

Madras Management Association: Managing Diversity, Growth and Excellence

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This case presents the success story and future challenges of the Madras Management Association (MMA) in the context of the changing business environment. The association faced several challenges such as what it should do to be relevant in the current changing business context, and reinforce the original vision, what model to adopt to become best actor in disseminating the management thoughts, and how to measure the impact of its activities. The situation is more challenging in the view of its glorious past, and to managing stakeholders expectations without deviating from its core purpose.

This commentary presents the brief history of MMA, its diverse activities and growth path, and challenges faced by this association. It also provides the set of options to manage the challenges without moving away from the original building blocks.

MMA was established in 1956 in Chennai, with the vision 'to be fountainhead of world class management excellence in India' for spreading management culture among business organization in southern part of India. MMA collaborated with industry experts and professional institutions to develop professional skills and expertise in the business organizations. Moreover, it also organized various programmes and events such as certification courses, training programmes, workshops, and annual conventions on diverse discipline of the management to share knowledge, to propagate innovative methods and practices among different set of audience.

The growth and success of the MMA was credited to its members who are the high profile corporate as well as individual professionals. These members served as the source of resources, barometer of brand value, and source of feedback on activities performance. MMA offers nine class of membership and also consider its promotion as integral part of all the activities. It organized various programmes to meet the need of the specific group of the members. For instance, it offered

seminar and workshop, lecture meeting, and quizzes and paper presentation for institutional, individual, and student members respectively.

MMA published a magazine to disseminate the current subject knowledge to its members. Furthermore, it organized theme-based Annual Conventions for its members such as women managers and management students, which is highly popular and successful due to its relevance, and eminent speakers. The association also instituted various awards such as best young managers, MBA award, and outstanding woman manager of the year award to recognize and reward business leadership. Furthermore, it ventured several landmark initiatives such as the entrepreneurship development cell, business school, and certificate programme in management.

In this growth path, MMA consistently maintained its financial expansion due to income from subscriptions, surplus at the annual conventions, and support from the sponsors. Moreover, it used various forms of electronic media to reduce operating cost, increase administrative efficiency, and promote the membership. In order to expand reach, MMA had established its chapters in Hosur and Salem, and increase overall membership from 4494 to 6597 members during the period 2008 -2011. The association had also won several best local management association awards during its glorious journey since inception.

However, the success of MMA posits several challenges due to the changing business environment and high expectation of the stakeholders. The association has to address what it should do in the context of changing business needs that reinforces its fundamental purpose, what model to adopt, and how to measure the performance of its activities. There are a set of options proposed in this commentary to handle this challenging situation for the association.

To deal with the first challenge, association can identify

and implement various activities that meet the requirements of the current business needs. The association can offer the long term management programme for the students, organize research conferences, and publish research journal in addition to existing activities. The long term business course can attract the young aspiring students from India, and provide the opportunity to disseminate management knowledge. Moreover, this programme should be a combination of e-platform and brick and mortar classroom setting to provide flexibility to the students. To conduct the programme smoothly, MMA should establish affiliation to some academic institutions to capitalize on the existing infrastructure and other academic resources. This programme offers several opportunities to address the current needs of the business. It provides a platform for the academia and industry to shape the young talents of India from a managerial perspective. These students will become the brand ambassadors of the MMA, spread awareness, and enhance the managerial capabilities of business organizations.

The success of this strategy depends on the managerial qualities of the students. The association has already built the capabilities to develop the managerial excellence through its network of academicians, diverse activities and industry experts. Now, they should capitalize on it by using those resources to shape the students. This strategy will increase of MMA membership and consequently revenues through fees and subscription, and help feeding the demand of current business. Moreover, it also adheres to the core vision of the association i.e. to be a source of world-class management excellence in India.

The association should also organize research conferences and publish journals to facilitate the interaction between academia and industry. It will provide the opportunity to recognize and address the current problems in the industry. These conferences should be designed on specific themes based on current needs of the industry. For instance, a conference or an issue of journal focus on the needs of small companies or information and business process outsourcing

companies. Such kind of activities will create interest, develop managerial capabilities, and motivate them to associate with MMA.

To address the second challenge, the association should employ a mix model of electronic and brick and mortar learning to provide flexibility to the members. The e-learning is more suitable to members in the distance areas, and others who cannot attend the programme due to busy schedule. Moreover, this model will help association to organize lectures and other activities on current issues, and propagate management knowledge by the international experts on virtual platform. Hence, association can attract experts around the globe and satisfy the need of the specific group of members. For instance, in case of information and business process outsourcing companies, association can organize specific workshop or training programme by international professionals. This model might create value for the members as well as reinforce the core purpose of the association.

Furthermore, the model might increase the revenue for the association by attracting more members due to its customized approach and credibility of the eminent international professionals. The association should use the incremental revenue to attract professionals from diverse industry and academia. Thus, it will build the virtuous cycle of knowledge creation and propagation among the members.

The third challenge deals with the performance measurement of its activities. The association should use multidimensional approach to measure the impact of its activities that combine quantitative and qualitative measures. MMA can use various measures such as increase in membership, number of sponsors, increase in revenue, and feedback at the end of each programme. It can also regularly get the feedback of the members particularly lower and middle level managers regarding the progress of their managerial capabilities and usefulness of various programmes of MMA in dealing with current business problems. The impact of the activities can be traced through the number of articles received for their journal or magazine, quality of articles, and readership profile and numbers. There are several

other ways to measure the impact of activity such as credibility of association among the corporate, academia, and members, willingness of eminent speakers to deliver talk, and development of managerial capabilities of the managers, but it may be costly or time consuming.

This case highlights the significance of the vision and the mission of the organization, and how it shaped its strategy. Vision sets the common tone in the organization and directs the activities of members. Moreover, mission craft the objectives which provides means to measure and compare the performance of the organization and guide actions to bridge the gap, if any.

In summary, the case raises important questions about the future challenges of MMA regarding the set of activities, appropriate models, and performance

measurement of activities in the context of current managerial requirement. It even make more difficult for the MMA to deal with such problems in the light of glorious history and adherence to its core purpose. It informs that being a successful organization it is more challenging to remain to the core, and charter the future of the organization.

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When I Asked God for Strength
 He Gave Me Difficult Situations to Face
 When I Asked God for Brain & Brawn
 He Gave Me Puzzles in Life to Solve
 When I Asked God for Happiness
 He Showed Me Some Unhappy People
 When I Asked God for Wealth
 He Showed Me How to Work Hard
 When I Asked God for Favors
 He Showed Me Opportunities to Work Hard
 When I Asked God for Peace
 He Showed Me How to Help Others
 God Gave Me Nothing I Wanted
 He Gave Me Everything I Needed.

- *Swami Vivekananda*