

Current Times

These are the best times to be a consumer (unlimited choices) or entrepreneur (unlimited opportunities without any practical barrier) but worst times for any leader (being observed, commented, criticized, advised and ridiculed everywhere and by everybody).

Since these are great times for any maker, unfortunately, these are great times for any breaker as well as they also have access to almost everything and that too virtually for free. Today, the fight is not between have-lots and have-nots, capitalism versus communism, western versus oriental but between order and disorder, system versus anarchy, process versus chaos.

Credibility is the foundation of leadership. It is a three dimensional matrix: Up – with board (Commitment); Down – with employees (Faith) and Out – with financial and social communities (Confidence). One-way communication is not acceptable.

Every job is being simultaneously pulled in three directions: Up – Requiring More Skills; Down – Outsourced and Out – prone to substitution by hardware and software. There is no place for anything average because the best is neither rare nor expensive and it is as much true for individual as it is for societies / communities / groups / states. The world now operates in 2nd Machine Age where human labour compliments machine labour less and less and prone to be substituted by software / robots / outsourcing.

Hiring people who supplement and compliment your own skill sets is the only way to keep the average IQ of team going up. They must be better than you, at least in the functions they are engaged to perform. Similarly, hire / engage / pursue wide and versatile talent in the board.

Review periodically your strategy, competitive position (internally as well as externally) and critically and continually evaluate what creates value and what destroys it. Remain unapologetic, objective and ruthless in encouraging former while killing later, simultaneously. Situational values have to be replaced with sustainable values, and replaced immediately.

In 2014, Markets, Mother Nature and Moore's law have entered into exponential phase (2nd part of Chessboard) simultaneously, creating unprecedented turbulence and opportunities. Advent and affordability of Personal Computer, coupled with easy (almost free) availability of internet, together with arrival of social media and work flow software have redefined competition and opportunities.

Markets have moved from connected to hyper-connected, interconnected to interdependent. Markets are heavily oscillating between greed and fear, mostly somewhere in between. All the walls and silos and physical barriers of the world are broken now but they still exist in their virtual avatar in most of the corporates.

In this world, top down imposed order is unsustainable and horizontal, bottom up and social harmony is only way to keep the order. Acknowledging and appreciating that ours is a pluralistic world that need to encourage pluralism, tolerance, accommodation and respect is the only sustainable way.

Today your friends can kill you faster and easier than your enemies. Financial crisis in Greece or economic slowdown in China or social unrest in Middle East has far serious implications on US than business troubles at home or threats from some rogue states. Friend failing (or even falling) is more dangerous than rival succeeding (rising).