



A Glimpse Into Factual Success Mantras Of Business

Management - The Sanctity Of 'Jugaad'

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CREATIVITY is an innate talent that is present in humans, some being highly creative while others have lower creativity, some are creative in arts, some in crafts, some in science, some in business, in a variety of fields. People respect creativity because this attribute brings freshness to the palates of the customers and does not allow monotony to set in. Creative persons have that special ability to think differently and discover new ways and means this keeping the developmental process ongoing. Creative people win respect from the masses, and they are well regarded for their ability by their target audience.

Such also happens in the case of "jugaad" – a term in Hindi language that is pretty well understood by all who speak the language, implies an impromptu arrangement, an on-the-spot creation that can help resolve a situation that develops suddenly, without any prior intimation. Persons who do such "jugaad" also draw appreciation from customers who are in distress when they get stuck in a situation, like their car hose developing a leak in a remote location, and someone comes by and uses leaves from a plant and a handkerchief to make a "band-aid" to arrest the leakage. The car owner rewards the person who does this "jugaad" thereby rescuing the passengers who are stuck in that location.

While talking to a batch of executives, I queried the experienced lot if they considered usage of "jugaad" in routine work as a virtue or as a vice. Bulk of them responded by saying that this is a virtue, and felt that persons in organisations should be allowed to be creative and use "jugaad" for their normal work, they should be allowed the freedom to do their assigned activity with the flexibility to do it the way they wish to. A healthy debate ensued and we got to assessing the pros and cons of utilising jugaad in regular work.

The prime aspect that was questioned whether the process of jugaad will allow delivery of sustained quality at all instances of its application? I queried if the Japanese, Germans, Swiss – as examples of those who are quoted for setting benchmarks for excellence in quality – allow the usage of "jugaad" by their workers in their routine work? This got them thinking and I could sense their internal mental deliberations starting to query this aspect. We went on further to discuss the amount of time the Japanese and the Germans spend in planning their works, detailing each and every aspect and process of their work to the lowest level of detail, and then when they get down to execution, then there is no scope left for any on-the-spot creativity.

We discussed about my experience of working on a mega-project in the early 90's where the Japanese corporation Mitsubishi was also executing a major segment, worth in excess of USD 500 Million. I observed them plan the work in the highest level of detail, identifying every small and large material needed, every type of human resource needed by skill and numbers, every tool and tackle needed, every equipment needed, every interface with cross-disciplines needed, and then issue the worksheet to the responsible foremen on a daily basis. The foremen, in turn, would take these documents and literally "work to the plan". "Plan the work and work the plan" was their mantra. There was

no room for any creativity on the job-site and no "jugaad" was permitted.

The entire creativity was done in their planning and design offices, there persons with the right skill sets were placed to do the creative work. They dug into details of the respective scopes of work, identified the inter-phases with other disciplinary work, developed a sequence of execution of the activities, identified the resources required – manpower and equipment. It did not stop there, then they would develop the cumulative resource requirement across activities and see if there are peaks and troughs that needed levelling, go back into the scheduling exercise to level the resources. Once satisfied with the overall plan, they would then progress to execution.

Having said the above, my team, working next to the Japanese, also claimed to follow the same steps, so where lay the difference? The singular response to this is - "the level of detail" the Japanese went into. While on one hand my workers would run into hindrances on site due to some issue or the other, the Japanese teams performed like a well-oiled machine. My teams would hit an obstacle frequently and then "improvise" on the activities to keep the workers engaged. These improvisations being done onsite are also "jugaad", and while they accomplished the mandate of keeping workers busy, the loss in productivity was obvious and also not to mention the cascading effect such diversions have

on other activities.

Hence, I am not a fan of persons who regularly resort to "jugaad". Workers come to attend to complaints at home without the required tools and tackles, and then use some other available tool to somehow manage the work, they do the "jugaad" to accomplish the task on hand. But they may leave behind a trail of scratched surfaces, damaged screw-heads, peripheral damages to the appliance they had repaired/ serviced. A simple acknowledgement of the fact that "jugaad" is not welcome would force them to think of their work in advance, check the relevant designs/drawings/maintenance manuals and come with the required tools and perform their work efficiently. The practice being allowed to use "jugaad" becomes contagious, that false sense of entitlement spreads very rapidly amongst others and breeds that complacency that one can get away without proper discipline of planning the work, or following the procedures. The impact of this mentality is noticed on the roads when drivers violate traffic rules and decide for themselves if they can drive on the wrong side, and end up upsetting the laminar flow of vehicles. So, in conclusion, do I say that doing a "jugaad" is something entirely avoidable and should not be done under any circumstances? The answer is – No. When in situations of crisis, or under exceptional circumstances, one can let one's creative talent flow and improvise an approach to resolve the situation, the key words being "crisis" and "exceptional", and not normal routine.

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