

INTRODUCTION

At the outset, it may be noted that this introduction is more like a sequel to my preface. I have avoided repeating here (but for a few necessary references), what is already said in the preface. Hence, before embarking on the introduction, reading the preface is highly recommended.

We saw in the preface that the Geo-Socio-Political world-order is changing rapidly and the economic center of gravity is substantially shifting eastwards. We also took cognizance of how the mindset of the people, world over is shifting from that of a job-seeker to a job-creator and took note of the overwhelming number of startups mushrooming all around. This is clearly the era of startups and entrepreneurship.

Empowered by the new technologies and correspondingly evolving new business models, the business ecosystem is also evolving on daily basis. Virtually every Industry and profession is undergoing a metamorphosis that affects all of us. These revolutionary changes will alter forever, the way many organizations operate. People and products that cannot cope with these changes will fast become obsolete and eventually perish. The new entrepreneurs, new leaders and those already in leadership positions will have to bear this in mind and keep aligning with new situations constantly, for long-term sustained success.

As *Stephen Covey* puts it, this realignment needs to be made at all three layers of leadership – Meta, Macro and Micro. Meta leadership is about vision and stewardship. Macro leadership deals with strategic goals and how you organize

structure and systems and set up processes to meet those goals. Micro leadership deals with empowering people and ensuring effective business execution through them.

This book is neither on general leadership, nor does it claim to be exhaustive. It is rather confined to a more specific and practical part - success-orientation. Many leaders seem to have little or no focus on this part, which for many organizations, is the primary reason for not realizing their full potential or failing altogether.

THE CONCEPT OF EFFECTIVE SUCCESS-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP (ESOL)

When we talk of success, it is not about good money made in short term. Neither is it about just making good money consistently over long term. It is about building respectable organizations that have a robust culture of success-oriented execution, having enough flexibility to adapt to the everchanging ecosystem, while living by their own *Core Values* and *Principles*. Empowered by this robust culture and flexibility, when organizations create substantial intrinsic value for all stake-holders, including society in general, sustained over a long-term, that is what we mean by success here. At times, organizations switch ownership or have to totally wind up. Effectively switching ownership or winding up is also a part of success. But we will confine our focus to running an organization.

Now, that brings us to the terms ‘Success-Oriented’ and ‘Success-Oriented Execution’. Some might argue that “Any leader starts off with a dream or a vision to achieve something worthwhile. Any good strategy is always success-oriented. No leader ever has a vision that culminates in failure or draws up a strategy to fail, so

INTRODUCTION

‘success-orientation’ is inherent to any vision or strategy per se; and hence, just saying ‘Execution’ should suffice. Phrases like ‘Success-Oriented’, ‘Success-Oriented Execution’, ‘Effective Success-Oriented Leadership’ etc are a futile play of words.”

That however, is not the case. What is inherent is the ‘intent’ to succeed. Success-orientation takes a lot more than just intent, as the following paragraphs will reveal.

This book does discuss the three fundamental aspects of business execution, namely *People, Strategy and Operations*, but in addition, it also talks about building the right culture for *Success Orientation* and a few other vital considerations that have a substantial bearing on the three fundamental aspects. These considerations, if missed, can cause damage of catastrophic proportions.

For instance, business management books are full of pages after pages glorifying **SMART** (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic & **T**ime-Bound) goals, goal setting, goal prioritization etc. Leadership programs crammed into a few days, often commence with pushing their participants hard – sometimes even to exasperating levels - to setting and prioritizing their goals first. But they often miss something very vital - these goals must emanate from a profound understanding of the organization’s ‘*Worthwhile Zone*’ (We will discuss this concept in detail in the subsequent chapters). Before setting something as a goal, one must ask - “Is it ‘worthwhile’?”

To be clear, I in no way, intend to undermine the importance of Goal Setting and Prioritization, but what is seen over long years of my experience of working with CEOs and top business leaders, is that at times, leaders

find themselves heading nowhere when they realize that some of the so-called SMART goals they set earlier, were far from being worthwhile. Knowing the organization's *Worthwhile Zone* is most fundamental and absolutely vital, before a leader sets goals and commits resources. It is the job of the leaders at the helm of affairs to know, what as a goal is worthwhile and what is not. The term 'worthwhile' is of course subjective, but the concept of '*Worthwhile Zone*' has been adequately discussed and explained in subsequent chapters, substantially curtailing subjectivity to acceptable levels; making it amply clear, that any goal is worthwhile only if it emanates from the '*Worthwhile Zone*' of the organization. That is one place where the term 'Success-Oriented' begins to find its relevance.

The other vital consideration often missed, is best represented by a mantra – ***“Always be available.”*** Now this might sound to some, like an advocacy of being free or idle, but it is not that. We will soon see how.

Very few actually have a vision to foresee a forthcoming breakthrough, a once-in-a-life-time opportunity or a disruptive innovation (internal or externally imposed). Foreseeing such events and predicting their timing accurately enough is crucial, especially if you are into a technology driven business or a creative business, where one creative idea or a disruptive innovation can change the entire course of the business or even turn it upside down. It is every leader's job to foresee such probable events and be 'Available' at all times (in part at the least) to face them. A leader must consciously keep some flexibility in her own schedule, and keep some resources handy to enable her to take out time and resources as necessary, so as to grab an unexpected but

INTRODUCTION

worthwhile opportunity coming her way, or undertake some radical measures to safeguard against a potential disruption. The leader must understand that plans and schedules are her slaves, not her masters. With that understanding, it is possible to keep such flexibility and be better prepared.

Of course, keeping schedules a bit flexible, identifying and keeping people and resources ready to be spared as and when required etc would cost money. It is clearly a tradeoff – what you gain at this cost is the ability to effectively deal with an unforeseen opportunity or an adversity. ‘Success-Oriented’ is also about such conscious and effective tradeoffs, just to give another example of the vital considerations I am referring to.

Just to reiterate, apart from the leader’s role in the three fundamental aspects of business execution, this book also discusses other essentials of effective leadership, like building and sustaining the right cultural ambience and a few other enablers of **Success-Oriented**. And hence this name – **Effective Success-Oriented Leadership (ESOL)**.

We have seen in the preface, how rapidly and why the business ecosystems are changing and how the corresponding new business models are evolving at a breakneck speed. The need for more and more leaders who can adapt to this new ecosystem effectively and deliver results consistently, is growing. And it is no more about leadership just at the top; it is rather about leadership across all areas of operations and at all levels. The culture of all-level leadership empowers people and motivates them to be more creative and innovative; contributing to the organizations’ long-term sustained success.

To sum up, ***Effective Success-Oriented Leadership*** is a book that will help build a sound culture of Success-Oriented Execution, that serves as a solid launch-pad for sustained long-term growth and success. At the same time, it will help in honing skills at all three layers of leadership – Meta, Macro and Micro. And that applies not only to the three fundamental aspects of business execution, but also to some other vital essentials of leadership, crucial for sustained long term success.

This book will help you in some way or the other, regardless of whether you are new to the top leadership role, or you are a seasoned leader who has seen many monsoons. The very fact that you are reading this book, bears testimony to you being a truly potential Level 5 Leader (as *Jim Collins* calls it in his book ‘*Good to Great*’) – the one having a strong professional will to excel, and at the same time, having the humility to realize that there is always a scope for improvement.

With that, you are now well oriented to proceed with the exciting journey through this book.

Note:

This book contains some special remarks at appropriate places with following signs, which are self-explanatory.

KNOWING SELF AS A LEADER

One of the most essential traits of a leader is her sense of self-identity, self-awareness. This self-identity – where are her roots, where does she come from, what values she espouses etc - is probably the single most important constituent of a leader's character. A person who has lost connection with her roots also loses self-identity and her character becomes intrinsically superfluous and hollow. Such a person may be able to get away with it by being pretentious with some of the people for a while, but eventually people see through her hollow character. Such a person seldom achieves anything worthwhile in life.

Excelling in business leadership too, calls for this sense of self-identity. The leader needs to be aware of her own strengths and short-comings as a leader. Everyone is not and cannot be excellent at everything. Business leaders have to relentlessly practice to play on their strengths and simultaneously work gradually, step by step, on the short-comings. This first chapter is aimed at giving an insight and the direction for doing that.



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Let us begin by discussing some of the key essentials for *ESOL*.

STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

We all know that leading requires strength of character. People follow someone, only if they realize that the person is wiser than themselves and has a better sense of direction than their own. This perception about a person develops in the people's eye, only when the person has displayed over time her strength of character, competence and resolve.

As a leader you have to deal with the organizational realities – favorable or adverse – on daily basis. You have to take into your stride the diversity of viewpoints, to deal with people of different mindsets and personal backgrounds. You have to give people their true and honest assessment with a candid feedback. It is your character that empowers you to do all this effectively without fear, with your deep sense of inner security.

Here are some of the traits of a business leader, that are essentially empowered by strength of character.

Openness to information:

It takes strength of character to be open to information regardless of what it is; and deal with conflicting viewpoints. Or else, your tendency as a leader will be like the proverbial maharaja who gives away his pearl chaplet as a reward to anyone bringing him some good news, and chops the head of the one who brings a bad news. Such a tendency can be devastating. Openness enables a leader to accept and deal with information coming to her, and to handle the ambiguities and complexities that she encounters every day.

Emotional strength:

Emotional strength, is an essential constituent of a leader's character. Leaders may be able to get away

KNOWING SELF AS A LEADER

with emotional weakness for a short while, but they cannot survive for long. Effective business execution depends upon adhering to values and a specific set of behaviors. Emotional strength empowers embedding and sustaining these behaviors. A leader with such emotional strength also coaches and encourages her people to speak honestly, to give candid feedback, to give and take honest criticism; and gives them confidence to resolve conflicts in a just manner. A group can correct mistakes or get better if its members have the emotional strength to admit that they do not have all the answers.

Putting the right people in the right jobs is a crucial task that requires emotional strength. Dealing with underperformers with a resolve, is another crucial task, which if not handled well, grows into an acute problem, as commonly seen in many organizations, and it is usually the result of the leader's emotional weakness.

Only a leader, who is emotionally strong can hire the best people to work for her. Because if she is lucky, these people will be better than what she is (in certain areas at least); they will bring new ideas and energy. A leader who is emotionally weak will avoid such people out of fear that they might weaken her authority. Her tendency will be to protect her fragile power. An emotionally weak leader will hire only those people she can count on to be loyal; and reject those who will challenge her. Eventually, such emotional weakness will prove to be devastating for both, the leader and the organization.

Positive Personality:

Personality has two components - inward and outward. Although positive outward personality traits are essential for success, we need to realize that the outward

personality is just the manifestation of one's character. Fake pretentious outward personality without character does not take one far.

Importance of a profound, principled character can never be overemphasized. Of course, knowledge and intellect play an important role, but knowledge and intellect without character can be extremely dangerous. Purely intellectual development with an under-developed or flawed character can lead to damage of catastrophic proportions. The glaring example is that of the Nazi leaders.

After the World War II, during the *Nuremberg Trials*, Nazi leaders were subject to psychological examinations including IQ tests. Table T-1.1 shows the IQ scores of the 21 defendant Nazi leaders.

Note:

An IQ score of just over 100 is indicative of above average intelligence. With IQ scores between 120 to 135, a person is considered to be 'Super Intelligent' and scores near 140 or more, put the person in the 'Genius' category.

As we can see, all these Nazi leaders had an above average intelligence. Some fell in the 'Super Intelligent' or even 'Genius' category.

As *Sean Kernan* rightly puts it: *"Their medical evaluations didn't reveal creatures with villainous lizard brains. They were flawed men, high on ego, low on empathy, put in situations where evil thoughts flourished. Their flaws deepened. Their hearts turned black, and in turn, the very worst in their humanity was brought out."*

The Nazi party was a clear example of how devastating a collective effort by smart, intelligent people with a flawed character can be.

KNOWING SELF AS A LEADER

Sr.	Name	IQ Score
1.	Schacht, Hjalmar	143
2.	Seyss-Inquart, Arthur	141
3.	Dönitz, Karl	138
4.	Göring, Hermann	138
5.	Papen, Franz von	134
6.	Raeder, Erich	134
7.	Frank, Hans	130
8.	Fritzsche, Hans	130
9.	Schirach, Baldur von	130
10.	Keitel, Wilhelm	129
11.	Ribbentrop, Joachim von	129
12.	Speer, Albert	128
13.	Jodl, Alfred	127
14.	Rosenberg, Alfred	127
15.	Neurath, Konstantin von	125
16.	Frick, Wilhelm	124
17.	Funk, Walther	124
18.	Hess, Rudolf	120
19.	Sauckel, Fritz	118
20.	Kaltenbrunner, Ernst	113
21.	Streicher, Julius	106

TABLE T - 1.1



Importance of a profound, principled character can never be overemphasized. Of course, knowledge and intellect play an important role, but knowledge and intellect without character can be extremely dangerous. Purely intellectual development with an under-developed or flawed character can lead to damage of catastrophic proportions.

I was once aboard an aircraft with *Pinak* (the name is changed) - the CEO of an Indian MNC. I was accompanying him to New Delhi on his invitation, to witness their annual strategy review meeting.

Pinak was known to me for quite some years and I was also aware of his deep involvement in philanthropic activities through some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). While discussing on general topics, *Pinak* mentioned to me that he was to deliver a talk the next week, at some forum, on Indian School Education System, especially primary and secondary education. He said he had some thoughts and he wanted to tap my mind, so as to seek validity.

“Go ahead.” – I gave my concurrence.

Pinak seemingly believed that we teach a lot of useless subjects in the schools – Social Sciences like History & Civics, Literature, Art, Music and so on. He was of the view that all this is an unnecessary burden on the kids and a sheer waste of time. According to him, all we should be teaching at the schools should be Science, Mathematics, English and may be Geography.

I smiled, took a deep breath and said “With due respect *Pinak*, I beg to completely differ.” He appeared to be surprised while I continued:

“Can you tell me, what is the fundamental purpose of

primary and secondary education?” He looked puzzled now, and I went on: “The fundamental purpose of primary and secondary education is character-building. The children must know about history, the ‘good’ rulers, the ‘bad’ rulers and why they were labeled that way; about the great wars, the warriors and stories associated with them. They must know about democracy and other forms of governance, the democratic values etc. In India, the children must also be made aware of the great ancient literature India is blessed with - the mythology, the characters, what values they espoused and what made them great or otherwise.”

“They must be exposed to great ancient and modern literature and our rich cultural traditions, as all this plays a huge role in their character-building. They must know about our great poets, playwrights, writers, artists, musicians etc and their eminent works. Exposing them to arts like painting, ceramic work, music, theatre, dance etc in their school days inculcates creativity and prompts them into thinking independently and expressing effectively.”

“All this connects the children to their roots and gives them their self-identity. If they are well rooted, they are ready to take on other subjects with an open mind, learn more effectively and apply their knowledge more creatively; as they move to different spheres of work or even to different geographies, without the risk of facing an identity crisis.”

“All this knowledge and self-realization not only builds their character but also inculcates in them, a deep-rooted sense of the right and the wrong. It helps children to identify who are their heroes and role models and what are the values they will themselves espouse.”

“Once the character is built and it comes to some reasonable shape, the children are now ready to learn

more meaningfully, anything that you wish to teach them – Science, Technology, Mathematics, Commerce, Law, Business, Administration, Arts and so on; because by now, they have a deep-rooted self-identity, the sense of the right and the wrong, the white and the black. They are now better equipped to make a meaningful use of what they learn Science, Mathematics or anything else.”

Quoting the same Nazi example, I continued “We already know how devastating things can get when people with a flawed character face a certain situation, regardless of how intelligent or knowledgeable they are.”



The fundamental purpose of primary and secondary education is character-building. Once the children’s character comes to some reasonable shape, it creates a foundation for learning any subject you teach them. The character lends meaning and purpose to the learning.

I then went on to say:

“*Pinak*, you are an ace scientist yourself and are making very meaningful use of your knowledge. You are making money for yourself and are contributing to the society in parallel. But had your character been under-developed or flawed, you could have gone in any direction, not necessarily the right one”.

“Hmmm...” – that is all *Pinak* uttered, but his submissive smile and grateful eyes said the rest.

As I stated earlier, importance of a profound character can never be overemphasized. A solid leader with a sound character never wavers from her values. This characteristic is beyond honesty or beyond integrity; it is even more fundamental to business leadership.

We saw some traits that are essentially empowered by the leader's strength of character. It will also be interesting to see what constitutes the character. From what I have seen in my many years of working with CEOs, the following look like the constituents of a leader's character:

SELF-MASTERY

We have already seen earlier, how crucial the sense of self-identity is, especially for a leader. When you know yourself, you are comfortable with your strengths and not bogged down by your shortcomings. You know your own behavioral and emotional weaknesses, and you know how to deal with them.

No one can be good at everything at the same time - to be good judges of people, to be good at strategy, to be good at operations; and at the same time excel in talking to customers and do all the other things the job demands. A very few leaders have that uncanny talent. But if a leader knows her short-comings, at least she can strengthen those areas and get some help. She has to be equally open to praise and criticism. She has to find her way around her weaknesses, get help and get things done. Only the person who recognizes what is lacking, can ever address it. *Larry Bossidy* and *Ram Charan* in their book 'Execution' put it crisply:

"Only when you know yourself, you have a chance to master yourself. You can keep your ego in check, take responsibility for your behavior, adapt to change, embrace new ideas, and adhere to your values and principles under all circumstances.

Self-mastery is the key to true self-confidence. Self-confident people contribute the most to dialogues. With their inner security they deal with the unknown better

and appropriately link it to the actions that need to be taken. They are aware that they do not know everything; they are actively curious, and encourage people to bring up conflicting views. They set up an ambience of learning from others. They can take risks, and relish hiring people who are smarter than themselves.”

That reminds me of an incident during a business review meeting of a Canadian conglomerate, of which I was a part. *Henry*, (the name is changed) the head of supply chain was found to be falling short on his commitments. That was adversely affecting the whole business with a potential threat of a heavy loss if the situation continued. I suddenly saw the CEO spring into action and say – “*Henry*, I can clearly see that you are short of good people. Let me straight away approve two new General Managers for you. Hire them immediately.” Everyone was stunned by this sudden intervention, but the real punch was yet to come. Much to *Henry*’s embarrassment, the CEO quickly added a rather sarcastic remark – “But make sure they are both smarter than you - as smart or as good as you won’t work.”



Only when you know yourself, you have a chance to master yourself. You can keep your ego in check, take responsibility for your behavior, adapt to change, embrace new ideas, and adhere to your standards or values under all circumstances.

GENUINENESS & TRUSTWORTHINESS

Being genuine is vital to leadership, but in addition appearing genuine is equally important. The leader’s genuineness should be widely visible. Only the genuineness that is visible builds trust, because sooner or later people see through the fakers.

KNOWING SELF AS A LEADER

Winning people's trust is crucial to effective leadership. Being and looking genuine gets you close to winning that trust, but you are still half way. It is only when you demonstrate in addition, your competence in steering the ship through the thick and the thin, that people would consider you trustworthy.

As *Stephen Covey* says in his book '*Principle-Centered Leadership*', "*Many people with secondary greatness — that is, social status, position, fame, wealth, or talent — lack primary greatness or goodness of character. And this void is evident in every long-term relationship they have, whether it is with a business associate, their spouse, a friend, or a teenage child*".

A leader is always under a scanner. People will watch what she does. If she is found compromising or cutting corners, people will soon lose faith in her. The worst; they will follow in her footsteps.



Being genuine is vital to leadership but making that genuineness widely visible is also equally important.

HUMILITY

When *Jim Collins* and his team were interviewing CEOs of the 11 super successful organizations chosen, one of the key findings was that 'humility' as a trait was common among all these CEOs, without exception. When asked what was the secret of their success, they immediately gave the credit to their teams, and some also added that they were just lucky. None of them got rhetorical, enumerating their own contributions.

Humility helps you to contain your ego, you can learn from

anyone at any time. When you exhibit this attitude, your pride does not get in the way of gathering the information you need to achieve the best results.

Making mistakes is inevitable, but true leaders admit them and learn from them. Humility allows you to acknowledge mistakes and over time creates the right ambience for success-orientation.



Jim Collins in his book 'Good to Great' describes Level 5 Leadership as a paradoxical combination of humility and strong professional will.

ABUNDANCE MENTALITY

What *Stephen Covey* calls Abundance Mentality is the belief that there is plenty out there for everybody. This abundance mentality emanates from a deep sense of personal worth and security. It results in sharing recognition, profits, and responsibility. It recognizes unlimited possibilities for positive interaction, growth, and development. As *Covey* puts it : *“Most people are deeply scripted in the scarcity mentality. They see life as a finite pie: if someone gets a big piece of the pie, it means less for everybody else. People with a scarcity mentality have a hard time-sharing recognition, credit, power, or profit. They also have a tough time being genuinely happy for the success of other people—even members of their own family or close friends and associates. It is almost as if something was being taken from them when someone else receives special recognition or success. The person with an Abundance Mentality does not fall prey to this.”*



Sharing recognition, credit, power, profit etc without sense of insecurity is vital to success-oriented leadership. This is the crux of Stephen Covey's concept of abundance mentality. People with scarcity mentality are unable to demonstrate this.

WISDOM

Information, or even knowledge to a great extent, can be externally acquired. But wisdom is what we earn internally, over prolonged exposure to different situations we face and through our experiences in life. A repertoire of learnings, findings and conclusions, knowingly or unknowingly derived from the cause-effect analysis of those experiences, is built in our subconscious. This plays a vital role in reaffirming our personal values and principles, the sense of the right and the wrong etc; and all this put together, reflects in our conduct. Broadly speaking, this is what we refer to as wisdom.

Wisdom is different from smartness or cleverness. One can influence others for a while, with just smartness, but smartness without wisdom cannot survive for long. As a matter of fact, it is quite dangerous. Those who are smart may be articulate and clever speakers, but it takes wisdom to spontaneously assess the situation and decide what to speak, how to speak, when to speak and where to stop; or where to keep mum altogether. And that is not only about speaking, it applies to our conduct in general. The wise display a fine judgement and restraint in their conduct, and hence are far more effective in long term than those who are just smart or clever.

The wise have an uncanny ability to foresee the short-term and long-term implications of any action or

omission. The wise are at ease when spontaneously dealing with situations. It is like a reflex action, because wisdom resides in the subconscious. Most of the thinking is already done. There is nothing much to think anew.

The ideas of the right and the wrong; the white and the black; the dos and the don'ts etc are crystal clear in the minds of the wise. They have a highly developed conscience. They don't easily waver from their own set of values and principles.



Wisdom is different from smartness or cleverness. Those who are smart may be articulate and clever speakers, but it takes wisdom to spontaneously assess the situation and decide what to speak, how to speak, when to speak and where to stop; or where to keep mum altogether.

Since the wise are empathetic enough to be able to think from different perspectives, their sense of fairness and justice reflects in the opinions they form and their fairness is widely visible to everyone. They laugh freely at themselves. They have a healthy sense of humor, a willingness to admit and learn from their mistakes. They cheerfully execute what is within their power. The wise invariably believe in synergy. Synergy is the state in which the whole is more than the sum of its parts. When they negotiate, they are looking at finding a synergistic solution rather than defending positions or egos.

The wise are often appreciative, but they are neither easily impressed by stalwart personalities; nor do they become any person's blind follower.