



## turning managers into leaders

### Merge's Monthly Mega Minute – July 2006

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*Merge Gupta-Sunderji helps turn managers into leaders. Through engaging keynotes and facilitated workshops, she gives people specific and practical tools to achieve leadership and communication success. Contact her at [www.mergespeaks.com](http://www.mergespeaks.com) or 403-605-4756*

### Why pykrete is better than ice

If you've never heard of pykrete, you're not alone! Most people haven't. Yet, in the 1940s, pykrete was the subject of a World War II top-secret project. Project Habakkuk – an unbelievable, yet true, undertaking to build a floating iceberg aircraft carrier – sought to overcome the shortcomings of ice, notably its tendency to melt quickly and to shatter upon impact. Enter pykrete: a composite material of approximately 10% sawdust and 90% ice that has a relatively slower melting rate and vastly improved strength over crystalline ice. Once molded, pykrete can be planed (just like wood) and also has tremendous crush resistance. When hit, rather than shattering, it indents, making it a better material with which to build a floating runway. Experiments show pykrete's strength to be actually closer to that of concrete, thus the name. Despite its great potential at the time, Project Habakkuk was eventually abandoned, primarily due to lack of funds.

While Project Habakkuk was never realized, the properties of pykrete present an insightful metaphor to those who are responsible for hiring and building human potential in organizations. Consider this: there are some people who come to us with great track records of nothing but past winning ventures. While this is often used as an indicator of future achievement, it doesn't tell you much about how they will respond in situations of trouble or stress. In fact, such people could be like pure ice: under sudden pressure they shatter and melt. Contrast that with those whose track record is not as flawless: if you will, they are more like pykrete because they contain sawdust. While their history may not be unblemished, the sawdust is what creates strength and toughness, and when trouble comes, their resiliency will likely be higher and their meltdown slower. When hiring and building human potential in organizations, it may be worth your while to seek out pykrete rather than ice.