

## **Internal Excellence Boosts Business Performance**

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*At the conclusion of his first interview with the New York Times (21 February 2014), Satya Nadella, the newly appointed CEO of Microsoft remarked, "One of the things I am fascinated about generally is the rise and fall of everything, from civilizations, to families, to companies. We all know the mortality of companies is less than human beings. There are few examples of even 100-year old companies. For us to be a 100-year-old company where people find meaning at work, that is the quest".*

The scientific framework for individual, organizational, national, and world transformation this author has developed in recent years is the path forward to realize Mr. Nadella's vision. Rise and decline of civilizations follow certain natural laws the author articulated over two decades ago. However, there is nothing in these laws to suggest that with deliberate intent, emerging nations such as India cannot rise faster, or nations currently in decline such as Greece cannot change direction, or for that matter, developed nations such as the United States cannot keep decline at bay longer. Furthermore, these laws apply to populations at large placing no limit whatsoever on an individual aspiring to rise to the highest level possible for a human being regardless of where on the rise and decline curve his or her civilization happens to be. These ideas extend to companies as well.

Excellence comprises of two components: Excellence of the external and excellence of the internal (the definitions are at the end of the article). It is essential for companies aspiring for long term excellence to embrace both. One without the other is insufficient. The US-developed six sigma framework is the wherewithal for the excellence of the external while ancient Indian wisdom is the home of the excellence of the internal. So powerful is the phenomenon of rise and decline that the very culture who has understood it for millennia, is unable escape its effects.

Until recently, the author had maintained six sigma was the only way for individuals, organizations, and nations to emerge as their best. This assertion is only partly correct. Strong evidence has become available which suggests that in the absence of internal excellence, six sigma performs (for that matter, any other quality initiative be it TQM, Kaizen, Lean, CMM Level 5, Balanced Score Card, etc.) will fall far short of expectations. Put it another way, in the presence of internal excellence, six sigma programs will lead to exemplary performance. By extension, the absence of both components of excellence is an invitation of disaster.

In the following paragraphs three examples are presented to substantiate the claim of a strong link of internal excellence to exemplary performance: (1) Mumbai's Dabbawallahs, (2) The 2013 Kumbh Mela, and (3) Gamarra Businesses of Lima, Peru.

**1. Mumbai's Dabbawallahs.** They are an internationally-renowned group of 5,000 lunchbox delivery boys reportedly with an average eighth grade education who deliver some 150,000 lunch boxes a day in Mumbai, India. Each day, the lunch boxes containing home-cooked meals are picked up from the residences of customers who commute into Mumbai and delivered to their offices throughout the city. The lunch boxes are picked up from customers' homes long after they have gone to work. After lunch, the process is reversed. Lunch box delivery time is 12:30 PM and the empty boxes are picked up at 1:30 PM for the return journey and delivered before the customers return. The Dabbawallahs know that customer satisfaction issues arise if a customer receives someone else's lunch box or if it does not arrive on time. These Dabbawallahs

reportedly make one mistake every two months or so. That's an error rate of one in 8 million deliveries. So impressed was Britain's Prince Charles that he paid them a personal visit to witness their operations. The price for this exemplary service, \$3 per month. In the 1998 article, Forbes expressed their feelings this way: *Superb service and charity too. Can anyone ask for more?* The Dabbawallahs themselves believe, *Work is worship*. The author has been taking up this case study in his six sigma training programs for over a decade challenging students that such a great performance is possible when six sigma practices are followed. There is no doubt the performance is outstanding and that the process is six sigma compliant but the claim now is that such performance is impossible without a sufficiently high S component.



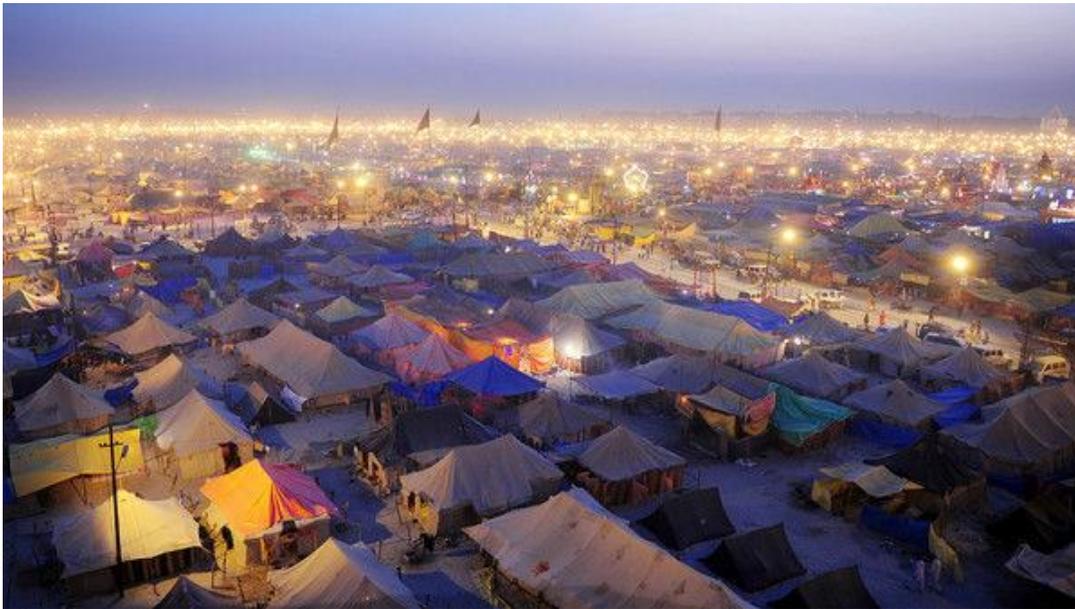
**Figure 1. Dabbawallahs at Work in Mumbai**

**2. The 2013 Kumbh Mela.** Kumbh Mela, believed to be the largest religious gathering of humans on earth is held at in the city of Allahabad in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India every twelve years on the banks of the confluence of the holy rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati. Most recently the Mela was celebrated during the first quarter of 2013. The Financial Times carried an interesting article on March 1, 2013 written by Victor Mallet titled, “**Pop-up Mega City is a Lesson in Logistics for India**” along with a photograph of the tent city in Figure 2.

Said the Financial Times, To somebody who does projects, the tent city is like a mega-refugee camp that comes up overnight and gets sustained and managed for two months with people filtering in and out at a rate of millions a day. It's managed by the Uttar Pradesh State government. If somehow we could translate that capacity to day-to-day business, you could transform UP. It's really a powerful thought.” Uttar Pradesh is often seen as the epitome of all that is wrong with India. With a population of over 200 million – larger than Brazil's – the state is notoriously corrupt and inefficient. Take sanitation. In the decade to 2011, the UP government reported steadily rising construction of latrines in rural areas with the help of \$600 million in public funds. But the 2011 census showed that almost no toilets had actually been built. Most of the money was stolen, leaving tens of thousands of children to die each year as a result of diarrhea spread by what one aid worker called “appalling” sanitation. There are few such problems at the Kumbh Mela, however.

Mr. Onno Ruhl, Head of the World Bank in India, who visited the Kumbh Mela was so moved by the operations that he decided to bathe in the Ganges himself. He called it an incredible logistical

operation. Said Mr. Ruhl in the Financial Times article, “The city on the sandbanks, soon to be dismantled before the river floods, “has water, sanitation, power, and solid-waste management, everything, actually, that many Indian cities lack”.



**Figure 2. Temporary tents for devotees during the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad**

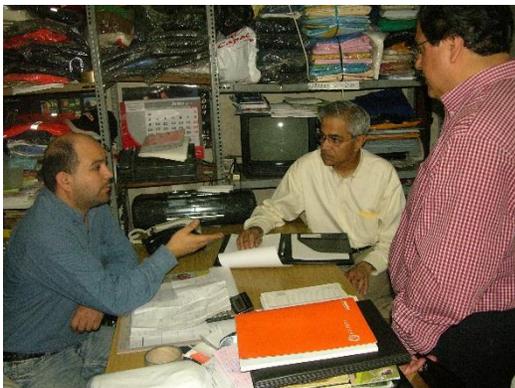
Harvard researchers described it as “a pop-up mega city”. The bureaucrats and workers from Uttar Pradesh, India’s most populous and one of the poorest states took less than three months to build a tent city for 2 million residents complete with hard roads, toilets, running water, electricity, food shops, garbage collection, and well-manned police stations. This year’s event attracted millions of pilgrims from across India who came to wash away their sins in the Ganges at its confluence with the Yamuna. Over its two months to mid-March, the Mela attracted 80 -100 million visitors, with up to 30 million attempting to bathe in the river on February 10 alone, officials say. Precise numbers are hard to come by but the devotees and foreign visitors are generally full of praise for the organizers of what is arguably the largest gathering of humans on earth. Apart from a February 10 stampede at the nearby Allahabad railway station in which 36 were killed, the Kumbh Mela itself has so far gone off smoothly. Fresh water comes out of the taps, toilets are disinfected, trained police carefully shepherd the crowds to the bathing areas, and the lights come on at night.

Devesh Chaturvedi, Divisional commissioner of Allahabad is proud of the “huge task” that he and perhaps 100,000 workers completed in organizing the festival. He mentions 165 km of roads on the sand made of steel plates, 18 pontoon bridges, 560 km of water supply lines, 670 km of electricity lines, 22,500 street lights and 200,000 electricity connections, as well as 275 food shops for essential supplies such as flour, rice, milk and cooking gas. Mr. Chaturvedi agrees there is a contrast between the successful provision of these services and the way life continues in the rest of the state, and has two explanations. First, the authorities ensure that all those working on the project are accountable for their actions and the money they spend. Second, those involved are highly motivated. “They feel it’s a real service to all these pilgrims who have come here, the sadhus

[holy men] and the seers, so it's a sort of mission which motivates them to work extra, despite difficult working conditions.”

In the concluding thoughts on the article, Victor writes, a question on the minds of both Indians and foreigners is: How? Why? Or rather: if the authorities can build infrastructure so efficiently for this short but very large festival and its instant city, why can they not do the same for permanent villages and towns? We trust the answer is clear to the readers of this article. This level of performance would have been impossible in the absence of a sufficiently high level of consciousness on the part of both the workers and devotees.

**3. Gamarra Businesses of Lima Peru.** Gamarra businesses span 34 blocks around Hipólito Unanue and Agustín Gamarra streets in La Victoria region of Lima, Peru. Gamarra has 25,000 businesses that employ 100,000 workers, generating \$1.2 billion in revenue annually. These businesses import textiles from several countries at competitive prices. Depending on the size, individual entrepreneurs are set up to handle a certain volume of business. However, agreements with other entrepreneurs allow them to handle orders of any size up to the total capacity of all entrepreneurs in Gamarra. This arrangement assures B-to-B customers of not only high quality and low cost but also a quick turnaround.



**Figure 3. The Author and his Former Peruvian Fulbright scholar and Doctoral Student, Dr. Roberto Tantalean at Gamarra**

Depending on season, anywhere between 150,000 and 600,000 visit Gamarra every day. Seventy percent of visitors reportedly purchase something or the other. Gamarra entrepreneurs are renowned and widely respected among both business customers and end-use consumers. Their textile products are known for high quality and low cost.

The author visited Gamarra in 2008 with his former doctoral student, Dr. Roberto Z. Tantalean to study their operations from a lean six sigma perspective. Like their counterparts in Mumbai, they are not a highly educated workforce either. That theirs is a lean six sigma operation is absolutely clear; nothing goes to waste and there is very high level of customer satisfaction. A clue to their higher S component is their motto, *Compete but cooperate!*

So, how does a company aspiring to replicate such exemplary performance proceed? There are two approaches: A conscious approach wherein one watches over their S, R, T components to be

sure that S stays up and nudges higher and R, T stay low and nudge lower. The second approach is a process whose side-effect is a rise in the S component. Meditation is one such process. Investigators have shown that meditation leads to more compassion and evidence is emerging that profits at compassionate companies are far higher than those at other companies. In his papers on a scientific framework for world transformation, the author explains these concepts in detail. In his author's view this is the way to sustain excellence in the long term that Mr. Nadella was referring to, there is no other way.

### Definitions and Note.

- Rising level of Internal Excellence equates to higher S, R, T Level of Consciousness
- **S:** Truthfulness, honesty, steadfastness, equanimity; study
- **R:** Attachment, bravery, ego, ambition, greed, desire to live;
- **T:** Lying, cheating, causing injury in words or deeds, sleep.
- Minimum S, R, T required for life.
- **S** component strongly correlates with positive emotions (Unconditioned love, kindness, empathy, compassion, gratitude, forgiveness, etc.)
- Excessive **R, T** components strongly correlate with negative emotions (Anger, hostility, hatred, irritation, sorrow, fear).
- External Excellence refers to the wherewithal of doing all that we do from wake up time to bedtime including all that we do at work in the best possible manner.



**Figure 4 Rising on the Scale of Excellence**

### Further Reading

- [1] Deshpande, P. B., Internal Excellence Boosts Business Performance, 2014.
- [2] Deshpande, P. B., Aroskar, S. A., Bhavsar, S. N., and Kulkarni, B. D., Mind Over Matter: Investigation of Materialization of Intentions, Journal of Consciousness Exploration & Research, 5, 2, February 2014.
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- [6] Deshpande, P. B., Science of Compassion, Journal of Consciousness Exploration and Research, 3, 9, October 2012.