# Example of into thin air: risk management book review

Business, Management

A basic challenge in climbing peaks like Everest is that air past 800o meters becomes exceptionally obscure. There are just 14 mountains globally with maximum heights of more than 8000 meters and though top climbers strive to conquer all of them this also implies that the faculties of their brains is impeded severely, and cannot spend longer time periods in zones over 8, 000 meters devoid of risking their lives, even without storm. Rob Hall was to rule on turnaround times to ensure that his worn out clients could make it back to camp before it became dark, as they had travelled light to the summit without any equipment. Hall had stated prior to the bid of summit that the time for turnaround on the given day was to be 1 or 2 pm, depending on how the condition was to be. The actual time does not seem to have been communicated to anyone, not even the guides. At one occasion, they waited until 4pm on the summit for the arrival of the last client before they commenced to descent.

The question on why Hall did not enforce his own rule is raised. Several answers are suggested by the journalists: the final client was a postal worker who had been turned around summit short in the previous year; this made him to undertake two jobs to achieve his dream to climb Mount Everest. He had been helped to fund the trip by little children who sold T-shirts. During the trip he wrote postcards to them. The postal worker appears to have gained more focus on reaching the summit during the year between the two bids, and he had been convinced by Hall by offering a discount to him. As a result, Hall was considerably invested emotionally than usual if this client was to reach the summit. This client indeed reached the summit but succumbed as he was descending. Hall took the risk of taking the client to the summit without putting precautionary measures on how the client was to descent. As a good risk manager, he should have put into place measures, which would ensure the safety of the client while climbing mountain as well as when descending (Mark 25).

It is worth noting that both Fischer and Hall anticipated to guide many clients to the summit and also to gain fresh clients in the coming years, which contribute to the prosperity of their company. Despite having respect for one another, they had competing business ideas. They knew that the amount of clients they were to bring to the top would affect their income directly in future. This informs the reason for Fischer and Hall taking more risks than it would have been the case with a professional mountaineer. None of them realized that they were taking risks, which were serious with the lives of their clients as well as theirs, until it was late. Hall and Fischer were pushed beyond their limits by the presence of journalist, as they needed favorable PR. The tragic outcome of the expeditions gives emphasis on the way emotional involvement overrides rational safeguards and result to disasters. Krakauer reports on Mount Everest commercialization, however, the business he comes across while there goes past the expectations. The commercialization is manifested in various ways; the revenue collected from tourists by Tibet and Nepal, the wicked money charged by the guiding serves on clients, the completion among Sherpas to be employed by the guiding services, the competition amid guide services to get attention from the media, images throughout climbing expeditions and broadcast information. The position by Krakauer underpins the commercialization of the business. He finds himself folded into the process and paid for commercialism reporting. The guide services by Fischer and Hall compete to get Krakauer into their group since the attention from the media and the backing they were to get after the publishing of the article by Krakauer. Additionally, the mountain commercialization distorts the climbers’ requirements. Majority of the climbers lack experience and with no doubt they were unable to succeed to the top without being guided. All the climbers were unified by the fact that they had money. The adventure of climbing the mountain was characterized with considerable level of risk taking and risk management skills were required. This risk management as well called for sound leadership skills (Borgelt & Falk, 127).

The disaster account on Mount Everest as Krakauer presents it is an ideal paradigm of the various forms of leadership and the way in which when even least expected things may happen as unexpected. The essentials of leadership are discussed, the process involved in getting clients to the summit, the leadership goals, together with the role played by the external factors in attempting to reach the summit of Mount Everest. It evaluates what went wrong as the climbers attempted to reach summit and the reason for it happening. What transpired is that no climber thought that anything unexpected could take place; this was because nothing wrong had recently happened. The guides were also meant to belief that they had a formula of climbing Everest and if they adhered to it, all would be well. Suppose the guides stuck to their standards, to turn around at 2 p. m no matter their closeness to the summit, they could have avoided much of the disaster that took place.

The danger that was experienced was caused by weather, time limit, fatigue, altitude lack of experience and temperature. Ultimately, after some climbers reaching safely, there was reform in the community and climbers started assisting others in terms of personal risk. The Western view Mount Everest as a mountain to be overpowered. All of them were adequately prepared to climb Mount Everest and their clients had faith that the guides had the capability of getting them to the top of the mountain. Greenleaf had the perception that servant leadership is when a person leads through offering service to the society. All of them were placed on a similar level and even the guides seen as superhuman leaders required assistance. Hall portrayed directive leading through giving his clients notification regarding the turnaround time (Douglas 58). The view of Everest differed amid the Sherpas. On the Everest expedition that year, conflict was inevitable. There a shared goal amongst the guides in relation to security on the mountain and accumulating personal profit as one gained publicity for the guiding companies. Concerning leading people, the hierarchy of Maslow is apparent. Directive leading is apparent in the group of Hall versus that of Fischer. This common objective forms part of the leadership process. The different leadership techniques displayed were all worthy in managing the risk experienced by the climbers (Peter van 37).

Krakauer helps one understand why one undergo the physical torture and risks their life to venture into climbing the highest pick in the world. Krakauer avoids glossing over the inactions or actions of several which might have led into disaster. He holds himself accountable for the committed errors, which resulted to loss of life and pain for his teammates together with their families. He gives a detailed explanation of questions that will never be answered; these include the reason for Scott Fischer and Rob Hall, who were experienced but ignored their abort time by more than three hours, and this would have made everyone to get back safely prior to the breaking of the storm. The risk guiders never took the necessary measures to manage the impending risk.

Reading the book by Krakauer, one draws comparisons to the processes of decision making which business leadership follows. Disasters rarely result from just one flawed choice, but are rather a combination of several, small mistakes. This was the conclusion arrived at by Krakauer. The guides were having rules stated for keeping every individual safe despite the effect of hypoxia, which resulted from low levels of oxygen at high altitudes. Nonetheless, the several individuals bending put everyone in unnecessary risk. As one, none of the little missteps would have made a difference. However, accumulating them spelled disaster after the heating of the storm. The question here should be on the number of times one should allow himself a small rules bending to keep someone out of risk. In risk management, this is a question that risk manager ought to put in mind before making any decision. Additionally, risk managers should ask whether they could afford to let themselves and others at risk.

In this expedition, money also acted as a motivator. Money appears to have played a crucial role in the decisions made by Fischer and Hall as they were in need of favorable PR to maintain competitiveness of their companies. In general, the climbers were to guide clients to the mountain top so as to get the money for securing permits for expeditions, however, some climbers never came across, since they were generally enthusiastic to focus on clients. This gives the notion that all technically skilled individuals do not always make a good risk managers (Alexander and Sheedy, 2005, 75). Those who attempted to rescue the stranded climbers, like Anatoli Boukreev created more enmity. The fact that most professionals were more interested with money risked many people’s lives with some of them dying in the process.

In risk management, there ought to be trust among the involved members. Krakauer indicates the importance of trusting teammates. He states that when climbing, having confidence in the partner one has is not a small concern because the actions of one climber can affect the whole team (Krakauer, 47). During this expedition, Krakauer climbs basically with strangers and he expresses unease in putting his life in the hands of individuals whose mountain presence is not a tribute to the skills of climbing. In risky situation it is logical that when a partner is in trouble he ought to be helped immediately by the colleagues and this is seen in expedition.

Though related to trust, loyalty is of crucial importance such that it should be emphasized. On Everest, it implies that climbers would put their lives to assist their partners. By definition guides ought to express loyalty to their groups. In many incidences when clients got into trouble, they were assisted by guides. In these occasions, loyalty implied not wavering to assist a colleague for fear of safety. Krakauer gives educated guesses as to why climbers came up with certain decisions, and what transpired to the individuals who were never found.

Risk management entails the identification, assessment and prioritization of risks. This is usually followed by economical and coordinated resource application to monitor, minimize and control the chances of ill-timed events or for maximization of opportunities realization (Paul 23). To avoid the happening of risks, risk managers should undertake these steps as required (Trickey 38). Risks can be managed through various ways like for instance transfer of risks to other parties, avoiding the risk or reducing the negative impacts or the risk probability. In the case of climbing Mount Everest expedition, the risk managers were the business operators involved in the organizing of these events. Hall and Fischer should have been in the front line to ensure that risks are controlled. This was not the case; instead they were more interested in accumulating money and getting more people to participate in the event in the coming years (Airmic/Alarm/IRM, 2010). This failure to take the necessary measures to control the risk which involved people losing lives and getting injured could be blamed on these two individuals. Risk management should be taken keenly in any event undertaking whether a business venture or a leisure event.

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