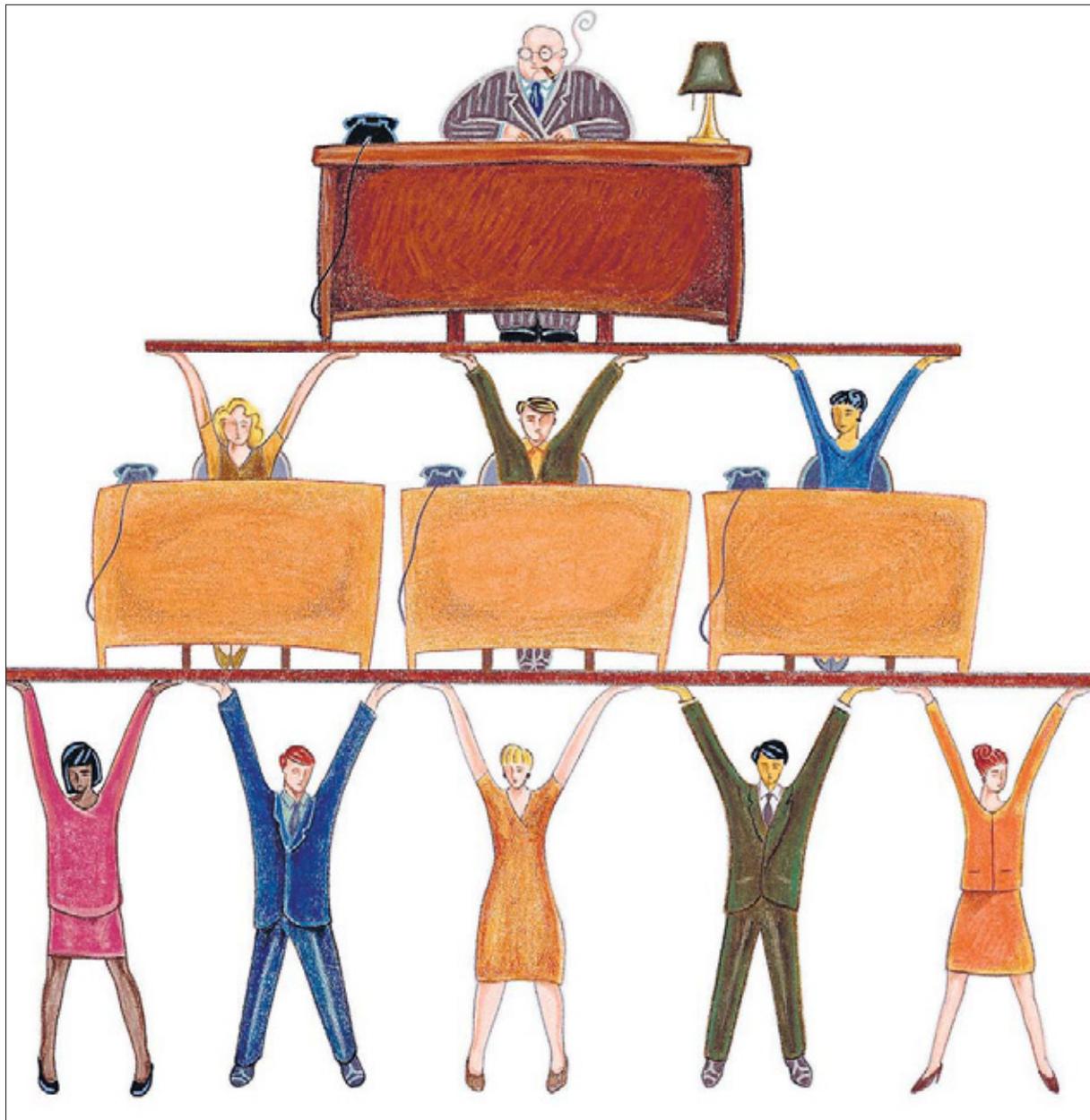


Balance task and people in search of excellence

New trend With the globalisation, there are new challenges of different dimensions, making the role of managers more complex



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Management theory and practice has undergone qualitative changes in the last few decades. With globalisation, there are new challenges of different dimensions, making the role of managers more complex.

Compared to the era of active trade unionism prior to liberalisation, managing people (employees) in today's passive trade

unionism, is tougher. This is not just due to increased opportunities, but also complexities of human behavior in modern world, accentuated by internal and external stress factors.

Post-globalisation

Globalisation has led to significant changes in the economy. The service sector has attained a dominant share of the economy contributing over 55 per cent of the GDP. This sector being totally cus-

tomers oriented is highly dependent on people who interact with customers.

Importance of people in service and also other sectors, has led to increased employment opportunities.

Increased employment opportunities coupled with dependence on people for business success, has brought about a radical change in the attitude of people. They are now in a great hurry to hop jobs and employer loyalty is therefore an

outdated concept.

Consequently, the attrition rate has been on the rise, with productivity losses due to vacancies.

With the current trend of nuclear families and an increased proportion of working couples, domestic stress levels are at an all-time high.

Challenges to managers

Task orientation as a style of management has been going through a metamorphosis.

Managers are under constant stress to deliver results despite high attrition rates and vacancies.

Recognising that 'people orientation' is a necessity rather than of choice, CEOs have been advocating managers to adapt to this changing development.

However, middle level managers across industries such as IT, FMCG, banking and financial services, highlight practical issues and illustrate live examples of people, ready to resign, with slightest provocation.

"We have an attrition rate of 15 per cent. Further, new recruits are not productive in the first year and hence, invariably I have to accompany them for most meetings," says Anand Kumar, who works in the Financial Services Industry. "One of our employees did a silly mistake due to which we lost an important customer. I took it up strongly with the employee and next morning, he resigned. Management felt, I should have handled the issue tactfully," says Ronald D'souza, a banking professional.

"Attrition rate in our organisation is around 18 per cent. Even though we have massive recruitments, there is a lack of dedication and commitment amongst new employees. Therefore, it becomes difficult to meet the project deadlines," says Vijay Kumar, an IT professional.

"Often I have to do the job of my juniors. With the result, my job profile in practice is much different from what is defined," says Stephen Fernandez, who is with the FMCG industry.

In such a scenario, some

managers lose their natural aggression and task orientation, leading to a defensive approach.

Other managers might carry on, with task orientation, and face practical issues, as highlighted earlier. Unfortunately, in both cases there is loss of productivity.

Basic factors driving productivity

Other resources remaining same, the basic factor driving productivity is human effort. In general, people orientation has a soothing, positive effect on motivation, whereas mere task orientation can have negative connotation. Therefore, achieving productivity is indeed challenging for managers, irrespective of their functional responsibility.

Therefore, in their quest for productivity, how should managers meet these challenges? The answer is to recognise that task and people orientation are not exclusive, but need balancing.

Balancing task and people orientation

One effective way to balance task and people is through team building, to achieve corporate goals. The outcome of team building is a successful pursuit of common goals. Balancing people and task, is therefore a necessity in today's business environment. So, how should one go about this delicate act of balancing task and people?

Here is a guideline:

Common objective: To begin with, irrespective of your functional responsibility, a common objective for the team, in alignment with the corporate objec-

tive is essential. This could be meeting your annual or quarterly sales targets, handling a project for a client or completing an audit in time.

Building trust and relation: To build trust, the key factor is understanding people.

Trust ensures transparency and two-way communication, leading to people participation in team management. Further, it helps to build personal relations with your people.

Role of the leader: A manager as the leader must take responsibility to organise resources and understanding the skill sets of people, effectively delegate. Delegation is an effective method to motivate people and raises self-confidence too.

Developing leaders: In a team with common objective and high levels of motivation and confidence, there is clarity of role and individual responsibility.

In such an environment, even the absence of the leader makes little difference as there is no ambiguity about the pending work. This provides opportunities to members and facilitates the emergence of new leaders.

Building healthy competition: Another strategy is to build healthy competition within the team and with other teams.

This leads to unity of purpose where all team members work together. Intra and inter team competition works in the best interest of the organisation, with high productivity.

Handling results: In a competitive environment, success or failure is common.

It's good to be tough when a

team tastes success, to avoid complacency. On the other hand, when the team faces failure, give your support and encouragement. Believe in yourself and in the abilities of your team, to bounce back.

Become successful, not popular: A common allegation is that people leave managers and not the organisation.

When you become people oriented, it leads to the converse; people work for the organization as well as the leader. The road to success is to tactfully mix, task or people orientation, as the situation demands. Also, being in the driver's seat, the speed of the leader is the speed of the team.

Be conscious that mere people orientation may make you popular in the short term, but not successful.

To summarise, balancing people and task orientation is to recognise that people are generally self motivated and capable of achieving excellence, under effective leadership.

Even if you do not work in a structured team environment, you can still apply these principles, with minor modification.

The role of the leader is, as Sony Corporation CEO Akio Morita, says: "We try to create conditions where persons could come together in a spirit of teamwork, and exercise to their heart's desire their capacity".

Individuals play the game; but teams win championships. Therefore, at the root of all successful organizations, is team work.

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