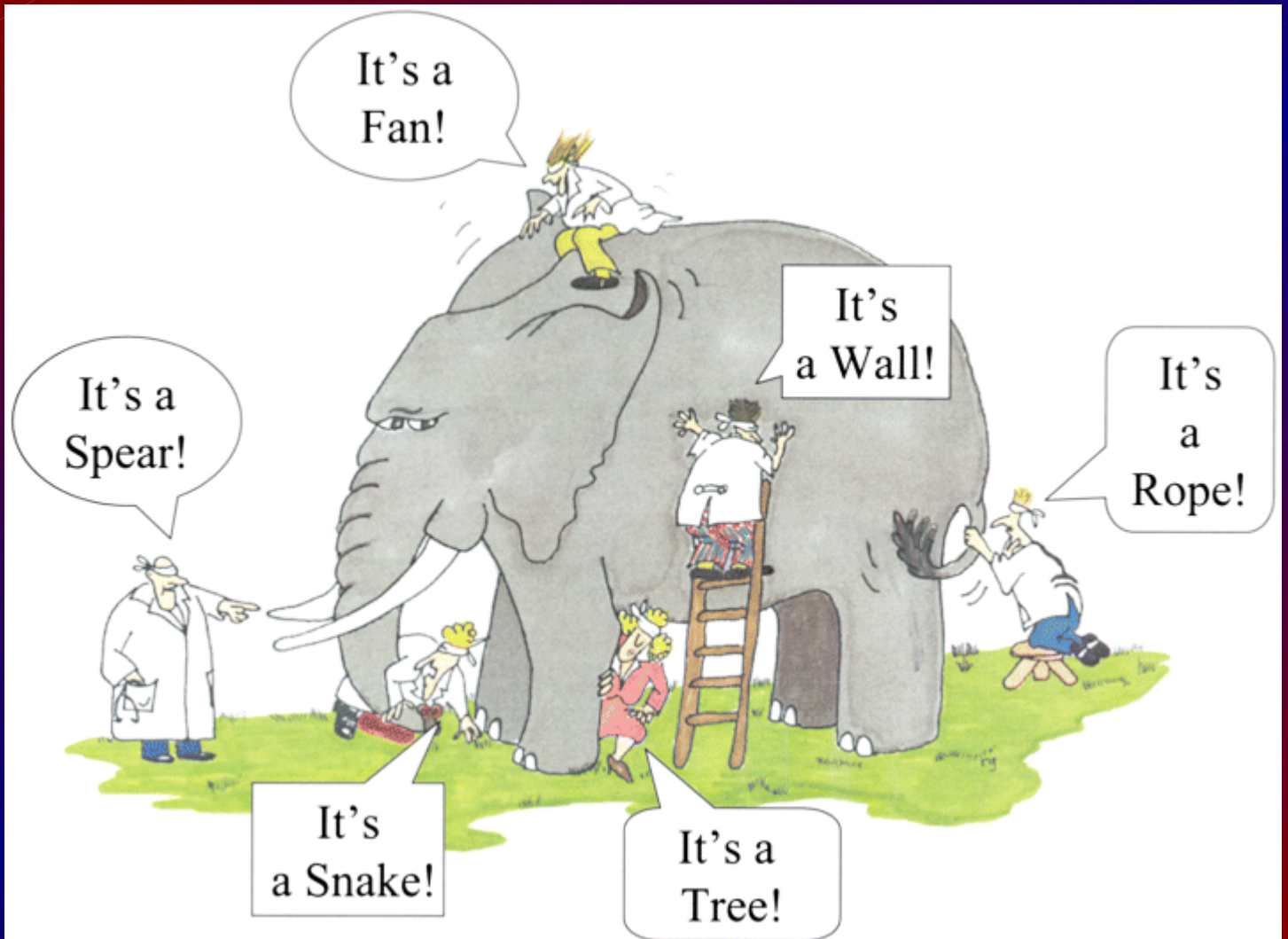# The Many Forms of Truth

For further information, please contact us at:

Consulting Connoisseurs
Office 4, Sai Baba Plaza
Sector-15, Airoli
Navi Mumbai 400 708
India
Tel: +91 961 942 8209
info@consultingconnoisseurs.com
www.consultingconnoisseurs.com

THE QUALITY OF BEING PREDICTABLE WITH GREAT CONFIDENCE

Introduction

The understanding of truth is a fundamental concern for most executives. It reflects itself in the most fundamental needs of management: data, information, knowledge and wisdom. It is important to understand that truth(s) have different forms and levels. This fundamental understanding actually has two direct fallouts viz., the phenomenon of abstraction due to the levels and the phenomenon of applicability due to the forms. Just as companies operate across the continuum from operations at the one end to the strategy at the other end, one could visualize a parallel continuum of truths across the different 'levels' and the application areas.

Approaches to Understanding the Truth

Talking of levels in this context, one could go by the 'old school' and talk of two approaches to understanding the truth. The first approach is the top-down approach while the second approach is the bottom-up approach. Although strategists always like the line of thought involved in the 'top-down' approach for various reasons, the basic corporate model in the neo-renaissance era has been a 'bottom-up' model for truth like the data, information, knowledge and wisdom that form the progression of the needs of management. Thus, the modeling and acceptance of truth has, always been bottom-up! Corporate recognition has always been on 'mastering the detail as one move's up the ladder' rather than 'working the metaphysical into the detail'! However, business success is more involved and intricate, revealing a totally different story. If one closely analyzes business success, one understands the 'top-down' approach. However, one needs to understand the conventional school before 'breaking the convention itself'. Hence, let's try to understand how the conventional 'business' or the 'bottom-up' approach is, and the issues associated with this approach in a little more detail.

For a business, from a practical standpoint, as there are different possibilities to explore the forms and levels, it is essential to note that not all truth are interpreted the 'right' way; thereby, distorting the concept of truth itself! Further, not all truth(s) are put in the global context of their relevance. The contrasting varieties of possible configurations make it a challenge for companies to define and develop the right levels of understanding on each of these issues. From a common man perspective, variances in any of these components, forms and levels, causes issues that lead to huge operational and strategic inefficiencies. Such inefficiencies usually tax not just the system, but also have a profound impact on the external stakeholders of the system. It is, therefore, important to align these elements in order to establish the required informational cohesion for the company to operate effectively. However, all said, there are several challenges to realizing this goal.

Parameter 1: Culture

From a management perspective of the business, there are three fundamental parameters that affect the understanding and the expression of truth; they being culture, the dilemma of choices and the corporate direction. The first parameter is culture. In the broad sense, this is one of the strongest parameter that affects the definition of truth.

Simplistically speaking, culture is defined as the tastes in art and manners that are favored by a social group. The social group extends over and includes:
▪ The environment,
▪ The management and
▪ The organization itself.

The environment includes issues like the geography, economy, competition, status of the company, sector in which the company operates, the status of the truth informer, suppliers and the customers. For instance, European geographies have a 'negative' tone to facts while the American geography has an 'overly positive' tone to express truth. On the same token, the Orient is relatively 'neutral'. Every large conglomerate looks at sensitizing itself to cultural factors, especially when they extend over multiple geographies. However, culture itself brings with it, an element of ambiguity and this needs to be carefully worked out.

For instance, taking the element of management, many times the management might not be able to appreciate the truth in the communication due to limitations stemming out of the knowledge, the management style or the 'unwritten' norms of communication, to name a few. Each of these actually add to the ambiguity and could be a potential ally to distort the truth.

The final factor, the organization itself, goes a long way in defining the culture. The knowledge levels and the business acumen of the people in the company do have a profound implication on the culture of a company. While it is relatively easy to define the knowledge levels of people, the business acumen is hard to determine. It is the role of HR professionals to actually try to map the business acumen and knowledge levels of potential candidates to the people around the roles they are expected to be in. There are many challenges to do this and our aim is not to delve into them now.
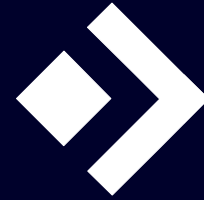
Parameter 2: The Dilemma of Choices

The next challenge towards understanding the truth is the dilemma regarding the choices. Culture works as a boundary condition. They are like the shore of a beach. The dilemma of choices or the tone, as I call it, is comparable to the colour of the water.

The general consensus in theory and practice is to do away with 'political correctness'. However, in real life, it is seldom going to be the case. 'Political Correctness' is like 'Inequality'. A situation where they don't exist in a society is unrealistic (Utopia?). At the operational level, political correctness transforms itself into shades. Like, the tendency to focus on the component of optimism or pessimism in the 'truth'. In the software sector, for instance, the 'ugliest' statement is 'this is not logical'! In the construction and manufacturing sector, a similar statement is 'this is not true'!

This brings us to the other shades; viz. shades of reality and shades of perceived truth (imagination?). Discussions regarding these moods or the 'colour of the water' actually affect the understanding of the message it carries. The negativity of choices often has its bearing not just on the truth, but more so, on the informer of the truth. Have you heard of 'Shoot the Messenger'? A typical indication regarding dilemmas and the dynamics of the understanding of the truth are in the level of discussions that one sees in the organization. For example, it would be comparable to discussing the estimation on the accuracy of the length of the telescope, an activity that hardly has any 'business significance' to extrapolate the error to the remainder of the distance between the earth and the stars (the activity with greater 'business significance'! Do you see situations where discussions of 'accuracy' or 'logic' are used to camouflage the core message in a communication? Do you see situations where the choices like the optimism / pessimism affect the acceptance of the information? These are some of the indications of the level of coherence in thought across the organization.

Parameter 3: The Corporate Direction

One of the challenges that plays a pivotal role in understanding truth is that of corporate direction. This is different from culture as it is more specific to the way the situation is approached. In our beach example, where we had the beach shoreline as the culture and the colour of water as the tone, imagine a person standing in the water. If the person is looking at or towards the shore or the sand, he might possibly have many 'surprises' from the waves. If the person is looking into the sea or away from the shore, he has a different view. If he stands perpendicular to the direction of the waves, he sees still more different things. For a typical management function, the corporate direction can be compared with the direction the person faces when he is standing in the water.

Parameter 3: Cont'd

Corporate direction is often based on three factors:
- Assumptions in the Management Philosophy,
- Evolution of Focus Parameters and
- The Nature of Growth the Company has had.

At the rudimentary level, the assumptions in the management philosophy are the result and the basis for the organizational structure and the communication / reporting plan.

Do you often get wind of problems from 'an unexpected corner'? Is the management philosophy and the strategy firmly understood by all concerned? Do you hear words like 'I was not aware' in your meetings often? These are potential issues of disconnect in the corporate direction. Do you segregate your organization into management levels and groups a little too often? These are indications of a poorly implemented management philosophy.

The second factor is the evolution of focus parameters. The 'once bitten twice shy' paradigm works negative in this case. Many times, companies have a difficult time in focusing on the right things. The fact that someone got 'bitten' make people change priorities to the less important, just because the management direction asked them to do so. Like I said in the article on the biological approach to project management, this translates, in practice, to an 'event-driven' approach rather than a conceptually sound approach. The result is that one has lesser reaction time to plan and prepare for attack. These issues again create huge in-efficiencies. However, on the greater risk, they also bring in shades to the truth!

The next factor is the nature of growth of the corporate. Companies with organic growth have a greater tendency to become the 'white elephants'. It is like a huge empire where everyone has a fiefdom that stops promoting talent and focuses on retaining power. Lets defer that to a political philosopher. However, on the other hand, companies that have recently been a party to a merger or acquisition tend to perform better in understanding such factors. Companies that are 'young' with 'disruptive' technologies also tend to perform better in optimizing across these factors.

Integrating the Parameters

In our beach example, if we assume that one has the right understanding of the shoreline, the colour of the water and one is facing the right direction, we are then left with the sensitization of the decision making process to all these factors.

This actually is common to both the approaches. A sensitization is more dependent on the intellect of the person and how the person processes the various inputs provided by the different factors like waves, fish, wind, birds, etc., that one sees in the beach example. In this context, therefore, the aligning of business knowledge with all forms of communication is required: data, information, knowledge or wisdom. This calls for a strong systematic approach that enables one to work with different levels of abstraction. It is often a challenge in itself. In the real world, however, the key lies in working with a strong qualitative and quantitative model to understand the implications of various information 'bytes' and translating that to business.

Amidst all these factors, there is a strong feeling among various executives to actually align themselves and balance several factors; especially those of Truth, Ethics, Professional Responsibilities and Business Needs. This is especially important for middle managers having difficulties in orienting themselves to the changing roles from managers to leaders and the dynamic needs of today's businesses. It is also useful for intrapreneurial skill-sets within organizations that are looking at ambitious targets for growth and that are wanting a dynamic work culture. A good handle of these factors also help entrepreneurs to position their personal strengths and sift through the right opportunities in a more fruitful way.

The Way Ahead

Fortunately, these challenges are well addressed in the 'Top-Down' approach towards understanding truth. In the top- down approach, the understanding of these factors is relatively simple when one starts off with a solid foundation of the exact definition of the highest level of truth. This truth is characterized by universally applicability and has the highest level of abstraction. From practical considerations, it also needs to have a simple form, making it easy to understand and clear to interpret.

If one fails in determining the right starting point, the 'Top-Down' approach fails. In this light, we have now developed a model of truth based on the metaphysical and spiritual levels of knowledge. We are currently looking at this scientific model that is an application of established models in religion. This model has its significance due to the fact that religion provides us with pointers to the highest levels of abstraction. A direct fallout of this fact is that religious principles are fairly universal in nature. Our research actually took this aspect into understanding the universal nature of the principles. If this assumption holds truth, they should, therefore, be applicable to ANY or EVERY situation at hand. Ethics and conduct, part of culture and environment, need to be revisited from the regulatory perspective, often codes that are instilled by law. These fall under the umbrella of the definition of the society.

And my recent research into the Bhagvad Gita has revealed an amazing wealth of knowledge in mapping business requirements with the orientation towards defining and understanding truth. This DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM is, thus, a warehouse of immense knowledge that enables us to understand factors in the broader context. This training program helps one work around the problems of 'conventional business thinking' by enabling its participants to become more effective managers and leaders. Get trained in understanding businesses through the Bhagvad Gita and jumpstart on your next career move.

For a confidential discussion on how this can be implemented in an organization, please feel free to contact us.

About the Author

Rotarian Nikhil S. Gurjar is the President of Consulting Connoisseurs, a new generation management consulting company based out of Navi Mumbai. The company specializes in providing solutions based on both conventional methods in management consulting as well as the state of the art tools using modeling and simulation. With several years of experience in Europe and the US, Nikhil Gurjar is one of the few experts in the country who understands and uses these tools for business applications and policy research. He is also associated with agencies like CII, PPMAI, MSME for different types of services. Before the launch of the company, Nikhil was the Head of Planning at a very large Greenfield steel project in the US. For more details, visit www.consultingconnoisseurs.com.