

Let Out the Steam, and Get Into the Team

By [Sri Sri Ravi Shankar](#)

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Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

I believe that the starting point for leaders is the boardroom, the office. To create an atmosphere of celebration, you need the right attitude, and you have to bring in that attitude yourself. This may require some form of teamwork. An atmosphere of celebration, of trust, cooperation and a sense of belonging, all have to come. I have no doubt that there is a willingness among people to refresh themselves; they just need to have it put in front of them in an effective, viable way. They need to be given the opportunity.

A business will not last if it focuses only on productivity and net result. The company ultimately suffers because the creativity, the strength and the sense of belonging will ebb away. Similarly, the military “command and control” system no longer works. Only inspiration and motivation are effective tools. For that, one can apply some of the ancient principles from different parts of the world in the workplace, to make the work more enjoyable.

In the past, the business world ran on economic pressure, because people had no other means. But today, the global market is very open, and the choices are many and varied. People are more aware than a few years ago, so now they want to move around. Previously business was regionally oriented, because job availability was limited and people were stuck with the job they had. But now, if people are not satisfied at work, they will find a new, better job and move elsewhere. This has turned the business view completely upside down.

One of our program components has the slogan, “Let out the steam, and get into the team.” In other words, take off your management hat and sit with others in your company. Sit and talk to them and share your point of view. This type of interaction is an education. It empowers people and facilitates cooperation. This can be combined with breathing techniques and exercises, where participants independently eradicate feelings of stress and take a fresh look at the situation.

Any business needs intuition, and successful business is directly proportional to the intuition

of the boss. Greater intuition translates into greater business success: If your intuition is wrong, you cannot be successful. Programs should be aimed at lessening the stress and enhancing intuition. This will also bring out creativity and enthusiasm in the workplace.

In today's hectic world, people are often exhausted, and there is so much illness. Mental ill health costs the European Union an estimated 3 percent to 4 percent of its gross domestic product, and this cost runs into hundreds of billions of euros. According to the World Health Organization, mental ill health accounts for 20 percent of the burden of disease in Europe, and mental health problems, including depression, affect one in four individuals at some time in their lives. Techniques of lifestyle change can help people enormously to overcome their illness.

The reason why unethical things are happening in business is because there is fear among individuals, and that fear needs to be addressed by these spiritual practices. Thus, when you fear less, when you want to be trustworthy, when you want to be committed and adhere to ethical values, you would never commit acts of wrongdoing that have the potential to affect the lives of thousands and millions of people. That is why business needs to embrace corporate social responsibility. It is not just an intellectual thing; it is something that has to come from the heart of every human being.

There are many programs designed to facilitate that process, hosting "business and ethics" conferences with successful businesspeople who have completed corporate programs, then share their experiences on how to be successful and ethical. This inspires other businesspeople to follow in their footsteps. Often, people think that if you want to be successful, you cannot be honest, but this is not the case. It is a bubble of illusion.

However, balance is required; you cannot embrace CSR while allowing your company to sink. Equally, you can't gain at the expense of your employees, who suffer and eventually leave the company. Both strategies rock the boat. You have to achieve perfect balance. You have to look at your gains and how much you care about the people in the company, as well as how dedicated you are to CSR.

The prerequisites for organic growth are patience, perseverance and clear intention. This includes clarity of purpose, flexibility to accommodate errors and a long-term vision with good intentions. For any business to grow organically, the leaders must also put a check on any feverishness and not indulge in blame games. This means that they must learn! Learn from the past, have a vision for the future and sustain enthusiasm. They must also have a sense of respect for all, performers and nonperformers alike.

We are not taught at school or at home how to manage negative emotions, like feeling unhappy, sad, jealous or angry. This knowledge has not been provided. But if you are taught how to manage your anger and your own emotions using your own breath, then it does a lot of good. Acquiring that knowledge is possible with the help of breathing and meditation.

I have investigated Buddhist and Hindu traditions from different centuries in China, Japan and India, as well as their use of breathing and meditation. The difference between our techniques and these old techniques is that ours suit modern-day people who have less time. This technique is so handy, useful and accessible in today's modern society.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar is an international humanitarian leader and official consultant of the World Health Organization. He was among the seven most powerful people in India in 2009, according to Forbes India. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar was twice (in 2004 and 2006) nominated by the Nobel Prize Committee for the Nobel Peace Prize. He is founder of the humanitarian nongovernmental organization International Association of Human Values and the international organization The Art of Living.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar is the ideological inspiration for the international forum “For Ethics in Business,” held annually at the European Parliament in Brussels. The forum provides a unique opportunity for business and political leaders to share experiences in the field of reconciling social responsibility with effective management.

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