

Thank you to Frank Owarish at the UN, the Conference Board and Management, Dr Amin and Dr Bhuiyan and to Kandace Rusnak & the NYT. Today, I want to talk about facts, change and influence.

The wonderful thing we have in this conference is a shared belief in fact, not fiction; unfortunately, our trait for facts is no longer dominant in the world's populations; we are fed fake-memes by grandstanding people.

Some social media businesses have successfully underpinned the creation of new, large and dangerous web-communities of fake-believing activists and fear-mongers; the largest social-media companies are using algorithms that link these people in an odious nutrient of lies, in order to grow these communities and then make more money from these sick groups.

So, let us return to facts and their necessity as an antidote to lies. When we talk about shared beliefs in facts, other than our own peer-reviewed papers, we are fortunate, still, to have real news-media, like the NYT with the Facts, analysis, investigative reporting and having an educational data-base that is rich in facts. Maybe this Conference community needs to do even more to make the facts more accessible and believable to wider audiences? Maybe, we should do more in the popular media channels to help counteract the presence of fake-news with the power of accessible, believable facts?

### **Let's talk about CHANGE...**

Facts do not make change. It is each of you that contribute to the power of change. It is YOUR engagement, your communication-effectiveness, your leadership skills that leverage needed change for the greater-good of all. Bless you for that.

You know, humans can either lead strategic change or they can react to threats. The pandemic has been, and remains, a test of our flexibility in the face of COVID-19 threats; it has tested our adaptive abilities and our leadership. I would argue that because of the pandemic, people like us are more ready to embrace good change. Most of us want to strategically change; we want to participate in collective outcomes and to 'make a difference'. It is easy for me to say that phrase: 'people like us are more ready to embrace good change'. But, one of the great things about human psychology is that when we make believable pre-suppositions like 'people are more ready to embrace good change', doors will tend to open wider; and more people will team with us to drive for that good change.

One scientist, one person, can come up with a winning idea for change. But one person is invariably poor at implementation; we need others, we need co-creativity and shared challenges, to get to the best outcomes, to get good-change.

**Because we need others, to influence them, let's talk about INFLUENCE**

To achieve collective change, using facts, we need to influence individuals and to influence 'teams' of others. Influence means listening, communicating, encouraging participation, so that others can influence us and other people too.

Since the pandemic, I do believe that we too need to change our leadership. Reports tell us that the needs of workers and families has changed and they want more from life. That tells us that our communication-styles, our listening styles should change to better-encourage people who are now wanting to be part of change, not just follow ideas, as many did before the pandemic. So, what influencing-skills can we look at, and what things are likely to work for a global community like this Conference community wanting to accelerate good change?

To leverage participation and good change, we may have to listen better and become more flexible to meet the individual resource-needs, communication-needs, mentoring, coaching or direction-needs of others. For example, some people need the big picture to understand context; some other people need the smaller-details before they can understand the context; we need to adapt to these needs consciously and practically. Likewise, some people need time to reflect before they can make a decision to act, but there are others who are convinced more quickly. Others too may need to hear positive and repeated confirmations from a certain number of trusted-people, before they are convinced.

**Let me adapt a true story about needs of some people for repeated confirmations...**

A child's mother said, "Swathi, go to bed". Minutes later, Swathi is still playing with a toy, so mother says, "Swathi, upstairs now!" The mother goes to make a bed-time drink and when she comes back, her daughter is still there playing downstairs, so she says, "Swathi, how many times must I tell you to go to bed!?" Swathi smiles and replies, "Four times Mummy!"

It is a known fact that some people, not just some children, need exactly three or exactly four people to confirm something before they are willing to make a significant decision. Our awareness of the individual differences in the teams around us, can help us to adapt to their individual and group needs, reduce our frustration and more quickly get to good outcomes!

Personality profiling like the Hogan and JobEQ can help us understand these personality differences better. Used proactively, profiling can help all of us work together more successfully towards good change.

### **I talked about the possible need to LISTEN BETTER post-pandemic...**

A great way to show that we are listening and to make others feel heard and valued, is to use 'Reflective Language'; simply, Reflective Language means ***using the other person's words and phrases in our responses***, without interpretation or semantic changes. When we rephrase what other people tell us, they can get side-tracked due to doubt about our message or our intentions and they may go into internal-dialogue with themselves. This will not happen if we use their language, Reflective Language to prevent their doubts.

### **Let me give an EXAMPLE**

So, a colleague says to you, "I'm not sure about the direction of this work". In response, using Reflective Language, we might say, "okay, 'not sure about the direction', what would be the first step you can take towards getting to the right direction?"

Another way to value & encourage others to share challenging ideas and good change, is to keep asking questions ***and talk less!*** Questions can make others feel that you are interested in them and that you value their ideas and creativity. And while we are thinking about valuing, lets also make sure that we honor others and their contributions openly and authentically. Authenticity is everything in this type of communication! We have to be believable. That means that we have to believe what we are about to say, to believe ourselves, BEFORE we open our mouths!

My final comment about influence and good change is to consider smiling openly, so that the eyes are involved in the smile. Globally, the mirror-neurons in our brains are activated by seeing other people smile involving their eyes authentically; we feel safe with them. When we do the same, they are likely to feel safe with us and maybe, just maybe, they will work better with us too.

I've spoken about facts, change and influence and I hope given some thoughts about developing our skill-sets to communicate and influence others more effectively.

On that note of communication and influence, thank you for listening and please enjoy the rest of this wonderful Conference.