

Madras Management Association: Managing Diversity, Growth and Excellence

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The case documents the journey of Madras Management Association (MMA) from its humble beginnings en route its vision "to be the fountainhead of world-class management excellence in India". From being established as Madras Institute of Management (MIM) to becoming an affiliate of All India Management Association (AIMA) and changing its name to its current spectrum of offering (exhibit 7), undoubtedly MMA has covered a lot of ground. Over the years, membership figures (exhibit 6), delegates' participation in conventions (exhibit 10), and financial performance (exhibit 12) has improved. However, is it enough and well aligned with MMA's core vision and mission (exhibit 2), and which way to go forward are some of the concerns raised in the case.

Management association especially in 1950s India were essentially product of interaction of two factors- a burgeoning business and industry that was struggling to skim enough out of opportunities, and a lack of institutional infrastructure that could offer advice, mentoring and support in areas of transferable skills, knowledge, expertise, and experience that would facilitate it. Accordingly, MMA (erstwhile MIM) was a timely and befitting response to needs of Indian managerial talents from south India especially Tamil Nadu. Over time MMA's sphere of activities has grown manifold despite proliferation of local management institutes. This can be attributed to the need of students and management professionals to seek wider and credible professional legitimacy, share state of the art managerial knowledge and techniques, and learn from experienced professionals and managers. Absence of any key institute like IIM facilitated this, if anything else.

Over time, leveraging its sound organizational structure and selection and management processes, and utilizing the capabilities and experience of its management committee members, MMA has turned out to be an agile and professionally managed adaptive organization.

Focussing on contemporary managerial issues over decades (for eg., focusing on challenges of globalization in nineties), changing and increasing its offerings to suit the needs of its multiple stakeholders (for eg., lectures, regional/ women/ and students conclaves, video discussions, certificate programs, executive/ management education and development programs etc), and expanding into hitherto unexplored geographies (for eg., Hosur and Salem- actual, and Trichy and Ambur-planned) has made it dearer and more relevant to the stakeholders and a brand to reckon with. Other strengths and capabilities that MMA has built up include- dedicated and eminent members and patrons, regional character and geographic ease of access to members, focussed activity centres, financial strength, ability to tap network to generate funds, and conduct its professional activities using state of the art technologies. Given these strengths and the absence of any rival mechanism to meet needs of such a large technical and managerial pool in Tamil Nadu, there can be no doubts over the strong belief and comments concerning the longevity and survival of MMA by its patrons. Further, so far all that MMA has done has led to repeated laurels through national awards, and a state of financial sustainability.

However, continuous questioning of the key strategic-management premises, and promoting a healthy debate about the scope and future direction(s) are critical attributes of a growing and agile organization. Scenario planning can be a useful tool while trying to picture alternate plausible futures and their key characteristics (Roxburgh, 2009; Schoemaker, 1995; Wilkinson, A. and Kupers, R., 2013). According to Schoemaker (1995), following steps are involved in scenario planning process: defining the scope; identifying major stakeholders, basic trends, and key uncertainties; constructing initial scenarios; checking for plausibility; developing learning scenarios; identifying research needs; developing quantitative models; and evolving

towards decision scenarios. Schoemaker (1995) also offers four criteria- relevance, internal consistency, archetypal patterns, and scope of equilibrium- to determine the worth of scenarios developed using scenario planning process. Wilkinson and Kupers (2013) highlight that scenarios not only open doors for exchange of perspectives and insights with internal and external stakeholders, but allows the disagreement among decision makers and stakeholders, signs of which are beginning to emerge in MMA's case, to be managed as an asset.

Scenario planning exercise will allow the thinking of a range of plausible future scenarios and the sequence of events that would lead to them. Each scenario tells how different elements might interact among different conditions, and facilitates formation and testing of alternative hypothesis about the determinants of future scenarios relevant to MMA. Scenario planning exercises will also allow insights into changes in the notion of "management excellence" over time across academia and corporate world as relevant to MMA. It will also allow MMA to gauge what various stakeholders might expect from it and get benefited most from in future. MMA also faces some serious concerns such as geographically concentrated membership. Its regional character that allows it to maintain a close contact with members and allows offering more contemporaneous

programs also restricts its scope of growth geographically. Further, the utility and importance attached to certificate programs, management development and executive education programs from MMA when there are so many options available from prestigious Indian and foreign institutes/ universities using online, and satellite technologies needs re-examination. Scenario planning can be used to find the plausibility of these concerns becoming seriously damaging and ways to deal with them strategically.

References

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Perfection does not come from belief or faith. Talk does not count for anything. Parrots can do that. Perfection comes through selfless work.

- *Swami Vivekananda*