

<p style="" class="MsoNormal">Kamran Rizvi, Navitus
January, 2014</p><p style="" class="MsoNormal"> </p><p style=""></p><p style=""></p><p style=""></p><p></p><p></p><p></p><p></p><p class="MsoNormal"></p><p class="MsoNormal"></p><div style="mso-element:footnote-list" mce_style="mso-element:footnote-list"><div style="text-align: left;" mce_style="text-align: left;" id="ftn1"><p style="text-align: center;" mce_style="text-align: center;"></p><p style="text-align: center;" mce_style="text-align: center;"></p><div style="text-align: left;" mce_style="text-align: left;" id="ftn1"></div><div style="text-align: left;" mce_style="text-align: left;"> <p class="MsoNormal"><i style="mso-bidi-font-style:normal" mce_style="mso-bidi-font-style:normal">◆ In navigating our lives, it is our fears and envies, our rages and depressions, our worries and anxieties that steer us day to day. Even the most academically brilliant among us are vulnerable to being undone by unruly emotions.[1]◆ </i></p> <p class="MsoNormal">When the going gets tough, the tough get going. This may be a hackneyed phrase, but it is not to be taken lightly, particularly in the chaotic times we are facing in Pakistan today. The word 'tough' sounds like an understatement these days. What we are confronting is nothing less than an economic, social and a political tsunami, on a scale never known before. </p> <p class="MsoNormal">Dealing with crisis is not new to our corporate leaders. Stories, albeit, few and far between, of their resilience are laudable. However, this time round our country is particularly vulnerable. It is in the throes of a convoluted war waging within and on its borders, inflation is skyrocketing and the energy crisis is worsening with each passing day. And all this just get magnified when you add poor governance in the mix. </p> <p class="MsoNormal">How do

companies survive, let alone prosper, in these hostile conditions? What are our organizational leaders doing in such circumstances? Some are wasting time sharing half-baked opinions on the unfolding geo-political scenario; while others are steering their ships safely through these stormy waters with an uncanny calmness and eyes focused on the goal.

Of course, should we, God forbid, witness a complete breakdown in law and order, our survival instinct will be triggered. The ones with means will try to seek refuge in another country abroad, if they are lucky to find seats on commercial flights that are still running; others will hunker down in some safe corner in their homes with basic ration of food and water, praying for safe times to return. But this is the worst case scenario.

In conditions of high risk and uncertainty that are likely to remain with us for many more years, business and government leaders with cool heads are wanted more than ever before.

Such leaders are very intuitive and emotionally intelligent. It is in such horrific and testing times, that true leaders emerge. They have the temperament to prepare for the worst, while expecting the best. They manage to stay calm and alert to opportunities. Those less prepared are paralyzed by fear in the face of threats to their lives and business.

Leaders with a healthy sense of perspective have a pre-disposition to the coexistence of opposites. They believe that our desire for peace and stability, while natural, needs to be balanced by the acceptance of disturbances of all kinds in our environment.

What we need is clear thinking, which can only come from a mind that is serene amidst surrounding chaos, in short, stress free. How is this possible? I hear you ask. You may also be saying that it is only human for a person to loose his nerves in ambiguous and dangerous conditions. Stress, when left unattended causes blurry vision and fog in thinking. We get unduly stressed when our 'present' is crowded out by our fear of what might happen in the future, and by the guilt or remorse we harbor from our past. This includes what we did, and how we now feel about what we shouldn't have done or should have done, but did not do.

To allow our fear of the future and guilt of the past to hijack our present is a grave mistake. We need to recognize the value of the present moment and create the space for it in our mind. A calm disposition helps us makes quality decisions in the present that positively impact our future outcomes. While I can see you agreeing with this train of thought, please ask yourselves, how many times you, your friends and associates, end up suffering from tensions, wasting precious time blaming and complaining about the ambient conditions.

Wouldn't it be wiser to be proactive in tough times and engage in serious analysis of the socio, economic, and political environment? On-going strategic thinking and review will help you uncover ways to

mitigate the impact of threats and you will be better able to profit from opportunities for your enterprise. Only an agile and responsive organization can survive in such turbulent times.

This calls for exemplary leadership characterized by confidence for decisiveness, deep understanding of internal and external challenges, and an appreciation of the genuine hopes and fears felt by key stakeholders. As the pace of change increases and the world of work makes ever greater demands on your cognitive, emotional, and physical resources, this particular set of abilities will become increasingly important.

To remain effective and inspiring, keep your cool. To this end, consider learning how to meditate. Meditation is a mental discipline by which you can get beyond your conditioned, "thinking" mind into a deeper state of relaxation and awareness.

Do not be swayed by those who peddle fear by painting a doom and gloom scenario, and neither be carried away by comfort of the soothsayers that all will be well soon.

[1] Daniel Goleman, in his book **Emotional Intelligence**.

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bureaucratic, over-managed, rule-driven and inflexible by virtue of their size. In this day and age of cyberspace and nanotechnology, fetish with size of a business can become an impediment. This is particularly true for organizations that have grown significantly in scale in terms of revenues and market share. Organizations like Citibank have lost touch with their core constituents. It may be a major player with a strong brand image, but customers interacting with its frontline employees are often disappointed by their state of helplessness in resolving routine problems. This could be on account of slavish adherence to archaic procedures. Often, individual contributors in big companies don't take the initiative needed to listen and understand customer requirements with the intent to ultimately delighting them. There is a lot to be said for systems and processes, but if they are not customer oriented and responsive, the game is as good as lost.

Quality can now be replicated anywhere in the world. China is leading the way in this respect. With the falling of trade barriers and dropping of quotas, the Chinese have taken their global market share in textiles from 16% to over 50% in less than a decade. In recent years, the Pakistan market has been flooded with Chinese products (mostly electronic, light engineering) that are low priced and in much demand.

We no longer live in a world of big mainframes. We live in a world where the real power is large networks a lot of individuals connected together Facebook & Twitter are pointing the way. A network does not have any headquarters. Chinese excel in this field and have spread their global business through this means. Naisbitt cites Asea Brown Boveri (ABB) as a great example of a huge company that thrives and grows through networking. He quotes Percy Barnevik (Former CEO at ABB) as having said, "We grow all the time, but we also shrink all the time." As the network gets larger, the nodes get smaller.

So, no matter how big your company gets, continue to excel by empowering your people at every level to deliver. Building agility and responsiveness is the key.