

Race Between Growth and COVID - 19

By K.U. Mada*

CCOVID 19 has changed life that we cannot really fathom its impact. Circumstantial necessity is the mother of game-changer. Many changes in working in enterprises have been made for transacting online with varying efficacy. The change required maintaining trouble-free-gadgets, jottings, gist of transactions and limiting length of working and use of videos and slides for presentations.

Indian Context Challenging

To what extent employees take work seriously is a conjecture. Many require cajoling, reminding and assertively directing with disciplinary action. The perceptions, etiquettes, work-ethos and style of functioning differ widely from small business to multi-national corporations to public sector enterprises and authorities. Whether the work ethos differ or not, supervision influences effectiveness. Employees need guidance of seniors, peers and juniors. Exceptions apart, distractions at home could be more. There is scope to study the files containing information on similar cases. At higher levels the body language and the tone, tenor and voice modulations in conversation have impact. Hence, the role and importance of working in office atmosphere cannot be substituted. None knows how long working at home will continue and its impact on habits will persist beyond; it depends on enterprises and circumstances.

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Working from Home

During the COVID19 peak lockdown, there was no alternative but to adopt online working as inevitable stop-gap arrangement. But for appropriate technology to make it feasible, there would have been hardly any work. Perforce, office-goers would have to depend on technology-support, resources and facilities nearer home for setting right technical glitches. The professionals who have youngsters at home could also create irritants. There may be cases of job loss for family members. Further, young families may be living in joint family where they have to obey the directions of seniors. Working at home lead to frictions. In recent years, some of Corporate Board/Committee meetings and business meetings have been the norm.

Suitability in Business Enterprises

The online work and teaching have made people to spend more time for fixing children's educational needs. With such diversion, some parents cannot pursue their work diligently. They need to assist children at the cost of own pursuits. There are complaints that in rural and urban towns new office entrants face the problem of their families not understanding the changing work styles and it creates frictions.

While the technology-based work in offices, factories and elsewhere is inevitable in the short-term, the country cannot continue with new system. There should be alternatives by way of permutations and combinations of safety and physical presence depending on situations. Thanks to information and communications technologies, noteworthy changes

permeated changes in enterprises and in educational fields. Many techniques and methods have been modified as we cannot duplicate everything since the Internet, power connections, infrastructure of road and transportation facilities are poor in most areas and the people are not yet tech-savvy.

Need-Based Work Style

There is a mixed success. Where top management is taking a safe stand, the employees work from home. A distinction has been drawn between essential services and normal (non-essential) items in social and economic area. Another category is that of money managers who carry on cash transactions or in common and bigger transactions with institutional dealers of capital and money. Hospitals, chemists and druggists, municipalities and cleaning services which are essential services work almost as "normal" and it is justified from social angle. Some are on grey areas. Nothing moves in modern society without money and supplies of foodstuffs and other essentials for common people's day-to-day life and for services like cleaning and personal services. To cite an instance, in banks like IDBI Bank, each official is covering their head fully with clothes and are put in a thick plastic enclosure with only a small window to push in and receive transaction-related documents and papers.

In most other banks officials sit as in the past. Thick plastic sheet may be fixed between front and back row in autos, taxis, hired cars and buses. Some work on alternate days and made suitable changes in seating arrangements. Essential services are in open areas. If care is taken as in

respect of "essential services" in all (normal) services with minor modifications, as may be required in each case, it should be possible to manage the whole economy. This means the economy should do much better with greater employment, production and earnings, without accumulating the adverse economic conditions.

Psychological Impact on Executive Practices

As experienced managers would know, psychology, psychiatry, body language, interactive sessions suffused during the course of work and daily conversational styles through which the process of nudging the opposite business parties could go a long way in work situations. The physical interactions accentuate further scope for more intensive work-relations. Such interactions have been the basis of many established relationships between enterprises. Then the deserved people get positions and not just because of their seniority. So the deserving were nurtured by colleagues or seniors. Interactive work-situations are platforms for true learning.

Interactions Influence Human Relations

In large corporates, regardless of the targets, there develops, as a natural process, specific ways, means and methods. What is more, there are exclusive techniques of developing rapport through the individual efforts. For doing so, imaginative executives introduce techniques to kindle right spirit among colleagues. All such matters cannot be dealt with through internet. While new platforms can fit in for online transactions for reducing corrupt elements, personal interactions are essential for many other types of transactions.

Discussions with some corporate officials, business houses and company officials revealed that online working is not an adequate substitute and sooner the interactive business is restored, the better would be business deals.

Cost Consideration Be Secondary

Whatever the restrictions required for interactive working methods are by now apparent in social, economic and human relationships. Now it is apparent that life cannot be smooth without opening the scope for employment, social life and earning decent income. The economy is now supported by Government but how far the stop-gap arrangement could continue. We are not doing enough of "off and on" lockdown as some countries do. We have lockdown which has fairly succeeded in preventing COVID but we have to now juxtapose the damage occurred. The basics of economic life strikes back on our face. How long we can distribute support-benefits in the way the Governments have been doing. They have accumulated liabilities. The longer it goes on, the greater the damage, especially for the poor and the younger generations. Unless we expand the pie how could we continue with the largesse. All expert bodies warn that shrinkage in GDP ranging from -7% to over -10%. With uncertain-future, all assumptions and presumptions would have to fail inevitably.

Steady Lockdown or Off and on Stoppage

The prime consideration is the economy and life of common man and making best use of primary (human) resources in this country of 1.3 billion. The rest of ingredients for prosperity follows only if we have well-educated and trained human beings. They deserve more funds and we cannot find money when the business is sleepy. Once the system loses its erstwhile momentum built into the systems and procedures, we lose so much more. For instance, the basics for gaining knowledge, training, building in understanding in people and so forth. Hence, the policy of "off and on" merits serious adoption, lest we will be in trouble. Unless we go on such revised basis we cannot return to normal growth. As India we have got into development trajectory in new way

for the last 30 years, we have fairly good accumulated national assets in terms of infrastructure, industrial and services sectors and many facilities for ushering in a competitive industrial structure.

Concluding Observations

We should make all-out efforts to ensure safe interactive working arrangements in all work-places whether essential services or non-essential services. Unless the work is carried out as collaborative endeavours the employees and professionals could become lop-sided personalities and the faculties for building successful career with confidence and right calibre in work situations would get muted. This is applicable for seniors, equals and juniors. This is the Wikipedia interactive, collaborative and cooperative era; what one lacks the others supplement and complement to make the work-in-hand the whole at the quickest.

While education or training are basic to discover talent what makes an individual a complete personality is what he picks up as life's lessons for a rounded personality. Nowadays hardly few could do research or work single-handedly. COVID vaccine and health care is but one example. Major research and development and projects are undertaken as "joint projects" since they are to be done by bringing together as collectives and by fusing the pieces of diverse knowledge inputs which are directly, indirectly or remotely connected brought from whoever or wherever they get hidden or embedded. Pieces make the whole!

The past is base for present and the present, for the future. Data-sets of each era may partly differ and partly complementary. Our generation is sitting over inventions and innovations already made by the past generations. Using them in right proportions and interactively and bringing them for common good remains our responsibility. □