

LESSONS LEARNT FROM FAILURES

CASE TITLE: THE TRAUMA IN SHIFTING FROM THE CORPORATE
WORLD TO THE EDUCATIONAL WORLD

CASE AUTHOR: PROF. DR.R.GOPAL
DIRECTOR, HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT
D.Y. PATIL UNIVERISTY,
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT,
CBD BELAPUR, NAVI MUMBAI

The transition from the corporate world to the teaching world / educational world especially in to the full time program is one of real pain.

I was working with Siemens Ltd -- one of the WORLDS LARGEST ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING COMPANY, I spent almost 27 years there and prior to that with TATAs -- Tata Economic Consultancy Services, for 5 years and prior to that Bush India Ltd ., Larsen and Toubro etc

The out look of all the three organizations in terms of people need was quite different. It had one thing in common; however that was the Return on Investments or Profits Profits Profits.

All the three large organizations had a definite heirachy position which was more or less defined in terms of responsibilities and accountability. The scope of work, to whom you had to report, how you are allowed to do the job, the systems procedures etc are mostly well laid out.

The employees or people reporting to you were diverse group sometime young matured, unmarried or even just graduates. In some cases they were middle aged personnel with family burdens. In many a case they had children in school and colleges and came with it associated happiness, problems etc. etc. Gender wise it was a mix of male and female. At the time of leaving Siemens, I was responsible for more than 650 employees reporting to me and was responsible for a business of Rs. 1500'0 and a profitability of more than 30%

When I left Siemens to join the educational world (I joined because of my passion for teaching, I underwent a monetary loss of almost Rs.25 to 30000 per month—6th pay was not

mandatory) I went against the wishes of my entire family including my son, daughter and wife. I joined a Management College on 1st Jan 2004 and thereafter I joined another college in 2005- 2006. I joined in all the colleges as the Director or the Principal of the B School. At the time of joining I was told I was responsible for the entire smooth working of the B School as well as for the growth of the B School.

As soon as I joined the B School, the **first** thing that hit me badly was there was complete lack of hierarchy, the top management encouraged the office staff and faculty to bypass me and come straight way to them. Without consulting me decisions were taken. I used to hear this from the faculty concerned that so and so decision has been taken by the Top Management. It was expected that I would implement such decisions.

The **second** thing was the tussle (or perhaps the right word is the difference of opinion) I had with the trustees / top management -- me with my corporate thoughts and ideas and the way to run a management college and they with the school mentality. Both the B Schools had their background in running in primary and secondary schools. Both these schools were run very efficiently and effectively. In fact in some of these schools the likes of Mr Sachin Tendulkar, Mr Gavaskar etc had passed through. In all cases, the comparison was the way a B school should be run – on the same lines as the primary and secondary schools – in terms of infrastructure, teacher timetables, etc In fact the thought process was that the B School should be run in the same fashion as the primary and secondary school perhaps with some very little changes.

The **third** important issue was the selection of both the full time teacher and the visiting faculty – no say of the director.

The **fourth** important issue was the decision making capacity-- **grossly trampled**. In an organization like Siemens I had the power to sign and authorize purchase orders etc for more than Rs. 5 Crores. Here it was limited to less than Rs. 2000/- I had virtually to take permission from the trustees / top management for each and every item.

The trustees would not give you the decision making power -- no authority -- but you are responsible for the student community being happy, responsible for the staff being happy. They would require you to ensure that all AICTE (statutory body of the Government of India) compliances be met and you as Director are to meet the AICTE Officials when they come for inspection. The trustees normally would not like to meet them and would come and meet them only it is absolute necessary.

In my opinion, the working was **extremely difficult** NO AUTHORITY BUT RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERYTHING ----- starting from ensuring that the infrastructure is maintained well -- spic and span to ensuring 360 degree satisfaction.

By the time I joined DYPATIL University Department of Business Management in 2006, I had learnt the following lessons:

1. You are responsible for everything but you do not have the full authority.
 2. You need to have a very strong maturity to deal with the management.
 3. You need to come down to the level of the children/ students --- immature, fun loving, not so much bothered about many issues, almost in the age group of 21 years -- teenagers-- a state where they are not a child nor an adult.
 4. You need to talk to the faculty as if you are one of them -- not as a boss -- caring, transparent loving and open with them and yet you got to be strict to ensure that the rules are complied with.
 5. You need to devise some Key Result Areas (KRA) but the evaluation and subsequent reward in fulfilling the KRA is not in your hands. . That power remains with the top management.
 - 6, YOU ARE THE BOSS BUT YET YOU ARE NOT.—NO Authority but responsible for everything
 7. You need to have good contacts with the press because this is what enhances the brand image of the school and also ensure that adverse remarks are not there in the press and if it is so it is put so mildly that it does not become a major talking point.
 8. You need to handle pressures from several pressure groups like the MLAs, MPs etc for admission, failures in the class, copying in the class or in some cases ensuring that this teacher is asked to join in or give a recommendation to a particular person say a tailor, or seller of books etc etc
- All these people know the trustees/ top management and have had tea and coffee with them and if they speak with them the work would be done instantaneously but out of deference to you and the chair on which you are sitting, would not like to approach the management..
9. The parents expect you to be a guardian or in short a substitute or a surrogate parent to the child. Let me explain, - typically I am responsible if a child elopes with another child. I had several cases where the child ran away to nashik, lonavala etc and had not returned home in the evening. I am supposed to trace the children and bring them back and not inform the police (the name of the family gets spoilt—Khandan ka naam kharab ho jayega); If a child sits

late in college say till 9 or 10 pm because of some project work or group work, problem arises especially if it is girl student. If they are caught copying, I am supposed to explain to the parents and somehow ensure that their name is cleared. Many of the times, the child did not do anything – no he did not see the papers and answer written there was not part of the question etc and the faculty is biased against the child etc etc.

10 You are expected to counsel the child if he smokes, drinks etc, or flirts with girls or spend a large amount of time outside the college during the college hours.

9. You need to be a mentor, counsellor, a teacher. a guide and philosopher to the children be fair and transparent to every one and yet be firm and strict, follow all the rules yet appear not to be following rules etc.

10 You are to control the faculties also. For e.g. I have a peculiar case wherein a married faculty with a son (in the fifth standard) flirts with a female unmarried lady faculty sometimes inside and many a times outside the college premises . It is expected that the Director is expected to somehow stop this unlawful, illegal, unethical behavior of both the concerned faculties by the parents, parent inlaws, other faculties(it is creating a bad impression about the college)

In such a situation, what does one do? You feel like telling him yet you are scared if he say Sir, this is my personal problem please do not interfere etc etc. In short you are the SINGLE POINT CONTACT FOR THE ENTIRE WORLD -- INSIDE THE SCHOOL / COLLEGE AND OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL / COLLEGE. **You are like LORD KRISHNA -- wife, mother, father, brother, sister, friend etc all rolled in one. Play Politics but yet do not play politics, play by the book of rules yet show flexibility in going out of the box and cutting corners with the school book of rules be a good negotiator, a team builder, understand group dynamics everything.**

The stresses and strains are colossal. When I took the plunge to enter the educational sector, I thought "the OTHER SIDE OF THE RIVER LOOKS GREEN not just GREEN BUT GREEEEEEEEEN and in reality it is not all that GREEEEEEEEEN .

People promise you support -- lip support of course.

In Human Resources Management, I learnt that HIGHER YOU RISE ON THE LADDER, THE LONELIER YOU BECOME. As a Director, you are all alone. There is no body to guide you--

there are no ready made solutions. Case studies that we learn in our MBA programs are good but each case which you are supposed to handle is so different from the other that the cases one studies in **the MBA program becomes irrelevant to the particular case in hand.**

YOU ARE SITTING ON A BED OF THORNS. The CROWN THAT YOU WEAR LOOKS GOOD WHEN IT HAS ROSES, but behind each rose there are several thorns.

But there is also ANOTHER SIDE OF THE STORY A very POSITIVE STORY A FAR REACHING SATISFACTION STORY which comes but does not come early it comes after some time.

A School Principal, a teacher, a Director, a Head of the Department is someone whom society respects looks up to perhaps not in our day to day life but when we really are in need. Give you a typical example, you know through my hands if you permit me to use this phrase, atleast more than 10000 students would have passed through during this tenure of my teaching and yet you feel so proud and happy when a student even though he/she may be married with or without children come up to you and says "GOOD MORNING SIR, HOW ARE YOU?" That too in the middle of the road when you are walking with your wife or children and then he recalls the days that he spent with me in the school. This happens to me not just in Mumbai but also in some corner of the world. This has happened to me several times at the airports both national and international. . Sometime you go to the bank or any public office and then suddenly somebody comes up and wishes you and goes out of the way to help you. Let me honestly tell you when the student introduces himself and tells you that he was your student in so and so batch and in so and so school you feel so proud and happy For the sake of these few small ?? things in life, I do not mind losing anything.

For me all MY STUDENTS ARE MY CUSTOMERS. I WILL DO ANYTHING to ensure that they are happy, morally correct..... In fact I give more than 24 hours to them.

This is not to dismay people or frighten people but to bring out the essential factors which I felt are necessary whenever one transits from the corporate world to the educational world and joins there in a position of director or as a principal.

Transition as a faculty member is not just a big issue, because your line of responsibility is clear – it is the director or the trustee and no one else.

One LAST POINT -- because you possess all the soft skills you cannot neglect your hard skills -- viz the teaching stuff that you require to have because that is the starting point.

XX