

Minding Our MBA Manners

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Curtain Call

Jaya T was a top notch MBA from a reputed IIM. She was recruited on campus with a very good pay package. The company had plans for her. Six months later her classmates were shocked and surprised that she had been asked to resign or she would be fired!

Ravi was also an MBA from a good B-School and got into the same company almost at the same time through recommendations made by a friend of the boss. Nine months later he was sent abroad for advanced training and was on the rung of the corporate ladder.

The recruiters were curious and did some informal research. Not surprisingly they found out that Jaya had very good IQ but was a poor listener and also very mediocre in communication skills. On the other hand Ravi, according to his boss, had reasonable IQ but was better in "Minding his MBA Manners". He not only listened with an open mind, but willingly adapted himself to the company environment.

This is just one of many true life examples that MBA aspirants, recruiters, schools all experience.

How to strike a balance between the verticals of MBA specialisation and the realities of a work environment?

There are many books, articles, papers on the aspect of soft skills. This write-up is not on soft skill development but on a broader issue of "Minding Our Manners". A good doctor is known because of very good bedside manners. The same holds good too for all practising MBAs. Only then can it have any meaning and meaningful effectiveness.

Skill & Manner

"Skill" is the ability to do well.

"Manner" is the way in which something is done or happens.

It should therefore be clear that good skill has to go hand in hand with manner. This fundamental needs to be understood and also imparted in effective measure both in MBA schools and corporate.

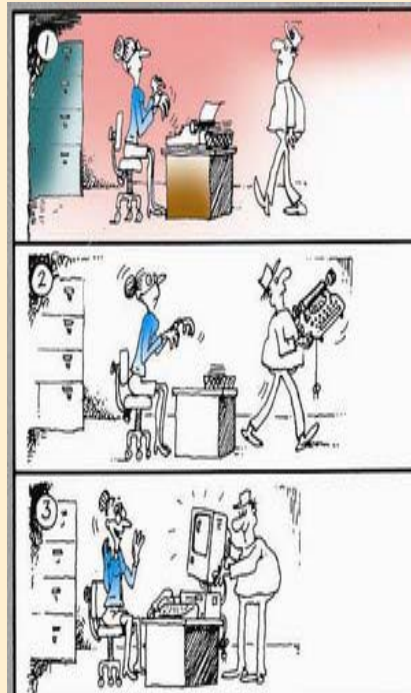
"Studies by Stanford Research Institute and the Carnegie Mellon Foundation among Fortune 500 CEOs found that 75% of long term job success depended on people skills and only 25% on technical skills".

The Real World of Work Eager to Impress the Boss

A young MBA was leaving the office late one evening when he found the CEO standing in front of a shredder with a piece of paper in his hand. "Listen", said the CEO, "this is a very sensitive and important document here, and my secretary has gone for the night. Can you make this thing work?" "Certainly," said the young executive. He turned the machine on, inserted the paper, and pressed the start button. "Excellent, excellent!" said the CEO as his paper disappeared inside the machine. "I just need one copy."

The above is just a good example of life in the real World—nobody knows what happened to the boss or the young executive.

Office Upgrade - The Importance Of Keeping Abreast!!



What is MBA About ?

"Masters in Business Administration in essence, function, outcome, integrates processes, people with systems and organisations to produce outputs that benefit individuals, societies and nations".

The GHRDC Team

This would readily reveal that this vocation has to have a spread of education covering vertical specialisation, horizontal orientation, analytical ability, "lateral thinking", down to earth approach, global economic awareness, multicultural sensitivities, people centric participation combined with a practical sense of business. Except the first component of vertical specialisation, the rest need soft skills in plenty. It then, has to be consciously absorbed by the MBA executive as "MBA Manners". This is the wisdom that will stand the individual, society, country and the globe in good stead.



Do we make the MBA or does MBA make us would be a nice way to begin our journey of discovering the gold mine of “MBA Manners” ?

Beginning with Basics

“Whom do I call educated? First, those who manage well the circumstances they encounter day by day. Next, those who are decent and honourable in their intercourse with all humans, bearing easily and good naturedly what is offensive in others and being as agreeable and reasonable to their associates as is humanly possible to be... those who hold their pleasures always under control and are not ultimately overcome by their misfortunes... those who are not spoiled by their successes, who do not desert their true selves but hold their ground steadfastly as wise and sober-minded men”

—Socrates (BC 469-399),
Greek Philosopher of Athens

The human being is the pivot point in life and living. Every one of us desires peace, success, health, wealth and being wanted. Peace is the start point for the rest. What is “PEACE”. It is:

- Personality**
- Emotions**
- Attitude**
- Conduct**
- Enablement**

Personality is the protein of who and what we are to ourselves and others. It is the colour of our clothes, the value of our voice, the impact of our emotions, essence of our behaviour, the code of our conduct and how all this enables or blocks us in living and working well. These basics have to be recalled, renewed and refreshed again and again throughout our living moments. They are as essential as the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat.

Emotions of fear, anger, desire and ego are part and parcel of our life. They influence the way we work and live. Our litmus test is whether we create calmness, confusion, chaos or cooperation wherever we go or whatever we do.

Discussion, introspection on all the above would make us take a call on our outlook and hence attitude, conduct. We would then enable ourselves to make choices and command the life we lead. These are the foundation blocks that have to be talked about in management schools. The curriculum should be deliberately created around this. It will

then somewhat prepare us to face the real world outside. We would then hopefully learn to be:

- Ambitious without arrogance
- Competitive with conscience
- Conscious of our capabilities
- Modest without servility
- Forgiving without forgetting
- Selfish without toxicity
- Demanding of our dues
- Rational in our approach
- Positive in our attitude
- Leaders who listen
- Confident of ourselves

Our LAMP

Our leadership and management potential lies in the above. As leaders we would be able to visualise, validate, value, venerate our visions and goals. As Managers we would be able to oversee and ensure optimal processes and work standards.

Lighting our LAMP

“Management has a need for advanced education as well as for systematic manager development. Management today has become an institution of our society”.

—Peter Drucker

This LAMP can be lit by us with the understanding of what is mostly needed and how should we go about preparing ourselves for this. All that is needed:

- An open mind with a wish to learn*
“Intention”
- A positive attitude to learn and listen*
“Attention”
- To work hard and self develop*
“Determination”
- Alignment between the three through*
“Effort”

Remember “Manners” make a Human

Let us try and list a few important qualities expected of any human being, let alone the MBA executive:

1. Dressing well (the colour of your clothes). Impressions are important imprints
2. Bearing and poise
3. Value of your voice—speaking clearly and making yourself understood

4. Greeting people with a sense of equality to both seniors and juniors
5. Being gender sensitive and courteous
6. Punctuality and discipline of work
7. Considerate of others
8. Mannerisms and public eating habits
9. Sense of cleanliness.

Qualities to Manners

The value of a firm handshake and sound eye contact are the body language vanguards. Making people wanting to come and work with you would make you reasonable and rational.

Developing lateral thinking by practice. It is simply the ability to visualise the direct consequences of any action and all possible side effects and the reactions therein by you and the team. A ready example, is coming to the class totally unprepared for that subject. The direct consequence is your failure/inability to participate and thereby learn. The indirect effects are loss of face, credibility, creating a poor impression and landing up in a comparative disadvantage.

Being personally and professionally organised by planning, preparing and anticipating ahead for both action and countering emergencies—an example—your power point presentation has a glitch due to computer malfunction or power outage. If you have hard copies you could continue with your task with appreciation of your forethought.

Avoiding one upmanship at all costs is always one’s best bet.

Taking up ownership and onus for all your tasks and responsibilities would make you a credible team member.

Being helpful but avoiding being taken advantage off would make you gain good reputation of a proactive, participative team player.

Being excellent in what you are good at and effective in your work output will take you places.

Clarity of your communication upwards and downwards is an important asset. It should not matter whether the news is good or bad.

Acceptance of not knowing with a willingness to learn is an asset.

Adapting to change and changing circumstances is an essential facet of your skills.

Synergy brings in trust through transparency. This by itself is an integral advantage for the team.

Key Professional Requirements

The key verticals that have to be supported by your skills and manners are:

- Soundness of your knowledge
- Strength of your negotiating skill
- Clarity of your professional objectives

The competence and quality of your business, commercial, marketing financial awareness and its viability.

Understanding the competition, the collaborator, strengths, weaknesses, cultural sensibilities as part of your orientation efforts.

Managing your information network and role playing by each member of your team is an important facet of your job. Team preparation and its orientation is a part of this.

Training and being trained are integral to your vocation enhancing process.

Assessing risks, probabilities of failure, success and likely reactions of the other side through analysis, estimates, business calculus and bandwidth of mutual capabilities would be a good decision making tool.

Not exceeding your brief and ensuring a good feedback loop would go a long way in achieving set goals.

Constantly learning the art of decisioning should become each one's ultimate selling point.

Noah's Ark The Wood Pecker has to go—the Management decision!

Encouraging out of the box innovative thinking within the frame of the rules of acceptable deviations would increase the probabilities of success.

After you became Supervisor of the team, many people have left the organization...



They probably realized that, there is no future working under you.....!!!



The Management has viewed the situation very seriously and concluded that.....



you have helped the cause a head counts under control !! So, you are promoted as **Global Down Sizing Manager**



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Public relations and in-house coordination are two sides of the business management coin. If tossed well it would achieve laid down objectives.

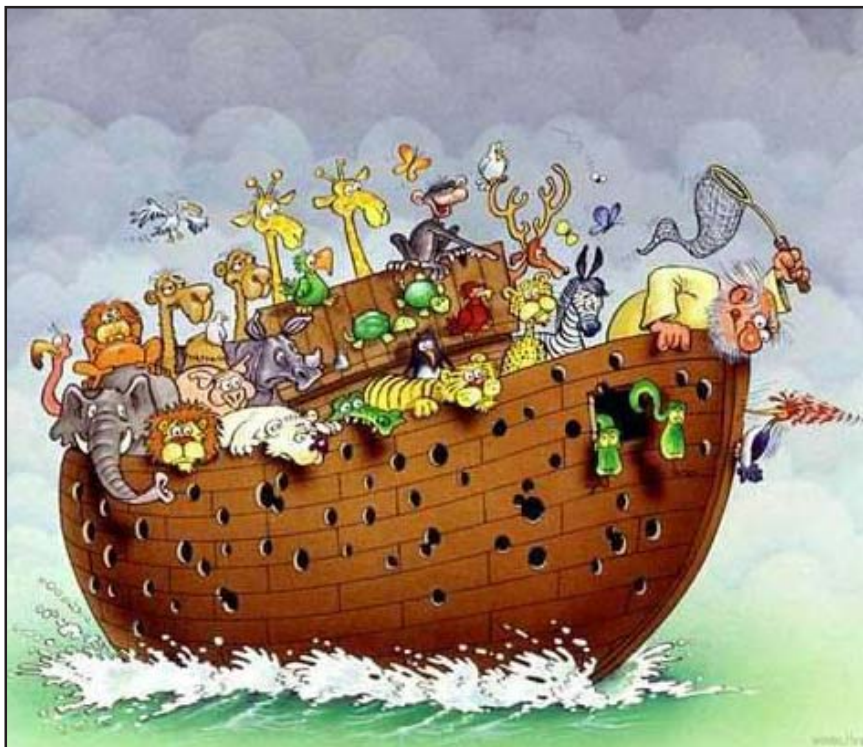
Curriculum conversion of "Skills and Manners"

Creating an optimal balance between theory and practice in the MBA curriculum is an imperative. The components of skill, manners and the like, need to be vetted by the corporate and faculty.

Role playing, simulation, case study debates, professional lectures by experienced elders and doyens of the MBA World must form part of the student syllabi.

The likely challenges and negatives of the work place and possible solution-based approaches should become part of the student orientation continuum.

Dealing with disappointments, failures, frustrations, success, achievements in the work place must be discussed in depth



Closing the Curtain

At the end of the day there is only so much that can be taught or talked about. In the end it is up to each one of us to take as much as we want or can from the well of wisdom and learning.

Minding our MBA Manners would help us become sound business professionals and excellent Management gurus.