

# Understanding - A Key Aspect

**Have we realised that understanding is the key to every lock in work and life?**

A person behaves on the basis of training that he or she has obtained from school. A person may also behave based on his or her past experiences. A person may also behave absolutely different than the training or past experience. What is that force that drives the human behaviour at work?

Over a period of time, various researches have come forward and propounded that a person's behaviour at work is directly attributed to the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) possessed by that person. The conception of a person towards work is vital in deciding the human behaviour at work. This "conception of a person" is the understanding that a person possesses.

Understanding is a very individual idea. It is an individual perception. Every

counts and there are indirect implications in the world that are suggestive of this ideology. If there are two MBAs, then the one with more experience is paid more than the one with less experience. Important fact to note is that, it is not the experience that is paid higher salary but it is the understanding of that person which is being honoured with premium. This understanding is generated from experience. A person is asked the number of years of experience in his or her resume, but not asked to write the experience itself. It can't be written but it generates tacit knowledge, called understanding.

However, the idea of understanding suffers from limitations. Firstly, there is no measure of understanding, whereas KSA can be measured by way of GPA or successes and failures. Secondly, there is no way a person can be trained for enhancing understanding, whereas a person can be trained for KSA. These drawbacks certainly deteriorate the strength of the idea



would be close replica of their actual operations and ask the employees to analyse those case studies. A panel of experts could evaluate the analysis in order to avoid biasness. The experts could rank the results on scale of 5 from 1 being "least understanding" to 5 being "most understanding". Thus this could be an attempt to measure understanding.

Training for understanding can be done by way of "knowledge conversion". This "knowledge conversion" has been derived from the Nonaka and Takeuchi model of knowledge creation, which suggests that tacit knowledge, can be transferred and made explicit through the socialisation and externalisation processes. In the same vein, it is

Further training in understanding can elevate the level of understanding person possesses. These levels are "novice understanding", "smart understanding" and "superior understanding". A new entrant at work has "novice understanding",

however with the number of effective hours of work that novice understanding translates into "smart understanding" and then finally to "superior understanding". There is no proven evidence that how many effective hours of work would elevate a person from one level to other. But there are certain characteristics found in persons, which could be indicative of their level of understanding (as shown in Table 1).

Human behaviour is an area that has no correct answer and the answers suffer from subjectivity. In case of study of human behaviour at work, it could be sufficient to say that the more we probe, deeper gets the tunnel. However, many B-schools today stress on understanding rather than memorising and coin an opinion that understanding develops the analytical and logical abilities.

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Table 1		
Novice understanding	Smart understanding	Superior understanding
Confused	Feels confident	Fully confident
Enthusiastic	Takes decision with care	Strategic planner
Hasty decisions	Analysis is second nature	Takes visionary decisions

individual has a different conception and interpret a situation based on past experiences. These experiences have become implicit in nature and are engraved in the mind of a person. These past experiences tend to reflect back to a person's brain whilst that person is in a similar situation as the past incident. If a situation is new, then the past experiences act as a lighthouse and a person tries to find a way. This process of learning from experiences is the root of understanding.

A student was asked the price of a loaf of bread and answered that it could be Rs. 12, because of production costs, marketing costs, administrative costs and others. If the student was asked to undergo a study in economics and then asked the same question, the answer could be, "cost of production and demand and supply forces of the market". A person has to apply education and that comes by way of understanding.

Understanding is the conception of a person. It is the way a person looks at a particular job or task. Experience and constant learning from such experience enhances understanding. For some, it takes long, but for some it takes a short while, but in any case it is the understanding that

of understanding as the key, but there have been attempts to counter these drawbacks.

The first issue is about measuring understanding. This can be done by way of case study. This approach is still open to research. It suggests that, enterprises could develop case studies, which

inferred that tacit knowledge of understanding of one employee can be effectively transferred, taught and expressed to other employees. The employee who "seems" to have understood better could be the mentor and work with other employees, to develop understanding of other employ-

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