April, 2018

Connect Special

Edition 24

Editor’s Desk

Dear Friends,

"Do what you can, with what you have, where you are."

--Theodore Roosevelt

With this in mind I started Connect Special and today as we celebrate the second Anniversary ,I say a big thank you from the bottom of my heart to all of you for appreciation, suggestions and feedback.

Happy Reading!!

Regards,

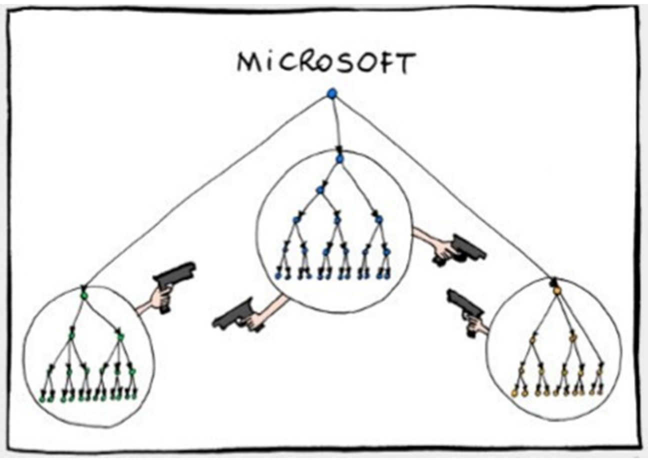
Bhavna Botta

We are on the Web

info.connectspecial.com

A Salute to the Power of Empathy

Microsoft has had many profound world-changing successes as well as many notable and image-damaging failures. Over 40 years ago, founders Bill Gates and Paul Allen set out to put a PC on every desk and in every home. These visionaries saw a need that PCs would help businesses and individuals fulfil. The PC on every desk and in every home goal has been more or less achieved in most developed regions. But Microsoft's internal structure has been notoriously plagued by a toxic environment of in-fighting and competition that for a time hurt its ability to effectively serve its customers needs.



Self-destructive culture

The competitiveness and fear of failure that permeated Microsoft's culture were exacerbated by the leadership styles of Gates and Steve Ballmer, the company's first two CEOs.

Current CEO Satya Nadella remarked in a recent interview that both these men exercised a leadership approach where they initiated a conversation by first acknowledging the "20 things you did wrong."

This type of leadership during and in the wake of a very public antitrust battle drew the company's focus inward, as it began to walk on eggshells to address its own needs to avoid further infractions, Microsoft lost sight of customers and their needs.

The company was failing at the expression of empathy, the ability to see things through another's eyes, until Nadella whose eyes were opened by his son Zain, who has Cerebral Palsy, took the helm. Nadella's oldest son, Zain was born in 1996 with severe Cerebral Palsy. Nadella said this of the life-altering event:

If anything I should be doing everything to put myself in [Zain's] shoes, given the privilege I have to be able to help him … empathy is a massive part of who I am today ... I distinctly remember who I was as a person before and after.

This shift in Nadella's outlook led him to become the executive sponsor for Microsoft's community group for disabled staff members years before becoming CEO. He continues to meet with the group and speaks at its annual event. Nadella's seeing the world through the eyes of his son with limited mobility has helped him see the need for Microsoft's products to be accessible to all and made him a more empathetic leader.

Nadella's mission for Microsoft is to empower every person and company to achieve more. A passion to give people of varying abilities the tools, to empower them, to achieve their goals is a mission birthed from empathy. Nadella has worked to change Microsoft's competitive culture to one that embraces these values internally so that they are reflected with its customers.

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Failure is now embraced as a learning experience; taking chances is an opportunity to learn. I can imagine that his encouraging his son to take chances and supporting him through failures and successes greatly contributes to this empathetic leadership style. Many Microsoft watchers may focus on Microsoft's high-profile failures and miss the broader effects the shift in leadership has brought the company. When Nadella took the helm, the company was viewed as headed toward irrelevance. It has since more than recovered, and its shares now exceed previous peaks. Nadella's approach to leadership is more inclusive than that of his predecessors. He encourages relationships with former competitors like Linux, DropBox and other tech companies with whom it now collaborates. Perhaps raising Zain opened Nadella's eyes to the network of support Microsoft will need to remain relevant long after he leaves the post as CEO.

Microsoft's ability to beneficially affect the lives of individuals with disabilities given its position is not lost on the company. During a senior leadership team meeting in June, Microsoft engineers were video conferenced in so that a prototype of an app for visually impaired people could be tested. That's just one example of how Microsoft is working to use its resources to assist those with disabilities.

Making an impact

During its Build 2016 developer conference, a blind Microsoft employee demonstrated AI-driven smartglasses that use Microsoft's Cognitive Services to help the blind navigate the world. The software can recognize facial expressions, activity and more. This app, now called Seeing AI, was made available on iOS this year. During Microsoft's Hackathon event a team of individuals embraced the seemingly mundane task to make Windows easier to navigate for the visually impaired. Though not as exciting a task as some other hackathon endeavors, imagine the impact this will have for millions of people around the world who may otherwise not have been able to use Windows.

Microsoft OneNote has also been used to help children with dyslexia read and spell. HoloLens has helped surgeons with spinal surgeries. Eye tracking technology has been used to help people with ALS navigate their world. This same tech is part of Windows and empowers people to navigate Windows with just their eyes. Imagine a mind trapped in a body unable to verbally express one's thoughts or move. Imagine being released from that prison by technology that allows one's eye, the windows to the soul, to express oneself using Windows.

No leader or company is perfect. But Microsoft has shifted toward a more empathetic company in the three years since Nadella has taken the helm. How might that empathy continue to translate into how it interacts with consumers and meets customer needs in the years to come.

I'm convinced that a leader's character and how he leads are intricately intertwined. Who a person is in his professional capacity is simply who he is. And that person's character shapes a company's culture for better or worse. — JASON WARD

Originally Published : https://www.windowscentral.com/how-fathering-son-disability-helped-ceo-satya-nadella-transform-microsoft-through-empathy

A Salute to an Indomitable Personality

Meet Mrs. Jyotsna Kumar,a blogger, poet ,a person with hearing impairment and mom of a young adult with disability.

1. A chance read of your blog made me realise how important it is to share experiences. Can you please share your journey , your work ,your challenges and success ,aspirations

My daughter is now 16 with spastic diplegia and was born with a rare congenital heart defect that needed surgery- she was on prolonged life support and acquired cerebral palsy (spastic diplegia) . Her journey has been one of consistent therapies and interventions and surgeries for her rehabilitation.

My challenges now when I look back at them have only been opportunities for understanding myself better and reaching a clear space of no expectations and compassion .I remember when I started therapies for my child at age of 5 months when she was recovering from her complicated heart surgery I was asked what my goal was for her and all I felt then with tremendous conviction was that she should lead an independent life . I don't know where this came from but that's what I wanted . Our Neuro developmental therapist in fact mentioned to me later that I was one amongst the few mothers who never asked her "When will my child walk?"

I have and am experiencing a disability of profound deafness and raising a child with disability and equipping her to manage her disability long term. This is the biggest challenge. I have coped (and I don't want to label it as a success)only because I have been patient and I've trusted every therapist / doctor/ surgeon who has treated my child . Putting aside my own knowledge and co partnering the therapists in my daughters journey helped me respect and appreciate the vital role they played.

2.What about your support system-family and friends and community

My support system has been my family and I know without my husband's presence I would not have been able to cope. He stepped in always to take her for physiotherapies and coordinate with the doctors / orthotics. We worked as a team to help our family through this journey.
My older daughter has played a pivotal role in the way my younger one has grown up to be. She brought about a balance to our lives and has been a source of tremendous support to her sister .

Since her birth, I found less time to socialise and meet friends and my inability to hear over the

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phone then didn't make it easy. I was always better off with one on one conversations . However I encountered thanks to my daughter, many new friends , a group of people who had formed a prayer group Connect ticket , many other mums of special needs children and found tremendous support in small ways.

I found little time for the outside world honestly. I did find myself constantly asking for malls and restaurants to have ramps to allow for better mobility for my daughter. There was fatigue and need for more me time. And there was patience:)

3.What is the one thing you would like to see changed in this community regarding hidden disabilities

I'll speak here for the deaf . When I'm deaf and tell people so I find them immediately raising their voice to be heard. A loud voice is never clear. Speaking slowly and clearly facing me while you speak is ideal.

I don't watch movies in theatres as I don't follow the dialogues. So I'd love subtitling .
I don't like being told "Oh but you wear hearing aids you should be able to hear!" . A hearing aid isn't the same as spectacles . They amplify frequencies and clarity of speech is a big issue for me.

4 What about coping mechanisms particularly dealing with your daughter -

The first few years I was on autopilot. Twice a day 6 days a week of therapies and my focus was just that along with taking care of my older daughter .I learnt to seek help and to ask for help which I never did earlier. I sought help through counselling along with learning yoga , deep breathing .

5. Can you share any incidents which changed perceptions of people around you

What has helped me is to change my own perceptions of my disability. Viewing my deafness as an obstacle and drowning in self pity over it only made me feel like a victim. Accepting my deafness for what it is- it's there and I need to be with it for what it is and working around it helped . There was no thought of changing perceptions of those around me .

http://myjourneywithanandita.blogspot.in/

A Salute to the Irrepressible Lady

Meet Sujatha Kypa, MPhil in Zoology ,who in her own words says she lives life to the fullest and takes every day challenges in her stride .

Tell us about you

I am working as a coordinator at Equals, Centre for Promotion of Social Justice. I have a genetic disorder ,sudo alopecia, which comes under Spondyloepiphyseal dysplasia. Due to this I have stunted growth and all my bones got deteriorated at an early stage and because of that I have growth issues .

Where did you do your schooling and college.

I did my schooling in Perambur and even in school days I couldn't write by myself due to pain in hands and fingers. I graduated in science from Bharathi Womens Arts college and did my M.sc and MPhil in zoology at Presidency college .

I was using a crutch to walk at that time and I had to travel to college by bus since there was no other option. The long hours and travel affected my health.

There were lots of access issues in the college . Science ,the subject I chose also had lots of record work and at masters level ,it involved regular practical work too. Despite the pain and access issues I still could finish it successfully and stood first in the class.

MPhil also had lots of work and I was able to cope. But unfortunately since the exams were back to back ,I had to skip an exam due to severe pain and finish it as an arrear.

All my friends ,professors were the support system. Without them I wouldn't have accomplished what I have .

Oh wow, that's great to hear such a supportive community. Tell about your job .

Life is not a bed of roses that too for a person with disability - no way.

After completion of my studies I could not find a suitable job. Though I was qualified for a lecturer's job and cleared the selection exam ,I was rejected and humiliated at interview and there was also corruption issues in UPSC AND DRB board exams ,so I was jobless for many years.

After a lot of struggle in 2009 I got a job of managing portal for people with disabilities. It was wonderful as access and reasonable accommodation was provided in the office. But I had to change the job as the supportive management changed .

Then I became HR consultant in 2012 at Synergy India. But access issues and insensitivity at management level made me loose the job. This led to severe depression, medication and I was bed ridden. It took a lot of my inner strength to come out of this. Right now I am working as coordinator at Equals.

A Salute to the Irrepressible Lady

At home front my problems are compounded as my father who is also having the same disability as mine is now a senior citizen and my mother has psycho social disability. We are interdependent on each other. This is both draining me emotionally, physically and financially.

Recently have taken Japanese therapy for my condition and this is helping me with pain and mobility. The need of the hour is a good care giver .There is no support system provided by the Government and lack of accessible transport ,affordable medical intervention increase the cost of living for people with disabilities.

What are your views on livelihood options for people with disabilities.

Access is the biggest issue and lots of work on sensitisation in govt private and public sector and community as a whole as to be done on a war footing. Reasonable accommodation has to be worked out. There is vacancy available but organizations are taking only mild disability .Jobs have to be created for people with severe disabilities too. There is no thought process for support workers for people with disabilities. Inclusive community is still a distant dream.

May be options of work from home could also be a solution to livelihood and employment.

Yes very true Sujatha , what are your future plans

There are no future plans, living today is the motto!

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