

management

EAST AFRICA'S PREMIER BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP MAGAZINE

DEBUNKING GEN 'Y'

July 2012

TSHS8,000
USHS8,700
RWF.2,500
US\$4

ISSN 2074-7801



6164001157003

JOE MUCHERU

ON MANAGING A GENERATION
OF MISUNDERSTOOD
EMPLOYEES

HOW TO:

- CREATE A PICTURE PERFECT PROFILE
- INVEST IN MONEY MARKET FUNDS
- PUT INSOMNIA TO SLEEP

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Great leaders BUILD BIG FIRMS

By: HAN VAN DER POOL & LEX LINDEMAN

Transformational Leadership can be defined as a process, as an effort by the leader to influence members of a group and direct

their activities towards a common goal. Philosophers, historians, novelists and journalists have always been interested in what makes a great (and a failed) leader. The history of organizations provides great examples of business leaders who have transformed their company and created new successful ventures.

Nelson Mandela said: "I always remember the axiom: a leader...is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind".

Leaders have the power to attract and influence followers and to create an environment where employees take pride in, and demonstrate commitment to the company. Organizations achieve significant competitive advantage by bringing together different ideas, experiences and learning strategies. They possess the ability to focus employees

on business goals and build a high degree of trust and confidence among teams. These abilities are also the secret behind an organization's success.

Through our practices and experiences at different international companies, we have identified the following qualities of great transformational leaders.

1. Sees the necessity of innovation.

A great leader is able to implement new ways of organizing business, which competitors and others have not thought. A good example of a leader with this quality is Jeff Bezos who founded Amazon.com. "Our vision is the world's most customer-centric company. The place where people come and discover anything they might want to buy online". In typically methodical fashion, Bezos reviewed the top 20 mail order businesses, and asked himself which could be conducted more efficiently over the Internet rather than by traditional means. Books were the commodity for which no comprehensive mail order catalogue existed, because any such catalogue

would be too big to mail; perfect for the Internet, which could share a vast database with a virtually limitless number of people.

2. Understands customers and markets.

The leader assesses the impact of global trends to redefine the organization's business plans to serve us well for the next five years.

The entrepreneur Stelios Haji-loannou (EasyJet) is a good example of a leader with this quality. "If you create the right expectations and you meet and exceed those expectations, then you will have happy customers". EasyJet provides in Europe 'sound reasons' for a customer relationship: a cost-effective and good quality service. As such, EasyJet is able to obtain customer feedback about the service they provide, and to go on improving it.

3. Drives strategic change.

A great leader expresses a clear vision for the future of the business and communicates it in a language, which can be understood by everyone.

For this we like to quote W. James

McNerney (former CEO of 3M) "... the entire company needs to adopt one methodology, so that we can develop a common language.. (and) so that we can leverage our size". In order to improve products and services and perhaps most importantly develop a common language, McNerney introduced a quality improvement methodology for the whole 3M organization. Using this methodology, they started with the factories working on yield, scrap, and re-work. Next they focused on the back office and finally 3M moved on to their customers. Together with their customers, 3M improved shared processes and made an offer to customers to help improve some of their business processes.

4. Engages and inspires others. A leader is able to engage the hearts and minds of others to achieve greater motivation, satisfaction and a sense of achievement.

A good example is Kofi Annan (Former Secretary General of the United Nations): "We need to create a wider, expansive definition of our duties to our fellow men and women in the global village, to ensure that globalization benefits them all" In an address to The World Economic Forum on 31 January 1999,

United Nation Secretary-General Kofi Annan challenged business leaders to join an international initiative - the Global Compact -that would bring companies together with UN agencies, labour and civil society to support nine principles in the areas of human rights, labour and the environment

5. Realises out-performance. A great leader connects the strategy of the company to people performance and sees to it that it is cascaded. Our favorite quotes of Jack Welch (former CEO of General Electric) are: "Our vision is to create the world's most competitive enterprise. Don't focus too much on the numbers. Numbers aren't the vision; numbers are the products. Focus more on the softer- values of building a team, sharing ideas, exciting others".

Jack Welch used "stretched targets". Stretched targets are used as a way of managing which encourages people to go beyond 'business as usual' At the same time, it mobilizes people to reach beyond current resources and capabilities.

Therefore, in our reality in Africa, many times we urge companies to replace the "A" in SMART objectives into "Ambitious"!

6. Champions' development. The leader creates an environment that fosters a culture of life-long learning, which enables both the individual and the organization to evolve. We like to quote Nelson Mandela as he is for us a great example of a leader with this quality. He wrote history with the following quote "We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be?" And according to the Dutch Soccer legend Johan Cruyff "Leadership is not telling just someone else what to do, it's all about gaining maximal performance out of the qualities and talents of associates." A part of the Cruyff creed is to make players work on their weaknesses. For example, right-footed players have more difficulty heading left-to-right than they have with the more instinctive right- to- left. That kind of co-ordination could be crucial if the match-winning chance comes on the "wrong" side for a player. So Cruyff would spend long hours with individual players striving to help them overcome their weak points. i

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Transformational leadership has a future

In many organizations and institutions top management is strongly aware of the fact that something fundamental needs to take place to prepare the organization for far-reaching external development in years to come.

These developments are existential by nature, such as surviving in an environment with increasingly strong competition, the yet unknown, but undoubtedly drastic consequences of the credit crisis also in Africa,

a recession, a new government, reshaping of the markets and the necessity for a sustainable economy. Subsequently, the awareness grows that one- time action programs are not sufficient, simply because the organization is expected to adjust constantly, especially in Africa where there is a need for rapid transformation. Whether it is for private organizations (they must become more competitive) or public institutions (they tend to be organized now

around accountability, integrity, see for example the Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens under the Kenyan Constitution).

This constant adjustment means in deed continual learning. The link between the strategy of the company and the strategy of leadership development needs to be secured. The responsibility of talent development lies with the top of the institution; read CEO's, Ministers, etc.

This organizational top needs to be actively involved in developing future leaders. Transformational leadership development is seen as a 'mission critical' corporate process. The availability of high potential talent is a strategic advantage Filling the organization-wide pipeline

and keeping it filled is viewed as an absolute necessity. The outcomes of this process are measured, Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). The process of management development is Included in the business cycle. The mindset is that of recurring processes Instead of one- time initiatives.