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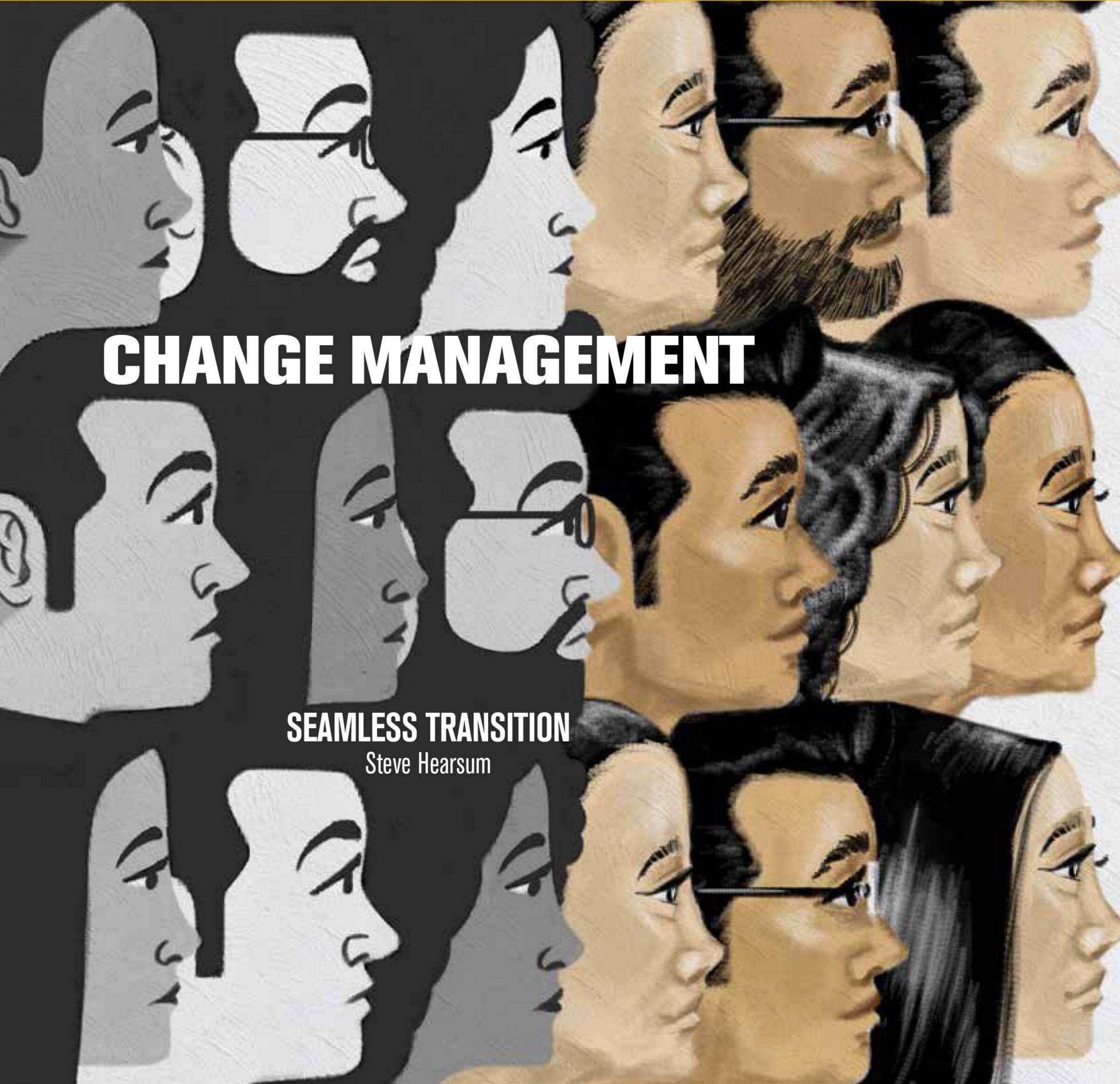
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CHANGE MANAGEMENT

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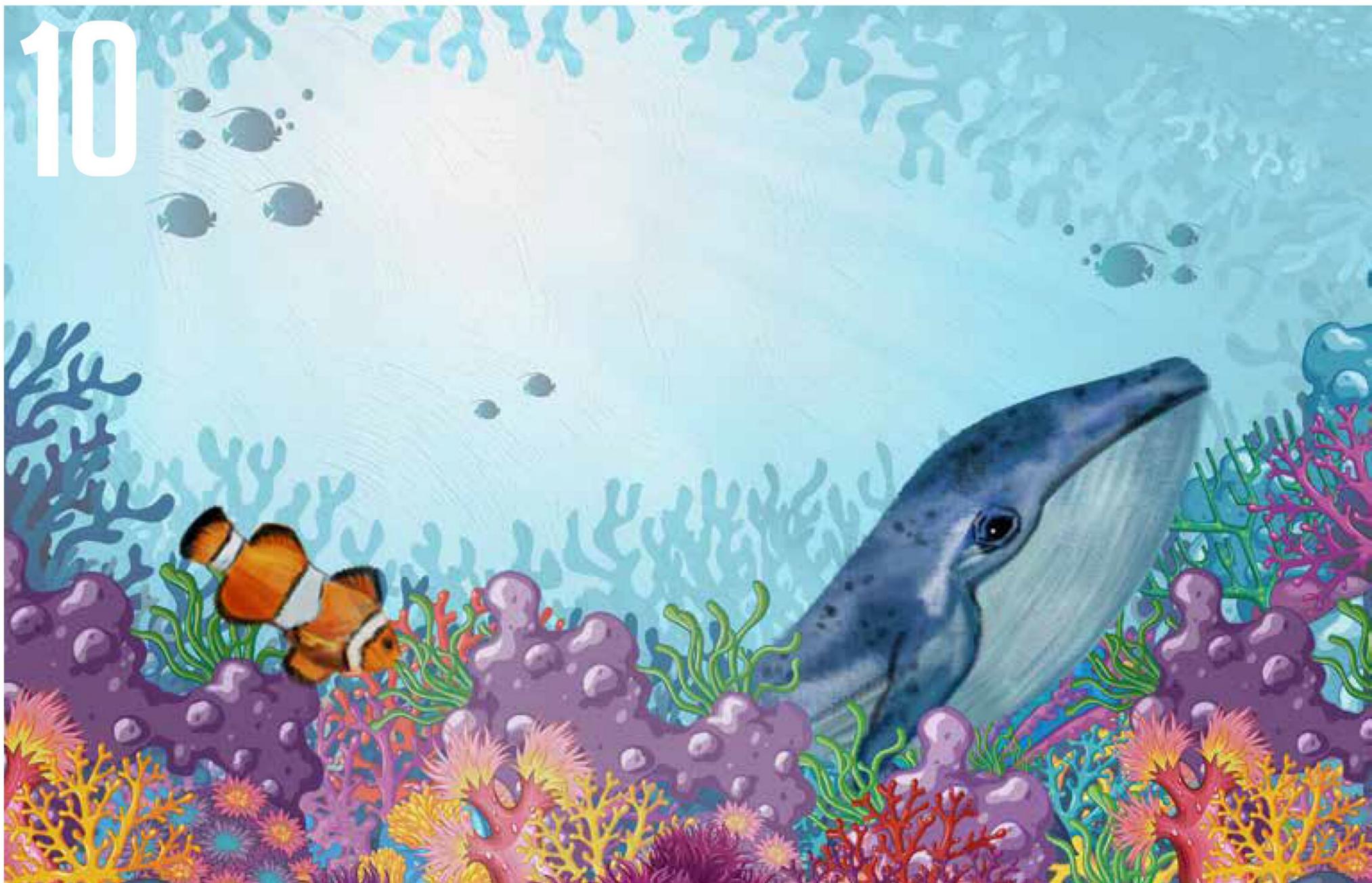
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Change better or perish

Nikhil Sawhney is President, AIMA & Vice Chairman and Managing Director of Triveni Turbine Limited, and a Director of Triveni Engineering.

Change is the only constant is a cliché, but it is the compulsory and the repetitive undertakings that keep entities alive. However, change itself undergoes change and it has never been as fast and radical as it is now. In fact, today change management goes by another name - transformation management.

This era is marked by dramatic crises

While it is essential to have as many points of view on what is more important and urgent, it is possible to lose the way with too many priorities seeking attention and resources.

and opportunities created by global financial and health events, technological revolution, geopolitical churn, and climate change. Management leaders are struggling to keep up with, or even anticipate, the next change in consumption, competition, compliance, supply chain, market access, technology, skills,

business methods and more. Managing change in this environment is anything but boring.

With everything up in the air, management leaders have to make choices that ensure stability in the immediate term but allow changeability at a short notice. However,

there are certain changes that are firmly underway, such as technological advances and economic restructuring. Some changes, such as disasters and wars tend to develop slowly but occur suddenly, and these must be addressed through recovery, adjustment, and renewal capacity building.

When a lot of things change rapidly and simultaneously, it is tempting to throw oneself at whatever excites or concerns one. However, that tends to destabilise the business and the organisation. The key to successful change management is picking the fights one must fight and prioritise those that one can win without getting too stretched.

Clearly defining what needs to change is basic. While it is essential to have as many points of view on what is more important and urgent, it is possible to lose the way with too many priorities seeking attention and resources. The top management must weave the competing interests and priorities of departments and regions into a cohesive change design that can be implemented. When a change can unsettle a lot of people, it is best to start with the most necessary and undisputed change requirement.

Typically, for change to make sense to everyone, it needs to be defined in terms of growth, profitability, market share, etc., with clarity on the roles to be played by specific changes in products, processes, target

markets, supply chain, tools, skills, hiring, acquisitions, divestments, etc.

Being specific helps create a sense of stability in the purpose and progress of change programmes. However, a mindset of changeability of everything is central to keep the change aligned with the shifts in the business environment. While a focus on what is real and measurable is essential to keep

Preparing both the leaders and the organisation for change is essential, as a topdown change tends to recoil after an initial thrust.

change management disciplined, it is also essential to design change with alternate futures in mind.

Change decisions and execution must also give the necessary respect to the human element.

The people who receive decisions at various levels instinctively resist anything that

demands them to shift from what they have become comfortable with, or accept changes a change of decision makers. The people are not numbers on spreadsheets that can instantly manipulated to get the desired outcomes. People tend to prefer others to change first before they do, and they change quickly only when driven by terror or greed. Therefore, any radical change management exercise must begin with showing everyone

what they stand to gain by changing and what they could lose if they do not.

In the normal course, it is best to change by a thousand cuts. Small and sequential changes tend to reduce friction and make change more stable. Change leaders who prioritise cumulative change over theatrical revolution tend to get more done, more quickly and for longer term.

Preparing both the leaders and the organisation for change is essential, as a topdown change tends to recoil after an initial thrust. Retraining and retooling teams for new ways of doing things and the new things to do is essential for change acceptance and effectiveness. For example, better digital infrastructure, devices, software and skills are basic for any organisation that is looking for efficiency gains and competitive advantage through digitalisation.

In some cases, an organisation may need a dose of leaders and managers from another organisation to kickstart a cultural change that is needed to move on from the legacy vision, competence, and habits.

Change is managed best when it is a habit and not a reaction to a damaging event or trend. Where everyone comes to work thinking about the next or the better, change costs the least and delivers quick returns. **IM**

The opinion expressed is personal.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

As economy, technology, market trends, competitors, laws and regulatory compliances, et al, keep changing, business strategy must also keep constantly evolving, adopting and adapting to these changes. Change management is an efficient approach to implement changes across a wide spectrum in an organisational structure. It is a systematic method that helps an organisation actualise its goals by incorporating strategies to control change, be it at an individual or department level or even an organisation-wide transformation. It also helps employees understand their deliverables and enriches organisational culture.

Diving in the financial aspect, it is to be noted that while change management can incur costs initially, in the long run, it reaps benefits and profits for the organisation by fostering a healthy work environment, decreasing risks, enhancing productivity, reducing losses and wastage of resources, and helping convert ideas into successful results.

But not all organisations are able to implement change management successfully, the common reasons for failure being poor strategy and directionless execution, communication gap, letting resistance go unchecked, and unrealistic expectations, to name a few. Steve Hearsom founder of Edge + Stretch and the author of *No Silver Bullet* writes in the cover story of this issue that, leaders can carry out successful change management if they develop reflexivity, cultivate a both/and mindset, ask questions, and experiment without the fear of failure.

What is your take on change management? Do write in with your views to imeditorial@spentamultimedia.com

Maneck Davar
Maneck Davar

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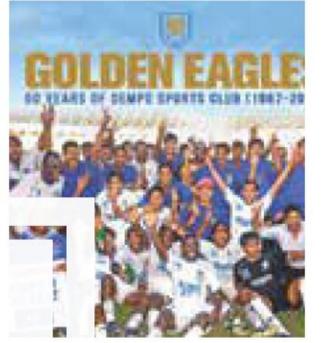
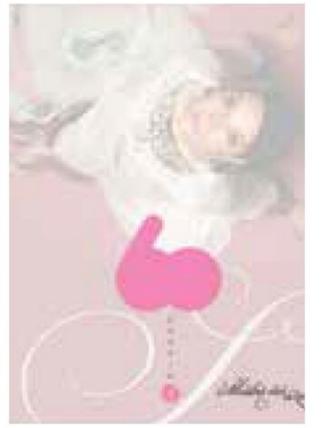
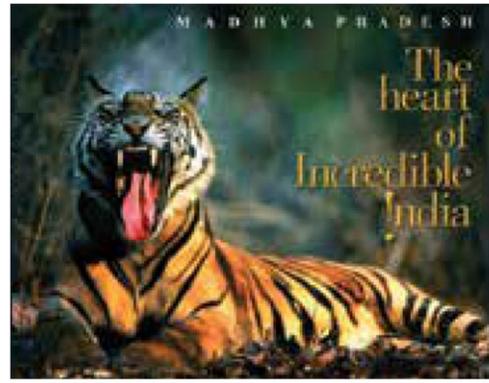
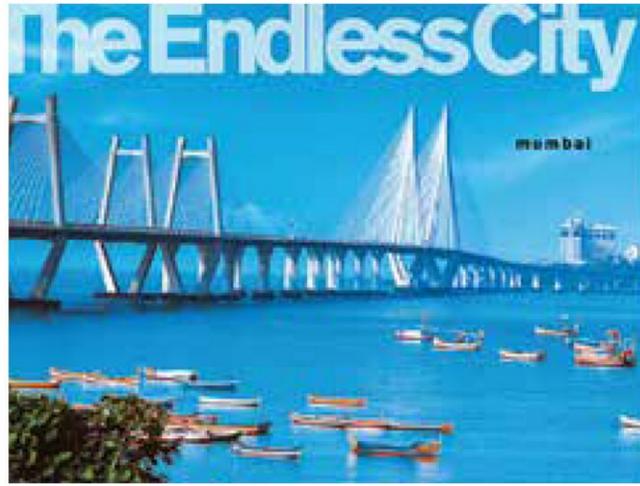
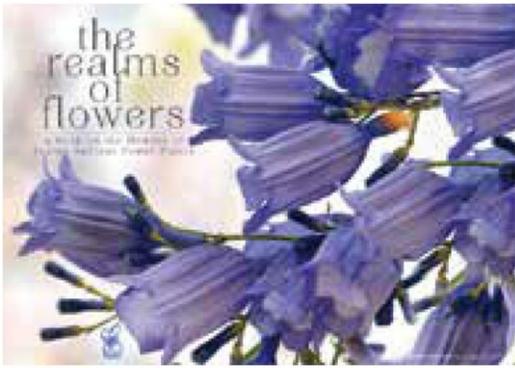
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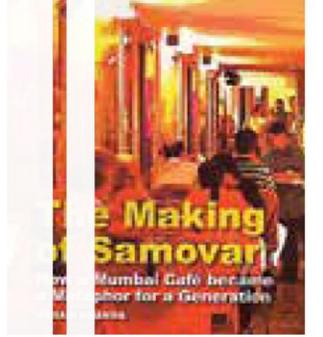
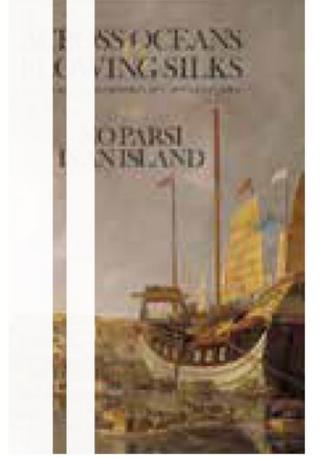
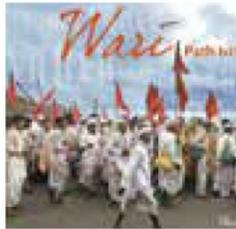
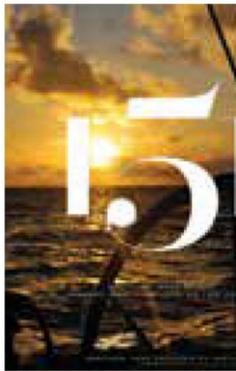
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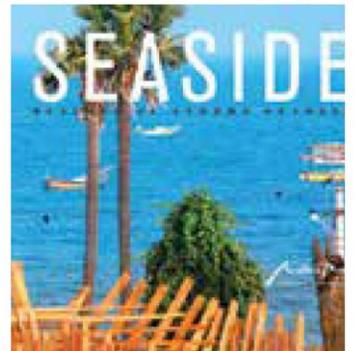
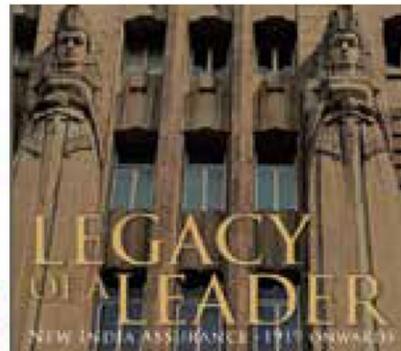
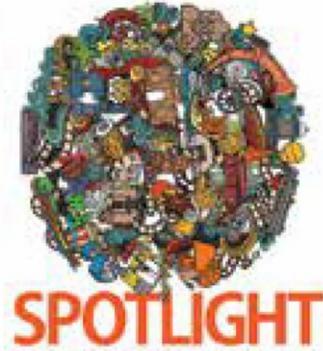
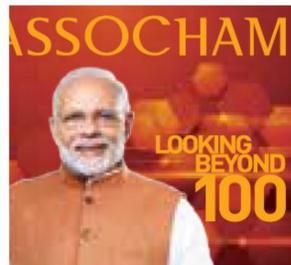
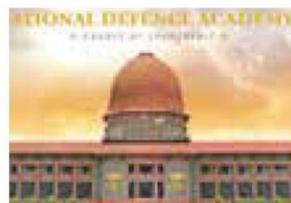
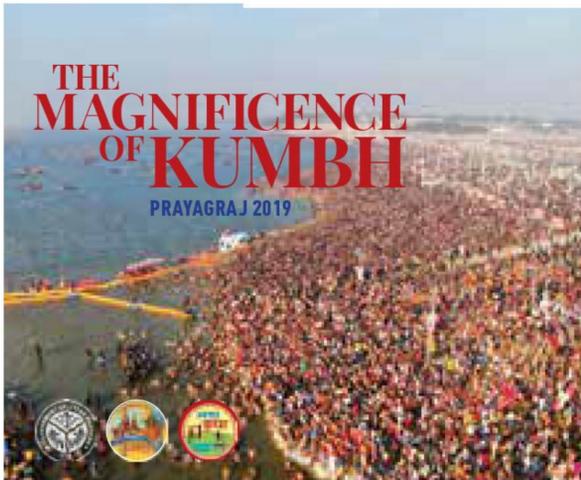
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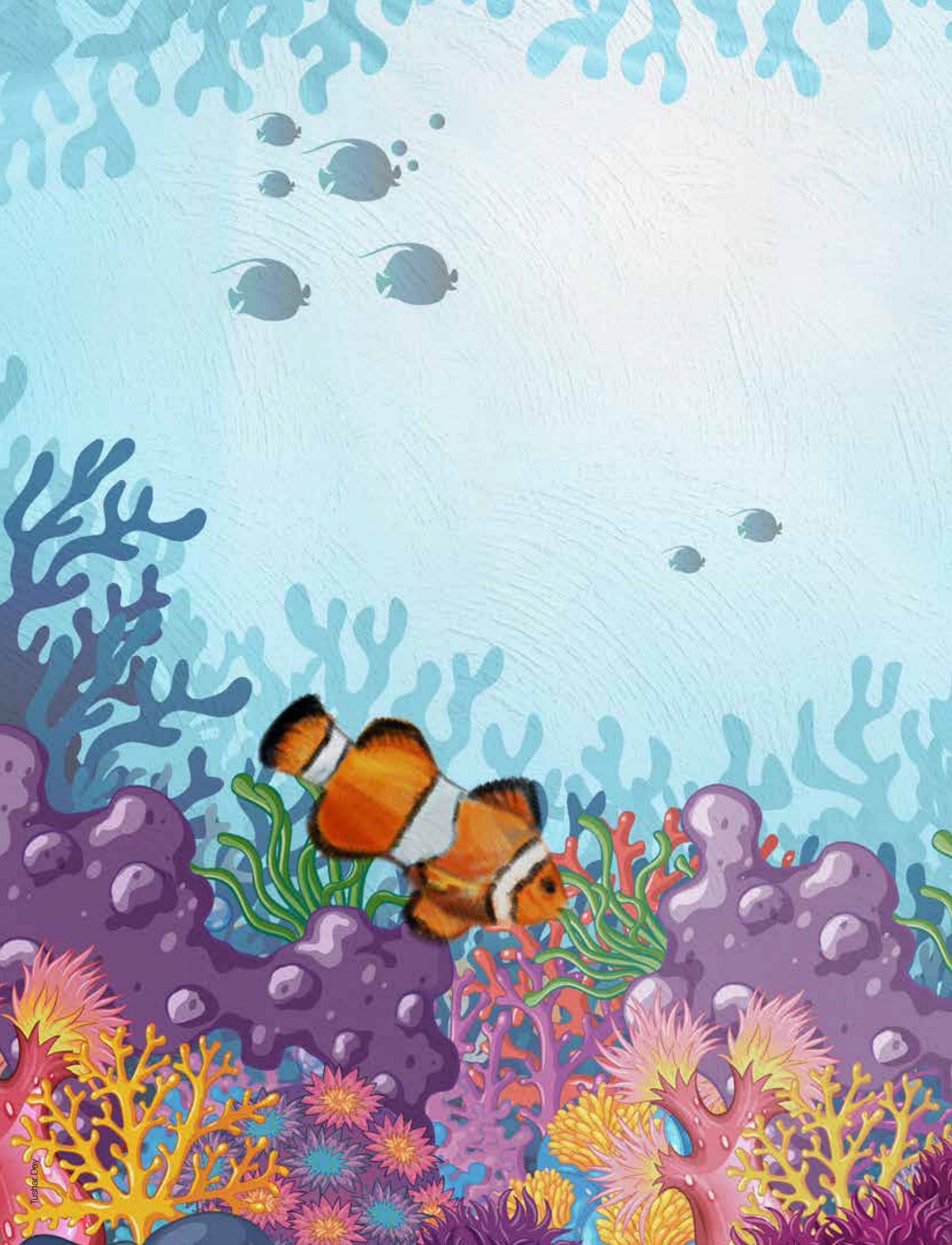
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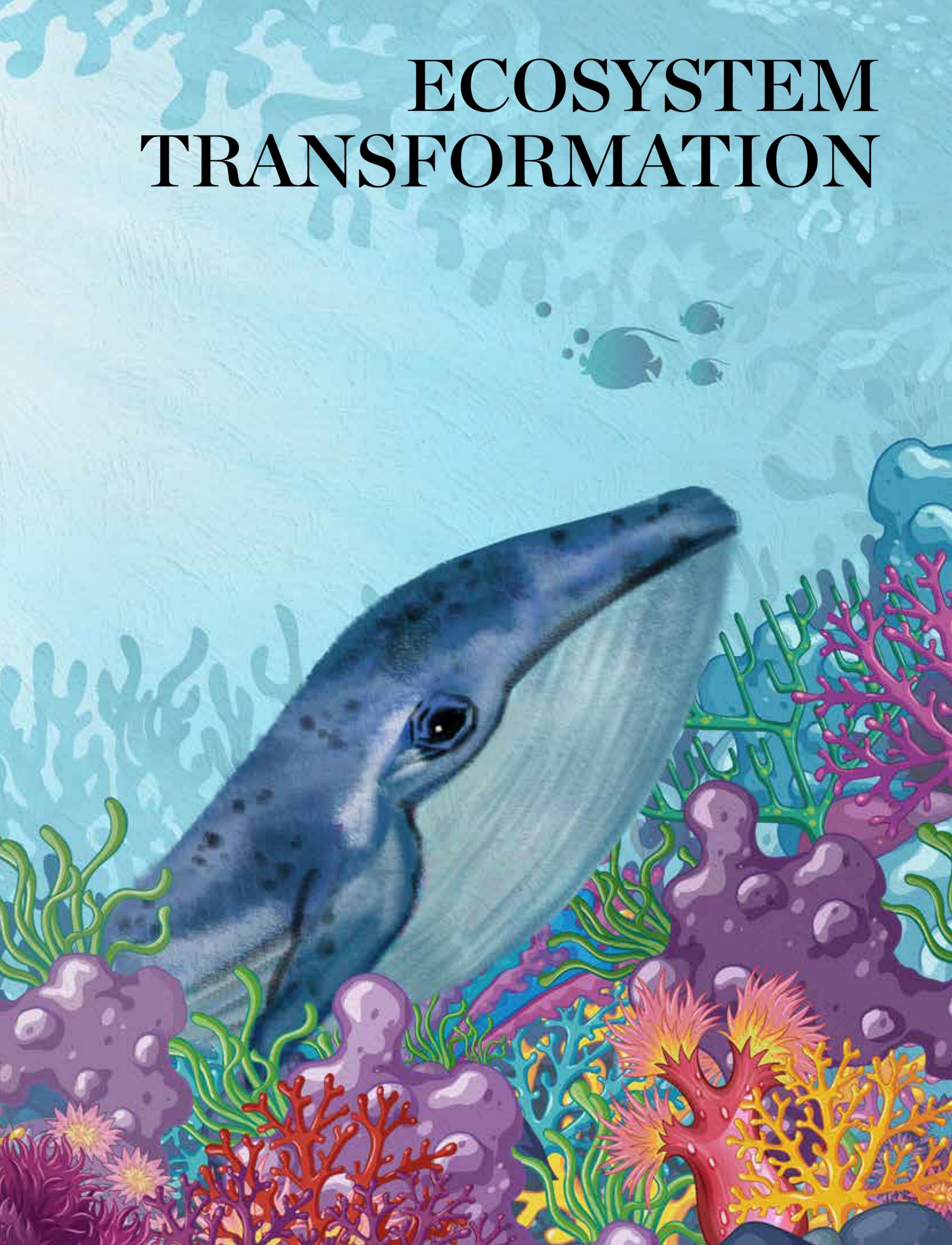
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ECOSYSTEM TRANSFORMATION





Tushar Dey

Seamless transition

Change is inevitable, successful change isn't.

◆ STEVE HEARSUM, AUTHOR, *NO SILVER BULLET*



semblance of control over ‘it’, however illusory. This is in no small way down to the myth of fixability (Cole & Higgins, 2022), the idea that we have more agency than we actually do when faced with messy reality. It is a form of laziness, in part underpinned by assumptions about the nature of change. We see this in responses to complex challenges such as climate change or pandemics, and this thinking is pervasive in organisations, where the allure of ‘n’ step models of change remains strong, even though the evidence base for many of these is suspect. For example, a 2013 study found that as many as 13 of the most widely used ‘planned change models’ replicate and echo Kurt Lewin’s three-step model (Evans, 2020: 6) .

In a further delicious twist, there is some question as to whether Lewin ever developed a three-stage model of change. Cummings et al suggest that it came into being after his death (2016: 1) and: “This foundation of change management has less to do with what Lewin actually wrote and more to do with others’ repackaging and marketing.” (Ibid.: 3)

This is an example of the laziness I mentioned earlier: it is a lot easier to simplify Lewin’s work than wrestle fully and engage with the complexity and mess of change as it ‘really’ is in human systems.

What are the essential ingredients for positive change, then?

The first thing to say is that the top ‘3’, ‘5’, or ‘10’ lists are part of the problem; they are a way to manage anxiety by suggesting that if you do these things then everything will be fine. My intention in what follows is to offer a few suggestions that might serve all leaders when faced with change, to consider, along with an invitation to see these as a starting point first and anything but definitive:

■ **Remember, change is not a thing**

Despite developments in organisational and leadership theory and practice over the last thirty years, organisations are steeped in often unconscious, and therefore untested, assumptions about what an ‘organisation’ is. The fact we assume it is a ‘thing’ may be the first problem: it is not, it is an abstraction, and only exists because the people in it decide it is one. ‘Thingification’ is endemic in organisations and

It is stating the obvious to say that change is ubiquitous, in both organisations and life, more generally. We are awash with advice from experts, thought leaders, consultants, former leaders, academics, and more on how to manage, lead, navigate, deliver, overcome, drive, and generally wrangle change such that we experience some

theories about them, and ‘management speak’ is dripping with abstractions and nominalisations (verbs solidified into abstract nouns). ‘Organisation’, ‘culture’, ‘leadership’ and ‘management’ are all abstractions, and ‘change’ is the daddy.

We ‘land the change’ and ‘drive change’, which makes it easier to construe ‘it’ as a thing we can move around, like furniture. The trap for leaders is that the pressure they are under can lead to oversimplification of complex phenomena. The need, therefore, is to see things as they really are, and change as unfolding, ubiquitous, complex, and messy.

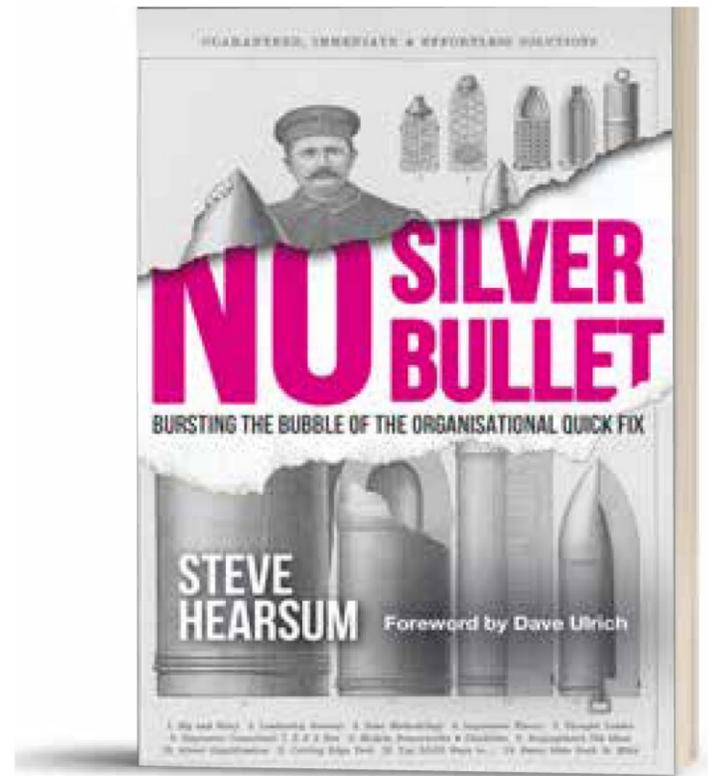
■ **Re-think change capability building**

When organisations embark on large-scale change, particularly, when there is a recognition it might involve cultural and behavioural change (which essentially means every change project, unless your organisation employs nothing but robots), there is often an intent to upskill a core number of people, building capability in consulting or change agency, say. This is a form of psychological splitting: leaders appoint teams of specialists ‘qualified’ to deal with the issue(s) so they themselves do not have to think deeply about it.

I have run many capability building programmes, and a common pattern has emerged. As soon as development

has taken place, the very people who have had their ‘capabilities built’ are included in restructures and consultations, and large numbers end up leaving. As I have explored this further, it has become clear that organisations typically do not have a clear idea whether they want (and need)

The trap for leaders is that the pressure they are under can lead to oversimplification of complex phenomena. The need, therefore, is to see things as they really are, and change as unfolding, ubiquitous, complex, and messy.



either context-specific specialists who can move between spaces in response to need or ‘centres of excellence’ so everyone knows what ‘good’ looks like.

What is clear from many conversations with leaders is that they know how important these skills are. As one senior leader said to me about the people I was about to start developing, “We want them to be far more skilled at support and challenge and acting at a level above their pay grade.”



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The need, therefore, is to ensure that skills are developed both where needed within a business, and that senior leaders recognise when they too have capability gaps. This requires a fundamental rethink of what is meant by change capability building, and who needs it.

■ Change is everybody's responsibility

Linked to this is the tendency to see change as the responsibility of a narrow set of people, often at the top, and/or the specialist teams mentioned above. The reality is that knowledge lies out in the organisation. A good example of this is every episode ever of the TV programme *Undercover Boss*, where the moral of the story is typically 'leader-learns-something-really-important-they-would-never-have-known-had-they-not-spoken-to-the-people-who-actually-create-value-in-their-organisation'. It is a wonderful example of how things are simply not joined up in many organisations, and no wonder senior executives need the plausible deniability of a consultant, sometimes one after the other, overriding what came before with newer, shinier presentations and models.

Change, particularly, culture change, is everybody's responsibility. To change a

whole system, you need everyone involved, or at the very least, a representative of every part of the system. This requires leaders to both let go of their need to be in control and accept they may not know everything or have all the answers. This is a muscle that needs to be intentionally worked.

■ Model it

Connected with this is the fact that most change initiatives have a cultural element to them or depend on behaviour change. That is true even with organisation re-design, often mistakenly construed as merely technical or structural change. One 6,000-strong global organisation I encountered in 2015 restructured from a divisional to matrix structure. I asked how it had gone. The response? "Nothing has changed—the top thirty people are all behaving in the same way."

In the case of another client, the senior leaders of the EMEA region in a global business mandated new behaviours. Again, little change, and one courageous OD manager within the business pointed out to them the reason for this was that they, as the five most powerful and influential figures, were not modelling the behaviours they expected others to adopt. Time and again,



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Hearsom is founder, Edge + Stretch. Steve is also author, *No Silver Bullet: Bursting the bubble of the organisational quick fix*.



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the single biggest failing I see is the inability of leaders to model behaviours and ways of working they expect others to adopt. If you cannot do that, do not expect change to stick.

- **Acknowledge and attend to anxiety**
Take organisation design as an example again. When you re-design an organisation, you are in effect removing or at the very least disrupting the containers that have held anxiety in place for those working in the system. If you remove these, you need to think about how to manage the anxiety that in all likelihood will increase in light of change, even if it is framed as a 'good thing'. The difficulty is that most organisations, and leadership teams, struggle to even admit to anxiety, or know how to attend to it when it arises, in no small part due to the shame dynamic. When things do not go to plan, there can be another whole cycle of denial rooted in the need to defend the fragile egos and reputations of all involved. And there is a lot of vulnerability at play that drives behaviours, and it boils down to some profoundly human stuff that is as real in a

school playground as it is in a boardroom. When Allan Katcher, an American psychologist, asked senior executives what they would "least want their subordinates to know about them, in nineteen out of twenty cases" they "feared that their subordinates would learn how inadequate they felt in their jobs" (Micklethwaite & Wooldridge, 1997: 60).

What all of this requires

In terms of what this translates into for leaders of change, I suggest there are four things:

1. **Develop reflexivity:** it all starts here, with the ability to notice your own beliefs, judgments, and practices and what influences them.
2. **Cultivate a both/and mindset:** if the context you are in is full of people demanding certain, binary, yes/no, either/or answers, getting comfy with not knowing means working with nuance.
3. **Ask questions:** when you are in the mess and the unknown, that is a place for sensing and responding, not heroic leadership.
4. **Experiment:** being prepared to fail and learn is central when you do not know what is going on or what to do.

Leaders will never be omniscient or omnipotent. A more grounded and compassionate stance is one of courageous humility in the midst of change. Anything else runs the risk of denying reality. **IM**

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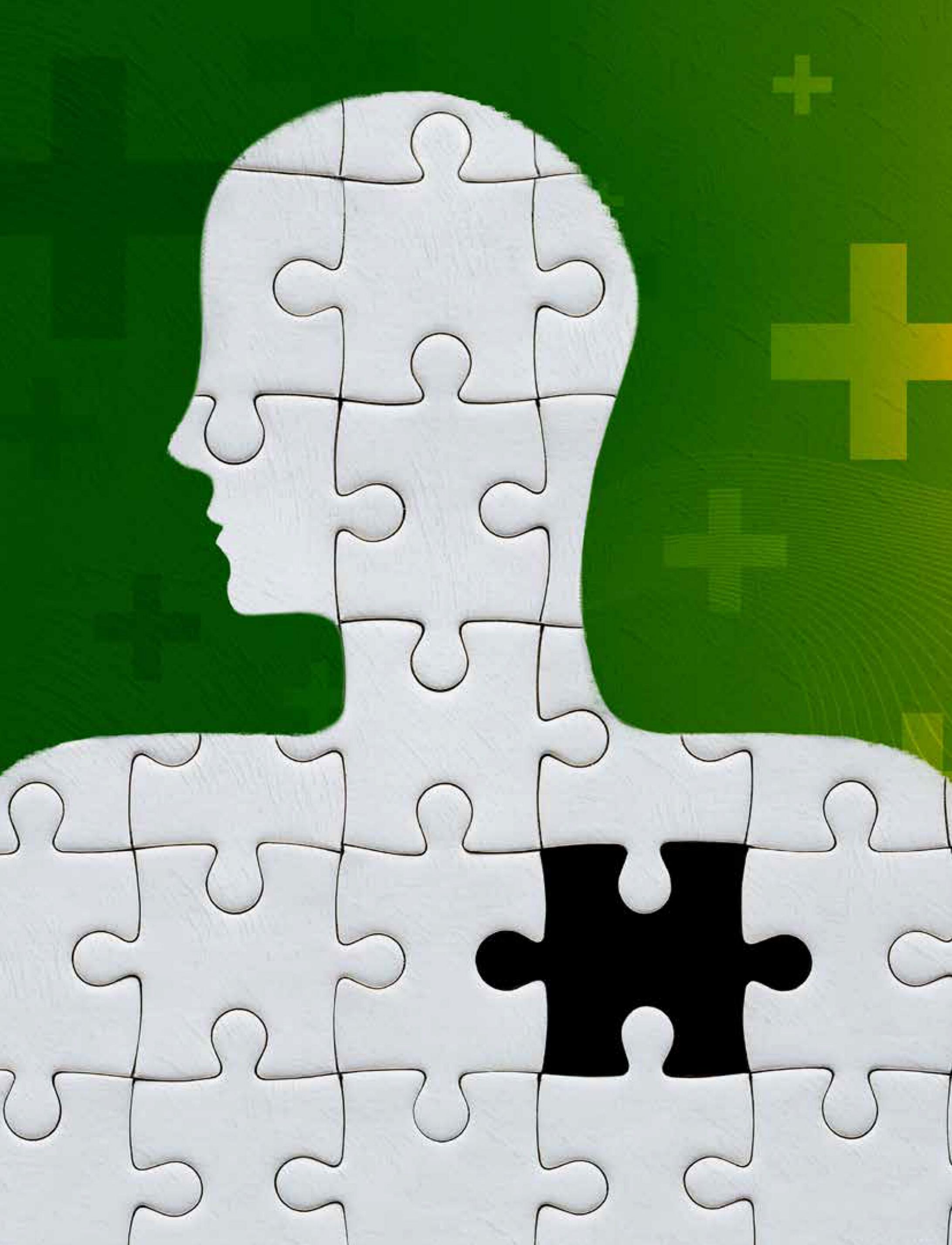
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Urgent 'treatment' needed

There are many problems with our healthcare system—the crowds at the iconic AIIMS as well as major, private hospitals, mortally sick patients being turned away either for want of money or due to shortage of beds, babies delivered outside hospital doors, fake medicines, unnecessary diagnostic tests and surgeries, rampant kickbacks—the list seems endless. People continue to suffer, many mortgage their houses to pay for treatment, others just die as they are unable to afford the huge cost of treatment.

Putting in place a universal healthcare system for all is perhaps not feasible for the government—resources required would be humongous, and the private sector can barely take care of their own people. Even the reach of their CSR funds is limited to a few 'memorial hospitals and research institutes' that manage to corner cheap, prime land from the government, on the express condition of providing certain number of 'free beds' to the poor, but more often than not these are appropriated for extending favours.

The situation is ironic- India has the best of doctors. They are as good as, if not better

than, those in advanced economies. There is a culture of empathy and caring for the needy; our new-age, private sector hospitals are equipped with the latest machines and robots. Yet, we see so much suffering and misery all around! Even the so called 'upper middle class' is unable to cope with medical costs when someone in the family needs to be hospitalised.

Perhaps, the only explanation is that the number of hospital beds and doctors is woefully inadequate for our huge population. So, let me start with this aspect.

WHO recommends '3 hospital beds per 1000 population'. Affluent countries like Germany and Austria have seven to eight! To meet the guideline, we need about 42 lakh hospital beds. As per the available information, in 2021, we had a total of 8.25 lakh beds—that is roughly 0.6/1000 persons. Before I proceed further, let me mention that 'Public Health & Hospitals' in India is a 'state subject' and state authorities often do not post information accurately and nor on time. Therefore, this figure of 8.25 lakh beds may not be correct. Even so we could've inched up to 0.8 or 1 bed/1000 population—a long way to reach the needed 42 lakh total in all government and private hospitals!

A remarkable scheme that deserves special mention here is 'Ayushman Bharat,' which is expected to provide significant succor to the poor.

Our public health system has, of course, seen upgradations, but we need much more. A remarkable scheme that deserves special mention here is 'Ayushman Bharat,' which is expected to provide significant succor to the poor. Our spend on healthcare has moved ever

so slowly from 1.12 per cent of GDP in FY 2010 to 1.35 per cent in FY20. A recent ET edit mentioned that Central and State governments' budgeted expenditure on health, for FY 2023, was 2.1 per cent of GDP and the National Health Policy plans to increase it to 2.5 per cent in FY2025. Incidentally,

USA spends an eye-popping 16.8 per cent of its GDP on healthcare! For the UK and Japan this figure is about 10–11 per cent. India's 2.1 per cent in FY 2023 was the lowest amongst BRICS nations.



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It is also worth mentioning that the distribution of healthcare expenditure in India, between public (38 per cent) and private (62 per cent) is highly skewed. I think the rub lies in the fact that out of the ₹5.8 lakh crore total spent in 2016-17, only ₹1.9 lakh crore was on capital expenditure; so there was very little 'capacity building', i.e., the addition of new hospitals! Opening new AIIMS, initiated in 2012 (six opened that year) and accelerated in 2014 is a great idea but not many of them are functioning satisfactorily due to shortage of manpower and construction delays. An early March '24 report talked about 108 'functional' new medical colleges and another 49 being in the process. A wonderful news, reported early April mentioned 'foundation stone laying of a 30-bed Community Health Centre (CHC) in a Haryana Village Bhora Kalan'. Now, that is exactly what we need—literally thousands of such centers all over the country.

There are, of course, huge improvements on the 'mother and child health' front. For example, MMR (maternal mortality rate) came down from 556 per 1 lakh population in 1990 to 122 in 2014–16 and further to 103 during 2017-19. UN has set a target of bringing down MMR globally to under 70/one lakh by 2030 as a sustainable development goal (SDG) and, happily in India, eight states have already achieved that.

Schemes like Anemia Mukh Bharat and transfers through direct cash benefit (DBT) to pregnant women's bank accounts have helped hugely to ensure basic nutrition. Similarly, Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) which stood at a catastrophic 190/1000 live births in 1950, came down to 27.7 in 2022 and is expected to reach 5/1000 by the year 2100. On the immunisation front, a 2019-20 report, by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, disclosed that 62 per cent of all children between



the age of 12 to 23 months had been fully vaccinated in 2015-16. Death rate in the country, which stood at 25/1000 in 1950, came down to 7.27 in 2011 and 6.71 in 2019. Sadly, 2021 saw the same spike to 9.45 due to COVID but is now coming down. Deaths due to communicable diseases have been controlled pretty well but those due to non-communicable diseases have risen sharply, the biggest killer being cardio vascular diseases, followed by cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory cases.

We do have an elaborate Public Healthcare System through a network of about 30,000 primary health centers, 5,600 CHCs, 1,250 sub-district hospitals, and 1,000 district hospitals with about 7.4 lakh beds available in public facilities. Then there are CGHS and

ESIC hospitals. Defense and Railways have their own set ups of efficient hospitals and even a highly ranked ‘Armed Forces Medical College’. Sadly, the multi-tiered government set up it is very inefficient. Many of the PHCs often do not have doctors. There’s some sort of a mandatory ‘rural service’ tenure for all those graduating from government colleges but most manage to dodge the system. Not to put the entire blame on the young doctors, it is a fact that living conditions in the villages are just too bad to attract these bright men and women. So, the bottom line is- patients load moves on to tertiary care hospitals concentrated in big cities and metros.

In a country of our size and its complexities, we need a much more robust government healthcare system at the primary and secondary levels rather than pushing everything to the overcrowded and super expensive tertiary hospitals. We have to find means of significantly increasing the number of beds in PHCs and district hospitals and making sure that these are all well-staffed and run efficiently. We also need many more medical colleges to add thousands of doctors in the country. More colleges—especially by the government—will also ease the nefarious practice of capitation fees charged by private colleges which have mostly become money-making businesses.

Let me quote Dr Basant Garg, additional CEO National Health Authority from what he wrote in a recent article. “Empowerment, not just treatment, defines the future of Indian Healthcare.” He goes on to add a ray of hope when he says, “ABDM (Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission) is helping India leapfrog technologically in its healthcare sector to provide a seamless, interoperable, and efficient digital healthcare infrastructure.” He feels this will make the system citizen-centric rather than disease-centric and it will empower

There is a deep-rooted lethargy and fear with large number of Indians for getting cancer detection checks even when such tests are available free of cost.

citizens to access information related to their health, healthcare professionals, facilities, and insurance claims. He envisions that under Ayushman Bharat Health Account, citizens

will have access to their health records digitally and will not have to worry about carrying their records physically.

I will now turn to the importance of regular health checks which are rampantly ignored by large number of people, perhaps due to (a) non availability in smaller towns/ villages and (b) high costs, mostly not reimbursed by

insurance companies. In particular, I want to talk about cancer screening tests which are now easily available, at least in the metros. There is a deep-rooted lethargy and fear with large number of Indians for getting cancer detection checks even when such tests are available free of cost. Let me mention here that ‘almost all cancers are completely treatable if detected early stage. Several cancer hospitals and NGOs have been offering basic check-ups virtually free of cost. But a vast majority do not avail of these, perhaps due to the fear of cost of treatment and the

toll it will take on them and their family treatment. While this is a ground reality, one has to understand that once the disease advances- (a) treatment cost will probably become 10X (b) there is every possibility of great pain and even fatality, and (c) many hospitals offer treatment at concessional rates and also free in case of 10 per cent low income patients. Hospitals and NGOs regularly organise ‘cancer detection camps’ in middle- and low-income colonies, fair amount of publicity is done in the area through posters or door to door information... even RWAs are roped in... and yet, response of the people is less than the optimum numbers that can be screened in a typical 8–12-hour day.

All this continues to rapidly increase the number of cancer patients in the country. Incidentally, once a person is diagnosed with cancer, even after successful treatment and no reoccurrence for as long as 15–16 years no insurance company—public or private—accepts the person for medical cover. Even in case of an existing policy, the insured cannot increase the amount covered! Most heart-rending is to see little kids afflicted with cancer. Recently in a short video, gone viral, someone asks a group of youngsters “which screen has changed your life?” Answers ranged



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from mobile phone to laptop and from TV to cinema. However, one girl narrates how her young and fit doctor friend had succumbed to cancer and her closing words, “if only she had taken the simple cancer screening test, she would’ve been here with us,” shake up everyone in the group; she closes the conversation with “for me this screen has changed my life!”

Just cervical cancer alone claimed the lives of 341,000 women globally in 2020 alone. Most of these deaths occurred in low- and lower-middle income countries due to inadequate access to cervical cancer prevention, screening, and treatment. In India, this is the second most prevalent cancer in women (14.7 per 1 lakh women) and needs urgent steps to check its frightening spread. We need a concerted drive to increase the capacity and geographical spread of screening facilities and a strong drive to sensitise the people about consequences of not going for regular basic screening tests.

Need for mindset change

The Indian mindset ignores the need for preventive care—be it for cancer or heart or other NCDs—that ultimately leads to bigger problems and the unbearable load on our very busy and very expensive tertiary care

The Indian mindset ignores the need for preventive care that ultimately leads to bigger problems and the unbearable load on our very busy and very expensive tertiary care hospitals.

hospitals. This load can be considerably reduced if the Health & Wellness Centers (as the PHCs are now called) are tasked with preventive care through regular screenings.

I will now turn to the ‘mystery & malaise’ of kickbacks and unnecessary surgeries.

I can never forget an incident about 30

years ago when the son of a close friend in Punjab came back after finishing his MD in diagnostics. His parents, who were already running a successful business, added a diagnostics wing in the same premises and ordered equipment for x-ray, ultrasound, CAT scan, etc. The family scion was to start professional life in style. As the parents knew lots of doctors in town, he was hoping to get good referrals.

On the very first day, as the young man was doing an ultrasound, his assistant came and whispered that a highly reputed big doctor wanted to speak with him urgently. Reluctantly, he apologised to the patient and left midway to take the call. The doctor on the other side said, “*Puttar*, I have sent Roshan Lal (name changed) for an ultra sound; please confirm his gallstones.” “But uncle I don’t see any stones,” responded the young chap. The doctor livid. “You have started work today, whereas, I have been in practice for 60 years; will you now teach me these things? I know he has stones in the gall bladder and needs an urgent surgery; if you can’t ‘see’ any stones, just tell him your machine is out of order and send him to another lab. And, don’t expect any more referrals from me,” said the doctor and slammed the phone!

The poor kid was in tears and ran to his parents’ office. When they heard the name of his caller, they too also scared and told him, “We can’t make Doctor Sahib our enemy; we will call him in a day or two and make amends. Right now please do his bidding.” The guy was aghast, but had no choice. Soon he understood the ‘system’; there was a widely circulated list that mentioned rates for different tests, which had to be paid in cash to the referring doctors religiously every week. ‘No payment, no referrals’ was the accepted norm. So, his lab prospered while his dad kept a meticulous account,

prepared small white envelopes every Sunday that his peon would go and deliver at the doctors' homes. There were no secrets and no bashfulness in this straightforward business. I tried raising this issue in several meetings of national industry associations and chambers but was patronisingly corrected by CMDs of large chains- "You must be talking about independent labs in small towns. Such things don't happen in large corporate outfits." I hope and pray they were right and the malaise is confined to small places.

Do I really need this surgery?

Early in 2019, I started feeling pain in the calf behind my right knee. This was odd as I was used to walking 7–8 km daily. I sought an appointment with a doctor friend at a

big hospital and was advised to get knee x-rays and an MRI of the right one. A week later, I was back in the doctor's office with all reports. The doctor walked in, trailed by half a dozen juniors, had a good look at the reports, pointed out a 'meniscus tear' in the right knee, and advised 'arthoscopic medial meniscus balancing procedure', saying it might give me relief for anywhere between 2–3 months to a couple of years. I was told that this minor intervention is being suggested "in view of our friendship" as, with the degenerative changes, I was likely to need total knee replacement (TKR) pretty soon.

I was shaken and decided to seek a second opinion. My quest took me first to another doctor friend at another big hospital who

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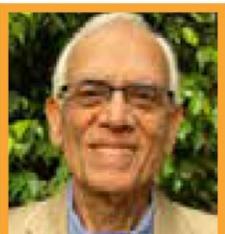


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didn't think a surgery was needed and advised an ultrasound of the right calf and also some digital x-rays of the spine + some tablets. Thoroughly confused, I met yet another doctor in the same hospital, who noticed 'degenerative changes grade III' and prescribed B-12 injections, "no brisk walks" and also suggested that I meet someone for herbal *potli* treatment. My next visit was to an old school orthopedic surgeon who too ruled out surgery, felt that the 'meniscus tear' was not a problem if I wasn't jogging/running and advised a knee brace support while walking, a spray, good old 'seven seas fish oil' capsules, etc. Even more confused, I met a fourth specialist who felt that my case was "far from a surgery" and the problem could possibly be resolved by some

injections—either synthetic or protein rich part from my own blood or stem cells.

By now, I was ready to write a thesis on the 'finer nuances of pain in the calf' but decided to first meet my neighbourhood physiotherapist. His prognosis was truly heart-warming. "Sir, you are not likely to need a TKR for at least ten years. Just have a couple of sessions with me and God willing you should be fine." Sure enough, eight sessions of thermal, ultrasound, vibration, manipulation, etc. did give me a lot of relief. Five years have passed and I am doing my usual walks, haven't had to visit the physio more than perhaps 5–6 times, do some daily exercises at home, and life is pretty much back to normal. Of course, I have no clue what is in store tomorrow. **IM**



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Krishan Kalra is a member of the managing committee of Indian Cancer Society, Delhi.



Leaders need to deploy different skills as per the circumstances in order to thrive in today's multi-faceted world.

◆ SUE MUSSON, AUTHOR, *FIRECRACKER LEADERSHIP*

LEADERSHIP

A multi-dimensional leader

In today's demanding world, inspirational leaders need a range of highly-developed skills. Knowing which skills to deploy in different circumstances and embracing a balanced approach can transform your leadership style for the better.

We have all met leaders who are gifted in a particular area. However, when they apply that one skill to every situation regardless of the facts, poor results are not far behind. Leaders with such a narrow skill set are at risk of becoming the one-trick ponies of the leadership world, lacking breadth and nuance in their approach. As one former colleague described the limited style of a peer's leadership, "When you are a hammer, all you see is nails."

The pitfalls of one-dimensional leadership include prioritising performance relentlessly, snatching tasks with a "give it here" instruction or being overly empathetic without providing direction. Each of these settings can be effective in the short term. But, over time, they inject alienation, stifled growth and poor motivation within teams. These are hardly the desired outcomes anyone wants from their leadership.

Just as one size does not fit all, one leadership skill is not appropriate to every

situation. The question is: how can leaders expand their repertoire of skills and apply the right skills at the right time so that they inspire rather than alienate others?

As described in my book, *Firecracker Leadership*, the answer lies in mastering fifteen essential leadership skills grouped under three categories: head, hands and heart. In summary, great leaders have head, hands and heart skills in abundance and in balance. They have everything they need to apply the right approach to the situation at hand.

Head skills (brainpower): The head skills represent the best of your brainpower. These skills equate to the command centre of your leadership. They allow you to make the most of your intellect in analysing information, detecting patterns and formulating solutions. Proficient head skills enable you to set purpose and meaningful goals that inspire others to bring their commitment, energy and effort to the task of achieving a shared vision.

Hands skills (technical ability): Hands skills enable you to translate thought and knowledge into action. From technical prowess to effective communication, hands

skills are all about developing expertise, doing the work, showing the way by example, embracing high standards and encouraging others to learn and grow.

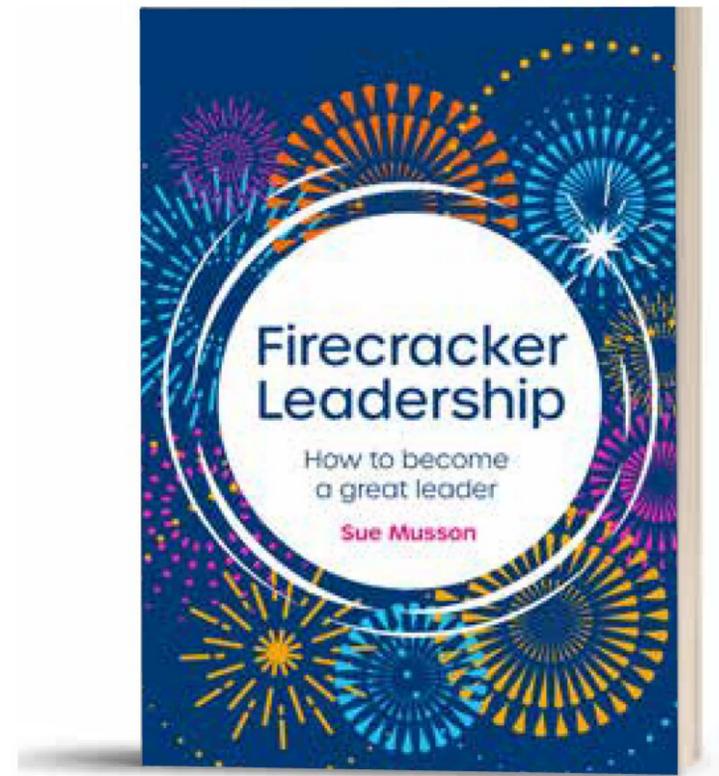
Heart skills (emotional intelligence):

Heart skills are the foundation of good people skills, trust and effective working relationships. Leaders with strong heart skills bring genuine care, empathy and positive values into the workplace. They understand others and are comfortable expressing gratitude, emotion and vulnerability.

Effective leaders draw on skills in all three areas to shape their approach. But what happens when a leader lacks skills in one area and relies too heavily on just their head or hands or heart skills? Unfortunately for these leaders, their skills are not in balance, and they can expect the pitfalls of the one-trick pony to loom large.

When head skills are too dominant, the focus is entirely on results without nuance. This approach can be effective in the short-term, but over time, if it is unrelenting, teams lose motivation. They begin to feel treated as a commodity and become alienated from the leader who is constantly cracking the performance whip. The leader who was compared to being a hammer who only saw nails is the exemplar of being too head-driven. That leader was completely uninterested in understanding anything about colleagues, their development needs or their feelings. Every problem was a performance problem, and every solution was framed as a need to improve performance. Understandably, those who worked for him felt dehumanised and demotivated by his style, resulting in a very high turnover of staff.

When hands skills are too dominant, the technically gifted leader may be so focused



on their own ability to get the job done well and quickly, that they say, “Give it here,” taking over the doing and forgetting about the leading. This approach leaves team members feeling undermined, untrusted and without the guidance and encouragement they need to develop and grow their own skills to a proficient level. I worked with a colleague who embraced the “give it here” mantra with the best of intentions. He was new to his board-level role and was keen to make an impact. He thought the quickest way to a win was to take on the writing of a technology strategy himself. When it was pointed out to him that his approach was denying his team the opportunity to learn from him, to develop their skills and to feel trusted, he was able to adjust his plan and get his approach into balance. It took longer to produce the strategy, but it was a good opportunity for team members to learn, contribute and hone their ability to implement the end result.

When heart skills are too dominant, the overly-empathetic leader gets lost in the moment and becomes caught



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up in demonstrating their wealth of compassion and understanding at the cost of injecting urgency, a clear direction or high expectations for results. Heart-driven leaders are often people pleasers who find it challenging to make a decision that might be unpopular or might affect relationships. I observed a very caring leader who made the fundamental mistake of blurring friendship and leadership. When the pressure was on, this leader would swerve asking team members to take on additional tasks or to accept operational changes that they did not like. Ultimately, this leader lacked insight and could not see that being too concerned about others' feelings was limiting the team's ability to function. It can be challenging to recognise a lack of balance in leadership skill, but for the heart-dominant leader, the cost of muddling along can take an emotional toll and lead to burnout.

Balancing these three elements—head, hands, and heart—is what sets the effective and inspiring leader apart from the one-trick ponies of the leadership world. Achieving balance in your leadership skills creates the results every business wants, including

high-performing, motivated teams who feel valued, appreciated and recognised. Inspirational leaders rarely face recruitment or retention problems because their approach attracts and nurtures ambitious talent.

You can check if your skills are in abundance and in balance by rating your proficiency in the skills listed in my Firecracker Leadership Framework*. If you are out of balance and have skills weighted in only one area, choose one or two improvement areas at a time to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Work your way through the framework, maintaining areas of strength and methodically tackling improvement areas one after another.

What if you are unsure how to rate your skills and want to know if others perceive your leadership as inspirational or single-track? Seek feedback from sources you trust to tell you the truth, or, better yet, ask a colleague to circulate an anonymous 360 feedback survey on your skills so you can gain insight and prioritise the areas you most need to improve. You can use the Firecracker Leadership Framework as the prompt to seek feedback. This will help you identify the areas of strength you want to maintain as well as the gaps you need to prioritise.

Do not despair if you sense you may be a one-trick pony at the moment. The mastery of effective leadership skills is there for any leader who is committed to achieving a balanced approach. The first step is to keep an open mind. Be willing to identify where you lack balance and then commit to the practical action you can take to strengthen gaps. It only takes insight and a commitment to improve to start you on your way. **IM**

References:

- *A free download of the Firecracker Leadership Framework is available at www.suemusson.com



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sue Musson is Managing Director, Firecracker Projects. Sue is also author, *Firecracker Leadership: How to become a great leader*.



Nuala Walsh, a visiting speaker at the Harvard Kennedy School, INSEAD, and London School of Economics and author, *TUNE IN: How to Make Smarter Decisions in a Noisy World*, writes that, “misjudgement may not be your fault, but course correction and awareness of accepted wisdom is always your choice.”

**MYTH
BUSTER**

The voice of common sense

If you are climbing the corporate ladder, you have probably made some fairly smart decisions along the way. But could you have had a smoother ride with fewer errors? In today’s AI-based, fast-paced world, good judgement has become an underestimated skill. It is simply expected—and a differentiator to be mastered. Multiple myths exist about the art of decision-making which can unintentionally jeopardise careers, reputations, economies, livelihoods, and even lives.

As I explain in my book, *TUNE IN: How to Make Smarter Decisions in a Noisy World*, human decision error starts with tuning out the voices that really matter, especially in high-stakes situations. That may be the unheard customer, employee, voter, patient, maverick, or minority.

Tuning out explains why business and governments are so distrusted. It is why activism is rising, countries are polarising, startups are imploding, and mergers are

still failing. Leaders encounter at least 10 judgement traps, all rooted in bias.

As a behavioural scientist and non-executive director with three decades in financial services, I find that five myths about judgement in particular repeatedly derail ambitious leaders.

MYTH 1: More information means better decisions

With the information superhighway, there is a tendency to believe that more information, advice, or instruction leads to better decisions. It is understandable. The problem is that too much information leads not only to analysis paralysis but provides false comfort. More data is just a crutch. Last year, Deloitte reported a 22 per cent increase in mergers and acquisitions activity across India. In major transactions such as Adani’s acquisition of Ambuja Cements, it is not unusual to cling to data rather than seek true risk signals.

In our modern cyber vortex, too much data can fool us into imagining patterns. University of Oregon professor Paul Slovic found that people exposed to 88 variables were no more accurate in predictions than those exposed to five variables. Unlike money, more data does not make you happier or more accurate. With more data, confidence increases rather than the accuracy of predictions or great decision-making.

MYTH 2: Decision consensus beats decision conflict

While consensus is often seen as the hallmark of collaborative decision-making and human-centric leadership, striving for unanimous agreement can be unrealistic and counterproductive. Consensus is not better than conflict—it is the enemy of groupthink.

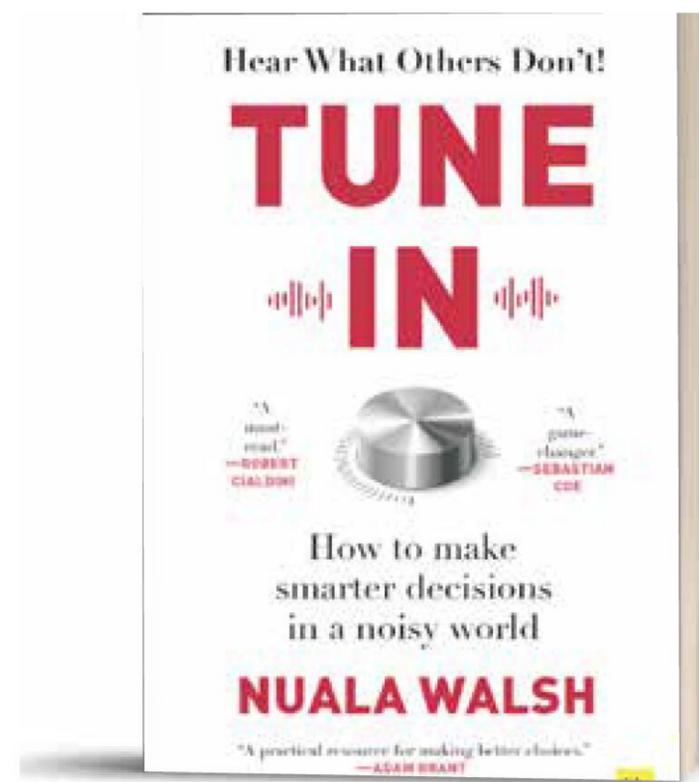
In the early days of the auto industry, Gottlieb Daimler concluded that one million cars would never exist due to a “lack of capable drivers.” Yet pre-pandemic sales reached 90 million vehicles. Embracing constructive conflict and challenging assumptions allows diverse perspectives which in turn, drive innovation.

In resource-constrained situations, some degree of conflict is more inevitable than consensus. Territorial wars, neighbourhood competition, and workplace factions bear this out. Blind consensus or conformity based on fear of authority or desire for acceptance is rarely better than unmanaged conflict. Yet, it is the root of corporate blind spots and deaf spots.

MYTH 3: Everyone tunes into the leader’s voice

People who hold power typically assume that everyone hears their voice. But that is not the case. It is the classic ego trap. In today’s noisy,

People who hold power typically assume that everyone hears their voice. But that is not the case. It is the classic ego trap.

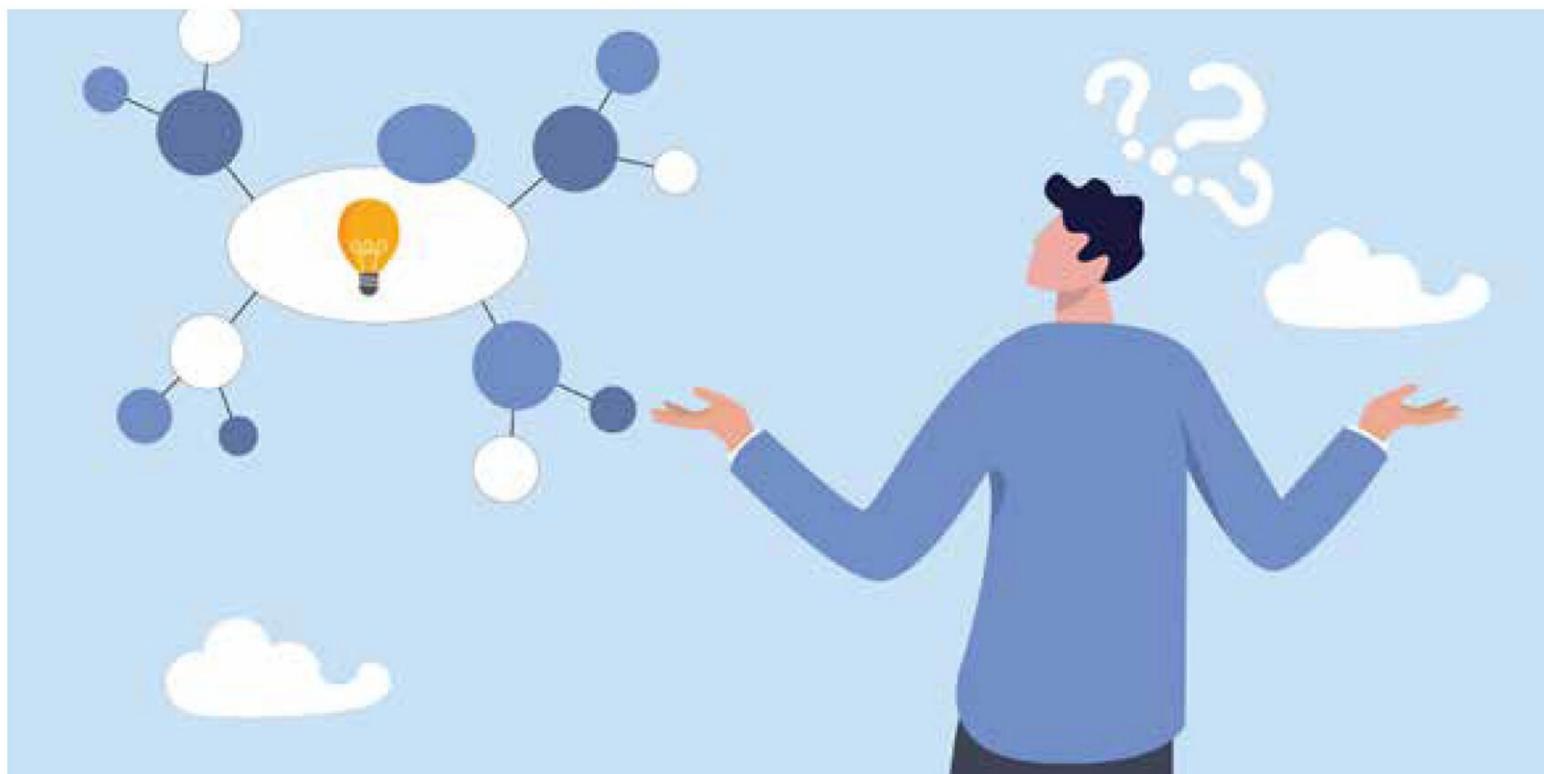


tone-deaf world, it is simply not possible. People only hear at 25 per cent operating capacity due to neurological processing constraints. Moreover, people tend to hear the first or the most popular voice—even over the most senior voice.

Do not assume that others hear you. I have identified a suite of 75+ biases that distract people from absorbing critical information, even if it is from the leader. It is only by slowing down long enough to interrupt your own thought process that better decisions are made.

MYTH 4: Strategic decisions are made rationally

Unfortunately, most boards have an inbuilt preference for what is rational, measured, and logical over soft skills such as understanding intuition, bias, or emotion. The love of spreadsheets tends to dominate. Yet, the most important decisions are influenced by subjective, irrational elements. In the workplace, hope, ambition, envy, greed and impatience typically distort strategic



hiring or investment decisions.

Moreover, most people feel more comfortable choosing the safer option over the best option—it is the status quo bias. There are exceptions. When Netflix invested in original content over licensing content, they recognised the potential of series like *The Crown*, *Sherlock*, or *House of Cards*. Strategic decisions that incorporate logical analysis and psychological insights typically produce better outcomes.

MYTH 5: Yesterday’s decisions don’t affect today’s decisions

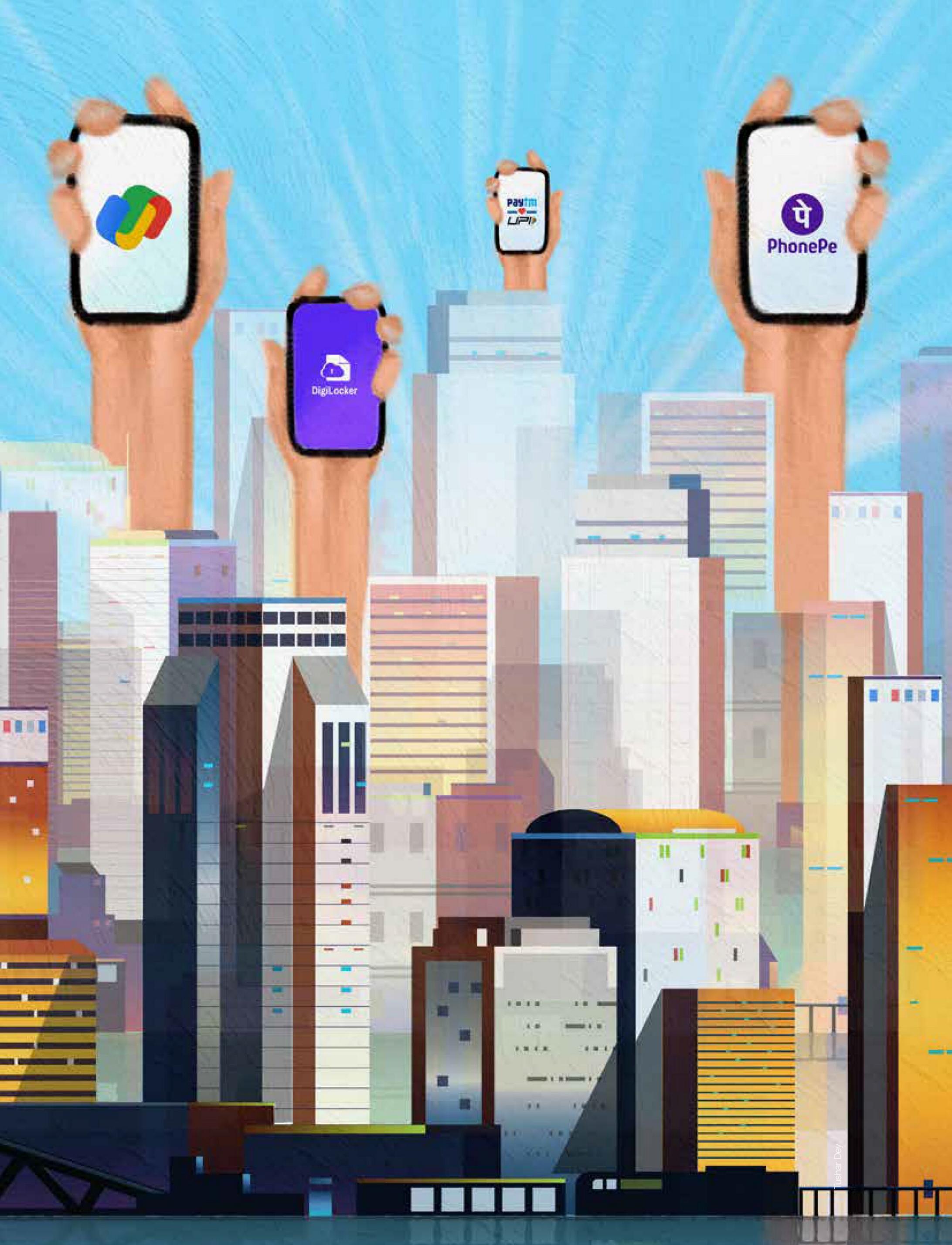
It is easy to think today’s decision operate in a vacuum. Yet, past decisions are a liability, especially, if you are unaware of their present potency. This memory-based misjudgement trap explains why businesses still fail despite past lessons, why people invest in failing projects or repeat mistakes.

Past decisions also affect ethical choices. For instance, people descend the slippery slope through gradual acclimatisation. The expenses fiddler does not get caught, so repeats the pattern of misconduct. That is

how most rogue traders, money launderers, and drug traffickers start.

Moving on from past error is not easy, yet, it is an asset I have seen in business and sport. For example, when Novak Djokovic played unseeded Nick Kyrgios in the 2022 Wimbledon final, Djokovic had never won a set against Kyrgios. Pumped with this ‘flashbulb memory’, Kyrgios won the first set. But Djokovic tuned in to his experience memory of six grass-court wins to inspire a seventh Wimbledon and 21st Grand Slam title. Like Kyrgios, we remember our mistakes as today’s decisions are linked to the past.

Misjudgement may not be your fault, but course correction and awareness of accepted wisdom is always your choice. We cannot control circumstances, but we do control our greatest asset—our minds. Debunking the more accepted decision-making myths helps leaders to stand out not lose out. Smart leaders tune into the voice of conscience and common sense over the voice of comfort or convenience. It is time to reconsider how we make decisions and tune out of what matters. It is time to ‘TUNE IN’. **IM**



India has gained a strong foothold in the digital space owing to its rapidly developing digital infrastructure.

◆ DR ABHISHEK NARAIN SINGH, IMT NAGPUR

TECHNOLOGY

Digital leader

The rapidly evolving technology landscape is disrupting the competitive environment. For most, this means undergoing a digital transformation is no longer optional. Approximately 89 per cent of organisations¹ are planning to adopt or have already adopted a digital business strategy. Yet shockingly, about 70 per cent of these programs fail to reach their goals². The implications are significant—from lost investments, frustrated stakeholders, unsatisfied customers, and lost ground to competitors—all of which can be fatal for a business.

The size of the Indian internet economy will grow from USD 175 billion in 2022 to USD 1 trillion by 2030, according to a report by Google, Bain & Company, and Temasek, published in June 2023. Against the current 4 to 5 per cent, the internet economy will contribute 12 to 13 per cent to India's GDP by 2030. With the second-largest internet population in the world (880 million internet users in India in 2023), this revolution is possible due to the creation of robust digital public infrastructures (DPIs) such as UID (Aadhaar), UPI (unified payment interface), FastTag, DigiLocker, ONDC (open network for digital commerce), and many more.

Innovative digital solutions built on top of such digital infrastructures have benefited

individuals, businesses, and government departments alike. In addition to the hard infrastructures like roads, rail, air, and ports, such soft infrastructures play a vital role in the overall growth and development of an economy. It also enables sustainable digital development and consumption among individuals and businesses, making its contribution towards realising UN's sustainable development goals.

DPI Architecture

India's DPI is built upon three layers: identity layer, payment layer, and data layer. These layers are guided by the principles of open source, interoperability, trust, and consent. Enabled by Aadhaar's unique identification system, the identity layer provides and authenticates a unique ID to every resident. UPI-supported payment layer allows interoperable, cheap, and fast payment from anyone to anyone with ease. Governed by the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) rules and sectoral guidelines & standards, this layer includes banks, financial intermediaries (including payment gateways), NBFCs, and application providers. Finally, the data layer provides a secured and trusted mechanism of data sharing based on users' consent. The data protection policies and regulations provide the safeguards for secure data transmission among various stakeholders.



companies, central and state (educational) boards, central and state government departments, among others. With 261+ million registered users, DigiLocker has issued more than 6.7 billion documents electronically through 1703 issuers.

- **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC):** An open network to promote small retailers to join the e-commerce wave in India that can increase the existing e-retail market of 4.3% (of overall retail) to its optimal potential. Through a system of network partners and ecosystem partners, ONDC promises to create an equal level playing field for small retailers in the e-commerce space. In comparison to existing platform-centric models, ONDC is a network-centric model. At present, with ten live domains (categories), ONDC is available in 586 cities across India, having 4.18 lakh sellers/service providers on its network.

- **National Academic Depository (NAD):** Powered by DigiLocker, NAD has approx. 2,400 registered higher education institutes, universities, and boards storing and publishing over 800 million academic records, enabling smooth transfer and sharing of documents among students, institutes, and verifying agencies. This is a fast, reliable, easily accessible, and secure method for document sharing and verification by minimising paper waste and unnecessary expenses.
- **Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA):** Under India's digital health mission, the Government of India initiated Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission program. The idea is to create a unique 14-digit ABHA number for citizens that connects various stakeholders in a healthcare ecosystem to provide easy, hassle-free, and seamless access to personal health records and healthcare-related data sharing among



various stakeholders (doctors, hospitals, labs & pathologies, insurance providers, and public healthcare programs). With 3 lakh registered healthcare professionals, the platform already has 358 million ABHA-linked health records for 587 million ABHA numbers.

Benefits of DPIs

Given its nature and ease of integration—with existing infrastructure and services—the DPIs have become more like utility services. It enabled the financial inclusion of marginalised sections of society through proper authentication and direct benefit transfers to the beneficiaries of government schemes and subsidies, credit to the J-A-M (Jan-Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile) trinity. This has further fueled the growth of micro and small businesses through e-KYC, sharing and storage of e-certificates (through DigiLocker), and easy & reliable payment integration through UPI.



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Using DPIs, startups and private players are now providing innovative solutions to unique problems, ranging from education, healthcare, digital payments, logistics, agriculture, and many more. By making vital services available to all citizens and organisations, all-encompassing digital public infrastructures (DPIs) promote a more accessible and equitable digital economy for all.

The way ahead

In the recently held G20 summit under India's presidency, the G20 Digital Economy Working Group (DEWG) identified three priority areas: digital public infrastructure, security in the digital economy, and digital skilling. Some of the focus areas that will further boost the growth of the digital economy in India include: the creation and usage of content in vernacular languages to cater to diverse linguistic communities; investment in digital infrastructure, mostly in rural and far-fetched areas, to improve stable internet connectivity through reliable and affordable broadband networks; and most importantly, laws and regulatory provisions to safeguard data protection, privacy, and secure access to digital services.

According to a report by NASSCOM and Arthur D Little International (a Boston-based management consulting firm), the economic value created by DPIs in India will reach to somewhere between 2.9 per cent to 4.2 per cent of GDP by 2030, from 0.9 per cent in the year 2022. Further, around 30 countries around the globe have shown interest in adopting or are at the initial levels of implementation of UPI and Aadhaar-like systems. This has helped India to secure a leadership position in the digital innovation space globally. 



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The digital technology and internet has emerged as a platform to facilitate global businesses and communication. Virtually, every organisation today is using some or the other digital/online marketing tools.

Leveraging the digital marketing tools, and technology to achieve the competitive advantage and building market lead, CRM and innovations is the main objective of the digital marketing strategy programme.

The programme is intended for Sales & Marketing and IT professionals, who want to take, advantage of digital marketing tools and techniques to upscale their career and achieve better revenues for the organisation and create business values.

*in ODL mode

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