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## The New Manager

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## Features

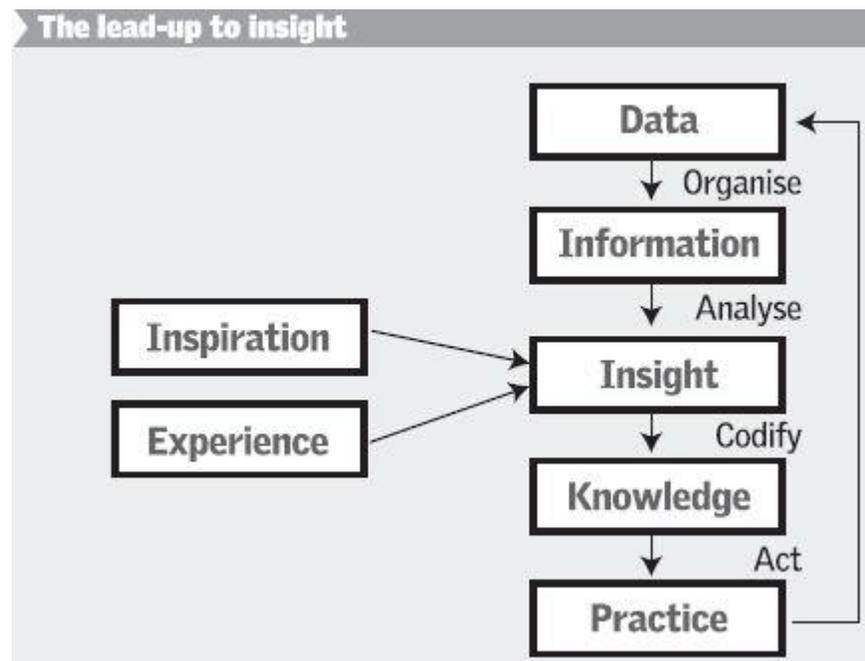
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## Stocks

The New Manager - **Management**

## Weaving insight into an organisation's DNA

*Institutionalising the insight process aids knowledge creation.*



*Mohit Kishore*

In Meno, one of the dialogues written by Plato, Socrates contends that all knowledge pre-exists in an individual; all he needs is the ability to find out what is already inside him. It appears that Socrates was referring to the 'insight' or 'inspiration' dimension to the creation of new knowledge.

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A lot of times, new insights appear to us in a flash, out of no logical process based on facts. This statement holds true today too, as a significant portion of new knowledge creation is often based first on insight and subsequently on 'finding evidence' to support the conclusion.

Whatever the truth of this assertion, it is hard not to see that insight/ inspiration are key tools for knowledge creation. However, these two dimensions find little place in modern organisations.

#### Focus on facts

#### Cross Currency

- Rates

For long, fact-based approaches have assumed a prime position in management thinking. One reason for this could be that facts are not subjective and hence leaders may view facts as a risk-free way to push through initiatives, make decisions and find solutions to problems. However, it is increasingly becoming clear that decision making is a far more complex process, where the whole is often greater than the sum of the parts.

#### Shipping

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Systems Thinking is a form of analysis in which problems are solved not just by understanding a component or part of a system, but rather by looking at its inter-relationships with the 'whole'. Such an analysis would clearly need more than just an analysis of facts; it would require inputs from more nebulous things like 'inspiration' and 'insight'.

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In the model depicted in the accompanying graphic, an attempt is made to understand how 'insight' is a function of many parameters — facts being only one of them. Data in the external world becomes information through its organising. Analysis of this information leads to partial insight. This is fulfilled through further contributions from past experiences of the decision maker, as well as the creative force of inspiration.

In the absence of experience and inspiration, it may well be argued that all decision making could be entirely done by machines and there is no need for human intervention. Moving on, codified insight becomes knowledge, which when acted upon becomes a practice. Practice in turn generates further data and so on.

#### Institutionalising insight

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Unfortunately, most organisations do not invest in institutionalising the insight process. This means that 'best practices' may be discovered accidentally and not be scaled up to the entire system. Also, people end up sticking to existing norms, processes and approval mechanisms without questioning whether or not things could be any better. Here are some thoughts on how insight could be institutionalised.

#### Group Sites

*Acceptance of failure:* The first step is the creation of a culture that is extremely accepting of failure. It is not hard to see that the ability to see new creative possibilities is closely linked to a tolerant view of

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failure.

*Investing in cross-functional skills:* Organisations rarely invest in the creation of cross-functional skills amongst managers. One of the biggest threats to insight realisation is 'silo-based' thinking, where individual divisions seek to maximise their own self-interest, leading to highly non-cooperative political environments.

In such environments, people tend to focus only on their 'parts' without realising that the 'whole' is greater than the sum of the parts.

For instance, most multi-product companies routinely fail in implementing effective cross-selling programmes because of this very reason. Once an investment is made in the creation of individuals who appreciate the 'whole', the above problems would diminish.

*Hubs for insight realisation:* To close the gap between insight and implementation, it would help to have hubs or teams that focus exclusively on realisation of insight in the real world.

This would be done in the form of quick pilots, which if successful would scale up to become new practices.

Often, line managers do not have the bandwidth to focus exclusively on such initiatives as they would come in the way of fulfilment of regular responsibilities or achievement metrics.

The role of new insight and knowledge creation in an organisation cannot be underestimated.

Today, rapid advances in technology mean that the duration for which any organisation can hold on to a 'competitive advantage' is severely compressed.

This implies that institutionalising insight is key to sustainability through the creation of new sources of competitive advantage.

Hence, it is important to respect the role of insight and also understand that its source lies not just in fact-based analysis.

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