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THE CHALLENGES FACING MANAGEMENT TODAY AND TOMORROW

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ABSTRACT

Management challenges in the 21st century looks afresh at contemporary and the future of management thinking and practice. The challenges revolves around two fundamental issues that are occurring simultaneously; the changes in the world economy, and shifts in the practice of management. These developments both in developing and the developed countries are crucial in exploring and understanding the challenges of the future. This paper focuses on the key questions for all organizations; what are the new challenges or realities? What new policies and management responses are required of companies and executives in order to deal with these challenges. With this in mind, this paper offers a number of strategies - both proactive and otherwise - on how managers can respond or be more responsive to these challenges facing management today and tomorrow.

Keywords: Management, Knowledge, Workers, Outsourcing, Globalization

INTRODUCTION

Management is a child of the last two centuries, that is, the 19th and 20th centuries. During the early part of the 20th century most Europeans and Asians, were still very skeptical about management. For instance, when in 1924 Mary Parker Follet gave a management seminar at the Oxford University, London, they cajoled her and made mockery of her, thinking that she is just bringing to them another important American fad. And in those years, the communist countries too were quite certain that management was a capitalist invention which has absolutely no meaning for them - and was indeed totally incompatible with anything that could be called “Socialist” or “Marxist”. These people and countries were still very skeptical about management then because it was something that fitted others, but had very little relevance to them, their own companies and institutions and their own countries. As social institutions go (i.e. in the early part of the 20th century), management is thus a mere infant still.

But this child has been growing up very, very fast. Few people today would doubt that management is essential. Indeed, even in China, where under Mao management was clearly taboo, there is now a sharp shift. Today, management and managers are the essential key resource for economic and social development. Management is a factor of production and an economic resource, and the arts and sciences of management appear to provide the best opportunity for increase in productivity. The vast majority of productivity improvements (60%) are within the purview of assertive, innovative, entrepreneurial managers functioning in their role as productivity catalysts (Heizer and Render, 1991).

However, with this acceptance of management as a key function in society have come ever-increasing demands/challenges on the manager. Thus, the challenges facing management today and tomorrow illustrate the rapid change and unpredictability that all managers face today in contemporary times and in the future. Most organizations have survived and thrived because of the remarkable management talent of their managers and management. Hence, managers and management can have the most remarkable effects on organizations if they take into cognizance these issues/challenges facing management today and tomorrow. Conversely, businesses with untrained and unrepentant staff to cope with these challenges will lose market share and will ultimately be chased out of
business by their competitors. Nevertheless, the effect of good management in coping with these challenges on companies is nothing short of remarkable.

Organizations today thus need to grapple with a number of revolutionary forces/challenges; boosting the productivity of resources, employing resources where results are, staying ahead and coping with change/accelerating product and technological changes, motivating knowledge workers/disenchanted employees or rather trends towards knowledge workers and the information age, and globalized competition. Challenges like these have changed the playing field on which firms must compete. In particular, they have dramatically increased the need for firms to be responsive, flexible, and capable of competing and reacting rapidly in a global marketplace.

With that in mind, it is against this background that this paper explores the challenges facing management today and tomorrow in order to identify how managers can respond or be more responsive to these challenges in order to drive their organizations to a stellar performance.

THE CHALLENGE OF BOOSTING/INCREASING THE PRODUCTIVITY OF RESOURCES

The management challenge today, and increasingly the management challenge of tomorrow will centre on the productivity of resources. In nineteenth century liberal capitalism, it was believed that resources developed themselves and are allocated by the “invisible hand”. In nineteenth century socialism and twentieth century communism, it is believed that the development of resources is a function of the system - which is another form of the “invisible hand”. We know better today, i.e. in the 21st century. Resources are developed by managers, are allocated by managers and managers are responsible for their productivity. It is above all productivity which is the first mission of management and its first responsibility. And the management challenge today, and increasingly the management challenge of tomorrow will centre on the productivity of resources.

Resources are not made by nature. They are made by man. And this is particularly true of two key resources - the human being and capital. Indeed, the human being as such is not resource. He becomes a resource only if trained, developed and allocated to productive work. This is the central challenge of management. It is particularly important in developing countries. It is the essence of being a developing country that effective, productive, competent people are in very short supply. One of the central management challenges in a developing country is development of people into human resource - a task of training, of developing, of managing.

In many ways, capital is perhaps even more crucial, especially in developing countries, than the human resource. And capital can only be obtained by providing a surplus from today’s production over today’s costs - otherwise, capital formation cannot take place. Capital formation may be the crucial factor in the development of the developing countries. It is also the crucial factor in the continuing prosperity of the developed countries.

In this regard, everyone knows that there are no jobs unless we can invest in substantial amount of capital. Even in developing countries, in which a good deal of activity is, and should be, labour intensive, the capital cost of a new job is very high and is going up rapidly. In fact, you may well say that the greatest drawback, the greatest weakness and thus the greatest challenge of developing countries in their desperate search for employment opportunities, is lack of enough capital to create jobs (Drucker, 2001). The consumer demand is there - what is lacking is the capital to create the jobs which in turn would create the goods to satisfy consumer demand. Thus, one of the challenges facing management today and tomorrow, is the need of
our society for adequate capital formation for the jobs of tomorrow.

**THE CHALLENGE OF EMPLOYING RESOURCES WHERE THE RESULTS ARE - MEANING THAT MANAGEMENT, BOTH IN DEVELOPING AND IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, WILL HAVE TO LEARN TO MANAGE PRODUCTION SHARING/OUTSOURCING**

In all developed countries, there is a major shortage of people to do the traditional jobs - especially traditional labour-intensive manufacturing jobs. It is a matter of wage cost primarily and also a matter of the availability of people. This is because birth rates in the developed countries are so very low, and because so many of the young people in the developed countries go in for higher education and thus become basically disqualified for traditional work.

In all developing countries, on the other hand, we face about two decades during which there will be an incredibly large supply of young people qualified for little but the traditional labour-intensive jobs in manufacturing. And in most of the developing countries, the only way these young people can possibly find employment is in manufacturing for export. Only a very few countries - India, Brazil, Nigeria - may be amongst them - in which there is a potential domestic market large enough to absorb the output of the masses of new young workers, workers who need jobs and who are easily trainable for the traditional manufacturing work. In the rest of the world manufacturing jobs and jobs in export industries, will mean increasingly that the world will see a new pattern of economic integration - a pattern called production sharing or outsourcing. Production sharing/outourcing is the delegation of production processes or services to an external vendor who owns and manages these processes, based upon defined performance metrics. Thus, while production sharing/outourcing was initially seen as a cost reduction tool and as a matter of the availability of people with a clearly defined and limited scope, today it is increasingly regarded as a means of achieving a marked change in organizational performance, agility and customer service (Barrar and Gervais, 2006); in other words, as a source of competitive advantage. You already see production sharing/outourcing all around you. Here is the large European textile manufacturer, a German/Dutch company, who spins, weaves and dyes in the common market and then airfreights the cloth to such countries as Morocco or Algeria or Thailand, where the cloth is converted into suits and shirts and rugs and beddings, to be airfreighted back and sold in the common market. There is the American shoe retailer - the largest shoe retailer in the world, perhaps. The hides to make the leather tend to be American, if only because America has the largest livestock population. They are being shipped to Brazil to be tanned and made into leather there, to be shipped to such places as Haiti and the British Virgin Islands where they are being made into shoes, to be assembled into finished shoes in Puerto Rico, for sale in the American market and for export to Europe. And so it goes - with the electronic industry perhaps the foremost practitioner of “production sharing”/outsourcing.

Increasingly, managers will have to learn cum face the challenge of managing a system under which the developing countries will find employment for their abundant resources of young trainable people in production for export in those stages of production that are labour intensive; while the developed countries will furnish management technology and capital and, above all, the markets.

In view of this, the multinational company of tomorrow will be a marketing company rather than a manufacturing company. It will sell where the markets are, and this means primarily in the developed countries, and also in the developing countries. But it will have the goods made where the workforce is - that is in the developing countries. And thus, production sharing will increasingly become a major managerial challenge - both in the developed countries and in the developing ones.
and in the developing countries - and one that requires close cooperation between the two.

**THE CHALLENGE OF STAYING AHEAD AND COPING WITH CHANGE**

Frequent change will be the rule in tomorrow’s environment. This means that the organization/business environment of today and tomorrow will face increasing turbulence. A dynamic, unpredictable, expanding, fluctuating environment is a turbulent environment. It is an environment marked by changes. It is an environment in which the information received by the organization is often contradictory. The best estimates that management can make of the future are really only “guesstimates” and get obsolete fairly quickly since the environment takes unpredictable turns. It is an environment in which the ability to take calculated risks in the face of uncertainty is vital. In this regard, rapid technological advances, political instability and key resource shortages in some countries are examples of the kinds of changes that are likely to occur more frequently in the future. Thus managers and management of today and tomorrow must develop strategies of staying ahead of change and for coping with change. They must encourage learning among their people in what is referred to as a learning organization, engender ICT - information revolution whereby not only data are valued but also concepts, and develop agility in coping with change.

A learning organization is one that continually improves by rapidly creating and refining the capabilities required for future success (Wick and Leon, 1995: 299-311). In a learning organization, employees are engaged in identifying and solving problems, enabling the organization to continuously experiment, change and improve. In this manner, the organization can increase its capacity to grow, learn and achieve its purpose. Thus, in the learning organization, all employees look for problems, such as understanding special customer needs. Employees also solve problems; which means putting things together in unique ways to meet customer needs. A learning organization promotes exchange of information among employees which creates a more knowledgeable workforce. It exhibits flexibility because employees accept and adapt to new ideas and changes through a shared vision. Nevertheless, today’s increased pace of change is thus one reason the learning organization is popular. The corporation that is able to quickly shape and motivate their workers is better able to transform its work practices to keep pace with the constantly changing environment.

Furthermore, today and tomorrow’s managers must also face the challenge of the frequent changes in the environment (which can create psychologically, great tension and stress for the manager) by developing agility in coping with these changes. The manager must thus develop planning strategies that are flexible enough to allow for frequent changes in direction while still accomplishing organizational objectives. Thus, confidence and enthusiasm for a given course of action must be maintained while knowing that the plan may be obsolete before it can be fully carried out. Maintaining the balance between enough stability to pursue plans while remaining flexible enough to make changes when necessary will be more difficult than ever before.

**THE CHALLENGE OF MOTIVATING KNOWLEDGE WORKERS CUM DISENCHANTED EMPLOYEES**

Today and tomorrow’s organizations are populated by knowledge workers. Knowledge workers are workers that possess high talent, high calibre knowledge, skills, abilities and expertise in performing their jobs. Put in another way, they are workers with a high degree of knowledge management abilities. Knowledge management is concerned with storing and sharing the wisdom, understanding and expertise accumulated in an organization about its processes, techniques and operations. To Tan (2000: 10-11) it is the process of systematically and actively managing and
leveraging the stores of knowledge in an organization. Thus, the growing emphasis on human capital/knowledge workers or rather knowledge management - i.e. the knowledge, training, skills and expertise of a firm’s workers - at the expense of physical capital like equipment, machinery, and the physical plant are increasingly the order of the day in contemporary organizations.

Consequently, due to the predominance of knowledge workers in contemporary organizations, managers and management need to face the challenge of motivating this type of employees otherwise termed disenchanted employees. Thus, for managers, the challenge of increasing human capital is that “knowledge workers” must be managed differently than were those of previous generations. The centre of gravity in employment is shifting fast from manual and clerical workers to knowledge workers, who resist the command and control model that business took from the military about 100 years ago. Knowledge workers cannot just be ordered around and closely monitored. New management skills will be required, and the behavioural side of managing will become more important.

In other words, many of the “new generation” of employees will be more difficult to motivate than their predecessors. This is in part the result of a change in value systems coupled with greater knowledge management and rising educational levels. In view of this, greater skepticism concerning large organizations and less reverence for authority figures will be more common; unquestioning acceptance of rules and regulations will be less likely. While presenting a problem for managers these employees can also be the source of much creativity and accomplishment. If their potential can be tapped, many can become significant organizational contributors and organizational high flyers.

Nevertheless, the solution to cope with this challenge is the creation of a “community” within the organization that changes the workers traditional role. This approach includes the use of participative decision-making, job enrichment, and a deemphasis of traditional bureaucratic controls. This new approach does not mean that all workers “do their own thing” with little or no direction. Instead, mutually developed goals are established. These then become the basis against which employees are evaluated.

THE POLITICAL CHALLENGE
The need to deal with or rather to cope with the challenge of conflicting interest groups within or outside organizations, will mean that today and tomorrow’s manager must sharpen his or her political skills. This means that to cope with the political challenge within/outside organizations managers must be politically savvy.

Thus, as group confrontation becomes a more established way of dealing with grievances/disputes, managers will have more frequent contact with special-interest organizations - like consumer unions or interest groups and trade unions. Rarely can a purely factual, rational approach solve the problems presented by such organizations. Consequently, such political activity as developing coalitions, engaging in delaying tactics, face-savings, restating issues and making temporary concessions may be used more frequently by successful managers in the future.

THE CHALLENGE OF GLOBALIZATION
Globalization is the tendency of firms to extend their sales or manufacturing to new markets abroad. It thus refers to processes that promote worldwide exchanges of national and cultural resources; and it entails the promotion and expansion of the global movement of people, goods and ideas. Globalization engenders economic growth for corporations and countries, and it involves a country’s participation in, and integration with, the global economy. This means that the world economy is fastly becoming a global village; i.e. an increasingly interrelated, interdependent and interconnected world economy, especially in
terms of trade and investments. In particular, advances in transportation and telecommunications infrastructure, including the rise of the Internet, are major factors in globalization and precipitate further interdependence of economic and cultural activities (Guyford, 1972: 1-3). For businesses everywhere, the rate of globalization in the past few years has been nothing short of phenomenal.

Globalization of markets and manufacturing is important, in part because it has vastly increased international competition. Throughout the world, firms that formerly competed only with local firms - from airlines to car makers to banks - have discovered they must now face an onslaught of new foreign competitors. Many firms have successfully responded to this new international environment, while others have failed.

In view of this, the worldwide corporation in the 21st century or rather of today and tomorrow, including those in the manufacturing sector of the Nigerian economy are now confronted with the rapid globalization of markets and competition. Thus, managers and managements of contemporary organizations are developing strategies to cope with and overcome this challenge of rapid globalization of markets and increased competition. To stay afloat in the fierce economic competition of the world marketplace, they must build multilateral business networks, and introduce new management philosophies like Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) and Total Quality Management (TQM).

The development of information technology, the globalization of the markets and the networking of the economy have all contributed changes in the competitive and operational environment of companies; thus the increasing importance of the growing proliferation of partnership relations - multilateral business networks (Arnzen and Brownfield, 1992: 50). Multilateral business or enterprise network is a firm’s alliance formed with other businesses to achieve mutually beneficial goals. It is the process of establishing a mutually beneficial relationship with other business people and potential clients and/or customers. Alliances or multilateral business networks are coalignments between all stakeholders in an industry to expand opportunities for performance. In other words, they are coalignments between two or more firms in which the partners hope to learn and acquire from each other the technologies, products, or rather flow of information, skills, and knowledge that are not otherwise available to competitors.

BPR, on the other hand, is the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service and speed. BPR means that organizations have to reengineer their processes, i.e. reinvent the way they do things or rather offer a particular product or service in order to remain competitive and stay afloat in the fierce economic competition of the marketplace engendered by globalization.

TQM is thus an organization wide approach that focuses on quality as a very important goal. TQM conveys a vertical approach to quality in an organization, i.e. quality is a matter of concern for everybody from the Board of Directors down to the humblest employee. The basis of the TQM approach is the understanding that all employees and organizational units should be working harmoniously to satisfy the customer. Since the customer’s needs are in constant flux, the organization must strive to continuously improve its systems and practices.

CONCLUSION
The challenges facing management today and tomorrow look fresh at the future of management thinking and practice. The content revolves around two contemporary issues that are occurring simultaneously; changes in the world economy and shifts in the practice of management. These developments in the

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developing and developed countries are crucial in exploring and understanding the challenges of the future. And the new realities or rather the fundamental challenges facing management today and tomorrow are - the issue of the development, the allocation and the productivity of resources, the challenge of employing resources where the results are, the issue of staying ahead and coping with change, the issue of motivating knowledge workers/disenanchanted employees, political challenge, and Globalization. This paper thus offers a prescient and informed analysis that will help every executive to build a proactive strategy for the future.

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