



## Sustainable Leadership: Key to Sustainable Future in Indian Organizations

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### ABSTRACT

*In most of the companies in India, we encounter various changes. For stability and growth of India's domestic and global organizations a sustainable leadership competency is essential. In India, leadership is a complex change management process. The backdrop of growth and change in India, a country with long-standing traditions and an established reputation in the global marketplace, is the environment in which every Indian company works and builds its own strategy. Today, with the influence of global organizations in India, a shift is occurring especially in the big organizations. With strong leadership, India is forging its future and, in doing so, will forever change the world of business and work. This paper examines leadership in Indian companies in the context of the cultural and economic climate which offers both clarity and questions about the appropriate pathways to build a justifiable leadership.*

**KEYWORDS :** Sustainability, Consumerism, Leadership, Shift

### INTRODUCTION:

India's future rests in the strength of its leaders and their leadership ability. The backdrop of growth and change in India, a country with long-standing traditions and an established reputation in the global marketplace, is the environment in which every Indian company works and builds its strategic business and human resource plans. As illustrated by rapid growth rate, India is building its global presence, with Indian leaders establishing themselves as strong competitors.

### CHANGE IN THE WORKPLACE

Today, with the influence of global organizations in India, a shift is occurring in Indian human resource management. Indian companies are increasingly strategically driven and less immersed in the culture of the past. Cultural value changes can be seen in areas such as foreign investment, mass media, technological education and consumerism. Value changes in the workplace are more easily found in multinational corporations, where emphasis is placed on human capital with experience and knowledge for increased work performance. Because of the focus on organizational performance and leadership in Indian domestic and global organizations, these value shifts are raising leadership standards. Today, Indian leaders are focusing on the next levels of leadership.

### INDIA: ITS ENVIRONMENT

It is important to have a broad sense of the Indian environment. The country name, in its conventional form, is Republic of India, with "India" as the short form. The second largest country in the world, India has a population of more than 1.2 billion. The government is a federal republic, with Hindi as the national language and the primary tongue of 41% of the population. English is the language for most national, political and commercial communication in India. India is the second fastest growing major economy in the world, quickly gaining on China. In the past, Indians who had money would save their resources rather than spend. Now, with many choices and brands brought to the market in recent years—and new employment opportunities—many Indians enjoy spending.

In India, leadership is a complex change management process. Nina E. Woodard, former executive director of SHRM India, lived in India for eight years and provides an inside view on the unique environment that influences sustainable leadership. She notes that in India, effective leadership helps people build and change the ways in which they have lived, survived and thrived for centuries, by offering new careers, jobs and brand choices. As Indian organizations focus on sustainable leadership, they are building and managing sizeable organizations with thousands of employees, sometimes in the tens of thousands. Company leaders realize that the growth of the country depends on effective and sustainable leadership in the business community in the midst of rapid and often unimaginable growth in both the domestic and global marketplace. However, India is a country where one should not judge values or abilities by appearances. Western visitors quickly notice three aspects of India—poverty, large numbers of people and dichotomies—and may form incorrect assumptions about India based

on these observations. For example, in the West, poverty equals crime, but in India, that is not necessarily so. Mumbai, the commercial and entertainment center of India, is a "mega city." Statistical reports indicate that in Mumbai there are more than 16 million people, and 9 million are said to be in poverty. Mumbai is the home to Dhavari, the largest slum in Asia and perhaps in the world. Mumbai also has some of the most beautiful and modern buildings in the world. Often, these two communities—impoverished and modern—coexist adjacent to each other.

### NEED OF SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP

In today's competitive economy, it is imperative for organizations to understand, develop and establish sustainable leadership. Formal research studies about leadership are important tools from which organizations can learn and grow. Additionally, changes in society influence organizations and, in turn, expectations of leadership. A recent cross-national study that focused on the changing nature of leadership in relation to societal context revealed changes in leadership practices from traditional, individual approaches to more collaborative, innovative approaches. In *Developing Business Leaders for 2010*, researchers agree that the most important leadership competencies in the future include effective change management, development of talent/teams and effective collaboration/network-building. Other key leadership competencies are cognitive ability, strategic thinking, analytical ability, personal and organizational communication skills, diversity management, personal adaptability, and talent management. However, certain traits can be obstacles to leadership success: insensitivity and personal arrogance, a controlling leadership style, risk aversion and a reluctance to address difficult people issues.

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, a major Indian oil and gas corporation, commissioned the Hay Group which provides a solid base to move toward leadership sustainability, with three overarching leadership dimensions: organization, self and others. to conduct an 18-month study comparing Indian leadership traits with global leadership models in organizations in Europe, Australia and the United States. Traits, behaviors and motives of 30 CEOs of India's top publicly traded companies were examined. The results showed that while Western and European CEOs are focused on corporate reputation, cultural change and succession planning, Indian CEOs are concerned about growth and innovation, altruistic business philosophy, patience and integrity, and formal and professional workplace relationships. Many Indian leaders work to create a positive impact for the country, their fellow Indians, their families and themselves. The idea of being invested in the future of the country is a catalyst for their success. Top Indian CEOs demonstrate a high level of integrity and inner strength. Finally, Indian CEOs prefer to maintain more formal and professional business relationships than Western CEOs, who avoid close relationships in the workplace. Their challenges include managing sustainable growth, hyper-competition for markets and people, high employee expectations, emphasis on customer relationships, and altering traditional company organizational structures. Due to exponential growth in Indian companies, leadership challenges focus on growth strategies, speed of response,

innovation and execution excellence. Indian CEOs are more focused on internal management, long-term strategic vision and organizational culture. They also place greater emphasis on setting a good example and motivating employees rather than gaining favor with shareholders.

Effective communication is at the heart of sustainable leadership. In today's global world, cross-cultural communication is a key leadership competency. While an in-depth discussion of cultural dimensions is beyond the scope of this article, cultural values and behaviors are important factors, particularly for communication at the leadership level. It is critical for Western leaders to understand Indian culture and communication styles. When Western and Indian leaders work together, understanding cultural concepts such as power distance (attitudes of people of different cultures toward authority and distribution of power) can help mitigate cultural misunderstandings, particularly expectations around leadership styles and communication. "Leadership in India," he said, "is based somewhat on the model of the father in the Indian family, meaning that a good leader would exhibit many of the same qualities as an exemplary father: someone who looks out for and protects his workers, who takes responsibility for their development (as opposed to the West, where workers are expected to be largely responsible for their own development), who makes most of the decisions, and toward whom workers are very respectful, deferential and unerringly polite. Indian leaders typically do not consult as much with their subordinates,

though they are expected to make all decisions with the well-being of the workers as their utmost consideration. A female leader would be expected to exemplify these same qualities develop awareness of how he or she can utilize English as a communication tool and a means to achieve collaboration, rather than an expression of cultural heritage, history and local contexts. Finally, another important communication leadership competency is global mindset. This concept has been identified by cross-cultural management consultants as an essential leadership competency for today's business environment

## CONCLUSION

On its journey to sustainable leadership, India is pioneering new paradigms and creating new opportunities for success that incorporate who it is as a people and culture. At the same time, India is leveraging the best of Western leadership practices for what it sees as important influences of global leaders while also determining best practices within India, adapting to regional styles as appropriate and moving forward on Indian successes. Ultimately, the global economy needs Indian companies to be successful and develop sustainable leadership competencies that will support not only Indian business success but also the global economy. With strong leadership, India is forging its future and, in doing so, will forever change the world of business and work.