

How to make Zoos more Effervescent

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The popularity of zoos is both a challenge and a dilemma for modern zoo staff, who must balance the entertainment value of the zoological park with other equally important and demanding zoo missions. Present-day zoo managers work hard to keep pace with public tastes, to deal with thorny ethical issues, and to establish and define their roles in conservation, education, and research. Over the last 30-35 years many of the Indian zoos have transformed themselves in response to a variety of external pressures and emerging viewpoints. The number of species in a zoo's collection no longer rates the zoos as excellent or poor. Instead, it is how the exhibits are designed, how the animals are managed, the quality of the educational and scientific programs, and, more recently, the efforts to conserve species that determine the quality of an institution. For it? we need support from the motivated and dedicated staff.

Even though zoos in India are managed by intelligent, committed individuals, supportive scientific institutions, and are supported by people who have dedicated their lives to wildlife and zoos, still, at times, we collectively are unable to achieve our cherished mission and vision.

Why does this happen? We often hear that lack of funds, apathy of decision-makers responsible for zoos, irresponsible staff, etc., are some of the plaguing problems of zoos.

Regarding the institutional failure, some have suggested it is due to

- our inability to work in groups
- administrators' lack of faith in the competencies of their lower staff
- lower staff are not motivated enough for showing good results
- our failure to archive the best and worst past practices
- that we don't want to learn lessons from our past.

Whatever may be the reasons for failure, in my opinion three required practices are seminal in achieving our cherished goals. They are as follows

Idea I: Communication as a tool for improving the overall efficiency of the organization

(A) Why do we really need communication?

Undoubtedly every body will vouch that

1. Communication is a critical determinant of individual, team, and organizational performance.
2. Communication helps in exchange of information and thus, knowledge exchange and accumulation.
3. Communication helps in establishing the knowledge management units.
4. Communication helps in creating an atmosphere of positive energy among members of the group as internal and external communication frequencies are linked to team performance.

5. Communication helps us in creating an environment with mutual trust which will further help staff willingness to engage themselves in desired organizational behaviors.

6. Many believe that social interactions facilitate resource exchanges among employees and business units which can lead to the generation of new ideas and enhanced organizational performance.

(B) The hurdles: It is generally seen that

- The different working sections of the zoo are structurally isolated with distinct psychological boundaries and show least interest in communicating with one another especially on zoo related matters.
- Lack of internal communication culture (sometimes no channels for communication at all) which makes employees feel that they don't have a voice within the system.
- Often the zoo administrators don't realize that good communication is critical for invigorating the zoo personnel and often don't communicate with their juniors in right earnest.
- Information obtained or generated at the upper levels of the organization is not consistently transmitted to employees at lower levels. This is responsible for development of mistrust and many a times it determines the quality, viability and success of the zoo programmes.

For the above maladies, it is being argued by some that, it is difficult to have effective communication channels within the organization because of its sheer size, its complexity and its hierarchical structure. They further argue that with the multi-layered management structure in force it is often difficult to have smooth communication channels. They further feel that it is very intricate for establishing linkages for vertical and horizontal integration, and for developing mechanisms for coordination, and control, for ensuring effective channels of communication down the line.

(C) How to overcome these hurdles?

Some of the perceived measures can be

1. Set up a short-term working group to review how well the zoo can communicate internally and externally. Limit the group to a maximum of two meetings - one to outline the brief to the group members and one to report back their findings.
2. Turn the group's findings into a simple action plan, which can be implemented over the course of a year. Make the plan achievable rather than overly ambitious - otherwise it will only put people off implementing it.
3. Develop the concept of 'communication champions' asking team members to act as a champion for each

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area of communication activity. For example, one member with experience of running successful events could act as a sounding board for this activity, while another could provide advice to team members on media relations etc.

4. Include "internal and external communications" as a standing item on team meeting agendas. This will help group members to think of communications as integral to what they do, rather than as an add-on.
5. Share knowledge and learning. If you have done something well, archive the information so that other members of the team can have access to the information and don't have to reinvent the wheel.
6. Celebrate and communicate every success - from being quoted in a news story to producing a new report or speaking at a conference. If staff know this is important to the director, they are more likely to give it a higher priority.
7. Encourage staff to pen down their experience and publishing it.
8. Another good idea can be having an internal zoo advisory committee comprising of people from all departments and levels and holding structured meetings. These meetings will give the staff a sense of pride, belongingness, and empowerment. This idea of putting into place a mechanism (internal zoo advisory committee) where the views of the lowest tier of zoo is pushed upwards through the process of discussion and presentation whereby the ideas are allowed to get crystallized as it travels up.

Some other simple but potentially powerful ideas are

9. Zoo authorities can have a system of identifying the best workers of the month and putting their photographs in the prominent places of the zoo
10. Celebrating the achievements of staff by the way of felicitating them during important events like Independence Day, Republic Day, Wildlife week, Zoo day, etc.
11. While formulating the communication strategy the zoo should strictly keep in its mind about the audience, their behavior, their condition and degree of involvement (**A-B-C-D**) and the message should be specific, efforts should be measurable, targets to be attainable, realistic and programme should be time bound (**S-M-A-R-T**).

Idea II. Knowledge management as a tool for accomplishing the organizational goals

(A) Why do we need to have a mechanism for knowledge management? Without an iota of doubt

- knowledge is a human capability
- knowledge acquisition is a dynamic process
- knowledge is generative
- knowledge is elaborate
- knowledge about work is best acquired through work and
- Dialogue is knowledge

In the zoo day in and day out we collect lots of information about the animals; from it we try to

acquire knowledge. The need of the hour is to manage this acquired knowledge in a better way. In other words it is nothing but converting knowledge into wisdom, which we can otherwise call it as knowledge management.

The development, management, and transfer of knowledge are critical for organizational success. Knowledge management involves generation and acquisition of new knowledge and also sharing of information.

In the zoo setting, knowledge management has the following potentially important implications; they are

- It is critical for ensuring that employees have the most current knowledge and skills in animal care and management.
- A focus on knowledge sharing can help to ensure that good work done in animal care and management practices are emulated by other keepers of the zoo
- Managing institutional knowledge can also prevent the loss of knowledge that typically occurs when people retire from the zoo and thereby to make sure that animal care and safety are not compromised.
- Knowledge is essential for providing high-quality animal care and management; therefore, zoos, like any other organization, must take steps to manage their institutional knowledge

(B) Impediments

- Zoos are not acting as learning organizations. It is generally seen that the zoos are having lots of problems with sharing of knowledge, generation of new knowledge and retaining and archiving of the knowledge.
- This can partly be attributed to the fact that in the zoos we communicate badly with each other and hence have limited avenues for knowledge sharing.
- As far as generation of new knowledge is concerned—the new knowledge can be acquired through training, education and through dialogue.
- Very few zoos have a mechanism for capturing, archiving and retaining institutional knowledge. I perceive it to be the most important problem.

(C) How to overcome?

Some of the recommended measures are

- Reinvigorating the learning climate in the zoo
- New ideas should be valued and encouraged
- Staff should be encouraged and be made accountable for learning
- Constraints if any on learning be identified and removed
- May be encouraging staff to pen down their experiences and publishing them
- Having a good internal communication culture with in the institution
- Exposing staff to some of the managerial concepts like KAIZEN and CANDO etc.
- The zoo should develop additional strategies for capturing and retaining existing institutional knowledge that is being lost through the departure of experienced staff (may be through transferred Veterinary Doctors and through the retired staff)

Idea III : Effective use of Human resources a contrivance for achieving organizational goals
A one-word reply for this pertinent question "Are we really using our human resources in a productive way" is — in most cases – "no". Effective use of human resources will be a good answer for most of our nagging problems.

Here comes the question of how to use the human resources effectively. Neo *et al*, 2000 are of the opinion that the following are the keys for using an organization's human resources effectively; they are:

- The organization must understand its current human-resources configuration. It must understand the strengths and weaknesses of its employee population and take steps to leverage the strengths and neutralize the weaknesses
- Second, an organization must have a plan for where it is headed and understand how its current human resources are related to the plan. If there are gaps between the current human-resources configuration and the configuration needed for implementation of the organization's plan, efforts (such as selection and training) must be taken to close them.

(A) The ground reality

Generally it is observed that in Governmental departments, resource-allocation decisions are often ambiguous and appear to lack strategic focus. That's the reason in organizations that people are sometimes assigned to work for which they lack the necessary expertise. Furthermore, the specific needs of different units do not appear always to be considered in determining how human resources should be allocated. The zoological parks are not an exception for this.

(B) How to surmount it?

Some of the possible ways can be

1. Developing an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system that will enable many administrative human-resources actions.
2. Addressing human-resources problems is to restructure the human-resources management function.
3. Attention should be focused on maximizing the use of human resources.
4. There is also some confusion and conflict regarding employees' roles and responsibilities in the zoo, this should be minimized.
5. It will be important to make sure that the work environment facilitates effective employee performance.
6. Finally, the zoos should focus attention on developing a human-resources plan based on an analysis of the adequacy of its current staffing levels and projections of staffing necessary to achieve its strategic vision.

(C) What more can be done

The effectiveness of the human resources can be maximized by imparting training to the staff.

However, a formal training program is not meant to replace the training that keepers receive from their fellow keepers; it is meant to supplement it.

While designing the training and developmental modules, the following points may be kept in mind, they are

1. First, a good training program should be systematic, in that it is intentionally designed and implemented to address specific needs that have been identified through a comprehensive training-needs assessment.
2. Second, training is aligned with other components of the larger organizational system.
3. Third, a successful organizational training and development system focuses not only on developing employee skills but also on generating and managing institutional knowledge. It does that by implementing systems and structures that create new knowledge, archive existing knowledge, and facilitate knowledge-sharing across the organization.

The ultimate aim of the different training programmes should be aimed at that the staff will assume responsibility to stay abreast of innovations and further their education and development in their fields.

Epilogue:

Whether a zoo is successful in achieving and maintaining excellence by reforming its infrastructure and mission depends not only on the financial resources available to it but on focused and dedicated leadership and staff, short-and long-term vision and strategic planning.

With the dedicated, supportive and motivated staffs the zoos can become an organization dedicated to conservation, education, and science, and they exhibit an array of species to reflect these ideals otherwise at their worst, they will be shameless indulgence.

So it is our earnest duty to make our institutions world class and for it we should work as change agents (change enablers) but for it we have to work very hard, we should always keep in mind what Mahatma Gandhi aptly said "*become the change that you are asking for*" a difficult but not impossible task.

Note :

For more details on ERP Enterprise Resource Planning please contact web sites like www.en.wikipedia.org. KAIZEN and CANDO are Japanese modern management philosophies aimed at continuous improvement and lessening the costs for Total Quality Management in their institutions. Good web sites on this include about both KAIZEN and CANDO are www.1000ventures.com, www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaizen, www.fac.swic.edu/turnerke/Kazien-Guide.pdf

Celebrating Successes (Names of the zoo people who were decorated with state awards)

कानपुर प्राणी उद्यान के गौरव

राज्य स्तरीय पुरस्कार प्राप्त करने वाले कर्मचारीगण

वर्ष	कर्मचारी का नाम	पद
2002	श्री जगरूप सिंह	कीपर
	श्री शेर सिंह	चौकीदार
2004	श्री हरिहर लाल शर्मा	कीपर
	श्री जगरूप सिंह	कीपर
2005	श्री कैलाश चन्द्र काण्डपाल	हेड कीपर
	श्री भगडू	कीपर

2007 5 25

Photos of the 4 Pillars of the zoo (keeper of the month, Gardner of the month, Chowkidaar of the month, and Sweeper of the month)



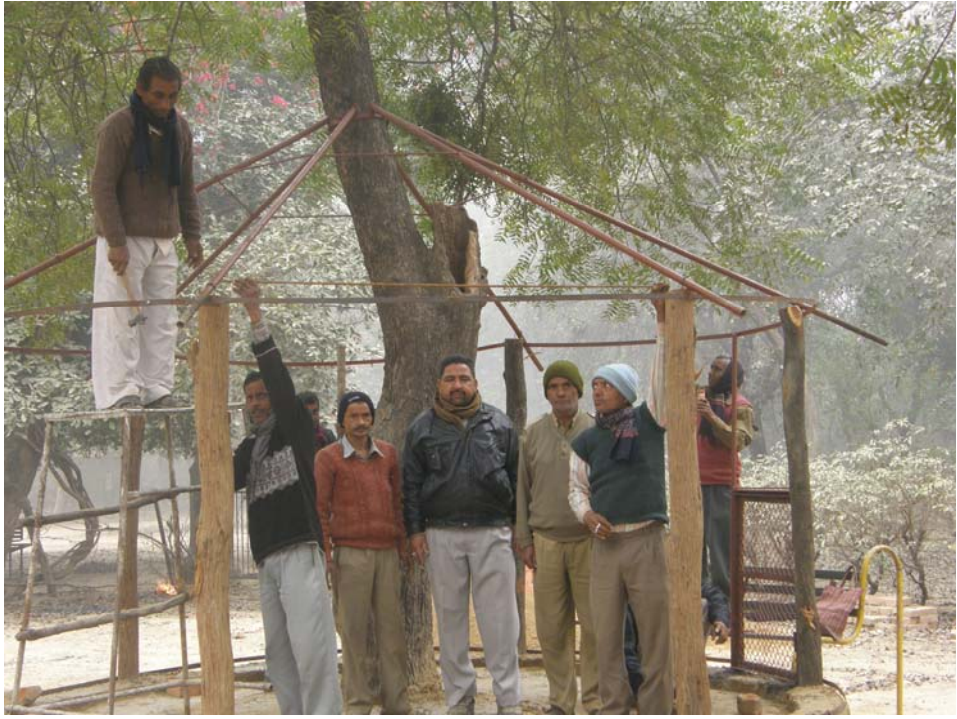
Celebrating events



Reusing









Reduce, Reuse and Recycling in action

Reducing and recycling





Waste iron collected and fabricated



The Result



