'Unlearning', first and key steps to 'learn'

Unlearning is both Science and Art.
It is easier said than done.

Context setting

'Change is constant', 'transform, not incremental change', 'old habits die hard', 'keep learning till last breath', 'learn from youngsters', 'nothing is permanent, but change', … are among some of the phrases often heard in conversations. Some really mean it & follow, while talk for sake of noble talking. Truly, these are more relevant now-a-days than ever before for a simple reason, i.e. kind of all-round transformation we are experiencing in & around us during last two to three decades across personal, professional, and social lives.

Technology, disruption (both negative and positive), new (young) kids on the block, current unprecedented all-round exposures … are among the key factors in socio-economic-cultural-political transformation. Globalization is well settled for now.

In today's world, effectively, everyone is challenged everyday by these driving forces. It may not wrong to call 'these factors as 'forces''. One has a very little choice, i.e. 'lead and/or be the part of change' or 'be driven by change'. Best option is to 'keep challenge oneself continuously', 'don't get & stay in comfort zone', 'give space to others to help oneself learn', 'focus on growing one's own line than cutting other's from growing', 'people alignment is getting irrelevant beyond a given period of time', 'allow diversity to learn from entrant coming from external world and/or different culture', … In summary, don't stay in denial.

There is nothing negative about unlearning; it is a part of journey of real & effective learning.

All this is context setting to briefly talk about 'unlearning'.

Some of the fundamentals of 'Unlearning':

Unlearning is like a journey with moving targets, more one wants to learn – more needs to unlearn, unlearning parameters & intensity keep changing from time to time.

First rule of learning is to know consciously and believe-in that one has to unlearn and dump the baggage. What is called 'baggage' here in today's context must have been quite relevant and critical success factor once upon a time. It would have worked and delivered results. Knowing and dumping the baggage is simply 'easier said than done'. Let's look @ what does it take to unlearn.

'Unlearn' is about changing the habits, behavior, thinking, doing things, acting, interacting & engaging, listening, managing, communicating, team work, delegation, exercising authority, leading, and one's imagination.

Having known, everyone has to keep <u>unlearn to learn effectively</u>, one needs to be watchful of what is changing around and what change is expected from oneself by ecosystem. It is no more a hierarchical

world; today's times are of living and surviving in ecosystem. Most Corporate world runs matrix/ partnership-led organisation. Ecosystem brings-in larger dependencies and key to success parameters by effectively engaging with stakeholders. One has to build 'mutual trust and mutual respect' among stakeholders to succeed and stay relevant. Look @ Startups, they are more task-force driven than traditional hierarchies or even matrix organisations.

Unlearning is more about 'look inner', 'talk to self', and 'know oneself better'. Unlearning is a process to keep challenges oneself in ever-changing times. Unlearning is all about coming out of comfort zone and expose self to keep pace with changing times.

'Unlearning of anything' may mean same thing to different people @ given point of time and/or different to same person @ different point of times. The degree and level of unlearning for all or select gets determined basis the organisation undergoing the change to keep pace with market conditions. Some of the change symptoms and scenarios could be

- An organisation moving from
    - o Business Unit led to Enterprise
    - o Product sales to Solution sales
    - o Direct sales to Partner-focused Go to Market
    - o On-premise to Cloud/ Shared Services, …
- Growing and/or Diversifying through Acquisition and Merger
- Privately held to Public Limited, …

In organisation context, it may be sensitive to have three set of identified programs for

1. New Hire
2. Existing teams and
3. Select common across organisation for all

    Considering the background of every new hire as an individual and previous organisation context, it is needed to identify one or two areas of unlearning to be effectively inducted in the organisation. Likewise needs to be done for existing team members as they cannot be exemption. Some could be common for all across organisation to support organisation level changes or transformation program. At times, it can be very formal and sometimes bit informal. It can a program in itself or part of larger initiative.

Organisations may create a framework to capture various kinds of unlearning with action plan, methodology, measurement, learning path with gradual progress, development of people, … and continue to connect in organisation context. Ideally, this shall be like BAU (Business As Usual), i.e. build and incorporate in people's regular schedule & working.

Unlearning is like a journey with moving targets, hence there needs to be monitoring, review, revision, and feedback process with appropriate interventions from both sides.

'Unlearning' needs to be run like a program and campaign in the organisation with everyone across discipline and across levels explicitly being a part of it. It would be real task for everyone to join & be inclusive in the program actively & effectively, otherwise some may expect it to be for others with exemption for self.

Unlearning has certain definite advantages and select potential threats as by-products to watch and work on carefully. Unlearning shall mostly ensure one is always learning, humble, not let be complacent, understandable, openness to new ideas and new thoughts, self-course correction, manage generation gap naturally & effectively, helps one mature for better future. In the process of unlearning, it becomes important to be inquisitive to learn more. One needs to be careful that unlearning doesn't let lose focus and objectivity.

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