



The Savola 8

Our Success Drivers

“The External Values”

All of us strive to succeed in all we do. Success, however, is not easy. It needs sustained effort, focus, and determination to achieve. To facilitate this and to ensure our efforts are spent in the most effective manner we have developed the “Savola 8” document. On the surface, the “Savola 8” describes a set of traits geared towards enabling our success. At a deeper level, however, the “Savola 8” is a comprehensive and balanced system designed to bring about positive change to our inner traits, habits, and characteristics, as well as in our external perceptions of people and events.

“Habits” alone are not sufficient to result in the type of deep character building we aspire for. For one, habits may not be purposeful. Habits may not be mutually enforcing. They may also be ethically inconsistent. While good habits, ones that are carefully crafted (such as the “7 Habits of Highly Effective People - proposed by Steven Covey) go a long way to make us more effective, we in Savola are in search of deeper, more character building traits. Such a set is proposed here in the **Savola 8**.

Our “Savola 8” will enable us to achieve success both in our business and personal lives. They achieve this by helping us identify and up-root those personal attitudes that hinder our success. Then they help entrench the attitudes needed to propel us towards achievement of personal and business objectives.

The “Savola 8” is divided into two groups. First, there are the internal drivers we need to establish a sound, stable, and balanced set of attitudes and behaviors. These “Internal 4” drivers work by creating a comprehensive framework that identifies the key behaviors, or traits we need to become more self-aware of our performance, and to remain driven to enhance that performance.

The second set of drivers is the “External 4”. The “External 4” addresses an area key to our success, which is our ability to interact and work effectively with others. The “External 4” achieves this by enabling us to employ a process of developing effective interpersonal relationships.



External 4

The “Internal 4” detailed the inner, or personal, traits we need to ensure our success. We, however, do not live in isolation of others. We rely on our subordinates for the assistance they provide us in achieving assigned tasks. We rely on our peers for their assistance in coordinating and completing shared objectives. We rely on our managers for the guidance and support they provide us. We rely on our customers for our very existence as an organization. We rely on our suppliers for delivering the resources we need to meet our customers’ demands. Hence, our success is reliant not only on our own personal effort, but also on others and on the effectiveness of our relationships with them. Consequently, a comprehensive value system needs to address the issue of building effective interpersonal relationships.

How do we build and maintain effective interpersonal relationships? We do so by ensuring that when we interact with others we interact in a manner that fosters understanding and cooperation. This, we believe, can only be done when we go beyond simply listening to others and actually start understanding their point-of-view. By understanding others we will begin to look beyond our differences, which is usually where most relationships end, and begin investigating ways of channeling these differences toward a new understanding. This two-way and open-minded communication process, or dialogue, will make us more receptive and open to the ideas and perceptions of others. We will no longer let our opinions or backgrounds bias our interpretation of what is said or done by others. Hence, we will receive the views of others with an open mind and with the attitude that there might be truth in what they are saying. Only with this attitude will we truly be able to access the intelligence and experience of those around us, and truly benefit from it.

Thus, the purpose of the “External 4” is to enable us to reach this new understanding and, in doing so, to form a totally new basis from which to think and act. Ultimately, this means that we will not merely try to reach agreement; rather we will try to create a context from which many new agreements might come. We will seek to uncover a base of shared meaning that can greatly help align our actions with our values. By fostering our joint ability to think together in a common relationship, we will no longer take our own position as final. We will listen to the possibilities that arise from our interactions with others – possibilities that might not otherwise have occurred.

How can we achieve this? We can achieve this by adopting the traits that bring about change at the source of our thoughts and feelings. These are what the following four values will help us achieve.



Trusting (Ihsan Al-Dhan):

To form new understandings, the basis of dialogue, rather than compromise on what we believe to be true or right, we need to start with trust. **Trusting**, or **Ihsan Al-Dhan**, means we believe what others say to us without doubting their intentions. At a practical level this means we will begin attributing the mistakes of others (in terms of what is said or done to us) to ignorance, poor communication, or other unintentional reasons, not to a willful intent to mislead or harm. By denying the existence of hidden agendas or ulterior motives, we will gradually begin to deal with others as individuals with specific needs and concerns and whose perspective on matters is as legitimate as our own. This form of Ihsan Al-Dhan, however, can sometimes be viewed as a type of credulity, naivety or simple mindedness. This concern with naivety could be accepted were it not for two points.

The first point is the existence of It'qan. As stated previously, It'qan is driven by caution, and it is this caution that will allow us to practice Ihsan Al-Dhan while taking care not to harm the interests of the organization, or others who have entrusted us. This means that if we end up getting deceived, manipulated, or betrayed by others it is not because we trusted them, it is because we have not practiced enough It'qan. In other words, our disappointment with others is not because they are “bad”, as such, it is because our work was not “good” enough to protect us. It was not good enough if we did not carry out the needed due diligence. It was not good enough if we did not remove any loopholes or gray areas that might tempt others to abuse the situation. Thus, in the final analysis, we should take responsibility for whatever happens to us, and not blame it on the “dishonesty” or “deceit” of others.

The second point is that the practice of mistrusting people or doubting their intentions is in fact the naïve or simple-minded approach because it deprives us of the vast opportunities we can gain from interacting with others just because we feel they *might* harm or mislead us. For example, an individual who has had two or three bad experiences flying might conclude that all air flights are bad, and, consequently, stop flying. This individual might feel he is doing the smart thing, but in fact he has let a few bad experiences deprive him from the vast benefits air travel can provide. Similarly, a person who has been “cheated” or “tricked” might conclude that all relationships are driven by ulterior motives and that no one is to be trusted. This individual will always be suspicious, and not be willing to listen and benefit from others.

Thus, when we are able to exhibit Ihsan Al-Dhan balanced with It'qan we will become more open to the ideas, opinions and needs of others and less likely to impose our interpretations to what they say. We will no longer be driven by suspicion, rather by the need to simultaneously trust and fulfill our responsibilities towards others. This is the first step towards creating dialogue between us.

To clarify Ihsan Al-Dhan we would like to present a swimming analogy to illustrate the application of this value. Let us assume that we are healthy and physically fit individuals, but unable to swim. One day a friend of ours invites us to go swimming in a swimming pool. Our first reaction would be to reject this offer because we fear



the water and what could happen when we enter it. In addition, being unfamiliar with swimming we are not certain of the benefit or enjoyment to be gained from such an activity. Thus, our immediate reaction will be to reject this offer. Here is where Trust comes to play. With the proper Trust we will overcome these mental blocks by realizing that:

- Our friend's invitation is motivated by a sincere interest in sharing with us something he feels is enjoyable and of possible benefit to us. That is, we trust his intentions.
- Our friend realizes our inability to swim and will be there to support us. That is, we trust his abilities and his commitment to our safety.
- There are sufficient safety measures around the pool which minimize the possibility of our drowning or being injured. That is, we trust those responsible for the safety of swimmers.
- We are physically ready for the demands of this sport. That is, we trust our abilities.

Thus, with Trust we will be able to expand our horizons and experience new experiences to which we would otherwise have been closed. Hence, Trust is about looking for the positive in what we are told or what we are asked to participate in. Thus, with Trust we will not deprive ourselves from enjoying and benefiting from any activity, whether old or new, we participate in.

Accepting (Qabool):

Ihsan Al-Dhan revolves around the concept of trusting the intentions or motivation of others. That is, with Ihsan Al-Dhan we trust that others do not intend to knowingly harm, mislead, or deceive us. This value, however, does not imply that we need to trust their abilities or knowledge. Thus, if we limit ourselves to Ihsan Al-Dhan we limit ourselves to simply tolerating the views of others but not benefiting from them. Hence, to move beyond tolerance and into mutual benefit, we need to begin the process of exploring the ideas of others. To do this we need **Accepting, or Qabool**. **Qabool** means to “endure” the views of others by going beyond tolerance or acceptance and working to suppress our biases or needs. It means trying hard to truly understand and work with these different views. This, however, is not easy, hence the use of the term “endure”. We need to endure opposing points-of-view even if we do not agree with them or believe them to be contrary to our needs. We need to endure the process of looking into opposing points-of-view to understand their source and motivation. Ultimately, we need to endure the possible need to abandon our own positions in favor of a new and possibly more effective one.

To endure we need to exert effort, patience, and tolerance. We will not do this if we are not sure there will be some return benefit for us. So what benefit will we gain from Qabool? There are two primary benefits from Qabool. First, it will bring us closer to the goal of developing effective and constructive dialogue amongst us. The second, and more immediate, benefit is that by looking at situations from varying points-of-view we will gain new insights and widen our own perspectives on matters. Realizing this second point is key to accepting Qabool. Why? Because, by accepting the fact that ignoring the views of others deprives us of the benefits these views



might contain, we will be internally motivated to adopt Qabool. Arriving at this realization, however, is not a one-step process. It will be gradual and will take considerable effort on our part.

Building on our earlier example, Qabool comes into play when we actually enter the water. To start we are uncomfortable and slightly panicky as we are unfamiliar with the physics of water. At this point we have two choices; refusal or acceptance. Refusing the situation means we will be resisting the water which will result in us beginning to panic and having to get out of the pool. Thus, by resisting the situation we ultimately deprive ourselves from this new and possibly rewarding experience bringing our Ihsan Al-Dhan efforts to nothing. Acceptance, on the other hand, means we overcome this fear by suspending judgment. We suspend judgment by ignoring our preconceived notions about swimming, the dangers we associated with it, and the belief that we are incapable of mastering this sport. By suspending judgment we are in effect forcing ourselves to *endure* the anxiety and discomfort we feel because we accept (through Trust) that there is something worthwhile to be gained from this activity. Then, as we become more comfortable with this sport and as our paradigm begins to shift; we begin the process of appreciating it and appreciating the new perspectives it provides us. (In Qabool this represents the point when tolerance, and acceptance become second nature to us and we begin reaping the benefits of the various points-of-view we are exposed to).

How does Qabool manifest itself in us? We will have adopted Qabool when:

- We demonstrate tolerance by not letting our disagreements lead to animosity or an inability to function with others.
- We actively listen and try to clarify the opposing point-of-view to determine what it is others are trying to say and what their true motivation is.

These behaviors will further our acceptance of different points-of-view, and make it more likely for us to work with these differences rather than against them. A sure sign we have adopted these behaviors is when we find ourselves searching hard for points of agreement, and for methods of fitting our understanding with others' models. When this becomes possible we will have demonstrated Qabool and taken a further step towards dialogue.

Approaching (Iq'bal):

As we continue to exhibit Endurance (Qabool) by exploring the views and perspectives of others, our understanding will increase. However, as long as we continue to perceive ideas in the framework of "ours" and "theirs" we will not be able to progress beyond "enduring" the ideas of others. We will continue to perceive their views as something to be endured and tolerated. This, in itself, connotes that we are doing others a favor by "tolerating" them. And, as long as we feel this way, we will not be able to accept the views of others as our own nor will we be able to progress beyond the exploration phase. Thus, what is now needed is the ability to blur the distinction between "ours" and "theirs" and view things from the "us" perspective. This is what we define as **Approaching (Iq'bal)**. Approaching will enable us to



investigate the ideas of others so as to achieve higher levels of interaction. Iq'bal will enable us to see points of intersection more clearly, liberate ourselves from our personal perspectives, and promote a more fluid means of thinking and working together.

The process of adopting Iq'bal starts when, after striving to adopt Qabool, we begin to feel a genuine interest and curiosity in the views and opinions of others. It starts when we feel that the seeds of interest have grown sufficiently to enable us to appreciate what others are saying, and see the possible benefits in it. Eventually this leads us to no longer view these differences as a burden or as something we need to “endure”. Rather we begin to see them as something of interest that arouses our curiosity.

This curiosity leads us to further investigate and understand others, and to engage in a process of joint learning, and interaction. This will then enable us to uncover common ground and points of overlap to build frames of mind based on a new “us” perspective. This new perspective will then lead us to cooperate with others and build on our new common understanding of issues.

In our swimming example, Ihsan Al-Dhan and Qabool delivered us to the stage of actually entering the water and beginning to feel comfortable in it. To take full advantage of this activity, however, we need to go beyond being passive participants. That is, with Qabool we can end up simply floating on the surface and not attempting to actually swim (i.e., we simply endure the process rather than enjoying and benefiting from it). This can result in a less than desired experience especially if we are unable to keep up with our friends who are able to swim and enjoy the swimming experience to the fullest. By remaining passive we will remain a burden on our friends as they need to continually look after us and remain close to us since we are not experienced enough to be left alone. Thus, we now need to take an active approach to swimming. We need to *approach* it as though it was our own idea and to work towards adopting all the skills and traits needed to make this activity an integral part of who we are. This way we will appreciate this activity, appreciate those who recommended it to us, and reward them by becoming less of a burden and more of an equal. The active approach will also instill in us the desire to enhance our abilities so as to further our experiences in this activity we are growing to like.

Caring (Mu'azarah):

The more we adopt Iq'bal as a value, the more we will be working with others to understand them, resolve our differences with them, and uncover new points of common understanding. This growing familiarity of, and working with others will increase our appreciation of who they are, what they stand for, and what can be expected of them. We will also become more attuned to how they will react, and how best to work with them in an effective relationship. This enhanced awareness or intense appreciation is what we term **Caring**. We are referring to the type of Caring,



Mu'azarah, mutual respect, and understanding which exists among members of highly effective and productive teams. It is a caring born of extreme knowledge and appreciation of the other, and the belief that we can trust and rely on them.

This level of mutual respect and caring can be described as having “a comprehensive grasp of an extremely detailed level of knowledge about the unique characteristics” of the other.

This Caring/Mu'azarah, when it exists, means we have practiced effective dialogue and have been able to gap the differences between ourselves to create a new and more powerful paradigm from which to work.

In our swimming example, we have now reached the stage of mastering swimming. We are able to go with our friends and experience the activities which they are experiencing. Gradually we will become more independent and our friends can begin to feel more relaxed and safe in our presence. That is, not only will they not worry about us, but they will begin to trust and rely on our abilities in case they need them. In addition, we will begin experiencing situations which are new to them and which we can begin sharing with them (e.g., diving, snorkeling, scuba diving, etc...). Sharing these new experiences with our friend can be motivated by the simply desire to return the favor. This is a very basic level of Caring. The higher, and very desirable, level of Caring is when we appreciate the sport enough to introduce it to those who are unable to swim by encouraging them to swim and taking the time to teach and support them. This in fact is the level of Caring our friend exhibited when he first introduced us to swimming and took us by the hand until we mastered swimming. This desire to support those around us and to share with them what we have stems from true Caring. We care enough to share what we have learned; we care enough to see each person excel; and we care enough to invest ourselves and our time to do so. In the process we all grow.

Finally, Caring/Mu'azarah is based on intimate familiarity. Our contact with people, however, is often brief or in very specific situations (e.g., on a project, or limited assignment). Thus, when we reached this stage with someone, we most probably reached this stage based on a limited and specific situation. For example, having worked with and gotten to know someone while both of us were part of a specific project exposes me to the traits of that person as a colleague or peer. Then, when we go through the “External 4” process of Ihsan Al-Dhan, to Qabool to Iq'bal to Caring, we go thorough it on the basis of being peers. All what develops from this process develops on that basis. However, if we work on another project in which one is the supervisor of the other, then we will not be sure of what behaviors and opinions to expect from each other. We will not know what effect the manager – subordinate relationship will have on the dialogue we have previously developed. This means that the process of dialogue is now disrupted. Hence, to rebuild it we will have to restart the “External 4” process based on this new relationship.