TRANSFORMING HUMAN RESOURCES FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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The authors review research indicating that the Transcendental Meditation Programme simultaneously promotes creativity, health, and teamwork—three human resource qualities that are vital for success in the future business environment.—EDITOR

Three concerns of management—creativity, health care costs, and teamwork—are identified. Research on creative thinking, mental and physical health, insurance claims, and personality development is reviewed and suggests that Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation technique addresses these concerns. An understanding of this holistic approach is given by linking Maharishi's Vedic Science with modern science.

REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCCESS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The twenty-first century looms before us. Rapid change, technically advanced communication systems, and global environments are not the stuff of a far-off space odyssey but realities of modern management. They are our future that we have created—a mere decade away. They will place increasingly greater demands on our most important resource—people. Human skills and abilities, the realm of human resource management, will need to keep step with this environment of change and technology. Success in the twenty-first century will require simultaneous development of three diverse human factors: creativity, health, and teamwork.

Creativity is fundamental to business success. Despite popular attempts to upgrade creativity through suggestion boxes, quality circles, and brainstorming sessions, creativity is still regarded as the talent of a few. American corporations spend $40 billion a year on training and development [30], yet Peter Drucker affirms that “capable, performing people [are] the scarest resource in any organization” [22, p. 41]. To meet the challenges of the future, training will need to develop plentiful creativity in not just a few individuals, but in the whole workforce.

Training and development are not the only expensive human resource programs. Corporate health care costs, our second area of concern, are also soaring. In a recent survey of all publicly listed companies, Herzlinger found that “70% of CEOs complained about the rise in health care costs and nearly 50% felt unable to control them” [12, p. 97]. From 1981 to 1983 medical care expenditures amounted to 24% of average after tax profits [13]. By 1986 that figure had risen to 39% [20]. Business Week [9] expects another rise of 16.5% in 1989; that follows an 18.6% increase in 1988. Sattler [19] reports that the rate of spending on medical care—10% a year for the last decade—is almost four times the gross national product's rate of growth. Concluding that attempts to reduce these costs by redesigning policies or creating alternate suppliers have only shifted the costs to other payers, Herzlinger comments, “Health care costs are like a lump of rubber: punching down one part will only cause a rise in another” [13, p. 69].

The third area of concern in the twenty-first century will be teamwork. A manager’s success, already measured by the success of units under him, will expand to include success in networking, both within the organization and outside. This trend will create an even greater need for harmonious and effective teamwork at all levels of
the organization. Allan Cox, author of a research study on thirteen major American corporations, agrees that “team member attitudes are valued in today’s corporations. Yet corporate leaders fail drastically in encouraging the kind of participation that leads to victory. They seek loyalty from employees, devotion to the job, low absentee rates, low turnover rates—all without putting out an effort to arouse team spirit” [5, pp. 191–2].

In short, corporations need innovative thinking, good health, and effective teamwork without undermining profitability. The costs of human resource programs to develop creativity, teamwork, and good health are high, and the efficacy of many remains unproven. Yet to succeed, much less survive, in the twenty-first century, corporations will have to develop all three factors cost-effectively.

**RESEARCH ON MAHARISHI’S TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION TECHNIQUE**

A substantial body of research [22; 26; 28] now shows that all three factors—innovative thinking, good health, and effective teamwork—are developed simultaneously by one integrative approach. This approach is the Transcendental Meditation (TM) program of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. TM is a simple, natural, mental procedure practiced for 15 to 20 minutes morning and evening while sitting comfortably with eyes closed. During the practice, the individual’s awareness becomes progressively more refined and clear as he experiences a unique state of restful alertness. As the body becomes deeply relaxed, the mind transcends activity yet remains alert in the simplest form of human awareness—transcendental consciousness—in which consciousness is open to itself [26].

Easily learned by any individual, TM consistently produces a unique and integrated state of functioning of mind and body that results in benefits to the practitioner’s health and functioning. Because it is taught worldwide in a systematic and standardized way, the effects of the TM technique have been open to a wide range of reliable measures [11]. Its uniqueness and effectiveness, validated by research in psychology, physiology, and sociology [28], indicates that the TM program may be the only human resource intervention that effectively promotes creativity, health, and teamwork through one simple practice. The research described below studied the effects of this one technique on a wide range of variables.

Researchers at Cornell University measured creativity and found that after only five months, TM practitioners scored significantly higher than controls on figural origination and flexibility and on verbal fluency [24]. Maharishi explains, “Every individual has an infinite potential of creativity. But this storehouse is not fully enlivened by the current systems of education. The genius of man is hidden in the silence of his awareness—in that settled state of his mind from where everything emerges” [14, p. 171]. Stanley Goodman, retired CEO of The May Company Stores says, “TM lets your mind settle down easily to a pure, elemental state of awareness. It opens your mind to the type of lateral thinking that gets you off the obvious path. It opens the door to creativity” [22, p. 77].

In the 30 years since Maharishi introduced the TM technique, it has been recognized as an antidote to stress, and consequently, as a means of improving health. Research shows that practice of TM helps the body function more efficiently and with more stability [7], improves cardiovascular health [29], consistently reduces the major risk factors associated with heart disease and stroke [3; 4], reverses the detrimental effects of aging and promotes longevity [27; 1], and leads to improved self-rated health, improved sleep, reduced insomnia, decreased fatigue, more positive health habits, and decreased health problems in general [2].

The logical conclusion that employees practicing TM will benefit their corporation by reducing medical care expenses has been substantiated by recently published research. In a large-scale field study on the effects of the TM program on general health, Orme-Johnson [18] found that TM practitioners had 87% less hospitalization for heart disease, 87% less for nervous disorders, 73% less for nose, throat, and lung problems and 55% less for cancer than nonmeditators. Furthermore, the TM practitioners had less than half the doctor’s visits than nonmeditators. Thus we see the TM program both improves health and reduces medical care costs.

The TM program is also cost-effective. Orme-Johnson found that treatment costs per 1000 members paid out by the insurance carrier of the TM practitioners were 26.7% to 67.4% less than comparable group programs of the same health insurance carrier. The average one-time cost to learn the TM technique is $300 per person. “Therefore after teaching a group of people the TM technique, one would still save an estimated third of a million dollars per 1000 over a five-year period, a considerable reduction of health care costs if extended nationwide,” posits researcher Orme-Johnson [18, p. 502]. Maharishi’s TM program offers a cost-effective technique to reduce corporate medical care costs while supplying the goal of health care systems: a sound mind in a sound body.

The same program that develops creativity and improves health also fosters attitudes and behaviors that lead to effective and harmonious teamwork. Scientific research studies on Maharishi’s TM technique reveal improved self-concept [25], greater capacity for warm interpersonal
relationships [17], improved relations at work [8], and reduced tension and anxiety [2; 6; 7]. Growth of these characteristics supports cooperative behavior. The director of quality control for a Fortune 500 company reports, “The majority of my staff started TM a few months ago, and I’ve seen a great change in our ability to work together. It just seems so much easier now to talk things out. There’s a lot more openness and trust” [22, p. 87].

**HOLISTIC APPROACH OF MAHARISHI’S VEDIC SCIENCE**

An understanding of how creativity, health, and teamwork, each a different facet of human behavior, could be affected by one single approach, is offered by His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, a great scholar and teacher of Vedic wisdom. He explains, “Life is always holistic. It is not only objective, not only subjective, not only intelligence, not only the body, not only the environment—it is a totality. A totality can only be handled from the source of the emergence of all this diversity. That source can be completely identified by the most simple human awareness. The most simple human awareness is transcendental consciousness, gained through Transcendental Meditation” [15, p. 42].

Maharishi predicts that with the application of his TM program in business, “people will work less and accomplish more. There will be greater efficiency, more production, and more national productivity through increased creativity and proficiency in that style of functioning which is the functioning of nature” [15, p. 126].

The experience of the CEO of a medium-sized Midwestern chemical manufacturing company that offered the TM program to employees confirms that its benefits are holistic. Raoul Montgomery, Jr. says, “It’s one simple program—one lever to pull—that can improve your entire organization” [21, p. 50]. Eighty percent of the company participated in the program over a six-year period. Net income increased steadily as the percentage of employees practicing the TM program rose. Productivity increased by 52%, annual sales by 88%. At the same time, labor costs as a percentage of sales revenue decreased 39%. The number of work days lost to poor health or injuries declined more than 50%, from 70 days per year to less than 35 days. Absenteeism dropped 89% [21, p. 56]. Montgomery says, “Our increased profitability was due to improved management, teamwork, and commitment from all employees resulting in improved sales. I attribute this success directly to the TM program” [16, p. 13].

Pioneering firms such as Montgomery’s are transforming their human resources to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. An insurance company in Australia introduced a nationwide training program that included TM along with sales training for its sales staff of 350 people. One year later, with 55% of the company practicing the TM technique, sales had increased 250%. The TM program is now routinely offered to new sales personnel [22, p. 98].

Drucker has written of quantum jumps of knowledge in technology, physics, and behavioral sciences that make the future unpredictable for business and economics [23]. Maharishi’s Vedic Science appears to offer a quantum jump in knowledge that implies discontinuous progress in the development of the creativity, health, and teamwork of human resources. The jump in knowledge presented by Maharishi’s Vedic Science reveals that the totality of both subjective and objective aspects of human resources can be handled from their unified source in transcendental consciousness.

This insight from ancient Vedic Science is supported by new concepts of nature in modern science. Physicists now describe all aspects of the objective world and subjective world as arising from one unified source, the unified field of all the laws of nature. This unified field unites all previously discovered fundamental force and matter fields [11]. With these advances in modern physics, our scientific paradigm of a world composed of separate, discrete, identifiable particles has become nothing other than “materialist superstition” [10, p. 120]. Gilder describes this profound transformation as the “overthrow of matter” and postulates that it “will reach beyond technology and impel the overthrow of matter in business organization” [10, p. 116]. In support, he notes that corporations on the rise are those that have mastered not land and material resources but technologies and ideas.

Maharishi’s approach to meeting the human resource challenges of the twenty-first century is based on a new concept of human nature that identifies transcendental consciousness as the basis of both mental and physical phenomena. Intervention at this fundamental level underlies and supports interventions in structure, technology, rewards, and culture to develop human resources. With both a theoretical basis and scientific support, the TM program appears to meet the human resource challenges of the twenty-first century both holistically and cost-effectively. A quantum leap in the application of Maharishi’s TM program could successfully catapult us into the next century. We create our future. Let us create a future that will bring fulfillment to human resources and to life.

**REFERENCES**

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