

COLLOQUIUM

includes debate by practitioners and academicians on a contemporary topic

Managing Social Organizations: Experiences and Challenges

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THEMES

Social Organizations

Not-for-profit Organizations

Legacy Organizations

Social Impact

Challenges for Social Organizations

Stakeholder Management

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of economic activity is trade. Trade is characterized by the movement of the product or service from the supply location to the demand location for consideration. As civilization progressed, trade evolved as a business activity. Traders emerged as business leaders. The business created wealth for the shareholders and also transformed how civilization lived. The wealth creation process was accelerated by the industrial revolution, the discovery of automobiles and advances in information and communication technology. The wealth creation process deepened further when products were substituted by services in the context of competition to add unique value to consumers. The wealth creation process is now well established, and several business models have emerged to create wealth



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and meet the shareholders' expectations. This process created a major division in society between the people who were wealthy and those who were not wealthy. In a sense, the society was divided based on economic prosperity. Those left behind in the economic race need assistance to maintain overall societal harmony.

The state alone cannot handle the burden of this responsibly. Organizations started realizing the need to assist the economically weaker segment of the population. This led to the birth of voluntary organizations. Their purpose was to improve the living conditions and quality of life of the economically weaker sections of the society. The West referred to such organizations as not-for-profit. The voluntary organizations or not-for-profit organizations were never evaluated on operating surplus but mostly on the impact they created on the relevant segment. Effective functioning of the organization dominated the efficient functioning of these organizations.

While not-for-profit organizations were engaged in transforming the relevant population segment, another class of organizations rapidly emerged focused on the collective good for society. These organizations required cutting-edge administrative and managerial expertise. Usually, these organizations, referred to as social organizations, are not focused on operating surplus but on ensuring the relevance of the organization. Such organizations are also called legacy organizations. These organizations did not commercially produce or sell a product or service. These organizations are owned by multiple stakeholders and meet an unfulfilled societal need. They focus on enhancing the collective public good and preserving the legacy. These organizations are focused on the welfare of the segment of the society they choose to address. Cooperative organizations are a version of social organizations. Social organizations are characterized by the purpose for which they are created and the involvement of multiple stakeholders. The capital required is usually sourced from the public, users or a philanthropic endowment. Social organizations are somewhere in between the continuum of not-for-profit and for-profit organizations. They are subjected to the effectiveness of the operations and managing the diverse expectations of stakeholders. They also need to generate funds to run their day-to-day operations. Transparency and public accountability are of primary importance in these organizations. All conventional business management

concepts, such as leadership, structure, strategy, value chain, customer focus, use of information and communication technology, employee empowerment and productivity improvement initiatives, are equally applicable to these organizations.

As academicians, the authors have frequently interacted with organizations that are not-for-profit or social organizations. Recently, both of us had an opportunity to study in detail a large social organization operating in India. Based on these reflections, we decided to abstract the management approaches that are effective and efficient in managing social organizations.

We approached several eminent persons from academia and industry to contribute to this colloquium. We received seven contributors. Two of the contributors have founded/co-founded social organizations while two are experienced in managing a social organization, in their professional capacity. The remaining three contributors are academicians who have worked extensively with social organizations. The primary purpose of this colloquium is to document multiple perspectives on managing social organizations. We created a thematic brief and shared it with the authors to provide the contributors with a structure. The discretion to modify/use the brief remained with the authors. The thematic brief is given in the Appendix.

The contributions have been curated, considering the need to include diverse views. In the first contribution, Uday Gajiwala focuses on his social organization, which is an eye care hospital operating in the tribal belt of Gujarat. Rahul Pandey, in his article, focuses on a small-scale social organization founded by him and discusses its growth trajectory. Shridhar Venkat focuses on his experience of managing a large and highly impactful social organization that provides midday meals to school children. I. V. Subbarao documents his personal experiences in administering a legacy organization, as a part of his professional career. The remaining three academicians have chosen to look at social organization from multiple perspectives. K. R. S. Murthy traces the evolution of social organizations, and S. Manikutty deals with leadership, strategy and management concepts in the context of social organizations. The colloquium concludes with G. Raghuram outlining the governance challenges of social organizations.

Divyajyoti Trust: A Deep Dive into Community Ophthalmology

Uday Gajiwala, Vice President, Divyajyoti Trust, Mandvi, Gujarat

Divyajyoti Trust was established in 2010. The trust set up an eye hospital in Mandvi, Gujarat. The hospital started functioning in 2011. The hospital is organization working in all spheres of eye care, including prevention, promotion, cure and rehabilitation. During the groundwork, before setting up the facility, we realized the need for an eye care provider in the tribal area. The non-government organization (NGO) was established to meet the needs of the unserved poor tribal community.

In the first year, the hospital performed 3,600 eye operations, which crossed the 10,000 mark in five years. As one of the founders had more than 20 years of experience in eye care, the road map was clear. We kept on adding various activities one after the other. Diagnostic eye camps were started almost simultaneously, along with setting up the hospital. Two satellite centres were added in the second year under a public-private partnership with the government of Gujarat. The community-based rehabilitation of

incurably blind individuals was also started in the second year. A hostel for blind children was set up in the third year. The trust also started a screening programme for school children. Along with these initiatives, we also started screening newborn babies for a disease called retinopathy of prematurity (very few organizations do this). Two vision centres were added in the fifth year. Three more were added in the sixth year and the seventh year, making it eight vision centres where outpatient clinics are run daily. We added teleconsultation at all these centres in the early stages of operations. A training centre building was constructed and commissioned in the fifth year. A one-year certificate course for para-medical ophthalmic technicians was started immediately. An optometry college was added in the seventh year. Training of ophthalmologists was started as early as the third year of operations. We started getting involved in clinical trials (research) from the ninth year onwards. An eye camp for truck drivers was started in the 10th year. The trust also conducts clinical audits of other hospitals

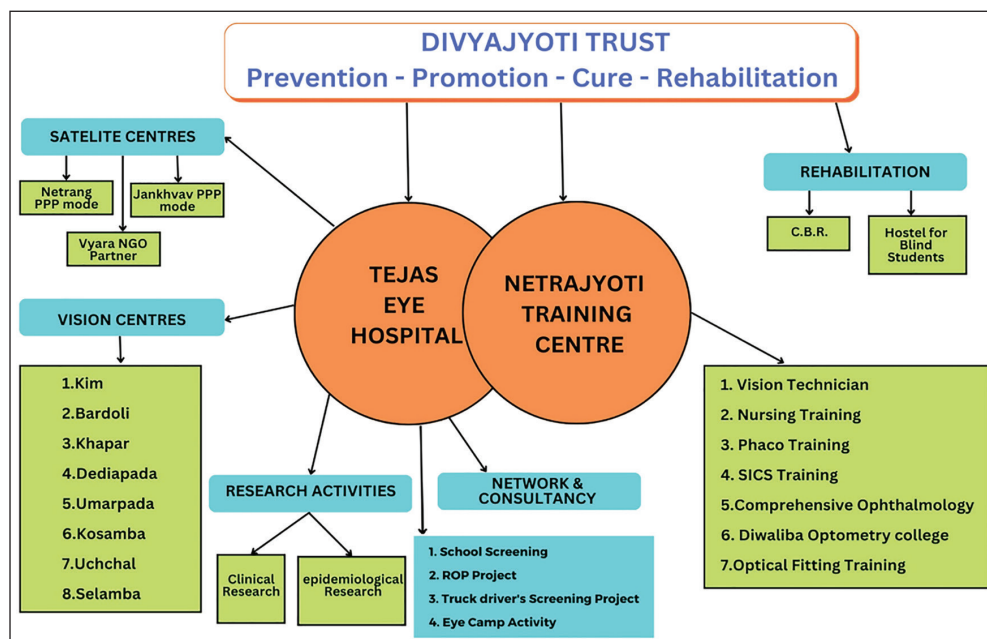


Figure 1. Activities of Divyajyoti Trust.

Source: Compiled based on the documents from Divyajyoti Trust.

and provides technical guidance to three hospitals in the vicinity. Figure 1 shows the activities of Divyajyoti Trust.

As an eye hospital, we are conscious of the climate change effects and have adopted various eco-friendly measures, such as solar electrification, solar water heating, steam cooking, bath water recycling, biogas plant installation, rainwater harvesting, 100% LED lighting, energy-efficient fans and five-star-rated air conditioners.

The primary objective for establishing the Divyajyoti Trust was to serve the poor rural tribal population. The selection of the town was also done keeping that in mind. The target group is the underprivileged tribal population residing in the interior villages of the tribal belt. These people have little income-generating potential and are surviving on meagre resources. They live largely on the daily wages they earn. Their capacity to spend is minimal.

There was no full-time ophthalmic surgeon in the area, even in a private practice. The community depended on the intermittent diagnostic/operative eye camps organized by philanthropic organizations and individuals. On one side of Mandvi, towards the north, the nearest eye care facility is at the SEWA Rural, Jhagadia, and towards the south, it is at Ranchhodasji Bapu Eye Hospital in Vansda. In the west, the nearest regular eye care facility is in Bardoli; in the east, it is in Nandurbar. All of these locations are far away, and the two-way travel for a patient and the accompanying person costs more than ₹100 at the minimum and can be to ₹600. The access to facilities, therefore, was financially challenging. The eye care hospital serves nearly 35 lakh people from approximately 2,000 villages.

Accomplishments

- The hospital caters to over 125,000 outpatient department (OPD) patients annually, performing over 13,000 eye operations annually. Over 125,000 eye operations have been undertaken in 12 and a half years.
- The eye hospital has a reputation of being a good quality eye care organization.
- The hospital is a tertiary eye care facility (providing sub-speciality services—retina, cornea, glaucoma, paediatric eye care, oculoplasty, neuro-ophthalmology, etc.) in a small peripheral remote town.

- The hospital provides a comprehensive eye care package, including prevention, promotion, cure and rehabilitation.
- The hospital conducts the maximum number of tele-consultations in Gujarat, that is, 15,000+ annually.
- It is involved in research—conducting clinical trials despite its location in a remote place.
- The hospital is environment-friendly, with a platinum-rated green building. It plans to build a green campus in the near future.

Management Infrastructure and Strategies

The trust has realized that professional management is required to run an NGO today. The need to report and maintain timelines, particularly to meet government rules and donor requirements, is critical.

With the increased workload, we created departmental heads (refer to Figure 2). However, these positions were filled with staff members who rose through the ranks due to their performance and skills. We refer to this team of departmental heads as the core team. To enhance their skills, they underwent leadership programmes as opportunities came up. A retired professor from the Institute of Rural Management, Anand—Hitesh Bhatt, trained the core team online over two and a half years through a monthly session. The core team meets once a week for an hour or so regularly. The performance of the week is discussed, and plans for next week are formulated. An attempt is made to maintain strong communication among the core team members.

The two primary administrators underwent a structured month-long training for eye hospital managers at Aravind Eye Hospital, Madurai. The founder, an ophthalmologist, has also undergone leadership development training. Future plans include hiring an HR manager and dedicated personnel for fundraising.

The integrated hospital management software (IHMS) has been in use since the foundation of the hospital. The hospital plans to shift to electronic medical records soon. The outreach centres too use IHMS, hence allowing access to all reports from the base hospital. The IT team has developed an app for data entry from the field, making fieldwork paperless, allowing access from any location. Tablet computers are used for visual acuity checks in the field. Details of screening camps

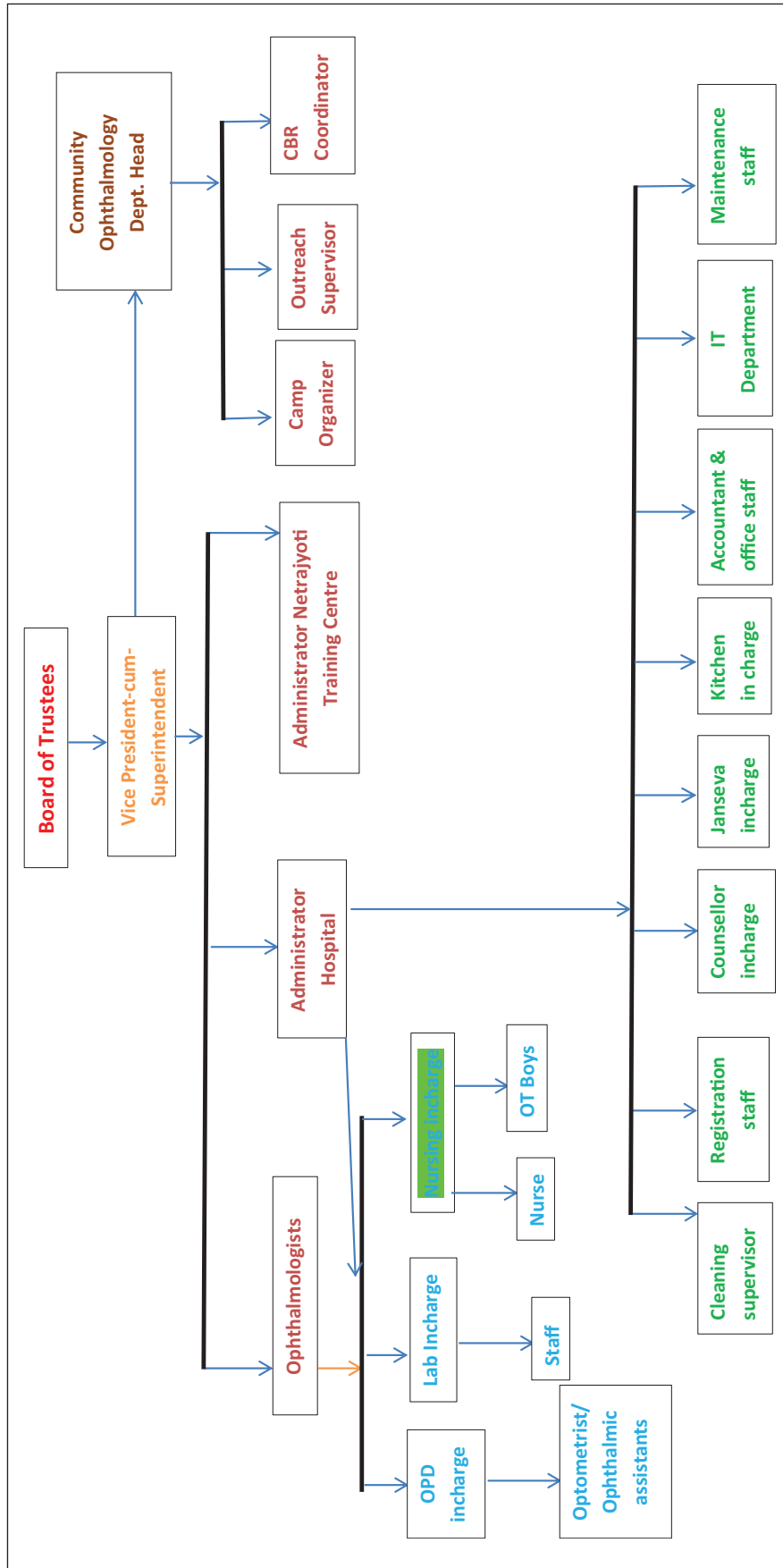


Figure 2: Organization Chart.

Source: Compiled based on the documents from Divyajyoti Trust.

at schools are also logged through Google Forms. At Neonatal Intensive Care Units, retinal cameras are used for screening new born babies. The fundus images captured are transmitted to the hospital, and real-time reporting is done by the retina consultant. The report is printed at the screening site and customer feedback forms are used to understand patient satisfaction. Names and contact details of staff members who can be reached to lodge complaints are displayed in OPD and inpatient department.

There is a suggestion box in the OPD area where staff members can drop communication with their suggestions or grievances if they are unable to talk to management in person. During the bimonthly meeting of staff members, there is an option to raise discussion points.

Stakeholder Involvement

Staff

The trust follows the minimum wage rule as prescribed by the government rules. This has helped our reputation as a good employer. The employees have access to many additional benefits like educational loan/subsidy for kids of staff members, medicines are provided almost free to the staff members, spectacles are provided at a 25% discount on our prices which are as such 50% of the market cost, cataract operations with Indian new intraocular lens is offered free of cost to the staff and family members, a cooperative society has been formed and staff can get a loan at a nominal interest rate from the society. The society helps them buy a yearly quota of wheat, rice, dal and oil, etc. at a lower rate than the market rate, and the staff can pay this amount in instalments. We provide ample opportunities to the staff to hone their skills by exposure to well-known places and also inviting external faculty members to train them. A minimum 10% yearly increment is given over all these years. Our training activities elevate local tribal youth from poverty to comfortable middle-class living. On completing the one-year certificate course on optometry, a 100% job placement is ensured with a fair salary. Our optometrists, the degree holders, get better wages than their peers from other colleges.

Community

Whole-hearted acceptance and trust in the services we offer are the most essential criteria for community

involvement in our case. The rapid expansion of our activities speaks volumes about this fact. There are many kind-hearted individuals who help us organize diagnostic eye camps in their surroundings by taking care of the logistics and local requirements. Sometimes they also offer financial support. At schools, we receive a lot of support from teachers. Three of our vision centres are located in the premises of local NGOs. These NGOs not just provide logistical support but also bear a part of the expenditure. There is a group of local patrons at the outreach locations who meet once a year. The group spreads word about the initiatives and also makes recommendations.

Funding

Funding has never been a major issue. The trust meets the recurring expenses through patient income (40%), government reimbursement (15%), project and corporate social responsibility funds (5%), assured donations (20%) and income from interest (10%). Usually fundraising efforts are required for the remaining 10%. Fundraising activities are carried out for non-recurring expenditures.

Challenges

Administrative

There is a lack of ownership in general among the staff. We are trying to understand how to develop a sense of ownership among the team members. While we believe that the core team has that ownership, we do not know how to test it.

In the past couple of years, the attrition rate among staff has increased to 25%. We feel that this is alarmingly high and may reflect a lack of ownership. We need to look into this urgently.

Staff competency needs to be improved. We have observed the staff seems to have a casual approach to work and poor work ethics. We may be falling short in providing them with training on these two aspects. Somehow, staff members do not follow the systems set for implementation, which results in delays.

Other challenges

Unknowingly, we have created an impression as a charitable, that is, free activity. We are now trying to change this perception to a low-cost high-quality activity. However, this is creating friction. People who

can afford healthcare are also asking for free services. Trying to convince them is creating problems. Especially, since there are other organizations in the vicinity that are providing services for free. The mindset of the community, over the years, is attuned to freebies, which has encouraged lethargy and the demand for all services to be free. Getting qualified personnel to work in rural areas is another problem. In our experience, especially with ophthalmologists, they work briefly to gain the necessary exposure and leave. Government regulations and processes are another major challenge. The renewal of licences is a long-drawn effort. Corruption is rampant. Therefore, getting work done without paying bribes poses a major challenge leading to prolonged delays.

The experience of setting up and running a social service organization

After 13 years of running the operations, we feel that this is a very satisfying work. Seeing a wide range of people

walking into the hospital and availing services gives us a deep sense of satisfaction. Providing training and ensuring that the rural youth is gainfully employed is another reason for satisfaction. Being able to set up a tertiary care facility in a remote place is like a dream coming true. The trust is setting up a new campus with increased facilities in a year or so. We look forward to providing services to more patients over the coming years.

We have realized that the major challenges arise not due to clinical competencies but managing human resources and ensuring compliance with government rules and regulations.

To end, I would like to quote Robert Frost,

'The woods are lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep'.

We will continue our journey without feeling tired.

Managing Small Social Organizations

Rahul Pandey, Founder, Centre for Learning & Empowerment, Bengaluru, India

Nearly all social organizations begin as small social-entrepreneurial start-ups, driven by a particular social mission of their founders. However, after being in existence for years, a majority of them remain small in size and limited in their societal impact. This is notwithstanding the fact that most of their founders and top management aspire to grow the scale of the organization and its impact.

In this contribution, we look at some of the characteristics of small social organizations, particularly the ones that make their teams rally around a social mission and create disproportionately larger outcomes, and those that impede their growth. Later, we discuss the key challenges in making a successful transition to a larger organization with greater societal impact.

Characteristics of Small Social Organizations

Progress driven by a social mission, entrepreneurial passion, volunteering spirit and team camaraderie

Small social organizations are typically founded by one or more individuals driven by the passion to make a difference towards a larger cause. Although the team remains small in the initial years, the progress of work and outcomes achieved are often disproportionately larger. This is because the leaders are driven by a social mission, teams are well-knit and display personal initiatives and camaraderie among members. Work processes are informal and agile, and the social mission and a spirit of volunteering drive long work hours, swift decisions and progress.

Non-formal and lean structures and processes

Organizational structure and processes are non-formal and ill-defined. The work roles of individual members are somewhat fluid. Even though each member might shoulder a primary responsibility, the actual scope of their work is often wider and not rigidly bounded. Members routinely share each other's workloads. Several common tasks are shared by multiple members. Reporting relationships might be ill-defined as well. Personal initiatives and interpersonal relationships often transgress official work roles and drive teamwork.

Since the boundaries between professional and personal relationships might be blurred, the extent of professionalism and mutuality in senior-subordinate and peer-to-peer work relationships can vary depending on the value systems of founders and the top management.

While many small for-profit commercial organizations have non-formal structures and processes, small social organizations retain a greater extent of non-formalism for a long duration. A possible explanation is that the spirit of working for a social mission overshadows and somewhat undermines the need for efficiency in work processes.

Inefficient management of work, communication, information and knowledge

The efficiency of managing work processes, communication and information, as measured by metrics such as person-hours spent in carrying out tasks, timely completion of tasks or first-time resolution of problems, remains low. This is partially a consequence of non-formal and ill-structured processes.

However, while the efficiency of social organizations appears low on certain metrics, performance on other metrics, such as outcomes achieved for every human and financial resource input, might be higher than in the case of commercial organizations. This is due to the mission mode in which people work in well-knit teams and with non-formal but agile processes.

Paradoxically, the same non-formal structures, ill-defined roles, overlapping professional-personal relationships and ad-hoc ways of working that account for inefficiencies also explain why many social organizations achieve disproportionately larger outcomes than the human and financial resources they use.

Individual, non-formal fundraising based on personal connections

The processes of fundraising in small social organizations that depend on donations to meet expenses are informal too. Funds are often raised erratically through personal

connections of founders and board members with individual donors, rather than with a formal and systematically planned approach.

This results in two significant problems that many small social organizations are beset with over long periods: (i) recurring cash-flow constraints and (ii) frequent fundraising efforts consuming substantial time of founders and board members. Both problems constrain the creative and strategic potential of small social organizations and, consequently, their growth.

Challenges of Transitioning to an Organization with Larger Scale Impact

Figure 3 depicts the possible states of a social organization on two dimensions: the size of the organization and the delivery on its social mission. Size could be measured in conventional terms such as number of members/employees and annual financial outlay. Delivery on social mission refers to the scale and quality of services delivered to intended users and the societal impact created. These could be measured in

terms of the number of target users served, proportion of users retained over time, geographical reach, quality of services delivered and impact on target users and communities.

Most social organizations start in the ‘small size–high delivery’ quadrant. Over time, a social organization could follow any one of the many possible trajectories that might take it to one of the two quadrants on the right, that is, large size–high delivery and large size–low delivery, or keep it stagnant within the ‘small size–high delivery’ quadrant that it started in. Four of the possible trajectories are depicted in Figure 3.

Broadly speaking, two categories of factors influence a social organization’s trajectory over time: (i) zeal of leadership, strategy and appeal of the social mission among users and (ii) the balance between passion-enhancing processes and efficiency-enhancing processes. The factors in the first category are essential for a social organization to succeed. It is the factors in the second category that make a difference to how effectively that organization grows and executes its

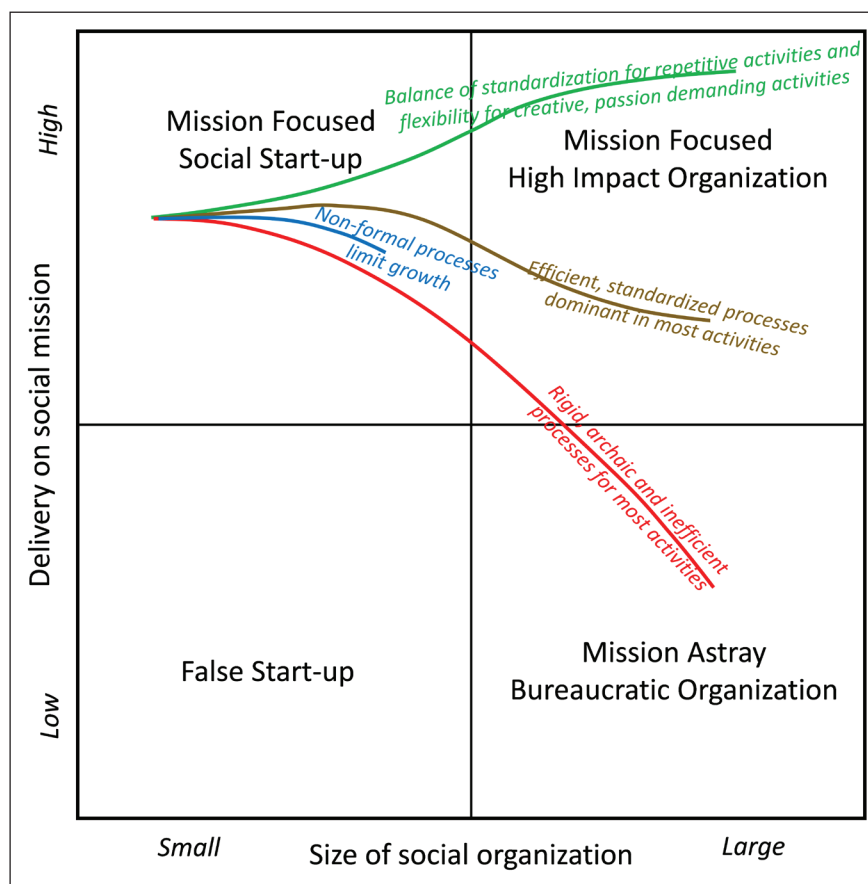


Figure 3. Possible States of a Social Organization and Trajectories Traversed over Time.

mission and strategy. In the rest of the article, we take a look at the second category.

Balancing social-entrepreneurial passion, personal initiatives and team camaraderie with structured and efficient processes

A core strength of a social organization is the larger mission its founders started with and how its people rally in service of that mission individually and as teams. These individual and collective passions are the fuel of small social organizations. With non-formal and lean structures and processes, these passions swiftly percolate the organization vertically and horizontally. They keep individual members and teams in a high-energy mission mode and drive the organization to produce outcomes that outweigh the small size of its human and financial resources. For the organization to remain focused on its mission and make a larger societal impact as it grows, this strength must be maintained and nourished at its core.

However, for any small organization to scale up in a sustained manner, it must not lose a substantial part of the potential productive energy of individual members and teams in inefficient, non-value-adding activities. For this to happen, it must put in place certain formal processes that assure consistent efficiency in operations and the quality of service outcomes. There are two major advantages of doing this. First, formal processes facilitate smoother scaling up of the organization while still being effective. Second, generating consistent levels of operational efficiency and service quality is as much a source of motivation for organization's members as is its social mission.

A social organization that can discover and establish this balance is likely to witness swifter growth in size and societal impact.

Formal and standardized processes for repetitive activities could facilitate a smooth transition to growth

Several activities in a social organization are repetitive, such as managing routine tasks, planning projects, executing project tasks, reviewing their progress and fundraising. Designing formal and standardized processes for managing these activities and monitoring their performance frequently through quantitative metrics would help increase efficiency. In addition, it would allow a smooth transition as the organization grows in scale and scope.

Semi-formal and flexible processes for activities requiring creativity and passion could keep the organization focused on its social mission

There are activities in social organizations that require human creativity and passion, interpersonal connections and personalized attention. Examples include leaders guiding team members, members of a project team working together on collective tasks, organizational members nurturing relationships with key stakeholders—internal and external to the organization, and leaders selecting and designing projects. Keeping processes for these activities semi-formal, flexible and somewhat vaguely defined would allow team leaders and members to transgress their officially defined roles in circumstances that call for paying special attention, leveraging human connections, motivating teams and mobilizing people around a cause. Progress of these activities could be measured through partially qualitative metrics such as feedback from members, feedback from external stakeholders (such as users of organization's service and collaborative partners) and retention of members. These metrics ought to be monitored regularly but less frequently than the ones for standardized processes.

Experiences from Managing a Social Organization

Shridhar Venkat, CEO, The Akshaya Patra Foundation, Bengaluru, India

In a world filled with challenges and complexities, The Akshaya Patra Foundation stands as a resolute force of hope and transformation. The foundation is not merely an organization; it is a collective of ordinary individuals carrying out extraordinary work, driven by an unwavering commitment to make a profound difference in the lives of children across our nation. The journey has been enriched by the power of public-private partnership, which has played a pivotal role in scaling up and reaching even more children in need.

My journey with The Akshaya Patra Foundation has been a voyage of self-discovery, enlightenment and profound experiences. It has not only shaped my thinking but has also reaffirmed the fundamental principles of our mission. These experiences have illuminated the path forward, emphasizing the paramount importance of scaling up our efforts while preserving our core values of compassion, integrity, quality, devotion, trustworthiness and synergy.

The Unyielding Focus: The Key to Scaling Up

In our dynamic and ever-evolving world, the value of unwavering focus is immeasurable. Recently, as I immersed myself in the pages of various books, I could not help but reflect on the timeless lesson they impart. The importance of staying dedicated to a single mission, without allowing distractions or deviations, resonates profoundly, regardless of the context.

In the journey with The Akshaya Patra Foundation, we encountered numerous opportunities to diversify our efforts. Well-intentioned individuals have presented us with various causes to champion, from building sanitation facilities to expanding our reach into different facets of social service. However, our unswerving commitment to our core mission—feeding the children—has enabled us to reach an astonishing 2.1 million children and serve them every day. This commitment magnifies our impact and exemplifies the transformative power of unwavering focus.

Simplicity: The Catalyst for Scaling Up

Life often reveals its most profound lessons in the simplest of interactions. In our encounters with the

young minds and children we serve, the essence of simplicity has emerged as a potent catalyst for transformative change. Their boundless curiosity, infectious enthusiasm and zest for life are perpetual reminders of the elegance of simplicity.

In a world frequently entangled in complexity, embracing simplicity in our operations, communications and programme design has proven to be a game-changer. It enhances clarity, fosters efficiency and fortifies adaptability—qualities that have become indispensable in our quest to address the ever-evolving challenges of our times.

Always Your People First—Employees as Your Greatest Stakeholders

In my journey with Akshaya Patra, one truth has become abundantly clear: Our employees are our most cherished assets. Their unwavering commitment fuels our mission and charts the course towards a brighter future for our nation. I have always championed the belief that *happy employees create happy children*.

Recent experiences have not only reaffirmed this belief but have deepened my understanding of its profound significance. Learning and development initiatives extend far beyond skill enhancement. They represent a vehicle for elevating the nation's capacity to address societal challenges. Engaging our employees is not merely about honing their skills; it is about fostering a profound sense of belonging and commitment.

Culture: The Cornerstone of Success

Heart-warming interactions with the children we serve have reaffirmed my faith in the transformative power of positivity. A recent visit to one of our schools was a testament to this belief. The energy, infectious smiles and unwavering enthusiasm of the children left an indelible mark on my heart.

Children possess the innate ability to radiate pure happiness, and as leaders, it is our solemn duty to nurture and strengthen this culture of positivity, trust and collaboration within our organization. Trust and

values are the bedrock of a positive organizational culture and recent experiences have underscored the importance of embodying empathy, integrity and dedication to our values.

Right from the Day One—Set the Values and Abide by Them

Ethics and values have always been the bedrock of our organization. Since its inception, we have been unwavering in establishing a clear set of values that mirror our mission and principles. Recent experiences have emphasized that consistently upholding these values is not merely a choice; it is an inviolable commitment.

Trust and credibility are imperatives for building enduring relationships with stakeholders. These values are not mere words on paper; they are the guiding principles that shape our actions and decisions from the very beginning.

Implement Then Advocate—Walk the Talk

In my journey with Akshaya Patra, I have come to appreciate the profound significance of translating words into action. Implementing programmes and initiatives aligned with our mission yields tangible results, providing compelling stories and evidence to share with donors and supporters.

Transparency and authenticity are the bedrock of building trust with stakeholders. As leaders, it is our duty to lead by example and demonstrate the impact of our work through action, not mere rhetoric.

Function with the Mind of a Corporate and Heart of a Compassionate Not for Profit

Balancing the pragmatism of a corporate mindset with the compassion of a non-profit heart has always been our guiding principle. Recent experiences have reinforced the need to embrace sound business practices, such as strategic planning, financial management and performance measurement, while never losing sight of our compassionate core.

The well-being of our beneficiaries should always be at the forefront of our decision-making. In essence, we strive to be an organization that combines the acumen of a corporation with the heart of a compassionate, not-for-profit entity.

The Essence of Our Mission: Real Solutions

Ultimately, the true measure of our success lies in our ability to address and solve the problems we are passionate about. Meeting a beneficiary who is now pursuing a PhD in Physics, despite humble beginnings as the child of farmers, exemplifies this principle.

Raising awareness and discussing issues are crucial, but taking tangible steps towards solutions is paramount. Recent experiences have reinforced our commitment to addressing real problems and achieving measurable outcomes.

In Conclusion

My journey with Akshaya Patra has been marked by encounters and reflections that have deepened my commitment to our mission and the principles that guide us. As we move forward in an era where challenges are increasingly complex, I am more determined than ever to lead the Akshaya Patra Foundation with unwavering compassion and purpose.

Our journey is not solely about expanding in size; it is about expanding in influence, impact and, above all, compassion. As we align our efforts with the government's mission of creating an educated nation, we are reminded that our work is not just about feeding the children but also about nourishing their dreams and aspirations. In this endeavour, let us remember the words of Srila Prabhupada, 'Each one of us can make a difference. Together, we can make a change.'

Together, we can be that change, ensuring a brighter future for all—because at The Akshaya Patra Foundation, we are not just an organization; we are a movement fuelled by compassion, commitment and an unwavering belief in the potential of every child.

Managing Ancient Temple Complexes: Preserving Heritage, Providing Pilgrim Services and Promoting Social Good

I. V. Subba Rao, IAS (Retired), New Delhi, India

As temples evolve from small hubs of traditional worship and rituals into large sociocultural institutions, attracting an ever-increasing number of devotees, the managerial challenge becomes more complex. If the temple is steeped in history and has a unique architectural and cultural significance, the challenge gets further nuanced. It necessitates a sensitivity to certain essential facets that should be carefully preserved as a part of humanity's tangible and intangible cultural heritage. India has a number of ancient temples that have had a long, rich tradition of worship over many centuries. They have become part of the collective consciousness and have great emotional appeal to a large number of devotees. Devotional literature, music, dance and art have celebrated and amplified their significance. One such temple, perhaps the richest and most visited and one which has had a long history of royal patronage and systematic management, is the Venkateswara temple at Tirumala in Andhra Pradesh.

I was posted as the Executive Officer of this temple at the turn of the last century in 1999. As I look back on my experience managing this temple complex against the backdrop of several recent government-led initiatives to better manage ancient temples such as Kashi Vishwanath, Kedarnath and Mahakal temples, I think it might be useful to draw some lessons from my own experience that can be relevant for the management of such ancient shrines as well. Of course, each of these temples and other ancient shrines has a unique history, legend, significance and challenges of its own. Nevertheless, there are certain essential elements of better temple management that could serve as guideposts for improving the governance of these sociocultural institutions.

Identifying the Central and Peripheral Aspects and Prioritizing

Temple management is a multilayered task, and as we start unpacking this complex set of tasks, we can be

easily overwhelmed. Prioritizing what is central and critical can be the most pragmatic way forward. When I took charge of the management of Tirumala temple, my immediate priority was to look at the quality of the pilgrim experience and how it could be enhanced. I perceived this to be the central piece of the overall architecture of temple management. I thought that the primary mission of the temple administrator should be to enable every devotee to have a pleasant, peaceful glimpse of the deity and offer prayers. There should be a process that facilitates this qualitatively improved pilgrim experience. When a large number of devotees are queuing up for darshan, and have to await their turn, management of the queue becomes crucial. Even though the queue complex with its neat compartments could ensure an orderly flow of pilgrims and was most certainly a vast improvement over the earlier chaotic situation, I searched for a system that ensured that the devotees were not confined to a geographical space for too long, and they were aware of how long the wait is going to be. My discussions with Professor Sowmya Narayanan Sadagopan, Director, Indian Institute of Information Technology, Bengaluru, at a Conference of Operations Research professionals held in Tirupathi led to an information technology-enabled solution that obviated the need for devotees to be in a physical queue. An algorithm to work out the time taken for each pilgrim to have a darshan allowed us to estimate the waiting time. Devotees could register at a counter, enter a *virtual queue* instead of a physical queue and report at the entry gate at the time indicated for checking in. The waiting period became, therefore, predictable. Since it was a virtual queue, it gave pilgrims more freedom to plan how to spend the waiting time more usefully. It was a great relief, especially to the aged and those who came with young children. There were a few finer aspects that we had to pay attention to in the implementation design. We created a bar-coded wristband that would not be transferable and, therefore, was not traded or misused as compared to, for instance, a paper acknowledgement. Also, because the devotees normally wish to bathe before

entering the temple, it had to be water-proof. Taffeta was chosen as the appropriate material for the wristband. Counters were established at Tirumala on the hilltop and, later, at Tirupati downhill, where pilgrims could register for darshan and obtain the bar-coded wristbands. This was a disruptive innovation and widely welcomed by pilgrims. However, since it was too futuristic at that point, there was quite a bit of resistance from the staff and vendors who used to sell refreshments inside the queue compartments. As the Chief Executive, I had to steer the implementation through a very turbulent time and learn a few lessons in change management. Patience, dialogue, persuasion and realistic phasing helped. Addressing the genuine concerns of all stakeholders was essential. The innovation gradually took root.

Creating Clean, Open Spaces Around the Temple

Many of the spaces around temples tend to be crowded and unclean. The first essential task of temple management is to ensure that these spaces are decluttered and opened up. Cleanliness must become integral to sound temple management. The excellent work done by my illustrious predecessor Mr P. V. R. K. Prasad, the first IAS officer to be posted as the Executive Officer of the temple, helped create a clean environment around the temple. I built up on his work to ensure a broad corridor around the temple for the chariot to pass through during special festival days. Also, my team and I planned the permanent galleries to enable the devotees to comfortably sit and watch the festival processions on the four streets around the temple. All this was designed to enhance the quality of the pilgrim experience.

Leveraging IT for Process Re-engineering

Rapid advances in information technology have opened up new windows of opportunity for process engineering. Even at the nascent stage 24 years ago, I could launch a website on the temple activities and create a web-based online donation facility called e-Hundi. Not only can the ease of pilgrimage be enhanced, but there could also be a lot of public education content that could be effectively communicated to a wider audience through museums and online programmes. This will help preserve the cultural heritage transmitted down the ages and keep it alive. It will also allow the devotees to spend the waiting time before or after the darshan in a purposeful manner.

Demystification and Effective Communication

Along with queue process improvements and the creation of clean, open spaces around the temple, it is important that the temple management focuses on pilgrim amenities, including rooms, food, water and sanitation facilities. Depending upon the specific religious ceremonies and rituals in each temple, systems for pilgrim facilitation must be planned to allow orderly pilgrim flow and information sharing. Signage and information booths can enhance the demystification of procedures and make pilgrimage less stressful.

Retaining Spiritual Ambience

Unlike other social organizations, temple management requires consistent attention to creating a spiritual ambience in the architectural modifications, additions and labels attached to schemes. For example, the name given to the innovative darshan system in Tirumala was 'Sudarshanam' which not only signified good darshan but also was one of the names of Lord Venkateswara, the presiding deity. The auditorium was called 'Mahati' after the musical instrument that Narada, the most prominent disciple of Narayana or Lord Venkateswara. The pathway within the temple was called 'Supatha' evoking the Vedic mantra and pointing to walking a righteous path. All the terms used were related to the names and themes sanctified by traditional legends and devotional literature.

Since devotees visit temples because they have faith in the sanctity of the temple and the presiding deity, the sanctity of the temple rituals must be assiduously preserved. The Hindu temple system is governed by a codification of key architectural features and what the religious rituals should be. This traditional knowledge is part of the intangible heritage that must be preserved. When a suggestion was made that we make some architectural modifications to the sanctum sanctorum area in Tirumala to facilitate pilgrim flow, I did not agree with the proposal. For me, it was unwise to tinker with the heritage. The temple managers should be discerning enough to identify the facets where innovation is desirable and feasible as well as determine those where changes are to be avoided. If the restoration of some part of the temple is inevitable, one must restore the structures so that they are reconstructed as close to the original design and shape as possible.

Creating Space for Local Artisans and Promotion of Traditional Crafts

Pilgrimage, or religious tourism has traditionally been a part of the Indian lifestyle, has picked up pace in recent times, and there is an expanding market for souvenirs, local products, artefacts and local cuisine. This trend is likely to grow, and temple management will also have to create spaces for local enterprises to thrive without disturbing the serene, religious ambience of the core temple area. For example, the shopping areas in Tirumala have been demarcated. The area provides livelihood to local people, including those who lose their properties in the decluttering process. Promoting local artisans and traditional arts could be an ancillary objective of temple management.

Professionalize by Adopting the Latest Advances in Technology and Managerial Knowledge

Temple management involves efficient logistics, fund management and personnel deployment. These aspects need to be focused on seeking state-of-the-art solutions using technology and managerial knowledge. Unlike commercial organizations, the bottom line is not profit but pilgrim satisfaction, preservation of heritage and promotion of social good.

Involve Stakeholders in the Management and Build a Culture of Cleanliness, Piety and Compassion

The overarching aim of a temple manager should be to create an organizational climate where employees feel that the responsibilities entrusted to them are

opportunities for serving pilgrims. The work culture has to reflect the values of courtesy, empathy, devotion and patience in all activities. This requires careful nurturing. One experiment I tried during my tenure was involving devotees to volunteer for responsibilities within the temple and work along with TTD staff members. Called *Srivari Seva*, it helped engage the key stakeholders, the devotees, in better managing the temple and informally influencing the attitudinal orientation of the staff members.

Promoting Social Good and Contributing to Charitable Causes

Temples like Tirumala have surplus funds and are faced with policy choices on their deployment. Charitable projects that are socially relevant, such as hospitals and schools, as well as the promotion of traditional temple sculpture, devotional literature, music, dance and other art forms have been taken up. In a way, these activities make spirituality acquire a human dimension and help channelize positive spiritual energy towards improving the quality of life of humanity. It is also in consonance with the philosophical underpinnings of ancient Indian thought explicated in devotional literature by prominent saints.

What I have attempted to do is to glean a few lessons from the management of Sri Venkateswara temple at Tirumala that could be useful while designing the management systems in other temples. Hopefully, it will encourage temple managers to make our temples more pilgrim-friendly, decluttered, clean, serene, pious and institutions reflecting India's rich cultural heritage.

A Perspective on Social Organizations

K. R. S. Murthy, Former Director, Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, India

It is difficult to provide a clear answer to the question of what we mean by social organizations. Are these organizations to be distinguished from antisocial organizations or from business organizations? The dissatisfaction about the correct name for this group is evident from how its nomenclature has changed in India over the last few decades in popular usage. In the early part of this century, they were commonly referred to as voluntary organizations, which changed to non-government organizations, and now to social organizations. The nomenclature for such organizations differs across countries. In the United States, the nomenclature for this group of institutions, namely, not-for-profit organizations, has remained the same over many decades. In each of the two categories, that is, for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, there could be many sub-categories since they encompass a wide variety of organizations, and the numbers run into millions.

Not-for-profit and For-profit Organizations: More Than Just the Bottom Line

Profit motivation as the distinctive difference helps us focus on the purpose of the organization and how it affects its operations. All organizations are founded for a purpose by one or more people. For-profit organizations consider their purpose relatively flexible and tend to adapt to changing circumstances swiftly. The not-for-profit social organizations often do not feel that they have that kind of flexibility. For example, a for-profit organization that finds external or internal constraints are making it difficult to scale up its activity to the expected level and is not making a profit feels compelled to quickly adapt its business suitably. Exiting from a business or entering a new one is a routine strategic activity for large organizations with multiple businesses in their portfolio. The increasing level of mergers and acquisitions across business organizations in competitive economies indicates the exercise of this flexibility in for-profit organizations. For-profit organizations also strive to mitigate risks associated with business and increase their chances of survival through good and bad times. The risk-mitigating actions they take include cooperation with competing for-profit organizations when high-investment high-risk projects

are to be undertaken, such as new drug discovery projects in the drugs and pharmaceutical industry.

In contrast, not-for-profit social organizations tend to treat their mandated or chosen purpose as sacred. For example, a social organization founded to build skills among poor and unemployed rural youth would not consider switching to skilling of urban unemployed youth when it finds the going difficult. The rural environment is chosen knowing that it is fraught with difficulties, especially in finding suitable instructors willing to go to rural areas and the high cost of bringing such expertise to the poor in rural areas. This inflexibility with respect to purpose arises from its network of social relationships; changing the purpose can result in losing some financial and/or human resource support. Ideologically based organizations face this inflexibility in a more acute way. For example, the Khadi and Village Industries Board considers its purpose to be changing the way of life through hand spinning and weaving, and the product is not just something to be marketed. Any commercial proposition such as gearing up operations to suit the needs of high-end consumers in the market, which would help it reduce the deficit or would enable it to pay higher wages to its spinners and weavers, is considered to be outside the ambit of their purpose. The organization survives because of its networking relationship with its stakeholders.

Survival guides the operations of for-profit organizations rather than the purpose, while the purpose is the rationale for the existence of not-for-profit organizations. For-profit organizations tend to operate tightly and calculatedly with profit as a guiding factor. Not-for-profit organizations use their networking relationships as the guiding factor when faced with constraints. They run the risk of inadequate recovery of overhead costs all the time. Many external funding agencies that sponsor projects fund only the direct costs associated with the project and expect the not-for-profit organization to fund the overhead costs. Although for-profit organizations rarely take up such projects, not-for-profit organizations accept them routinely as a part of life.

Most of the not-for-profit organizations in India are financially and organizationally weak. They are unable to build any reserves for bad times. Many of the over million social organizations in India exist only on paper. Many are corrupt and use the organization for selfish and extraneous purposes. Consequently, social organizations have acquired a poor reputation in India. There are some systemic issues as well. All private educational institutions in India are assumed to be doing social good and legally have to be charitable societies. It is common knowledge, however, that most of them operate as for-profit organizations and earn returns that could be the envy of for-profit organizations.

To gain greater acceptance and legitimacy in society, a voluntary network was set up, and a certification scheme was launched. A certificate was to be issued after verification of the organization's practices such as publishing a chartered accountant-certified statement of accounts for at least three years and demonstrating work in the field. The scheme failed to take off and marginalize pseudo social organizations.

Innovative Fundraising

Raising funds is a major problem for most social organizations. The recently introduced social stock exchange is a national platform that enables eligible social organizations to raise debt in perpetuity and with no or low rate of interest. Donors, sponsors and investors can buy the bonds and support the cause by buying and selling their bonds on the exchange and switching causes they want to support. All this can be done easily when each bond is actively traded. The exchange is still in a nascent stage, and most Indian social organizations do not, at present, meet the listing requirements.

Another innovation is mutual funds promoting a social organization. For instance, the HDFC Fund for Cancer Cure, to support the Indian Cancer Society. An investor can, while buying the fund, specify what portion of the dividend he would like to be donated to cancer cure on their behalf. The investment remains in the name of the investor. Large social organizations with national and international reputation can develop this channel as a way to raise funds.

Donors want the proportion of a social organization's funds spent on administration to be kept low. But if social organizations want to keep pace with changing technology and the tight human resource market for

attracting competent people, their overhead costs keep increasing. Such conflicting demands need to be balanced through scaling up or building strong networking relationships with donors and sponsors. The character of a social organization is defined by its strategy on balancing competing demands and constraints. One social organization that I know does not want to accumulate any reserves. It identifies a project and then contacts potential donors for support. A donor may select a part of the project that he wants or the part that is consistent with his organization's objectives for support in cash or kind. The project will be dropped if support is not forthcoming from donors and sponsors. All office bearers work in an honorary capacity, and it is needless to say, the organization is small and local working in one geographical area.

Not-for-profit Organizations: The Way Forward

The difficulty of balancing the conflicting demands becomes more acute for social organizations that expect their workers to adhere to a particular way of life. Social organizations affiliated with religious *mutts* face this problem even when the parent body is financially strong. Decades ago, the leadership of Vivekananda Kendra in Kanyakumari expressed this concern: attracting workers to its projects and lamented the lack of interest in such activities among youngsters of the day.

India has some professionally run large social organizations such as Help Age India or the SOS Children's Villages of India. Such organizations can do more to learn from for-profit organizations. One example would be to unbundle their in-house chain of activities and examine opportunities for outsourcing or collaborating with other similar organizations, such as for monitoring or auditing their geographically disbursed activities. Reducing costs of administration and increasing efficiency has to be a focus even if there is no direct competition. Innovation and keeping pace with advancing technology will also help enhance productivity. Social organizations running hospitals as a public good have been unable to keep pace with advancing technology and face competition from for-profit corporate hospitals. They have had to yield space to private hospitals. A recent example of this dilemma is the conflict that came to light between the CEO and the board of a not-for-profit organization, OpenAI (US-based artificial intelligence research organization). Having started with public good as its purpose, it had to resort to a for-profit company route

to make the needed high investments, resulting in strategic problems.

A major factor affecting all social organizations in India in the last 10 years is the increasing impact of government regulation and its enforcement at both the centre and state levels. The policy changes have adversely affected many social organizations receiving funds from foreign sources. The role of social organization in society has itself come up for questioning, whether arising from fears of covert terrorist funding, religious conversions

or potential manipulation of domestic sentiment by powerful global interests.

The way for not-for-profit organizations is to shore up their image through good governance and utmost transparency. A powerful statutory regulator for not-for-profit organizations along the lines of the Securities and Exchange Board of India, which operates independently of other government agencies, would be beneficial in promoting good governance of not-for-profit social organizations and good service to society.

Strategy, Leadership and Modern Management Concepts in Social Organizations

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Defining Social Organizations

Social organizations aim to serve or cater to the needs of society at large or a particular segment of society. They may not necessarily be non-profit organizations; all organizations need to meet their expenses through the generation of income; they might even generate a surplus. Non-profit organizations may generate surplus, but these may not be distributed as dividends or profit sharing among its stakeholders. The surplus is ploughed back into the respective organization for expansion or expanding the scope of activities. Social organizations also would do the same, that is, plough back the surplus but are more focused on the social impact they address. For example, an industry association or an association of professionals may be non-profit, but they exist to address some issues of their members, not broader social issues and hence cannot be called social organizations. Since many social organizations, or indeed most, are non-profit, this distinction is sometimes unclear, but it is still important to keep this distinction in mind.

At times, it does become hard to say whether an organization is a social organization or a commercial organization with a strong social benefits focus, such as some hospitals or educational institutions. For example, corporate hospitals with a strong charity component may masquerade as social organizations, while in reality, they are still commercial organizations, judged by their bottom-line performance. Tutorial classes, for example, may serve a vital unfulfilled social need but are still clearly commercial institutions.

No matter how one looks at it, TTD is a social organization, though it may serve only the needs of Hindu devotees who are interested in having a darshan of Lord Balaji. So is SEWA, an Ahmedabad-based organization serving the interests of the poorest

sections of society, such as vegetable vendors and also addressing a variety of social issues.

Leadership in Social Organizations

Though the basic principles of leadership may be the same or similar between social and commercial organizations, in some crucial aspects, they differ. These are briefly discussed below.

Role of ideology

This is the most important aspect. Social organizations, since they are serving social causes, need to have a strong ideological foundation to which members can relate. Generally, this is the paramountcy of service, but an organization making cheap and affordable sanitary napkins would also qualify. The staff must be committed to certain service parameters, and the customers are not really customers engaged in a transactional relationship, but the people one serves. A few examples are listed below.

- In TTD, the prime motive of the devotees who come to Tirupati is darshan plus associated activities such as *mundan* (tonsure) and collection of *prasadam*. The entire organization needs to be oriented to this goal, even cutting across jurisdictional boundaries, if needed. Systems need to have professional accountability as well as the satisfaction of the devotees.
- SEWA aims to provide a decent and dignified living to its clients by giving them micro-credit, insurance and even giving legal assistance if needed.
- A charity NGO devoted to helping children in dire need (such as orphans or those struck by serious diseases) needs to have this focus.

Leaders need to infuse this ideology through constant practice, setting examples and communication.

Resolution of conflicts

Leaders in social organizations face the problem of resolving conflicts of various kinds, which are quite different from those of commercial organizations. One such conflict may be between the professional discharge of one's duties and ideology. For example, there may be occasions when the demands of clients conflict with those required for the efficient discharge of duties, like the operation of bus services or decisions on how many laddus to make every day, minimizing the possibility of wastage or running short. Leaders can neither deal with them on a case-to-case basis nor make general policies covering all situations. The solution is to impart ideological training to the members so that they can figure out what the appropriate decisions could be.

Succession of leadership

Since social organizations depend so much on the ideology of the leadership and its congruence with that of the organization, it is vital to ensure the right succession of leaders. This may be difficult in some organizations, especially if they are government organizations in which the position of the head of the organization is nothing but a posting. In the case of TTD, it seems to have been fortunate to get the right type of leaders but imagine what would happen if the head of the organization chosen were a (competent) atheist! One way could be to request the incumbent to suggest a successor (or a panel of successors) with the support of the governing board, from which the government can choose. This is still an uncertain process, and there is no real solution to the problem, except perhaps the backlash the politicians may face if an eminently unsuitable person is posted and he/she makes a mess of things.

The levels of leadership

It is not the leadership at the top that matters; leadership at all levels is important. In many cases, especially in NGOs, the top person may have the power to select and appoint other leaders, but in government organizations, this cannot be taken for granted. There

is a need for mechanisms to ensure a good selection maybe through committees with external stakeholder representation. This may be important for senior leadership positions but is very practical or important for lower-level positions.

For these appointments, the conflict between ideological commitment and competence is likely to be a key parameter. On the whole, ideological commitment seems more important since other competencies can be improved through training and mentoring, at least to some extent.

Adopting Modern Management Techniques

There is no inherent reason why social organizations should not adopt modern management techniques, but generally, it is seen that most do not. A possible reason could be that most of them do not have the pressure to reduce costs or improve performance, as is the case with commercial organizations, or perhaps the personnel in these organizations have a perception that adopting these techniques are, in some way, incompatible with their ideological goals. They may also be too engrossed in their mission that they do not take the trouble or have the time to keep themselves abreast of modern techniques of management. In general, these organizations do not make much use of the opportunities available for training because they may feel training is a waste of resources they cannot afford.

TTD seems to be an exception. Though a little late in the day, they engaged consultants to look at their systems, especially management of queues and logistics. This made a huge difference. As with the rush for darshan we have today, it would have been impossible to manage the darshan queues without online booking and virtual queues. The application of modern techniques soon extended to improving supply chains, logistics of transporting the pilgrims, delivering *prasadam*, etc. A number of good systems have also been applied in the softer areas, such as human resource management.

But TTD does seem to be an exception. In many social organizations I have seen, there is a reluctance to apply techniques that will reduce costs, improve delivery and increase the efficiency and effectiveness in addressing their missions.

One way to address the problem could be more emphasis on training with definite training budgets,

well-defined training objectives and assessment of the effectiveness of training. Each organization will have to address areas where they would need improvement and lay down the priorities. A full-time training manager may not be possible in all organizations, especially in smaller organizations, but organizations need to assign this responsibility to someone.

Organization Structures in Social Organizations

I really do not feel social organizations' need a different organization structure as such. The structure of social organizations needs to follow the same logic of relationships between different functions. This structure, of course, needs to be reviewed from time to time as the logic of relationships and priorities change.

Strategy Formulation in Social Organizations

In a sense, there could be nothing different about the process of strategy formulation in social organizations:

definition of product market scope, growth vector and values that form the foundation of strategy in any organization. The product market scope, however, is predominantly service, and the market cannot be defined or chosen. For example, in TTD, the services offered are darshan, *mundan*, *prasadam* distribution, transportation, accommodation and food for pilgrims, emergency medical assistance etc. These are related closely to the core mission of providing darshan. Other services and activities, such as running Vedic classes, universities and general hospitals, may be deemed as tertiary functions whose scope may be determined by the resources available. This makes it more like assessing continuously the needs of different sets of users and figuring out what makes sense at a particular time.

The growth vector defines the direction of growth in each of these activities, what new activities are planned, and to what extent. This will follow from a continuous analysis of the changing demand for different services and resource availability.

Governance Challenges in Social Organizations

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My experience is based on studying temple administrations (with one of them being the largest in the country) and being on the board of religious missionary organizations (including academic institutions) with social goals. One of the missionary foundations is into large-scale feeding programmes, mostly as part of the midday meal scheme.

I discuss below some of the interesting aspects of such organizations, which would like to serve their client systems well while battling their inherent challenges.

Missionary Zeal

All these organizations exhibit a missionary zeal for whatever they do. The legitimacy of their zeal is derived from two principles. The first and more specific is often based on the stated vision of a key religious leader. The second and more general is based on the religious mission that 'service to humanity' is the purpose of our existence. The 'operationalization' of the zeal is achieved by selecting the leadership in one of two ways. The first is where the leadership of the organization is from members of the religious order, generally with appropriate qualifications and experience. The second is where carefully selected professionals are inducted and aligned with the mission achieved by ensuring that coded principles of management and ritualistic actions are followed.

Governance

One of the important challenges of such institutions is to bring transparency and accountability into the governance. The implicit mindset of the leadership is often that they can do no wrong since their intent is service to humanity. However, there could be spending on capital investment versus operations, financial versus physical asset investments, related party transactions and partiality towards certain stakeholders, which could happen without a sense of wrongdoing but may not stand the tests of good governance. The role of independent members of the governing board becomes important in such contexts. A level of tension between the independent members and the executive leadership

would be healthy for the organization. The process of selection of independent members, preferably to represent key stakeholders, becomes significant.

Dealing with Government

The mission of such organizations often requires clearances from the government or working along with the government, be it temple administration, education or school feeding programmes. As the organizations grow and have a larger impact, the process of dealing with the government becomes more critical. Regulatory compliances, periodic reporting, dealing with inspections and navigating the ruling political ideology are all key to success. Political leaders seek the visibility of associating with such organizations. This can (and should) be carefully leveraged for resources (including land) that only governments can provide. At the same time, it should be ensured that there is no abuse by either party.

Resource Mobilization

Revenue from operations and donations constitute the two important sources of funds. Dependence on donations is often the more significant share since the pricing of operational outcomes may need to be kept low to ensure affordability for the client system. Donations are usually easy to come by since they are primarily an outcome of the alignment of the faith between the donors and the religious mission. To an extent, the donations are also dependent on the sincerity of the missionary zeal, the mechanisms of reaching out to the donors and the ease of channelizing donations. Reaching out to donors, donor segmentation, donor analytics and continuous engagement with donors are key managerial actions.

Managing the balance between operating revenue and donations and capitalizing the donations towards income to deal with varying donations across years are key financial management challenges.

Donations sometimes come in kind, in which case there could be a challenge of inducting it and using it in an appropriate manner for the activities of the organization. Social organizations not under the direct control of the government often have the benefit of

quality procurement from capable suppliers who could be selected based on the alignment of their faith with the religious mission. Such suppliers are value driven and do not compromise on quality.

Managing Operations

This is a central part of how the social organizations achieve their mission. High-quality delivery of operations can be expected as an outcome since that is an intrinsic value of the missionary leaders. Such delivery enables brand building and long-term sustainability. The only reason that high-quality delivery may not happen is due to a lack of professional knowledge on the part of the driving missionary leaders.

Since such organizations have a primary mission, a clear focus can be developed. It is useful to conceptualize the operational delivery to the client system as a supply chain. The supply chain challenge could be managing queues for *darshan* in a temple, managing the lifecycle of a student from admissions to placement or managing the cook-to-consume process of delivering meals for schools. Often, the supply chain towards the primary mission can be designed, managed and improved through formal tools of operations research. Information systems and technology are great enablers for the use of such tools.

Human resources: Missionary order versus professionals

This is an important challenge that such social organizations have to deal with. The executive leadership of such organizations is often selected from a limited pool having missionary attributes. This may not lend itself to good management. The ideal would be if members of such a pool have the appropriate qualifications and experience. Participating in relevant training programmes would help.

Complementing the leadership with professionals would be essential. This should happen at the board level, top management and executive roles. Decision-making at each level could have tensions. While such tensions are useful at the board level (as already discussed under 'Governance'), greater alignment

would be necessary at the other levels. Developing a culture of working in teams, with no implicit hierarchy based on missionary roles would be essential. This does not always happen. Consequently, either the decision by the missionaries prevails, or there is increased dependence on consultants to guide the way forward. Another related issue is the possibility of reduced motivation on the part of the professionals, especially at the senior levels, when it is clear that executive leadership roles are unavailable to them.

Feedback from the client system

Unlike the corporate sector, where customer feedback is an essential input into decision-making, missionary-driven social organizations do not depend on feedback. There is an implicit acceptance that the missionary leadership is aware of the client's requirements. Clients also do not speak up since they are mostly satisfied with whatever the level of service is provided, as it comes with missionary backing.

For continuous improvement in delivery, it is important that such organizations create multiple mechanisms of client system feedback. Even the representation of clients at the board level is essential. For example, representatives of regular temple visitors/associations, alumni (for educational institutions) and representatives of midday meal benefitting schools/associations.

In conclusion, a reflection and consequent action on the above aspects would enable social organizations to offer greater value to their client systems in fulfilling their mission.

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APPENDIX

Managing Social Organizations: Themes

1. What are social organizations?

- a. Social organizations generally deal with public good, social welfare, protection/preservation of culture and heritage.
- b. These are characterized by a representative board. The resources are generally drawn from the public. There are multiple stakeholders related to a social organization.

2. Professional management concepts are applicable to social organizations

- a. Value chain (from concept to delivery of a process or a product).
- b. Recruitment, motivation, retention and empowerment of employees.
- c. Comprehensive use of information and communication technology.
- d. Process re-engineering and process automation leading to digitization.
- e. Total quality management, Lean management, PDCA (plan–do–check–act) and lean thinking.
- f. Customer focus, feedback from the customers, grievance redressal mechanisms.

3. Effectiveness of a social organization

- a. The impact of social organization is difficult to measure and varies from context to context.
- b. Unlike commercial organizations, the impact cannot be measured only on monetary terms, profitability and market share.
- c. Transparency and accountability in operations is an important measure.
- d. Management, monitoring and safe custody of fixed assets are important.
- e. Administration to be measured in terms of effectiveness, efficiency and adaptiveness to technology and changes in consumer behaviour.
- f. Who should drive the change, how is it to be accomplished?

4. Stakeholders involvement

- a. How do social organizations ensure that the primary stakeholders are actively involved? Monetary token contributions by beneficiaries or physical labour or emotional connect, etc., to the organization are some means to connect with the organization of choice.
- b. Participative management is a standard tool that can be attempted.
- c. Management of the primary stakeholders is the key.

5. Deepening the value chain

- a. Value chain management would include starting with small interventions and expanding the scale and scope of the interventions.
- b. For example, the primary objective of an organization would be to elevate people from the below poverty line (BPL)/liberate people from the (BOP)/BPL status. Once this is done, provide opportunities for access to sanitation, clean drinking water, nutritious food, improved housekeeping, induction to modest education, exposure to social and economic environment help them to set up small business (depending on the enthusiasm of individuals this can be expanded).
- c. In the case of other organizations, it will be looking at the primary purpose and nurturing and developing several secondary (related) purposes of the organization.

6. Funding

- a. In social organizations, funding mechanisms are not from the sale of products and/or services. Usually, they depend on donations and contributions from philanthropic individuals and organizations. Occasionally, it is possible to generate some revenue by pricing services. Often it is the public money that gets into funding the activities of a social organization.

7. The role of leadership

- a. The leadership should ensure not deviating from the primary/core purpose of the organization. It should explore opportunity for expansion and the growth of the social organization.

- b. Leadership should be driven by compassion, socially sensitive and respect the legacy of the organization.

8. How should the social organization be managed?

- a. How does the management/administrative content and style evolve or change depending on the changes in the environment or the primary customer priorities?

9. Interface with society

- a. How do social organizations interface with society, if the primary customers are not from society?
- b. How do social organizations ensure that it promotes the environmental (water, air, noise pollution and carbon footprint) harmony?
- c. What steps are necessary and who is responsible for social organizations to respond to the regulatory environment and its changes?
- d. How do social organizations leverage the power of an individual with appropriate capital support to bring the desired changes in the social environment?
- e. Social organizations which are primarily dependent on funds from CSR activities of an organization are basically returning the surplus wealth to society and therefore extensive caution to be exercised in terms of how the money is

spent, where it is spent and how effectively it is spent.

- f. Who is responsible for ensuring this oversight in the context of a social organization? Is it the leadership/board/regulatory environment?

10. Harmony between a social organizations and the context in which it operates

- a. How should social organizations deal with elected representatives?
- b. Social organizations need to give something back to society, but this is not a one-way street. What is that a social organization can harness from society?
- c. It is known that change is contagious. How to trigger the first level change? Who is the influencer? How to ensure collective ownership in the context of a social organization?
- d. If not carefully managed, social organizations can quickly degenerate into subsidy providers. How to prevent this?
- e. How does the social organization leverage the government's financial support?
- f. What strategies are possible to manage the tension between the community, the political system and the social organization?

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