

# Identifying the role and importance of hybrid managers business essay

[Profession](#), [Manager](#)



This paper is aimed at identifying the role and importance of hybrid managers in the present economic conditions of the 21st century. It tries to explain how the hybrid managers help the industries to flourish and subsequently the present economic scenario. A step by step analysis of definition of hybrid managers, its characteristics, their advantages, disadvantages has been made. As, the term management is a wider concept, first the role of a hybrid manager in an organisation and his importance is to be understood. Then, In order to explain the importance of hybrid managers in the present economic scenario, we need to understand the global economy of the 21st century. So a detailed account of present global scenario has been made. Finally the structure mentioned above has been used to form the foundation of the arguments presented in the last section of the paper- How Hybrid Managers hold the key to development in the 21st century Global Economy.

### **Definition of a Hybrid manager:**

The term hybrid was originally coined by Peter Keen in the mid 1980s, but received its most precise and most quoted definition by Michael Earl:

**“ A person with strong technical skills and adequate business knowledge or vice versa .... Hybrids are people with technical skills able to work in user areas doing a line job, but adept at developing and implementing IT application ideas”**

In addition, roles such as leaders and impresarios were also defined.

However, these distinctions are seldom recognized by practicing managers.

From the above definition it is pretty clear that although the term ‘HYBRID’ is being used only for the last 2 decades, managers with such skills always existed. So, it is the need for an increase in the quantity of such managers that has increased in the 21st century. So a more popular term ‘hybrid manager’ has been coined. The need for the increase in the quantity of hybrid managers sums up the whole economic scenario of this era. The Quality of the managers has been there before but the present global economy needs more of such hybrid managers.

### **Characteristics of hybrid managers:**

From the definition of a hybrid manager, it is understood that he should be sound technically and well versed with ‘business needs of the organisation specifically he works for’. The latter is the most important aspect to ensure success. We will discuss about organisation specific knowledge in detail.

### **Organizational specific knowledge:**

The most important skill of a hybrid manager is “How to get the things done as per the requirements?” The time taken by the hybrid manager with an organization to develop this particular skill makes essential importance for the hybrid managers. A good hybrid manager exploits the networking skills to build the personal or social network over a period of time. This gives them a simple tool to get the works done easily with multiple sources of information. Since every organization will have good communication media either by internet or by intra-net, hybrid managers can utilize this communication media efficiently to get the exact required information on the requirements at the time of need. However it all depends on the level of

expertise a hybrid manager has within the organization. For example it takes time for a navy-hybrid manager to get the contacts with the senior management and generate the repo with them. But a senior hybrid manager can get the exact required information within the time limits.

### **General management skills:**

The characteristics that are often searched for in a manager include ' soft' interpersonal skills. They are

Motivation

Communication

Negotiation

Team building

The true ability of a hybrid manager lies with their ability to exchange jobs with their peers in other functions. For example in a software organisation, a manager for HR services should be able to act as a chief information officer (CIO) Hybrid managers should also have a good social skill and extroversion to manage people. A more detailed explanation of various possible roles played by hybrid manager will be discussed in the section ' Role of a hybrid manager in an organisation'.

## **Need for a hybrid manager:**

Some of the issues that are being faced by IT industry are highlighted by a survey conducted by popular 'IT press'. The major issues faced by IT companies are as follows

“ Only 11% of organisations are successful with IT according to any objective measure” (A. T. Kearney)

“ 30% of systems projects fail to meet user needs” (KPMG)

“ Over 40% of systems projects are not completed within time or to budget” (Butler Cox)

“ Only 27% of CEOs in the UK are satisfied that their IT department can deliver them the business advantage they need in the 1990s” (Amdahl)

<http://www.skyrme.com/insights/6hybrid.htm>

Also as per 1985 opinion survey of MIS managers, the key issues faced by organizations are as follows

Alignment of IS to business needs

Strategic Benefits of IT not understood by business managers

Need to improve IS-line relationships

Identification of competitive edge applications

The opinion survey of the managers implies that most of the managers at that time do not understand the importance of aligning IS to business needs. This shows the need for a close partnership between IT and business. This is where a hybrid manager comes into play. He is the one who can deal with both IT and business aspects of an organisation. He will have the capability to align IT with business.

<http://www.skyrme.com/insights/6hybrid.htm>

### **Role of a hybrid manager in an organisation:**

The greatest challenge faced by an IT industry is the perceived misalignment between technology and business requirement. The common perception is ‘BUSINESS AND IT CANNOT COMMUNICATE’ and they speak different language. So, the role of a good hybrid manager is to act BILINGUAL. He should act as a bridge between the two worlds.

Till recently, IT industry is seen as a back office work which can actually be outsourced. But with the changing times and global recession taking its toll on the companies, IT is being seen as a part of the industry. This has given rise, the requirement of managers who could also deal IT. But because it is always easier the other way round, i. e. IT managers with good business skills, a new concept of hybrid managers arose.

Let us take an example of a successful hybrid manager, ‘ graham Johnson’. Like many other students he took up electronics and got a highly paid job in chip design. In that job he started as electronic engineer and later went on to

become self employed consultant, CIO and now transformation consultant for Ecclesiastical Insurance

During his time with this firm, he worked on major projects with famous names like Marks and Spencer, Abbey National and Baring Securities. While undertaking these projects he seconded as IT manager reporting to the financing director. With that experience, he gained a lot of knowledge about business and finance issues. Also, when he became self-employed he worked on large projects for a string of other famous companies, such as Legal & General Assurance, Nationwide Building Society and the London Stock Exchange. With this experience of self employed consultant he got to work with lot of clients and dealt with them successfully. He gained a lot of experience of working with people. Now with that experience of dealing with the clients and the technical experience he already possessed, he is working as a transformation consultant.

“ I think there’s a real shortage of classic hybrid managers – who can manage the technical gurus but also have a coherent business conversation with the chief executive,” Johnson says.

“ Lots of people are logical and lots of people have human empathy, but there don’t seem to be too many who have a bit of both.” This could mean there are wider career opportunities for those who do develop both left and right brain sides.

The above example portrays the role of a hybrid manager in an organisation. So the most important and primary responsibility of a hybrid manager is to

have a clear understanding of the business issues such as the requirements of the clients, market value for the products etc in addition to the core technical knowledge he possess.

Senior level hybrid managers can make the most important impact for organizations decisions in various areas of business decisions of organization. The research work conducted on various projects identified some of the following particular contributions that hybrids make:

- 1) Initiate the awareness on potential capabilities of IT for a organizational business
- 2) Business needs of IT must be identified
- 3) Anticipate in finding the new possible applications of IT
- 4) Assess the pros and cons of new technological advancements
- 5 ) Give appropriate strength to the benefits of IT to line managers of organization.
- 6) Making broad awareness programs to ensure information system managers learning about business issues and opportunities
- 7) Information system function's responses of emerging and changing business needs can be provided to the organization.



Before going to discuss about the role of a hybrid manager in the 21st century economy, we will discuss the pros and cons of having a hybrid managers.

### **Advantages of hybrid manager:**

The effective leadership qualities of hybrid managers can create “ islands” of real business and information system understanding. These islands are proving to be the accelerators for an organizational hybridization. Every stage of organizational hybridization is gaining flexibility and effectiveness with the help of hybrid managers.

### **Disadvantages of hybrid manager:**

Even though there are many advantages of hybrid managers throughout organizational hybridization, it takes high amount effective resources of organization which may not be available for every organization throughout the hybridization process. Developmental stages of hybridization of organizations may vary with the governance that is being followed within the organization.

Business consistent information system, Information oriented expletive business are the two different disparate disciplines. However integration of business consistent information system with the information oriented expletive business is the major huddle for hybrid managers. Even though there is no communication, which can make the amalgamation of two separate disparate disciplines with the same degree of effectiveness, it is

very difficult to take out a simple and single stand out which bring a hybrid manager out of the two disciplines.

Now let us discuss about the state of 21st century global economy.

### **21st century global economy:**

21st century refers to the start of a new millennium from 1st January 2001.

Global economy generally refers to Economy, which is based on economies of all the countries in the world. It can be evaluated in various ways. The evaluation is done based on US dollar.

Economy can be indicated by various factors. They are

GWP(gross world product)

Inflation

Global dept

Unemployment

Industries

Energy

All the factors referred above are the indicators of global economy. From the fall of 21st century, till the early part, the global economy was led by US. The new century has seen 10 years so far. The global economy can be divided in the following way in its first 10 years.

2001-2006: USA led the expansion of the global economy. Post Second World War, the economy of the world was more or less driven by the United States, with its aggressive industrialisation coupled with increasing consumer spending capability.

2007: china leads the expansion of global economy. With the occurrence of subprime bubble, the US economy collapsed and went towards depression. It affected many markets worldwide. This marked the beginning of recession in major world economies.

2008: credit crisis began. In that year, even though many markets in the world expanded, the markets which has impact on the world economy contracted. This led to a crisis like situation in world economy.

2009: credit crisis deepens. In this year most of the economies contracted. UK was the biggest victim of the contraction followed by Russia.

2010: recovery. The international monetary fund forecasts recovery. But the recovery was not as good as expected. There were fears of double dip recession in many major economies of the world.

So, in the early years of 21st century, the global economy was mostly dull and subtle. The vice president and chief economist of World Bank, Justin Yifu Lin opines that

“ The crisis has deeply impacted virtually every economy in the world, and although growth has returned, much progress in the fight against poverty has been lost. More difficult international conditions in the years to come will

mean that developing countries will have to place even more emphasis on improving domestic economic conditions to achieve the kind of growth that can durably eradicate poverty.”

[http://publications.worldbank.org/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info](http://publications.worldbank.org/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=0&products_id=23738)[HYPERLINK “ http://publications.worldbank.org/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info&cPath=0&products\\_id=23738”&HYPERLINK “](http://publications.worldbank.org/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=0&products_id=23738)  
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### **How ‘ Hybrid Managers’ still hold the key to development in the 21st century global economy:**

As discussed above, the state of global economy is dull at the latter half of the decade. According to the vice president of World Bank, the key to the recovery of the global economy is to improve the domestic economies. This can be achieved by aggressive entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship requires good management to succeed. This is where the hybrid managers come into play. There were many examples in the past where with the change in the management style, the firms have been successful.

As said in the Harvard Business Review analyzed by Alan M. Webber in January-February 1993 that:

“ General Motors, buffeted by the turbulence of global competition, changes nearly its entire senior management team. IBM, made vulnerable by rapid technology shifts and the arrival of smaller, more nimble start-ups, begins the painful process of taking itself apart. Sears, humbled by fragmenting markets and cost-conscious competitors, strives to rediscover in a changed business environment its original retailing success. Across the corporate landscape, in every industry and at every level, managers are struggling to adapt to unfamiliar circumstances and new strains of competition”.

From the above statement, it is clear that the managers are finding it difficult to adopt themselves to the changes in the trend. This situation has arrived due to the fact that managers are well versed with only either economics of the business and do not have technical skills to understand the changes in the technology or only technology and do not have skills to compete with the changes in the marketing style. This is where hybrid managers like ‘ graham johnson’ (discussed in the section ‘ role of hybrid managers in an organisation’) helps the organisation. He had developed both the skills required to manage an organisation. With the experience he obtained from running a consultancy during which he worked with many firms like Legal & General Assurance, Nationwide Building Society and the London Stock Exchange, he understood how to attract clients, what they want and how to deal with them. Already, he has got a degree in electronics and worked on major projects with famous names like marks and Spencer, abbey national and baring securities. So he has got a clear idea of how the technology is changing in his field. He had a clear understanding of the

business needs and client requirements. So every industry needs a hybrid manager like graham Johnson. The hybrid managers should possess an organisational specific knowledge, i. e. both technical and economics.

As said by justin yifu lin, global economy is driven by improving domestic markets. Domestic markets are driven by enterprises. Enterprises are driven by hybrid managers. So from the above concept it is clear that hybrid managers are important for the economy to flourish.

As we know the current situation of fluctuating economic scenario, the person in charge should understand the new turbulent world of business. The manager being the person in charge should be able to answer the questions on new economic world order.

So what is so new about the new world economic order?

According to Alan . M . Webber, the analyst of Harvard business school, the answer is

“ A qualitative shift is taking place in the ways companies compete, managers manage, and business is conducted. At one level, that shift has familiar elements-for example, from mass production, mass marketing, and mass organizations to flexible production, niche marketing, and networked organizations. But even shorthand descriptors such as these don't capture the power of the change and the enormous implications for managers”.

So the answer lies with the change in the mind set of the managers. In addition to be able to do programming, the managers should also concentrate on complex economics of the business.

Present global economy needs high level of technical knowledge combined with essential information management skills to accelerate the business to achieve the pre determined goals within the specified time limits. The essential skill which makes managers to be called as hybrid managers must be identified and they must be trained with the time to get the best talent out of them. With a few notable exceptions, many of the organizations are preparing a strong ground work in developing hybrid managers for solving the challenges of real world management problem.

### **Conclusion:**

Today, the world's economic crisis can directly be attributed to world's management crisis. " In 1990 a British compute society (BCS) report UK, companies were exhorted to train circa 10, 000 people to become hybrid managers by 1995." The British computer society understood the importance of hybrid managers and their role in building the British economy and subsequently the world economy. It is to be understood that UK is one of the main victims of global recession that shook the world in 2008-2009. If the foresight of BCS is met with, its economy wouldn't have suffered as it has happened now.

Better late, than never. So in order to understand the fluctuating and versatile global economy versatility in management is required. . Nandan

Nilekani, CEO and MD of Infosys Technologies, had said while speaking at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore recently, that what the world required today was a new breed of Hybrid Manager- the ' versatelist'. Nilekani further added:

“ A versatelist has the ability to apply skills more intensively to situations. Hence, they gain new competencies, build new relationships, and assume new roles. One should be equally at ease with technical issues as with business and strategic. You have to synthesize knowledge, experience and the context to create value.”