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ALL INDIA MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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SPEAKERS

Harsh Kapoor
Programme Director &
Partner Monitor, Deloitte

Suneeta Reddy
President, AIMA &
Managing Director
Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd

Sunjay Sudhir
Ambassador of
India UAE

Vishal Kampani
Vice President, AIMA &
Non-Executive Vice Chairman
JM Financial Ltd

Rekha Sethi
Director General
AIMA

Christian Buchholz
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CEO
G42 India

Krishnadas Nanath
Deputy Head of Computer
Engineering & Informatics
department, Middlesex
University, Dubai

For more details, please contact

Mr Mansoor Hassan - Assistant Director
Mobile: +91 – 9540060166, Email: mhassan@aima.in
All India Management Association Management House, 14, Institutional Area, Lodhi Road, New Delhi – 110003
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THE JOURNAL OF THE ALL INDIA MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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THIS ISSUE

PRESIDENT'S
MESSAGE

Sustainable sustainability: Employees are the key

Suneeta Reddy is Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Ltd.

Sustainability is an important box to check for business organisations. Management is obligated to reduce emissions, increase energy efficiency, and contain the company's carbon footprint in general. There is also the incentive to align with global interests to attract customers, investors, talent, and partners. Beyond compliance compulsions and appreciation for altruism, containing a business's cost to the planet has major payoffs in growth, profits, and competitiveness.

While planting trees in and around the premises is useful for sinking carbon emissions locally, the choice of energy source and energy optimisation can make a big difference to those who work inside and live in the neighbourhood

Given the buzz about climate change and green transition, organisations and brands like to dress up for the sustainability party. Organisations often make ambitious claims about sustainability, with brands striving to absolve the consumer of any guilt for climate change. Many companies put out shiny sustainability reports and run high-pitched communication campaigns to look responsible. Still, the tangible impact is not readily seen or felt by stakeholders.

Often, the leadership's intent and priorities are not effectively communicated to the world due to the challenge of aligning the grand vision with everyday operations. The organisation's planet and people priorities are reflected in the actions of its employees, whose alignment with the leadership's sustainability agenda is crucial to its success.

Getting the employees to align with the leadership's sustainability commitment is fundamental to creating a culture that cares for the planet and the people along with profits. For that, the employees must be convinced by the leadership that any extra effort or sacrifices demanded from them have a meaningful impact on their own lives and the larger world.

Sustainability begins at home. Saving the world from environmental and human degradation starts with making the workplace and work conditions healthier. Businesses can benefit the planet and the people within their factories and offices. While planting trees in and around the premises is useful for sinking carbon emissions locally, the choice of energy source and energy optimisation can make a big difference to those who work inside and live in the neighbourhood. Safe disposal of waste and reclaiming of reusable materials and parts require adequate and assured incentives and obligations for the employees.

It is critical to include people in the sustainability equation along with resources, materials, energy, and products. A rounded approach to sustainability must include the physical, mental, and economic health of employees. Factories and offices could monitor and display air and water quality on the premises. They could organise preventive health checks at the workplace and provide adequate health insurance. Remote employees and gig workers should be assured of the same pay and benefits for the same work as regular employees. Sensitivity about employees' time and workload could prevent unproductive stress and potential burnout. Sustainable human capital must be integral to the overall sustainability agenda.

Technology itself is becoming a major sustainability issue in the digital age. Digital devices and data centres have put information and communication in the 'cloud', but the new magical world runs on enormous amounts of energy and materials

Business transportation and travel form a significant part of corporate carbon footprints. Business travel can be substantially reduced by encouraging employees to use video conferencing more often and by using electric vehicles for local transport. Reducing the transportation intensity of sourcing, production, and distribution is very doable by training employees to use digital and geospatial technologies to optimise logistics.

Technology itself is becoming a major sustainability issue in the digital age. Digital devices and data centres have put information and communication in the 'cloud', but the new magical world runs on enormous amounts of energy and materials. Digital machines also become obsolete rapidly and require frequent replacement. Staying technologically current and competitive puts tremendous strain on business resources and involves considerable electronic waste with each upgrade. Employees need to be trained to get the most out of existing systems and be encouraged to repurpose old equipment instead of adding to landfills.

Creating an organisational culture of sustainability takes time and consistent commitment, despite temporary market and bottom-line pressures. There are no quick wins for a business that wants to be sustainable, and each of its stakeholders must be aligned with the collective longevity and well-being, especially the employees. IM

The opinion expressed is personal.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

Sustainable practices have a bigger, more widespread, impact if implemented at the organisational level, rather than just at the individual level. This implies that organisations need to proactively engage in sustainable practices if they want to make a positive difference to environment and society.

Various surveys have shown that a majority of Gen Z—the future of workforce—lays great emphasis on sustainable practices and chooses to work in organisations that care for environment. Hence, in a way, sustainable practices also serve the 'business purpose' of attracting talent.

Apart from hiring this talent, organisations also need to retain it; so sustainability should not be practised as mere tokenism, but should rather reflect in the culture of the organisation. As Marilyn Waite, author, *Sustainability at Work,* writes in the cover story of this issue, "Employees are more likely to embrace environmental, social, and governance (ESG) initiatives when they believe the company is genuinely committed to making a positive difference."

A big challenge that organisations, especially, legacy ones, face is integrating sustainability into their business strategy—[re] setting goals, managing supply chains and costs, transforming strategies, etc. But it also goes without saying that without embracing sustainable practices, in the long term, such orgnisations would lose not just talent but also business, since stakeholders (including shareholders) too are making a shift towards organisations that practice sustainability.

Do write in with your views to **imeditorial@ spentamultimedia.com**

Maneck Davar

Maneck Davar

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EDITORIAL

EDITOR & PUBLISHER I MANECK DAVAR
SR. ASST. EDITOR I Ashutosh Gotad

DESIGN

ART DIRECTOR I Yogita Iyer

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Robert Gomes I 022-67341024
robert@spentamultimedia.com
Bhairavnath Sutar I 022-67341049
bhairav@spentamultimedia.com

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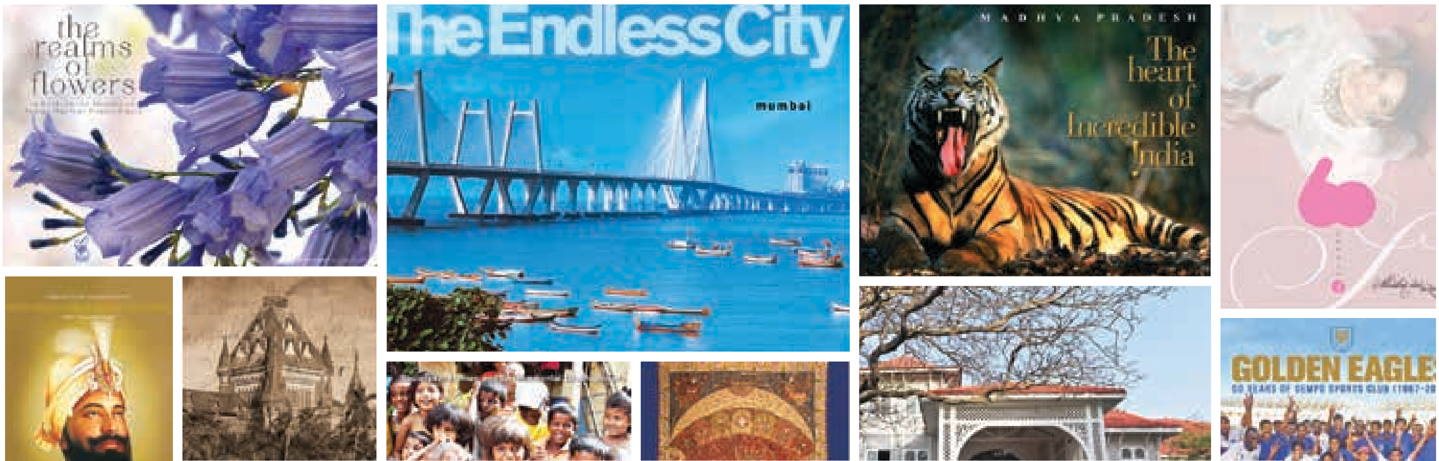
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SEASIDE

SUSTAINABILITY BEGINS AT WORK

Dinesh Bhogale

Dinesh Bhogale

Commitment to social

For their part, organisations are waking up to the fact that, if they want to attract the right talent and investment, linking their purpose to sustainability goals is imperative.

MARILYN WAITE, AUTHOR, *SUSTAINABILITY AT WORK*

If a commitment to social and environmental sustainability is something you want from your employer, you are not alone. A survey conducted by healthcare firm Bupa Global & UK in 2023 found that over two-fifths (42 per cent) of workers said they would accept a job for a lower pay to work for a more ethical or environmentally active organisation. This rose to 66 per cent among the Gen Z demographic, indicating that younger workers place an even higher value on sustainability.

For their part, organisations are waking up to the fact that, if they want to attract the right talent and investment, linking their purpose to sustainability goals such as the 17 created by the United Nations, is a must. Despite this, many employees remain unconvinced that their employers are actually delivering on sustainability issues. *Stanford Social Innovation Review* highlights that stakeholders, including employees, are often sceptical about a company's motivations for sustainability initiatives. Employees are more likely to embrace these environmental, social, and governance (ESG) initiatives when they believe the company is genuinely committed to making a positive difference.

How can you be sure that the organisation you're working for—or applying to work for—is truly committed to sustainability? You can start by asking the following 10 questions, which include the SURF Framework for sustainability:

1. What are the company's sustainability goals?

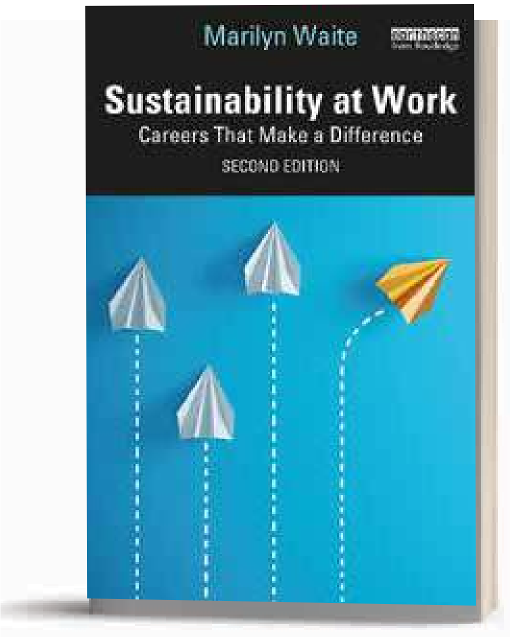
Internal sustainability objectives should ideally align with some or all of the 17 United Nations sustainable development goals (known as the SDGs) and can range from discontinuing the use of single-use plastic to updating hiring practices to become more diverse and inclusive. The 'U' in the SURF framework stands for user. Since every business has a 'user' of its product and/or service, it's vital that the sustainability goals address the user, otherwise known as the customer, consumer or client. Is the user given the means to use the product or service sustainably? Is user input integrated into the company's sustainability strategy?

2. How is sustainability integrated into their business strategy?

Sustainability should not be an 'add on'; it should be fully integrated into the day-to-day life and performance of every organisation. A clearly defined mission, vision and values are clear signs that the organisation has set a direction of travel to help all employees work towards sustainability goals. The decision to employ a chief sustainability officer (or similar role) also demonstrates a commitment to sustainability; failing—or in addition to—that, employee-led focus groups within the organisation that help drive sustainability and ESG strategy ensure that all employees feel part of the sustainability journey, as well as helping build an inclusive, engaged culture.

3. **What metrics do the company use to measure their sustainability performance?**
96 per cent of the world's leading organisations publish a sustainability report, often in line with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards, which can usually be found on their website. Sustainability reports are essential for demonstrating accountability, but a report by Sage, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), and PwC UK that surveyed more than 16,000 small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) found that 83% of SMEs prioritise sustainability but only 8% report on their impact. This should evolve as sustainability reporting becomes mandatory by numerous regulatory bodies across the globe. The European Commission recently published the final delegated act containing the first set of European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS), and Malaysia, Brazil, India, China, the Philippines, Nigeria, Thailand, South Africa, Singapore, Costa Rica and Indonesia have proposed either mandatory sustainability standards or clear guidance issued by public authorities or stock exchanges.

It is important that the company sets forward-looking metrics in addition to reporting on the past. The 'F' of the SURF framework stands for the future and is focused on the responsibility that we—both humans and organisations—have to future generations. Sustainability is all about planning for the future—without it, there will no planet to hand over to our collective offspring.



4. **How trustworthy is the company's communication of sustainability practices?**
'Green-washing' and 'social-washing' are the practices of making a company appear more environmentally friendly and socially responsible than the company actually is—and unfortunately, this practice does continue, with some organisations trying to leverage the value of appearing sustainable without doing the work. Looking at the company's track record and what independent, third-party organisations have to say about the company's impact should help you ascertain whether the company's claims are trustworthy.

5. **What sustainability certifications or standards do they adhere to?**
Sustainability certifications are an excellent way of determining whether a company

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Every sustainable business should be working towards Net-Zero greenhouse gas emissions, ideally ahead of any government-designated deadline

is serious about having a positive societal impact. Check for adherence to certifications and standards such as B Lab's B Corp Certification (and the associated score) and sector-specific accolades such as belonging to the Global Alliance for Banking on Values (GABV) in the case of a bank.

6. How do they manage their supply chain to ensure sustainability?
Many businesses that tout their own sustainability credentials fail to pay due attention to their supply chain, meaning they are often negligent to their impact as a purchaser. The 'S' in the SURF framework stands for supply chain considerations that address sustainability criteria. It calls companies to look at their supply chains and ask: are they ethical? Are they using eco-friendly materials? Are they centring diversity, equity, and inclusion? Organisations that are truly sustainable have accountability mechanisms that reach all the way down their supply chain and are actively working with suppliers to help them achieved these shared goals.

7. What initiatives do they have to reduce their carbon footprint?
Every sustainable business should be working towards Net-Zero greenhouse gas emissions, ideally ahead of any government-designated deadline (which is, for instance, 2070 in India and 2060 in China). To do this, they need to have identified where their emissions come from in the business (including Scope 3 emissions in the supply chain), set Net-Zero targets and identified opportunities for carbon reduction.
They should be able to demonstrate to employees that they're taking the necessary steps, including addressing their financed emissions by offering climate friendly, sustainability-aligned retirement benefits and banking with fossil fuel free and

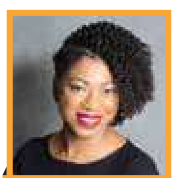
deforestation free banks.

8. How do they engage employees in their sustainability efforts?
A 2023 Gallup survey found that 79 per cent of employees feel more engaged in the workplace when they are actively involved in sustainability efforts. It pays for employers to ensure their employees are not just on board with the sustainability journey but actively driving it. Communication is key here; unsurprisingly, companies with good sustainability credentials are also proactive about engaging employees through focus groups, employee-led sustainability initiatives, and regular surveys to gauge employee satisfaction with sustainability initiatives.

9. What are their JEDI (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion) policies?
JEDI policies aim to create fair and inclusive environments by addressing systemic inequalities and promoting diversity in various settings, such as workplaces, educational institutions, and communities. Employees who feel included are 3.5 times more likely to contribute to their full innovative potential. This aligns with the 'R' in the SURF framework, which stands for relations or relationships—both internal and external. Is the organisation inclusive? Is company funding transparent? Do employees and other stakeholders have a say in decisions that impact on them?

10. How do they contribute to the local community and environment?
Any business that is serious about its ESG credentials will have a plan for working with the local community and environment, which may include working with smaller, local enterprises and affinity groups.

Asking these ten questions that embed the SURF framework will help you see whether your company—or prospective employer is acting sustainably. Employees have the power to influence change. The world of work is gradually changing, but there is a long way to go before most organisations can be described as sustainability leaders. Let us make sure we are all part of that journey. IM



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marilyn Waite leads the Climate Finance Fund and teaches ESG Strategies at Sciences Po and other universities across the globe. Marilyn Waite is also author, *Sustainability at Work: Careers That Make a Difference.*


Dinesh Bhogale

From lack of visionary leadership to unhappy employees…reasons abound for business failure.

✦ RS RAJESH (FORMER EMPLOYEE) ONGC, DELHI

Decoding business failures

In the ever-evolving landscape of businesses, companies rise and fall with remarkable frequency. Behind every successful enterprise lies a multitude of factors contributing to its triumph, just as behind every failure lies a series of missteps and oversights. Understanding why companies fail is crucial for aspiring entrepreneurs, seasoned executives, and policymakers alike. By dissecting the root causes of these failures and identifying effective solutions, we can pave the way for a more resilient and prosperous business environment.

India as on date has over 24.2 lakh registered companies out of which only 14.92 lakh are going concerns (active). At any given time there are thousands of companies being shut down and lakhs who have not filed their annual accounts. This small bit of statistics indicates the failure of business. The failure rate increases during a recession, but even during periods of buoyant economic conditions many businesses fail.

Although the reasons for failure of a business are many and the details differ from case to case, however the underlying causes can be traced to the five fundamental factors

The first reason for business failure is the loading of the firm with a heavy debt burden (usually to carry out merger and acquisition at overpriced terms). This affects the firm's strength at the time of recession or market downturn.

There were many reasons for the sub-prime crisis in USA and one of them was cheap money. It encourages banks, investment banks, hedge funds, corporate and individuals to borrow more and place bets. This can happen when interest rates are low and lending procedures slack leading individuals and companies to leverage themselves to unsustainable levels. The table below shows the leverage level of US companies which failed during the 2008 financial crisis.

COMPANY	LEVERAGE
BEAR STEARNS	33 :1
LEHMAN BROTHERS	28 : 1

The leverage indicates that—for every $1 invested by the promoter, $33 was raised through debt. Eventually these were the two mighty corporates that collapsed first and set the domino reaction to the financial crisis of 2008.

Any economic activity with a high borrowing is vulnerable to shocks. The table indicates this concept for a Company A:

Business A	Owner's Capital ($ MM)	Borrowing ($ MM)	Total lending to A	Capital employed wiped out	
CASE 1	50	50	100	10%	$10 MM (1/5th of the equity)
CASE 2	50	450	500	10%	$50 MM (entire equity is wiped out)

Once the capital (equity) of the promoters is wiped out, there is tendency for the promoters to take greater risks to make up for the losses. There is something in finance called the 'gambling for resurrection'. It is when you are down so far that you don't have much more to lose, so you are willing to take big risks in the hope of recouping your losses.

The debt-equity ratio is a very useful leverage indicator. High leverage reduces the pay-out to equity investors and the interest payments are legal obligations and part of the profit. The table below shows Indian companies with high leverage.

COMPANY	DEBT - EQUITY RATIO
Jet Airways	Equity: ₹113.6 cr LT borrowing: ₹5,554 cr Leverage: 48
Kingfisher Airlines	Equity: ₹1,362 cr LT+ST borrowing: 13024 Leverage: 9.5

*The numbers are indicative, taken from the books of account. However, leverage is what matters.

The second reason many businesses fail is because decision-makers do not fully understand the fundamentals of their business or the core expertise required. Then the firm drifts (through diversification and merger & acquisition) into areas where it has very little expertise. In any business, the promoters are the main persons sponsoring the business because there is a match between the promoter's competency and the competency requirement of the business. The diagram below indicates this proposition and only when it is correlated that the business becomes a success. The match between the two is a fundamental requirement.

Unrelated diversification without competencies will result in failure of projects/organisations unless the business entity has acquired the talent or through creation of JVs, to manage a conglomerate. A good example could be NTPC creating a wholly owned subsidiary Renewable Energy Company called NTPC Renewable Energy Limited. The vision of this company is to be world's leading renewable energy company accelerating India's energy transition. The challenge is that these subsidiaries thus created should become self-reliant in terms of revenue, cash flow, profitability and growth at the earliest.

The failure of the United Breweries Group's venture into airline industry is another case in point. Kingfisher Airlines was a subsidiary of the United Breweries Group, which holds 30.25 per cent of the paid up capital. It was an unrelated diversification from the distillery to airline industry. The promoter's competency did not match the business competency required in an industry which is very competitive and service-oriented. The second example is the Videocon Group, the first company to acquire license to manufacture colour TVs

PROMOTER -COMPETENCY	↔	BUSINESS MODEL - COMPETENCY REQUIREMENT
↓		↓
RELIANCE, DMRC	↔	Conceive large & complex projects and excellent project management
AIRTEL, HUL	↔	Branding & Distribution
CAIRNS	↔	Oil & Gas Explorers
SCHLUMBERGER	↔	Oil Field Services

in India. They became a household name in electronic goods, but subsequently ventured into oil & gas, telecom and other verticals. The company went bankrupt in 2018 and referred to NCLT (bankruptcy court).

The third reason for businesses failure is lack of vision or the inability of the top management to anticipate or foresee the serious problems (risks) the business will face down the road. US automakers comprising General Motors, Chrysler, and Ford, at an early stage, failed to understand the seriousness of the competitive challenge posed by Japan in the US car market and conceded the small car space to the more agile and nimble auto makers from Japan. US auto majors believed that the Japanese were no challenge to them. This was an erroneous belief. The Japanese auto manufacturers have captured a market share of 43 per cent in the US auto industry.

The fourth reason for business failure is that firms vainly trying to recapture their past glories and getting stuck on obsolete strategies are unable to respond to new and major competitive challenges. An example is Kodak, which stuck to photo films. Nokia is another example of a firm not transitioning quickly in the smart phone segment. Recently, Honda Cars India inability to introduce compact SUVs has resulted in conceding the market to KIA and MG.

Finally, a company may fail as a result of unhappy employees. This may be as a result of strikes, hostilities, unionisation, loss of key managerial personnel, data theft, indiscipline, loss of remuneration, etc. The failure of manufacturing sector and textile sector in India is a result of the above factors. IM

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RS Rajesh, is ex-CGM, ONGC, Delhi.

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Dinesh Bhogale

The transformation of the automotive industry is driven by the rise of software-defined vehicles and the integration of AI across every facet of the vehicle lifecycle, opines Evangelos Simoudis, founder and Managing Director, Synapse Partners. Evangelos is also author, *THE FLAGSHIP EXPERIENCE: How AI and Software-Defined Vehicles Will Revolutionize the Automotive Customer.*

MYTH BUSTER

Driving into the future

The automotive industry stands at a pivotal crossroads, transforming anything seen in its more than 100-year history. The rise of software-defined vehicles (SDVs) and artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping how cars are built, sold, and used. Incumbent automakers, who have long defined their value through their hardware and engineering prowess, must now adapt to a new reality. The shift toward software-driven mobility not only disrupts traditional business models but also challenges long-held assumptions.

In this article, we'll explore five pervasive myths about the automotive industry and how SDVs and AI are busting them. As automakers move from hardware-defined machines to software-powered platforms, they must abandon outdated notions and embrace a future of ongoing service provision, digital performance metrics, and dynamic innovation cycles. The industry's transformation is well underway, and those who fail to adapt risk being left behind. In his book The Flagship Experience, Simoudis clarifies misconceptions about SDVs and shows how they and AI are transforming the automotive industry.

MYTH 1: Automakers' value is tied solely to their hardware and product sales.

Traditionally, automakers have been seen as manufacturers, delivering hardware-centric products: vehicles defined by horsepower, build quality, and engineering precision. However, this view is increasingly obsolete. The real value lies in the software powering the vehicle, enabling continuous feature updates, personalised experiences, and new services. SDVs are transforming cars into platforms for mobility services, data-driven insights, and in-vehicle subscriptions. The transition from hardware-focused product sales to service-centric models means that automakers can no longer rely solely on selling cars and the auto-maker's customer experience does not end when the vehicle is sold. The customer journey "covers the entire relationship between the customer and the auto-maker, starting at the time the customer first interacts with the OEM's brand and ending when the customer no longer owns any of the OEM's vehicles. Instead, they are becoming service providers, offering ongoing customer engagement through connected ecosystems.

This transformation opens new avenues for recurring revenue, long after the initial sale. Over-the-air (OTA) updates and software-driven customisation allow automakers to deliver new features and capabilities, maintaining customer interest and satisfaction throughout the vehicle's life cycle. The future of automotive value lies not in static, one-time transactions but in dynamic, evolving relationships between automakers and their customers.

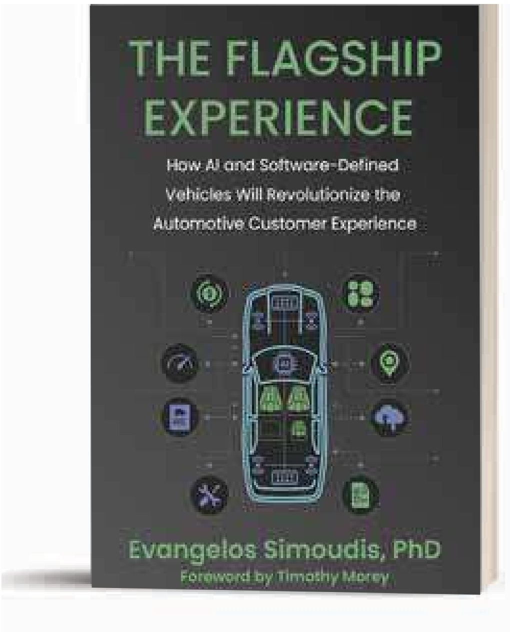
MYTH 2: AI in automobiles is only about autonomous driving.

While autonomous driving garners much of the spotlight, AI's influence extends far beyond. AI is revolutionising various aspects of the automotive value chain, from vehicle design to manufacturing and customer experience. AI-powered simulations optimise vehicle design, while predictive maintenance, driven by machine learning algorithms, reduces downtime and ensures vehicles operate efficiently. In manufacturing, AI enables predictive maintenance of machinery and automation of complex production processes.

Moreover, AI enhances in-cabin experiences, offering voice assistants, personalised infotainment, and proactive safety measures. By processing real-time data, AI adapts to individual driving habits and preferences, tailoring the vehicle experience to each user. These broader applications of AI are fundamental to the evolution of the automotive industry, well beyond the development of fully autonomous vehicles.

MYTH 3: Automakers must own every aspect of vehicle technology.

In the past, automakers prided themselves on owning and developing every aspect



of the vehicle. However, the rise of SDVs challenges this notion. While they must own the customer experience, automakers must collaborate with tech companies, cloud providers, and third-party developers to integrate advanced software and AI into their vehicles. Software-defined vehicles do not just require updating and adding to existing software, but creating and incorporating into the SDV new integrated software- and AI-centric platforms.

The vehicle is no longer a standalone product but part of a broader, interconnected ecosystem where software-driven services and applications differentiate one car from another. Automakers that embrace external partnerships will not only accelerate innovation but also enhance the user experience by leveraging cutting-edge technologies without needing to develop everything in-house. This shift reflects a broader industry trend of collaboration, where ecosystems and partnerships become

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as crucial as traditional engineering.

MYTH 4: Vehicle performance is only about speed, power, and efficiency.

Historically, vehicle performance has been measured by metrics like speed, power, and fuel efficiency. While these factors remain important, SDVs introduce new dimensions of performance that are just as critical. Performance is no longer just about how fast a car can go or how much power it delivers; it's about how well the vehicle processes data, integrates with external systems, and supports digital features.

SDVs offer driving automation that provides safety and convenience to the vehicle's occupants. As a result, performance now includes real-time decision-making capabilities, data processing, and how seamlessly a car integrates with digital platforms, including smart city platforms. The ability to process vast amounts of data in real-time and act on it is just as important as traditional performance metrics. Software-defined features such as advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS), connectivity, and sensor integration are becoming essential components of modern vehicle performance, redefining what customers value in their cars.

MYTH 5: Automakers can offer and take advantage of SDVs with only technological innovations

Developing and offering software-defined vehicles is not just another product evolution that can be handled within existing organisational structures. The model introductions and refresh cycles in use today established well-defined time lines and hierarchical organisational structures.

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The transition to SDVs and the adoption of a new comprehensive customer experience, require significant organisational and business model transformations which the automotive industry must undertake.

Automakers need to become customer-centric, embrace flatter and agile organisations, and capitalise on the opportunity for continuous innovation that SDVs offer them. These necessary changes will impact them financially, as we are seeing already. They also have the potential to alter their relationships with dealers and other sales and service channels. Automakers need to rethink and reconfigure their entire ecosystem, from suppliers to post-sales partners. As Stephan Durach, senior vice president of development at BMW's Connected Company states in the book "These transformations are ongoing and could last several years."

Conclusion

The transformation of the automotive industry is driven by the rise of software-defined vehicles and the integration of AI across every facet of the vehicle life-cycle. These advancements are busting long-held myths about the automotive industry. As vehicles become more connected, intelligent, and software-driven, automakers must embrace new business models, focus on digital performance, and collaborate with technology partners to stay competitive.

The future of the automotive industry is one where continuous customer engagement, dynamic innovation, and seamless integration with the digital world define success. Automakers who can adapt to these changes will thrive, while those who cling to outdated notions will find themselves struggling to keep up. The road ahead is one of transformation, and it is already well underway. IM


Dinesh Bhogale

Evolve quickly, adapt to change, and reinvent yourself to enhance long-term performance.

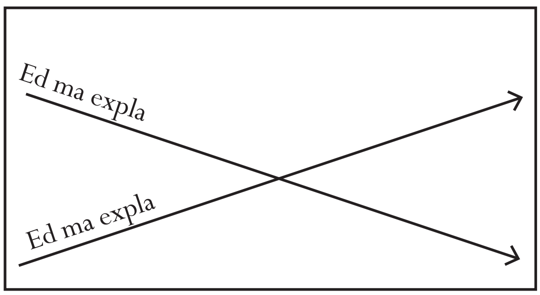
✦ TERENCE MAURI, AUTHOR, *THE UPSIDE OF DISRUPTION*

Break the bureaucracy

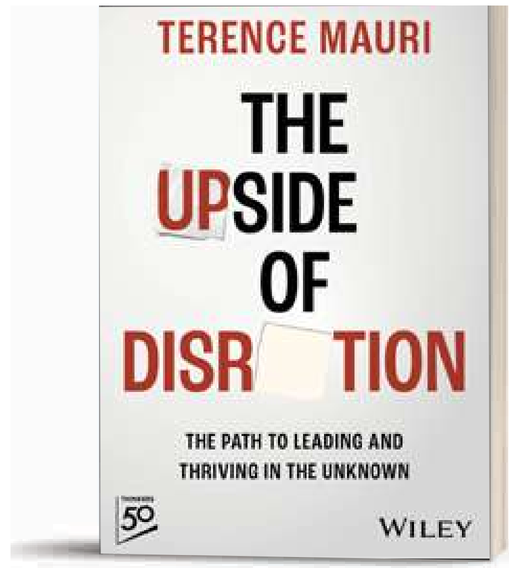
Business bureaucracy is an age-old challenge which plagues most large organisations, but Thinkers50 author and Hack Future Lab founder Terence Mauri asks, "Is enough being done to reduce excess bureaucracy that is like a leadership tax on learning and innovation?"

Too many leaders are drowning in 'Excess Bureaucracy,' meaning too many rules, duplicated processes, unnecessary meetings, best practices that have become 'broken practices,' and silo behaviours that slow down decision-making, and ultimately, harm innovation efforts. One of our time's most ironic paradoxes is that technology changes fast, but humans don't. Leaders are suffering from a common-sense gap, with excess bureaucracy outstripping our human brains' capacity to make sense of it all, leading to structural stupidity in our organisations and rewards for building organisations of bureaucracy. Take resource allocation: budgets, Opex spending, Capex spending, sales, and marketing dollars. The correlation of the same business allocating roughly the same dollar to the same executives yearly is exceptionally high because bureaucracy is sticky like glue, and there's inertia in the system.

Four billion pieces of paper are used daily, and the number of words in the U.S. Tax Code has increased from 400,000 to 4 million in the last 20 years. San Francisco City Hall is pushing a new initiative to speed up its glacial hiring process for city workers, which currently takes an average of 255 days. We move closer to 'Zombie Leadership', leading with dead ideas every time we need to remember to unlearn the old ways, whether attending too many pointless meetings or rules that become the proxy for how we work. Does bureaucracy serve us, or do we serve bureaucracy? We stop looking at outcomes and ensure we do the bureaucratic processes correctly. The role of leaders should not be bureaucracy itself but protecting what creates value and serves the purpose. Every organisation would benefit from a bi-yearly 'Marie Kondo exercise' named after the eponymous Netflix star who detoxes and declutters messy homes; all employees need to be responsible for streamlining operations and trimming what authors Gary Hamel and Michele Zanini of Humanocracy: Creating Organizations as Amazing as the People Inside Them call the 'Bureaucratic Mass index. Given the high price humans pay in lost time and intelligence doing tasks that do not make a difference, it is time for leaders to prioritise intelligent work over bureaucratic work and ask, "Are we complexifiers or simplifiers?"



Winning the future is no longer just about scale and efficiency. It is about 'Return on Intelligence'—a cognitively enabled human-led, AI-enabled culture where humans are empowered to solve problems and co-create the future; a collective intelligence enabled by freedom, trust, and responsibility rather than control and excess bureaucracy. Hack Future Lab's research confirms that most leaders struggle with record levels of excess bureaucracy, leaving them less willpower to focus on their top priorities. No wonder most leaders cannot focus on what matters. Leaders are exhausted. Screen fatigue. Meetings fatigue. Collaboration fatigue. Bureaucratic fatigue. With over $41 trillion of enterprise value at risk from disruption and $17 trillion yearly wasted globally on excess bureaucracy, 93 per cent of leaders believe that excess bureaucracy could be one of the most significant barriers to growth of our times. We have less energy to focus on high-value leadership activities whenever we forget to unlearn the 'Zombie ways', whether too many meetings and emails that make the trivial seem urgent or annual performance reviews



that become tick-boxing exercises. Bureaucracy is like costs. They always need to be cut. This is the essence of excess bureaucracy, a corporate disease from which leaders suffer and waste talent.

Talent crushed by bureaucracy*

- 1/3 of leaders spend 700 hours a year (33.3 per cent of their total hours worked a year) on excess bureaucracy.
- 1/3 of leaders devote more time to shallow leadership (Low Impact) versus deep leadership (High Impact) because of excess bureaucracy.
- 1/2 of leaders waste time using manual processes, 'broken' practices, and excess protocols that could be automated or eliminated.
- 1/2 of leaders agree that excess bureaucracy is a 'leadership tax' on speed, agility, and talent.

The most significant risk to long-term performance, well-being, and resilient growth is not market volatility or the rise of exponential technologies but the failure

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to eliminate excess bureaucracy in our organisations that we have normalised. The number one takeaway is that the higher your excess bureaucracy, the slower you make decisions, avoid risks, and lead for the future. So, what can you do differently to evolve from a leader of bureaucracy to a leader of intelligence?

Bayer, the pioneering biopharma firm uses a 'Dynamic Shared Ownership' (DSO) model to maximise a bootstrap ethic and nimble management: flat, fast, and iterative despite legacy and complexity. If it were a formula, it would read 'Leadership = trust + freedom x ownership'. Employees are expected to put common sense over bureaucracy and democratise ideas and decisions by asking, "Do our rules, meetings, and processes serve or sabotage us? Do we reward and incentivise bureaucratic work and behaviours (doing things right) more than curiosity over conformity (doing the smart thing)? If the answer is "yes," then it is time to simplify, eliminate, automate, or outsource (SEAO). Too many firms suffer 'addition sickness' with people adding more friction and slowing thinking and decision-making. "If you want to be a large company and not a dinosaur, you have to find a way to evolve quickly, to adapt, to change, to reinvent yourself," says Bill Anderson, the CEO of Bayer.

The most significant risk to talent is not external threats such as competitors or market disruption. It is internal risks from excess bureaucracy and the normalisation of bureaucratic over intelligent work. Bureaucracy is a significant internal barrier to growth, and talent agrees, ranking excess bureaucracy as the number one barrier to learning and productivity. As organisations become more bureaucratic, there creeps in a leadership bias to manage more proxies and 'battles among the silos'. Bureaucratic work becomes essential in business at the expense of ideas, innovation, and leading change. This leads to an 'organisational tragedy of the commons', where individuals inadvertently produce collective harm. The higher the excess bureaucracy, the slower the organisation becomes. Inertia. Excuses and procrastination are the norm, and in so doing, saps initiative and drive. Leaders stop looking at results or outcomes and fixate on teams doing the process right. The lesson is that we are all responsible for reducing the leadership tax of excess bureaucracy and rigid hierarchies to embrace the future and stay ahead of change. IM

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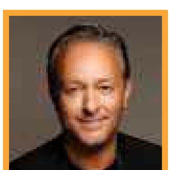

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Terence Mauri is author, *The Upside of Disruption: The Path to Leading and Thriving in the Unknown* (in collaboration with Thinkers50).

The adoption of green logistics technology, smart cities infrastructure, and logistics parks is reshaping the landscape of urban logistics.

✦ DR DEBASISH SUR, THE UNIVERSITY OF BURDWAN; PRAMIT SUR, HCL TECHNOLOGIES LTD; AND PRIYANGSHU GANGULY, GREAT LAKES INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT

Greening urban logistics

In today's rapidly evolving world, the convergence of technology and sustainability has become paramount in reshaping urban logistics. From the adoption of electric and hybrid vehicles to the implementation of smart city initiatives and the development of logistics parks, innovative solutions are driving efficiency while mitigating environmental impact. The present paper explores the transformative potential of green logistics technology, smart cities infrastructure, and logistics parks in creating sustainable and resilient urban environments. By delving into each aspect, this article seeks to uncover how these advancements are not only optimising logistics operations but also paving the way towards a greener future for cities worldwide.

Green logistics technology

1. Electric and hybrid vehicles: Electric and hybrid vehicles are revolutionising the logistics industry by significantly reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainability in the following ways:

- **Continuous innovation:** By encouraging employees to contribute their ideas and collaborate on projects, Google has maintained a steady stream of innovative products and services that meet the evolving needs of its users.
- **High employee engagement:** The culture of co-creation fosters high levels of employee engagement and satisfaction. Employees feel valued and motivated to contribute to the company's success, leading to lower turnover rates.
- **Market leadership:** Google's commitment to innovation and collaboration has solidified its position as a market leader in the technology industry. The company's ability to adapt and respond to changing market dynamics is largely attributed to the active involvement of its employees.

2. Alternative fuels: Exploring alternative fuels such as biofuels, hydrogen fuel cells, and others offers promising avenues for further reducing the carbon footprint of logistics operations:

- **Biofuels:** Derived from renewable sources such as plants or waste biomass, biofuels can significantly reduce lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions

Advanced algorithms analyse historical data and real-time inputs to determine the most efficient routes, considering factors like traffic patterns, delivery schedules, and vehicle capacities

compared to conventional fuels. They can be used directly in existing diesel engines with minimal modifications.

- **Hydrogen fuel cells:** Hydrogen-powered fuel cells produce electricity through a chemical reaction between hydrogen and oxygen, emitting only water vapour and heat as by-products. They offer zero-emission propulsion and are particularly suitable for heavy-duty vehicles.
- **Sustainable alternatives:** Continued research into other sustainable alternatives, such as synthetic fuels produced from renewable electricity (e.g., Power-to-Liquid), holds promise for further reducing carbon emissions in logistics.

3. Optimised route planning: Utilising smart algorithms and AI for optimised route planning enhances efficiency and reduces environmental impact in logistics.

- **Real-time data:** Integration of IoT sensors and GPS tracking provides real-time data on traffic conditions, weather, and road closures, allowing for dynamic route adjustments to avoid congestion and optimise fuel efficiency.

Embracing green logistics technology not only enhances operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness but also plays a crucial role in mitigating environmental impact

- **Algorithmic optimisation:** Advanced algorithms analyse historical data and real-time inputs to determine the most efficient routes, considering factors like traffic patterns, delivery schedules, and vehicle capacities.
- **Emission reduction:** By minimising unnecessary mileage and idle time, optimised route planning reduces fuel consumption and emissions, contributing to environmental sustainability.

4. Last-mile delivery innovations: Efficient and eco-friendly last-mile delivery solutions are critical for reducing congestion and emissions in urban areas:

- **Drones:** Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones can deliver small packages directly to customers' doorsteps, bypassing traffic congestion and reducing delivery times. They operate on electricity, further minimising environmental impact.
- **Autonomous vehicles:** Self-driving delivery vehicles are being developed to navigate urban environments autonomously, reducing the need for human drivers and optimising delivery routes for efficiency.
- **Microhubs:** Strategically located microhubs in urban centres enable consolidation of deliveries, reducing the number of individual trips and optimising the use of electric or hybrid vehicles for last-mile delivery.

5. Green warehousing: Adopting eco-friendly practices in warehouses enhances sustainability throughout the logistics supply chain:

- **Energy-efficient lighting:** Switching to LED lighting reduces energy consumption and operating costs compared to traditional lighting systems.
- **Solar panels:** Installing solar panels on warehouse rooftops generates renewable electricity, reducing dependence on grid power and lowering carbon emissions.
- **Sustainable packaging:** Using biodegradable or recyclable packaging materials reduces waste and environmental impact associated with packaging disposal.
- **Water conservation:** Implementing water-saving technologies like rainwater harvesting systems reduces water consumption and supports sustainable water management practices.

So, embracing green logistics technology not only enhances operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness but also plays a crucial role in mitigating environmental impact. By integrating electric and hybrid vehicles, exploring alternative fuels, optimising route planning with AI, innovating last-mile delivery solutions, and adopting green practices in warehouses, the logistics industry can contribute significantly to sustainable development goals while meeting the growing demand for efficient and eco-friendly transportation solutions.

Smart cities

1. IoT integration: Internet of Things (IoT) devices play a crucial role in real-time data collection and management in urban logistics:

- **Sensor networks:** IoT sensors embedded in vehicles, infrastructure

Traffic signals equipped with sensors and connected to central management systems adjust signal timings based on real-time traffic conditions, prioritising freight vehicles to reduce congestion and optimise flow

(like roads and bridges), and logistics assets (containers, pallets) collect real-time data on location, status, and environmental conditions.

- **Data transmission:** Data from IoT devices is transmitted to centralised platforms where it is processed and analysed. This enables logistics operators to monitor and optimise supply chain operations continuously.
- **Predictive maintenance:** IoT sensors can detect wear and tear in vehicles and infrastructure, allowing for predictive maintenance scheduling to minimise downtime and operational disruptions.
- **Inventory management:** IoT-enabled inventory tracking systems provide real-time visibility into stock levels and location, optimising inventory management and reducing the risk of stockouts or overstocking.

2. Traffic management: Smart traffic management systems leverage technology to optimise freight movement within cities:

- **Smart traffic signals:** Traffic signals equipped with sensors and connected to central management systems adjust signal timings based on real-time traffic conditions, prioritising freight vehicles to reduce congestion and optimise flow.
- **Congestion prediction:** Advanced algorithms analyse historical and real-time traffic data to predict congestion hotspots and suggest alternative routes or timing adjustments for freight vehicles.
- **Dynamic Routing:** Integration with logistics fleet management systems allows for dynamic routing adjustments in response to traffic conditions, minimising delivery times and fuel consumption.

3. Data analytics: Big data analytics play a pivotal role in enhancing logistics efficiency and minimising environmental impact:

- **Route optimisation:** Analysing vast amounts of data on traffic patterns, weather conditions, and delivery schedules enables logistics operators to optimise routes for efficiency, reducing fuel consumption and emissions.
- **Demand forecasting:** Predictive analytics models forecast demand fluctuations, enabling better inventory management and resource allocation to meet customer needs while minimising waste.
- **Environmental impact assessment:** Data analytics help quantify and analyse the environmental impact of logistics operations, facilitating informed decision-making to implement sustainability initiatives.

4. **Shared mobility solutions:** Shared mobility options contribute to reducing traffic congestion and pollution in urban areas:

- **Bike-sharing and car-sharing:** Integrated bike-sharing programs and car-sharing services provide flexible and sustainable transportation alternatives for urban residents and logistics operators.
- **Micro-mobility solutions:** Electric scooters and small electric vehicles for last-mile deliveries reduce reliance on traditional delivery trucks, easing congestion and lowering emissions in

Logistics parks are typically located near major highways, ports, airports, and rail terminals to facilitate efficient goods movement and reduce transportation costs and time

densely populated areas.

- **Collaborative logistics:** Sharing logistics resources such as warehouse space or delivery routes among multiple companies enhances efficiency and reduces overall transportation costs and environmental impact.

5. Urban consolidation centres: Urban Consolidation Centres (UCCs) serve as centralised hubs for consolidating freight to minimise congestion and pollution in city centres:

- **Efficient freight distribution:** Goods from multiple suppliers are consolidated at UCCs before being distributed to their final destinations using fewer and more efficient delivery vehicles.
- **Reduced mileage:** By reducing the number of vehicles entering city centres and consolidating deliveries, UCCs minimise vehicle miles travelled (VMT), lowering fuel consumption, emissions, and traffic congestion.
- **Optimised last-mile delivery:** UCCs enable more efficient last-mile delivery operations by providing a staging area for sorting and organising deliveries, optimising routes, and coordinating schedules to minimise idle time and vehicle emissions.

Thus, Smart Cities leverage IoT integration, advanced traffic management systems, data analytics, shared mobility solutions, and Urban Consolidation Centres to transform urban logistics. These technologies and strategies not only improve logistics efficiency, reduce delivery times, and minimise environmental impact but also contribute

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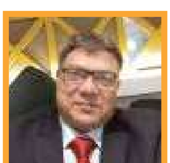

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Debasish Sur is Professor, Department of Commerce, The University of Burdwan, Burdwan.


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to creating more liveable, sustainable, and resilient cities. Embracing these smart city initiatives is essential for addressing the challenges of urbanisation and ensuring a greener future for urban logistics.

Logistics parks

1. Location and design:
Logistics parks are strategically located and designed to optimise freight movement while minimising environmental impact:

- **Proximity to transportation networks:** Logistics parks are typically located near major highways, ports, airports, and rail terminals to facilitate efficient goods movement and reduce transportation costs and time.
- **Urban sprawl mitigation:** By centralising logistics activities in designated areas, logistics parks help mitigate urban sprawl and minimise the environmental footprint associated with transportation and logistics operations.
- **Land use planning:** Careful land use planning considers environmental factors such as wildlife habitats, water resources, and air quality to minimise disruptions and conserve natural ecosystems.

2. Multimodal connectivity: Integration with various transportation modes enhances the efficiency and flexibility of logistics operations:

- **Rail, road, and waterways:** Logistics parks are designed with access to multiple transportation modes, enabling seamless intermodal freight movement. This integration reduces reliance on trucks alone and optimises transportation routes based on cargo type and destination.
- **Intermodal terminals:** Some logistics parks include intermodal terminals where containers can be transferred between different modes of transportation (e.g., ship to rail or truck to rail), optimising logistics efficiency and reducing transportation costs.
- **Dynamic routing:** Integration with logistics fleet management systems allows for dynamic routing adjustments in response to traffic conditions, minimising delivery times and fuel consumption.

3. Green building standards: Logistics parks are increasingly adopting green building certifications and sustainable construction practices:

- **LEED certification:** Logistics park developers strive to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, ensuring energy efficiency, water conservation, and reduced environmental impact in building design and operations.
- **Energy-efficient infrastructure:**


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pramit Sur is Senior Management Trainee, HCL Technologies Ltd, Noida.

Installation of energy-efficient lighting, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems reduces energy consumption and operating costs while minimising carbon emissions.

- **Renewable energy:** Integration of renewable energy sources such as solar panels or wind turbines helps meet electricity needs sustainably and reduces dependency on fossil fuels.

4. Advanced warehouse technologies: Automation and robotics play a crucial role in enhancing operational efficiency within logistics parks:

- **Automated storage and retrieval systems (ASRS):** ASRS automate inventory management, storage, and retrieval processes, optimising warehouse space and reducing labor costs.
- **Robotics for loading/unloading:** Automated guided vehicles (AGVs) and robotic arms streamline loading and unloading operations, reducing turnaround times and improving throughput.
- **Inventory management systems:** RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) and IoT-enabled systems provide real-time visibility and traceability of goods, improving inventory accuracy and order fulfillment efficiency.

5. Sustainable practices: Implementation of sustainable practices within logistics parks further enhances environmental stewardship:

- **Rainwater harvesting:** Collection and storage of rainwater for landscaping, irrigation, or non-potable uses reduce dependency on municipal water sources and promote water conservation.
- **Waste recycling:** Comprehensive recycling programs for packaging materials, paper, plastics, and other waste streams minimise landfill contributions and promote resource reuse.
- **Environmental management systems:** Adoption of EMS (Environmental Management Systems) ensures compliance with environmental regulations and continuous improvement in environmental performance.
- **Green procurement:** Procuring eco-friendly products and materials for construction, maintenance, and operations supports sustainable supply chain practices and reduces environmental impact.

Hence, logistics parks are pivotal in modern supply chain management, integrating strategic location, multimodal connectivity, green building standards, advanced technologies, and sustainable practices to optimise logistics efficiency while minimising environmental impact. By embracing these principles, logistics parks contribute to creating more sustainable and resilient logistics infrastructure for the future.

Concluding remarks

While challenges remain, the ongoing development and adoption of green logistics technology, smart cities infrastructure, and logistics parks are reshaping the landscape of urban logistics. By harnessing innovation and sustainability, stakeholders in the logistics industry are not only improving their operational efficiencies but are also making significant strides towards creating greener, smarter, and more resilient cities worldwide. IM

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Priyangshu Ganguly is a student of PGDM, Great Lakes Institute of Management, Gurgaon.


Dinesh Bhogale

Various factors contribute to workplace happiness; nevertheless, an individual's perspective plays a crucial role.

✦ J DEVAPRAKASH, TARAPUR ATOMIC POWER STATION

The secret to workplace happiness

To work is human. Work is a central part of humankind, with an average of one-third of a person's life spent at work. But does everyone enjoy a happy workplace?

State of the Global Workplace Report 2024 by Gallup, a multinational analytics and management consultancy company, finds that 41 per cent of the global workforces feel stressed at work. Another similar finding by an American HR solutions company, BambooHR, reveals that employees' global happiness index has been declining year after year and in 2023 it drastically fell by 9 per cent. The story is not different at home in India: about 25 per cent employees have a sense of alienation in their current workplace, according to a recent public survey by ISS India.

Is job hopping the solution?

Expectations, lack of support, low authority, interpersonal issues, unclear roles, and organisation changes are the major causes for workplace stress.

Quitting is the easiest way if you feel the workplace is uncongenial. In fact, job hopping, the practice of changing jobs, is becoming increasingly common. But there is a catch. Finding a job that aligns with your skills and goals is challenging in today's competitive environment. Even if you find one, it may not turn out to be the paradise you imagine. Changing the employer in hurried manner may land you in an even unhealthier workplace.

Perhaps, adopting yourself to the present job climate can bring you a more positive work experience. This can help you either stay with your current employer or at least maintain your composure until you find another better job

The happiness equation

It is not just organisations that have to strive for a conducive work environment, workers too need to do it. As *Harvard Business Review* puts it, workplace happiness is a two-way street and if it is achieved it is win-win for both the employees and employers. Undoubtedly, organisations worldwide are doing their part by implementing strategies to provide better employee experience. As an employee, there are many ways you can keep cool yourself and thereby contribute to creating workplace happiness. Here are two:

Focus drives work engagement

In avifauna, there is a classification of birds called 'waders' which comprises over 200 species of birds such as sandpipers, plovers and stints. Waders that usually inhabit along the shorelines are known for their ability to forage in mud. Finding food from such a challenging environment isn't an easy job: First, their prey remains obscure amidst the mud; second, their legs often get stuck

in the soft and sticky soil, impeding their mobility; then the flowing currents dislodge the prey and destabilise the birds themselves. Undeterred, the waders press on with their essential task of finding food. Their success hinges on two elements: Staying focused and using their special characteristics (their sensitive bill nerve helps to detect the hidden prey and their long thin legs and agile toes facilitate navigation with stability).

From workload to lack of support, bullying, and team politics, you may find plenty of reasons at work to worry about. The first step to recovering from this negative environment is recognising that you are in an unfavorable situation and you are stressed. Then, like the birds wading ahead ignoring obstacles, focus diligently on your assignment with enthusiasm. Besides, just as the waders capitalize their traits leverage your strengths to increase your job engagement.

Embrace changes

Producing ice is a refrigerator's job. However, its productivity varies seasonally, with higher output in summer and lower in winter. To adapt to this, refrigerators offer modes like summer, winter, and monsoon. Owners must adjust the mode for optimal performance, but many are unaware or forget to do so. Consequently, the refrigerator either overworks or underperforms, leading to increased energy consumption or ice shortages.

Can you guess who will be blamed for this disarray? Of course, the refrigerator. The owner never accepts his negligence but will simply say, "the fridge is not good.". Conversely, modern-day refrigerators come with automatic temperature control system. Taking cue from the circumstances, such smart refrigerators adapt themselves to the ongoing circumstances.

You may be a tireless worker. But, your energy and productivity become meaningless when it is not recognised. You may even be blamingly labelled as 'audacious'. So, like the modern fridge, align yourself with the prevailing circumstances or system and expend energy only as much as is required. Do not overexert yourself where 'being ambitious' is seen as a problem. Change the mode that best suits the situation. Similarly, whenever you are led to underperformance, bounce back to prove your worth by identifying the root cause and prioritising tasks.

Remember, you are adjusting only your performance given the circumstances but not compromising with your integrity or standards.

Orient yourself

Feeling apathetic about your job can increase daily stress, worry, and negative emotions. Instead, finding meaning in your work and positive work relationships can boost daily enjoyment and reduce negativity.

Focusing on your tasks and goals while adjusting your expectations and reactions is the key to maintaining a positive outlook, even in a hostile workplace. Various factors contribute to workplace happiness; nevertheless an individual's perspective plays a crucial role. Because, happiness lies within. IM

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

J Devaprakash
is Deputy General Manager, Tarapur Atomic Power Station.