

Tap enterprise consciousness

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Enterprises are like living organisms. Only if their consciousness is awakened and enriched, they can thrive longer

In September 2004, in what came to be historically termed as Battle at Kruger, the laws of jungles were dramatically challenged. The supremacy of the lion as the uncontested king of jungle and a master predator was questioned. In 2008, closer to our familiar world of civilized wilderness, the tsunami of economic recession witnessed the demise of many a roaring lion. This was not the first time that striving for supremacy, strength or even survival, seemingly invincible enterprises collapsed. The bust of 2002 had also witnessed similar collapses as had the downturn in early 90s.

Ignoring the impending doom associated with the cyclical depression in economy striking every 7 to 10 years, and despite the proven futility of chasing economic indicators, a large number of business enterprises striving to survive and fighting for size and supremacy have kept going bust decade after decade.

What ails enterprise life and longevity?

When we look deeply into the possible reasons for pre-mature enterprise mortality the truth that hits us straight in the face is perhaps most of these crumbling corporations were not alive and meant to live. They were economic machineries engineered by design to serve short-sighted motives. Growth for such enterprises had also been artificially induced and often cancerous. And while they had more or less served the greed-led motives of their stakeholders before collapsing, the debris of carcass left behind in itself remains a threat to the enterprise ecology. The price of which is being paid by the tax payer.

This is in complete contrast to the likes of Stora, a mining major in Sweden which is still going strong at 700 plus years. This organization seems to have been, by design, co-created as a living entity with a certain immutable purpose to live for. Creating value out of the values it is driven by. And most importantly, growing organically to ensure sustained wealth, wisdom and well-being for the stake holders.

Despite ambient contaminants and constraints due to parasitic co-existence of non-living enterprises (and often mimicking as living enterprises) and vagaries of economic forces, living enterprises have managed to survive because they inherently are adaptive systems - inter-related, inter-dependent and interacting, with other living and adaptive systems and the ever-changing enterprise ecology. Unlike their non-living or pseudo-living counter parts, they don't bother to 'manage' change but naturally respond to it by evolving.

Are all living enterprises evolving? Are all seeds sprouting? Are all plants flowering and bearing fruit?

There is an element of consciousness of a certain essence of life amongst living systems. This is the fundamental determinant for a living enterprise to evolve. Thus, there could be enterprises which are very much alive, breathing and pulsating over decades and yet with little or no sign of movement. This is a classical case of the enterprise consciousness being not awakened, threatening extinction of a living enterprise.

Ten fundamentals for enterprise evolution are:

1. Executive intent, belief and commitment to support enterprise life and its evolution.
2. Respecting change and disruption in the business habitat as a systemic process seeking correction and neutralization.
3. Enterprise willingness to let go of habits (read best practices, winning strategies, among others) to spontaneously and instinctively respond to complex changes in the habitats.
4. Investing in uncovering the essential enterprise 'being' and not getting carried away with 'becoming' for exploiting short-term opportunities.
5. Enterprise membership based on a process of alignment and enrolment to the essential being
6. Enterprise leadership driven by a cause and mission, rather than being motivated by the need to manage and overcome fear of change.
7. Encouraging a process of natural selection for creating and living interdependent stakeholder relationships.
8. Learnability – openness and receptivity to learning as an enterprise – as an enterprise culture
9. Enterprise learning that promotes continuous empowerment of its members as agents for enterprises evolution
10. An enterprise-wide system of close-loop feedback and knowledge osmosis to enable continuous sensing and responsiveness.

While as free citizens of an independent country we all have the choice to exist the way we want, its high time that as responsible citizens of India Inc. we come together to reclaim the space that has been encroached by entities feigning to 'live' quarter-to-quarter, brace ourselves to create purposeful living enterprises and seek help to awaken the collective enterprise consciousness to stay relevant and evolve. It is incidental that economic well-being, wealth and wisdom will follow.