

The best way to predict the future is to create it

– Peter F. Drucker

Opening Scene (December 2004):

I could hear some noise from my mother and father, and it disturbed my sleep early in the morning. It did not take any time for me to realize that noise is to pack the necessary things as government officials are evacuating our place due to Tsunami hit our coastal areas in India. Being 12 years old kid, all I can remember is moving to different place temporarily which was arranged by the government and waiting for the food supplies. We do not have any way to go out due to flooding of water everywhere.

Being from the poor family, I used to go to school because I could get at least one day meal which was sponsored by the government as part of mid-day meal scheme. In addition, basic education if not quality education was a bonus. Tsunami devastated this opportunity as well from my plate. Slowly things getting under control, flood water started drowning and the government has given clear signal to go back to our places. Yes, it was just a place but no longer home there. I still remember the words which my mom has spoken to me during those difficult times that *“education is very important, and we could lead a better life only if you study well”*. This is the greatest guidance I have ever received, considering the timing, situation, and the fact that my parents are not educated but still knew the value of education.

Scene after 15 Years (March 2020):

The Nurse came out from the surgery room and told that it is baby girl. Yes, I became father, soon after Doctor appeared holding a baby in pink comfort towel and handed over to me. Wow, what a moment it was. I was on my paternity leave, enjoying beautiful moments with my baby and I did not know like others that there would be a worldwide COVID-19 pandemic.

Some companies prepared than others, particularly when it comes to adjusting to remote working environment over a single weekend. But what about daily wagers, people from unorganized

sector whose livelihood is based on the work they engaged in a day-to-day basis? Estimates suggest that 83 million to 132 million more people will be chronically hungry due to COVID-19 pandemic alone. Corporate schools, colleges, universities quickly shifted to distance learning for its students but what about students who does not have access to internet especially students from government schools? One in three children missed out on remote learning when COVID-19 shuttered schools. More than 463 million children whose schools closed due to COVID-19, ***“there was no such a thing as remote learning,”*** the head of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) said in 2020, when the agency launched a new report outlining the limitations of remote learning and exposing the deep inequalities in access. I do not dare to talk about medical facilities and supplies during this situation.

Flashback Scene - Two Years Before the Pandemic (March 2018):

I have everything in my life, my dream home, well-paid job, understandable wife, and a feeling that life is not 100% fulfilled. Yes, I have everything except “WE” factor in “My” life. I remember the session of one of my guest lecturers in my M.B.A who is working in development field said in the Public Policy class that ***“one diamond cannot create another, but a real leader could create another 100 leaders. In today’s situation it is not enough to have one leader to see the enough impact in the society, we need not necessarily government representatives or policy makers to bring the change. Every individual should work as leaders for their own and country development.”*** These words along with one scoop of vision, peg of determination and ocean of desire to support at least few people whom I know personally led me to start *“We for the Cause”*, a national level voluntary network which works towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of No Poverty, Zero Hunger and Quality Education (with what I suffered from in my childhood). I strongly believed that these goals are interdependent, feeding the hungry and providing the quality education leads to poverty reduction in the long run. I witness the results in my own life. Our mission is to develop resilient democratic societies through providing quality education, striving to prevent the hunger and malnutrition, and providing the basic need to less fortunate.

Present Scene (June 2021):

Through *We for the Cause*, we have delivered our educational programs to more than 22,000 students, served more than 124,000 cooked hot meals in major cities of the country during the COVID-19, conducted career counseling session to more than 5,600 students both in person & virtually and the list goes on. We were succeeded in creating a self-sustainable system which can work towards our mission and goals. When we started, *We for the Cause*, we had a long vision and ***created it for the future rather than predicting what happens next***. After two years of operations, unfortunately we had to gone through the COVID-19 pandemic but *We for the Cause* really turnout great results in the pandemic time. It is not about having an idea to bring the change. Having an idea is just 2% but remaining 98% is planning and execution of that to become successful. I might have an idea, planned everything to start a system but the execution part has done by our volunteers. It is 100% true that what Peter Drucker said about employees - ***“employees are assets and not liabilities”***. In our case it is our amazing volunteers without whom there is no *We for the Cause*.

Challenges as a founder:

I strongly believed in what Peter Drucker mentioned in his book “Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices” that ***“The spirit of an organization is created from the top”***. So, I wanted to be committed to what I believed and maintain our network culture throughout the nation. Since the network has more than 800 volunteers it had become difficult for me to connect with everyone but with the help of technology, I could connect them virtually, learnt their interests and align our mission and vision with their objectives by conducting few training sessions about our policies and programs/campaigns. It was not easy either to engage volunteers in the COVID-19 situation for voluntary activities as India is going through the second wave and most of them are not willing to step outside of their homes. However, we could conduct few awareness programs specifically to our volunteers and convince them to participate in our programs/campaigns by taking medical precautions. Operating such a network with zero funds is our uniqueness which means that neither we do not collect money from anyone nor raise funds. It was not difficult when we started as a small group of people but as the network grows and

especially during the COVID-19 we felt the need of funds. But we could overcome this by increasing our robust marketing techniques instead of relying on money (money is not everything right?). It is not tough for anyone to mimic our model. However, it requires lot of efforts in terms of dedicating quality time, engaging volunteers, designing programs/campaigns, drives, motivating others, especially committing to what we believed initially when we started.

Climax Scene (but it is just beginning): What is necessary now to confront upcoming crisis?

Peter Drucker said that *“Trying to predict the future is like trying to drive down a country road at night with no lights while looking out the back window.”* Our technology and innovation should take a different route as there is a disconnect between what we can do and what we are doing. We need to think big to address big issues. The next 20 years will be much more challenging than previous with unexpected crisis. Craig Barrett, former CEO and Chairman of Intel said that *“We cannot save our way out of the crisis, we must innovate it”*. Technology is no more just a tool. It has become part of our life in the form of mobile phones, computers, internets, communication and what not. We see lot of technological advancement in the products and services, lifestyle, the way we shop etc. But there is need for innovation in business models, organization processes, public private partnerships, government services and the social sector. Ultimately, we will have to innovate innovation itself. We should remind ourselves that individuals are advanced by technologies but should drive by humanity. We should use the technology wisely to connect people and improve wellbeing of the societies.

Peter Drucker said that *“we should look first at what an organization does to society and second at what it can do for society”*. This idea suggests that social responsibility has two basic dimensions: legality and responsibility. India made it mandatory for companies of a certain turnover and profitability to spend two percent of their average net profit for the past three years on CSR activities. Even though it is not mandatory for others, this should be the responsibility of governments, scientists, policy makers, economists, socialists, entrepreneurs, business leaders and every citizen of the country to give back to the society where they are living. Again, we no

need to leave our jobs and dedicate ourselves for this cause. But if we could spend our leisure time productively, that will create huge impact as a whole. We should be proud to be part of these kind of journeys and experience the joy of giving whenever we can. We should remind ourselves about the famous quote by Mother Teresa that ***“We know only too well that what we are doing is nothing more than a drop in the ocean. But if the drop were not there, the ocean would be missing something.”***

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