

Vipassana and Business Management

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Abstract

Business Management: With the growing complexities of business especially industrial business-the use of meditation techniques has become popular during the last few years. However, they have been used mainly as stress relieving techniques for executives subjected to the tensions of achieving targets.

Management of a medium scale industrial business requires organization, quality control, production, purchasing, marketing, fund flow, administration, etc. Each of these operations requires clear thinking, planning, coordination, and execution, cost accounting, and profitability projections. There are presently several colleges which teach this type of management. There are special techniques of management for large organizations with turnovers of three hundred crores rupees (one hundred million U.S. dollars) and over. Research and development methods are also available for upgrading the technology of these businesses.

Keywords: Business Management, Vipassana, Meditation, Business etc.

1. Introduction

Need for Meditation: Where exactly does meditation come into the picture? To get an answer, we have to look to more industrialized countries such as the United States and Germany. The nature of the societies produced by advanced industrialization has been characterized by heavy alcohol, drug and cigarette consumption; pandemic divorces and broken families; economic recession and job insecurities; and strong feelings of competition and frustration leading to heart attacks, suicide and so on.

Fragmented Society: People who become business managers come from this fragmented society. Business schools teach them to work for more profits and higher salaries, and the stress involved leads to greater consumption of drugs and alcohol, and various health problems such as hyper-tension. The level of equanimity in such societies deteriorates. The business owners, executives and managers develop feelings of pride, prejudice, jealousy and arrogance and experience their concomitants: depression, anxiety, stress and other harmful effects.

2. Positive Transformation

The Vipassana meditation technique improves the lives of executives and business managers by transforming their attitudes. Prejudice is replaced by compassion; jealousy changes into joy at the success of others; greed and arrogance are replaced by generosity and humility, and so on.

This transformation of attitude results in stress reduction, and mental equanimity and balance. It is a creative force capable of inducing a dynamic work approach in subordinate staff. The positive change is brought about by a change in the attitude and actions of the executive-to polite and compassionate behaviour, gentle speech, and a mind full of love and friendliness. This positive change in consciousness is the aim of genuine meditation practice, and it forms a new and advanced basis for business and industrial management.

3. Present Scene

Business management is presently judged by profits or "money-making" ability. Managers are evaluated by their ability to make more money by increasing product turnover, developing new technologies with better payoffs, or decreasing costs through new inventions. In return, they want higher salaries and more requisites. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with generating profits and an increase in incomes, the real aim of an economic venture is to create a wealth which combines money with health and happiness. Vipassana makes a significant contribution towards improving the mental health and happiness of individuals-vital components of wealth.

4. Human Resource Development

Many companies currently have human resource development departments, popularly known as HRD. HRD is a welcome new concept because human beings working in business or industry should not be taken for granted. They need to be developed. One of the parameters in this process is the development of mutual respect, which naturally improves interpersonal relations. Meditation will also help to achieve this, enabling us to overcome the hostility towards fellow human beings- colleagues, subordinates, superiors, government officers and others. This hostility manifests as anger, arrogance, jealousy, vengeance, selfishness, greed, prejudice and ill will. Lectures, seminars,

books, discussions and so on give some understanding of these subjects. Nevertheless, more than 95% of the negative material in the human mind remains unaffected despite an intellectual understanding of the value of overcoming hostility, negativity and selfishness. This statement stems from my own experience, as well as interviews with more than one hundred business executives during the last ten years.

5. Right Livelihood

The practice of Right Livelihood is an important aspect of Vipassana meditation. It can become the foundation for business management practice, upon which can be based traditional management techniques of using statistical data such as of cash-flow projections, return on capital, GNP, the turnover of profits, and so on. These parameters are useful if they are based on the concept of Right Livelihood.

Briefly, the application of this concept means that income, whether of a business corporation or an individual, should not only be ethical, but the consciousness of the individuals producing this income should be reasonably clean, i.e., free from the negativities mentioned above. A mental climate free of negativities automatically becomes pure and exhibits the characteristics of genuine love, respect, co-operation, compassion and equanimity. Wealth produced by a group consciousness of this nature not only produces money, but also the mental health and happiness resulting from a stress-free mind.

6. Subconscious Mind

Without going into the details of Vipassana meditation, I will touch upon an important aspect of the transformation of consciousness: the subconscious mind. Very little is known about this mind which is filled with negativities which are counter-productive to wealth in its totality. While it is possible to recognize and experience these negativities, it is not possible to empty the mind of these defilements without a proper technique.

Most meditation techniques are unable to reach the subconscious mind, they are not colourless and can therefore "taint" the mind which further complicates the situation. Vipassana bases every step on "reality-as it is." Vipassana allows a meditator to experience moments of "no nutriment to the mind. This starts the process of "detoxifying" the mind of its impurities.

7. Industrial Sickness

A mind which does not meditate and develops impurity causes grave consequences. When the minds of industry leaders are impure, the ramifications are pervasive and serious. This phenomenon is exemplified by the classic example of the management failure at the Bombay Textile Mills. Twenty years ago, it was a viable, profit-making unit; however ' the greed for quick money caused a financial tragedy. The incoming

cash, which could have been used for modernizing the plant and machinery, or for financing working capital was syphoned out for the personal gain of the directors. Their livelihood was not "right livelihood". The defilement of greed killed the best interests of the directors and caused widespread misery to a large section of Bombay's workforce and economic system.

Vipassana meditation is a surgical operation of the mind. When practiced properly the pace of purification can be dramatically increased. The technique frees one's mind from greed. A healthy mind is alert and capable of meeting the demands of a situation. It naturally comes out of addictions and indulgences. The practice of Vipassana results in the diminishment 'of craving. A business conducted with the base of such a mind would have resulted in the growth of the textile industry rather than creating sick production units.

An analysis of the increasing industrial sickness and the failure of business management reveals a pattern. In many cases, over anxiety for export or expansion causes the working capital to be diverted into the generation of fixed assets. The result is an acute shortage of working capital and excessive borrowing—clearly dangerous avenues for business practice. With a mind made mature by meditation, these kinds of desire-driven actions are checked by the calm and cool temper of equanimity, which reduces the possibility of making such mistakes.

8. Pure Mind: The Basis of Management

The Vipassana technique does not create by itself a new technology of management. It contributes to the improvement of management by correcting the root of the problem—impurity of mind—so that a business is continually nourished by the pure food of right thoughts and action. It is excessive craving and greed which poison the minds of managers; this impurity is corrected by meditation.

9. Attitude towards Competition

Vipassana also changes one's attitude towards competitors. When a business cuts out a competitor, there is a chain reaction: a vicious cycle starts. Many businesses have been ruined by this attitude. Vipassana purifies the mind and fills it with wisdom which enables the practitioner to appreciate that there is room for everyone to coexist. The purification resulting from Vipassana practice results, as it were, in fertile soil where seeds of healthy business management are nurtured. The soil of healthy minds brings forth management practices where the primary aim is to generate peace and happiness in the society, with the secondary aim of generating money as a means for buying goods and services, and attaining economic emancipation and a higher quality of life.

Some highlights of the study are as follows:

Sixty percent of the employees have attended courses. About half of those have done more than one course.

Resultant changes in the organization have been a shift from authority rule to consensus decisions taken at a lower level, from one-upmanship to team spirit and from indecisiveness and insecurity to self motivation in the work-force. Productivity has improved by 20%.

10. Conclusion

I have had detailed discussions with more than a dozen business executives who are small-scale entrepreneurs, after their Vipassana courses. These discussions have confirmed that, after a Vipassana course, they are able to work 20% faster than before, and the quality of their work has the improved value of being performed by a subtle mind. They report that qualities of greed, anger, arrogance, and prejudice have decreased and there is less friction in dealing with staff members. Very healthy and cordial interpersonal relations have resulted, and the wealth of their enterprises has steadily increased as a result of these positive changes.

References

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