



BW LEADERSHIP MARATHONER MINDSET

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WE LIVE IN VOLATILE TIMES. The sheer number of conversations, articles and seminars on disruption, disruptive technologies and innovation are proof that times are indeed, changing and changing at a rapid pace. Constant change is now the new normal. The quantum and rapidity of this change and the consequent demands on

businesses leaders is tremendous.

Over the next decade, leaders will have to groom future leaders for complex environments where there are no constants. Future leadership is clearly about continuous development – about being curious, agile, collaborative, resilient and flexible in the face of advancing technology, increased competition, evolving customer expectations and challenging bottomlines. Leadership needs an attitude open to unlearning and relearning new approaches. I do believe that future leaders need to be groomed. There are seven traits I consider absolutely vital in every leader, to thrive and succeed.

The **first** trait is decision-making, which is one of the key jobs of a manager in a world where there is either too much information or too little data. And all of us have biases. It is not that good leaders don't make bad decisions. It's just that they are more often right than wrong and when they make a mistake, they are quick to take remedial action.

The **second** trait is communication. Effective communication is a powerful tool. Today as a CEO, I am expected to communicate with various stakeholders – internal and external. If I don't have the communication skills to convey my vision or my strategy in a clear, inspiring manner, how can I expect people to achieve it? And communication is a two-way street. Some of the best ideas come from people on the front line, those closest to the customer.

The **third** skill is the ability to build diverse and valuable networks. A good leader must stay networked with key influencers and stakeholders for insights into his business. It is amazing how we often build networks around our own area of comfort and specialisation. One needs diversity in the network to energise and inform the mind differently. The **fourth** attribute leaders need is the ability to influence and collaborate, which is not always natural for those con-

ditioned to compete. Many of us find it difficult to achieve things through influencing. The world today is about collaboration. We will see competitors collaborating to succeed.

The **fifth** skill a successful leader needs is the ability to unlearn and relearn. This skill requires agility of mind, adaptability and curiosity. The **know-it-all-CEO** has to become the **learn-it-all CEO**. The **sixth** skill is people skills. Unfortunately, this is one of those things they don't really teach very well at business schools. Yet, it is often the single-most important factor that determines success. If you do not know how to manage people and are not sensitive to their motivational needs, their concerns, their issues, their ways of functioning, then getting far is going to be difficult.

The **seventh** and last attribute is what I collectively call the "marathoner mind-

IMPOSSIBLE IS NOTHING

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set" – comprising optimism, self-motivation and resilience. Optimism is a force multiplier and leaders must be able to see opportunity in challenging situations. We can't coach desire or self-motivation. Desire and motivation have to come from within, as they do for a marathoner. Finally, there is the need to be resilient – to withstand adversity, obstacles and challenges and still keep motoring on.

Whether we look at disruption as a threat or an opportunity, is in our own minds. We can choose to be disrupted by someone more focused on the customer and nimbler, or we can become the disruptor and gain a larger share of the market. Leaders need to unclutter their minds, be free and bold, leverage their curiosity to innovate every day and to reimagine tomorrow. And if you can percolate that energy through the organisation (to borrow a famous ad line) – "impossible is nothing!"

The author is chief executive officer of the Aditya Birla Financial Services Group