

The Unsung Melody

Back in 1940s, there was a black pianist who played at a club in Southern California. He was an amazing pianist, and many regulars frequented the club just to hear him play. One day, a drunken patron put up a strange request "Sing for me." The pianist was reluctant—the only time he had sung in public was during his choir days at his father's church. He hesitated considering his colored background in a racially prejudiced society. The drunken man screamed at the bartender, "I am tired of listening to his piano all the time, make him sing for me!" The boss shouted from across the counter "Piano man, this patron wants you to sing. So sing if you want to keep your job." The piano man nervously sang for the first time in front of a packed audience. It was the most beautiful rendition of the song "Sweet Lorraine" that the patrons at that bar had ever heard.

The man's name was Nat King Cole; he went on to become the most celebrated jazz singer in the history of music and is credited with the timeless melodies of "Unforgettable" and "Mona Lisa", amongst others.

This story of King Cole is probably mythological, but it holds a lesson that couldn't be more relevant in the present times. All of us hold more potential and knowledge than the world is able to gauge. Organizations have it, as do individuals. It is embedded in our character, nurtured silently somewhere in our history.

The changing business world, like the patron in the story, demands more from us. Therefore, we need to invoke our historical learnings to stretch our potential. Organizations can do it using the power of data and cognitive sciences. Professionals can do it by relying on knowledge-backed decisions, instead of the ones based on gut-feeling. Together, this reskilling will help the professionals and businesses of tomorrow excel in easy and tough times.