# LEADER CHARACTER

## A GUIDING COMPASS
Dr Mary Crossan and Bill Furlong
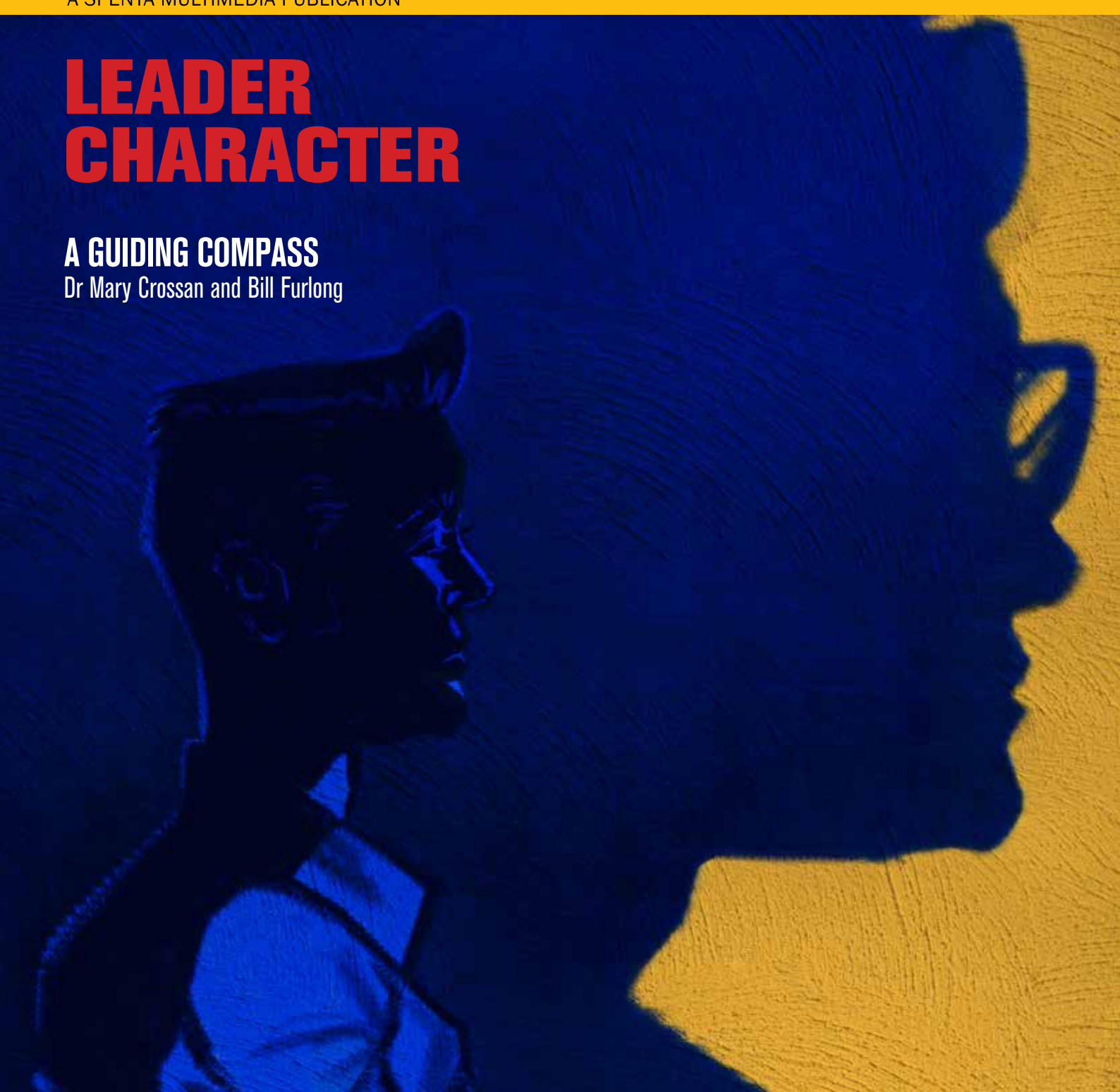
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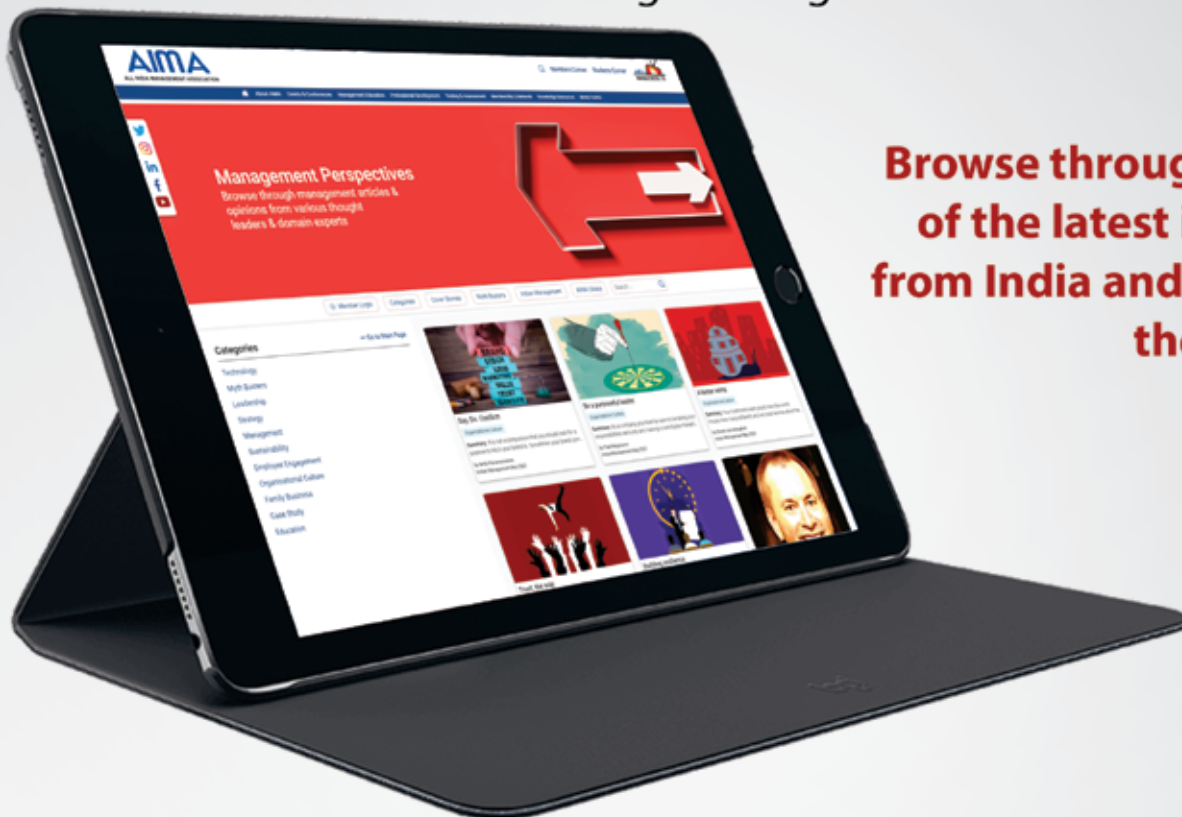
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# 2024: A watershed year

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

For better or for worse, 2024 could be a turning point for the world. It is a year of big decisions in technology, business and politics that would shape the medium to long term future of corporations, nations and the world.

2024 is the year of national election in many countries that are key players in the global economic and political order. India, Pakistan, USA, Russia, Taiwan, and European Union are among the 50 polities where voters will determine this year the future course of their domestic and global politics and policies.

While much of the world is on the edge, wounded by the many recent crises and worried by the chronic uncertainty, Indian economy continues to buzz with hope and confidence. India's 6 per cent plus GDP growth in 2023 showed its economic resilience and potential amid global growth slippage. Now, most forecasters believe that India is set for a close to 6.5 per cent GDP growth during 2024 followed by about 7 per cent in 2025.

The economic activity and growth in India during 2024 will get a boost from a massive election campaign spending and a probable spike in investment bounce after the elections. Despite intense competition for power, there is a political convergence on macroeconomic policies and priorities. Indian economy would be further spurred by a significant acceleration in foreign industrial investment in 2024, as global supply chains get further reorganised.

In 2024, technological changes will continue to dominate corporate thinking and behaviour across the world. 2023 was the year of generative AI's mass trials and 2024 is likely to be one of its mass adoption. Simultaneously, there will be a movement towards regulation of generative applications. The AI developers and platforms would try to find ways to address intellectual property, bias, and fakery issues to enable safe and large-scale use of their applications and services. Also, the advances in virtualisation technologies and the falling cost of their application would encourage the industry to use those in remote manufacturing, maintenance and training.

Digital security would become a greater priority for organizations during 2024. With everybody and everything going digital and online, and AI enabling synthetic information and communication, cyberattacks are turning into an industry. Securing access to data, controlling use of data, and protecting digital infrastructure are set to get a lot of attention and investment this year. Quantum computing is also expected to make slow but inevitable progress during 2024 and organizations will begin to take note and think about future data exploitation and digital security.

> **Despite intense competition for power, there is a political convergence on macroeconomic policies and priorities. Indian economy would be further spurred by a significant acceleration in foreign industrial investment in 2024, as global supply chains get further reorganised.**

The exponential growth of computing will accelerate further in 2024 with push for connected machines and devices and the accompanied enormous data generation. The energy and waste intensity of a digitalised world will attract greater political and regulatory intervention. 2024 will see heightened pressure to shift to cleaner sources of energy for computing and greater repairability and recycling of electronic items.

**The exponential growth of computing will accelerate further in 2024 with push for connected machines and devices and the accompanied enormous data generation. The energy and waste intensity of a digitalised world will attract greater political and regulatory intervention.**

The transition to alternate energy systems will be even more pronounced in the transportation sector. Electric vehicles hold great appeal among the urban politician and population because those reduce air and noise pollution. The producers are likely to begin focusing on lower-range, lower-cost, urban-only cars and scooters. EV battery technologies will see increasing investment as the industry and consumers want smaller power units with longer driving range.

India's infrastructure, manufacturing and technology push will continue to determine the boom sectors in 2024. Construction, construction materials, transportation, alternate energy, AI platforms, digitalised services, healthcare, and travel will see growing supply and demand. Social media and digital marketing will get a big boost from the national election spending. There will also be an accelerated growth in the demand and supply of mental health services, as disruption and uncertainty demand frequent and radical adjustments.

2024 will bring more and varied challenges and opportunities for managers. Continuously changing business structures and processes will require them to update and upgrade their technological and managerial knowhow. With data and machine intelligence becoming integral to work and business, managers will need to learn to train and work with AI applications.

Besides becoming technologically more proficient, managers will need to adjust to the new beliefs, values and practices to keep up with the dominant market and policy trends. That would be critical for their career advancement. Though digital work and business favours distance, managers must return to real world network building in 2024 to increase their chances of getting high-quality jobs and career opportunities.

2024 is likely to be a watershed year in many ways and it could change the world decisively for the foreseeable future. It is a year for managers and leaders to be at their best in agility, adaptability and creativity. **IM**

## Dear Readers,

A leader provides direction and guidance to his/her team. The strategies, approaches, and decisions of a leader affect the whole organisation. But there is also a set of virtues that affect these aspects of a leader. These virtues—ethics, integrity, empathy, passion, commitment, and so on—are the values system that the leader abides by. Together, they form what we call 'leader character'.

Leader character decides the quality of leadership, which in turn, decides the progress of organisation. A good leader often tends to stand by his team during testing times, owns up responsibility of failure, exhibits empathy, and coaches and empowers his team to help them bring out their best. In other words, a good leader exhibits a 'leader character' synonymous with selflessness, accountability, and resilience.

In the context of embracing leader character, Mary Crossan and Bill Furlong, co-authors (with Gerard Seijts), *The Character Compass,* write, "No matter how busy you are, you owe it to yourself to take control over how your character is developing by taking a mindful, intelligent, and intentional approach to your life…It's not so much about finding more time in your day to develop your character, but rather transforming your lived moments to both activate and strengthen your character."

Leader character can be your competitive edge. It is an asset that can give a high RoI in the long run. It is that unseen tool of positive transformation.

Do write in with your views to
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# THE MARK
# OF A LEADER

# A guiding compass

*'Leader Character', more than anything else, can help organisations navigate present and unforeseen storms of today's VUCA world.*

✦ DR MARY CROSSAN AND BILL FURLONG, CO-AUTHORS, *THE CHARACTER COMPASS*

Our technologies are racing out ahead of us, faster and more prolifically than ever before—AI, quantum computing, cryptocurrencies, genetic manipulations, and so on. There are new and powerful storms brewing—climate change, geopolitical unrest, commodity shortages, supply-chain failures, and many more—and we expect our major corporations and other organisations to help us ride them out and imagine a better way forward. At the same time, social movements demand effective responses: Environmental Social Governance (ESG), #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, and others. And an unforeseen event like the COVID-19 pandemic can arise to present fundamental challenges to society and, as we have witnessed, the habits and structures of the workplace.

So how will our society rise to these challenges?

### Enter leader character

Leader character is the compass that helps leaders steer us to real, positive, and lasting change. Augmenting character with the word 'leader' is more about the 'disposition to lead' than occupying a formal position of leadership. It applies not only to senior leaders, but to every person who is in a position to help bring about transformational change. It is about how any individual can bring their best self to their endeavours.

To be effective, leaders need to draw on the three Cs: competence, commitment, and character. All are prerequisites to wise judgments, well-being, and actions, and they are interrelated in subtle and powerful ways. However, while competence and commitment are key, they are both leveraged—for better or worse!—by character.

### What is character?

Stated most simply, character is a set of virtues, a few of which are personality traits, and values. Character shapes a number of things, including what we notice in the context in which we operate; how we engage the world around us; what we reinforce through our rewards and punishments; who we

M
ore than ever before, our collective fate hinges on the character of those who direct and influence our organisations, that what we call 'Leader Character'.

engage in conversation and how we conduct those conversations; what we value; how we interpret feedback; what we choose to act on; how we deal with conflict, disappointment, and setbacks; the goals we set for ourselves; how we communicate; and so forth.

Character is a critical missing link in explaining failures at the organisational level. Competencies alone are insufficient for an organisation to achieve its goals, because our ability to develop and employ our competencies is directly connected to our strength of character. To achieve excellence, organisations need to elevate the importance of character alongside competence. Poor decisions, misbehaviours, and even misconduct can be interpreted as a failure of judgment (not just ethics)—and poor judgment can be framed, understood, and described as a weakness in a person's character. It requires courage, for instance, to challenge a strategy that is already in place, transcendence to envisage a future different from today, humility to accept and apply constructive criticism, and collaboration to move ideas forward.

Character is often confused with, or submerged within, topics like 'ethics' and 'morals'. Those topics are important, but we believe that character provides a far larger and more useful framework. It comprises the whole life of a whole person.

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### A myth, a misconception, and an objection

■ Character is 'locked in' at birth or in childhood, or at some other early developmental stage, and cannot be changed.

> **Character is often confused with, or submerged within, topics like 'ethics' and 'morals'. Those topics are important, but we believe that character provides a far larger and more useful framework. It comprises the whole life of a whole person.**

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**Dr Mary Crossan** is a Distinguished University Professor; Professor of Strategic Leadership at Ivey Business School, Western University; co-founder, Leader Character Associates Inc; and co-host, Question of Character podcast. Dr Crossan is also co-author, *The Character Compass.*
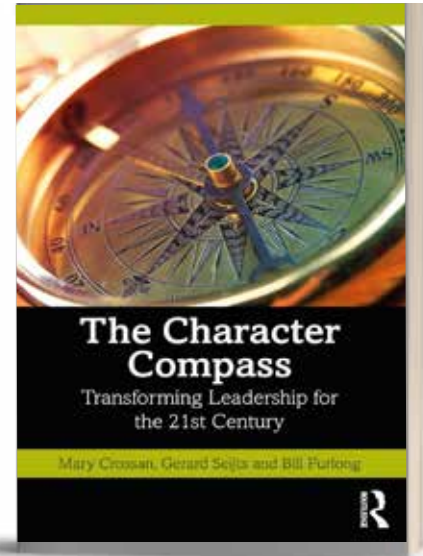
■ Character cannot be taught, and so it should not be a concern of academia or leadership development.
■ Character is a nice-to-have but not really a core concern of hard-nosed business leaders

Research and experience show that all of the above are not true. Most significantly, when character is not present, the result is very often personal and professional failure, leading in turn to massive organisational damage. The scandals at Boeing, Theranos, Volkswagen, and Wells Fargo—to cite only a few recent examples, were not failures of competencies, but character.

### The Eleven Dimensions of Leader Character

Leader character is defined by a set of interconnected behaviours, shown in the illustration below, that satisfy a set of criteria as being 'virtuous'. With a defined set of behaviours, the study of character is not simply about understanding individual differences (personality), the skill or capability they bring

*(Leader Character Framework diagram)*

**Transcendence** — appreciative, inspired, purposive, optimistic, creative, future-oriented

**Courage** — brave, determined, tenacious, resilient, confident

**Drive** — passionate, vigorous, results-oriented, demonstrates initiative, strives for excellence

**Accountability** — takes ownership, accepts consequences, conscientious, responsible

**Collaboration** — cooperative, collegial, open-minded, flexible, interconnected

**Judgment** — situationally aware, cognitively complex, analytical, decisive, critical thinker, intuitive, insightful, pragmatic, adaptable

**Justice** — fair, equitable, proportionate, evenhanded socially responsible

**Humanity** — considerate, empathetic, compassionate, magnanimous, forgiving

**Temperance** — patient, calm, composed, self-controlled, prudent

**Integrity** — authentic, candid, transparent, principled, consistent

**Humility** — self-aware, modest, reflective, curious, continuous learner, respectful, grateful, vulnerable

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Bill Furlong** is an executive in residence at Ivey Business School; co-founder, Leader Character Associates Inc; and founder and co-host, Question of Character podcast. Furlong is a Director of the CAA Group of Companies and an adjudicator with the Capital Markets Tribunal. Bill is also co-author, *The Character Compass.*

to a task (competencies), or the way in which they display their leadership (style). Instead, character is about the foundational elements that influence both judgment and well-being.

All of these dimensions interact with and influence each other. Ten of the dimensions contribute to what we consider the central dimension: judgment. Strength across all the dimensions is likely to produce the wisest and best judgments, no matter what specific context you find yourself in. It is also likely to help generate novel, creative, and effective strategies to choose from.

Keep in mind that in excess or deficiency some dimensions are likely to become problematic, i.e., when out of balance, virtues can become vices. Thus, you need to figure out and stay mindful of your imbalances and take steps to correct them. This may entail dialling

up a counterbalancing dimension, rather than dialing something back that is in excess. There is no limit to the strength of a dimension once it is supported by the other dimensions.

**Embracing Leader Character**

No matter how busy you are, you owe it to yourself to take control over how your character is developing by taking a mindful, intelligent, and intentional approach to your life. As your habits change for the better, you too will change for the better—emotionally and even physically. Your brain will work better, you will feel better, and you will feel better about yourself. It is not so much about finding more time in your day to develop your character, but rather transforming your lived moments to both activate and strengthen your character. **IM**

Dr. Randy Brazie, MD, SEP® and Dr. Geoffrey VanderPal, DBA, CFP®, co-authors, THE STEADFAST LEADER: Control Anxiety, Make Confident Decisions, and Focus Your Team Using the New Science of Leadership, write on understanding the interplay between neuroception and interoception which is crucial for debunking traditional leadership and management myths. Dr. Randy Brazie, MD, SEP®, serves as a medical director for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona and has a private practice. Dr. Geoffrey VanderPal, DBA, CFP®, Project Management Professional, Society of Human Resource Managers Senior Certified Professional, is a professor in the Master of Science in Finance program, Purdue University Global. Dr. VanderPal is also author, Invincible Investing and other peer-reviewed research articles.

**MYTH BUSTER**

# A ground-breaking approach

In the dynamic landscape of Indian business, leadership and management are often shrouded in myths that can hinder organisational growth and employee well-being. A deeper understanding of how Polyvagal Theory intersects with and is influenced by concepts like neuroception and interoception offers innovative perspectives for effective leadership and management.

Polyvagal Theory, developed by Dr Stephen Porges, provides a framework for understanding how our nervous system responds to stress and social interactions. It posits that our physiological state influences our ability to connect, communicate, and feel safe in our environment. This theory is closely linked with neuroception, a term also coined by Porges, which describes how our nervous system subconsciously assesses risk and safety in our environment, influencing our behaviour and interactions.

Interoception, the sense of the internal state of the body, plays a crucial role in how we perceive and respond to our internal cues and emotions. It affects our decision-making, emotional regulation, and empathy, all of which are critical components of effective leadership.

Understanding the interplay between these concepts is crucial for debunking traditional leadership and management myths and adopting a more holistic, human-centric approach in the business world.

## MYTH 1: LEADERS MUST ALWAYS BE STRONG AND UNEMOTIONAL.

**The myth:** A prevalent belief is that effective leaders should always exhibit strength and refrain from showing emotions, equating emotional expression with weakness.

**The reality:** Polyvagal Theory suggests that

human responses involve social engagement systems. Leaders who embrace their vulnerability and emotional expressiveness can foster an authentic and trusting workplace environment. Neuroception allows leaders to be more attuned to their teams' emotional states, promoting a supportive atmosphere.

**Applied example:** In an IT company, the CEO starts sharing his challenges in monthly meetings, fostering a trusting environment and enhancing team cohesion and morale. This vulnerability leads to increased openness and idea-sharing among employees.

## MYTH 2: DECISION-MAKING IS SOLELY A RATIONAL PROCESS.

**The myth:** It's often assumed that good leadership decisions are purely rational, devoid of emotions.

**The reality:** Interoception plays a crucial role in decision-making. Leaders who are in tune with their internal cues can make more balanced decisions that consider both logical analysis and emotional intelligence.

**Applied example:** The CEO of the IT company begins practising mindfulness, leading to more empathetic and well-rounded business strategies. This approach results in decisions that are not only data-driven but also consider the well-being of the team.

## MYTH 3: HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURES ARE THE BEST FOR ORGANISATIONAL SUCCESS.

**The myth:** Traditional management models often emphasize strict hierarchical structures, assuming they ensure efficiency and clarity.

**The reality:** Polyvagal Theory emphasizes the importance of social connection and safety in human interactions. Flat or flexible organizational structures can foster a sense of safety and belonging, leading to increased innovation and employee engagement.

**Applied example:** The IT company adopts a flatter structure, enhancing communication, innovation, and collaboration. Regular cross-functional meetings and open forums are introduced, breaking down silos and fostering a more inclusive work environment.

## MYTH 4: HIGH STRESS YIELDS HIGH PERFORMANCE.

**The myth:** The belief that high stress leads

to high performance is common in many corporate cultures.

**The reality:** Chronic stress can lead to burnout and decreased productivity. Understanding neuroception helps leaders recognise the signs of stress and threat in their teams.

**Applied example:** The company introduces flexible working hours and wellness programs, reducing burnout and enhancing performance and job satisfaction. Employees report feeling more valued and supported, leading to a noticeable increase in productivity and creativity.

### MYTH 5: LEADERS SHOULD HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS.

**The myth:** There's a misconception that effective leaders should always have solutions to every problem.

**The reality:** Leadership involves collaboration and continuous learning. Polyvagal Theory suggests that fostering connections in the workplace can lead to a more collaborative and creative problem-solving environment.

**Applied example:** The CEO initiates a 'collaborative innovation' program, encouraging all employees to contribute ideas, leading to a surge in innovation and engagement. This approach demystifies the notion of the all-knowing leader and promotes a culture of shared knowledge and continuous learning. A safe space to share ideas without judgement or negativity.

The integration of Polyvagal Theory, neuroception, and interoception into leadership and management practices offers a ground-breaking approach to debunking traditional myths. By embracing emotional intelligence, fostering safe and inclusive environments, and recognising the importance of social connections, leaders can drive their organizations towards a more holistic and sustainable future. The Indian business landscape, known for intensive work environments, stands to benefit immensely from these progressive leadership strategies. This approach not only enhances employee well-being but also drives sustainable business success. **IM**

*Motivation can be done right through a right mix of positive and negative reinforcement.*

✦ NIK KINLEY AND SHLOMO BEN-HUR, CO-AUTHORS,
*CHANGING EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR*

# Carrot or stick

Across every society, culture, and business, there is a fundamental behaviourist idea that if you reward certain behaviours you will get more of them, and if you punish certain behaviours, you will get less of them. However, according to many recent headlines, rewards do not work nearly as well as people think when it comes to changing behaviour.

For managers, extrinsic motivators such as money, prizes, praise, and recognition, as well as negative things such as criticism and punishment, are the key tools at our disposal. The question is how, but best, to use them. Here are four basic rules.

## Rule #1: Praise first, money last

When we think of rewards, we tend to think of tangible things like money and prizes. Yet when thinking about which rewards to give, we are better of starting with the intangibles: praise and recognition. They are free to give and can be just as powerful as financial rewards.

Indeed, there is some evidence that they can be more effective than money. And if you are going to use financial rewards, try using non-cash prizes wherever possible, since they can be more effective than cash in many situations. As a rule, money should be a last resort.

## Rule #2: Punishments should be rare, collaborative, and predictable

Punishments are dangerous motivators to use, because they can have all sorts of negative unintended consequences. Handled poorly, they can impact confidence, trust, and intrinsic motivation. As a rule, you should always try a reward first. Sometimes, though, punishments are necessary.

Take an example of a company where administrative paperwork was repeatedly not being completed. The business first tried rewarding those who did it with praise and public recognition, publicly naming and thanking those who had done it. But a large proportion of people still did not complete the forms, so punishment was the last resort.

The first thing the business did was

to involve its staff in deciding what the punishment should be. They set it as a problem that needed solving and then asked people for suggestions: "What punishment can we use that will make a difference?" Then, to make sure the chosen punishment of a fine worked, the business ensured that everyone understood when forms needed to be completed, why the forms were important, what the punishment for non-completion would be, and that there would be no exceptions so the punishment would always be applied.

Finally, to ensure the punishment was seen as fair, the business followed through, and always applied the same punishment for everyone, consistently, whenever the rules were broken. By involving people in selecting the punishment and explaining the reasons for it, the business was effectively trying to improve people's intrinsic motivation for the task. They were appealing to people's sense of autonomy by giving them ownership of the punishment and emphasising that they had a choice and a chance to avoid it. So in order to use punishments effectively and possibly even to boost intrinsic motivation, think rare, collaborative, and predictable

### Rule #3: Align solutions to the situation

This one is less obvious and involves the use of the promotion versus prevention focus we mentioned earlier. Not only can you think of people in terms of whether they are promotion or prevention focused but you can also think about behaviours that way, too. For instance, behaviours such as creativity and sales can be thought of as promotion focused, while behaviours that improve health and safety can be thought of as prevention focused.

To illustrate the importance of this, consider a firm that specializes in the design and manufacture of aircraft. In a continuing effort to improve safety, the management

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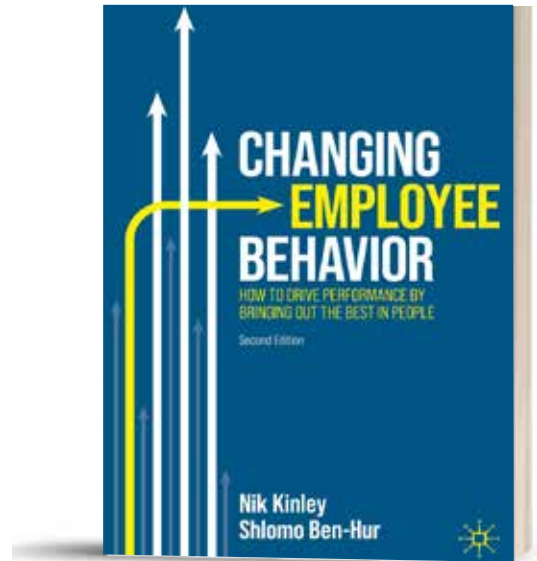
team decided to offer a bonus to everybody if a particular safety target was reached. To their surprise, however, the bonus offer did not seem to make much difference to safety rates. The reason for this, they realized, was that whereas preventing accidents is a prevention-focused task, bonuses are a promotion-based motivator. What they needed instead was a motivator that would put people into a prevention-focused mindset. So they repositioned the bonus as something to be lost if safety standards were not met, rather than as something to be gained if standards were met. And sure enough, safety rates improved.

It is important, then, to consider not only whether the individual trying to change their behaviour is promotion or prevention focused, but also the nature of the behaviour they are trying to change.

### Rule #4: Be fair and consistent

A number of years ago, one of your authors worked as a psychotherapist in prisons. To his surprise, he discovered that the prison officers who were disliked the most were not the harsh or even brutal ones, but the inconsistent

ones—the ones who were not seen as treating people fairly. And in the same vein, no one likes an unfair reward or punishment. So one final basic rule is to make sure that whatever extrinsic reward you offer is fair. Now obviously what people see as fair varies, but we can do a few things to help ensure that what we do is considered as equitable as possible:

- Give evidence: Explain what you are doing, showing why a reward or punishment is warranted. Make sure people understand why you are doing it.
- Be consistent: Whether it is rewards or punishments, make sure you provide them consistently, treating all people the same.
- Make sure the behaviour is controllable: If you are going to reward or punish a behaviour, ensure that it is something that the individual feels able to control.

### Beyond motivation

It is true that if we wind the clock back ten

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**Nik Kinley** is a Director, YSC Consulting. Nik is co-author, *Changing Employee Behavior*.

years, the focus tended to be predominantly on extrinsic motivators, at the expense of promoting people's intrinsic motivation. So we have much to thank people like Dan Pink and Dan Ariely for, with their passionate support for the power of intrinsic motivators. But we must not let the pendulum swing too far.

### Extrinsic motivators can help to motivate people in the short term

Is intrinsic motivation more powerful than the use of extrinsic factors? Over the long run, yes it probably is, and as a source of motivation it is almost always longer lasting. But extrinsic motivators can help to motivate people in the short term—something that is particularly important when people are trying to change behaviour. Sometimes they just need help to get started and during the early days of trying out a new behaviour, until it becomes a habit or a standard part of their routine. So the longevity of the motivation is not always so important.

Moreover, whatever your thoughts about extrinsic motivators, whether you are a committed sceptic or an ardent fan that uses them wherever possible, the fact is that they are a tool that managers have at their disposal. To ignore them seems unwise. Behaviour change is a tough business and frankly we need every tool we can get our hands on.

Motivation is a critical part of the context for change, and, if you get it wrong, it can cause any behaviour change initiative to fail. The old adage is true: one way or another—through intrinsic interests or extrinsic rewards—people have to want to change.

Yet motivation is only the first piece of the puzzle. No matter how powerful motivators are, they can only help so much, and this is why research shows that they work best as part of a broader package designed to support behaviour change. **IM**

✦ DOMINIC ASHLEY-TIMMS AND LAURA ASHLEY-TIMMS,
CO-AUTHORS, *THE ANSWER IS A QUESTION*

**ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**

# Rehumanising management

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that people's values have changed when it comes to the world of work. With the global realisation and attitude that 'life is short', people are putting themselves first more than they were before. How an employee's values are met within their workplace can be make or break for an organisation. People are now voting with their feet, with staff more likely to jump ship and find new roles that align better with what matters most to them, rather than stick with the traditional stability of an unsatisfying and unrewarding job.

It is no surprise that there is a higher expectation for employee value and well being. These days, when you come to work for an organisation, you expect that your contribution is going to get recognised. So, when that recognition is not present and they are not valued, staff is not prepared to put up with it. Employees are also increasingly frustrated with a lack of feedback, with many managers ill-equipped at giving feedback and handling challenging conversations. Workplace stress levels are still scarily high, with increased workloads in short time frames leading many to want to work from home or absent themselves from work altogether. Compound this with a lack of clarity as to where their careers are heading and a lack of confidence in managers to have open career conversations and we have perhaps a better insight as to why companies are struggling to retain their employees.

Indeed, Gallup's State of the Global Workplace 2022 report* found that employee engagement levels everywhere are shockingly low—79 per cent of workers disengaged globally, and the percentage of engaged employees in South Asia at just 27 per cent. They found strong links between engagement and performance outcomes such as productivity, job satisfaction, profitability and retention. Disturbingly, South Asia also had the highest regional percentage of employees who do not feel respected at work (81 per cent), having a huge knock-on effect on workforce happiness, engagement and innovation. With low engagement levels estimated to have a $7.8 trillion cost on the global economy, managers and leaders must take urgent action now to respond to the human needs of their workforce if they are to keep them engaged and operating at their

highest level of potential.

The time to rehumanise management is now. But managers themselves are struggling to keep pace with the constantly changing world of work. Through successive rounds of delayering, continual reorganisations, budget constraints and the drive to improve margins, managers have found that the pressures upon them have continued to increase, often doing the work of two or more people which is taking them further and further away from being able to spend quality time with team members. And it was the pandemic that threw this chronic failure of management into stark relief. With the added challenges of adapting to hybrid-working models, a higher demand from staff for better work-life balance, managers are feeling overwhelmed, overworked and exhausted.

The workplace is seeing a rising number of 'accidental managers'—employees promoted to a managerial position due to their technical strengths, but who lack the vital skills needed to deal with the 'people' side of leadership in order to boost productivity and performance. Teaching managers how to be a coach, once seen as a panacea for helping managers perform differently in their roles, has singularly failed to transform organisations. No surprise perhaps when specialist performance consultancy Notion established that coaching only ever reaches less than 5 per cent of an organisation and typically it is much less than 1 per cent. The reason for this they discovered is that the coaching models being taught are Executive Coaching models like GROW, reinforcing the idea that coaching should follow a structured, sit-down process. These 'Manager as Coach-type' training courses all teach time-starved managers how to conduct coaching sessions, rather than learning how to use coaching during daily interactions with team members.

So, what can organisations do differently to take the benefits of coaching and make them

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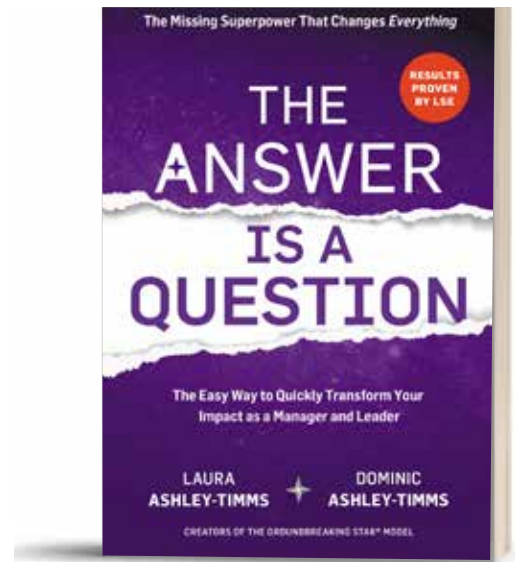
relevant and applicable for a manager? According to Notion, the focus needs to shift towards the behavioural aspects related to coaching that managers can learn to adopt to help them utilise more of an enquiry-led approach. This Operational Coaching™ style of management that Notion has defined ditches the command-and-control style, helping managers to stop firefighting and instead learn how to quickly 'change state' to have 'in the moment' coaching conversations every day with their employees. And there is a simple but effective method all managers can follow to achieve this – the STAR® model:

■ STOP – when an employee comes to you with a problem, as their manager you must learn to stop and take a step back to recognise your habitual responses, in order to change your state when responding to different situations. This places the control over the situation back in your hands.
■ THINK – once you have been able to STOP, this gives managers the ability to THINK about whether the situation an employee has

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presented to them is a coachable moment.

- ASK – being able to master the art of asking powerful, thought-provoking questions and actively listening to your employees allows you to ditch the 'fix and solve' response, and instead presents the other person with a learning opportunity to become independent, solution-driven problem solvers.

- RESULT – as a manager, it is your responsibility to achieve a positive result from such an interaction. For continuous performance development, you must approach the conversation openly and empathetically, allowing the employee to imagine themselves taking the action in order to agree a next step that you can then follow up on.

The STAR® coaching model focuses on changing your behaviour as a manager, instead of trying to change the behaviour of the other person. It helps managers cultivate new coaching-style behaviours in the moment, which can:

- Help get the most from their teams,
- Boost employee engagement levels,
- Increase retention,
- Develop high performing workplaces,
- Build personal and organisational resilience,
- Drive commercial performance,
- Increase solution focused outcomes,
- Improve creativity.

Rehumanising management is giving people those human skills to develop their management capability in order to develop the people that directly report to them. This will enable managers to deliver a transformative coaching culture throughout the entire organisation, connecting with employees on a human level where they feel valued, listened to and can develop the confidence to fix problems independently providing them with their own skills for a successful future and giving managers some of their time back. **IM**
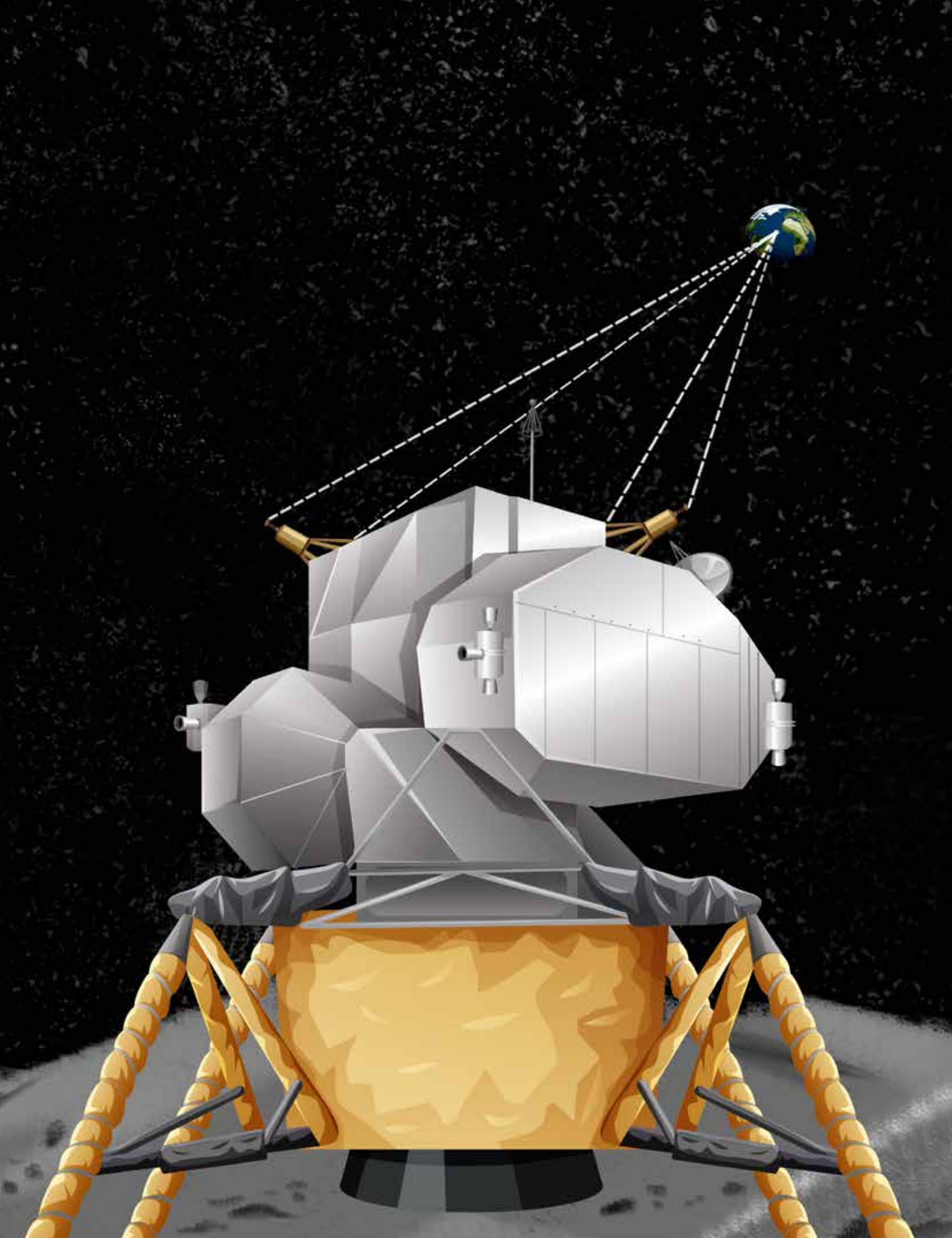
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*Chandrayaan-3 is not just a scientific success for India; the mission programme also has lessons for management professionals.*

✦ RAVISHANKAR J, SPACE APPLICATIONS CENTRE (ISRO), AHMEDABAD

# From 'Earth' to 'Moon'

Millions of people across the globe witnessed the successful soft landing of the Vikram Lander of Chandrayaan-3 on August 23, 2023; the event also became the most watched YouTube live ever. The perfect touchdown positioned India as the first nation to reach the South Pole of Moon. This scientific and technological achievement of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has elevated self-esteem and scientific temperament of millions of Indians cutting across the boundaries.

ISRO had its humble beginning with the launch of an assembled Nike Apache sounding rocket way back in 1963 after the establishment of Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR) in 1962. Since then, ISRO has been making relentless efforts to master the closely guarded space technology, resulting in many successes for the country in the domain of space science and technology. Chandrayaan-3's soft landing is a technological feat that cannot be attributed to just a single individual or a small team. The TV newsflashes of Chandrayaan-3 soft landing showing jubilant scientists and engineers indicates the commitment and involvement of large team spread across ISRO centres. I present the following management lessons based on my reflections as a practising HR person.

■ **Shielding team during failure**

The great leaders do not expose the team at the time of failures as it demoralise and demotivates them. The same thing happened during the failure of the soft landing of Chandrayaan-2 mission. The media filled with the iconic picture of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi consoling the ISRO chief, Dr K Sivan. The team was not exposed to the public at that time. However, the team was introduced to the media at the time of success of Chandrayaan-3 mission. This episode was a perfect example of team management and strong leadership. Both the political and organisation's technology leaders demonstrated impeccable leadership quality at the time of crisis. It resonates with Dr Abdul Kalam's narration in his book about his personal experience

with Prof Satish Dhawan during the failure of ISRO's first satellite launch vehicle mission (viz., SLV-3) and its success in the subsequent year.

■ **Acknowledging contributions of significant others**

Media briefing is customary at the end of every space flight mission. It is generally seen that the chairperson will brief the media followed by addresses of few project executives and centre directors. In the same tradition, the chairperson of ISRO faced the media after the successful soft landing of Chandrayaan-3 lander craft. After few initial statements, he introduced project executives with excitement and invited them one by one to address the media present there. In the end, he continued his vote of thanks by acknowledging contributions of many others including superannuated senior officials of ISRO. It reflects the family-orientation of ISRO's cultural fabric and the secret of success in a public-funded R&D organisation.

■ **Achieving the success by embedding learning from failures**

Supporting honest/novel failure breeds success and tolerance for failures promotes innovations. The pioneering leaders of ISRO made a strong foundation of its so-called ISRO culture. Failures have been regarded as a learning platform at ISRO. Failures have been accepted openly, but are also subjected to threadbare analysis and reviews to avoid repetition. The learning from failures of SLV-3 and ASLV propelled the success of subsequent PSLV mission. In tradition of this great ISRO culture, Chandrayaan-2 team also carried out minor modifications in the system and continued with its untiring efforts through rigorous failure analysis. The team thus ensured the success by conducting thorough testing of all its constituent elements and incorporating lessons learnt from the Chandrayaan-2 lander failure. This is another important lesson in managing R&D team and project besides building a learning ecosystem.

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### ■ Managing constraints through innovation

The historical soft landing touchdown happened on August 23, 2023 after the successful launch of Chandrayaan-3 satellite on July 14, 2023. ISRO had taken more than 40 days to reach Moon. None of the ISRO launch vehicles have the capability to reach moon directly in lesser time like its counterparts in USA, China, or Russia. This obvious constraint was managed by adopting an innovative approach through a series of orbit raising manoeuvers. The same technique was exercised during Mars orbiter mission as well. ISRO was under ban on the access of advanced space technologies from the developed countries and still, it managed in developing indigenous technology through due diligence and great innovation.

### ■ Promoting commitment through nationalism

It was moment of great anxiety for the

team members after the experience of Chandrayaan-2 mission. Associate Project Director of Chandrayaan-3 mission made the above statement in her media address. Thus, it reflects the strong commitment of the team members associated with the mission. Public-funded organisations suffer from multiplicity of high goals, lesser commitment and procedural discretion. However, ISRO has surpassed all such limitations by embedding national interests in its programmes.

### Conclusion

R&D professionals are generally different from others. They are highly qualified and prefer autonomy, freedom, and respect. Millennials have different orientations and expectations. Probably, the above-narrated reflections might be useful to practising managers in managing big R&D projects and talented team members. **IM**

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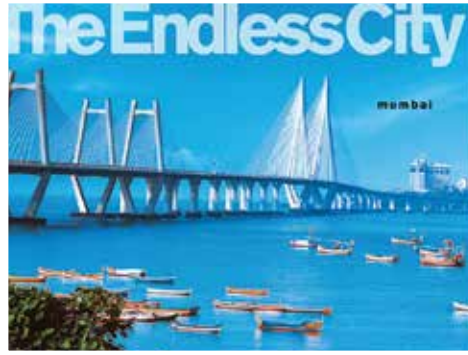
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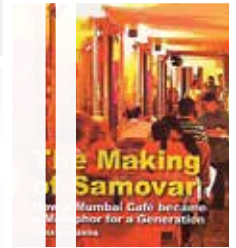
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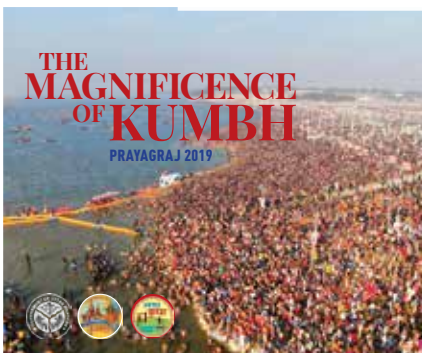
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