

**People management nuances of CEO
styled PM Narendra Modi and distinctive
lessons for business professionals
A practical approach**

L. Gandhi

Assistant Professor - OB/HRM
SDMIMD, Mysuru
gandhi@sdmimd.ac.in

Abstract

*“Be sure you put your feet in the right place, then stand firm.”
~ Abraham Lincoln*

Political critics opines that the C suite styled Indian PM Narendra Modi is conditioned to the practice of doubly ensure before he puts his feet in the right place and stands firm. Modi is invariably a huge source of inspirational learning for Management professionals especially HR Managers if they observe PM as a CEO of India. If one can understand the planning efficiency and execution strategy of PM to some extent, then undoubtedly they will be at the receiving side of knowledge related people management. Additionally, the managerial capabilities of PM Modi is not the outcome of theoretical understanding from any management degree, but it is surely the experiential learning. Modi had been the CM of Gujarat for almost three terms and executed different plans including Road Transport, Rural Development, E-Gram Vishwa, Solar Energy

projects, Primary healthcare, and Investors meet gave the edge over other contenders in the field of politics. Also, leading and winning the much expected 2014 parliamentary election and spearheading the Indian government with the aims to increase governance, increase FDI inflow, Make in India, Clean India has sculptured one of the best administrators in the world. A sheer attempt has been made in this article to explore the lessons to be learnt by Management professionals and HR Managers from PM Modi especially in the key aspects such as Talent Acquisition, Placement, Training, Performance Appraisal, Promotion, Transfer, Disciplinary measures and grievance handling.

Keywords: *CEO PM Modi, Management Lessons from Modi*

Introduction

The dynamic world of business has been making the People Managers not only vibrant and creative but also keep the eyes and ears open to learning from different spheres of life. Apart from the academic wisdom gained from their Management Institutions (MIs), they are also sharpened by the business environment. In fact, the eternal challenges in the business environment converts them from administrative personnel to a perfect Leader. As Jim Collins quotes, Managers will become Good to Great, i.e., from Good Managers who are capable of running business to Great Leaders who will build institutions. Some of the best People managers of Indian corporates including Mohandas Pai are known for their vibrant nature and open to learning from external environment.

People management dynamics of PM Modi

Managing a political party is as tough as managing a business organization . In business, at least top executives have unfettered powers. If someone is controlling stakes, that goes a long way to fasten the control over the competitors. However, this doesn't work well in politics. In fact, politics is a different ball game where people from all walks of life to be respected. One has to be on the toes always to ensure that they don't get trapped in opponent's net. It is really astonishing to see a person short of Management degree from Ivy League B-School is perfectly leading the country and directing his team to move towards the set vision. Today's Managers shall see through how the people functions (depicted in the figure-1) are handled by PM Modi in addition to various other country affairs

How the so called biggest challenges of HR Managers such as getting the right person on board, assigning him/her the right task, developing the required skills and handling various issues of his colleagues & people.

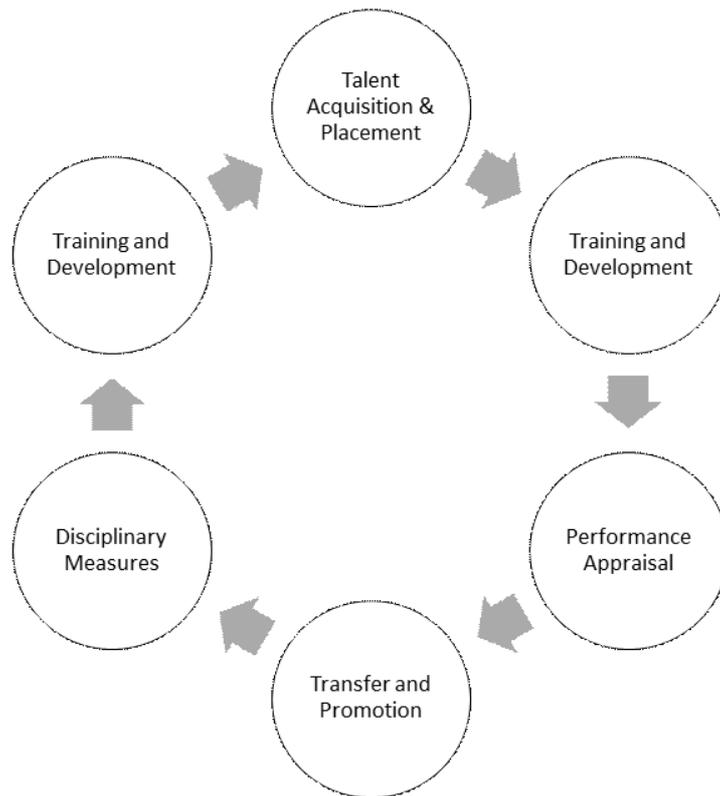


Figure 1 : People management dynamics of PM Modi

Talent acquisition & placement

‘Identify people first and build the organization latter’ is a mantra for success in the corporate world, In India, quite a few of the corporate houses have followed this strategy including Infosys and the success is witnessed. After assuming the role of Prime Minister of India on 26th May, 2014, Modi’s administration has focused on reforming and modernizing India’s infrastructure and government,

reducing bureaucracy, encouraging increased foreign direct investment, improving national standards of health and sanitation and improving foreign relations. It is understood from the evidence that PM Modi has done his homework, consulted with party leader and senior colleagues to select the Cabinet Ministers after winning 2014 general elections. On 31st May 2014, Prime Minister Modi abolished all existing Group of Ministers (GoMs) and Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoMs). A statement from the PMO explained, "This would expedite the process of decision making and usher in greater accountability in the system. The Ministries and Departments will now process the issues pending before the EGoMs and GoMs and take appropriate decisions at the level of Ministries and Departments itself". The UPA-II government had set up 68 GoMs and 14 EGoMs during its tenure, of which 9 EGoMs and 21 GoMs were inherited by the new government. This reflects the importance of having required number of departments or preferring flat structure over tall structure. The major advantage of flat structure is speedy decision making and fast approval of projects & proposals. The move was described by the Indian media as being in alignment with Modi's policy of "minimum government, maximum governance". The Indian Express stated that the GoMs and EGoMs had become "a symbol and an instrument of policy paralysis during the previous UPA government". The Times of India described the new government's decision as "a move to restore the authority of the Union Cabinet in decision-making and ensure ministerial accountability".

Management lesson #1: The portfolio allocation to ministers and administrative pattern is largely an indicator for Indian HR Managers to learn the lessons of having right size of team members, reduce red-tapism for speedy decision making and careful selection of team members as they are core to the organizational success. Basically, HR Managers need to do a lot of homework apart from seeking advices from their superiors to acquire talents especially for top positions is the straight line take away from PM Modi.

Training and development

The whole world is moving towards Learning Organization and Knowledge Management phenomenon. Precisely, without continuous and comprehensive learning, growth is impossible in this cut-throat competitive world. Apart from the regular school and collegiate education, it is imperative to have continuous training and learning to cope up with the technological development and meet growing needs of the customers

Infosys Leadership Institute, Motorola University are some of the live cases of why Learning and Development is vital in running the business. Especially, to keep the employees abreast with the latest development and avoid obsolete skills rigorous training is essential. *Modi Sarkar* is no exception and made their training cards perfect to get their council of Ministers on track. A few training programs have been organized for Modi's Ministers are mentioned below for substantiation.

Nitin Nohria, the first Indian Dean of Harvard Business

School, visited India specially to address the ministry officials on leadership attributes. Union Minister Piyush Goyal, had invited author Chetan Bhagat for a talk with his ministry officials. He also said that the new government believes learning is a continuous process. Bhagat, had addressed officials of coal, power and renewable energy ministries on how to synergize functions.

Meanwhile, erstwhile environment minister and present HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar invited Shiv Khera, an author and business consultant, to be the key note speaker at a meeting of his ministry.

Management lesson #2: the policy makers of the country are very firm on the continuous learning and avoid obsolescence of skills. Indeed, the HR Managers can realize the significance of learning from organizational growth perspective and insist top management for sufficient budget to provide required training. Also, the conducive environment can be created like setting up a Library, availability of newspapers, magazines and journal to employees for continuous learning.

Performance appraisal

“Perform or Perish” is the maxim for employees of today’s corporate world. In this highly profit driven world, one has to prove his or her mettle for very basic survival, consequently show their excellence in all relevant fields to grab attention of the top management that will eventually lead to rewards and benefits.

The USA which had denied Visa to PM Modi some years back quoting certain political reasons, latter invited him to address the joint meeting of House and Senate is the indication of his charisma and hope on his high performance to lead India in the global arena. Every full-term prime minister since 1984 has addressed a joint meeting of the House and Senate and Mr. Modi is the fifth, speaking 11 years after his predecessor, Manmohan Singh. The first-ever Indian premier to make such a speech was Rajiv Gandhi in 1985, followed by P.V. Narasimha Rao in 1994 and Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2000.

The work allocation will also become their evaluation parameter for promotion or ouster from the Council of Ministers as was evident in the July 5 reshuffle where only one MoS Prakash Javadekar was promoted as Cabinet Minister but then removed from the economy-centric Environment Ministry to the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

After expanding his Council of Ministers in November 2014, the Prime Minister had asked Cabinet ministers to distribute work to their juniors. But the performance appraisal of several junior ministers showed that they were kept away from mainstream functions with Cabinet ministers hesitant in sharing policy assignments.

The Indian Express has learned that in the run-up to the reshuffle, a team of researchers worked out of a full-time office to assess the “merits” of each BJP MP and Minister. As per a “formula” devised by Modi and party president Amit

Shah, they were graded on voter perception, performance in Parliament and in the Ministry. Given that 165 of the 282 BJP MPs in the Lok Sabha are first-timers who are considered to have been swept into the House by the Modi wave, the idea, party sources said, was to check their “grip on the ground” halfway into their term.

Management lesson #3: Performance management is the heart of any people management system and the major lessons for management professionals from this particular dynamism was how the subsystems like appraisal, method, and feedback are effectively used in Modi’s government and emulate the model if suiting the requirements.

Transfer and promotion

Smriti Irani’s downsizing is a message that party discipline is No. 1 in the Modi regime. In an India TV programme in May 2016, for example, in response to Congress’s Rashid Alvi, Irani said she had to live with the “poison” of being the subject of comments about her and the Prime Minister. In the Ministry, she hit headlines more because of what she said rather than any substantive decision-making. Her strident hectoring of Mayawati in Parliament and her comments on the Vemula suicide and the JNU arrests courted rather than quelled controversy.

Also, a proposal from party leaders to form a consortium of all major universities to bring in research funds gathered dust.

Ananth Kumar getting Parliamentary Affairs isn't being seen as a major promotion because Modi, Shah and Jaitley are in control of legislative affairs in both Houses of Parliament.

Domain knowledge rather than caste was the factor behind the selection of P Chaudhary, senior Supreme Court advocate and expert on Constitutional law; C R Chaudhary who has studied rural development at University of Birmingham and staunch RSS man Anil Madhav Dave who has been active in the Narmada conservation programme.

M J Akbar's intellectual credentials and his Muslim identity are being seen as assets in a high-profile public diplomacy role.

Management lesson #4: The promotion and transfer of ministers clearly projects PM Modi's CEO face. Actually, performance is a major criteria to transfer, shift or promote the ministers. Eventually, the point of bias has also been largely avoided. In fact, HR Managers need to religiously follow performance based culture over sympathy and compassion

Disciplinary measures

Cracking the whip on non-performing officials, the government for the first time has prematurely retired 33 tax officers including seven Group 'A' officers. In a statement issued by the Finance Ministry states that 72 officers have been dismissed including six Group 'A' officers in other departmental/disciplinary actions in the last two years. "There is a general perception that no action

is taken against the defaulting tax officials for their non-performance as well as in case of harassing the tax assesses among others,” The present government has taken various steps to change this perception.

Management lesson #5: Be it a party MP or government servant or cabinet minister, Modi follows red-hot stove rule that is whoever commits mistake is eventually punished. The direct take away for the HR Manger is that irrespective of the rank and file, disciplinary actions must be taken against the mistakes and no personal emotions to play role in this regard.

Grievance handling

Employees must invariably follow the hierarchy and never bypass the hierarchy for smooth operations. If the employees cross their immediate boss to report to the next person in the hierarchy, then the whole system will get a hit. The measure taken by Modi in the below case is an example of how grievance handling mechanism has been followed.

Government officials, including those in the army and paramilitary forces, have been warned of action if they complain directly to the Prime Minister. The Department of Personnel and Training today reminded officials of rules dating back to 1957 that say bypassing one’s own boss and writing to higher authorities will be treated as unbecoming conduct.

“In spite of these instructions, it has been observed that government servants, including officers and officials of para

military forces and Army personnel continue to represent directly to the Prime Minister, Minister, Secretary (Personnel) and other higher authorities, directly,” said the department. The government has said that officials skipping “prescribed channels of communication” would be “viewed seriously” and appropriate disciplinary action would be taken against those who violated the rules. Officials can’t even use emails or public grievance portals to take their plea to the prime minister, said the department, and in what is known to be a routine reminder. Officials were told that complaints are to be taken to an immediate superior or the head of department or any other authority at the “appropriate” level.

However, general public can reach the PM by all means and express their issues.

Table 1 : Key functional take away for management professionals

<p>Digital India: Keeps IT Managers to use think-tank of the company to move towards automation and AI</p> <p>Clean India: Factory Mangers to ensure the business environment is kept spic and span for healthy working</p> <p>Demonetization: Finance heads to be vigilant on monetary transactions and prevent fraudulent handling of money</p> <p>Election campaigns: Marketing heads to observe and emulate the campaigns are planned and executed to attract the voters while attracting customers to the product.</p>

People welfare measures: HR Managers to learn and adopt the model of people welfare measures such as Pension, Accident Insurance, Benefit in interest on self-employment loan Shri Nanaji Deshmukh Housing Scheme

Distinctive management lessons for management professionals

Though there are numerous lessons for management professionals from PM Modi's administration, here are some strategies and management lessons one can learn from Narendra Modi's historical rise to the Primeinistership of India

Set clear ambitions and goals

Hardly in Indian elections have we seen any candidate clearly state what he wants and what he hopes to achieve if he gets what he wants. While others procrastinate around the idea and act timid, Modi has always been clear in his vision of becoming PM of India. This is the main reason why many voters preferred to give Modi a chance.

This is simple logic. Consider that there are three applicants for a job. The first applicant says it does not matter if he gets the job or not, for he is on to higher things. The second applicant says everyone else is a crook and doesn't deserve the job. The final applicant says he wants the job and he is best qualified for it. He is willing to work hard and brandishes his past achievements to support his candidature.

Who has got the highest probability to get the job? The person who is keen on the job has got the better chances, seems to have the qualifications, and willing to toil for it.

Divide the final target into smaller milestones

Modi's milestones were clear: First, win Gujarat convincingly, next win public backing for his candidature through carefully-choreographed speeches to specific audiences, then win party support by getting the cadre excited at various fora, and then expand his support base by winning votes for his party CMs in various assembly elections (but after sealing his candidature for the top post). Modi ran his campaign like a US presidential election - from primaries to the final party nomination and on to voting day.

Establish strength and alliance

One of the big hype created by the media was that Modi would never get allies because of 2002. For a while it seemed likely to prove true. But, Modi did not bother with this theory. He knew allies would come if they saw winning potential in him. Once he demonstrated public support and the opinion polls started conveying the same groundswell of support across the country, allies started trickling in one by one. It is strength that attracts allies, not entreaties.

Identify 'A' players

As Morten Hansen writes in this HBR blog: "Amundsen emphasized unity and teamwork over individual competence. He got rid of his best person, Johansen,

and booted him from the final assault team because he had quarreled with Amundsen openly in front of all the others. Amundsen could not risk fracture in his team, which could jeopardize the whole enterprise. Likewise, Bill Gates was quick to manage out people who didn't fit, including two presidents".

This is exactly what Modi did. First, he got his *bte noire* Sanjay Joshi out of Gujarat in 2012. Then he got the party to appoint his key person. He brought back BS Yeddyurappa despite opposition from within, and tied up with Ram Vilas Paswan in Bihar despite misgivings in his party. Modi supported Amith Shah as a party chief, Rajnath Singh and Arun Jaitley holding top portfolios in his cabinet Home and Finance respectively. Also, Shifted Manohar Parrikar from Goa CM post to Defense Minister of India as a reward for his meticulous planning and execution and made Vijay Rupani the CM of his own state Gujrat replacing Anandiben Patel. Interestingly, appointed Urjith Patel as RBI Governor succeeding the most dynamic governor Rahuram Rajan and subsequently executed demonetization.

Meticulous plan of action

TV viewers watching Modi's speeches in various places may think it is all about oratory, but that is only one part of the Modi plan to communicate with the masses. The truth is there is an entire army of people working to support his rallies. There is a huge IT crew that monitors the buzz on social media. There is a huge contingent of on-ground researchers who thank people who come to his rallies and seek feedback.

A Narendra Modi rally is not about erecting a stage and giving the speakers a mike. There is water-tight security combing, there are LED screens to give everyone who attends a clear view of the man, and there are speakers at vantage points to amplify every sound bite from the stage - the works. Plus there are feeds organized for the TV channels, and facilities for live streaming on the internet.

Says an *Indian Express* report: "Narendra Modi rallies have, in recent times, gone on to become full-fledged stage productions involving light, sound, carefully chosen music, stage design and sky cameras - all intended to enhance viewer experience and build the Modi brand."

An Economic Times report explains why a Modi rally is not just any event: "At every Modi meeting, an army of volunteer combs through the crowd, gathering feedback, profiling attendees and making a headcount. Later the party's IT cell collates all the data."

Fixing and monitoring agenda

After emerging from Gujarat on the national stage, he began talking of the Gujarat model. Suddenly, the man who everyone labelled communal was talking growth and development and introducing new talking points to the TV and media circuit. The agenda excited young voters at a time when Rahul Gandhi was talking elliptically about "escape velocities". The Gujarat model is now being questioned following Arvind Kejriwal's foray into Gujarat, but the agenda has changed again. It is too late to debunk the Gujarat model. The Congress gave him space to

introduce the Gujarat model by initially ignoring him. Now that they have decided to take him on, he has shifted the agenda again.

Target at the weakness of the competitors

This strategy is, of course, obvious. Modi's strength has been the UPA's economic failures, and the meekness of Manmohan Singh as PM. It did not need a Modi to discover where the UPA's chinks were, but it required genius to discover whom to attack, how to attack, and for what.

Contrary to general assumptions, Manmohan Singh's weakness is actually his strength and his weakness his strength. Modi was happy to defend Singh when Rahul Gandhi insulted him by rubbishing the ordinance to help convicted criminals as "nonsense". Modi defended Singh. He attacks Sonia and Rahul more in order to expose the weakness of their government.

Conclusion

Tech Savvy PM Modi is indisputably a great role model for corporate executives in the key areas such as administration, planning, execution, problem solving and decision making. The HR Managers can closely observe and learn the dynamisms & practices of PM Modi's ministerial affairs. There are umpteen amount of learning for HR Managers which shall be adapted to their respective companies suitably. Also, there is obvious learning for HR Professionals on how to keep their nerve amidst the chaos and confusions in the organizations. Finally, in addition to

observing various strategies of PM Modi, execution of ideas also play an important role in determining success.

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