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Research Paper HRM

Creativity and Innovation for Business Sustainability: Lessons From Military

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ABSTRACT

Creativity and Innovation are two important aspects that no business can do without. Business plans often do not follow their intended logical path because of various factors; both internal and external. It is here that a business leader's ingenuity and resourcefulness come into play. While companies which made use of creative and innovative ideas sustained their businesses even during rough weather, a number of businesses perished due to poor leadership. This goes to prove that sustainability of any business depends upon creative ideas and innovativeness of its human resources, which are central to building a dynamic business model. The history of warfare is full of examples of how creativity and innovation were used effectively against even a mightier force. The most important principle of war viz., the Principle of Surprise has creativity in-built. History of the world bears testimony that creativity is inherent to military leadership. Creativity and Innovation as tools have substantial influence on success in warfare which can be imbibed by the corporate world for business sustainability.

KEYWORDS : Creativity, Innovation, Business Sustainability, Business environment, HRM Practices, Military Leadership, Business strategy.

INTRODUCTION

"The primary business of every business is to stay in business" is an oft quoted statement. This statement, when amplified, would mean that constant monitoring is a pre-requisite for survival and strategic planning in a competitive business environment. A business cannot achieve its other objectives unless it first achieves its basic objective of **'Survivability'.** The purpose of business is to create a customer. Since its purpose is to create a customer, the business enterprise has only two basic functions; Marketing and Innovation. Marketing and innovation produce results: all the rest are 'costs' (Peter F. Drucker, 1975). According to Drucker (1975), "it is not enough for the business to provide just any economic goods and services; it must provide better and more economic ones. It is not necessary for the business to grow bigger; but it is necessary that it constantly grows better".

BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

All the factors that would have a bearing on the business could be termed as Business Environment. These factors could be grouped into two sets i.e., Internal and External. Internal factors refers to the organisational environment and the external factors are those which have relevance to the organisation. The strengths and weaknesses of an organisation form the internal environment, whereas the opportunities and threats forms the external environment. Thus, the strategy formulation is properly pitting the organisational factors against the external environment (Francis Cherunilam, 2003).

BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY

According to "Financial Times" (2014), "Business sustainability represents resiliency over time – businesses that can survive shocks because they are intimately connected to healthy economic, social and environmental systems. These businesses create economic value and contribute to healthy ecosystems and strong communities". Business sustainability therefore depends upon a number of factors. Return on Investment or the profit is an important economic objective of any profit making organisation, which is influenced by internal organizational factors and external environmental factors such as economic, political, governmental, natural, technological and demographic. Prahalad, Rangaswami and Ram Nidumolu (2009), state that "In the future, only companies that make sustainability a goal will achieve competitive advantage. That means rethinking business models as well as products, technologies, and processes."

METHODOLOGY

The research focus of this paper has been mainly exploratory and experiential in nature which included survey of literature on this topic with emphasis on lessons learnt from history of warfare on creativity and innovation. Military officers with adequate field experience formed the sample for conduct of experience survey through personal interviews. The significance of these tools for a military leader in achieving the military objectives during crisis situations have been highlighted through examples and case studies from military history.

DATA ANALYSIS

Primary data was collected through personal interviews of experienced military officers. Secondary data was collected through survey of existing literature on the subject for getting the theoretical perspective. Books, Journals, Internet Data and Reports published by both national and international sources have also been used for analysis to strengthen the concepts.

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

The basic processes of the creative genius are accessible to entire human race and not just to a charmed few. Our conversation exhibits our creative power, for out of a vocabulary of some ten thousand words; we pluck out the right ones and combine them instantly into varied sentences of effective communication power (Khandwalla,1988). Many experts, in their own way have variously defined creativity. The online "Wiki books" site defines creativity and innovation as follows:-

Creativity is typically used to refer to the act of producing new ideas, approaches or actions, while innovation is the process of both generating 'and applying' such creative ideas in some specific context. In the context of an organization, therefore, the term 'innovation' is often used to refer to the entire process by which an organization generates creative new ideas and converts them into novel, useful and viable commercial products, services, and business practices, while the term 'creativity' is reserved to apply specifically to the generation of novel ideas by individuals or groups, as a necessary step within the innovation process ("Wiki books", 2014).

OBSTACLES TO CREATIVITY

There are many obstacles in the way of creativity. Important ones are, traditions, false security of success, fear of failure, comfort in the known, over familiarity and lack of perspective, short term view, unrealistic expectations from R&D, unwilling culture and poor creativity leadership (Donald Gamache & Robert Kuhn, 1989). The barriers to creativity and innovation are Lack of motivation and Lack of trust, Lack of acceptance and tolerance of criticism in conflict, Conservatism and authoritarian management (Marzieh Zare Nazari and Najmeh

Shahdadnejad, 2011).

CREATIVITY IN WARFARE

The history of mankind is the history of innovation and creativity. Since time immemorial, man has been fighting wars. Initially at tribal level with stones and sticks, and today at global level by integrating weapons of extended reach, exceptional mobility, communication transparency, weapons of mass destruction etc.. It is important to analyze how ingenuity and creative decision-making by military commanders since time immemorial brought in success and also changed the way wars are fought forever. Some of the selected case studies in brief are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

Examples of Creativity in Warfare

Creative Deception.

An excellent example to demonstrate the importance of quick decision-making and creativity is Napoleon's first Italian campaign of 1796. He was pitted against numerically superior Austrian forces well entrenched in defences on the northern bank of the river Po. His only hope of success lay in confusing the enemy and getting behind him. Knowing that the opponent Commander, General Beaulieu was cautious by nature and would take some time to react, Napoleon hastily launched a limited attack directly against the enemy across the river.



While enemy's attention was diverted towards this, he raced selected units downstream to an undefended crossing point well to the Austrians' rear. As anticipated, Beaulieu took time to identify and react to the ruse. Resultantly, Napoleon's main force had enough time to cross the river and attack the enemy from his rear. Outcome was as anticipated, the Austrians were forced to abandon their formidable defensive position and fall back to protect their lines of communication (Lt Gen Attiqur Rehman, 1986)

Chinese Innovation in Operation.

This is a classic example of Chinese novelty in operations. National forces (KMT) despatched an 80,000 strong force under General Hu Tsungnan to Yenan (a major supply depot of PLA) to secure the province. On seeing the approaching army, PLA vacated the city and melted into the surrounding areas. Infantry Brigade of PLA of 5000 men depicted the withdrawal of a major force of PLA to Hwang Ho River; three days march from the city. Hu Tsungnan left his 167 Infantry Brigade at the depot and gave chase with the balance of forces. When he was two days march from the depot, the PLA emerged from the surrounding areas and attacked 167 Infantry Brigade. By the time Hu Tsungnan returned to the assistance of 167 Infantry Brigade, the brigade had been decimated by PLA who had again melted into the surroundings (Daniel & Herbig, 1970).

The Arab-Israel War of 1973.

The Yom-Kippur War of 1973 encompassed many aspects of strategic actions of creativity at political and military level. Sadat would, time and again, give serious indications of going on an offensive against Israel leading to an Israeli mobilization and then back out. Israel could scarcely afford such repeated mobilizations and thus stopped reacting to Egyptian exercises and mobilization. On 15 July 1972, Sadat deliberately forced 20,000 Russian advisers out of Egypt to show differences between him and Russia. In June 1973, Egypt, Libya and Syria established a joint command to fight Israelis together. Diplomatically, Sadat kept the Middle-East issue alive at the UN and other international fora, thus confusing the world of his offensive designs. The military build up over a long period and careful deception plans made Israelis believe that these were training exercises. 'Yom- Kippur', the day of atonement of Jews and the tenth of Ramzan of Muslims, i.e., 06 October 1973, was chosen as D-day. 1400 hrs, an unorthodox time, was chosen as H-hour. Routine activity by the Egyptians continued along the canal till the last moment. Technological surprise was achieved by high reliance on SAM-6 and SAM-7 umbrellas to counter Israeli Air Force. Sagger anti tank missiles, RPGs , GSP ferries and PMP bridges were used to achieve surprise. Even the acquisition of these equipment was kept secret. A high degree of camouflage and concealment was used to hide the real strength of troops and equipment deployed. The Israelis went about grossly wrong in their estimation of intention of Egyptians (John Gooch & Amos Perlumettur,1982).

MILITARY CREATIVITY

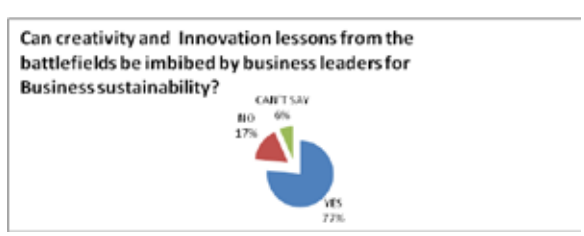
By its very nature, war is dominated by subjective factors. Military creativity is therefore unique. It is the creativity of activity, which may manifest itself not only in tangible products, but also in its influence of events (Brig Nazereth, 1987). Since military creativity, except that of purely military thinkers, is linked with activity, it is inseparable from leadership which is the art of influencing men in action. It is an indisputable fact that the greatest military commanders have been creative geniuses and more often than not battles have been won more by intuitive and innovative decision making rather than superiority in numbers. Obviously, creative thought has an important place in the Armed Forces.

APPLICABILITY OF MILITARY LESSONS TO BUSINESS

Success in war, depends on commanders and officers possessed of wide knowledge and a sense of humanity, having a steadfastness of purpose and clarity of thought, courage to carry out a dangerous and difficult task and the humility to understand their own limitations, and combine technical proficiency with the imagination to exploit new ideas in fast changing situations. These qualities, which had substantial influence on success in warfare, could be imbibed by the corporate world for business sustainability. Whichever approach of leadership style that a leader may follow, creativity forms an ingrained component, be it the risk taking ability in behavioral approach, or the ability to adapt to the dynamics of new situations as in situational approach.

EXPERIENTIAL SURVEY

A sample survey was carried out to ascertain the relevance and applicability of military lessons of creativity and innovation from battles, to business situations by corporate leaders. The sample population comprised of 30 officers of armed forces with 15 to 30 years of service. Majority of the officers agreed with the view that the lessons learnt front battles could be effectively applied even in the business scenario. However, five officers disagreed and said that its applicability in business situations were limited. Two officers neither accepted nor denied. The result is depicted below:-



The above survey result is also in line with the testimonials of people who had attended a training program based on leadership lessons learnt from real battlefield situations. The lessons learnt from the battles and their applicability in today's business environment has been acknowledged by the attendees of the program (www.corporatebattlefields.com).

CONCLUSION

The armed forces have to conduct operations in highly dynamic, fluid and high speed scenario, where novel methods of tactics, quick decision making, analytical approach combined with intuitive applications and newer ways of examining situations are of prime importance. The scenario painted by limited budgets, scarcity of resources together with implications of huge defence budgets/expenditures on social and economic development of the nation necessitate that the armed forces find innovative ways to achieve their objectives. Study of history of war indicates that ingenuity and creative decision-mak-

ing by Military Commanders has a very important role to play in their success. After examining these views, it can be concluded that creativity and innovation are integral to success in war even in today's technologically advanced environment. These 'insight-stimulating' examples from the history would enable corporate leaders to relate 'battleground scenarios' to 'business scenarios' for sustaining their businesses in the 'corporate battleground'.

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