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## Towards collaborative commerce

The message from the Gartner summit – Strategy 2000 India – was loud and clear. It almost sounded like the headlines for technology's future. E-commerce is here to stay. It may, however, assume a different shape and be perceived in a different framework as time passes on. Dotcom revolution is no flop and has the potential to transform the way we live and do business. The downslide on the dotcom front is nothing abnormal and is very much an integral part of the e-technology lifecycle that has five stages – technology trigger, peak of inflated expectations, trough of disillusionment, slope of enlightenment, and the plateau of productivity. Dotcom industry is just now passing through a trough of disillusionment before it climbs up the slope of enlightenment to finally reach the plateau of productivity.

In today's doomsday atmosphere, Gartner's research findings and predictions hold great promise for the fledgling e-industry. Gartner's past record renders its predictions great value and authenticity as its technobusiness forecast in the past decade has mostly come true. That is why its theory of growth of collaborative commerce is seen as a logical extension of the present day e-commerce. Gone are the days of business conglomerates that could self-sustain all its business needs through the establishment of disparate business units. The present day business calls for more collaborative efforts starting with co-optition through business knowledge integration. Enterprises of the future need to be faster, flexible and focused working only on areas of core competency, while most of the activities need to be outsourced to parties or organizations that have proven to be competent in a particular field. Technologically, organisations would need to integrate different platforms and systems to increase efficiency. Enterprises have to realize that the line dividing business and technology is getting blurred continually and no longer is there the need to align the two but to effectively fuse them to reap rich harvests. One of the essential dimensions to realize the same according to Gartner is indeed G2C (Government to Citizen) e-business, which offers a huge potential globally.

The impact of e-business is already on display. Future will see several industries obliterated, several others relatively untouched while most becoming hybrids of online and brick and mortar services. Faster the brick and mortar industries understand the e-business realities better it is for their survival. Although information-intensive industries are natural crossovers into e-business era they are the ones facing the greatest threat from e-business. Product areas requiring touch and feel however have the minimal threat.

The predictions of the millennium Gartner summit is certainly a thing for the enterprises to ponder over. E-business initiatives require such a broad range of skills that no one provider can meet all the requirements and the only way out is to be a part of the revolution without raising monopolistic hopes. With collaborative commerce fast replacing earlier forms of e-commerce, staying flexible by having open connections with partners, even competitors, will be mandatory.

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## Management ideas with a difference

**In the pages of 'Management in New Age: Western Windows Eastern Doors' Dr Subhash Sharma laid several innovative, intuitive and creative insights useful to policy makers, enlightened leaders, managers and administrators**

There is hardly any book on management and administration that would liberate the Indian mind to unleash the creativity of Indian masses in general and Indian managers in particular. Dr Subhash Sharma, however, came up with a fascinating book – Management in New Age: Western Windows Eastern Doors – that sets the tone for new thinking in management and administration.

Dr Sharma presents the concept of 'integral capitalism' as dharma driven artha for wealth creation. This calls for sensitivity towards ethical dimension and towards the weakest in the society – it's society's dharma to care for the weakest.

Some 2,000 years ago, Kautilya had recommended that King should protect the weak because 'big fish' has a tendency to eat the 'small fish'. The author suggests that 'survival of the weakest' needs to be brought into focus as a new development agenda because with more and more free play of market forces, more and more resources need to be provided for the victims of market forces. Hence, policy making needs to take care of this dimension. Dr Sharma's metaphorical concept of 'economic chapatti making' captures the essence of balance between the survival of the fittest and the weakest.

His another unique concept is 'survival of the unique'. It's a celebration of cultural diversity that also provides a conceptual basis for new marketing approach, which emphasizes the niche creation. Survival of the unique liberates our thought process from shackles of Darwinian social influence and from the cognitive dominance imposed by the fittest.

In consonance with integral capitalism, Dr Sharma presents conceptual basis for an Indian paradigm of development, based on 'ecoterian' approach as against the Western model of purely utilitarian approach. He contrasts harm minimization and need optimization with utility and need maximization. It is rooted in the holistic approach to development and is based on the four objects of life: dharma, artha, kama and moksha.

The author also presents a number of new management ideas rediscovered from Indian intellectual and spiritual heritage. The pool of 'management wisdom' from folklore and other literature indicates the richness of management ideas available in Indian thought. These ideas emphasize the eternal relevance of human values.

Dr Sharma's work indicates that there are many parallels between the Eastern practical wisdom and folklore heritage and Western management concepts. Similarities occur because there are two routes to discovering ideas – the intuitive-holistic and the rational-analytical. Dr Sharma presents these routes through metaphors, Eastern Doors and Western Windows.

While in Eastern tradition the ideas were expressed in intuitive holistic phrases viz. Kabir's dohas, in Western tradition identical ideas are expressed in analytical and at times mechanistic metaphors. It's interesting that the time gap between rediscovery of ideas is at times more than 500, 1000, 2,000 or 3,000 years.

Indian sources contain several insights for new ideas that are yet to be

discovered. The author provides a sample of such new models that translate the intuitive holistic insights into analytical models.

Dr Sharma presents the OSHA model of 'man'. This mystical world captures the four essential qualities of human beings – oneness, spiritualism, humanism and animalism. Application of this model in the form of an interaction matrix could be useful for change within organizations. Secondly, it isn't just a personality model but also one of leadership, management and administration due to its applicability in social and organizational contexts.

Dr Sharma argues the need to go beyond HRD, towards the new concept of Human Quality Development (HQD). The concept of HQD makes the Indian intellectual and spiritual heritage relevant for good governance and good management. So, the need for designing HQD programs for organizations.

Liberated economy needs liberated mind with social concerns. 'Western windows eastern doors' opens new vistas to liberate Indian mind from cognitive dominance, providing several cues to enlightened leaders and professional managers for creative explorations of new management concepts. New Age International Publishers, New Delhi, 1996.

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## **Electronic Vaulting: An effective offsite storage facility**

**Storage media such as optical disc, magnetic disc, the automated tape library etc are used on the receiving end of an electronic vault. Electronic vaulting exploits the significant cost-effective strides made in telecom technologies, says Priti Sikdar**

**E**lectronic vaulting (EV) is the ability to store and retrieve backups electronically in a site from a primary computer center. Backup information can be transmitted to offsite from onsite and vice versa. This is a new trend in the offsite data storage.

Storage media such as optical disc, magnetic disc, mass storage device and the automated tape library are examples of devices used on the receiving end of an electronic vault. EV exploits the significant cost performance improvements made in telecom technologies. The higher bandwidth and the lower costs associated with fiber optics and satellite links have made it possible to send complete backup image copies electronically, timely to a remote site.

Improved system availability, system performance and reliability, quality of backup and recovery process and increased customer (user) service are the benefits of EV, reducing the retrieval time from days or hours to minutes.

The three alternative ways for EV are: channel extenders, host-to-host batch transmissions and host-to-host real-time transmissions. Channel-extenders EV applications look like a tape-to-tape copy operation. An image copy tape, or a log/journal tape is transmitted to a vault location through the channel extender. The challenge in implementing such a technique is to accurately track the datasets at the remote sites for recovery purposes. Database recovery will be possible through the last journal or log dataset transfer.

Recent improvements in channel extension technologies have made it possible to locate magnetic disk hardware up to 20 km away. Critical databases or online disk or journal files can be duplicated at a remote site to survive a disaster. Host-to-host batch transmissions give high speed; file transfers can take place

between the host computers one at the recovery site and the other at the primary computer center. Both image copies and log/journal data can be transferred using host-to-host communication facilities.

Host-to-host real time transmission is where organizations can send backup data to a remote host system in real time mode. Depending on the specific disaster situation it has now become possible to recover production databases up to the point of failure. There is an applications-oriented solution to queue an audit trail record for delivery to the remote system while updated transmissions are being processed.

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## in box

Digital Age is very useful for software professionals like me. Please keep it up. I also do hope that this IT-related tabloid will have further improvements to make a real headway in the domain of IT publications.

– **Sudipto Basu, Jamshedpur**

In my opinion, yours is a good publication. Myself being an agriculture student, I would like to read about the emerging technologies at use in this sector. Inform us more about IT in this sector by handling topics like e-biz in agriculture and its scope in India and worldwide.

– **K Shah, Mumbai**