



Manas Chakravarty

LOOSE CANON

## Choosing a president

**W**elcome to Management 101. My topic today is: how do you elect the chairman of the board of directors? Naïve folks believe the best way is to ask board members to suggest the names of eminent people they would be proud to call the chairman of their company and then select the right candidate openly and transparently in a meeting.

These people are woefully behind the times. That's not how you select a person for the top job at all. Consider, for example, the way they go about selecting the president of India. We must learn from them.

This latest management technique has been patented as the UPA Principle. What is UPA? It's slipped my mind but no, Samata, it certainly isn't the Underwear Peddlers' Association. Eh? Yes, it could well be Unmitigatedly Painful Adventure. No, Alamelu, why should UPA Principle be an oxymoron?

According to this theory, the CEO must come up with a candidate ALAP. ALAP is an FLA for As Late As Possible. As you management students know, FLA is a TLA for Four Letter Acronym. What's TLA? Three Letter Acronym. The advantage of ALAP is it allows people to start the 3Bs about possible candidates. These are Bitching, Bellyaching and Backstabbing. Prioritising them must be on the basis of the members' core incompetencies. Board members must, while deciding on candidates, adopt the WIIFM (What's In It For Me) rule.

They must consider what they would gain by kicking the CEO upstairs to the chairman's post. They must strategise whether two or more of them can combine against the CEO to extract pounds of flesh, also known as Management by Ganging Up. Board meetings must be studiously avoided as it might inject unwanted transparency into the process. Members must formulate an actionable go-to-pocket horse trading

strategy. Can any of you come up with a killer tactic? Ah, yes, Rulayam, a DC-TC Matrix, short for Double-Cross-Triple-Cross matrix, works very well. Rulayam, your paper on the subject was masterful, you've really worked hard at it. Eh, what was that? No Samata, a victim of a DC-TC Matrix cannot bash the triple-crosser over the head, that would be unprofessional. Incidentally, the presidential election underlined the importance of SWOT analysis. SWOT, of course, stands for Samajwadi Will Outfox Trinamool.

It is mission critical for some board members to make announcements to the media about the candidates they favour, using best practices embodied in the WYDLIP (Washing Your Dirty

Linen In Public) paradigm. Conspiracy theories must be spouted. Is X a candidate because they don't want Y? Or is it because they think people will think they don't want Y and hence pick Y? And is Z a red herring or, as in Somnath Chatterjee's case, an



■ An able manager: Pranab Mukherjee

ex-red herring? The Boss must present more than one name to keep everybody guessing.

Of course, someone has to do the heavy lifting and finally make a decision. But she should do it only after the management has made an utter ass of itself and after being forced to make the choice. No, Sushma, heavy lifting doesn't mean lifting Gadkari.

Unfortunately, people don't seem to appreciate the beauty of the management principles behind the presidential election process. That's probably why parts of it feature on YouTube's list of Funniest Videos and several idiots who watched it have died laughing. No Jagan, I can't give you the video, the government is selling the rights to Ram Gopal Varma, who's planning a blockbuster called Raising the Bar.

■ manas.c@livemint.com

Manas Chakravarty is  
Consulting Editor, Mint

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