

Swanvesha

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“Within you there is a stillness and a sanctuary to which you can retreat at any time and be yourself.”

–Hermann Hesse



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, inspired, and lead with purpose.

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WELCOME NOTES

It's already February. The year has stopped easing in — it's moving. Work has picked up pace, calendars are full again, and the familiar “back to routine” rhythm has settled.

This month, I am focusing on what goes on behind the scenes when progress is made.

Under *Musings*, I reflect on silver — not as a commodity story, but as a systems one. In *Novella*, I share a story about a master builder and the quiet choices that shape what we eventually live with. In *Corporate Culture*, I explore psychological safety, and why so many failures are not technical, but human.

I end this issue on a lighter note, with a few corporate malapropisms — because sometimes the best way to stay thoughtful is to not take ourselves too seriously.

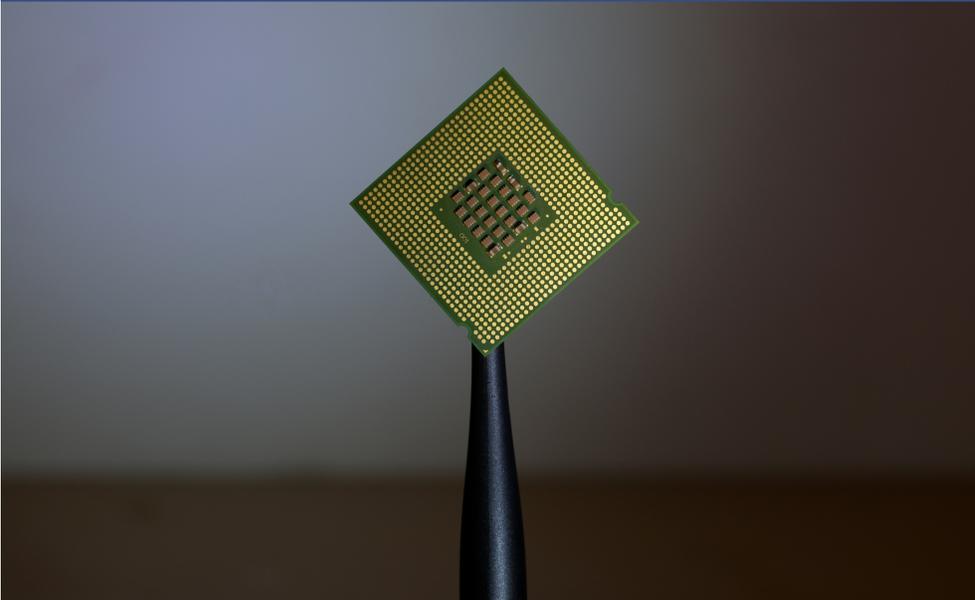
I am an Executive and Leadership Coach. Connect with me on my website www.swanvesha.com for more resources or write to me at swanvesha@gmail.com. Happy reading.

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Musings



SILVER IS THE NEW GOLD



For centuries, gold has symbolized value, stability, and wealth preservation. It sits quietly in vaults, admired largely for what it represents rather than what it does. Silver, on the other hand, is busy. A single electric vehicle contains up to 25–50 grams of silver, and every solar panel adds a little more. Each time a factory ships another batch of panels or cars, a bit of the world’s silver quietly leaves the vault and disappears into circuits, coatings, and connectors that will never be recovered.

Silver is one of the most conductive metals on Earth - electrically and thermally. That single property makes it indispensable to modern technology. It is embedded deep inside the systems that now define economic growth: renewable energy, electric vehicles, semiconductors, advanced electronics, medical devices, and the hardware behind 5G and AI. Unlike gold, silver doesn’t sit still. It gets used up. Once deployed in industrial applications, much of it becomes economically unrecoverable, dispersed across products that are never mined again.

The uncomfortable reality is that we are consuming more silver than we are mining. Industrial demand has outpaced supply for years. That makes supply hard to scale. As technology adoption grows, silver is quietly shifting from abundance to constraint—a fundamentally different dynamic from gold. This isn’t just a commodities story. It’s a systems story.

Modern economies are built on electrification, connectivity, and efficiency. Those systems don’t run on symbolism; they run on materials that conduct, perform, and scale. In that sense, silver reflects a broader shift—from valuing what stores wealth to valuing what enables growth.

A Leadership Lens

Gold represents static value: preserved and protected. Silver represents dynamic value: deployed, consumed, essential. Organizations face the same choice. Do we hoard capability or embed it into the system? Do we reward visibility or utility? Do we optimize for appearance or for function?

The future belongs less to what shines in isolation and more to what quietly powers everything else. Silver may never replace gold symbolically—but functionally, it already has.

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There was once a veteran master builder. After decades of crafting the finest homes, he was ready to retire. When he told his employer, the wealthy man asked for one last favor: *"Build just one more house before you go."* The builder agreed, but his heart wasn't in it. Resentful of the delay to his retirement, he used shoddy materials and rushed the construction. He bypassed the meticulous standards that had built his reputation for years. When the house was finished, he handed over the keys, expecting to walk away. Instead, the wealthy man handed the keys back to him. *"This house is my gift to you,"* he said. *"For all your years of service."*

The builder was devastated. Had he known he was building his own home, he would have done it so differently. Now, he was destined to live in the only shoddy house he had ever built. This isn't a story about a "nice" boss or a "mean" employee. It is a lesson in **intentionality**.

1. **You are the Primary Beneficiary of Your Excellence:** We tend to think we are "giving" our best to our organization. In reality, every time you practice excellence, you are strengthening your own "foundation"—your skills, your character, and your standards. When you settle for "good enough," you are the one who eventually has to live in a world of mediocre results.
2. **Reputation is Built in the "Reluctant" Moments:** It is easy to do a great job when you are excited. True leadership is defined by the quality of work you produce when you are tired, bored, or ready to quit. The "shoddy house" is usually built in the final 10% of a project.
3. **Ownership is a Mindset, not a Deed:** The builder only cared when he realized he *owned* the house. High-performing leaders act like they own the house from day one. They understand that their professional life is an echo of how they treat the unglamorous, "final" tasks.

We build our lives one day at a time, often putting less than our best into the work. Then, with a shock, we realize we have to live in the house we have built. If we could do it over, we would do it differently. But you cannot go back. You are the builder, and every day you hammer a nail, place a board, or erect a wall. So..

Build wisely.

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Corporate Culture



PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY



In 1986, the Space Shuttle *Challenger* disintegrated shortly after launch, killing all seven astronauts. The cause wasn't a lack of expertise. Engineers had warned that cold temperatures could cause O-ring failure. The problem was that those warnings didn't travel intact through the hierarchy. Concerns were softened, reframed, and ultimately overridden. For the engineers, speaking up forcefully carried risk; staying quiet felt safer. The result was catastrophic. This was not an engineering failure. It was a failure of **psychological safety**.

What is Psychological Safety?

It is the shared belief that people can speak up, question decisions, and surface risks **without fear of punishment or embarrassment**. It isn't about comfort or consensus. It's about ensuring that critical information survives power dynamics. When psychological safety is low, people don't stop seeing problems — they stop naming them.

Decades later, Google studied what made teams effective in its **Project Aristotle** research. The findings pointed to one thing that mattered the most. It was not talent, experience or seniority. The strongest predictor of high performance was psychological safety. Teams performed better not because they avoided mistakes, but because they surfaced issues early, learned faster, and challenged assumptions openly. The best teams weren't smarter — they were **less afraid**.

How Leaders Create Psychological Safety?

Psychological safety is built in daily moments:

- **Respond calmly to bad news** – *Tell me more beats Whose fault?*
- **Invite questions, especially dissenting ones** – *What am I missing?* creates options to get more information
- **Treat mistakes as data, not personal failure** – There is so much to learn when one does not make it personal
- **Share your own gaps** – “I am not sure, what's your take? Normalizes it and creates an atmosphere of honest conversations

Leaders don't need all the answers. They need environments where the truth can be spoken **before it's too late**.

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Hasta Luego



THANK YOU

One of the most legendary funny corporate anecdotes involves an executive at Ford, **Mike O'Brien** who spent **32 years** meticulously documenting the verbal slips and "business-speak" errors of his colleagues.

Over three decades, he filled whiteboards and notebooks with more than **2,000 corporate malapropisms**, including gems like:

- "We need to make sure dealers have some **skin in the teeth**."
- "Let's not **reinvent the ocean**."
- "Forgive me for my **lack of ignorance**."
- "I know it like the **back of my head**."
- "That's just the **secret sausage**" (instead of secret sauce).

Do you have any favourites, that you use? Drop me a line. Stay warm and stay safe..

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