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**HARMONY OF BODY AND MIND**

Audrey Tang



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# Champions of change

## Inspiring, Creating and Innovating

With a vision to be a leader in Management Development AIMA facilitates individuals and organisations to realise their potential. And in its endeavour to shape the management destiny of the new age India, AIMA has constituted **YOUNG LEADERS COUNCIL** for young leaders. A non-lobbying platform to mentor and nurture young leaders for the next wave transformation.



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# A happy workplace is a winning workplace

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

**While buying health insurance and tying up with hospitals and clinics for checkups and treatment is quite straight forward, the care for mental wellbeing is a tricky part. It can be intrusive and its outcome may go either way.**

**T**he conventional wisdom has been that people must leave their personalities and personal issues outside the office door. Only the strong and the stoic should enter and they should focus solely on the given tasks and expected results irrespective of how they feel in their body or soul.

This industrial approach to human resource is no longer valid in modern workplaces. Employers and managers have come to acknowledge that output is not merely about getting the most out of the workforce but the best; and to get the best from their people, they must contribute to their physical and mental health, which are critical for people to focus and invest in the job.

Covid pandemic was a major catalyst in making employers and managers aware of the health and

wellbeing component of their human resource, and since then there has been a greater emphasis on formalizing care of the employees' physical and mental shape.

Money can buy employees' skills and time but it cannot buy their engagement

and commitment. If the employees do not feel cared about by their organization and superiors, they reciprocate in kind. They tend to do the minimum necessary to keep their job and do not care about the fate of the organization or its mission.

When employees feel cared for, they do all they can to help - put in more thought and effort than they are paid for and contribute to innovation for an edge over the competition. The cared for employees promote the brand without needing to and they persuade more talented people to join the organization. Looking after the wellbeing of the workforce may have its costs but it is a net gain generator.

While buying health insurance and tying up with hospitals and clinics for checkups and treatment is quite straight forward, the care for mental wellbeing is a tricky part. It can be intrusive and its outcome may go either way. Stress can come from work or target overload, relationship with colleagues and superiors, or from inability to concentrate on work due to issues in personal lives.

Workplace stress has been known to be a big factor in employee burnout, resulting in stress in their private lives also. Suffering employees tend to become toxic and toxicity tends to spread in the workplace. Therefore, it is important for the leaders to not just celebrate extraordinary performances but also look out

**The wellbeing of the workforce also requires linking the work to a larger phenomenon and a bigger purpose. Business leaders need to learn from politicians in working people's emotions by providing them visions and ideologies that transcend immediate reality.**

for signals of excessive stress and address it in time.

It is critical for the leaders to not merely be interested in the work of the employees but also in their lives, albeit limited to the relevance to their physical and mental wellbeing at the workplace. It is important for the leaders to ask about employees' wellbeing and not just about their work and provide help if they require.

Allowing some flexibility of where to work from, giving more control over work and time, and offering periodic long breaks for personal pursuits tend to boost employee wellbeing

and motivate them to do the utmost for the organization.

Making work and schedule reasonably predictable while driving for the best results helps both their wellbeing and their achievement. Daily uncertainty in their work and schedule is a major source of anxiety and resentment for the workforce, especially when it is avoidable through more disciplined management. It helps to have the organization adequately staffed and to have fallbacks so that a state of permanent

emergency is avoided.

The wellbeing of the workforce also requires linking the work to a larger phenomenon and a bigger purpose. Business leaders need to learn from politicians in working people's emotions by providing them visions and ideologies that transcend immediate reality. Giving the workforce a sense of contributing to a larger cause can help them overcome the fatigue and frustrations of the routine. People have a need to believe that they are the good guys and they need to belong to a winning team. The leaders need to cater to that need.

Given that the people spend larger parts of their days and lives on work or thinking about work, it is vital that their jobs and workplaces bring a good deal of satisfaction to them. **IM**

*The opinion expressed is personal.*

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

**M**cKinsey Health's Institute 2023 survey, conducted in 30 countries around the world, states that Indian respondents reported the highest rates of burnout symptoms at 59 per cent and the highest level of workplace exhaustion at 62 per cent. These are indicators of a toxic workplace culture, where employee well-being is, perhaps, given the least importance.

Workers' well-being is a determining factor in the effectiveness of an organisation. Every employee dreams of a workplace environment that is stress free and every boss dreams of a workplace where productivity is at an optimum. These two things, though they look different, are actually inter-related. And utopic as they may sound, they are quite achievable.

Today, we need leaders who have the mindset to listen to employee problems, empathise with them, and genuinely work towards finding workable solutions. Doing so will not just work as a short-term 'cure' but also establish a long-term, holistic, positive culture in the workplace, where employee well-being is prioritised.

As Audrey Tang, author, *The Leader's Guide to Wellbeing* writes in the cover story of this issue, "Well-being is not only about making the individual more resilient, but changing the culture which caused the need for that level of resilience in the first place."

Do write in with your views to  
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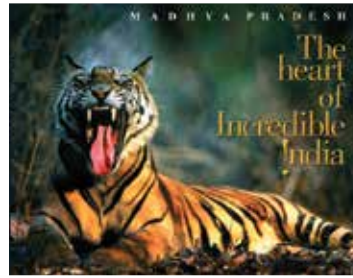
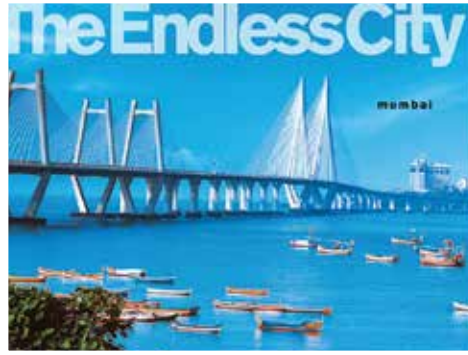
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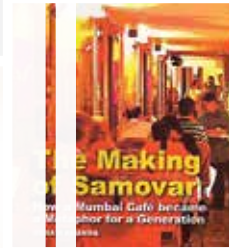
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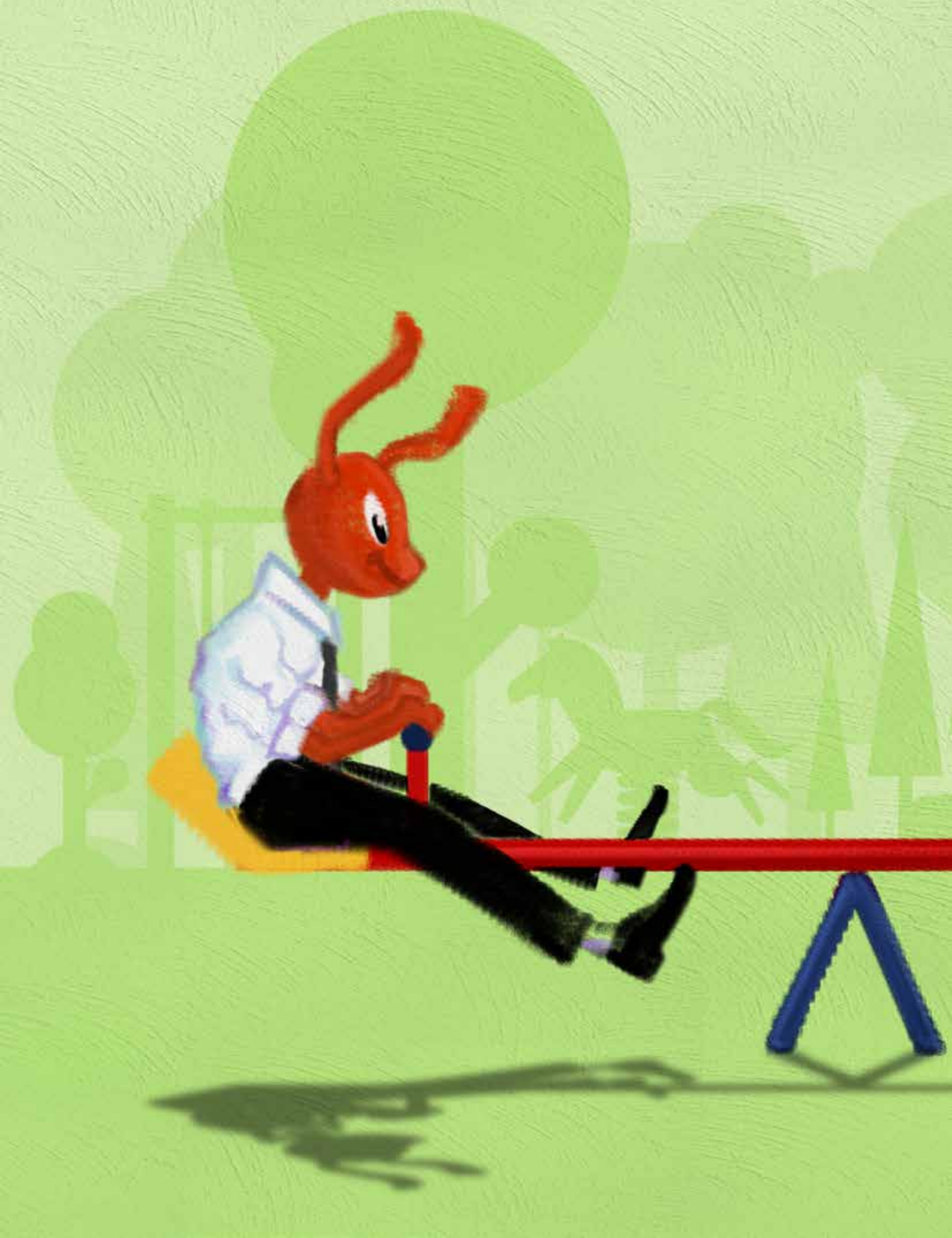
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# STRIKING A BALANCE





# Harmony of body and mind

*Well-being at work should include eradicating the cause of the mental and emotional ill health.*

---

◆ AUDREY TANG, AUTHOR, *THE LEADER'S GUIDE TO WELLBEING*

Indeed, a sense of well-being—whatever that means to us—results in a number of benefits with research showing greater efficiency, more effective interpersonal interactions and taking of opportunities, greater motivation, and even greater cognitive flexibility (resulting in better problem solving and creativity).

However, a virtuous cycle can easily become a vicious one. Microsoft's Work Trend Index<sup>1</sup> found that globally, 40 per cent of people were looking to leave their employer in 2021, and at the end of 2023 in the UK sick leave was at an all-time high.

With more emphasis being placed on well-being than ever before, including a focus not just on mental and emotional resilience, but also opportunities for growth and finding greater meaning and purpose within the workplace itself, organisations have indeed increased their commitment in this area. But while a 2023 report<sup>2</sup> published by *Management Today* stated, “The Corporate Wellness Industry...market was valued at \$57.3 billion in 2021 and is expected to reach \$109.4 billion by 2030 [and] nearly two thirds of US employers say staff well-being is one of their top priorities.” In practice, teams sometimes remain uninterested in taking up what's on offer... so what is going wrong?

### **The problem of personal and individual incentives**

There is a problem which all business psychologists face when it comes to well-being interventions- when there are mental health concerns, it is the individual and personal incentives that are stepped up; ‘build your resilience’ workshops, lunchtime yoga, stress busting apps, and so on.

But this is not enough.

Let us take a health and safety perspective to physical health—if someone falls down a hole, the organisational (Health & Safety) response is to fix the hole—not teach people to walk around holes better or learn to climb out faster. And yet, ‘that’ is the equivalent of telling a burnt-out employee to ‘look after themselves better’!

Scholes (2023) points out that an organisationally driven ‘Psychosocial Safety Climate’—akin to the

**I**n a review of the research into well-being at work, one of the most common definitions was that of the word ‘health’, provided by the Constitution of the World Health Organisation. It read, “Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

practical Health and Safety at work approach (of which personal and individual initiatives can fall within) is likely to better promote and sustain well-being. This means taking a much more systemic approach to mental and emotional health

Well-being at work is not just helping people build their resilience, or mental and emotional fitness. It helps, but that is only part of the story. It is as important to remove the cause of the mental and emotional ill health in the first instance.

As such, organisations need to reflect on their well-being strategy (and employee engagement with it), their overall design and demands, the tools or technology available to do all aspects of the job well—

and ask themselves is this conducive to good health?

### Applying systemic or leadership interventions

Well-being is not only about making the individual more resilient, but changing the culture which caused the need for that level of resilience in the first place.

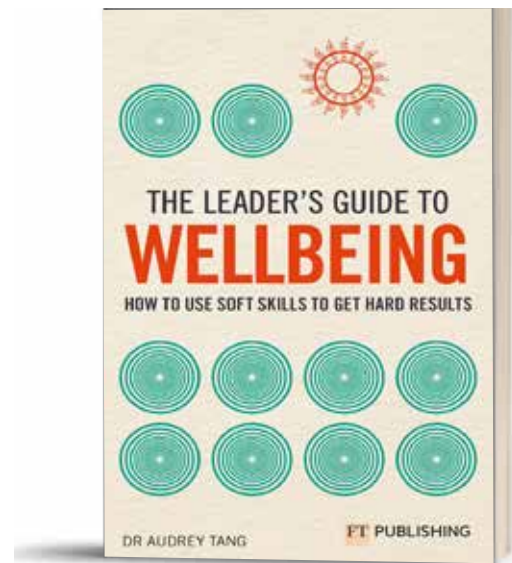
And sometimes the solution is practical rather than psychological.

Herzberg et al (1959) used the term hygiene with the same meaning as that of ‘medical hygiene’—factors within a job that are needed to remove health hazards; they included:

- Fair salary;
- Status, supervision, and security;
- Healthy relationships with colleagues and conditions of the working environment.

For Herzberg, without fair pay, a healthy pace of work, and positive relationships in an environment conducive to work, your teams are likely to become unwell. These hygiene

**Well-being is not only about making the individual more resilient, but changing the culture which caused the need for that level of resilience in the first place.**



factors are essential to avoid ill-being or job dissatisfaction.

However, Herzberg also added that there were a number of motivating factors which contributed to job satisfaction. They included:

- Achievement and recognition;
- Opportunity for advancement and growth;
- Responsibility and meaning or enjoyment of the work itself.

Herzberg maintained that job satisfaction (motivation) and job dissatisfaction (hygiene) were not opposites—rather the opposite of job satisfaction was no job satisfaction and the opposite of job dissatisfaction was no job dissatisfaction.

The two are not mutually exclusive—they need to exist together.

### Remember that ‘too little’ can be just as stressful as ‘too much’...the emergence of ‘Rust Out’

‘Rust Out’ is a term applied to the boredom experienced by employees by Paula Coles (2019) when they do “work which is uninspiring and fails to stretch the person, so

that they become disinterested, apathetic and alienated.”

While burnout is active, for e.g., trying to do more than is possible until there is no energy left, a rusty object does not necessarily choose to rust...it is left to rust by careless owners. When it comes to rust out, the role of the leader and the organisation is clear.

### Support and stretch your teams

Coaching training has long emphasised the importance of taking both a supportive (nurturing) and stretch based (motivational) approach. Sometimes one is in need of comfort and at other times, one flourishes when pushed and the same principle can be applied to the workplace. While it is important to ensure the psychological and psychosocial safety protocols are in place to prevent the causes of burnout, being able to inspire a team is as important for their growth, and the sustainability of the organisation.

When it comes to supporting a team through burnout, you may identify the changes that need to be made (systemically and individually) and how best to do it while maintaining performance and productivity. This may mean improvement of the tools available, the training, the pay and/or reduction of the pressures.

Inspiring and stretching are two different things, so consider the following:

- **Identify purpose rather than passion**

Benjamin Todd said, “Follow your passion’ is no help...many successful people are passionate, but often their passion developed alongside their success, rather than coming first.”

Ask your teams if their own personal journey is still in alignment with that of the organisation which might give you—and them—a helpful starting point to make changes. Consider a

secondment; or training; or even explore opportunities which they may not have considered when they first joined.

- **Develop your team’s strengths over their skills**

Both strengths and skills can be learned, developed and improved, but strengths make us feel great when we engage in them, skills less so. For example, if someone shows skill in organising this may be recognised resulting in continuous promotion into events organiser, except if that is not a strength, despite being good at it, the role would eventually exhaust them. If you are unaware of the difference, it is very easy to get promoted in a role which is not an authentic fit, which ultimately leads to unhappiness.

Ask your team to consider all the things you are good at and get them to divide them into two columns—things they actually really enjoy and find energising, and things they can do but find exhausting. Then work with them in finding ways to better utilise their strengths.

- **A final reminder-do not confuse well-being perks with well-being practice**

Sometimes it is not a case of following the wellness trends, but asking teams what they really need. Along with your appraisal time ask teams to identify their optimal conditions to thrive, and what supports them best when they are struggling. Use that information to develop a well-being strategy that is most conducive to your organisation. **IM**



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Audrey Tang** is a chartered psychologist and mental health broadcaster. Audrey is also author, *The Leader’s Guide to Wellbeing*.

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- 1 <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/research/uploads/prod/2022/04/Microsoft-New-Future-of-Work-Report-2022.pdf>
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# Tech for the world

**N**ew tech applications emerging in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) make it possible to leverage sustainable impact at scale, and at the same time, seize exciting market opportunities. Yet businesses have only tapped into a fraction of sustainable technology's potential.

In order for businesses to perpetuate worldwide progress while gaining a competitive advantage, they must adopt a purpose-driven approach to the way technologies are deployed, for the good of people and the planet. They must leverage 'tech for good'.

## **Utilising tech for good to deliver the SDGs**

Innovative companies in India are utilising tech for good to help deliver the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—17 Goals, agreed upon by 193 countries in 2015, consisting of interlinked sustainability objectives designed as a blueprint for achieving a sustainable world by 2030.

Three of the most exciting areas are

Advanced MaterialsTech, Extended Reality Tech (XR), and SpaceTech. Let us explore how Indian companies are developing this tech while also benefiting from huge market gains.

## **1. Advanced materials tech**

Advanced materials are a new class of materials with enhanced properties that are continuously being developed. They are designed for superior performance. The drive towards sustainable business practices, large-scale manufacturing, and superior functionality is supported by advanced materials that prove fundamental to the 4IR economy.

Innovative advanced material technologies are also expected to positively impact economic growth. The advanced materials market is forecast to reach \$2.1 trillion by 2025, recording a 10 per cent CAGR globally from 2019 to 2025. Asia Pacific is expected to account for a majority of the advanced materials industry market share at 58 per cent by 2024.

## **CASE STUDY: Mynusco**

Mynusco, meaning "subtract the harm caused on our ecology" formerly known as Spectalite,

**Economic and policy incentives as well as interventions can encourage individuals and businesses in disadvantaged locations to engage with the opportunities brought by XR.**

is a Bengaluru-based biomaterials company, established with the vision of assisting companies and consumers reduce their carbon footprint (SDG 13). The Indian bio compound startup assists the automotive, logistics, packaging, hospitality, and consumer goods industries with their sustainability objectives. Mynusco produces biodegradable and recyclable compounds based on agricultural waste and renewable resources.

The startup's products contribute to conserving natural deposits and forests, while also ensuring scalability and adaptability for existing manufacturing processes (SDG 15). Mahadev Chikkanna, founder and CEO, Mynusco says, "Biocomposites made from crop waste, for example, eliminate a harmful industrial age agricultural practice of stubble burning, yielding a material that matches plastic in durability and versatility, while at the same time being climate-friendly and eco-friendly. It benefits farmers, industry, and the community (SDGs 2,11)."

## **2. Extended reality tech (XR)**

Computer-generated Extended Realities (XRs) are technological innovations that are poised to develop into the next computing platform. XRs fall into three categories: augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and mixed reality (MR). Real and virtual worlds interact in the MR experience, which combines elements of both AR and VR.

The XR market was valued at \$42.86 billion in 2021 and is expected to reach \$465.26 billion in 2027, at a CAGR of 46.2 per cent during 2022 to 2027. Ambitious businesses eager to invest here can look forward to an improved design better suited for wearability and use in a work environment. The convergence of the real world and simulated content has allowed MR environments to



emerge easily. The global MR market size is projected to reach \$4.5 billion by 2026, from just \$196 million in 2019.

Entrepreneurs and innovators in isolated or marginalised communities need access to XR technologies. Economic and policy incentives as well as interventions can encourage individuals and businesses in disadvantaged locations to engage with the opportunities brought by XR.

### **CASE STUDY: Jio Tesseract**

Jio Tesseract is India's largest MR company. The tech leader is working towards enhancing and developing products that disrupt the global MR market. Its Developer Program allows creators to build for the XR hardware and reach India's most extensive user base, including the 5G network launched by Jio (SDGs 9,10,17). With their built-in MR cloud for data computing that comes with the JioGlass Appstore, the company offers customers a comprehensive package. Businesses can publish and monetise their content on India's biggest MR marketplace through this Appstore. Jio's platform offers developers the



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opportunity to make tech companies' content accessible to India's largest user base, which includes 20 million households (SDG 11). Engaging approximately 16 million enterprises, Jio supports businesses by helping them improve productivity through immersive learning and remote collaboration (SDGs 4, 8).

In India, the XR spending is expected to triple in size due to market penetration, from \$2 billion in 2020 to surpassing an estimated \$6.5 billion into 2023.

### 3.SpaceTech

Space technology is the application of engineering principles in the design, development, manufacturing, and operation of devices and systems for space travel and exploration. Space tech is currently used to explore other planets, study the universe, and provide communication and navigation services to support human activities.

As the new space economy develops, it increasingly overlaps with sustainability in areas such as Earth observation, energy, and communications. These developing technologies from both public and private companies may soon become a new avenue for investors

interested in pursuing both sustainability and investor returns. Space tech applications, such as satellite technology and space exploration, offer exciting potentials and new opportunities to assess and address climate change and sustainability on a global scale.

In 2021, the global space market was valued at \$388.5 billion and is expected to reach \$540.75 billion by 2026. The sector expanded by an impressive 70 per cent between 2010 and 2020. The space economy is expected to grow at a CAGR of 6.84 per cent between 2022 and 2026.

#### CASE STUDY: Pixxel

Pixxel is a space data company based in Bengaluru, India, building a constellation of hyperspectral Earth imaging satellites and the analytical tools to mine insights from that data (SDG 9). The constellation is designed to provide global coverage every 24 hours. It detects, monitors, and predicts global phenomena. Hyperspectral imaging (HSI) is a technique that analyses a wide spectrum of light instead of just assigning primary colours (red, green, blue) to each pixel. The collected spectra are used to form an image in a way that each image pixel includes

## TECHNOLOGY

**With the wisdom to learn from the past, we can create a future we all want. The next industrial revolution simply must be a global movement toward sustainable progress.**

a complete spectrum. Pixxel's hyperspectral imaging satellites are uniquely designed to beam down 50 times more data than existing multi-spectral satellites. Through this technology, the satellites enable the detection and monitoring of ground-level phenomena that had previously remained unseen.

The company's impactful solutions include:

- **Agriculture:** The tech covers large areas daily with up-to-date data across the entire season to monitor crop health, detect variations, and improve yields (SDGs 1,3).
- **Environment:** Pixxel's HSI maps and monitors forest cover and deforestation (SDG 15). Regarding the environment, the satellites measure climate risks such as flooding and wildfires (SDG 13). By tracking natural capital utilisation, Pixxel assesses water resources and gives insights based on data for sustainability management (SDG 6).
- **Energy:** This unique technology is simple,

affordable, and precise for energy surveying and extracting (SDG 7). Pixxel's energy solutions monitor the state of vegetation stress near oil and gas pipelines, as well as quantify pollution stress levels due to pipeline leakages. In 2022, Pixxel raised \$25 million to launch this constellation of satellites to monitor a wider view of the electromagnetic spectrum that can reveal all kinds of details not visible to ordinary cameras. "The quality of our data is the best—and a bonus is we're doing it in a much more inexpensive way," said Awais Ahmed, founder and CEO, Pixxel.

We have learned a lot since the former industrial revolutions. With the wisdom to learn from the past, we can create a future we all want. The next industrial revolution simply must be a global movement toward sustainable progress. Businesses hold the key and responsibility to repurpose technology to create a better future for all. And the hope of this bright and prosperous future will steer us along the right path and drive us to take positive action. **IM**



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Marga Hoek** is a three-time CEO, Chair, and international Board Member. Marga is also author, *Tech for Good: Solving the World's Greatest Challenges*; *New Economy Business*; and *The Trillion Dollar Shift*.



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◆ KRISHAN KALRA, NATIONAL ABILYMPIC ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

# The power of sports

A lot has been happening on the economic and technological front in India, along with our climb up the political and diplomatic ladder, as we make subtle progress in almost all walks of life. In this article, I plan to focus on the ‘softer aspects’ like sports—for the able-bodied as well as persons with disabilities. Sports reflect on a holistic growth of Indian society which, to my mind, is important for any nation that has the ambition to become a super-power or at least reach the upper middle class one level by around 2050. Sports excite nationalism and, unlike politics, everyone respects rules on the field. No matter how nationalist the home crowds may be, if their team loses, it loses in the open and if it wins that too is in the open. There is no cold war in sports and all games are transparent from start to finish. If you do not agree with the rules, you are not allowed to play. The historic example of the WW2-time Olympics, when Hitler offered the great Indian hockey

player Dhyani Chand to switch to the German team and he politely refused, even the Fuhrer respected this decision. Violence on the sports arena is simply not allowed. Sportsmanship is above all and is an acid test of how a society and the country are evolving. India is witnessing an era of transformation in sports and that should rub off to everything else.

Let me start with our most popular sport—cricket. Notwithstanding the fact that we lost the final of the 2024 Men’s World Cup to Australia that broke a millions of hearts, watching the league matches every day, with India’s unprecedented record of winning all matches and the gruelling semi-final with New Zealand, filled every citizen’s heart with pride. Hundreds of millions were glued to the TV screen hoping and praying for a great game and yet another win for the ‘men in blue’. Virat or Rohit figuring in the chart of top run-getters or Shami’s name on the top of the world’s best wicket-takers is always a matter of national pride. These things do not happen by luck; such performances need consistent attention to work ethics, hard work,

**After Australia's win against India in the World Cup, Prime Minister Modi congratulated the winning team in the presence of the Australian Prime Minister. This shows great courtesy and sportsmanship.**

superb fitness, sustained practice, strength of character, regular introspection, and honest dissection of one's game.... in short values of life. Comparisons inevitably go to the 1983 Cricket World Cup, when Kapil Dev led Team India to victory. Kapil Dev's performance

wasn't mere luck—it was the man's resolve, determination, superb fitness, and strength of character that brought great honor to the country. World Cup or IPL or any other cricket series is not just hoopla and big money; it means much more. It is a test of the discipline and rigorous training of the players, unquestionable umpiring, diligent work of those who prepare pitches and planning/execution capabilities of the administrators. It involves many life lessons that reflect on character building of a team, society, and in a way, an entire nation! As a recent

advertorial by a sports shoes manufacturer mentioned about the, power of sports and wellbeing is not just for the body but also for the mind.

After Australia's win against India in the World Cup, Prime Minister Modi congratulated the winning team in the presence of the Australian Prime Minister. This shows great courtesy and sportsmanship.



We did not cancel any of the elaborate music and dance performances, award presentations to previous World Cup-winning captains and other razzmatazz; our players were sad but they did not sulk.

And, what happened in Hangzhou (China) during the 2023 Asian Games. Finally, India could claim that it's athletes were measuring up to world standards. Our medals tally of 70 at the last edition of the games in Jakarta was bested this time with a whopping 107—28 gold, 38 silver, and 41 bronze—putting us in the fourth place. All this shows huge strides by way of improved coaching facilities, selections from a bigger base of youngsters, sponsorships for training, and fire in the belly.

By far, the most soul-stirring sports success story for me is our team's success at the Paralympics that followed at Hangzhou. No one can forget the video of 16-year-old Sheetal Devi—born without arms—from a village in Jammu and Kashmir, drawing the bow with her toes and going on to win three golds in mixed archery. It was an NGO volunteer who saw her a few years ago, while she was undergoing some treatment in Bengaluru, and felt that she could take up archery and introduced her to coaches at Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Sports Academy in Jammu. The senior coaches felt that indeed archery would be a good fit for her indomitable grit and power of concentration. They modified equipment for her to train with her legs and the rest, as they say, is golden history! Similar great sense of purpose and nationalist fervour was displayed by other para athletes like Adil Ansari in Archery (bronze), Praveen Kumar in High Jump (gold), Ankur Dhama (golds in 1,500 and 5,000 meters). The most inspirational thing here is that all of them are from poor families and hail from different parts of the country—great on the inclusivity front! The record haul of 111 medals, including 29 gold, is the country's biggest ever tally at any major multisport event.

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No wonder we are now aspiring to host the Summer Olympics in 2036. It may be like a ‘coming out party’ and our need to make a statement because we have now reached a respectable per capita GDP milestone. China spent a whopping \$44 billion on the 2008 summer Olympics which is steep for us and yet! Our own CWG in 2010 cost the country \$9 billion but, of course, a lot of it was on non-sports infrastructure which would serve for decades.

The recent cricket tournament also brought out the fact that India derives its strength from its diversity. Our players came from varied background—Gill from a Punjab village near the Pakistan border, Jadeja’s father worked as a watchman in Jamnagar, Siraj’s father drove an auto-rickshaw in Hyderabad. As more people get a chance to hone their skills and excel the more, our country will shine in other areas too. We are aware that there are huge differences in the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ of the country and now these gaps are beginning to close. League matches were held all over the country. A lot is indeed happening to bridge the yawning gaps in inclusivity which will add to give us an even greater soft sheen.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Krishan Kalra** serves on the National Advisory Board of SARTHAK. He is also President of National Abilympic Association of India.

Proportion of the poor has dipped to about 15 percent from about 25 per cent in 2015-16. IAS and other civil services aspirants are coming from poor families in tier 2, 3, and 4 towns; daughters of farmers, mechanics and daily wage earners from Maharashtra villages are making it to the national hockey team; bright young achievers are getting involved with public healthcare in an effort to make it affordable, pioneering efforts are on for special needs education and healthcare for the disabled, support is emerging for the elderly by way of ‘companionship good-fellows’ like in Sweden, a successful ophthalmologist has opened five schools in the slums of the millennium city and now an IAS aspirant has changed tracks and is also taking classrooms to the slums in Gurugram. There is a ‘social exchange’ which should help NGOs to raise funds. Even the apex court has made space in the hallowed SC complex for a café run by the disabled and, as the CJI said, “Inclusiveness is not a mere aspiration, it is the key to unlocking full potential of our society.”

Of course, there are huge challenges too. Incidents of killings by drunken drivers and road rage murders are increasing at an alarming rate; so are tragic cases of rapes; ragging at universities at times leads to suicides; stalkers turn to injuring and even killing girls if they resist their advances; child marriages continue to happen and as the UN chief said “it will take India 300 years to end child marriages”; air quality in the metros is worsening year after year, so is the quality of water both leading to severe impact on life expectancy. There are ever-increasing cases of diabetes and cancer. No one paid heed to the SC orders and burst crackers on November 12, a major indicator of incoherence as a nation. Communal intolerance peaks at times—we saw a horrible case of a *yatra* turning into riots during the time our grand G20 Summit was on. **IM**



Merideth Mehlberg, Master Executive Coach and Career Strategist, debunks a few myths about the dual path of leading well and enjoying fulfillment at work. Merideth is the Bay Area CEO Peer Facilitator for the UCLA Anderson CEO Forum and serves as a Core Guide for Chief's San Francisco club. Merideth is also author, *Your Finest Work: Career Fulfillment in a Complicated World*.

**MYTH  
BUSTER**

# Your finest work unveiled

**D**eveloping a simultaneous lens on world-class leadership and the pursuit of career satisfaction is a challenge for many. Especially in this disrupted world, the tendency is to skew toward burnout, overwhelm, and fall short of our professional potential. In *Your Finest Work*, I have crystallised a simple framework of focus areas that make the difference between having what you want and missing the mark. Here, she debunks a few myths that keep managers stuck, and the antidotes to thrive in your role and your career.

## **MYTH 1: If you work hard, you will get ahead.**

Many of us expect our good work to speak for itself. We anticipate accessing desired opportunities by putting our heads down and working hard. Then, we are surprised when we are not promoted, recognised for our good work, or given the work assignments we want. Professionals often come to me for

coaching, convinced that they need to move into a new job or organisation to get ahead. That may be the case, but often it is possible to achieve more of what you want in your current situation by becoming your career's intentional architect. This simply requires taking the reins of your career, proactively collaborating with your leaders and peers to make them aware of your accomplishments, and progressively breaking down obstacles between you and your desired outcomes. If this feels like bragging, the solution is to reframe it as being of service to your organisation, team, and stakeholders. The first step is to hold regular one-on-ones with your boss, building into the agenda a regular discussion of your career goals and development.

## **MYTH 2: Emotional intelligence is innate, not learned.**

With the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the work landscape is changing rapidly. As we navigate this disruptive decade, our value as workers is changing from one of possessing content expertise to harnessing technology

**Especially for introverts and those who feel overwhelmed, networking is deprioritised unless it's part of a job or career transition. The reality is that networking is most valuable when you are not looking for a job.**

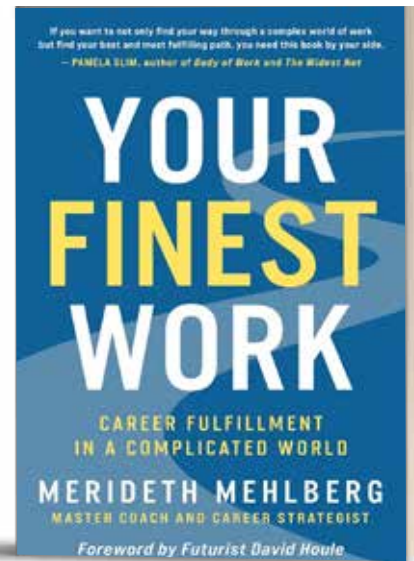
to make nuanced decisions that provide productive outcomes. Increasingly, empathy and the ability to communicate in a nuanced way are essential for leadership and career success. The fallacy is that you are either born emotionally intelligent or you're not. The reality is that even if you're naturally focused on tasks, logic, and analysis, you can learn to notice subtleties in interactions with those in a position of influence. You simply need to

develop the tools to do it well.

The easiest place to start is to learn about the different personality styles, how each approaches their work, their values, and how to create win-win outcomes. Then you can focus on fine-tuning your powers of observation to notice and respond to the needs of those around you. My favourite tool for this is the DiSC assessment, which provides an easy-to-understand inventory of key drivers of each style and how to recognise them and communicate effectively. To build your emotional intelligence (EQ) muscle, shift your attention from simply performing tasks to attending to your stakeholders'



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energy in interactions. By paying attention in this way, you can speak to the unspoken needs and solve issues at their root.

**MYTH 3: Networking is only important when you are looking for a job.**

Networking is often viewed as difficult or time-consuming. Especially for introverts and those who feel overwhelmed, networking is deprioritised unless it's part of a job or career transition. The reality is that networking is most valuable when you are not looking for a job. Why? Establishing connections in your organisation and external network pays dividends by broadening your base of support. Regular networking conversations with colleagues keep you informed, help mitigate risks, and boost your influence. The solution is quite easy: create a template for the conversations, then refine and co-create the agenda with each person to be mutually beneficial. This way, your conversations are of service to those you are networking with while providing you with insights and

fostering relationships.

**MYTH 4: Mistakes will kill your career.**

All of us encounter career steps that feel like mistakes. When we are fixated on a past experience, it can hinder our progress. To fix this, the energy needs to be released, like how a tea kettle whistles when the water heats up. The solution involves three steps: 1) forgiving ourselves, 2) figuring out the lessons from the experience, and 3) resolving any open issues to the degree that we can. By following these three steps, it moves from feeling intractable to feasible.

Similarly, if your next career phase feels like it does not fit the optics of what others consider correct or logical, it can be paralyzing. As an executive career strategist, I assure you there's always a way to frame your choices that makes sense to you and your network. The trick is to follow your internal compass and to define your own North Star. By identifying and making decisions to maximise alignment with your non-negotiables, you grow your capacity to message how your decision makes sense, both to yourself and others.

**MYTH 5: Every issue I face at work can be solved with more effort.**

When transitioning into leadership, it is tempting to use the playbook that helped you succeed as an individual contributor, which is usually centered on personal excellence with minimal collaboration.

Instead, the playbook for leadership must be updated to amplify others' strengths in service of organisational goals. This change can be challenging and ego-bruising, especially as it demands relinquishing control and some uncertainty. As responsibilities expand, micromanaging every detail can lead to burnout, making leading even harder.

The remedy lies in developing a new



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playbook, an important part of which is to fill your tank. This includes finding ways to rejuvenate your energy while simultaneously reducing your effort. You need to continually connect with your higher nature and your potential and be discerning in task delegation. Integrating energy-boosting practices, such as exercise, clear work boundaries, and pursuing enjoyable hobbies, are vital components.

The leadership playbook includes understanding that your value is best applied by unlocking your team's potential while removing obstacles. Collaboratively define project objectives, establish feedback loops, set outcome expectations, and secure alignment on support mechanisms. Optimise one-on-ones to empower your team to manage their agendas effectively. Over time these practices become ingrained habits both for you and those you lead.

Most people make things harder than they need to be; when you boil it down, paying attention and placing concerted effort in these areas enables you to enjoy a career — and leadership style — that truly hums. Following the practices and tactics outlined here is a good start to ensure you are walking every day into more of your finest work. **IM**



*In critical moments, your ability or inability to bring all of yourself will determine the success of the influence attempt.*

**STRATEGY**

◆ TSUN-YAN HSIEH AND HUIJIN KONG, CO-AUTHORS,  
*POSITIVE INFLUENCE*

# Mastering influence

**I**nfluence is ubiquitous and you are using it, well or poorly, in your life whether you are aware of it or not. You have likely been to a powerful workshop or training program where you felt you learned a lot. A few weeks after, though, you cannot remember much and start thinking the workshop wasn't that impactful. What drives the gap between your immediate feeling at the workshop's end and a few weeks later? It is creating the attitudes and habits you need to adopt and internalize what you learned and to consistently practice and apply those learnings.

Developing proficiency in influencing, like becoming good in any skill, has four stages:

1. Unconsciously unskilled.
2. Consciously unskilled.
3. Consciously skilled.
4. Unconsciously skilled.

To go from 'unconsciously unskilled' to 'consciously unskilled' is a logical progression once you are exposed to a new idea. To go from 'consciously unskilled' to 'consciously skilled' is all about commitment and practice. Improvement comes with consciously devoting

time and energy to adopting the skill. Practice will lead to habituation. You explore what habit you will adopt to use the principles day in and day out. You determine who will practice with you. And you envision what or who will enable you to call on these principles during times when you need them most.

To go from 'consciously skilled' to 'unconsciously skilled' (mastery) is essentially about your commitment to personal growth—not just about what you can access today, but about going outside your comfort zone, activating underutilised parts of your being, and integrating what you have experienced and learned into your being. Becoming more conscious and calling on the inner qualities needed for positive outcomes requires a great deal of effort initially, but over time it will become more automatic.

So, in terms of your influence, how do you consciously work to align your inner being with your influence attempts? Are you constantly working to uncover more of your personal qualities, to use a variety of strengths, and to minimise your negative instincts? Are you able to break through some inner barriers that hold you back from



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## STRATEGY



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seizing the moment and bringing your most heightened being to bear?

In critical moments, your ability or inability to bring all of yourself—mind, heart, and soul—will be keenly felt by others and will determine the success of the influence attempt.

The following five habits and attitudes will enable you to become more proficient in involving your inner being to have a positive influence:

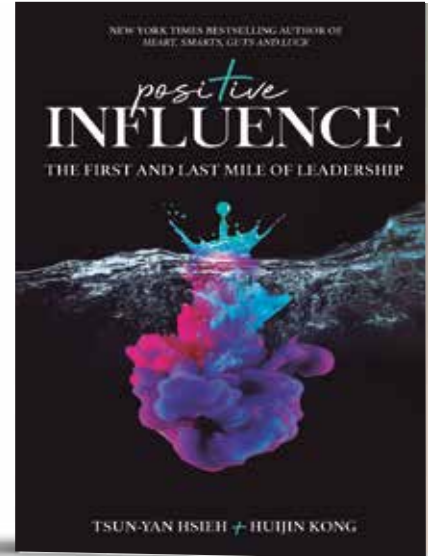
**1. Care about others:** Always commit to raising others' productivity, growth, and satisfaction—not just your own. When you intensively care about others, you have a greater chance of punching through inertia and concerns, inspiring people to act.

**2. Stretch yourself:** Pause your instinctive reactions and try approaches new to you. If you are a task person, try a relational approach, or vice versa. Too often, people default to a rational business approach; there are many roads to Rome. Going outside your current comfort zone is rewarding: you uncover more of your whole self, and better



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apply the influence needed to result in a positive outcome.

- 3. Be present:** Notice what is going on in yourself and in others during influence attempts, be it an angry scowl, or a twitch around the eyes. Discern what are the key pressures and needs to be addressed.
- 4. Invite feedback:** At every opportunity, ask others for their feedback regarding how well you performed in accomplishing specific influence goals you had, and how you made people feel.
- 5. Take time to reflect:** Following the completion of any project, activity, or influence attempt, reflect on what you did well or you need to improve, along with what assumptions and beliefs you need to revise.

The more you consciously practice these habits, the more you will become an habitualised master at better influencing others. **IM**





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