

GANDHI AND BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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“My life is my message”- M. K. Gandhi

ABSTRACT

This paper, puts an effort to analyse the managerial abilities of Bapuji, the father of our nation. He is now being looked upon as a new role model. This paper tries to address the relevance of Gandhian ideologies to the Business management & to social issues and reveals managerial qualities of Gandhiji.

Mahatma Gandhiji, was successful in getting freedom to the India in a very uncommon way i.e. through the non-violence. He showed to the world the power of non-violence. He fought with the mighty British Empire, as a Pradeep (lyricist) said, (a song from film –Jagruti)

देदी हमे आझादी तुने खड्ग बिना ढाल
साबरमती के संत तुने करदीया कमाल
रघुपती राघव राजाराम

Gandhi's ideas, philosophies, now popularly known as Gandhism. Gandhiji never started any 'ism' but said, “my life is my message” and there is lot to be learn from his experiments with truth. His ideologies, still holds good, to the social issues, political and even to the corporate world. Gandhiji is now being looked upon as a new role model, by management Guru's. Let us now reveal the managerial qualities of Gandhiji.

PLANNING :- Planning is very important, before starting any task. Let us now look into the planning behind the freedom struggle.

Innovative way :

'Poorna Swarj' was the sole objective of all leaders, in India. Freedom fighters, knew that Britishers are powerful and they do not have much resources to fight against British Empire. Gandhiji was very clear , about the path, which leads to the destination i.e. swaraj. The path he has chosen was “Non-violence”.

His previous experiments of “Satyagraha” in South-Africa, were taking bigger shapes in India and he believed firmly, in his way to achieve the goal. This shows Gandhiji's ability to innovate a way breaking the traditional way of war , to reach to the Goal. His followers, (the people of India) were weak politically, financially, but he has converted that weakness into strength through his way of war. Which was innovative and that was 'Satyagraha'.

'Satyagraha' :- Gandhi was greatly influenced by Indian culture. Gandhiji always believed in the power of non-violence strongly, to achieve his objective. He coined the name 'Satyagraha' for an active resistance to an injustice, in a non-violent way. By practicing eternal values like “Truth & non-violence”, which stands high in Indian culture, moulded M. K. Gandhi to 'Mahatma' i.e. great soul.

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Gandhiji combined spirituality to the politics and innovated a new way to achieve his objective, i.e. through satyagraha. 'Satyagraha' still the popular way to fight against the injustice in society and in Industry.

Gandhiji's Action Plan

The leaders in 1930 were thinking on how to achieve the goal of 'Poona Swaraj'. Bapuji was also thinking on what can ignite the fire of action and can unite the whole nation and drive common-man's will. For this the strategy (management Guru C.K. Pralhad interpreted Gandhiji as strategist.) that he had adopted was to break the law of British Govt by manufacturing the salt. British govt had monopoly on manufacturing and sale of salt in India. They had taxed heavily on Salt. Mahatma Gandhi made 'Salt taxation' as the main theme to unite the common man of India, and gained momentum to freedom struggle through the historic march to Dandi (Salt Satyagraha)

Salt Satyagraha reflects Gandhiji's ability to innovate the way, to achieve the objective and to frame action plans. 'Dandi Yatra' was well planned and organised by Gandhiji. He planned 'Salt Satyagraha' based on the analysis of the country's situation and reading the pulse of the common-man.

Motivation :

The Congress demanded the 'Poorna-Swaraj'. The people of India were motivated by this demand and were inspired to become satyagrahis. Gandhiji's 'Salt-Satyagraha' gained attention in India and abroad. The govt was informed about the action-plans of Satyagraha by Gandhiji himself. He wrote a letter to victory addressing him as a dear friend which was unusual in politics. He uses to motivate people through his speeches, press releases and addresses during the prayers at ashram. He created great enthusiasm in the public about the Dandi Yatra and he had good relations with the press. He converted the freedom struggle (Dandi yatra) into an event, & made people eager about the event.

Organising and Directing :

Such a large scale civil disobedience would not have been possible if it would not have been given proper organising and guidance. Gandhiji's knew for a mass civil-obedience it was necessary to create a large group of volunteers, who have understood the strict conditions of satyagraha. The rules of 'Satyagraha—active resistance' were written and were released in the press so that the followers get the proper guidance.

Sabarmati Ashram earlier being called as "Satyagraha Ashram" was devoted to search for truth and bring together a group of people committed to "Ahimsa" and who are ready to render their services to the cause of freedom. Gandhi was a great organiser of non co-operative movements. 'Swadeshi' and 'Salt-Satyagraha' are few examples of his organising and directing skills.

Staffing : Gandhiji always maintained a good relationship with national leaders. During the 'Salt-Satyagraha' he vested the responsibility of carrying-over the Satyagraha to the congress, if he was arrested. The responsibility of 'Young India' was given to Mr. Reginald Reynolds.

Controlling : Controlling was through the proper monitoring and guidance. He controlled the communal riots by doing fast for 21 days. Thus he controlled the angry mob involved in violence, that was the only one example of that kind. Fasting is also satyagraha.

This is how he has shown extra ordinary managerial qualities, while leading the freedom struggle, and achieved the objective in a different way.

Let us now look at the Gandhiji's philosophies on business practices. Can the corporate world entirely adopt the philosophies of Gandhiji's?

Gandhiji On Customers : Gandhi understood the importance of customer to the business and was right when he said "A customer is the most important, visitor on our premises

He is not dependent on us.

We are dependent on him.

He is not an interruption on our work.

He is the purpose of it

He is not an outsider on our business."

The same holds good even today and this forms bases of marketing strategy and CRM

Gandhi on Industrial relations : Gandhiji views on industrial relations are based on his principles of non-violence, non possession and truth. Gandhiji always advocated a peaceful way of resolving disputes between management and employees. He was of the opinion that the workers should avoid strikes in industries of essential services. He advocated the industrial democracy and suggested 'Trade Unions' to seek ballot authority from all workers before organising a strike. He emphasised the efforts of direct settlement between the management and trade unions. He was of the opinion that strike should be the last resort for workers. Gandhiji advocated workers right to strike but in a non-violent way, i.e. the way of Satyagraha.

Principle of Trusteeship : "Sharing of wealth" and transforming the capitalist order is the principle of trusteeship, this entirely can not be adopted by the corporate world . But they work in the interest of society, employees & customers. Gandhiji was of the opinion that there should be a limit to own a wealth by any individual or company and workers are expected to be co-trustees with the management.

Gandhism to Social Issues

Terrorism- In these days of Globalisation no country is self sufficient or can live in isolation. The economies are dependable and the most crucial issues the world is facing today is terrorism. Non-co-operation by the world with a rouge country can be one way to tackle terrorism.

Gandhiji's decade long non-violent movement has inspired leaders across the world from South Africa's Nelson Mandela to exiled Tibetan leader Dalia Lama. The tibetian freedom struggle against china is influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's message of non-violence, said samdhong Rinpoche, tibetian prime-minister in exile on 1st oct, 2008.

Mahatma Gandhiji was a great leader and manager. He combined spirituality with the work and always given importance to the means of achieving the goal, than just the results or goal. His ideologies are still relevant to social issues and to the business management. Gandhiji's values, ideology are relevant to all times , since they are based on the eternal values like Ahimsa and Truth. Adopting these values he innovated the ways to achieve the results, that speaks about his managerial and leadership skills.

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