

# Shall Managers Rule the Future?

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"Fifty Years Hence.."

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The 'Past' as we see it

The WTC's gone. And gone for good. Do you think they are going to rebuild it? Well, I guess not. A shoddy display of 'asymmetry of information' harassing an entire nation! No longer is information and knowledge endemic to a few big ones. For decades, these biggies ruled, being the sole bearers of information. They bought it (only they could), possessed it, passed it within themselves, made lots of money out of it, and grew bigger. Then, man networked voice and data. The first WAN of 23 computers across U.S cost Mc Kinsey 3 million dollars in the 1980's(ah! revelry of the moneyed). Today companies with a decade's turnover of 3 million dollars are networked. Plethora of knowledge, accessible information and know-how has welled up with anyone who is a no one, now a potential business go-getter. Market has grown from regional to default global. Customer is everyone human.

The next 50 years is any technocrat's conjecture. But certain somethings shall very well be. And it doesn't take an H.G.Wells to point that to us.

Telecommunications, for one shall be rightfully placed. The Capability of getting connected from anywhere, any technology, or any device. Convergence of Telephone/Internet/Cable/Computer/Satellite/Video shall exist. This integration of communication shall equip each man to be a potential 'know all, want all, be all'. Each person shall be a worker, a customer, a businessman.

So, Can trends be drawn from the past?

Embalming would be a fashion today if we were to grow by past trends. Maybe that's how old we are today as compared to what we shall be fifty 'fast' years hence. The entire thinking is about consigning to posterity with permanent amnesia of the past.

What are we looking at?

Work structure in a virtual world, process automation, home-work integration, and new technology may mean only a 1-month lead. 'Value' shall remain. 'Chain' shall vanish, with buyers and sellers getting linked directly. Disinvestments of larger entities and channel partnering of biggies. Inefficiency and bloatedness, so far thrust and charged for, from the customer to go. Profits shall vaporize. Companies with their products and services shall exist in their most potent and efficient form. The customer shall find them. Workers will become independent contractors, operating as contingent nomadic workers in response to ever-changing needs of employers.

## Metamorphosis of Management Functions?

Speculating future requires separating what is likely to happen from one's own wishful thinking about what ought to happen. The picture painted hereafter is a direct inference (too brash perhaps!) from the possibilities of all probabilities mentioned above.

### Human Resources

Mind the fact that contract workers are available 24 hours online. Thus staffing gets the kick. Recruitment to shift hands from HR Managers to 'in the line of business' Project Managers who shall float employee qualifications based on 'current time' project. Interviews by video conferencing. Terms discussed over the wires. Soft-skills take the backseat (who needs it anyway from a Timbuktu guy?) Specialization skills take the cake. Contract workers aint craving for portfolios and positions; only project savvy and money hungry (Maslow, are you hearing!).

Any work left? HR sees whether the contract worker abides by the terms- conditions. If not, gets into legalities pertaining the same. A U.S worker knows what it means to be sued, not an Indian one! A U.S worker takes weekends off, not a Japanese one. A global socio-legal knowhow is a prerogative for the HR. This know-how helps in time of recruiting alongwith the Project Manager.

### Marketing and Sales

Tch.Tch. Does anyone need them anyway? Retailing shall be marred (with Ozone depletion, is it worth going out!). Cyber malls and cyber shopping is in. Advertising is on the dry and shall see a drought. The customer is the 'knowledge man'. What he needs is a click away, to find and to get. Who fits his slate wins. The others and their advertisers don't. Market Research gives you the present, not the future and with high mortality product life cycles the present is past. Who delivers the future in the present, wins. Product development shall be the kitty of the R & D who shall be demanded to be creative as well as technical.

If at all, the crucial job of handling key accounts and reporting back to the operations and R&D shall be the only feather in the cap.

### Operations

Procurement & Ordering shall be online. Vendor/supplier finalization shall require the human touch. Production scheduling, Inventory management, Assembly line shall be automated. Defects and error checking in processes shall be automated and communicated. Maintenance and Troubleshooting shall require human intervention (phew!). Also the operations team needs to be on the toes with referrals coming from the Marketing Department and the customer! The stage is set for the C2B business game.

## Finance

The Gods of business. In a Perfect player's market with homogenous pricing, easy entry and easier exit; profit-money shall be a lemon. In situations such as these Budgeting, Auditing, Managing revenues, Streamlining business processes, Cost based pricing, precautionary measures and Business Continuity Planning are the cards the company plays with. Managing finances is managing business.

## IT and Systems

Mission critical. Considering that the end all of businesses shall be on networks and softwares to keep it going. Technology shall become plug and play, commoditized and a hygiene factor. No longer a differentiating factor. Business value shall stem from how well technology is managed. Networks shall be managed by network vendors working on client sites on outsourcing. If everything is outsourced anyway why does one need a CIO? Because vendor management can be carried out best by him!

## Final say...

We have berated almost all. So are we losers? Well, for one, all management functions that have enjoyed crucial roles thus far shall see a sad demise of their powerplay in terms of the gamut of roles that they have operated in. The promising part however is that the job is more fun and demanding as the focus in 2053 'is' more on innovation and anticipation. He who seeks strategies and plans from the future shall reap benefits in the present.

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