THE HINDU BusinessLine

Designing organisations as 'selfless' collectives

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...g complexity and friction between members is important

...llective endeavour, the most common barrier to smooth functioning is the ego. The ego in this context can
...defined as a strong sense of individual identity that dictates to the individual that he is separate from
...otecting this identity and serving its demands at the expense of larger goals of the collective creates
...The interplay of identities in a collective determines its ability to achieve what it has set out to do. The
...y of this interaction increases rapidly as the size of the collective increases.

...e ideal state that could be visualized in this situation? The ideal state would be a frictionless collective that
...towards its goals with minimal conflict arising out of individual identities, while each individual
...es exactly what he is meant to contribute. Such a collective could be termed as a Selfless Collective.
...; such a perfect state is impossible, yet it is possible to design systems in such a way that selfless behaviour
...ral response of participants in the system.

...ity Reduction

...way is to reduce complexity by reducing the size of the collective. It is relatively easy to assemble a small
...people which is highly aligned. However, the only issue with this approach is lack of scalability. Complex
...inevitably involve the coordinated efforts of a large number of people. This explains why nimble footed
...that thrive on innovation eventually often lose steam as they scale up. The second way to reduce
...y is by reducing the layers in the organizational hierarchy. Technology may have to play a role here
...ollaborative tools that free up individuals from administrative tasks.

...anizing teams

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o facilitate the creation of a selfless collective is to let the collective assemble itself. Self-organizing als may automatically lead to the 'self-selection' of individuals who are highly aligned with each other, and ortantly with the common goal in question. This runs counter to the prevailing idea of top down design of e main challenge here is to design the organization in order to facilitate such self-organization wherein ls assemble around initiatives freely, and then disband and choose their own paths. The success of the ce movement in software proves that such collaboration supporting designs are both possible, and

centric Rewards

ental paradox of traditional rewards is the disproportionate degree to which it fosters the archetype of the pecial person who deserves a lot more credit and therefore rewards than others. However, it is quite easy t a system designed entirely around heroes eventually becomes an obstruction to getting things done. ls start aligning behaviours to appearing as heroes versus getting things done. This may partly explain the y from bell curve based performance assessment that is being witnessed of late. A system designed around entric rewards would reward collective achievement with a higher weightage than individual achievement.

Resolution Structures

o make sense to create institutional structures designed specifically to address conflicts. Hierarchy based n and conflict resolution, which is the current approach to resolve conflicts, while offering rational to roadblocks, does nothing to resolve underlying identity clashes that could be the root cause of the at may be needed therefore is a more formal structure for conflict resolution where specialists guide l parties to mutually acceptable outcomes.

ce of all this comes down to two design principles that can help create a selfless collective - the first is to ple the freedom to choose their contribution areas to the collective based on their unique talents and n, and second, design the system such that people automatically behave in non-egocentric ways. Needless goal is to not create a conflict free collective. Certain kinds of conflicts are actually very useful - for reative conflicts are an extremely important part of problem solving and must be encouraged. A ss collective may well be utopian, but designing systems for minimizing friction is important.

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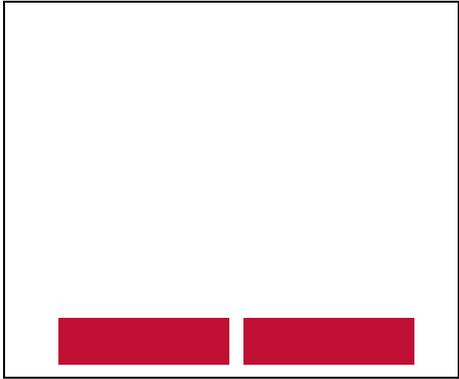
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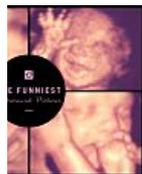
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