

Yoga Therapy for Business

Jayant Dwivedi shows how the metaphor of yoga can be used to improve the health of a company

One of the far-reaching benefits of yoga is the uncanny sense of awareness that it develops in the practitioner of an impending health disorder, or infection. This, in turn, enables the practitioner to take pre-emptive, corrective action.

Similarly, proximate 'illnesses' of businesses can be well controlled and managed without necessarily requiring any diagnostics and investigations. This can be achieved through the integration of the body and the soul, or, in this case, the integration of a business and its virtual control systems. The benefits to the business accrue by using principles similar to what has been prophesied by the gurus. These are, the following:

- **Increase flexibility** - It is important that the company geographically connects all its functional areas and its employees. This enables transactions and data movement with great speed. The organisation becomes flexible and more responsive to the needs of the business. The elimination of people-dependent processes also augurs well for an organisation and makes processes flexible, and, at the same time, robust. Some factors that the organisation needs to be prepared for are the following:
 - Look out for voluminous paper movements
 - Look out for bottlenecks (such as when a few people with limited ERP licences carry the burden of all transactions)
 - Look out for people with computers but not empowered to service the organisation electronically (be surprised if the employees

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cannot service their own requirements)

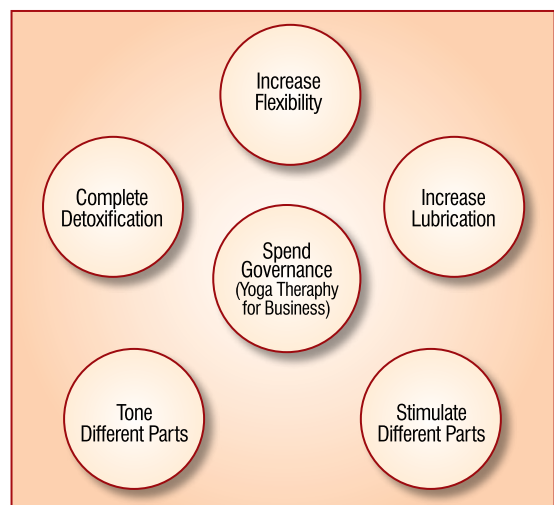
Organisation flexibility should not be misunderstood for flexibility without control. Flexibility is required to support growth and to take on the competition, while control is to ensure that the growth is healthy and sustainable. Disintegrated systems do not allow automated controls. Manual controls are people-dependant and therefore, risk-prone.

- **Increase lubrication** - Workflows are automatic lubrication mechanisms. Systems that automatically

handle transactions (with their documents), and enable financial processing are vital and the need of the hour.

There are reports in the media that a number of government organisations will progressively move their systems to e-governance to rid themselves of a number of evils around productivity and compliance. Top-down pressure, facilitation-money, and increasing people resources cannot be substitutes to lubrication. Electronic workflows lubricate organisations and get them to operate at desired levels of performance. Electronic measures reveal areas that have poor turnaround times. These can then be worked upon and improved.

- **Stimulate different parts** - An automation exercise or improvement cannot be limited to sections that have been addressed before. A genuine attempt has to be made to incorporate and activate parts that are manual, slow, and not auto-



mated. These areas, untouched by the regular flow, are often the 'mine fields' of the organisation.

Spend Governance can get seriously compromised if disintegrated parts supply information only towards the end of a month (or period) for accounting entries and closure. The stimulation of such parts of the organisation cannot be achieved only through audits.

- **Complete detoxification** - Organisations are known to embark on operational excellence exercises and also six sigma projects without getting the basics right.

Such efforts have to be holistic in nature and need to be adequately supported by the company philosophy and policies. They need to start with companywide efforts on data integration and cleaning.

- A detoxification exercise needs to precede the 'surgical efforts'. The detoxification can be around:
 - The elimination of wastes
 - A 5S exercise (sort, stabilise, shine, standardise, and sustain) for cleanup of the business
 - A job rotation in an area that is known to be 'clogged' (circulation of fresh blood will add wonders)
- Rationalisation and simplification of processes

Toning of different parts of the organisation both physical and virtual is essential. These could be the added muscles in terms of internal experts who understand and appreciate business process re-engineering, change management, and also computerisation. The toning exercises can be achieved through the use of systematic internal training, use of business support tools and applications, and involvement of facilitators. External facilitation goes a long way in toning up an organisation – this need not be over done but, at the same time, not being able to see the 'inner self' can be detrimental.

Toning up the organisation for an exercise like Spend Governance will also mean having the right organisational structure in place with responsibilities and account-

ability assigned. The configuration and set-up of controls need to be well understood at the start. Overdoing a toning exercise will mean damaging the (body) parts and, at the same time, not toning will leave the organisation weak and incapable of having a strong defence mechanism.

Sustainability is a buzz word in the board room. No organisation effort can be commended if it cannot be sustained, replicated, and repeated. Particularly when organisations are geographically spread out, it is the responsibility of the management to ensure that uniform and consistent processes reach the 'bottom of the pyramid'. If this is not the case then the computerisation effort is truncated and will lead to different behaviours at different locations and at different time periods. How does the management team ensure that the process will not get circumvented in a peak load situation or in a difficult month? Toning up of the systems to stand up to such demands, is essential.

Whatever may be the core financial system, an integrated Spend Governance system is essential for the following reasons:

- To speed up transactions so that bottleneck situations do not retard business
- To provide workflows that will ensure 'Compliance by Design', rather than 'Compliance by Chance'
- To energise scattered parts of the organisation. An effort to resonate all parts of the core organisation with the same vibration is essential
- To eliminate unwanted sub-processes, spend categories, document movements and retrievals, approval steps, obsolete home-grown solutions, and bring in best practices through well-tested 'therapies'.
- To train the management and power users to flex their muscles through system-driven controls and reports. Also, allow the system to be your 'whistle blower'.

Spend Governance is a key subset of corporate governance. At the same time it is a pivotal element that needs the top management's time

Yoga, the Sanskrit word for 'union', is a practice that uses posture and breathing techniques to induce relaxation and improve strength, and its health benefits may surpass those of any other activity. Developing one's body, mind, and psychic potencies ultimately leads to physical strength and further on to spiritual consciousness. Most types of yoga also involve the usage of different poses or yoga asanas, meditation, and breathing exercises, or pranayamas.

and attention. If properly managed, Spend Governance is not a cost but an investment for the secure future of the organisation.

I will like to draw an analogy between 'yoga' and Spend Governance (simple, perpetual and systematic). A Spend Governance solution works as a therapy and there are no side effects, if it is accepted as a company-wide philosophy. In large organisations, the use of automation to support Spend Governance at every user point becomes paramount. Online visibility allows timely alerts on fraudulent activities. The organisation can effortlessly grow in size and still maintain a very high degree of compliance.

Spend Governance deployments are in addition to the core financial system. They link up all the employees who transact on behalf of the company and empower them to service the internal and external customers. These deployments take a quarter of a year to implement and pay for themselves in terms of the compliance, productivity, and cost savings that they deliver. They make the organisation green by reducing paper movement, retrieval, and storage. The strength and

the consciousness of the organisation significantly increase. ■

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