

Bhagavad Gîta and Management

by: M.P. B. (info/email)

Summary (ed.):

'Management of time is a systematic way of doing all activities in any field of human effort. The western management thought of prosperity to some for some time has absolutely failed in its aim to ensure betterment of individual life and social welfare. The despondent position of Arjuna in the first chapter of the **Gîta** is typical for this human situation which may come in the life of all men of action some time or other. Lord Krishna in the Gîta advises how to manage for a better time. His Time.'

Contents:

- Introduction.
- Management Guidelines from The Bhagavad Gîta.
- Bhagavad Gîta And Managerial Effectiveness.
- Manager's Mental Health.
- The Ultimate Message of Gîta for Managers.
- Notes, Bio-info, links, and publications.

"Mind is very restless, forceful and strong, O Krishna, it is more difficult to control the mind than to control the wind" **Arjuna to S'rî Krishna**

Introduction

India's one of the greatest contributions to the world is **Holy Gîta**.

Arjuna got mentally depressed when he saw his relatives with whom he has to fight. The Bhagavad Gîta is preached in the battle field Kurukshetra by Lord Krishna to Arjuna as a counselling to do his duty. It has got all the management tactics to achieve the mental equilibrium..

Management has become a part and parcel in everyday life, be it at home, office, factory, Government, or in any other organization where a group of human beings assemble for a common purpose, management principles come into play through their various facets like management of time, resources, personnel, materials, machinery, finance, planning, priorities, policies and practice.

Management is a systematic way of doing all activities in any field of human effort. It is about keeping oneself engaged in interactive relationship with other human beings in the course of performing one's duty. Its task is to make people capable of joint performance, to make their weaknesses irrelevant -so says the Management Guru **P. D.**.

It strikes harmony in working -equilibrium in thoughts and actions, goals and achievements, plans and performance, products and markets. It resolves situations of scarcities be they in the physical, technical or human fields through maximum utilization with the minimum available processes to achieve the goal

The lack of management will cause disorder, confusion, wastage, delay, destruction and even depression. Managing men, money and material in the best possible way according to circumstances and environment is the most important and essential factor for a successful management. Managing men is supposed have the best tactics. Man is the first syllable in management which speaks volumes on the role and significance of man in a scheme of management practices. From the pre-historic days of aborigines to the present day of robots and computers the ideas of managing available resources have been in existence in some form or other. When the world has become a big global village now, management practices have become more complex and what was once considered a golden rule is now thought to be an anachronism.

Management Guidelines from The Bhagavad Gîta

There is an important distinction between effectiveness and efficiency in managing.

- *Effectiveness is doing the right things and*
- *Efficiency is doing things right.*

The general principles of effective management can be applied in every fields the differences being mainly in the application than in principles. Again, effective management is not limited in its application only to business or industrial enterprises but to all organisations where the aim is to reach a given goal through a Chief Executive or a Manager with the help of a group of workers.

- The Manager's functions can be briefly summed up as under :
- Forming a vision and planning the strategy to realise such vision.
- Cultivating the art of leadership
- Establishing the institutional excellence and building an innovative organisation.
- Developing human resources.
- Team building and teamwork
- Delegation, motivation, and communication and
- Reviewing performance and taking corrective steps whenever called for.

Thus Management is a process in search of excellence to align people and get them committed to work for a common goal to the maximum social benefit.

The critical question in every Manager's mind is how to be effective in his job. The answer to this fundamental question is found in the **Bhagavad Gîta** which repeatedly proclaims that 'you try to manage yourself'. The reason is that unless the Manager reaches a level of excellence and effectiveness that sets him apart from the others whom he is managing, he will be merely a face in the crowd and not an achiever.

In this context the Bhagavad Gîta expounded thousands of years ago by the Super Management Guru **Bhagawan S'rî Krishna** enlightens us on all managerial techniques leading to a harmonious and blissful state of affairs as against conflicts, tensions, lowest efficiency and least productivity, absence of motivation and lack of work culture etc common to most of the Indian enterprises today.

The modern management concepts like vision, leadership, motivation, excellence in work, achieving goals, meaning of work, attitude towards work, nature of individual, decision making, planning etc., are all discussed in the **Bhagavad Gîta** with a sharp insight and finest analysis to drive through our confused grey matter making it highly eligible to become a part of the modern management syllabus.

It may be noted that while Western design on management deals with the problems at superficial, material, external and peripheral levels, the ideas contained in the **Bhagavad Gita** tackle the issues from the grass roots level of human thinking because once the basic thinking of man is improved it will automatically enhance the quality of his actions and their results.

The management thoughts emanating from the Western countries particularly the U.S.A. are based mostly on the lure for materialism and a perennial thirst for profit irrespective of the quality of the means adopted to achieve that goal. This phenomenon has its source in abundance in the West particularly the U.S.A. Management by materialism caught the fancy of all the countries the world over, India being no exception to this trend.

Our country has been in the forefront in importing those ideas mainly because of its centuries old indoctrination by the colonial rulers which inculcated in us a feeling that anything Western is always good and anything Indian is always inferior. Hence our management schools have sprung up on the foundations of materialistic approach wherein no place of importance was given to a holistic view.

The result is while huge funds have been invested in building these temples of modern management education, no perceptible changes are visible in the improvement of the quality of life although the standard of living of a few has gone up. The same old struggles in almost all sectors of the economy, criminalisation of institutions, more and more social violence, exploitation and such other vices have gone deep in the body politic.

The reasons for this sorry state of affairs are not far to seek. The western idea of management has placed utmost reliance on the worker (which includes Managers also) -to make him more efficient, to increase his productivity. They pay him more so that he may work more, produce more, sell more and will stick to the organisation without looking for alternatives. The sole aim of extracting better and more work from him is for improving the bottom-line of the enterprise. Worker has become a hireable commodity, which can be used, replaced and discarded at will.

The workers have also seen through the game plan of their paymasters who have reduced them to the state of a mercantile product. They changed their attitude to work and started adopting such measures as uncalled for strikes, **Gheraos**, sit-ins, **dharnas**, go-slows, work-to-rule etc to get maximum benefit for themselves from the organisations without caring the least for the adverse impact that such coercive methods will cause to the society at large.

Thus we have reached a situation where management and workers have become separate and contradictory entities wherein their approaches are different and interests are conflicting. There is no common goal or understanding which predictably leads to constant suspicion, friction, disillusion and mistrust because of working at cross purposes. The absence of human values and erosion of human touch in the organisational structure resulted in a permanent crisis of confidence.

The western management thoughts although acquired prosperity to some for some time has absolutely failed in their aim to ensure betterment of individual life and social welfare. It has remained by and large a soulless management edifice and an oasis of plenty for a chosen few in the midst of poor quality of life to many. Hence there is an urgent need to have a re-look at the prevalent management discipline on its objectives, scope and content.

It should be redefined so as to underline the development of the worker as a man, as a human being with all his positive and negative characteristics and not as a mere wage-earner. In this changed perspective, management ceases to be a career-agent but becomes an instrument in the process of national development in all its segments.

Bhagavad Gita And Managerial Effectiveness

Now let us re-examine some of the modern management concepts in the light of the **Bhagavad Gita** which is a primer of management by values.

Utilisation of Available Resources

The first lesson in the management science is to choose wisely and utilise optimally the scarce resources if one has to succeed in his venture. During the curtain raiser before the Mahabharata War Duryodhana chose S'rî Krishna's large army for his help while Arjuna selected S'rî Krishna's wisdom for his support. This episode gives us a clue as to who is an Effective Manager.

Attitude Towards Work

Three stone-cutters were engaged in erecting a temple. As usual a H.R.D. Consultant asked them what they were doing. The response of the three workers to this innocent-looking question is illuminating.

'I am a poor man. I have to maintain my family. I am making a living here,' said the first stone-cutter with a dejected face.

'Well, I work because I want to show that I am the best stone-cutter in the country,' said the second one with a sense of pride.

'Oh, I want to build the most beautiful temple in the country,' said the third one with a visionary gleam.

Their jobs were identical but their perspectives were different. What **Gita** tells us is to develop the visionary perspective in the work we do. It tells us to develop a sense of larger vision in one's work for the common good.

Work Commitment

The popular verse **2.47 of the Gita** advises non-attachment to the fruits or results of actions performed in the course of one's duty. Dedicated work has to mean 'work for the sake of work'. If we are always calculating the date of promotion for putting in our efforts, then such work cannot be commitment-oriented causing excellence in the results but it will be promotion-oriented resulting in inevitable disappointments. By tilting the performance towards the anticipated benefits, the quality of performance of the present duty suffers on account of the mental agitations caused by the anxieties of the future. Another reason for non-attachment to results is the fact that workings of the world are not designed to positively respond to our calculations and hence expected fruits may not always be forthcoming.

So, the Gita tells us not to mortgage the present commitment to an uncertain future. If we are not able to measure up to this height, then surely the fault lies with us and not with the teaching.

Some people argue that being unattached to the consequences of one's action would make one unaccountable as accountability is a much touted word these days with the vigilance department sitting on our shoulders. However, we have to understand that **the entire second chapter** has arisen as a sequel to the temporarily lost sense of accountability on the part of Arjuna in **the first chapter of the Gîta** in performing his swadharma.

Bhagavad Gîta is full of advice on the theory of cause and effect, making the doer responsible for the consequences of his deeds. The Gîta, while advising detachment from the avarice of selfish gains by discharging one's accepted duty, does not absolve anybody of the consequences arising from discharge of his responsibilities.

This verse is a brilliant guide to the operating Manager for psychological energy conservation and a preventive method against stress and burn-outs in the work situations. Learning managerial stress prevention methods is quite costly now days and if only we understand the Gîta we get the required cure free of cost.

Thus the best means for effective work performance is to become the work itself. Attaining this state of nishkama karma is the right attitude to work because it prevents the ego, the mind from dissipation through speculation on future gains or losses.

It has been presumed for long that satisfying lower needs of a worker like adequate food, clothing and shelter, recognition, appreciation, status, personality development etc are the key factors in the motivational theory of personnel management.

It is the common experience that the spirit of grievances from the clerk to the Director is identical and only their scales and composition vary. It should have been that once the lower-order needs are more than satisfied, the Director should have no problem in optimising his contribution to the organisation. But more often than not, it does not happen like that; the eagle soars high but keeps its eyes firmly fixed on the dead animal below. On the contrary a lowly paid school teacher, a self-employed artisan, ordinary artistes demonstrate higher levels of self- realization despite poor satisfaction of their lower- order needs.

This situation is explained by the theory of Self-transcendence or Self-realisation propounded in the **Gîta**. Self-transcendence is overcoming insuperable obstacles in one's path. It involves renouncing egoism, putting others before oneself, team work, dignity, sharing, co-operation, harmony, trust, sacrificing lower needs for higher goals, seeing others in you and yourself in others etc. The portrait of a self-realising person is that he is a man who aims at his own position and underrates everything else. On the other hand the Self-transcenders are the visionaries and innovators. Their resolute efforts enable them to achieve the apparently impossible. They overcome all barriers to reach their goal.

The work must be done with detachment.' This is because it is the Ego which spoils the work. If this is not the backbone of the Theory of Motivation which the modern scholars talk about what else is it? I would say that this is not merely a theory of Motivation but it is a theory of Inspiration.

The **Gîta** further advises to perform action with loving attention to the Divine which implies redirection of the empirical self away from its egocentric needs, desires, and passions for creating suitable conditions to perform actions in pursuit of excellence. **T.** says working for love is freedom in action which is described as disinterested work in the **Gîta**. It is on the basis of the holistic vision that Indians have

developed the work-ethos of life. They found that all work irrespective of its nature have to be directed towards a single purpose that is the manifestation of essential divinity in man by working for the good of all beings -lokasangraha. This vision was presented to us in the **very first mantra of Isopanishad** which says that whatever exists in the Universe is enveloped by God. How shall we enjoy this life then, if all are one? The answer it provides is enjoy and strengthen life by sacrificing your selfishness by not coveting other's wealth. The same motivation is given by S'rî Krishna in **the Third Chapter of Gîta** when He says that 'He who shares the wealth generated only after serving the people, through work done as a sacrifice for them, is freed from all the sins. On the contrary those who earn wealth only for themselves, eat sins that lead to frustration and failure.'

The disinterested work finds expression in devotion, surrender and equipoise. The former two are psychological while the third is the strong-willed determination to keep the mind free of and above the dualistic pulls of daily experiences. Detached involvement in work is the key to mental equanimity or the state of nirdwanda. This attitude leads to a stage where the worker begins to feel the presence of the Supreme Intelligence guiding the empirical individual intelligence. Such de-personified intelligence is best suited for those who sincerely believe in the supremacy of organisational goals as compared to narrow personal success and achievement.

Work culture means vigorous and arduous effort in pursuit of a given or chosen task. When Bhagawan S'rî Krishna rebukes Arjuna in the strongest words for his unmanliness and imbecility in recoiling from his righteous duty it is nothing but a clarion call for the highest work culture. Poor work culture is the result of tamo guna overtaking one's mindset. Bhagawan's stinging rebuke is to bring out the temporarily dormant rajo guna in Arjuna. **In Chapter 16 of the Gîta** S'rî Krishna elaborates on two types of Work Ethic viz. daivi sampat or divine work culture and asuri sampat or demonic work culture.

Daivi work culture - means fearlessness, purity, self-control, sacrifice, straightforwardness, self-denial, calmness, absence of fault-finding, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, absence of envy and pride.

Asuri work culture - means egoism, delusion, desire-centric, improper performance, work which is not oriented towards service. It is to be noted that mere work ethic is not enough in as much as a hardened criminal has also a very good work culture. What is needed is a work ethic conditioned by ethics in work.

It is in this light that the counsel 'yogah karmasu kausalam' should be understood. Kausalam means skill or method or technique of work which is an indispensable component of work ethic. Yogah is defined in the Gîta itself as 'samatvam yogah uchyate' meaning unchanging equipoise of mind. Tilak tells us that performing actions with the special device of an equable mind is Yoga. By making the equable mind as the bed-rock of all actions Gîta evolved the goal of unification of work ethic with ethics in work, for without ethical process no mind can attain equipoise. **A. S.** says that the skill in performance of one's duty consists in maintaining the evenness of mind in success and failure because the calm mind in failure will lead him to deeper introspection and see clearly where the process went wrong so that corrective steps could be taken to avoid such shortcomings in future.

The principle of reducing our attachment to personal gains from the work done or controlling the aversion to personal losses enunciated in **Ch.2 Verse 47 of the Gîta** is the foolproof prescription for attaining equanimity. The common apprehension about this principle that it will lead to lack of incentive for effort and work, striking at the very root of work ethic, is not valid because the advice is to be judged as

relevant to man's overriding quest for true mental happiness. Thus while the common place theories on motivation lead us to bondage, the Gîta theory takes us to freedom and real happiness.

Work Results

The Gîta further explains the theory of non- attachment to the results of work in **Ch.18 Verses 13-15** the import of which is as under:

If the result of sincere effort is a success, the entire credit should not be appropriated by the doer alone.

If the result of sincere effort is a failure, then too the entire blame does not accrue to the doer.

The former attitude mollifies arrogance and conceit while the latter prevents excessive despondency, demotivation and self-pity. Thus both these dispositions safeguard the doer against psychological vulnerability which is the cause for the Modern Managers' companions like Diabetes, High B.P. Ulcers etc.

Assimilation of the ideas behind 2.47 and 18.13-15 of the Gîta leads us to the wider spectrum of lokasamgraha or general welfare.

There is also another dimension in the work ethic. If the karmayoga is blended with bhaktiyoga then the work itself becomes worship, a seva yoga.

Manager's Mental Health

The ideas mentioned above have a close bearing on the end-state of a manager which is his mental health. Sound mental health is the very goal of any human activity more so management. An expert describes sound mental health as that state of mind which can maintain a calm, positive poise or regain it when unsettled in the midst of all the external vagaries of work life and social existence. Internal constancy and peace are the pre- requisites for a healthy stress-free mind.

Some of the impediments to sound mental health are

- Greed - for power, position, prestige and money.
- Envy - regarding others' achievements, success, rewards.
- Egotism - about one's own accomplishments.
- Suspicion, anger and frustration.
- Anguish through comparisons.

The driving forces in today's rat-race are speed and greed as well as ambition and competition. The natural fallout from these forces is erosion of one's ethico-moral fibre which supersedes the value system as a means in the entrepreneurial path like tax evasion, undercutting, spreading canards against the competitors, entrepreneurial spying, instigating industrial strife in the business rivals' establishments etc. Although these practices are taken as normal business hazards for achieving progress, they always end up as a pursuit of mirage - the more the needs the more the disappointments. This phenomenon may be called as yayati-syndrome.

In Mahabharata we come across **a king called Yayati** who, in order to revel in the endless enjoyment of flesh exchanged his old age with the youth of his obliging youngest son for a mythical thousand years.

However, he lost himself in the pursuit of sensual enjoyments and felt penitent. He came back to his son pleading to take back his youth. This yayati syndrome shows the conflict between externally directed acquisitions, motivations and inner reasoning, emotions and conscience.

Gîta tells us how to get out of this universal phenomenon by prescribing the following capsules.

- Cultivate sound philosophy of life.
- Identify with inner core of self-sufficiency
- Get out of the habitual mindset towards the pairs of opposites.
- Strive for excellence through work is worship.
- Build up an internal integrated reference point to face contrary impulses, and emotions
- Pursue ethico-moral rectitude.

Cultivating this understanding by a manager would lead him to emancipation from falsifying ego-conscious state of confusion and distortion, to a state of pure and free mind i.e. universal, supreme consciousness wherefrom he can prove his effectiveness in discharging whatever duties that have fallen to his domain.

Bhagawan's advice is relevant **here** :

"tasmaat sarveshu kaaleshu mamananusmarah yuddha cha"

'Therefore under all circumstances remember Me and then fight' (Fight means perform your duties)

Management Needs those Who Practise what they Preach

Whatever the excellent and best ones do, the commoners follow, **so says S'rî Krishna in the Gîta**. This is the leadership quality prescribed in the Gîta. The visionary leader must also be a missionary, extremely practical, intensively dynamic and capable of translating dreams into reality. This dynamism and strength of a true leader flows from an inspired and spontaneous motivation to help others. "I am the strength of those who are devoid of personal desire and attachment. O Arjuna, I am the legitimate desire in those, who are not opposed to righteousness" says S'rî Krishna in the **7th Chapter of the Gîta**.

The Ultimate Message of Gîta for Managers

The despondent position of Arjuna in the first chapter of the **Gîta** is a typical human situation which may come in the life of all men of action some time or other. S'rî Krishna by sheer power of his inspiring words raised the level of Arjuna's mind from the state of inertia to the state of righteous action, from the state of faithlessness to the state of faith and self-confidence in the ultimate victory of Dharma(ethical action). They are the powerful words of courage of strength, of self confidence, of faith in one's own infinite power, of the glory, of valour in the life of active people and of the need for intense calmness in the midst of intense action.

When Arjuna got over his despondency and stood ready to fight, S'rî Krishna gave him the gospel for using his spirit of intense action not for his own benefit, not for satisfying his own greed and desire, but for using his action for the good of many, with faith in the ultimate victory of ethics over unethical actions and truth over untruth. Arjuna responds by emphatically declaring that all his delusions were removed and that he is ready to do what is expected of him in the given situation.

S'rī Krishna's advice with regard to temporary failures in actions is '**No doer of good ever ends in misery**'. Every action should produce results: good action produces good results and evil begets nothing but evil. Therefore always act well and be rewarded.

And finally the **Gīta**'s consoling message for all men of action is : **He who follows My ideal in all walks of life without losing faith in the ideal or never deviating from it, I provide him with all that he needs (Yoga) and protect what he has already got** (Kshema).

In conclusion the purport of this essay is not to suggest discarding of the Western model of efficiency, dynamism and striving for excellence but to make these ideals tuned to the India's holistic attitude of lokasangraha -for the welfare of many, for the good of many. The idea is that these management skills should be India-centric and not America-centric. **Swami V.** says a combination of both these approaches will certainly create future leaders of India who will be far superior to any that have ever been in the world.

<http://www.theorderoftime.com/science/sciences/articles/gitamanagement.html>

Managers: Train your brain for ethical decisions

Eric Barton

People in Austin, Texas, used to know the name of chef Jesse Griffiths for his supper club, Dai Due, or because of his popular stand at the city's farmer's market. But these days, Griffiths gets most of his notoriety thanks to his **hunting class**.

That's right. Griffiths, who has worked in France and at several renowned restaurants, also offers hunting and butchering classes. He takes clients — about 25 per year — out to deer blinds in the Texas countryside. He teaches them how to shoot and then shows them how to butcher the animal.

But Griffiths doesn't teach the hunt-and-butcher course for outdoors types. Instead, he targets anybody who regularly eats a hamburger. "People who eat meat should see what happens to animals before it ends up on their table," Griffiths said. "Every time they consume an animal, they should make sure they're comfortable with it."

This begs a question for the rest of us: If diners are being asked to think more about the source of their food, why stop at the dinner table?

Introspection at work, too

Especially when it comes to business, introspection is a must. If you haven't already faced ethical decisions about whether to lie or cheat for your company, it's time to consider what you would do if you were faced with such dilemmas. Figuring out those answers now — and how you'd implement your plan — will help you deal with that dilemma later. This is especially important for managers, who need to set the tone for subordinates. For one, research suggests employees will work harder and stay committed to companies with high ethical standards.

For those who feel too jaded by scandals like those at Enron or the implosion of Lehman Brothers to think any corporation has ethics, think again. In fact, the US has an advantage over the rest of the world. Federal and state regulations have codified many ethical mores into law, said W Michael Hoffman, executive director of the Center for Business Ethics in Waltham, Massachusetts.

For instance, in Japan gifts are expected at many business meetings, something that would be seen as a bribe in the US and forbidden under most ethics policies. And then there are the envelopes of cash expected by government officials in developing countries, something few US companies consider part of business.

Shifty practices by the US sub-prime mortgage lending industry may have made it seem like business ethics have gotten worse. And the idea of an investment bank betting against its customers at the same time it invested for them the opposite way certainly smacks of bad morals. But Hoffman said we're actually in an era where principles in business, or at least the discussion of it, is more prevalent than ever.

"When you have pressure to make money, you're going to have people who are quite ethical at home who do things at work they know they shouldn't do," Hoffman said.

For those who find themselves working for places with murky values, the key is to save up some "walk-away money," said Paul Adler, the Harold Quinton Chair in Business Policy and professor of management and organisation at University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business in Los Angeles. "You have to ask yourself, is this the kind of organisation you really want to work for?"

For those who aren't sure of the answer, Adler suggests finding someone who can help you parse ethical dilemmas. If you then decide the company is asking you to do something objectionable, Adler said bring it to your boss, who likely also had the same moral quandary and will hopefully respect you more for bringing it up.

At all costs, avoid justifying a bad decision. Too often we make excuses, such as 'everyone else at the company is doing it', or 'it's just the industry'. "Rationalisation," Adler said, "is the single most powerful factor driving otherwise upstanding citizens into malfeasance."

Building 'muscle memory'

Even if you don't currently face ethical quandaries at work, Adler encourages everybody to think out what happens when you do. He suggests studying Giving Voice To Values, a curriculum developed by Mary Gentile, a senior research scholar at Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

Gentile's approach to corporate ethics is a novel one. Forget considering specific examples, like your boss has asked you to lie about impending layoffs. Instead, managers and employees should ask themselves: "Once I know what I think is right, how do I get it done?" In other words, don't just plan the answer to ethical issues, plot the solution.

"Many situations are not about a single defining moment or conversation," Gentile, who was travelling in Europe, wrote in an email.

This kind of role playing creates "moral muscle memory" that makes us better at reaching ethical decisions, Gentile suggests. It also allows us to develop pre-scripted answers so that we're confident in reaching an ethical decision.

Then, acting on the decision comes down to something most of us might not expect, said Adler. Most of us figure ethical decisions are about our principles. More than not, it's about guts.

"It's a matter of courage to do what you know is right," Adler said.

There's also a good deal of courage needed in Griffiths's hunting classes. It's not uncommon for students to change their minds about shooting a deer traipsing through the woods or to get shaken up when faced with the still-warm carcass.

But the idea of ethical eating has come a long way, Griffiths said. Nowadays, most of his students know about the benefits of organics, local ingredients, and even hunting.

"When we started in 2006, we really had to explain ourselves. We would put on a dinner and say that it's going to be all local ingredients and people would ask why," Griffiths said. "Now eating green, everybody knows that."

In business, that kind of moral analysis is maybe still a bit novel.

<http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20131007-the-morality-muscle>

When corporate cultures breed dishonesty

Eric Barton

It's safe to say US President Barack Obama had no idea the trouble he'd find himself in after **telling a kid journalist recently** that his favourite food was broccoli.

Since then, comedians and Twitter users have served up entrée-sized servings of accusations that the president was dishonest with the pint-sized reporter.

If he did stretch the truth, Obama, a father of two, has plenty of company.

Some 84 percent of parents lie to their kids in the name of good parenting, according to a study released in November by the International Journal of Psychology.

Given that, maybe we can blame our parents for the difficulty we have being entirely truthful at work. One in five people admit to fibbing in the workplace at least once a week, according to a CareerBuilder.com survey, and a quarter of hiring managers say they've fired a worker for being dishonest.

Or perhaps we can blame the workplace. Corporate culture often calls for supervisors to keep “competitive secrets” to prevent revealing strategies that could tip off competitors. That practice leads people down the road of lying.

Honesty vs transparency

Honesty in business is often high on lists of what employees say they want in the workplace. Yet they usually get managers who tell white lies in the belief that they’re following the company line or protecting employees from bad news. But management experts say honesty should always win out — as long as supervisors understand and carefully manage the difference between truthfulness and full transparency.

Managers must always be truthful or they run the risk of polluting the ethics of those who report to them — even if that manager can’t be entirely transparent, according to retired US Army brigadier general Thomas A Kolditz, now a professor and director of the leadership development program at the Yale School of Management in New Haven, Connecticut. When Kolditz worked at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, his colleagues conducted a survey of soldiers serving in Mosul, Iraq, and found that they listed honesty and integrity third among the qualities they want in a superior (after competence and loyalty).

“Leaders set the ethical tone,” Kolditz said. “If a leader is being dishonest, you will see that employees will be dishonest with each other.”

That might sound like a politician’s hedge, but most managers struggle to maintain the balance between honesty and transparency. Kolditz himself dealt with that balance a few years ago when superiors told him the department he previously ran at West Point faced layoffs. When employees asked him about the possibility of cutbacks, Kolditz was honest with them — without revealing information he was forbidden to release. Instead, he’d say he couldn’t answer the question and then shift the conversation.

Honest, yes? Transparent? Perhaps not to his subordinates. But in such situations, it’s crucial for a manager to set the tone in the office, said R. Edward Freeman, professor and academic director at the Business Roundtable Institute for Corporate Ethics at University of Virginia’s Darden School of Business.

When asked about coming layoffs or cutbacks, for instance, managers need to be honest. But an awkward silence or half-truth meant to keep the opacity of the details is damaging — it sends too dire a message and breeds distrust.

“In today’s world, most employees are pretty smart, so they’re going to read into the lack of an answer,” Freeman said. “So it’s important for the manager to steer the conversation in a way that doesn’t cause panic.”

That advice goes against what a lot of human resources departments might hope managers are doing. Some prefer bosses to tell white lies to keep people working, Freeman acknowledges.

Retail outliers

Workplaces that stress the importance of honesty are more commonly found in the retail sector. The Container Store, for instance, has a trademarked set of guidelines for its 6,000 employees called Foundation Principles, which includes a section titled “Communication IS Leadership.” It spells out that there will be no secrets, with proclamations including: “We simply want everyone in our company to know everything!” The company, with 64 stores across the US, has seen a 25% compound annual growth rate over the past three decades — and managers credit those principles for a big reason why.

US natural foods supermarket chain Whole Foods also has a no-secrets policy, in which decisions are made by groups of employees. At the top, the company is headed by an “E-Team” of five executives that share the traditional chief executive officer role. That management model is duplicated in the company’s stores, where employees meet as a team to make decisions.

Still, this group-think approach might seem ridiculous in other parts of the world, where following authority may be more important than telling the truth.

“In other countries, there’s simply more dishonesty tolerated,” Kolditz said. “It’s about the societal expectations and whether there’s an expectation that managers will tell the truth.”

In China, for instance, the command culture system often overrides any expectation that superiors will be forthcoming with underlings.

North American employees also face dilemmas in countries where payoffs or bribes are standard operation for doing business. Workers from the US, for instance, often view a bribe as dishonest, and have a tough time repressing disdain for the practice if encountered overseas. That doesn’t mean managers or companies should play along, but, say, showing disgust over the suggestion of a bribe won’t make the situation better.

“Don’t be judgmental,” Kolditz said. “The key is to do the right thing in both countries.”

We must think of honesty as more than a crucial management trait, said Leigh Hafrey, who teaches at *Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s* Sloan School of Management and Harvard Business School.

“It’s a virtue or a value,” said Hafrey, who focuses on professional ethics. “It’s a standard that you hold yourself and others up to.”

A good manager, then, won’t lie if asked to do so by the company. She’ll speak up and refuse. That ethical act can do something dramatic: It sets the stage for an honest workplace.

<http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20130715-honesty-always-the-best-policy>

Deconstructing accountability

Eric Barton

When a pregnant 17-year-old walked into Rachel Weber's office a few years ago seeking help, the career counsellor couldn't imagine a bigger challenge.

The girl already had a toddler at home. She wanted to finish high school. So Weber did what she did best: She listened and helped the young woman make a plan. Weber, a counsellor at the government-funded Workforce Connection program in Ruidoso, New Mexico, helps people learn skills and find jobs, often for the first time in years — or the first time ever.

Weber created a plan for the girl. First, she'd finish high school. Then she'd enter a job training program. And finally, she'd get a job to support her two toddlers. And Weber would be there every step to urge the girl along and help her stay focused on her goals.

"A lot of kids in that situation would have dropped out and felt hopeless," Weber recalls. "But she set goals ... and worked towards them."

It sounds simple, right? Set some goals and then find a way to achieve them. Myriad studies show that setting goals, finding ways to get them done and implementing measures of success — otherwise known as accountability — is a core element to the most innovative and successful businesses. But it's something rarely done well in the business world.

Maybe the biggest impediment for accountability is that it has become another victim of management speak, akin to synergy or thinking outside the box — words and phrases that every chief executive officer throws into a speech at the annual meeting.

Too easy? Or too hard?

Nearly every workplace requires employees set goals, often through a yearly review with the boss. The normal inclination of most people when setting their mandated goals is to list tasks which are easy to achieve. Sure, it may seem like you've made your job easier, but employees who are allowed to set simple objectives will get bored quickly. This can become a direct link to decreased productivity — and often a way to practically ensure a good employee will head to a competitor.

Then there are the managers who insist on throwing down impossible-to-succeed objectives. You can see where this is going: Those unattainable orders will only lead to employee frustration.

"You want goals that will stretch you but also not set yourself up for failure," said Kurt Dirks, professor of management leadership at Washington University's Olin Business School in St. Louis, Missouri. Genuine accountability can even boost workplace productivity, he added.

Managers often also fail in making clear who's responsible for targets and who will keep track of them, said Sunil "Sunny" Misser, CEO of AccountAbility, a London-based research and consulting firm. This is especially true for middle managers who report to multiple bosses and may have no idea which vice president is keeping track of their metrics of success.

"Once you figure out what the person will be responsible for and to whom, then you can figure out the how," said Misser, who works in AccountAbility's New York City office.

Conversely, employees need to know that their bosses — and the company overall — will be held accountable for failures. But that is not the norm. Goals set by new CEOs, for instance, are rarely followed up if they fall into the loss column.

"People need to know they have the freedom to hold the organization accountable," Misser said.

Poorly run meetings are a key culprit of follow-up failures. Yes, meetings. Many companies work out new goals and ideas during brainstorming sessions where nobody is assigned tasks and deadlines, said Dirks. People then view those gatherings as a wasteland where ideas never leave the development stage.

Those sessions ought to be followed up with objectives and decisions on who will make sure they get done (aka, accountability in action). That should be followed with manager follow-up to be sure the tasks are on schedule and another meeting once they're completed.

Global differences

Of course, accountability is measured differently in various parts of the world. In the Middle East, for instance, there are more family run and state-owned businesses — they are less likely to hold higher-ups responsible for poor performance.

Meanwhile, in Southeast Asia, employees are often held to goals with religious-style devotion, and failure comes with all the spoils of shame. But businesses in those countries often fail to hold managers accountable, as employees in places like India and Japan are unlikely to call out their bosses for missing a target.

Holding employees, and the entire company, accountable for goals will obviously help achieve tasks, but there's also evidence that suggests it can help employees innovate. Indeed, the very makeup of the company structure and the way goals are handed down can help generate new ideas, according to a June 14 piece by Robert Simons, professor of business administration at Harvard Business School.

An example Simons offers: a \$2 billion computer software company tells employees to imagine they fall in a series of concentric rings, with consumers in the centre. In other words, customer complaints and suggestions set goals the company should achieve, and employees were held accountable for whether they succeeded in solving a customer's problem. This approach resulted in 70% of customers buying the company's products again — a customer loyalty average usually only seen by companies with a cult following like Apple.

Weber, the career counsellor, has her own accountability success story. After she helped set goals for the pregnant 17-year-old mom, she watched the girl graduate from high school and complete a job training program. The girl then earned a full-time position at the work experience program. She became the front desk administrator and soon after, a manager.

The girl succeeded at her goals mostly because of her work ethic, Weber recalls. “She had that desire deep down to provide for her family. Sometimes she felt helpless, but she kept working. She had goals, and she hit them.”

Correction: A previous version of this article misspelled the name Kurt Dirks. This has been fixed.

<http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20130702-who-me-accountable>

Manager vs Administrator

Manager and Administrator are terms quite often interchangeably used by people. There are obvious differences between a manager and an administrator, but for a vast majority of people, these two are interchangeable terms. In many companies, especially small ones, the person who is in charge of administration is essentially the same one who performs the duties of a manager. But in large enterprises, these are two different posts that carry separate rights and functions. This article intends to highlight the differences between a manager and an administrator by describing the roles played by each in any organization.

The differences between the roles and functions of a manager and an administrator can be better understood under following categories.

Nature of work

Administrator is responsible for deciding major objectives and policies of the organization while a manager has to put into action the policies and objectives decided by the administrator.

Function

Administrator takes decisions about the whole enterprise while a manager takes decisions within the framework that has been set for him by the administrator.

Authority in the organization

An administrator has the highest authority in the organization which implies he comes from the top management whereas a manager lies in the middle rung and has limited authority. A manager has to prove his authority by his skills and analytical thinking.

Status

An administrator is usually one of the owners of the organization who invests capital and earns profits whereas a manager is a hired employee, usually an MBA who gets salary and bonus from the administrator.

Competition

A manager faces competition within the organization whereas there is no competition for the administrator.

Selection of team

Manager has the sole right to decide his team of employees while an administrator has no role in his team.

Productivity

While both desire higher productivity, it is manager who is responsible for any lapses in lower productivity.

Human resources

It is manager who is in direct touch with the employees while an administrator maintains status quo.

Skills

A manager requires both managerial as well as technical skills whereas an administrator only needs managerial skill.

Decision making

While the decisions of an administrator are governed by his own idiosyncrasies, government policies and public opinions, the decisions of a manager are more pragmatic and are taken on a day to day basis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it would suffice to say that whereas a manager deals with both the employees as well as top management, administrator is more involved with the business aspects such as finance.

Read more: <http://www.differencebetween.com/difference-between-manager-and-vs-administrator/#ixzz2izT7pE30>