

Swanvesha

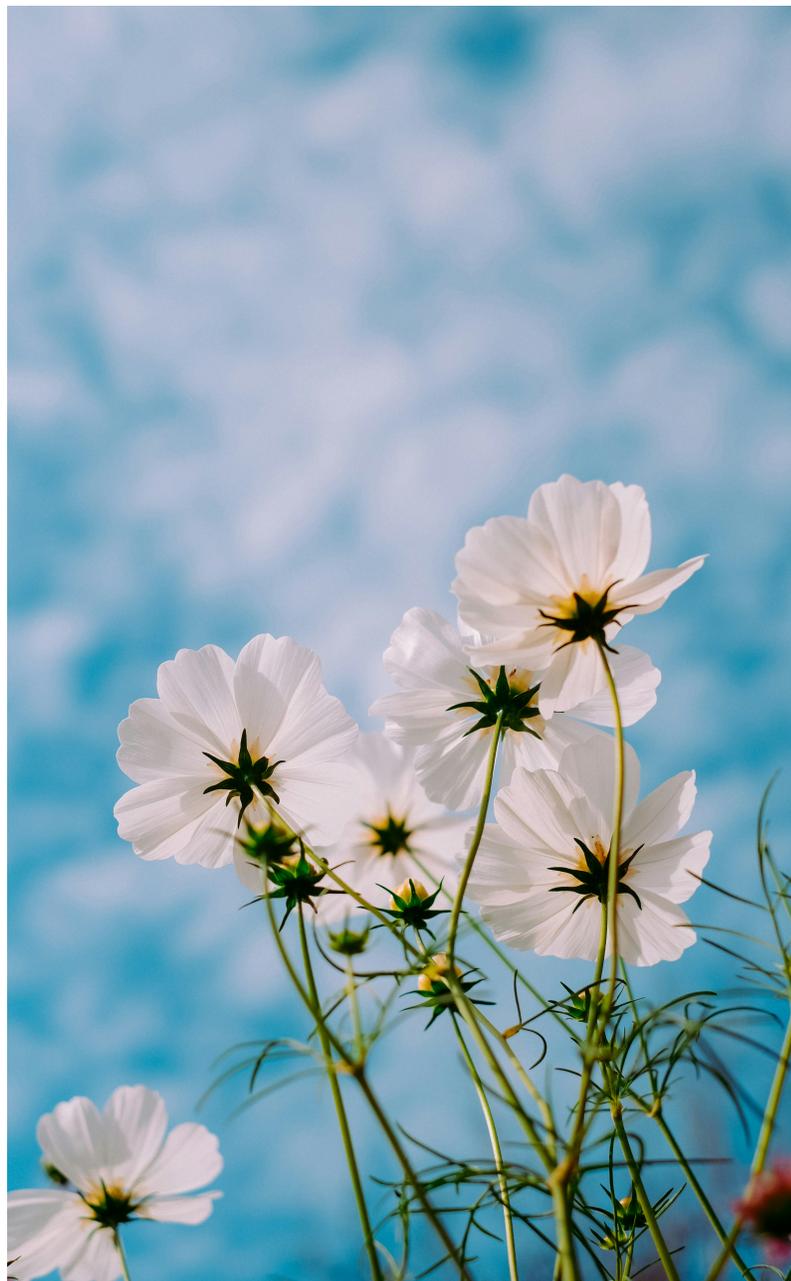
APRIL 2025

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Laugh a bit – It's good
for everything

“Never stop thinking of how
to delight your customer.

Not to satisfy your
customer, but to delight
your customer. No company
has failed, that had millions
of delighted customers”

– Warren Buffet



WELCOME TO SWANVESHA

Swanvesha (*Swa-Anvesha*, Sanskrit for *Self-Inquiry*) offers insights, stories, and actionable strategies to help leaders grow and adapt in an ever-changing world. Stay informed, stay inspired, and lead with purpose.

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WELCOME NOTES

Wildly fluctuating weather is a hallmark of spring. Just the other day, it was freezing with snow, and the very next day, it felt like early summer. Such is life, and such is the world we live in—where long-standing relationships are being upended for short-term gains, while new ones are being forged.

In the midst of this change, I bring you the April edition of Swanvesha. This month, in **Musings**, I explore the dynamic shifts in leadership and what they mean for the future. In **Novella**, I share a real-life story on the power of authenticity over faking it. And in **Corporate Culture**, I reflect on an insightful conversation with the CEO of a multibillion-dollar company—one that revealed a billion-dollar blind spot.

And finally, I'd love to hear from you! If you have thoughts, feedback, or a topic you'd like me to cover in future issues, feel free to reach out at swanvesha@gmail.com. I am an Executive and Leadership Coach. Connect with me on my website www.swanvesha.com for more resources.

Happy reading..

Musings



DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP



Have you ever noticed how, when we say, "**The tree is beautiful**" or "**The weather is wonderful**," we unintentionally describe them as static? In reality, the tree is growing every moment, and the weather is constantly changing. Consider another example—a river is never still; it is always flowing, its waters continuously moving forward, never the same in any given moment. What we see as a single entity is, in fact, an endless process of change

Language, like everything else, is shaped by philosophy. Most languages evolved during times when the world was not widely seen as constantly evolving. This is why, when we say "I am good" today, we don't acknowledge that we are in the process of getting better or gooder, (*if such a word existed*). Interestingly, in my limited knowledge, I am aware of only one language—*Burmese*—that inherently expresses everything as a flow. This linguistic trait is deeply influenced by Buddhism.

All Buddhist texts begin with a sentence like, "While residing in" a certain place—such as *Jetavana* or *Vaishali*—before the Buddha uttered a verse. Due to translation from Pali (the now-lost language in which the Buddha spoke), the true essence of these texts is often diluted. Though difficult to translate verbatim, the word "residing" is perhaps the closest equivalent—if we understand its underlying philosophy. It does not imply stillness but rather a continuous state of being, of existing within movement.

When we think about change, growth, or achieving a goal, we often overlook the fact that we are already in motion. Even the thought itself is the first step in that journey. As Lao Tzu wisely said, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." We are constantly moving—our thoughts, actions, and speech are in perpetual motion. The key is to become aware of this movement and channel it effectively.

Leadership, too, is not about attaining a fixed position or title—it is about continuously evolving, learning, and adapting. A true leader is not someone who reaches a destination but someone who embraces the journey, constantly shaping themselves and those around them. Great leaders recognize that growth is not a solitary pursuit; it is an ongoing process of influencing, inspiring, and uplifting others. They create momentum, ensuring that people, companies, and communities are not just surviving but thriving. Leadership is the art of directing this flow, fostering an environment where transformation is not just encouraged but inevitable

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I heard this story about a candidate interviewing at a prestigious business school. As part of their application, they had listed various achievements and interests, including a passion for the English football club, Manchester United. For those unfamiliar, Manchester United is one of the most famous football clubs in the world, boasting a massive global fan base—including a substantial following in India, where this incident took place.



During the interview, a panelist brought it up.

Panelist: *"I noticed that you're a fan of Manchester United."*

Candidate: *"Yes, I love the team."*

Panelist: *"How would you say they are performing this season?"*

Candidate: *"Pretty good. They're at the top of the table."*

The panelist continued. *"What did you think of their performance against Tottenham three weeks ago?"*

The candidate hesitated. *"I think it was okay."*

Sensing uncertainty, the panelist pressed further. *"Would you say it was the Jose Mourinho effect that made Tottenham attack aggressively from the start?"*

The candidate paused before admitting, *"I'm sorry, but I don't follow them regularly. I have interests in several things, and Manchester United is a very famous team."* Then, attempting to recover, he added, *"But I can see that you are a big fan of the team."*

At this point, the panelist took out a sheet of paper filled with detailed notes about Manchester United's current season. He said, *"I do not follow them. I researched them, so I could ask you relevant questions."*

The room fell silent. A panelist then stated, *"It's not about football; it's about depth. If you claim an interest, you should have the knowledge to support it."* The candidate realized his mistake. It was not his lack of knowledge about Manchester United, but his lack of authenticity, depth, and preparation. Whatever you choose to stand for, know it well. Authenticity and preparation matter more than just ticking the right boxes.

Corporate Culture



BILLION-DOLLAR BLINDSPOT



Recently, I had a conversation with the CEO of a multibillion-dollar public company. We discussed key topics such as uncertainty in global trade, challenges in the domestic market, and the CEO's priorities. It was a candid discussion that also touched on the importance of soft skills in leadership. While the CEO acknowledged their significance, what surprised me was his primary focus—technical skills, specifically IT skills.

During our discussion, we noted how many nonprofits and government organizations still rely heavily on Microsoft Excel, often creating operational risks. That's when they admitted—their own company was no different. It was shocking to hear that a company of such scale and influence had not yet embraced more advanced technology. This led me to reflect on what truly defines a successful CEO.

It also raised a bigger question: How many companies are unknowingly exposing themselves to similar risks? While financial success and growth may be visible indicators of progress, underlying inefficiencies in systems and outdated technology often go unnoticed—until a crisis occurs. Many leaders, especially in long-established organizations, tend to focus on immediate financial results rather than long-term resilience. However, in today's rapidly evolving business landscape, digital transformation is not just an upgrade—it's a necessity for survival.

Traditionally, success is measured in terms of financial growth—whether top-line revenue or bottom-line profit. Other factors include people management, client satisfaction, and value creation for shareholders and society. However, taking this specific case into account, I would argue that despite achieving these metrics, the previous CEO was unsuccessful. If a leader fails to anticipate and invest in the future, is that truly success?

Now, the new CEO faces an uphill battle—not just running the company but restructuring its entire technological foundation. And as the head of a publicly traded company, they must balance this transformation while still delivering earnings for shareholders. This is where foresight in leadership matters—a small, proactive decision made at the right time could have prevented years of costly rebuilding.

Indeed, **a stitch in time saves nine.**

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Hasta Luego (See you later)



THANK YOU

Thank you very much for reading my newsletter. I hope you enjoyed it. As we wind down, here is something lighthearted. Ever wondered what work email message translates to.

"Per my last email" = *Can you read?*

"Just circling back" = *Answer me already.*

"As discussed," = *You agreed to this, don't act surprised.*

"Hope this email finds you well." = *I have no interest in how you are, but I need something from you.*

"Just following up." = *You're ignoring me, and I know it.*

"Let's take this offline." = *I don't want to embarrass you in front of everyone... yet.*

"Friendly reminder..." = *I'm being nice, but I'm actually very annoyed.*

"Not sure if you saw my last email..." = *I know you saw it. Answer me.*

"Please advise." = *This is now your problem.*

"Going forward..." = *You screwed up, and this is me telling you not to do it again.*

"Adding [Manager] for visibility." = *Now you're in trouble.*

"Let's schedule a quick sync." = *This could have been an email, but I need to see your reaction.*

Stay Safe, Stay Healthy

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