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GLOBALISATION: FROM ALEXANDER THE GREAT TO GOOGLE

Thomas Kettle once said that 'culture is simply the hospitality of intellect. Your mind is open to new ideas and larger views; when they enter you know how to receive them, and to entertain, to be entertained, and to take what they have to offer without allowing them to dominate you.' In recent years there has been a great deal of analysis by reputable scholars on the so called 'Google Phenomenon'. These scholars usually claim that Google is no longer a normal company that has as its mission the consolidation and distribution of information and data on the internet, but has become a sort of a 'religion' in its own right. After a personal interest in the subject of the 'Google Phenomenon' in relation to business or corporate culture, I would like to note that these claims are to some extent justifiable and well founded. Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google admits out rightly that Google's vision is the 'collection and concentration of information globally' and not simply to strengthen its place or increase its profits as is the case with more multinationals.

When I first had a look at the functioning, vision and mission of Google, I wondered as to whether Google resembles anything we have experienced in the past, not long after I realized that the 'Google Phenomenon' is nothing new; it follows in many respects the vision of ancient 'conquerors' and in particular Alexander the Great!

As in the case of any ambitious conqueror, there needs to be a loyal and faithful army in order to turn the vision into reality. As Alexander the Great had an army that would follow its leader with 'closed eyes' and admired its leader like a God, Google has achieved almost perfect loyalty and dedication by its employees who feel they are fulfilling a 'divine' purpose. It's mainly due to this dedication and commitment that sparked scholars to comment on 'Google's religion'. Paul Saffon of Silicon Valley's Institute for the Future, claims that 'Google is a religion that presents itself in the form of a corporation'. Google has a number of great leaders who have managed to inspire their people and to embrace closely its vision. Moreover, Google invests constantly on its people through training and tries to

create leaders at all stages of the Organisation.

Apart from the success in leading people, Google and Alexander the Great have more common characteristics as regards their aims. As Alexander the Great thousands of years ago believed passionately in the end of fragmentation and division of the states but also in the ending of exploitation of natural resources by a handful of dictators, Google claims that it operates with the primary aim of creating a globalised information database without constraints and limitations, easily and freely accessible by all human beings.

Paralleling Alexander the Great's vision that changed the course of history by first embracing the notion of globalization, it appears that Google follows, or at least seems to do so, a similar vision. The difference is that today the notion of globalization and of the 'global village' that Alexander first talked about is not an aspiration but a reality. Google has contributed significantly in the minimization of distances and the availability of information. In achieving so it has created a new kind of corporate culture that was different to what we have been used to. It follows Frank Dobe's wise words that 'the boundaries of culture and rainfall never follow survey lines'.

Google as in the case of Alexander the Great, has managed to 'crash' its 'opponents' and consolidate the world's information into a single database, thus increasing the efficiency in information access and distribution. However this is not simply a noble cause; Alexander the Great's army was able to loot every new town that was conquered and in the same way the employees and shareholders of Google have made significant financial gains. There is always the risk of Google retracting from its noble vision and becoming a 'dictator' over global information.

Let's wait to see whether Google will fulfill its goals or whether it will 'die' as young as Alexander the Great did!