



**REVIEW ARTICLE**

**CUSTOMIZATION – LUXURY OF LEADERSHIP**

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**ABSTRACT**

Organizations live with greater risk of poor decision making amidst challenges and assumptions likely to jeopardize performance and reputation. Present day organizations need to be flatter and dispersed; people operating at higher levels – decentralized decision making because businesses cannot hinge around limited people and decisions need to be made at functional, operating and local level. Success depends on the intent and quality of decisions made at every level in supporting and strengthening strategy; reaching out to more people and larger goal. While some leaders bring positive systemic changes, others, more often than not live with presumptions; processes, practices and policies can be recompensed by customization -individual conventions in making things work. This conceptual paper attempts to contemplate the paradox of customization - luxury of leadership pitched against processes; bring systemic change or ignore and grow above processes!

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**INTRODUCTION**

Research and theories of management have identified executive intelligence– exclusivity as key to effective leadership (Cathy Anterasian, 2008) – how leaders adapt, analyze and solve problems, generate ideas, achieve results working with and through people. As leaders work towards attaining higher standards of exclusivity, customization has become a luxury less supporting and more often than not dispelling scientifically designed business work flow processes because of the notion; processes, practices and policies are open-ended and/ or disorganized, I do not believe in processes because adhering to processes takes more time, inevitable duplication of effort, inadequate/ out dated documentation, I want to somehow get the job done, I will do it my way - different people carry out processes differently and incessant inconsistencies - people executing differently each time. This makes way for mindful/ unmindful individual and or organizational driven customization guised with personal ego, beliefs and values, pressure of results, deadlines, urgency, moderating outcome, own agenda, pleasing superiors, fear psychosis and so on - piecing out pitched against strategic implications.

**Process driven**

Organizational designs are evolved by identifying ineffective work flow, structures, systems, redesigning to create a fit with

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business needs and developing plans to implement changes for improved results; planning, process analysis, organization and team design, team development and empowerment, implementation and follow up, training, refining and coordinating systems. Processes cannot be rigid and need to primarily serve as broad guidelines defining parameters and operational boundaries– scientific, proven, real and practical. People are the strongest asset in an organization and are different hence adopt a different approach to understand and implement. People need to review re-visit and overhaul processes and bring change - be pro-active because creativity and change happens with by people amidst complexity and chaos. Processes also need to be streamlined, simplified with improved structures and systems such that people are aligned in business units with greater responsibility and authority for success (Allen, 2016). Circumstances and change demand greater focus on implement ability; user friendly processes. Top management needs to connect with ground reality and practicality for implementation of processes and avoid personality based rigidity.

**Customization**

In an attempt to achieve an ideal state, 100% standardization with for people gaps bring in customization to compensate for; growth crisis due incomplete/ inadequate and/ or obsolete/ outlived processes. Bill Gates also stated; I choose a lazy person to do a hard job because a lazy person will find an easy way to do it. Customization is an important business concept and more than one organization opts for it; product, service,

cost customization and so on. Customization is also employed in development of strategies in furthering business objectives. Customization brings flexibility and personalization in custom-made business solutions. Customization therefore exists across businesses; case in point being software development allowing users to add/ change functionalities as per their requirement – made to order/ built to order bringing enhanced benefits when dealt with in the right manner (Fuller, 2015). Customization is customary and cosmopolitan, evolving and translating in cause and effect relationship. Research posits Galileo discovered adding each lens enables a more accurate and comprehensive perspective of sky while creating the first telescope. Present day telescopes therefore have lenses that enable scientists to see more and more accurately and discover like never before. Customization like the telescope brings luxury for leadership; alleged to enable understanding and acting from a different perspective because one size does not fit all and leaders choose the right and the important with an intent to succeed. IBM is identified as being little too process oriented and has even revamped processes to retain its position in fortune 500 companies, KPMG's business process management practices influence knowledge and experience to deliver process-based solutions; implementing by capturing and designing processes encompassing broad based client issues. Technology, methodology and expertise define the foundation in establishing process centres of excellence. Organizations from different sectors face different competitive pressures and accordingly customize leadership development approach to their specific needs focusing on; global awareness, creativity and new ideas, technology comfort, adaptability and tolerance to ambiguity. Customization is aimed to gauge and strengthen communication skills, organizational citizenship behaviour, work ethics, decision-making skills and creating **learning opportunities**. Toyota's unorthodox manufacturing process system enables in making the best automobiles, develop new products with speed and low cost. Toyota lives with the motto; efficiency alone translates in success therefore views its employees as knowledge workers who accumulate **chie** - wisdom of experience in front line and not just as a pair of hands. Toyota invests in capabilities - people and organization and brings ideas from everywhere and everyone – internally and externally. Toyota challenges employees to look for solutions by transcending differences rather than resorting to compromises; culture of pressure generates innovative ideas moving ahead of competitors. Toyota doesn't modify its automobiles to local needs; customizes both products and operations to consumer sophistication in each country enabling reaching out far and out of Japan - increasing operational complexity and maximizing employee creativity in developing new supply chains, newer technology and marketing strategies (Hirotaka Takeuchi, 2008). Goggle displays leadership in setting processes and at the same time encouraging customization to achieve objectives; creating an environment to bring out the best in people – communication, trust, interpersonal relations, taking risks and sharing ideas for good and positive customization. Leaders earn personal and professional repute by engaging from inside – outside; strategize and implement, manage risks, identify and overcome fears and obstacles, drive the right opportunity and marshal people and resources to realize intent into practice. Organizational climate thus implicates customization with

change – creativity and innovation, rewards and recognition, compensation, growth and improved concierge facilities. Globalization, technology, demographic diversity; expansion and contraction of business environment at the same time necessitates organizations address and periodically overhaul processes, practices and policies for greater empowerment and effective decision making to be in time and space. Customization enables leaders keep abreast and bring systemic changes helping people and business to succeed; people on ground are always right unless proved otherwise by the rear echelon. Changes enable in strengthening processes, practices and policies and evolve; making processes and policies real, acceptable and implementable. To this end, there has been greater influence from West w.r.t processes and practices - urge to implement newer processes irrespective of cultural perspectives necessitating individual driven and/ or organizational driven customization. While people by design understand and try to fit into the culture - adapt; alignment between people and culture directly affects customization. In an era when change and incoherence are the constants, ability to lead wisely is weakening because leaders at some point in time lose their way stretching and misdirecting this luxury available – question of trust and integrity - overtaking processes -want to achieve too much in too little time losing exclusivity.

### The not good customization

Customization universally is neither good and/ or bad because it is used as luxury - based on leader's intent, behaviour, situation and the outcome; need to shift from; I, me and myself to wed. Customization happens in doing a difficult process when leaders are not at their best and want to avoid errors; opt for easier left than harder right and avoid risk. When leaders lose faith, are unable to identify the difference between the immediate and essential, feel processes, practices and policies are incongruent and/ or inadequate, organization is unable to keep pace with internal/ external environment, personal and professional insecurity translating in inconsequential decisions masking insecurity rather than focusing on the greater good; mindful and/ or unmindful customization becomes the norm setting a new system - short lived due dysfunctional feudal organizational system. Organizations operating on directed behavior also set norms for customization with the intent of getting things done; doing my way, no questions are asked and tasks are accomplished any which way because leaders find it easier to control the outcomes rather than processes. Organizations and leaders also hold strong beliefs; limited people are truly engaged and productive. 2015 Gallup research based on inputs from 150,000 workers from all states and industries in US discovered a very high percentage of people were unhappy in their job; only 30% of working population admits being fully engaged at work, 52% admit to being disengaged and 18% actively disengaged. Are practices, processes and policies doing more harm than good translating in every 7 out of every 10 workers being disengaged and under-committed at work; a pointer for leadership, culture and organizational design. Some leaders do rise to the top imposing their will on others, eliminating other people in their way and when they reach the top, they are paranoid that others are trying to replace them and finally want to prove a point; they are

above processes and practices. While their distortions convince them they are not doing anything wrong they customize and practices are forced acceptable in achieving results. Technology driven customization also places speed and urgency at a higher pedestal and distances cross functional interactions bringing in customization. System is hit hard and affected especially when the individual intent is clouded by uncontrolled aspirations; collapse of imperial system with the change of person. Research brings out leadership cases hit by fraud, deceit and greed - visible disobedience of processes and practices, obsolete policies, lack of values and business ethics; contemptuous customization diluting trust and integrity. Customization derails the system based on how leaders deal with people and processes; rewarding high performers with quick and frequent promotions, frequently assigning challenging assignments to high performers, hoarding talent and so on. Journey of an individual to a manager in finally becoming a leader thus merits revisit by business schools, organizations and leaders; why knowledge acquired doesn't result in effective leadership? Identification of the problem suggests; some of the leaders apply knowledge incorrectly and some do not nurture the right leadership. Leadership therefore has had its own share of ups and downs without common consensus; loosely defined and often misused and abused. Leaders are unable to come clean and they become vulnerable to making big mistakes; violating laws and putting organizational existence at risk. Leaders without leadership abilities also exist despite leadership being associated with creating shared vision, mobilizing, inspiring, motivating and establishing culture. Managers are seen to rely more on explicit knowledge because it can be generalized, measured and organized. In creating the future, leadership is unable to look beyond the organization; pursuing common good. Top management and CEO decisions fail to serve higher purposes; decisions are short term knee jerk reactions as against exclusive leaders doing decision making only after they understand what is good for organization and society, quickly comprehend and intuitively measure situations and people, create formal/informal shared contexts to construct new meaning, use stories and allegories to transform the essence of real life lived experiences into implicit knowledge for individuals and groups, exercise power to align people with conflicting goals spurring action and encourage development of real time wisdom – inspiration for employees across all ranks and files, training, coaching and mentoring (Ikujiro Nonaka, 2011). People and organizations cannot stagnate and need to move ahead, evolve, develop and grow to compete and succeed in a challenging business market and thus engage in healthy and positive customization.

### Analysis

An organization is only as good as its culture; policies, processes and practices. Culture evolves as a result of individual assumptions strengthened by shared experiences in solving group problems; internal integration for external survival. Leaders trigger culture through beliefs, values and assumptions. There is therefore a need to understand why organizations operating in identical environments, technologies, tasks and many of the founders of similar origin end up having different cultures (Schien, 2004); human

systems attempt to maintain equilibrium and maximize autonomy in their environment - creating culture and leadership amidst customization. Changing rules of business, challenges and competition from more than one direction necessitate leaders to understand and create a fit between business environment and position - style and demands, how leaders feel, think and act; belief and values – behaviour - an indicative of leadership complementarily with education, indoctrination, experience and desires. Leaders exploit customization and make it affordable when they understand and measure it against associated cost they are willing to pay making it a luxury of leadership. When customization is not affordable it remains a distant dream hence not pursued; paradox of paradox; leaders do not take action because they are not aware, do not understand as also leaders achieve what they want to achieve through customization. Leadership therefore has little choice but to embrace contradictions as way of life. Organizational strategy needs to keep space for positive customization. Organizations with positive customization are seen to create 33% more value. Organizations need to go about in a systemic manner; bring exclusivity even when processes are perfect because they will not stay perfect for long and will demand changes (Rykrsmith, 2013). Positive individual and organizational driven customization enables in becoming a future ready organization; effective leadership, high uncertainty avoidance index, communication, integrity, trust and alignment of people with processes and practices.

### Conclusion

The old adage - results matter over people needs to change; people make results happen. Customization needs to be affordable in creating more value and optimizing work flow; organized outcome, empowered employees with access to resources translating in profitable business outcome. Challenges require leaders with comprehensive and far-reaching set of experiences and competencies; effective communication and interpersonal skills, multi-cultural experience and a strategic attitude to evaluate internal and external environment, identify risks and work effectively – display exclusivity making customization synonym to effective leadership luxury.

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