common concerns to establish change.”

What was interesting was that not only did the digital story telling experiment

help people find a voice which they would not normally express, the research found that it also motivated people to identify and engage more with the problems and issues they faced. The researcher found that it could help provide “the opportunity for people to regain energy and strength for fighting against everyday struggles.”

## Conclusions

Where this study only looked at 21 people, it does signal that there is room for digital story telling as a tool for engagement and commitment to problem solving and action with people who frequently either don't voice their opinions or often aren't listened to.

The key to the experiment was that individuals were being encouraged to tell their stories as opposed to giving direct feedback or reports. The stories Khebbaz found were the medium for self and organisational realisation.

Social media has been responsible in many ways for the dissemination of news through channels that bypass

the mainstream media. This was seen in the Arab Spring for example.



Though these cases were not 'news' they are a form of communication to their peers and those in power that may traditionally have been denied to them otherwise. In giving people that voice to tell their story they can be empowered and engaged.

## Reference

Khebbaz, S. (2016) Youth media and social change: Using digital storytelling as a tool that engages youth to become change agents. Capstone Collection. Paper 2906.

## Overview

Digital story telling is a powerful method to give voice to people who often go unheard or who are silent. Using simple and free tools, digital story telling was found to:

- Encourage participation and engagement in issues
- Promote problem solving and agency
- Successfully encourage people to voice their experiences

all of which are critical issues in organisations today.

## Industry 4.0: How new factory technology is improving Lean Product Development

Developed and built upon by Toyota, the concept of Lean working has been around for many years and has now reached most areas of industry from Lean Administration to Lean Manufacturing. Part of the process of making a product is in the development phase, known as Lean Product Development.

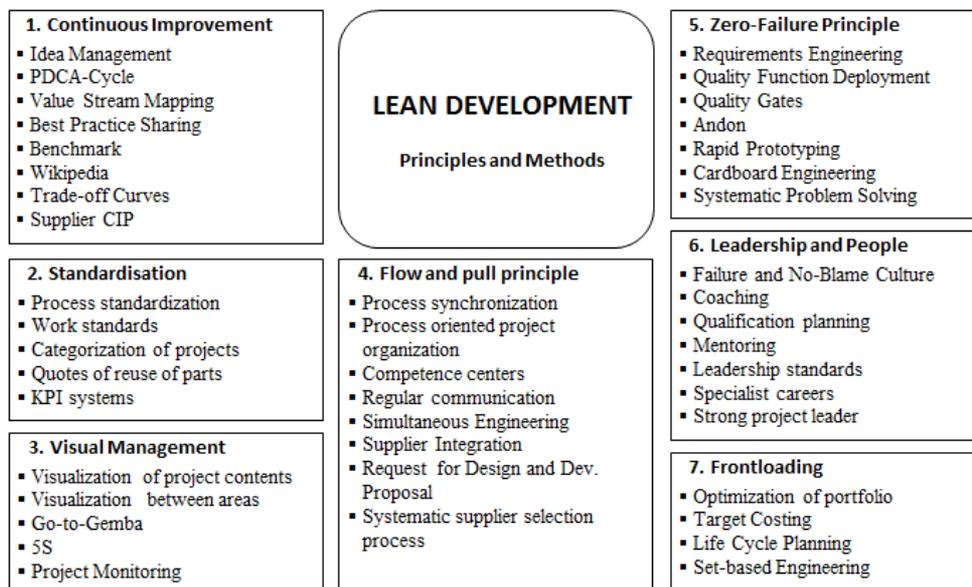


A new paper just published in the journal, Science Direct Procedia, shows how Lean Product Development is at the cusp of a new evolution of Smart Product Development. Let's look at the concept of Lean Product Development and look at how technological advances in manufacturing are taking it to the next step.

### Lean Product Development

The authors, researchers from the Faculty of Science and Technology, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Piazza Università in Bolzano, Italy and the Fraunhofer Italia Research Innovation Engineering Center (IEC), in Bozen, Italy summarise Lean Product Development as “a cross-functional activity that seeks to uncover product knowledge hidden within the end-to-end production flow, typically in the hand-over points between functional units.”

Lean Product Development deals with the complete process from gathering and generating ideas, through assessing potential success to developing concepts, evaluating them to create a best concept, detailing the product, testing/ developing it and handing over to manufacture.”



## Two types of Lean Product Development

There are two types of Lean Product Development:

1. Outcome based Lean Product Development and
2. Process Oriented Lean Product Development

### Outcome Based Lean Product Development

The outcome oriented type of Lean Product Development is: “how Lean Product Development can support R&D [Research and Development] to improve the quality and functionality of products and thus contribute to the success on the market”. Essentially, research and development teams work together with design teams to improve on a product’s design as opposed to handing it over to the design team later.

### Process Oriented Lean Product Development

The process oriented system is described as: “the impact of lean principles to reduce waste and to improve value adding in the internal product development process.” This is about waste and cost reduction in the process of making the product.

When both types of Lean Product Development work together we start to see a multiplier effect occurring.

## Industry 4.0

Industry 4.0 is a concept that argues that society is going through a fourth Industrial Revolution. As technology is driving consumer products (for example smartphones) technology is also driving manufacturing. As an example, robots in car manufacturing have been around for years but they are getting ever more intelligent and capable. We are now seeing an increasing number of increasingly effective smart technologies entering into the product development phase of the process.



The authors showed that “the engineering of these smart products will be of crucial importance for the competitiveness of industrial companies. There is a need for new Smart Engineering approaches, which also use the latest ICT innovation ... Developments in ICT have shifted industrial design from the notion of product-as-object to product-as-event”.

As we evolve into the new 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution so issues have been spotted with Lean Product Development. These include long periods of time adjusting and improving design.

## **Axiomatic Design**

Axiomatic Design has been around since the 1970s but is only now being widely used. This concept is best described as a systems design methodology using matrix methods to systematically analyse the transformation of customer needs into:

- a. functional requirements
- b. design parameters and
- c. process variables.

This the authors argue is driving the new concept of Smart Product Development.

## **Smart Product Development**

The authors of the paper have shown that we are emerging into a new era where smart information technology can shorten the development time of new products whilst increasing their functionality.

Where in many areas of the manufacturing process Industry 4.0 is

about identifying and removing inefficiencies (using robots for example), in product development, Industry 4.0 is about incorporating people into the process but arming them with better information. "Industry 4.0 in product development means the integration of information and people at many levels and in many different forms. Industry 4.0 opens new ways to customize the product life cycle from scratch."

In short, while not completely automating the development process, technology is now taking a step into the process that was previously wholly owned by people. It drives massive efficiencies into the process and uses knowledge that may have been beyond an individual's reach.

## **Reference**

Raunch E, et al "The way from Lean Product Development to Smart Product Development" Procedia CIRP 50 ( 2016 ) 26 – 31

## **Overview**

New smart technologies and ways of working are starting to enter the product design phase of business. As a consequence, lean methodologies can now be used in product design as well as manufacturing. This has led to what is known as Industry 4.0. where smart technologies and lean thinking are increasingly involved in the design of products.

## The importance of dignity in leadership

An interesting case study by international conflict resolution expert, Donna Hicks, has just been published showing how a major US corporation failed because the senior leadership failed to give their employees the dignity they deserved.

### Background

The unnamed company in question hit stormy waters and the staff of the company were asked to take pay cuts with the idea that 'we are all in this together' to keep the business afloat. After a few years on the reduced pay rates the company managed to do better. The senior management team responded by awarding themselves massive bonuses – the employees didn't get any reward or increase.

This understandably annoyed people considerably. However rather than talk with the staff about this decision, the senior management said nothing at all.

This created such a bad atmosphere between those at the frontline and the senior management that the company ultimately failed and ended up being sold to and merging with a rival business. The senior management all lost their jobs in the merger process.

During this period, Hicks worked with the company for a considerable time. Her expertise was in international and national conflicts, and had published a book called *Dignity: Its Essential Role in Resolving Conflict* on the matter.

Ultimately Hicks felt that if the senior management team had faced up to the problem and given a communication to the effect that they were sorry for their bonuses, or taken it a step further and shared a bonus between staff for what they had done to turn the company's fortune around, the business would have survived.



## **The 10 Elements of Dignity**

Hicks breaks dignity into ten elements:

### **1. Acceptance of Identity**

- a. Approach people as neither inferior nor superior to you.
- b. Give others the freedom to express their authentic selves without fear of being negatively judged.
- c. Interact without prejudice or bias,.
- d. Accept how race, religion, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, disability, etc. are at the core of their identities.
- e. Assume they have integrity.

### **2. Recognition**

- a. Validate others for their talents, hard work, thoughtfulness, and help.
- b. Be generous with praise;.
- c. Give credit to others for their contributions, ideas and experience.

### **3. Acknowledgment**

Give people your full attention by listening, hearing, validating and responding to their concerns and what they have been through.

### **4. Inclusion**

Make others feel that they belong at all levels of relationship (family, community, organisation, nation).

### **5. Safety**

- a. Put people at ease on two levels:
  - i. physically, where they feel free of bodily harm
  - ii. psychologically, where they feel free of concern about being shamed or humiliated.
- b. Create an environment where people feel free to speak without fear of retribution.

### **6. Fairness**

Treat people justly, with equality and in an even-handed way, according to agreed upon laws and cultural rules.

### **7. Independence**

Empower people to act on their own behalf, so that they feel in control of their lives and experience a sense of hope and possibility.

## 8. Understanding

Believe that what others think matters; give them the chance to explain their perspectives, express their points of view; actively listen in order to understand them.

## 9. Benefit of the doubt

Treat people as trustworthy; start with the premise that others have good motives and are acting with integrity.

## 10. Accountability

- a. Take responsibility for your actions.
- b. If you have violated the dignity of another
  - i. apologise
  - ii. make a commitment to change hurtful behaviours.

### Dignity breaches and how they can be resolved

When the unions broached the problem that their members wanted some resolution to this they were accused of being emotional.

Hicks says that where dignity is breached, a conversation must be had throughout the organisation to resolve

it. The offending parties need to acknowledge the issues and take steps toward those wronged to achieve a resolution. Only in backing down can the negative atmosphere be resolved and ultimately the organisation can return to full strength.

### Reference

Hicks, D. (2016) A Culture of Indignity and the Failure of Leadership. Humanistic Management Journal 1.1: 113-126.



## Overview

Treating people with dignity is a core leadership activity and should be part of a leader's mind-set. This study looked at an internal conflict which escalated to the extent that the organisation became untenable and had to be sold. The author shows how the leadership of the organisation in question helped create the situation through showing a lack of humanity and dignity to its employees.

The study shows the ten elements of dignity that every leader and management team should understand:

1. Acceptance of Identity
2. Recognition
3. Acknowledgment
4. Inclusion
5. Safety
6. Fairness
7. Independence
8. Understanding
9. Benefit of the doubt
10. Accountability

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## Leadership begins at home

For a leader to develop others' potential, they must develop their own first, according to Ian Cunningham, Chairman of Strategic Developments International. Writing in *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal*, Cunningham shows how taught leadership training can actually have a negative impact on leadership qualities (if it has any impact at all).



### **Taught leadership**

Cunningham wrote, “the insidious message is that you need credentials and qualifications to be a leader. Hence the growth of MBAs at the end of the last century. Yet the business world is replete with effective leaders who are totally unqualified (in terms of the educational establishment).”

He argues that there are as many good leaders today as there were 100 years ago yet businesses spend millions of dollars annually to achieve similar levels of good leadership as the era prior to the educational establishment stepping in: “There is absolutely no good evidence to support the hypothesis that investment in leadership development has had a generally beneficial effect on the generality of organizations.” He goes

on the question the fact that Return on Investment (ROI) is key in so many aspects of business so why not leadership training?

He also states that there have been negative impacts in business too of formal leadership training. Ethics is a core part of many MBA courses yet, according to Cunningham, this “has corresponded with the role of business school graduates in promoting unethical behavior in places such as Wall Street and the City of London.”

Another issue Cunningham raises is the individualistic model of leadership. The idea that a person can lead in isolation in his eyes is a fallacy. “Before the scandals of the incompetent – and sometimes corrupt – leadership of financial organizations on Wall Street we had Enron and other scandals. All the evidence is that the egocentric leadership models promoted by many US consultants and academics are damaging to organizations and to people.”



### **Inequality of incomes**

One example of unethical behaviour in

Cunningham's eyes is the huge remuneration gap between leadership and staff on the ground. Collectively corporations have caused gross inequality in society as a result of giving executives massive pay packets and staff just enough to survive on (subsidised by Working Tax Credits in the UK and food stamps in the US in some cases). He pointed out, "For leaders to tolerate (or even exacerbate) inequalities in wealth is to condemn many to increased misery. This is a moral issue that such leaders wish to ignore. We will never solve the range of social problems that many countries such as the UK and USA face unless gross inequalities are reduced."

### **Leadership needs to begin at home**

In Cunningham's eyes, a leader is unfit to develop other people if they cannot develop themselves. This harks back to the days before the advent of MBAs and taught leadership where people learned how to lead for themselves. "A person who cannot take initiatives in learning what they need is likely to be a poor leader."



### **There is an answer though.**

Leadership in his eyes should be part of a social grouping. Leaders are after

all leading people. He states, "I find that the most effective mode is working with groups of leaders on what they need to learn to work together to take their business forward. Each person may need to learn different things – because of their history and experiences – but they need to locate their learning within the reality of their organizational life."

Most importantly in his eyes, leadership needs to be something the leader develops by themselves for themselves: Research has shown "development approaches that demand leaders to manage their own learning work. Such approaches refuse to prescribe a curriculum or competences or leadership models. Leaders have to work to develop their own models of leadership and their own agendas for development."

It has long been understood that leadership can only be given by consent. If people both from above and below wish you to lead and respect you for your self-developed skills, you will be better than some graduate who thinks they have learned everything but actually knows nothing!

### **Reference**

Ian Cunningham, (2016), "Leadership development in crisis: leadership development hasn't made much difference to organizations", *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal*, Vol. 24 Iss 5 pp. 5 – 7

## Overview

Ian Cunningham, Chairman of Strategic Developments International makes an interesting series of observations about current leadership development practices in general and MBAs in particular, which he argues cause more problems than they solve.

At the core of his argument is that every leader should be developing themselves rather than being developed by others. That it is the act of self-development that marks one out as a leader. Further, he goes on to show that ethical and moral development through formal learning often fails spectacularly.



## Melting pots meld cultural norms

In individualistic cultures such as those in the US and UK, most people have what is known as the 'pursuit of happiness'. We all strive for a better world for ourselves. In Asian and eastern cultures, it has been observed, the individual is regarded as a unit within an 'in group'. They strive for the 'common good' rather than the self.

This observation has led to research into the 'fear of happiness' in different cultures. A previous wide ranging study of more than 2000 indigenous undergraduate students in predominantly collectivist Asian cultures found a high fear of happiness.

In a recent study Hazal Muhtar looked at Asian Americans and European Americans in light of the larger study of indigenous populations, and found that immigrant populations living in an individualistic culture are now blending collectivism with individualism, and this too has an impact on their fear of happiness.

### Fear of happiness

The concepts of 'happiness' and 'subjective well-being' tend to be interchangeable in current psychology literature. For the purposes of this study it is defined as having three components:

- a. satisfaction with one's life circumstances
- b. the existence of positive mood and

- c. the absence of negative mood.

Fear of happiness is not something that can be pathologised as clinical depression. Rather it has been shown as a construct of collectivism: "fear of happiness was an expression of culture and should be evaluated as a belief system embedded into collectivism." In other words that being happy as an individual is not desirable.



### Collectivism and individualism

As mentioned above, predominantly Anglo Saxon and Latin cultures tend to have an individualistic expression, where Asian cultures tend to emphasise the collectivistic. In collectivistic cultures, the family includes relatives beyond the nuclear family, like grandparents, aunts and uncles for example in the family group. Additionally, people tend to live in close proximity or in the same house as their family.

In contrast, individualistic cultures believe in the importance of self-

sufficiency. They prioritise the development of skillsets necessary for younger members to survive on their own out there.

### **The research**

Muhtar's research consisted of two surveys of Asian American and European American undergraduates. The first was smaller (78 total) whilst the second was much larger (275 participants). Where the first seemed to reflect the large scale research of indigenous collectivist cultures, the second found that the individualism of the west had encroached onto the tightly collectivist nature of their cultures of origin. The west is proud to be a 'melting pot of cultures' and so the dominant western individualism seems to have entered the world of the minority collectivist Asian cultures.

### **What does this mean?**

Though the research sought to reflect or argue against the large scale research into indigenous cultures, it found that dominant cultural norms can impact the outlooks of minority cultures. It shows that the country you were born in has more of an impact than the country your parents or grandparents hail from. It is where you are from rather than where your parents are from that has a greater influence on your outlook. These more collectivist and integrated cultures are also starting to sport more individualist notions and values.

### **Reference**

Muhtar H (2016) Fear of Happiness - Exploring Happiness in Collectivistic and Individualistic Cultures. Wesleyan University

### **Overview**

The latest research on cultures is starting to show that macro and national cultures are starting to become much more mixed, less homogenous and much more difficult to define. In particular the group orientated cultures of the east are showing signs of significant shifts towards individualism.



## Why knowing things is less important than creativity and planning

They say that a sign of madness is going the same thing over and over again yet failing each time. So it is with setting up a business – there are likely to be frequent setbacks and problems as the fledgling business moves forward to find its space. Success usually comes down to how you alter things each time to get over or around those obstacles. It is this ability to reinvent and solve problems and take different directions (pivot) that dictates ultimate success or failure.

A newly published research paper in the International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research looked at 198 small and medium sized enterprises and illustrates this fact by looking at the three elements of driving a business forward:

1. Optimism
2. Persistence and
3. How these are moderated by
  - a. Cognitive knowing style,
  - b. Creativity and
  - c. Our cognitive planning abilities.



It is all very well being pathologically optimistic and having the persistence

of a toddler trying to walk, but often it is how you learn that makes the difference, as opposed to just simple optimism and determination.

### Optimism and persistence

Previous research has found that optimism is linked to persistence. Persistent people tend to be more optimistic and conversely people who give up tend to have a more pessimistic outlook.

If someone believes that they are going to fail, then they are unlikely to have the huge drive necessary to make their idea work. If they have the belief in their idea and themselves (self-efficacy) then they will drive it forward. The authors found that persistence "... generally implies not only multiple attempts oriented toward a particular course of action, but repeated efforts in the face of adversity, challenge or difficulties."

Persistence can have positive or negative consequences: persisting with something that isn't ever going to take off like a business based on selling cellophane socks is unlikely to take off unless you can convince people of some hitherto unknown benefits.

The researchers found that two particular styles of thought tend to moderate people's course of action when faced with problems:

1. The cognitive creating style and
2. The cognitive planning style.

Conversely, the cognitive knowing style will tend to imbue conservatism and a certain cautiousness.

### **Cognitive Creating Style**

People with high levels of Cognitive Creating Style tend to fly by the seat of their pants and work intuitively. The authors defined this attribute as the ability and tendency to “see problems as opportunities and challenges.” They also “possess high risk preferences and they tend to have likeness for uncertainty and freedom.”

### **Cognitive planning style**

People who have higher levels of cognitive planning style “...favour an objective, structured, conventional and efficient problem-solving approach. Planning to organize and control tends to leverage entrepreneurs’ goal pursuit.”



The researchers found that one’s planning style impacts persistence thus: “the more pronounced the entrepreneur’s cognitive planning style, the more likely it is to leverage their optimism into enhanced persistent effort, because in planning activities

they have to engage in a way that makes them more optimistic about the feasibility of an outcome.”

Cognitive creating and cognitive planning styles were both found to have a strong positive correlation and impact on persistence and optimism. The authors suggested that this is good because, “optimism may be an important element in entrepreneurs’ decisions to persist, but cognitive creating and planning styles may be important moderating factors that can effectively translate optimism into higher persistence.”

### **Cognitive Knowing Style**



Cognitive knowing style was found to be a negative moderator of optimism and persistence. Cognitive knowing is defined by the authors as, “individuals who prefer a logical, rational and impersonal way of information processing. Research suggests that individuals with a cognitive knowing style look for facts and data and are inclined to think they know exactly the way things are and tend to retain many facts and details.”

In understanding where things went wrong last time, so modifications can be made to the next approach. People with high levels of cognitive knowing styles tend therefore to be over

cautious and ultimately the authors suggested, “when entrepreneurs take their time to make decisions, postpone decisions until data are collected for more information (cognitive knowing style), the relative usefulness of entrepreneurs’ optimism for stimulating persistence gets subdued.”

## Conclusions

One of the most important things for an investor to consider when thinking about putting money into a new venture is whether the entrepreneur will drive it to the next level. Looking at the way they think could be a factor in this – if they are creative thinkers or planners, this suggests that they will

be more optimistic than their cautious cognitive knowing colleagues. Additionally, people who think they know and who wait for more data or information are slower problem solvers and solve problems in more narrowly defined way. They tend also not to move on as quickly as creative optimists.

## Reference

Adomako, S., Danso, A., Uddin, M., & Damoah, J. O. (2016). Entrepreneurs’ optimism, cognitive style and persistence. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 22(1), 84-108.



## Overview

An interesting study of 198 SMEs looking at the success or otherwise of entrepreneurs found that two things often denote the success of the entrepreneurs in dealing with and overcoming the battery of problems most businesses face. Their levels of:

1. Optimism and
2. Persistence

Further they found that:

1. Knowing
2. Creativity and
3. Planning

tend to moderate or regulate the level of persistence and optimism an entrepreneur has when solving problems and overcoming obstacles that the business faces.

Higher levels of creativity and planning tend to lead to higher levels of optimism and persistence and consequently success. Higher levels of knowing (a belief in facts, data and being right) is conversely negatively correlated with optimism, persistence and success.

## Podcasting as an organisational learning tool

Podcasts are essentially audio broadcasts that are downloadable from the internet or an organisation's intranet and that can be listened to on an MP3 player, smart phone or other device. Podcasting has been around for many years, but has only recently begun to be used as a training and organisational development tool. Research up to now has almost exclusively focused on its efficacy in college and university settings. Among students preparing for exams, for example, it has been repeatedly shown that those who listen to a course podcast will do better at their exams than those who do not.

### What about organisational environments?

A new piece of research looked at how podcasting was being used in organisations and found some problems in the way that it was being implemented in organisations. The researchers looked at multinational organisations using podcasting to inform and train its employees and found few employees who were extremely positive about the podcasts in their organisation despite the enthusiasm of their managers.



The research, just published in the journal *Computers in Human Behaviour*, found five mediating factors that can make a podcast effective or ineffective in an organisational setting:

1. Information overload
2. Excitement about the technology
3. Tenure
4. Information privacy
5. Information relevance.



### Information overload

Many of those who used the podcasts complained that the amount of information in them was too much and too dense. Additionally most employees felt that they just didn't have the time or energy to take in. Though people can listen to podcasts on their commute to work, some found that they had difficulty in getting to the information they needed. This was partially because each podcast contained too much information and it was hard to index.

Where the podcasts were kept relatively short and interesting, employees reported greater interest in them. Most however contained too

much information per podcast and were not considered to be interesting.

The research concluded that if podcasting is perceived as information overload it will not be received very well.

### **Excitement about the technology**

Those new to podcasting and its technology usually have an initial burst of enthusiasm about it which frequently dwindles once the newness recedes. If the excitement and interest can be maintained, then the technology will be used more permanently. Ways of achieving this include mixing the sound well and using multiple voices for example. Most importantly, creating interest is important.

### **Tenure**

The researchers found that the longer someone has been in an organisation the less likely they are to find podcasting useful. Essentially, this refers to the knowledge the employee has already acquired in the organisation – they may feel that they are going over old stuff. However, newer employees who had not accrued that information tended to find the podcasts more useful.

### **Information privacy**

Where the podcast includes people speaking at meetings, there were some issues with people being identified by the sound of their voices. What the researchers discovered was that when podcasts were recording of meetings people often wouldn't speak as freely as they would often away from a recording device. It was also

found that when being recorded people are more significantly more likely to say things 'on message' in front of recording equipment than they do when not being recorded. This meant that often the act of recording people changed what was being recorded and this in turn started to found false.

As such the authors found that the consequent lack of reality and balance could negatively impact the usefulness of podcasting.

### **Information relevance**

The research found that, "employees perceived podcasting as being useful when they thought the information distributed by podcasts matched the information they were seeking. That is, the information was relevant to their job needs."



The issue was found to be getting the right information to the right audience and making it interesting to the target audience. Where organisational podcasting was working the researchers found that the podcast designers and editors had a detailed profile of the listener in mind. For instance, a high level executive doesn't need to know the script of a call centre .

This is related not only to information relevance, but also to information overload, as well as the perceived usefulness of podcasts as a whole.

## Conclusions

Given that outside an organisational setting people tend to listen to podcasts for entertainment or to learn about things they are interested in, it is probably hardly surprising that the researchers found that the overall view of organisational podcasts was

negative.

Proper targeting of the podcast content to the right sectors of an organisation improves the perceived usefulness.

## Reference

Wei, K., & Ram, J. (2016). Perceived usefulness of podcasting in organizational learning: The role of information characteristics. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 64, 859-870.

### Overview

Organisational podcasts have the potential to be part of the communication and learning toolset, however there are problems that need to be addressed to make them useful to staff:

1. It is easy to produce a situation of information overload – small is beautiful here.
2. Excitement about the technology often creates a lurch in interest followed by apathy. The content needs to be kept interesting and short.
3. Tenure – be prepared that newer organisational members might find podcasts more useful than more experienced members.
4. Information privacy – if the podcasts are recordings of actual meetings you might find the people at the meeting changing the way they communicate, making things appear a little false.
5. Information relevance – this is key to the acceptance of podcasts. The right audience needs to be targeted with the right content.

Podcasts have been used to great effect in organisations and as part of the blended learning toolkit. However they need to be kept short, interesting and relevant otherwise their use will wane.

## The employer brand identity effect in mergers

What makes someone stay after their company has been bought out? When a company acquires another they are often buying into the expertise and skills of the acquired company's staff as much the brand itself. Retaining the good staff should be a key objective in most mergers and acquisitions.

A new study looks at elements of what is known as 'employer brand identity' or what it means to work for a particular brand or company.



### Employer brand identity

Employer brand identity is the way the company is perceived by those who work for it. The authors used the definition, "the package of psychological, economic and functional rewards provided by the employment" in effect it is "what makes a firm different and desirable as an employer".

To that extent every organisation will have a unique employer brand identity and frequently it is the very thing that is the differentiator that retains staff, often for many years.

When a company or organisation is bought there is likely to be a difference in the two organisations' employer brand identity. At this point the staff from the newly acquired or merging organisation will most likely start to ask 'Do I want to work for this new company?' In effect they are asking, 'Do I like the new employer brand identity?'

This concept of employer brand identity was broken down so the researchers could identify and measurement the core components. From the data the researchers discerned the following core components of employer brand identity:

- Employee perceptions of the uniqueness of employment experiences
- Perceptions of the organisation's corporate identity strength
- Perceptions of organisational prestige and
- An analysis and perception of the acquiring company's corporate and social responsibility identity claims.

### The study

The research was based on surveys of around 250 employees from a telecommunications company that had been partially privatised and merged with another company. At the time of the sell-off many employees were quite angry at the move.

The study was carried out in 2016, eleven years after the sell-off and merger. It is interesting to note that, over the time since the sell-off and merger, wages had largely increased about 30% in the eleven years and profits had grown too.

## Findings

The main finding was that the biggest factor in a post-merger environment that predicts staff retention is whether the vision of the acquiring organisation's employer brand identity promoted to staff is held up in practice.

The researchers found that where the disseminated employer brand identity closely matched that found in reality after the merger, then higher levels of staff retention occurred compared to situations where the employer brand identity does not equate with that promised. This effect took place surprisingly regardless of whether the new employer brand identity was better or worse than that promised. However, if the employees found that the new employer brand identity was better than that promised, particularly in terms of perceived status drawn from the acquiring brand, then fewer people are likely demonstrate an intention to leave.

### What does this mean?

In acquiring a new company, the acquiring organisation needs to be aware and cognisant that its new staff

joined the other company not itself and that there will be a perceived employer brand identity at play. There have been occasions where swathes of employees have quit after a merger, leaving the acquiring company with little but an empty brand.



"We're buying the company, the brand, the building ... but mostly we're buying the golden eggs."

The important issue at play here is that the promised employer brand identity needs to meet employer expectations. Further there is evidence that the employer brand identity effect works at team and departmental levels as well. Merging teams or departments with different departmental or team brand identities can lead to problems if not handled correctly.

## Reference

Zia ur Rehman, M, et al, (2016) How Employment Brand Impacts Employees, Following a Multinational Acquisition? An Empirical Analysis. International Journal of Business Administration and Management Research Vol 2 (2) Apr- Jun 2016s

## **Overview**

The employer brand identity effect is where two companies or organisations merge. In effect employees in both entities will have an understanding of what their originating brands stand for and what it gives them, particularly in terms of psychological status. In merger situations employees look to see if the new employer brand identity matches their expectations.

If their expectations of the new brand aren't met the intention to leave is very likely to increase. This effect also works to some extent in departmental and team scenarios.



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