



HELPING EMPLOYEES AND ORGANISATIONS TO OUTPERFORM

POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO SUCCESS – AND WHY WE SHOULD BOTHR

It would be naïve not to consider the barriers to success when implementing any new approach to develop leadership, accountability, and self-awareness in order to boost the success of – and align – our personal and organisational efforts. Therefore, it makes sense to identify these potential barriers as potential hurdles and then develop strategies to mitigate the risks involved. These new approaches not only involve making things right, but also confirm that there is indeed a better way to succeed and that we want the best for every stakeholder without exception. Among the potential barriers are the following factors.

Barrier 1: Shareholder Philosophy

I do not know of any explicit shareholder philosophy based on mediocre performance expectations. After all, the main reason people invest in a business is to obtain maximum returns on their invested capital. Further, I am not aware of any explicit shareholder approach that wishes ill on other stakeholders and focuses instead solely on personal financial outcomes.

Investors (people) like to talk about their investments and the choices they make in terms of growing their capital. In the majority of cases, especially in publicly traded and family controlled investments, investors, without exception, seek new ways to increase profits and improve margins. They keep a close eye on how management executes their investment strategy.

However, shareholders are not always well-informed, particularly when it comes to large organisations. Although the purpose of the board and management team is to safeguard the interests of investors, by law (in a majority of jurisdictions), shareholders also expect them to respect certain operational ethics. On the surface, there should not be any suspension of intentional resistance to new approaches from the shareholders' perspective – that is, shareholders cannot explicitly intend to exploit the workforce for their own gains without honouring the right of each employee to achieve self-knowledge and fulfil the individual's potential.



Yet, on the other hand, explicit intentions sometimes may not be authentic; although legally justified, they implicitly drive the purpose of a given investment to satisfy only shareholders' gains. Whether or not this type of implicit intention is agreed or even articulated behind closed doors is another matter for investigation beyond the scope of this article. However, if suspicion is perceived, there is very little potential for the executive team to attempt new approaches that would jeopardise shareholders' current investment philosophy.

Barrier 2: Current Leadership and Management Intentions

If current shareholders have explicit and implicit intentions to consider all other stakeholders' interests along with their own to maximise returns for all stakeholders, management's key focus need only be guarding the interest of all stakeholders. Management's role in delivering returns while safeguarding the interest of all stakeholders should link to management's ability to be as transparent as possible. With management under constant scrutiny by

the board, having a specific mandate from shareholders to manage the operations of their investment with optimum efficiency, it is common sense for the organisation's leadership to continuously seek productivity gains.

By explicit default, the expectation for the management team is that they serve all stakeholders (shareholders, management, employees, clients, suppliers, and so on) and fulfil their accountability by facilitating a value generation for all.

The only problem with such facilitation is that, as an orchestrator, while aiming to safeguard the interest of all stakeholders, management might attempt to benefit more than other stakeholders. I do not know of any explicit intentional desire by any management team to achieve personal gains (although there have been disappointments in certain organisations, I prefer to assume that these are exceptions). However, if there is any implicit desire for personal gains, such people, in my opinion, belong in prison rather than on management teams.



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Legal means should address implicitly-driven leadership or management teams who only guard their own interests. In essence, management should support innovative approaches to maximise returns for all stakeholders.

Barrier 3: Existing Employee Population Disposition

The key purpose of any employee in working for any type of organisation is to generate value for all stakeholders. Although the definition of value may differ by entity, the key purpose remains the same. No employee should explicitly seek only personal gain. Fortunately, legal implications and internal management policies exist to address such acts. However, as some employees may have implicit intentions, at the very least, an organisation that recognises such patterns of behaviour should discharge such employees.

Although many reasons can explain why some employees focus on generating value only for their

- own gains, the typical rationalisation is that they are encouraged to do so or live in a working environment that implicitly allows such behaviour. Obviously, other personally driven reasons may exist due to individual inclinations. However, the fact remains that such employees will resist transparency and will misguide others around them, causing frustration throughout the organisation. Management needs to identify such individuals as early as possible to avoid their preventing the company from deploying new approaches.
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- **Barrier 4: Political Environment in which One Lives**
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- If one's country has an unstable political environment or discourages freedom of expression, it becomes challenging to advocate self-discovery and awareness. Some governments thrive solely on that promise, not wanting citizens to be more self-aware or to excel due to their knowledge of personal capabilities. Organisations established in these markets face the same problems.
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Barrier 5: Current Educational Systems

Unfortunately, many current education systems are archaic and based on an outdated economic model. There has been no large-scale transformational change in either developed or emerging markets regarding education. Learning still involves delivery of specific content and methods that are, unfortunately, not suited to every individual. Education does not provide adequate options for many students and lacks personalisation, representing a considerable barrier to preparing the younger generation for the future and facilitating their personal progress.

There is an urgency to alter and improve education systems in almost every country. If there is no action to modify these systems to address the needs of today's generation, schools will continue to produce unhappy and frustrated individuals in society. Self-discovery and awareness should be at the core of future system transformations.

REASONS TO PUSH THROUGH THE BARRIERS - FOR INDIVIDUALS

In light of the struggle and hurdles to make changes to move forward, it may seem easier to accept the status quo and settle for a life and career of mediocrity. But isn't that a waste of one's potential for happiness and success?

Self-actualisation, self-fulfillment, self-awareness, happiness – whatever one considers to be an optimal state – has benefits that impact all aspects not only of one's own life, but also those with whom we interact, be it our family, co-workers, friends, and the community at large.

Self-awareness and personal empowerment should be an individual's priority, as they form the foundation from which we can move forward on the path to making life-affirming decisions.



REASONS TO PUSH THROUGH THE BARRIERS - FOR EMPLOYERS

Employers – and other organisational entities – have a strong motivation to ensure that their employees have the opportunities to advance along their personal development path. In the end, employee growth can only serve to support the company’s strategic goals – as long as they are compatible. In a recent article of the Gallup Business Journal (Susan Sorenson, Gallup Business Journal, “Employee Engagement Drives Growth”- June 20, 2013) Gallup’s research showed that companies with engaged workforces have higher earnings per share (EPS) and recovered from the 2008 recession at a faster rate. Businesses with a critical mass of engaged employees outperformed their competition.

BARRIERS ARE NOT INSURMOUNTABLE

Acknowledging the genuine hurdles faced on both an individual and organisational level, the human condition strives upward and forward. Cooperation among people and organisations – whether community or job or government-related – can address the issues, given time, resources, and the right tools. In this day and age, technology is one of those tools that can support the path to empowerment, leadership, and self-awareness.

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