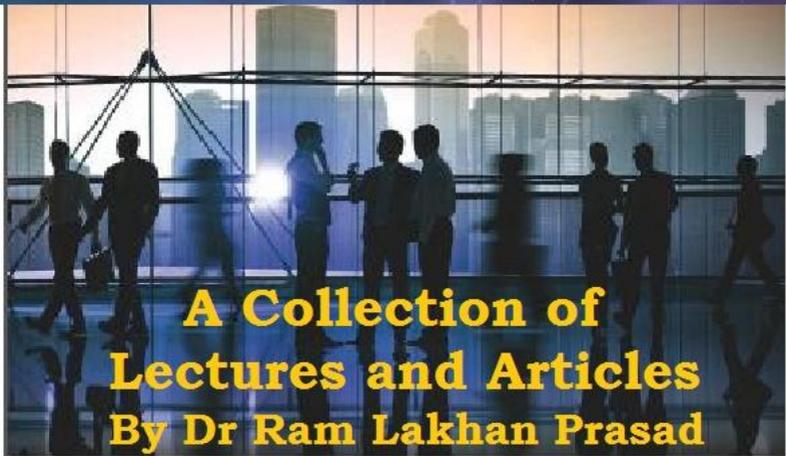


# People Power



**A Collection of  
Lectures and Articles  
By Dr Ram Lakhan Prasad**

**Managing People  
In The  
Business World**

# **People Power in the Business World**

**A Collection of lectures,  
speeches, anecdotes and  
essays on managing a  
business successfully.**

By  
**Dr Ram Lakhan Prasad**

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# Foreword

**Ram Lakhan Prasad** is my father and he is known in our business circle for his multiple achievements; as a successful teacher, a skilled school administrator, a tactful unionist and a dextrous director of human resources of a large multinational organization. Therefore, his newest publication “Managing People in the Business World” that contains his personal and professional experiences is an excellent reading for us. Those of us who deal with the most important resource of our business world, our people, know that all those who work for us need our support and care if we want them to contribute effectively to make our organizations prosper and rejuvenate.

To achieve the above objective, this collection of lectures of Dr Ram Lakhan Prasad is a relevant starting point to look at the many challenges we face in the modern business world. His collection is not a panacea but an eye opener in many aspects of dealing with our workforce and making our work place an even better environment with improved atmosphere for our success.

If the ideas suit us, we can use them but we have an alternative to adopt, adapt or change these to suit our own needs and circumstances. Our people of the business world will certainly have a lot to ponder and then act after reading this professional presentation.

I sincerely thank and congratulate Dr R L Prasad for his continuous effort to enlighten us with his professionalism and his years of varied experiences in his chosen field.

My father makes me proud, thank you my friend and my mentor.

Rohitesh Prasad, Chief Executive Officer, i-HR Consulting Sdn Bhd  
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# INTRODUCTION

This publication is a collection of various professional articles and lectures that I have been presenting on invitation to my clients and managerial staff over the last five years. The views expressed are related to my four decades of active involvement in the acquisition, management, development and administration of the people involved in a variety of business, private and government organizations in four different countries. Some are my essays and others have taken the form of my articles and anecdotes to be used as discussion points.

I was not born as a manager but became a manager of people and places through my experiences of different businesses and the realities of various workplaces. I am indebted to the people I interacted with because I refined and modified my thinking from their encounters, problems, failures and successes.

Over the years I discovered that business management had an apparent complexity but it also had an apparent simplicity. It is complex as far as organizing, coordinating, commanding and controlling are concerned. It becomes simple if we as managerial personnel begin to realize that the target keeps moving; events and people do not always conform long enough to be planned and controlled. Therefore, it is vital that our business leaders involve themselves in continual experimentation with new and workable approaches to solve the old, new and more challenging problems.

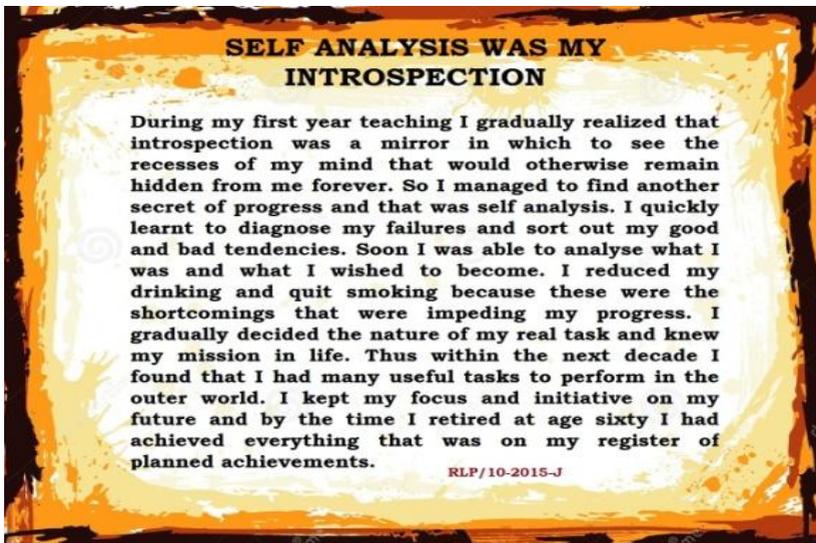
I was once told that I will grow and learn to be a successful manager by careful observation, proper practising, clear thinking and rethinking, effective experimenting and continually questioning, so I began to follow the maxim: "Try it, fix it, do it."

After reading my views people who manage people could carefully observe their own business realities and then take a step to either

change or review the strategies that they are already using. If the managerial style that you are following works without my ideas then good luck to you. You are my champion. But you are free to pick any ideas up and use them for the benefit of managing your people who work for you.

There is one more issue that I would like to dwell on when it comes to using these ideas. I have not been the perfect manager of people but after I learnt to recognize the power our people who work for us have I started respecting them. This mutual respect made the people share their power with the management. Their loyalty enabled us to serve our customers with dignity and relate with our business partners and competitors with added care and understanding.

Ram Lakhan Prasad.



## Success for Everyone.

Success for anyone has multiple explanations. Different people look at their success differently. If you have worked for over fifty years in the human services areas of various businesses, educational and political fields like I have done, you have the capacity to measure and provide some valid explanations for the success of people in their respective organisations.

Many wise people have asked some very valid questions on this topic. Is there a power that can reveal hidden veins of riches and uncover treasures of which we never dreamed? Is there a force that we can call upon to give health, happiness and spiritual enlightenment? When we talk of a power or a force we look at our success spiritually but it can be considered generally as well. We know fully well that all our success in life does not altogether depend and impinge on our ability and training because it also depends on our determination to grasp the existing or arising opportunities that are presented to us.

Those of us who have had meaningful interactions in business, social and political life can categorically say that opportunities come by creation and not by chance. If we are ready to create opportunities for us then our paths of success become smooth, controllable and manageable. Since we have created them, we can earn the benefits out of them and use them to our best advantage.

If we are determined to use all the available outward means as well as all our natural abilities to overcome and manage every obstacle that come in our path we will then gradually utilise and develop the unlimited potential that lies within us to succeed in any aspect of life. We just have to think positively and generate our will-power. These internal human gifts will make us see all our successes revealed for us.

We alone are totally responsible for all our actions, words, thoughts and deeds. It is believed that we demonstrate our success or failure according to our daily activities. If our mind is always looking in the negative direction then an occasional positive thought is definitely not enough to give us the success that we envisage. However, if we set our minds to think well and ponder rightly then we will definitely be able to plan our future properly and find our goals and objectives even if we face multiple dark spots in our life.

This power of positive thinking can be achieved by everyone through constant effort and proper practice but it requires volition or will power. We need to establish mechanical as well as conscious will and be determined to be constructive in all our efforts and endeavours. If we search hard within us we will find the needed talents and strengths to combat any weaknesses and shortcomings. If we take advantage of all the opportunities that knock at our door then we will be able to devote our entire energy to mastering one thing at a time and move towards success step by step.

Almost all successful people have tried to attempt simple tasks first and then as their confidence strengthens they have become more dynamic and aimed for more difficult accomplishments. Those successful people neither scattered their energies nor left something half done to begin any new venture. They have often made wise selections and refused to submit to failure. This led them to success for them. We can learn a lot from many of such examples.



## Moving Ahead in the Corporate World

I have been thinking about the new profile of an achiever in the working world and have made multiple attempts to finalise the issue but every time an additional aspect finds its way into that important statement. However, this time I am determined to complete this task somehow even if the idea sounds very basic and ordinary.

It is an accepted fact in our commercial and industrial world that today's work place is a lot more exhilarating, demanding, challenging and customer-driven than ever before so there is no doubt in my mind that the people who are in the workforce and want to get ahead and to rise to the top have to be high achievers.

I wish to go back to the basics of human qualities as means and methods of achievement. These may sound and look obvious but often a reminder creates a miracle to change and adjust our attitude.

My high school teacher gave me a description of a high achiever as an individual who is fully committed to team work, is always prepared to take risk, is a balanced thinker, is a continuous skill builder and is ready and eager to produce good results at all times. He told me a few specific things that make us high achievers like quality, skill, attitude and inspiration.

Ever since then, I have been adding my own thoughts to the profile of a high achiever for the business world. Whether we are working in high-tech or low-tech, in service sectors or manufacturing areas, and whether we are accountants, sales persons, plant operators, engineers, market researchers or managers, and supervisors, and whether we are Chiefs or just ordinary Indians, clerks or switchboard operators, we need to look at and check our essential biography or profile as an achiever if we want to move ahead successfully in this tough and competitive world.

In my many years of working as a teacher, administrator, curriculum developer, examiner and human resource practitioner I have heard members of corporations not only talking about their missions, strategies and objectives but they have been generating reams of written material, lectures, reports and memos spelling out what they wanted their people to know about their plans and policies.

Sometimes all these just end up being words piled upon words, with blame games pointing at failed associates. So what should be done? We need actions and attitudes that we can clearly measure and that can help us get there with ease and understanding. In order to achieve our goal we need specific means, behaviour benchmarks and design-oriented quality that tell us that we are on the right path and are fully engaged in the correct processes.

Let me pose a few relevant questions. Are we more entrepreneurial than we were this time a year ago? Just how much value have we added to ourselves in the past three months? Have we mastered decision making? These and similar other questions call us to move towards the global drift and do some skill building and renewal because everyday our work is becoming more demanding than ever.

My suggestion is that we in the business world should learn to sharpen our executive, individual and corporate instincts and seriously view and adjust our own biography or profile if we want to move ahead. Who are we? Where are we? What are we doing? How are we performing our duties? When are we changing?

As I said in the beginning, now I will look at various basic and simple human qualities and attitudes that we can add to our profile and become high achievers as time moves on.

Our smiles and frowns convey very vital attitude about our work life and are important aspects of the high achievers. Our genuine and authentic smile is an encourager that quietly says, "Go ahead and tell me. Go ahead, do it. I believe in you. I am counting on your ability to do better." A high achiever has to have the right kind of smile and be a spendthrift in this aspect.

On the other hand, frown, although it is appropriate in some instances, does a lot of damage because it depicts an attitude of an intimidator or discourager. So while the smile of a high achiever conveys an upbeat attitude about performance, our frowns may project the opposite, so let us take stock and adjust our disposition.

Then there is merit in a good handshake. My wife spoke at a wedding in Vancouver once and said that hand-in-hand contact is an expression of encounter, involvement and the good beginning of intimacy but it requires firmness. A weak handshake can show that we are moving away from people whereas a very firm handshake cannot be taken as persuasive but dominating. A high achiever gradually learns to resolve and adjust the handshake style accordingly to convey friendliness toward others and make them feel friendly toward self.

Many prominent workers have found that it pays to accept their weaknesses and character flaws. So it is often wise to accept that we have made a mistake and have learnt something from that error. If we do not acknowledge our limitations, we most certainly will doubt our strengths.

I know that a high achiever by trying to make the visitors and subordinates feel comfortable gets better results through involvement and by the degree of warmth that is displayed for the people who are part of the workforce. So it is better to resolve that it is worth our time and concentration to make our colleagues and visitors feel at ease at all times by teaming up with warmth because this basic human quality of warmth inspires and attracts.

Then a high achiever has to be an excellent listener because an impatient listener almost always misses the message. If you learn to give time then you are saving time and you respond appropriately at all times to exchange all your information well. This is critical for good performance at any work place.

One good point to remember here is that the word silent when reframed can become listen. So it is wise to be silent when we want

to listen well and get everything that a speaker says and intends to say. An achiever anywhere is the one who is a careful listener.

My grandfather made me study poems from early Indian poets and one of his efforts is still fresh in my mind.

Guru Govind Dono Khade Kaake Lagoon Paaye  
Balihari Guru Aapne, Govind Diyo Bataaye. –Kabir Das

If my Guru and God were to stand in front of me, to whom should I bow first? Well, I choose you my teacher or my mentor because if he or she hadn't been there I would have never known what God is.

I have always felt that achievers who are eager to learn and seek to be taught by masters of their crafts have always benefited tremendously in any position. An important aspect of learning from any mentor is that you will be criticised, face demands and maybe at times stressed but you have to take the initiative to find that teacher (that mentor) and convince him or her that you are a promising learner.

I have in my many years of work experience found that serious seekers definitely find gold and their quest assures enlarged perspectives and a lot more options for better achievement. So I have been promoting the maxim 'get a mentor and prosper' over the years.

If we have any convictions then we ought to have the courage to implement them but my understanding in this idea is that the peak performers have to dig deeper sources than their brains for calling up the needed courage to proceed. A long time ago I was told that fear has many eyes and courage has only one. I find that emotions are not always subject to reason but they are definitely always subject to action.

If we are among those performers who believe that they are authentic and not what they wish they were but what they really are then they can easily realize that their authenticity is what can

generate superior exhilarating performance. However, to fully understand what we really are requires a lot of courage.

My point here is simply to believe in ourselves and let all the colleagues do the same. Then whatever convictions you have at your work place could be implemented with courage and competence.

An achiever who is a positive thinker must have the stamina to act positively. This will assist us to create a variety of opportunities to develop mental capacity to seek and find workable, beneficial and appropriate options. Our positive attitude will encourage us as well as our colleagues to stop supporting all hopeless causes and reject all forms of defeat when we face tough projects and other problems.

We as achievers then not only can cultivate the needed attitude of positive thinking by discovering a workable, beneficial and proper options but encourage ourselves and our workers to act on them and keep on moving with added vigour and enthusiasm.

I think I have started the ball rolling for anyone to develop a more distinct profile of an achiever. A peak performer at any work place has to understand that we all are ignorant in some field and no one can profess to possess knowledge about everything. This feeling is the starting point to extend our knowledge.

Let us not claim to know something we do not and ask our colleagues to enlighten us. This action of an achiever will act like a two edged sword. This will enhance your knowledge and make the other person happy to share the knowledge he or she has developed over the years.

The modern complex work culture demands that we share our knowledge and learn to accomplish through collaboration and joint efforts. Any worker, executive, manager or leader who is ready and eager to tread on this vital path of admitting ignorance would be able to promote the concept of sharing knowledge, skill and all other vital information needed to establish peak performance.

I know that a lot more can be expressed on this important issue by people who relate better to their work place and workers, have a higher purpose and want to improve the lot of mankind and the workforce. We can definitely make our jobs more meaningful by thinking about all the people who are going to benefit from our quality performance.

The more we are able to realize how important we are to the work place and how lucky and fortunate we are to be in the work force, the better would be our profile of an achiever.

This important realization will enable every enlightened executive, every practising manager and every enthusiastic worker to keep revising the requirements of an achiever.

I firmly believe that we have the rationale to continue to sharpen our innate instinct to be an effective, enthusiastic and efficient performer at our respective work places to serve the community with distinction.



## NATURE OF OUR WORKPLACE AND WORKFORCE IS CHANGING

I have been seriously looking at various questions that come to my mind when I think of the changing nature of our workplaces and workforce.

These include:

What do we want at our workplaces? Do we want to have more responsible, functional and adaptable workforce? Do we want to?

- Be more in charge?
- Generate greater productivity?
- Establish our rightful authority?
- Make our organisation more profitable with fewer workers?
- Be more firm with our people?
- Motivate and inspire all our people?
- Get our workers to see things our way?
- Ensure peak performance from every one?
- Have greater control over things?
- Bring about even greater change?
- Generate peace, prosperity and harmony at our workplace by meeting the ever increasing challenges?

If these are some of our goals at our commercial and industrial enterprises then we are moving towards assertiveness but there is an irony in some of the objectives mentioned above.

Our new and successful managers have to be different from the mediocre and average supervisors of places, products and people (three Ps) and possess some other important and vital managerial and organisational skills and techniques. Our three Ps have changed to CPs, DPs and EPs ie Changed Places, Different Products and Effective People. So it is time for us to change as well.

The new managers cannot only be either controlling or acting as bosses or as remote authoritative figures or be a rugged individualists who decide things unilaterally and command the troops. My humble belief is that the neo managers should work with and through their peers, subordinates, superiors and their troops to negotiate workable and feasible solutions that produce better results and are more acceptable and satisfactory for everyone.

Believing that our workforce as well as our workplaces is changing, we will increasingly notice corresponding modification in our values as well as expectations. These in turn bring attitudinal reformation. Our individual achievements lead us to group performance because emphasis is being placed on building a collaborative work environment in which authority and decision making are shared for harmonious workforce and modified work places.

These introductory remarks lead us to the issue of leadership style. So the older hierarchical forms of organisation and the value system have to find relative adjustments and a new mode of managing the workforce and the work place has to gradually emerge to bring about greater success.

We therefore need a new breed of manager who still has to plan, organize, control, implement and evaluate but the style has to be modified from traditional management of direct and aggressive style to more teamwork and group decision making. The days of all- or-nothing outcome and expecting a clear win or lose situation have to be re-looked at seriously by every modern manager.

The new style of managing our workforce and work places has to be based on synthesizing, intuitive and qualitative thinking. Our new breed of manager has to exercise power flexibly according to context, with consideration for the various relationships involved. A serious look at the whole picture rather than a specific task has to be done.

When the new breed of manager learns to share all the internal resources and establishes apt interdependent relationships of support then the workforce and the work place become more

attuned to the subtleties of human interaction. We then become better equipped to deal with the overwhelming challenges and changes that are now occurring and will continue to occur in our society and in our respective organisations.

Leadership in the future has to change from control to influence, from planning as prediction to planning as learning and from scientific management to entrepreneurship.

Planning as learning requires a tolerance for error and has multiple interpretations. Entrepreneurship requires responding to changes with openness, flexibility and intuition rather than relying on rigid or abstract principles of control.

So the entrepreneurial manager has to quickly learn to respond like a skilled captain of a ship on the open sea. When the weather is calm, the captain runs the vessel 'by the book' but when events are turbulent, the new leader is ready and prepared to develop new strategies for all unexpected twists and turns.

Therefore, in my view the key to success as a new manager lies not only in control, authority and power but in a new form of assertive management that is demanding influence, collaboration and free and open communication.

My final point is that there are no magic formulas and no specific rule books for the new manager. The best guide for the new leader at our fast changing workforce and work places will be the leader himself or herself and their own motivation, training, judgement, ingenuity, imagination and flexibility. Our willingness to change is vital.

The vital question that many economists and quality control personnel have been asking nowadays is 'whether we can be more productive and profitable with fewer workers at our respective workplaces?'. The rightful and appropriate solutions to this aspect of workplace reform can be discussed by our current active business leaders because no textbook approach would fit every situation.

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