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heroic leadership

On a Sunday afternoon, I received a long-distance call on my landline, from the Vice Chairman of a tractor manufacturer in North India. He was calling from his factory, where he, his wife, and the surviving workforce had locked themselves in, a few days back.

As explained to me, two company buses that transport the workers back to their homes had been hijacked by Khalistan separatists. They had shot to death all workers in the two buses. A blood bath.

Soon thereafter, the Vice Chairman and his wife had entered the factory with trucks full of food supplies, and sealed the gates. Their mission was to keep the morale of the workers as intact as possible. They cooked meals together. They slept at the factory. They counseled individuals. The factory was kept alive running with the inventories on hand.

The inventory was now over. Although a hardcore engineer, the Vice Chairman also nursed a very active right brain. He saw in this crisis an opportunity to train his workers on Quality Improvement. He had a captive audience that had the time. On this

Sunday morning, he had just completed a participative workshop on 'How to Identify Chronic Problems'. His Bible was *Juran's Quality Handbook*, second edition.

The immediate realization after this first session was that engaging the right brain of workers had a therapeutic impact. He needed to share this finding with someone.

The sagging morale had been substantially rejuvenated.

lessons learned

- 01 employees are the biggest asset of an organization
- 02 treat your workers with 'love' and 'dignity'
- 03 leaders should walk their talk
- 04 leaders should have an aptitude for training
- 05 leaders should also be coaches on skills and counselors on behavior
- 06 successful leaders have unconditional support from their respective spouses
- 07 engaging the right brain for creative ideation has an amazing ability to recharge people ■

legitimizing process incapability

On one of my monthly visits to the head office of a television manufacturer, the Chairman was a worried man. No. Correction. He was in a state of shock.

He purposefully took me to his plush Chairmans' Office, and shared a devastating quality lesson he had learned the previous day. From a potential Korean mega buyer of color televisions.

Two Koreans had arrived in his office at the dot of 8 am. They had no time to sit in the Chairman's Office; refused the Chairman's courtesy of a cup of tea; went straight to the shop floor.

These two Koreans walked the shop floor, making notes in their pictorial script. They whispered to each other, at regular frequency over a four-hour walk.

At noon, they finally had a meeting with the Chairman at his office.

"Why do you paint your machinery grey?" was the first question.

"Why do you have incoming inventory? And work-in-

progress inventory? And finished goods inventory?"

More: "How many inspectors do you have?"

Even more: "How many after-sales-service engineers do you have?"

The Chairman confessed that he had fumbled with his answers.

the concluding remarks of the Koreans were:

"Respected Sir, we paint our machinery white to sensitize the workers for detecting errors. Also, we see strong correlation between inventory and process incapability. Further, your army of inspectors reinforces weak process capability. Finally, your large aftersales-service department leads us to ask: Is your product so unreliable and bad?"

"Our advice to you Sir is that you improve your processes and thereby reduce your costs. We would not like to pay for your chronic problems."

lessons learned

- 01 large buyers purchase 'process capability'
- 02 global buyers give 'product reliability' high weightage in their purchase decisions
- 03 light color machinery creates a climate for quality work
- 04 inventory in a factory is a red flag announcing process incapability
- 05 process incapability is legitimized in the budget: inventory costs, inspectors, aftersales-service engineers ■



Global buyers give 'product reliability' high weightage in their purchase decisions.