

Leadership and Human Capital Development for the Future

In a previous installment in this column it was argued that managing for high performance requires consultative goal setting, and leadership that provides ongoing support, mentoring and coaching to those that they lead.

These are the same qualities that Jack and Suzie Welch identified as the critical requirements of a successful leader, that is a leader who has taken a giant leap from seeing success as their achievement, their performance, and their contribution to seeing success as being all about growing others – making the people who work for them smarter, bigger, and bolder. The leader achieves this by nurturing and supporting their teams and helping the team members increase their self confidence.

Scott Peck wrote that the hallmark of the true servant leaders is that they empower others. He observed what he termed the great paradox of power, which is that the only civil reason to seek power is to lose it, to give it away. According to Peck the leader's first duty is to develop as many successors as possible and as quickly as possible. This entails utilization of power to seek and find people with a potential to lead that is even greater than the leader's, and to nurture their potential with all that the leader has got and then get out of the way.

Africa needs leaders who can touch lives to bring transformation not just in organizations but in their nations. Peck argued that this could be achieved through human developers who assist Africa to emerge, not as basket cases but as people filled with pride rather than excuses, with dignity rather than embarrassment, with a vision rather than a sense of hopelessness.

The proposition that is made in this discussion is that Africa requires leaders endowed with Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and not intelligence quotient (IQ).

According to the leading authority on EQ Daniel Goleman, all leaders are alike in one crucial way and that is that they have a high degree of emotional intelligence. The proponents of EQ argue that what gets one hired is (IQ) as demonstrated in the qualifications obtained and

scores on the intelligence tests but what gets one promoted or successful is EQ. Emotional intelligence is a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor your own and others emotions, to discriminate between these emotions and use information effectively to guide your own thinking and actions.

Those with high EQ therefore exhibit the hallmarks of the emotionally intelligent which include self confidence, realistic self assessment, self deprecating sense of humor, trustworthiness and integrity, strong drive to achieve, service to clients and customers, cross cultural sensitivity, persuasiveness, effectiveness in leading change, and expertise in building and leading teams among other traits. Bill Gates and Charles Branson are some of the emotionally intelligent leaders who dropped out of school, but went on to found business empires. Other renowned leaders with a high degree of EQ are Mother Theresa, Franklin D Roosevelt, John F Kennedy, Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela. Mandela is often quoted as saying that a good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination.

Goleman's research of nearly 200 large, global companies revealed that emotional intelligence – especially at the highest levels of a company – is a critical requirement for leadership. Data documenting the links between emotional intelligence of leaders and the performance of an organization indicate a very strong positive correlation. At PepsiCo, Goleman found that if the leaders of divisions were strong in six or more emotional intelligence competencies their divisions outperformed the annual revenue target by 15 to 20 per cent, and if they were weak they underperformed by about the same margin. In another study a group of engineers was administered an EQ test and also given independent work evaluations, and on the basis of the results it was found that EQ was able to predict star performers. Here the adaptability factor in EQ was the best predictor of star performing engineers.

What then can the leader or people manager do to touch lives? First and foremost we need to develop our own EQ. We need to appreciate that EQ impacts not only our work, but also what happens outside the workplace. It affects how good we feel, how much we can achieve and the quality and richness of our relationships. We ought to remember that everyone prefers to feel important, needed, useful, successful, proud, respected, rather than unimportant, interchangeable, anonymous, wasted, unused, expendable and disrespected.

This requires leaders to go back to basics and embrace the natural laws of human nature. The natural laws include respect for others, humility and integrity as powerful allies of success. Stephen Covey calls this going back to the basics the law of the harvest.

The Batswana brand of EQ is *Botho* and this includes good manners, helpfulness, politeness, respect for older people and many more positive attributes expected of a human being. In Southern Africa and other parts of Africa these concepts and values are expressed in the concepts of *Ubuntu* (South Africa) and *hunhu* (Zimbabwe). These three have one thing in common and that is that a person is a social being who in the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu knows that he or she is part of a greater whole and one who is diminished when others are humiliated, tortured or diminished in any way. The key lesson for leaders and managers in Southern Africa is that of engendering unity and consensus in decision making or what the Japanese term “ringisho”.

It is trite that where consensus is obtained at the planning stage execution of a project is accelerated and squabbles obviated. This then is the case for the leadership that is rooted in African culture and Human Capital management practices that are Afro centric rather than a mere duplication of Occidental practices.