How can I make "How We Run" values as part of our team's core DNA

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ABSTRACT

Software industry is currently experiencing a major transformation in its business model. This transforming requires adaptation of a new strategy, in which culture plays a vital role in ensuring that the organization stays on course and does not veer-off the path. Like many other organizations, SAP is also under tremendous pressure from our shareholders due to fluctuating share prices during transformation. My concern is that during transformation period team culture maybe not be at the top of our management's priority list. To investigate the concern, in this project, Ifirst critically examine myself□am I living my values in professional practice□ and second I assess as-is situation of our team. Utilizing the Johari Window exercise, results reveal that"friendly" and "intelligent" attributes were in the blind spot of the Johari window. Regarding second part, survey results show that our colleagues from MENA Field Services Sales do not see the relevance of HWR values in work routines. This result is significantly contrasting (falling behind) the SAP overall survey results of HWR values. Furthermore, the main results from 4-D cycle show that empowerment, learning environment,discourse, and participative leadership style are the important factors to encourage team-members to adopt HWR values.

Keywords: HWR values, culture,self-assessment, Johari window exercise, 4-D cycle

INTRODUCTION

On 21st Jan 2013 I was awarded the Field Services Sales Excellence Award for outstanding performance in Q4 2012 during our annual sales kicks off in Barcelona. On the same day, I resigned from SAP.

During my exit interview, I stated lack of team spirit and high work stress as one of the top two reasons.

I joined LinkedIn a professional networking social media company. Although it was no match to SAP's stature in terms of revenue, employee size and product maturity, what LinkedIn had was a great team culture driven top down right from the CEO himself. During my two and half years with them, I witnessed a healthy internal environment with minimal conflicts and high positivity.

I rejoined SAP in June 2015, because there were sweeping changes in MENA and I had faith in the new management. I was happy to see SAP MENA was not the same hostile environment that I had left, but it was not possible for me to accept the as-is working environment.

My transformation was "*irreversible*" of the "*second-order*", "*a paradigm shift, a fundamental realignment of how an individual understands the world and his own place in it*" (Poutiatine 2009) Globally, SAP introduced our cultural behavior traits known as, 'How We Run' (HWR) but unfortunately our values were on the wall rather than in our hearts. I started using the HWR language in my emails and verbal communications that startled many colleagues; it was pleasing since many conflicts were resolved amicably without any fuss – I was able to clarify my intentions in light of our values for the decisions I took. My actions were natural, I could not "*honestly or authentically revert to the old way of thinking or being*" (Poutiatine 2009).

What is my concern?
Our industry is going through a major transformation where are *sources of competitive advantage shall lie in emocracy* (Birkinshaw 2015). *".... selling software with a perpetual right to use it and, additionally, asking for a yearly maintenance fee to upgrade it is about to collapse as a model. This shift is mainly because customers no longer need to host, maintain and support the platform on which they run their systems,.... it is mandatory for SAP to rethink its business model and revenue in the coming years."* (Faure 2016)

SAP Field Services will also see a significant amount of revenue shifted due to the adoption of cloud[1]. Implementation cycles shall be short, sharp and simple. Would we need experienced sales professionals to sell complex projects? Do we need to have a large team of consultants on our payroll? The answers to these questions will shape our future strategy.

Transforming to a different strategy needs a different culture. SAP will be under tremendous pressure from our shareholders due to fluctuating share prices during transformation. In those times, our robust team culture shall soften the thud and will keep us bonded together and stronger.

My concern is that team culture *maybe* not be in top three of our management's priority list. A logical step forward to inquire about our team was to first critically examine myself, am I living my values in professional practice? So, my inquiry comprised of two parts, reflection of myself and assessment of my team. It asks the following questions:
i.   To self-reflect on myself as a "*movement towards self-actualization*" (Poutiatine 2009)
ii.   To assess as-is situation of our team i.e. how good or bad our team motivation levels are

Why am I concerned?
I value recognition and reputation as my core work life values(Appendix 5) and for me to be successful my team has to succeed too. For them to be successful, I need to provide them with a

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[1]The on premise software model has a completely different strategy as compared to the SaaS (Software as a Service) model.At LinkedIn, I saw the cloud model in action with significant success – a new perspective that I experienced versus my peers who have spent all their years at SAP.

healthy team environment. All my team strategies would be taken for a toss because, "*culture determines and limits strategy*" (Schein 1985).

We have a global framework i.e. HWR already in place; why are we not taking advantage. Our market unit, company and industry are entering a major transformation era – can we implement our strategy and sustain our talent without the right culture in place?

The situation as it is
I have designed my research using the Appreciative Inquiry. In particular, research framework of my study is as follows:
- To achieve the first objective, I conducted a Johari window exercise (Luft and Ingham, 1955) with colleagues from MENA
- To access the as-is situation of our team, I first conducted a survey of my colleagues from Field Services Sales. Secondly,4-D framework (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005)was applied on regional sales team leads from MENA services sales
- Self-reflection on my current practices and the as-is situation of our team

Research-Johari window
To assess how much I am a team member and follow the corporate culture and values, I performed the Johari window exercise. The Johari Window exercise was a revelation for me to understand my "Blind Spots" and the perception my colleagues had of me (Appendix 1). I emailed the Johari Window survey to almost 35 Field Services colleagues in SAP MENA and 65% of the recipients responded back. The results were interesting and I would like to group the 56 adjectives into three broad themes: "confident" (31 votes), "friendly" (81 votes) and "intelligent" (43 votes).

The first important attribute which most of participants and I described about myself is *confident*. I know I have a confident personality; I am confident in my own abilities and possess the business insight to know what needs to get it done and how to do it - an important asset to sustain in a highly competitive industry. Without confidence, you cannot defend your decisions; find difficulty in communicating people, especially when you have to justify your position on a business topic.Other adjectives that I clubbed under the "confident" theme, also mentioned by participants were*self-assertive,bold*, *dignified*, and *powerful*. Being *adaptable*(under this theme too) is the essence of this sales transformation program and I believe in an age of rapid change; effectiveleaders see change as a window into possibilities.

The second theme I classified with an overwhelming 81 votes for me was *friendly*. The respondents believe I am a 'people person'. Other associated adjectives clubbed under this theme were*cheerful*, *happy, caring, dependable, energetic, kind, observant, responsive, sensible, trustworthy and warm*. Friendly leaders are considerateof otherswho want the best for themas employees are happier working for leaders that they get on with. A leader having friendly and cheerful behavior creates an environment where they act more like a mentor and friend rather than a boss. According to Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (2006) employees in organizations having more friendly leadership are more committed as compared to organizations where the culture is tenser.
The respondents also perceived me as *responsive* and *trustworthy*. The emergence of these traits made me think based on the "Reflection on Action" practice and I concluded that I do exhibit these

qualities in my day-to-day routine. I exhibit our HWR values and culture both explicitly and continuously (Appendix 3). Listening is a part of responding that makes us more approachable and employees believe we have an open-mind and we will both hear and understand them (Steare, 2016). These traits are particularly pertinent to sales, which require keen insights on not just what is happening today, but also on what could happen tomorrow. The ultimate outcome of responding and listening is the trust building. As employees trust people that actively express them and listen to others, therefore trustworthiness automatically comes with responsiveness.

The last theme classified was *intelligent*. Intelligent leaderscan make good decisions even in the face of uncertainty and risk. Other associated adjectives under this theme were *logical, organized, able, clever, knowledgeable, mature, reflective, wise and witty.*

The most notable adjective under this theme was *ingenious*. Managers must be innovative and enthusiastic to infuse new ideas to promote the processes of self-discovery, motivation, constructive observation and feedback among team members. I believe this characteristic is because of my "proactive creativity" mindset (Squire 2009), where most of my deals are designed to suit the requirements of the individual customer.

In conclusion, the feedback was actually a revelation for me as most of the "friendly" and "intelligent" attributes were in the blind spot of the Johariwindow, which encouraged me to believe that I can be the change agent to lead a cultural program within MENA Field Services.

To assess the as-is situation of our team
Team survey
Initially, I invited 14 colleagues from MENA Field Services Sales through email teaser campaign to participate in the study. From this target group of 14, eight services sales colleagues completed the survey. I shared the HWR values (Appendix 2) and released the checkpoint questionnaire (Appendix 4) to all participants. I designed these questions to focus on personal reflections on strategy, HWR, leadership and values. The obtained information has following main aspects:

- Where they spend most of time
- Working and working environment
- Leadership support to embrace the HWR values
- Impact of HWR
- Relevance of HWR to the participants

Regarding the demographics, 75% participants have over four-year experience, 50% working in Saudi Arabia, and 63% respondents were between 25 to 40 years old. The most striking survey results are as follows: Only 25% respondents had the opinion that they are valued for their work and contribution, whereas 76% respondents believe they do not have enough information to make a good decision.

Specifically regarding cultural, 87% employees were in opinion that they do not have good relationship & communication among team members, and do not work at full capacity to innovate. Additionally, they believe empowerment and involvement in decisions, which affect them,is very low. Lastly, 87% believe that company is not open to challenges, suggestions and change.

The next section focused on management and leadership. In this, 62% respondents answered they are not well managed. Similarly, 87% people replied leaders do not provide clear direction and do not take team on board when making decisions. On the other hand, 63% respondents said that leaders ask people how they can help them and recognize desired behavior.

The last section related to HWR values. Majority of respondents (almost 86%) agreed that HRW values can help themin increasing trust within team and 75% think these values expect from us to work together. Finally, when asked do they see HWR values in action around them in daily work life, only quarter of employees agreed.

Top-down approach using 4-D cycle
The 4-D Cycle begins with the affirmative question, which grows out of the choice of affirmative topic (Cooperrider& Whitney, 1999). Hence, the choice of questions is critical to the direction of the required change process. *Using 4-D model my focus was not on what is wrong (i.e. HWR values are not adopted by services sales), but rather on howthe team members bring their best forward to adopt HWR values,as the main goal of appreciative inquiry is about appreciation, positive change and growth, not criticism or blame (Lewis et al., 2008).* Following the essence of appreciative inquiry, I concentrated on an interview process that included various open-ended questions.(Appendix 9). I inquired withteam-leads to identify the values (personal and work life), HRW values, and best experiences as a part of a team.

A two-stage process planned over three weeks period designed based on the 4-D framework[2], which comprised of two sessions ofthree hours for each. The first session covered the Discover and Dream phase whereas the Design and Deliver phases included in the second phase. Initially, I intended to invite 5-6 colleagues from MENA services sales for participation; however, after discussion with HR (Appendix 11) I followed the top-down approach and selected team-leads who manage our three regions in MENA i.e. Saudi Arabia, UAE and Gulf region. Top-down approach is best suited when changes are required quickly and most importantly under this approach leaders are responsible for creating the environment, where employees enjoy being at work, and then the people will live the cultural change that management is looking for[3] (Witte and Muijen, 2000). The invitation included all relevant material on the objective of study, HWR values, and survey output. I leveraged the opening 30 minutes of the first session to discuss the relationship between personal and work-life values; for selecting personal and professional values, I provided them the list of values (Appendix 5). In addition, the three team-leads reiterated that I am ideal to lead the change a cultural transformation program such as HWR.

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[2] The time constraint of semester and the working commitment of participants led me to set the three-week gap. Specifically, it was between 1st and 3rd week of October 2016, as shown in timeline provided in Appendix 10. Matter of fact, the exact timing of the second session decided during the first session by consulting all the participants and checking their schedules. In addition, the three weeks gap enabled participants to discuss the findings of the first-session with their peers and consultants.

[3] Cultural change in General Motors is a typical example of application of top-down approach where they initially focused on the culture, subsequently enlisted leaders to shape cultures, and crafted an infrastructure to drive the cultural change effort.

Subsequently in the second stage, after two-week time interval, second face-to-face session was conducted that covered the Design and Deliver phases. Everyone who participated the first session also showed up in the second session.

Discover stage (Appreciating the best of 'what is')
I started the session by outlining the principles of Appreciative Inquiry. In so doing, following Hammond and Royal(1998) I stressed on the following four basic facets of this technique, appreciate (yourself and other individuals), apply (our knowledge for problem solution), provoke (our imagination about what is optimal), and collaborate (coordinate the efforts). Subsequently, I proceeded further to describe the 4-D framework and stressed the desired outputs of the process:
- A compelling vision for MENA Field Services sales
- To develop an agreed plan to facilitate sales team in adopting HWR values
- An agreed set of performance indicators (which measure the extent of HWR adaptation)

I shared the HWR values(Appendix 2) and team survey resultsto all participants. Afterwards, I asked the participantsto write down or verbally answer the open-ended questions (Appendix 9). I designed these questions to focus on personal reflections on personal and organizational values, corporate core values, best experiences as a part of a team, and wishes for the organization.
During the discovery stage participants were encouraged to share their positive thoughts and experience within our group. They then documented what they had answered and fed it back to me. The information obtained from the interviews was assembled.

The main topics emerged in the end of session are as follows:
- Positive working relationship between services sales colleagues
- Incentive-driven performance
- Cooperative management style

To facilitate the process of developing provocative propositionsframed to develop a strategy for cultural adaptation, we grouped the emerged topics into four main themes based on SAP's global strategy (Appendix 7): Leadership and Culture, Simplification, Innovation and Customer Centricity.

Dream stage (Imagining what might be- visualizing a common future)
We kicked-off this stage with a dream: 'Let's assume that tonight we all fall asleep and wake-up five years from now. When you wake up, the culture of SAP has become exactly the environment you would like it to be. What do you see that is different in MENA Field Services and how do you know that it is different?' In particularly, I requested the participants to think within the above themes. Later, I asked participants to note down their thoughts/visions.

During the dream stage, there was a shared sense of excitement that the group was in a position to positively influence through organizing and setting direction towards implementing HWR values.

Design stage (Determining what will be)
In the second-stage, all three participants reconvened for the second session. They reported on additional information received after appreciative consultations with their colleagues. The focus of

the session is to design and deliver the implications of the agreed mission, e.g., how best to implement HWR values in MENA services sales colleagues. As a Japanese proverb states, 'Vision without action is a day dream.'

Data emerged in the discovery stage and their thoughts/dreams on what might help participants to develop a provocative proposition for each theme. We thoroughly discussed the following four provocative propositions and endorsed everyone.

Leadership and Culture
Leadership and cultureshould focus on the impact SAP Field Service's management leadership principles on MENA culture and on internal working conditions.
Simplification
We will transform our internal processes thereby simplifying them to keep us agile, focused and engaged for cloud business.
Innovation
We will create anenvironment that facilitates implementation of new ideas within a culture that supports creative thinking.
Customer Centricity
We intend to have anhonest, trustworthy and credible relationship with our customers.

These provocative propositions for FSsales grounded in the participants' collective positive organizational experiences and reflected the 'ideal' environment where they can practice the HRW values. In fact, provocative propositions integrate the best of the past with the possibility of the future (Edgar, 1985). In other words, propositions are cognitive bridges between the best of what the practice currently is and what it will become (Carter et al., 2007)

Deliver (Creating what will be)
Once the participants formulated the most energizing possibility statements, in the deliver phase we grouped together to determine what individual and group actions must be taken now and in the future to make our vision for MENA Field Services a reality. Additionally, what recommendations can we suggest to our management / HR to create an environment for HWR embracement in MENA services sales?

The group presented some actions required for making a conducive environment for adopting and practicing HWR values in services sales. These suggestions emerged directly from the provocative propositions. All participants agreed that these steps must be discussed, aligned and agreed with our EMEA South FS management and drive these initiatives at MENA level. The suggested initiatives were as follows:

- The existing buddy program whereby an experienced colleague is assigned to newly hired services sales colleagues should be oriented with our HWR values to introduce and encourage behavior as per our team culture.
- An annual value based reward and recognition system administered by our Field Services HR Business Partner, which awards colleagues by nominal cash, vouchers, offsite training or gifts for 'above-and-beyond' demonstration of one of the HWR values. This framework

should also recognize cumulative-performance, for colleagues that would recognize (by the system or survey) demonstration of exemplary HWR values.
- Organize meaningful sessions during quarterly team meetings with themes assigned to solve existing real life people issues using HWR values.
- Leverage global HWR programs to embed our team culture such as "Appreciate" a peer-to-peer recognition program (Appendix 8)

The final process involved suggesting appropriate and meaningful employee performance indicators. Theseindividual performance indicators include:
- Understanding of organizational core values and HWR values by MENA FS sales team
- Understanding of how their work fits with the HWR values
- Commitment to the organizational and HWR values
- Sense of ownership for their work
- Motivation to be productive, innovative, and creative
- Retention ratio

The tentative timelines for the execution of these initiatives is work in progress.

Personal reflection during the entire journey

My inquiry was two-pronged: firstly, to find out to what extent I am living my values in professional practices and secondly to assess the as-is situation of my team. Answer to my first question is yes. The interview results confirm that I am demonstrating traits such as *confident, friendly, intelligent, energetic, responsive* and *trustworthy* in-line with HWR values in the following ways:

Traits	HWR values
Confident	Tell it like it is
Friendly	Build bridges, not silos; Keep the promise
Energetic, Intelligent	Stay curious
Responsive	Build bridges, not silos
Trustworthy	Embrace differences

My personal lessons learned during the 4D-cycle and survey are as follows:
- Impact of empowerment: If the team leadswere involved in a similar problem-solving or decision-making activity along with SAP leadership, it would have given them a feeling that they do make a difference, their sense of capacity to influence their work environment in a positive direction would have increased and care more for company investments
- Impact of learning environment: To transform a company/department in a positive cultural change it requires innovativeness and creativity through constant learning
- Impact of discourse: communicative culture, which focuses on discourse, employees learn the power of communication— to influence team members, customers and the company as a whole
- Impact of participative leadership style: a participative and open leadership involve employees in co-creating the future of the company –their own future- evokes a spirit of collaboration and contribution.

Regarding my second question, where my team is standing (as-is situation) in terms of following

HWR values, my answer is they are significantly lacking behind.

HWR values help us in trust building and teamwork. Nevertheless, our colleagues do not see the relevance of these values in work routines. One astonishing comment I received regarding relevance of HWR values to work life from one sales employee is 'why I need to change my customer-interaction style when I am giving one of the best sales results'. This statement illustrates the extent of unfamiliarity of MENA services sales with the significance and relevance of HWR values in professional practices. The MENA FS sales is significantly falling behind the SAP survey results of HWR values (results shown in Appendix 6) where 81% SAP employees believe in HWR values whereas in my survey only 25% sale employees believes in the relevance of HWR to work life.