ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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Lesson 20

Leadership

THE RELEVANCE OF LEADERSHIP

- Many studies show that leaders have **a significant influence on group and organizational outcomes**

  – Both in **positive directions** (a «good» leadership) and in **negative directions** (a «bad» leadership)

  – **directly**: leaders' influence on the quality of decisions (their own and the collaborators' decisions), and on behaviors

  – **indirectly**: leaders' influence on the culture of groups and organizations

WHY IT IS DIFFICULT TO TALK ABOUT LEADERSHIP

- **Because literature is extremely diverse**
  - A sort of «jungle» of very different approaches and ideas that is hard to organize and to make sense of
  - The reliability of such variety of ideas and studies is not always very good:
    - It is very difficult to collect «objective» data and evidence on leadership
  - An excessive reliance of anecdotes and unjustified generalizations
    - Anecdotes and individual stories can be very usfeul (to exemplify, clarify, or inspire), but one should be very careful about the specific circumstances in which individual stories develop

- **Because we tend to rely too much on our intuitions and personal experiences**
  - We tend to exaggerate the general value of our beliefs and experiences: remember Over-confidence and Availability Bias

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE SOME KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LEADERSHIP

- It is important at any level of responsibility
- Not just for those at high hierarchical levels …
- … but also for those in lower positions …
- … and for everybody, even those with no formal leadership responsibility
  - Because somteimes we have INFORMAL leadership responsibility
  - Because understanding leadership may help collaborators to better understand their role and improve their relationship with their leaders
  - Because we may need to prepare to become future leaders

DO WE «BECOME» (good) LEADERS?

OR ARE WE «BORN» (good) LEADERS?

NATURE vs NURTURE, on LEADERSHIP

- A distinction:
  - leadership **emergence** (the fact that an individual **becomes** a leader)
  - leadership **effectiveness** (the fact that an individual is a **"good"** leader)

  Do some people have innate traits that make leadership emergence and/ore leadership effectiveness more likely?

  ONLY TO A LIMITED EXTENT

- Factors that are correlated to leadership **emergence and effectiveness:**
  - extraversion (both **emergence** and **effectiveness**)
  - agreeableness and coscientiousness (mostly **effectiveness**)
  - emotional intelligence (both **emergence** and **effectiveness**)
  - need for power, need for achievement (mostly **emergence**)
  - learning orientation (only **effectiveness**)

(LEARNING TO) BECOMING A LEADER: A CRUCIAL POINT

- Regardless of personal characteristics, a crucial role is played by HOW leaders exercise their leadership

- This is GOOD NEWS, because it means that we can all LEARN to improve our ability to become a good leader, and/or to understand what good leadership should be

- Individual traits are not irrelevant, but they are not as decisive as the most common «leadership mythology» seems to suggest

WHAT IS «EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP» ?

- intuitively important concept, but impossible to define precisely
- a lot of contextual / variable factors to consider

- GOAL DEPENDENCE
  – whose goals matter?
- TIME-DEPENDENCE
  – short term vs long term effectiveness
- CONTEXTUAL VARIABILITY
  – industry, group level vs organizational level, culture etc
- NORMATIVE vs INSTRUMENTAL EFFECTIVENESS
  – results vs values or ethics
- ATTRIBUTION BIAS
  – we tend to attribute organizational success to leadership, but many other factors may be as important or even more important

A VARIETY OF DEFINITIONS

- Outcome-based definitions
  - Effectiveness = leader achieves desired goals or improves measurable performance
  - Problem: neglects how goals are pursued, or whether goals are ethically sound
- Follower-focused definitions
  - Effectiveness = leader positively impacts people: motivation, commitment, growth, well-being
  - Problem: High follower satisfaction does not always correlate with organizational outcomes (e.g. populist or too indulgent leaders)
- Values- and ethics-based definitions
  - Effectiveness = leader advances shared values and contributes to the common good
  - Problem: values are often subjective, culturally variable, or difficult to quantify

- Multidimensional approaches
  - all the mentioned above factors should be considered at the same time
    - adaptability is also relevant
  - Consider that leadership effectiveness means different things in different sectors
  - but across domains, it consistently involves the ability to align people and systems toward meaningful goals, sustain trust and commitment, and adapt to context.

SOME VERY WELL KNOWN LEADERSHIP STORIES
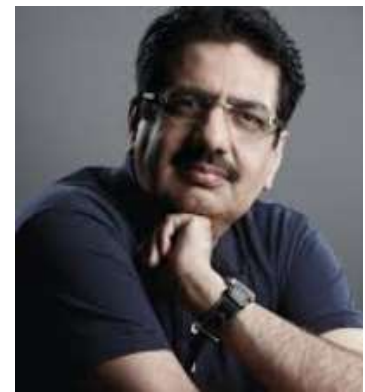
Satya Nadella, Microsoft

Steve Jobs, Apple

Indra Nooyi, Pepsi

Sheryl Sandberg, Meta

Vineet Nayar, HCL

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Malala Yousafzai

Nelson Mandela

what do they have in common?

I invite you to learn about their stories (and many others)

Every story is unique, but there's always a common element of personal growth, change, evolution, overcoming

LEADERSHIP STYLES

- A leadership *style* is a **consistent pattern of behavior that a leader exhibits across situations**, particularly in how they:
  - make decisions, relate to group members, set and enforce goals and expectations, respond to conflict, and motivate others.
- There are literally DOZENS of leadership styles that have been described. A few examples:
  - Autocratic vs Democratic vs Laissez-faire
    - focus on decision making (centralized vs decentralized)
  - Transactional leadership
    - focus on rewards and task compliance
  - Transformational leadership
    - Focus on change, vision, challenges
  - Servant leadership
    - Focus on developing collaborators, and on authenticity and humbleness of the leader
  - Inclusive leadership
    - Inclusion, listening, partecipation, trust
  - Paternalistic leadership
    - Authoritarianism, benevolence, morality

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH «LEADERSHIP STYLES»?

- Thinking about leadership in terms of "STYLE" may be appealing because of its simplicity
- However, there are MANY limitations and serious critiques

  - Conceptual confusion
    - styles often blend together different things such as traits, competencies, behaviors, and strategies
  - Lack of situational sensitivity
    - they often imply that a certain "recipe" is universally valid and effective
  - Idealization and limited predictive validity
    - if styles do not help to understand practical consequences, what is it good for?
  - Conceptual Redundancy
    - way too many styles have been proposed, with minimal differentiation

A WIDELY USED APPROACH: TASK vs RELATIONS ORIENTATION

- **TASK ORIENTATION - focus on:**

- Goal achievement and performance
- Clarity of responsibilities
- Decreasing ambiguity, clarity of communication
- Support on resources and competence needed for task execution
- Sanctioning insufficient performance
- Centralized coordination and critical decision making
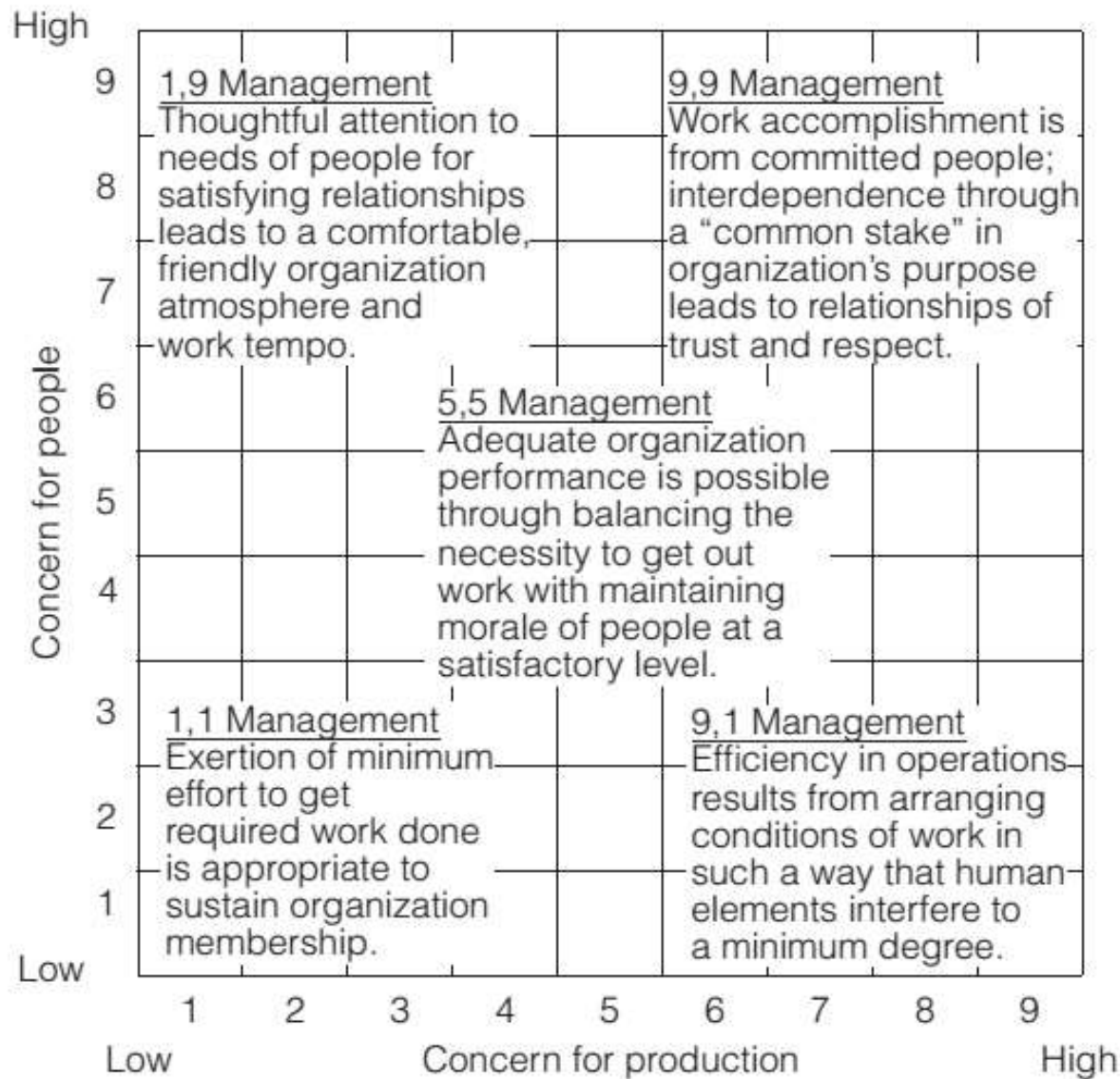- Planning, problem solving, delegating

- **RELATIONSHIP ORIENTATION - focus on:**

- Improving relations with and between collaborators
- Morale and emotional support
- Collaborator's personal and professional development
- Trust and collaborative climate
- Conflict resolution
- Openness, participation, decentralization of decision making
- Recognizing individual and collective abilities and success

WHICH ONE IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE?

- According to «Contingency theory» (Fiedler), the most effective style depends on context, particularly on the leaders' capacity to control, which depends on:

  » Quality of the relationships with / between collaborators and the presence of frequent conflict

  » Complexity of tasks and goals

  » Leaders' formal authority

- When capacity to control is LOW, the TASK ORIENTED STYLE is the most effective

  – a TASK oriented style allows the leader to focus the group towards goal achievement while a RELATION oriented style would require too much time and resources

- When capacity to control is HIGH the TASK ORIENTED STYLE is the most effective

  – a RELATION oriented style becomes a useless distraction from goal achievement, so again a TASK oriented style is to be preferred

- When capacity to control is in the MIDDLE, the RELATION ORIENTED STYLE is the most effective

  – attention to relationships becomes necessary and useful for goal achievement, so the RELATION oriented style becomes comparatively more effective

LEADERSHIP GRID

High

9 **1,9 Management** Thoughtful attention to needs of people for satisfying relationships leads to a comfortable, friendly organization atmosphere and work tempo.	**9,9 Management** Work accomplishment is from committed people; interdependence through a "common stake" in organization's purpose leads to relationships of trust and respect.

Concern for people

5,5 Management
Adequate organization
performance is possible
through balancing the
necessity to get out
work with maintaining
morale of people at a
satisfactory level.

1,1 Management
Exertion of minimum
effort to get
required work done
is appropriate to
sustain organization
membership.

9,1 Management
Efficiency in operations
results from arranging
conditions of work in
such a way that human
elements interfere to
a minimum degree.

Low

Low   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   High
Concern for production

focus on adaptation rather than «Ideal» styles

widely used in training programs

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Quotes about leadership from S. Shwarzmann

- CEO of Blackstone Group, a major global investment and advisory firm specializing in private equity, real estate, hedge funds, and other alternative asset strategies. It's the world's largest alternative asset manager, with over $1 trillion in assets under management.
  - **The leader needs to «avoid squashing»: watching and listening** rather than imposing a personal view
  - **«the job of a leader isn't to give an answer, but to establish a process, an environment in which the answer comes to the fore»**
  - **Everybody has to contribute, has to have a view on key issues**
  - **Leaders establish a process and let everbody's talent come forward**
    - **they need to adopt a critical thinking attitude: «not so quick!»**
    - be skeptical, look for risks, look for weaknesses, look for dangers, look for hidden negative consequences and things that may go wrong
  - **trust the intelligence of people, within a healthy group process**

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE: METHODOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP

a general definition:

METHODOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP is a form of leadership grounded in the competence to design, implement, and sustain the social, psychological, and procedural conditions that enable a group to collaborate effectively, learn continuously, and achieve complex goals. Rather than focusing on the content of decisions or personal charisma, the methodological leader exercises authority primarily in shaping how the group works—through methods, norms, decision protocols, communication structures, and shared practices. This type of leadership draws from disciplines such as group dynamics, organizational behavior, cognitive and social psychology, and is oriented toward creating collective intelligence and well-being.

Focus on competence, not traits or styles

Emphasizes creating conditions, not imposing solutions

Scope of authority is mostly methodological, not substantive

Conceptual roots (and required competences) are interdisciplinary

Goal is to foster autonomy, learning, collaboration, intrinsic motivation, group achievement

VENEET NAYAR'S STORY

- HCL Technologies is a large multinational company in the technology sector, with headquarters in India (founded in 1976 by Shiv Nadar).
- It operates in 44 Countries, with 208000 employees, revenues 11.4 billion dollars (in 2022).
- https://www.hcltech.com/

THE BEGINNINGS

- Vineet Nayar was hired by HCL in 1985, when he was 23 years old

- *I was often asked lots of questions by my employees. At first, I loved it. I enjoyed being looked up to. It made me feel important and successful. But very slowly, I began to see this style of management had its limitations. I could never know enough about everything happening in our company. Sometimes I gave answers that proved to be wrong and caused people trouble. Sometimes I gave answers and the people who had asked the questions ignored what I said … I had a sense that there must be a better way to manage a company. I decided in order to find out what it was, that I would have to leave HCL and start my own enterprise and make it a very different kind of company.*

- In 1993 he became the CEO of Comnet, a start-up controlled by HCL. Despite significant problems because of the new business, and strong competitors, Comnet was a huge success and grew really fast, thanks to the new managerial style and culture implemented by Nayar

- In the meanwhile, HCL was declining fast and seemed to be headed towards a very serious crisis. HCL's founder was looking for a radical change. Inspired by Nayar's success in Comnet, he offered him the presidency of HCL.

- Nayar was not sure. The challenge was enormous. Managing a large multinational company such as HCL was going to be very different from managing a small start-up such as Comnet. In the end, he accepted at one condition: "*that I could do things my way. I wanted to make drastic changes that had never been made before. It was risky but Shiv said okay.*

MARKET AND VALUE ZONE

- Nayar started by visiting dozens of customers all over the world

- He realized that the **situation was really bad**. Customers were not satisfied, and there were very few new customers.

- He realized that the market was changing rapidly. ICT technologies were going to become strategic for the customers. Nayar wanted HCL to become a strategic partner for the customers, not just a mere service provider

- He started reasoning in terms of «value creation» for the customer

- Traditional companies (HCL included) thought the the «value zone» was inside the company, where innovation, new products and services were created.

- Nayar thought that the **«value zone» was at the boundary of the company**, that is, where HCL and customers interact

- That's where HCL should generate innovation and value. Many competitors provided excellent products and services, but no company was thinking in terms of strategic partnership with their customers. Nayar saw this as a great opportunity for HCL

THE LEADERSHIP & CULTURAL PROBLEM

- A radical transformation of HCL was necessary

- Innovation should come not from management or a few "product designers", but **from the bottom-up**, from the people in the «value zone» (in touch with the customers)

- However, HCL employees were not proactive, too passive, did not want performance responsibility, they took for granted that their role was to wait for the managers to come up with ideas and solutions.

- It was not their fault. The company's culture was to blame. **Managers played that kind of role: they imposed top-down directions and made sure that nobody deviated**

- **Nayar's first and main problem was the kind of widespread leaderhisp in the company, how managers and leaders interpreted their role**

NEW CHALLENGES AS A TRIGGER

- **To change the culture, new, bigger challenges were needed.**

- After 3 months, he organized a 3 days meeting (the Blueprint meeting) with 100 highest level managers. He told them that the strategy had changed. The goal was not to engage in small projects, but to provide unique, large, multi-service projects / proposals to their customers, projects that would completely transform their customers' business. They were going to compete with giants such as IBM and Accenture

- **He set a very challenging goal**. DSGi, a very large electronic retail company, was looking for offers for its ICT infrastructure. It was potentially a huge business deal for HCL. It would take months to put together a good offer. Nayar thought that this challenge would be needed to shake things up and mobilize people towards a new direction

- He took some quick change initiatives (process reegineering, talent developmente tc)

- These and other initiatives were useful, but **insufficient to create the kind of organization and culture that Nayar wanted**. Something different was needed.

- Nayar asked: "**What if we turned everything upside down**? **What if management were accountable to the value zone and the people in it?** **What if we could put employees first**?"

EMPLOYEES FIRST

- Nayar created a team to think creatively about how to launch an internal communication and engagement campaign, to change people's thinking and attitude

- The new motto was "*Employees First, Customer Second*". A radically new vision.

- They also utilize a symbology that evoked the relevance of the individual and the strength of the collective. They chose «THAMBI», in Tamil language means «brother». Thambi was the symbol of an extraordinary individual, with pride, passion and focus on results, which reminded all employees that they are part of a **community**. One of the new slogans was «**THE FORCE OF ONE**». Nayar launched a campaign to communicate everybody the "*Employees First, Customers Second» philosphy* (EFCS).

- **Most people were skeptical, some very critical.** They thought it was another rethorical, useless initiative from the management. The most common attitude was «let's wait and see».

- Nayar said: «EFCS was in truth hard, not soft. I want value-focused employees who are willing and able to drive an innovative, sophisticated experience for our customers. **EFCS was investing in employees' development**, unleashing their potential to produce significant bottom-line results. The goal was to radically change the business model"

- For the employees to accept responsibilities and become proactive, a **trust** climate was necessary. **Trust could be earned only by example and total transparency**. How to do that?

GENERATING TRUST THROUGH TRANSPARENCY

- **The system «trust pay» was introduced**. In their industry, it was typical that technicians would get 30% of their wage as a variable component, depending on performance. But goals were often way too difficult, and most never obtained that 30%. Nayar increased the fixed wage to 85%. It was a way to communicate trust and responsibilization. It also worked in order to attract engineers from other companies to HCL

- The company's intranet was made much more open and transparent. All employees could access a vast amount of information

- **Transparency**, according to Nayar, meant a more honest feedback about the current situation of the company. **Problems should not be hidden but exposed and tackled**. Nayar created several feedback mechanisms. For example:

- **The Smart Service Desk (SSD) was created**. It was on online system where anyone could submit a problem (by opening a «ticket») and employees could track it. **Only the person who opened the ticket could close it and declare it solved. Nobody else.** This gave a sense of empowerment to the people, as now they could signal problems, track solutions and decide when the problem was solved.

- **U&I was a new online channel where Nayar himself committed to answer all the questions that any employee asked him**. He answered hundreds of questions each week. **He invited criticisms**. Questions were so many that he had to esablised a staff to help him categorize them and answer to all the questions.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

- *Directions* is an annual program in which Nayar travelled with senior managers in all company's locations, and directly engaged in face to face conversations with all employess. Every meeting was video recorded and made available to all employees. It was a way to establish a common language and a sense of community

- **A program of 360° assessment started**, and Nayar was the first one to publish his own review. **He promised to resign if his review would go down a certain limit**. Everybody had to be transpartent. At the beginning, he did not mandated top managers to do the same, but he asked them to. Some did, and after awhile many other followed. He said: «**When the thirty-seven thousand employees all over the world had the chance to view their top management transparently, I think the message really got across for the first time that we were truly a different company. The transformation process was becoming less dictatorial and more consultative**"

- Another HCL manager said: "**With the 360, there was a tipping point. For a while there were few believers, and then suddenly there were few nonbelievers**"

- Not all accepted the change. Transparency and trust meant higher expectations and responsibility. **A few managers left the company** because they felt they were not ready or accepted the new system

- After a year, the tone of the «Directions» meetings had changed. At the beginning, the questions were mostly «transactional» (we want «this», we want «that» …). After a while, almost all discussed about the future, strategy, how they could create more value. It became obvious that the culture had rapidly transformed.

TRANSFORMING THE IDEA OF LEADERSHIP

- Notwithstanding all positive changes, Nayar still saw HCL as a centralized company, too dependent on the CEO and top executives. He said:

- **"Everywhere I went I got questions—all good and useful questions about important topics, but it bothered me that I was expected to have all the answers. It was just that they'd gotten into the habit so common in traditional companies: "<u>ask the manager</u>". What bothered me was that I knew I didn't have the answers to their questions—but they probably did.**"

- Nayar, instead, wanted the employees to take more responsibility, to be more proactive, and in order to do that he had the change the perception of leadership, so that employees would not see leadership as the only or main driver of positive change. Here's what he did:

- **He changed the U&I portal. It was useful to instill trust and transparency, but it strengthened the idea that the CEO had all the answers. He created a section called «MY PROBLEMS», in which Nayar himself posted his own problems and asked employees, any emplyees, suggestions about how to solve them.** He received a very large number of excellent ideas and advices. Most of all, he wanted that the sense of «ownership» and «responibility» spread around to everybody, instead of being concentrated on very few people.

- In 2006, the 360° review system was extended to everybody in the company. 1500 managers complied. At some point, Nayar imposed all managers to adhere.

CREATING A COMMUNITY OF COMMUNITIES

- The Employee First Councils were created: spontaneous online communities in which any employee could discuss any topic, not just strictly related to work. The success was enormous. There were 2500 Council Leaders around the world.

- At that point, HCL created some Councils focused on relevant technological problems for the company. The success was such that many new ideas born in the Councils truned into new products, services and technologies.

- **Unstructured innovation was created, bottom up, nurtured by passion and interest, completely independent from hierarchy**

- Nayar also decided that the assessment of new ideas and project had to be done by peers. **The project «My Blueprint» asked all manager to assess the proposal of their own colleagues**.

- Although there was some resistance, the positive effect was surprising. The average quality of projects improved, they became more realistic, more detailed, the assessments more honest.

- When one expect an assessment of one's idea by his/her own peers (instead of their bosses, who knew less about technical details) the approach to idea generation and projectuality changes dramatically. Not only, but people started exchanging ideas, knowledge and help, and projects became more collaborative and effective

RESULTS

- HCL won the the job from DGSi, worth 330 milions. Many other similar, giant jobs were acquired over time

- During the 2008-09 crisis, while competitors were losing ground dramatically, HCL grew by 23%

- Nayar honestly admits that not all his ideas and attempts as he had hoped. It was a matter of **learning along the way, to experiment and improve continuously his managerial / leadership approach**

- Nayar left the company in 2013, he created a Humanitarian Foundation to increase education in India

- **From 2005 to 2013, whil he was there, HCL 6 times its total revenue, from 764 millions to 4.7 billions**. Profits and capitalization did the same. **Fortune declared that HCL was the company with the «most modern management in the world».** **Business week wrote that HCL was one of the most influential companies in the world.** **Forbes declared HCL the «best employer of the world in 2021».** Many similar prized and honors. The economic success of the company was growing together to the satisfaction and motivation of employees.

- **After Nayar' exit, thank to the new organizational culture that he established, the company contnued to grow and be successful by maintaining the same managerial approach that Nayar created and developed**

LISTEN TO NAYAR ON YOUTUBE

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCdu67s_C5E

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM NAYAR'S STORY? (1)

- Like with any individual story, **we cannot generalize anything**. However, we can see Nayar's story as a good, contextual **example** of more general concepts and ideas that find general support in many other cases and in more general data

1. **A shift towards a «methodological» approach to leadership and RESPONSIBILITY**
   - Radically different from the most common leadership «mythology»
   - Leaders are NOT (ans SHOULD NOT be) those **capable of making all the best decisions or the ones with all the «answers»**
   - Good leaders create the **CONDITIONS** allowing collaborators, groups and organization to thrive
   - Nonetheless, leaders still hold the **RESPONSIBILITY for the decisions and the outcomes**. How do we reconcile the two?
   - Having RESPONSIBILITY does not correspond with being THE SOURCE of the DECISION OUTCOMES
   - it corresponds with being THE SOURCE of the PROCESS through which decisions are made and outcomes achieved
   - In this sense, Nayar, as a «methodological leader» can be seen as a **«social» (organizational, cultural) architect**

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM NAYAR'S STORY? (2)

2. A necessary, clear separation between different «uses» of authority

- Authority over **process / methodology** vs. **substance / content**
- Is Nayar a «**strong leader**»? It's a question that doesn't make a lot of sense in this new perspective about leadership.
- Does Nayar uses «authority»? Does he make decisions?
- **ABSOLUTELY YES**, but only in relation his «methodological» responsibility, if and when necessary
  - Example: Nayar **does use authority to mandate the 360 assessment program**, at some point. He sees it as a necessary, non-negotiable part of the organizational process that he wants to implement in his organization (in order to increase the perception of transparency)
  - Example: he does **decide** to implement the «Trust pay» system (in order to increase the perception of trust)
  - Etc
- **ABSOLUTELY NOT** (or, <u>much less than what a «traditional leader» would do</u>) in relation to the specific problems and questions that employees may have
  - He said, in relation to the U&I channel: «***What bothered me was that I knew I didn't have the answers to their questions—but they probably did***". Once he realized that, he creates the "My problems" channel

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM NAYAR'S STORY? (3)

3. General conditions that are very important in most, if not all, organizations, that leaders have the responsibility to create and encourage:

- **MUTUAL TRUST** between management and operatives
  - Management trusts the ability and competence of operatives
  - Operatives trusts the strategic, methodological and cultural «vision» of the management
  - Trust must be reciprocal, it must go in **both directions: One cannot hope of operatives trusting management ifmanagement does not trust the operatives**
- **TRANSPARENCY** about ... everything
  - How can you develop trust without transparency? How can you have transparency without trust? These two things are the same. They are two side of the same coin. They imply each other.
- **PRIMACY of COMPETENCE, not of HIERARCHY**
  - Hierarchy and authority are important tools (for coordination, for methodological implementation, for strategic decisions) but they cannot replace competence
  - Good ideas and effective solutions can come from ... anywhere. The fact that a certain idea is good does NOT depend on its source, but only on its MERIT
  - Focus on personnel **GROWTH**, not just **PERFORMANCE: growth leads to sustainable performance**
- **THE RELEVANCE OF COLLABORATION and RECIPROCITY**
  - The most impactful ideas and contributions often come from groups, collaborative efforts, cross-fertilization between different expertise areas
  - Examples: the «Employees Councils», a crucial source of innovation in HCL

METHODOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP IN GROUPS

- The same general methodological aspects that we have seen in organizational leadership (Nayar case) also apply in **small groups:**

- develop a **methodological** and a **collaborative culture** within the group, encourage **proactivity, initiative, collaboration,** encourage **trust** and **transparency,** focus on **personnel growth first and foremost: performance will follow**

- choose the group's **composition** (ensure enough diversity, if possible)

- monitor **interpersonal dynamics** (avoid conditions that generate social pressure, conformity, self-censorship, ensure a good predisposition to cooperation)

- manage the discussion **time**

- manage / reduce **conflicts**
    - encourage debate while avoiding personal conflicts (example: the plussing technique in Pixar)

- develop **critical thinking ability** among members

- use **specific techniques** (divergent, convergent etc) to improve the groups's or the organizational effectiveness (role playing, subgroups, red teams, Delphi etc)

- **A METHODOLOGICAL LEADER MUST POSSESS ROBUST KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNICAL COMPETENCE IN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIAL, BEHAVIORAL DOMAINS**

Another «HISTORICAL» example: The 1962 cuban missile crisis

- CIA (october 1962) showed JF Kennedy satellite pictures of soviet missilistic bases being built in Cuba (able to hit US major cities). The missiles could kill 80 million people

- Kennedy formed a work group (called Ex-Comm); the group worked for the next 12 days in order to come up with ideas and solutions

- Most people, at the beginning, thought that the US should attack and destroy the bases

- **Kennedy started intervening and defining the groups' methodology**

- First, **Kennedy DID NOT participate in most meetings**. He wanted to avoid his influence (due to his charisma, position etc) on the group judgment

- McNamara proposed an alternative solution: a naval blocade in order to stop soviet cargos going to Cuba

The cuban missile crisis (2)

- Group became convinced of the naval blocade solution, but Kennedy thought their arguments were insufficient, and obliged them to keep debating. He added more «rules» that the group had to follow

- **Ex-Comm was divided in 2 sub-groups**. Each produced a report to support each of the two options (blocade and military strike)

- **The two sub-groups exchanged information, and tried to find weak points of the other position**

- During the discussion, **most formal devices for managing the group were never used** (chairmen, protocols, procedures, etc.)

- Robert Kennedy and Ted Sorenses **played devil's advocate** for each position

- Finally, the two groups met the President, presented the option; he listened and posed inquisitive questions. The naval blocade was the final decision.

Good points to remember from the Kennedy's case

- Conscious effort to **develop and debate multiple options**
- **Extended, open and critical debate about even the most "taken for granted" assumptions**
- Developing **written**, detailed plans for both options
- **Role played by devils' advocates**
- All members at the **same status level**: no hierarchy, no other differences implied or accepted
- No formalities
- Use of **subgroups** to generate variety and reduce polarization
- **Collaborative AND «competitive» approach for the interaction between groups**
- Group looked for **outsiders' infos and opinion**
- **Kennedy's absence to debates reduced his charismatic influence on the content of the discussion (but he did set the metodology!!)**

Final points about leadership

- There is a lot of literature and many different theories about leadership

- It is a topic on which is hard to collect reliable, general «evidence», as individual cases and situations may vary greatly

- While every leadership «style» provides useful insights, **there is no single «style» of leadership that is optimal in all situations**, but good leaders are generally able to **ADAPT** to different needs and circumstances

- Also, the more groups aspire to achieve **creativity, innovation, complex problem solving**, the more **leaders should be «methodological»**

- Good leaders should possess (and use) **specific, technical, science-based knowledge about the techniques and methods that improve group effectiveness, including how to manage relationships, create purpose, encourage autonomy, facilitate growth, leverage the uniqueness of individuals (their personal interests and passions)**
  - Personal qualities such as charisma, intuition, intelligence and experience may be important (sometimes ..) but usually NOT sufficient for effective leadership

GOOD LEADERSHIP MATTERS A LOT

GOOD (METHODOLOGICAL) LEADERSHIP CAN BE LEARNT