
Ownership - a new age competence

The contours of challenges faced by a CEO are changing. Today the issues keeping the CEO awake seem to have added nuances to them making it a new age challenge. Problems in organizations are exacerbated when senior executives despite knowing what to do or how to do, remain passive for various reasons. How does this silent killer behavior, create a culture of inaction?....

Ram a CEO of a Pharmaceutical company had just finished a marathon of meetings and something from an earlier discussion was gnawing at him. Two meetings after that and on his way back home, he could still not shake that feeling off. Ram remembered mumbling something about the roads and his driver responded saying that everyone was blaming someone else. That was it! In that instant Ram realized what was bothering him. Early that evening he was reviewing the progress of a critical project and his best men were all giving reasons as to why they didn't make progress the way they should have. It was just short of a blame game. Every member present in that discussion was a good blend of fine talent, amazing intellect, very articulate with years of experience to showcase and yet the needle on the bar of progression was not moving. He continued worrying...

A new age challenge?

Back Ram's situation is a microcosm of a large universe of CEOs who are constantly intrigued by the most ubiquitous question- **What ails my team?** Our experience of working with CxOs, business owners and many teams in organizations has taught us that this is a deep rooted issue and needs to be treated thus in order to address it.

The contours of challenges faced by a CEO are changing. Rapidly changing markets, fierce competition, slowing industry, prized customers shopping elsewhere were external problems to be addressed. The internal 'To-do' list typically comprised working on productivity, improving operational efficiencies, reducing cost, developing new products/solutions, identifying new markets etc.

Today the issues keeping the CEO awake seem to have added nuances to them. We asked CEOs what is the one thing they wish for in their immediate team (the group that directly reports to them). The responses painted an emerging picture of the new age challenge. Here are a few.

"... I wish others feel for the organization the way I do",

"Somebody must own this and drive this...",

"We have the best strategy, product and resources, I wish there was more passion in my team.."

“ Very few in my team are willing to take the responsibility.. ”

“... Believe in the vision ...”

“ This group must inspire the rest of the organization...”

A new age competence.

It is not difficult to spot the common tone in these wishes. They clearly allude to leadership issues. It would be a safe assumption to make that the CEOs would have invested time and money on executive development and other HR/OD interventions. **The new age challenge is not the lack of knowledge, resources, strategy or capability** (and even if they are they can be addressed quickly). At the core of this all lies human behavior and more specifically -A mindset.

Take the case of aviation industry where technology has mutate so rapidly that feats considered inhuman, have today become everyday routines. Investigations into unfrotunate air accidents reveal (after prolonged and meticulous investigations) that despite the best laid processes, world class training and thorough instructions the underlying cause of the crash in most cases had been human behavior that overrode everything else- an erring pilot, an overzealous groundstaff, a stressed air traffic controller, a casual engineer at the hangar etc... Yes, common to all these causes is the human element..

Similarly in organizations, issues can be traced back to human behavior. Someone, somewhere perhaps did not do a good job or did not do anything at all. This problem is exacerbated and has a ripple effect if it originates in senior executive teams. **Worse still is the behavior of knowing what to do and yet remaining passive for many reasons.**

Ownership as a mindset.

Ownership taken seriously, is a new age competence that has the potential to leverage every other competence. Utter this word amongst executives and they are all likely to say “I knew this all the while”, but ask them why their team is dysfunctional, they will quickly respond “others don't take ownership”. If this seemingly simple word is not recognized as a loaded word this has the risk of becoming today's cliché and tomorrow's forgotten idea.

All efforts at developing, mentoring, coaching resources, work if individuals are ‘**prepared**’ and willing to go through the process of learning to change.

As a mindset, ownership is about professionals saying things like “I belong here and take pride in this workplace”. **At a very simple level this mindset originates as a fundamental connect with the purpose of the organization or with the role at the least and manifests as hunger for desirable results.**

This mindset hinges on three simple principles and opens the door to a world of positive behaviors.

1. Accepting responsibility for outcomes
2. Recognize that the individual has the power and is in a position to impact outcomes
3. Choose to use this power and position in a manner to get desired outcomes.

The ownership mindset is a blend of a cerebral shift and assertive actions.

Ownership as a habit

Cutting edge neuroscience today is able to identify and establish that the brain and mind work in more complex ways. This means that conventional management approaches to change behavior may not be enough.

Well-designed training programs and interventions work to the effect of teaching executives, the right behaviors and offer the insight that leadership is beyond effective management. More often than not good programs show immediate perceptible change in the way teams think and act. **The problem however is that, all the learning can quickly vaporize when the graph goes south.**

Imagine a team that experiences a sudden newfound positive change in their leader. It is a welcome change (because it is sudden) and everyone is happy and life at work is beautiful. Now lets play the devil and imagine that things go pretty bad at work and suddenly the leader abandons everything about development, motivation, inspiration and other things that he may have learnt, including the ownership mindset. He simply steps on the gas to drive the team faster and this can be an unsettling experience for everyone in the team and become counterproductive.

Ownership can be learnt as a competence, like any other skill such as writing effective emails. **It requires a disciplined process of doing it enough number of times, finding payoffs and gathering enough personal validation.** It then becomes so deeply entrenched, that forces attempting to dislodge this learning, like cynicism, criticism, organizational push and pull etc . appear meek in comparison and fail. The ownership habit would have thus formed.

Ownership is a simple yet loaded term. While operating as a deep emotion, it regulates application and development of many skills, Ownership is where it all begins- A new age competence indeed.

At Leverage we exist to help organizations thrive by awakening the inherent ownership instinct in every individual.

We have poured all our expertise, exposure and experience in crafting a process that enables individuals look at ownership as a defacto way of life. The process helps individuals gain the 'ownership mindset' and goes on to create the 'Ownership habit' by systematically bridging the chasm between the two. While the Leverage process works at every level, we believe that this one must begin at the top triggering not just a trickle but a purposeful current, that pulls down every negative force and spawns effective behaviors at the very top, that echo the sentiment - **"the problem may not have originated from me but the solution can"**.