

Extreme Management

Dr. Manuel Angel (Coco) Morales

Organizational metaphors are very common. When you take an intellectual trip around the literature, you can manage for a minute, move your cheese, go fishing, and go gung-ho, create raving fans, visit Santa's workshop or drive the 2x2 formula...

There is a different kind of parable to which I have always been attracted, and it is that of extreme sport or extreme leadership and management.

Extreme sport or management is about engaging in a very complex, difficult work routine which will take you to breakthrough results that at the beginning seemed impossible. Later on, the mentality that impossible is nothing will emerge.

When we talk about the relationship between extreme sport and extreme leadership or management, we are pointing toward a radical leap mentality for cultivating relationships, generating double portion energy, showing audacity and always increasing performance. It is about the art and science of changing things for the better.

What is the connection between extreme sport and extreme leadership or management? It is the quest of breathing new life into something, whether a project, an organization, an institutional system, a community or a country as well. Bringing a new life into something, or creating a new and different reality is about practicing the disciplines that will lead to rapid, visible and dramatic results. These very strict routines can have many variations and can take many different forms, but all of them evoke and produce vitality. The paradox is that by practicing the disciplines, any system, whether that of human beings or organizational structures, can manage or sustain disequilibrium, thrive in near chaos conditions, and foster self-management, leadership and organization. If this logic or psychology is taken to the heart, the disciplines can foster changes of individual high performance. These disciplines have to be learned, practiced and internalized if their far reaching benefits are to be tapped at the individual and the organizational level.

The empirical disciplines of extreme sport and extreme management are the following:

1. Infuse a profound understanding of what drives an individual and / or an organization toward success.
2. Insist on uncompromising straight talk, acknowledging that on these matters there is no time or room for politicking.
3. Manage and say hello from the future.
4. Reward creative accountability and hard work.
5. Harness adversity by learning from prior mistakes.
6. Foster relentless discomfort.
7. Cultivate reciprocity between the individual and the organization.

When deployed with wisdom, art and science, these disciplines establish a strong foundation of intelligent repetition and continuity. But there is a kind of mystery or beautiful ambivalence that not everybody understands. As human beings and organizations move fondly upon replication and routine, they also experience delight in messing up or changing something that is too neat. As we have researched, studied, taught and shared with students, friends, customers and organizations of different types, the disciplines of extreme execution embrace structure (an organized pattern of behaviors) as a necessity and danger. Practices that promote excellence can also hold it back!

Mastering the disciplines of extreme management is, at least, a three stage process.

The first stage is that of learning and understanding concepts and theories that support the pattern of behaviors and high performance. This type of learning should take the individual or the organizational to a “let’s give them a try” mentality.

The second stage begins when protocols and routines are put in place to establish the platform of practice. This stage can evoke stress and apprehension because the system, human or organizational, is moving from a comfort condition to a discomfort experience due to high pressure. The common reaction is that of “we didn’t realize the full implications of this engagement. We are not sure if we are up to it.”

The third stage triggers introspection, reflection, personal or institutional distress, and if persistent, inner change... The actors involved in

extreme management ventures will realize that the discipline is not just about the organization, it is also about changing and transforming them.

This third level is the most difficult because it focuses on the real challenges of individual growth, change, transformation and breakthrough. Real education and learning is always about frame-breaking. We will always know the profoundness of any individual or organizational learning by observing the sustained quality of the elicited behaviors.

When an organization (or a relationship) faces a challenge and you are part of it, you are always the part that is easiest to change, as hard as that is. As the Kendo master will emphasize “When you focus on winning, you will lose; when you focus on not losing you will lose; Pay attention to your inner balance, then perhaps you have a chance to win...”

Dr. Manuel Angel (Coco) Morales

Contact Freelance at: cocomorales1@gmail.com

Cell phone: 787- 249-6102