

Performance Environment:

'An acorn is an acorn is an acorn' is one of the most oft used phrases in behavioural sciences. An acorn planted in the cold-warm mountains will grow to be a majestic gigantic oak tree, while the acorn planted in the plains will be stunted and small, and that planted near the seaside will struggle to survive and ultimately rot, wilt away and die.

For long the **Google** work culture has been hotly debated, much researched, cut, dissected and studied threadbare as to the 'how's and whys' of it being the happiest office space on earth. In a company where '*Great is not good enough*' Google insists that only 5% of those interviewed can be selected from a stiff short list made from 2.5 million applications received each year. Google has managed, both to create and sustain, an environment which is chiefly described by *ambiguity, humility and consciousness of others*. In a community that is acutely intelligent and where speed is the essence of quality delivery, as many as 14 % do not even have a college degree. For those that make it, the outcome of this fiercely competitive environment is '*happiness*'. Apple which has on the other hand a tougher, firmer, super innovative, candid, incisive and commercially brilliant environment, has done exceedingly well with its people alignment. Adam Lashinsky, the author of *Inside Apple*, says:

"I liken Apple employees to horses fitted with blinders... You don't look left, you don't look right, you look forward, and you charge forward with 110 percent of your energy".

At the macro level the earliest studies on the influence of environment on performance and achievement was done by a friend of India, David McClelland of the Harvard University. His book *Achieving Society* published in 1961, after many years of painstakingly collecting diverse data and then drawing inferences, establishes clearly that in the long run it is societies that support great achievement and performance. For example, the knowledge industry in Bangalore, innovation in the Bay Area, mass and scale in China, quality in Japan, mechanical precision in Germany, finance and share capital in New York etc. Thus, individuals in the environment, feed one into another only makes logical sense.

Is there then a prescribed and standardised organisation culture that produces the best of performance? The answer is an emphatic '**No**'. However, organisations that have its values and practices aligned, with no guess work on what the motives and drivers authentically are, have little challenges in keeping together a great team of performers. Those who join such organisations and get past their honeymoon period, usually peak their performance for about 7 years, till 'fatigue of the routine' sets in and then they long for change. A wise leader will foresee this need and re-design careers within width of opportunities available. In the absence of such opportunities within, it's best that the leader be humble enough to let go, so that these colleagues move onto a better space to be both productive and respectful of themselves.

An acorn is an acorn is an acorn. Where the acorn is all that matters.