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## COMMUNICATION

*Does Social Media add value to Organisation?*

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never leave, never  
get demoted



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Cardinal Otunga Plaza 6<sup>th</sup>  
Floor, Kaunda Street.  
P. O. Box 6132 -00300  
Nairobi, Kenya

TEL: +254 (0) 20 2213745/  
+254 (0) 20 2240213

FAX: + 254 (0) 20 2244557

EMAIL: [info@ihrm.or.ke](mailto:info@ihrm.or.ke)  
[www.ihrm.or.ke](http://www.ihrm.or.ke)



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Resource Management.

#### Editorial Board

Samson Osero  
Milka Murimi

#### Design and Layout

Streamline Your Business Info  
0722 609 402

[queries@streamlineyourbusiness.info](mailto:queries@streamlineyourbusiness.info)  
[www.streamlineyourbusiness.info](http://www.streamlineyourbusiness.info)

## Communicate on new media, but responsibly

Welcome Readers,

Rapid developments in technology are changing not only the way we work but also the way we relate to one another, be it in our social or work environments. What the personal computer did many years ago to ease communication and performance of tasks has now been replicated hundred times over by smartphones and tablets. Today, many people carry the office around in their pockets as these devices have slotted seamlessly into our lives.

One can write a report, complete with images and photos, just by using a mobile phone. Many discussions are held online through social media apps such as Facebook and WhatsApp, making decision making much faster and more inclusive since many people can participate without having to sit in a meeting. Organisations are also reaching out to their clients through such social media platforms.

There are a number of benefits that the use of social media confers on the organization, such as reaching a large number of people with the same message simultaneously, wherever they are. A firm that is carrying out a campaign, for instance, can bank on social media apps to spread the message, with the hope that recipients may also forward the same to their contacts. Social media therefore becomes a crucial tool for the organization to further its objectives. But there is also a downside to social media use, especially when applied irresponsibly. This includes employees spending too much time on the platforms at the expense of performing their duties.

Our lead article looks at social media and how it impacts on the work place. Read and consider whether you are making appropriate use of the media. Another of our writers discusses how you can improve your communication by cultivating a habit of listening to yourself first before sending out a message.

We also explore how to motivate your employees to improve the organisation's performance, and also how employees can increase their contribution to the organisation. A recent survey by the Institute of Human Resource Management in collaboration with the African Management Initiative showed that training programmes are not turning out the right skills. Many of the firms that responded to the research said they did not achieve the desired outcomes even after investing considerable funds and time in the courses. In case you missed the report, we have summarized the key issues in this edition.

You will find other resourceful articles from our contributors in this issue. Turn the pages.

*Editor*

# Are We Teaching the Right Stuff?

*Hundreds of students are graduating with MBAs each year* By Ken Moore

**W**ould you believe that there are over 450 colleges and universities in the United States that offer an MBA degree? With so many options for the business degrees, one has to wonder: Are these schools teaching what the students need to learn in order to be successful in today's and tomorrow's business world? In the best of political tradition, the answer is: well, yes and no.

Surveys routinely reveal that CEOs and business owners want people who can help them run the company by linking their discipline to the business plan. At a local HR chapter dinner meeting, one CEO said she needed people to help her run the company successfully regardless of professional discipline, understand the company's financial condition and performance pressure points as well as give good advice to help her make better decisions.

She also needed a person who could expand on the value of non-financial performance metrics that lead to enhanced competitive advantages and sustain and grow the business by helping colleagues to achieve deliverables.

The CEO further said that in the information and dot.com era, she is seeking people who are highly educated and competent professionals in their specialty, who are capable of dealing with complex problems, and who can be productive in multi-disciplinary teams.

For decades, our universities have been churning out highly trained and world class specialists in disciplines such as finance, accounting, marketing, human resources and information technology.

Now, thanks to the Internet, globalism, and the fast changing world economic models, an added competency has become essential: cross-functional literacy. This literacy requires re-thinking of the value adding results that each discipline is tasked to deliver.

MBA curricula are being challenged to embrace the multi-faceted challenges of globalism, business forecasting, determining short and long-term human capital needs, technology, regulation, finance and balancing quantitative and qualitative skills.

In order to do this, HR has to re-orient its deliverables so that they are viewed by other team members as technically competent in HR, profitability directed, productivity focused and generating competitive advantages through their work.

They also need to be seen as contributing to operational sustainability (that is, keeping the company in business) and performance-outcome oriented

How does HR—and other disciplines—do this? Let's start with a production department example.

Assume that in a production process the acceptable industry scrap rate is two per cent on a quarterly basis. Further, assume that your actual scrap rate is six per cent, also on a quarterly basis. The latter scrap rate simply means that six per cent of what is produced cannot be sold. The expenses of making the product cannot be recouped via sales to the customer.

Clearly, one of the performance goals of the production manager is to improve the process so that its scrap rate is two per cent or less. While the production team rightfully owns this problem, other disciplines can and do contribute their expertise to possible solutions.

Finance contributes by partnering with the production department to consider the costs and effects of excessive scrap rates. Human Resources contributes by working with the production department to see if the employees are properly trained in the processes, that they are sufficiently staffed to do the job properly, that they are properly led by their managers, and that their administrative needs such as compensation and benefits are consistently satisfied. Performance evaluations of the managers are scrutinised to see if their evaluation is consistent with the achievements of the department's goals.

In today's brutally competitive environment, CEOs have multiple constituencies to which they must be accountable. As a part of the strategic management team, HR must constantly define its value as an internal asset that directly helps the company achieve its business plan.



Ken Moore  
is Strategic  
Management  
Professor at State  
University of  
New York Albany.  
Email: kmoore01@  
nycaprr.com



# Training Programmes not up to Scratch, Shows Survey

Kenya needs to change its human resource training model to drive the country's and organisational growth, research has shown.

A survey by the Institute of Human Resource Management (IHRM) in collaboration with the African Management Initiative (AMI) also reveals that Kenyan companies are spending billions of shillings on training without realising commensurate results.

The biennial Training Talent Report said organisations must look beyond individual skill-building to the embedding of organisational habits, adding that successful Kenyan organisations are pushing beyond traditional training approaches, such as courses and workshops, to explore experiential learning and on-the-job feedback.

It draws fresh data on Africa's talent gap and presents insights from more than 130 Kenyan companies on how to improve the impact of workplace learning and development.

According to the report, the training gap is particularly acute in the estimated 750,000 companies that make up Kenya's formal SME sector.

"Effective young managers hold the key to Kenya's future prosperity and achieving Vision 2030," said AMI Chairman Jonathan Cook during the launch of the report. "Yet organisations in our report cite a talent gap, and traditional training models seem to be broken. Our young managers need a fresh approach to drive forward their organisations and the country as a whole."

The report identified key talent gaps in management, talent, employability and entrepreneurship, with most corporate training programmes not meeting the needs. Sixty per cent of Kenyan companies find training too theoretical with a similar number advocating a greater focus on people skills, it said.

"The red-hot requirements now are for young managers and entrepreneurs to develop more effective personal habits in the workplace," said IHRM Executive Director Samson Osero.

"Our education system and workplace learning programmes have maxed out on technical skills and rote learning. And many of our managers are not equipped for success in the 21st century workplace—whether it's a large institution or SME," he added.

Of those interviewed, 80 per cent of HR managers cite tangible change in their company as the leading requirement from their workplace learning investment. The report shows that traditional management courses have, in the majority of cases, failed to achieve this.

This is due to an emphasis on individual skill development over effective "management practices".

The report highlighted the emergence of blended learning, which integrates online and face-to-face learning. The programmes combine the face-to-face interactions with peer-to-peer learning and accountability communities that can run on mobile platforms.

Of the Kenyan companies that have applied this model, 85 per cent reported improvement in operating efficiency as a direct result.

"Kenya has one of the most highly developed digital ecosystems in Africa. We are not fully utilising this to improve practices in the HR profession and in how we deliver workplace learning," said Mr Osero.

The Training Talent Report involved contributions from big businesses, entrepreneurs, investors, NGOs, educators, training providers and consultants from across the continent.

# Strength of a Woman

*New research shows women are better at using soft skills crucial for effective leadership and superior business performance*

Women are more adept than men at using their emotional intelligence competencies, a new study shows.

According to research by organisational advisory firm Hay Group, women score higher in all competencies except emotional self-control, where no gender differences are observed.

Data from 55,000 professionals across 90 countries and all levels of management, collected between 2011-2015 using the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (ESCI), found that women more effectively employ the emotional and social competencies correlated with effective leadership and management than men.

ESCI was developed and co-owned by Case Western Reserve University professor Richard Boyatzis, Daniel Goleman and Hay Group.

The tool measures 12 emotional and social intelligence competencies proven to impact business performance: achievement orientation, adaptability, coaching and mentoring, conflict management, empathy, emotional self-awareness, inspirational leadership, influence, organisational awareness, positive outlook, teamwork and emotional self-control.

"Historically in the workplace, there has been a tendency for women to self-evaluate themselves as less competent, while men tend to overrate themselves in their competencies," said Boyatzis, "Research shows, however, that the reality is often the opposite. If more men acted like women in employing their emotional and social competencies, they would be substantially and distinctly more effective in their work."

In fact, when assessing the competency levels of both genders across the 12 key areas, Hay Group research found:

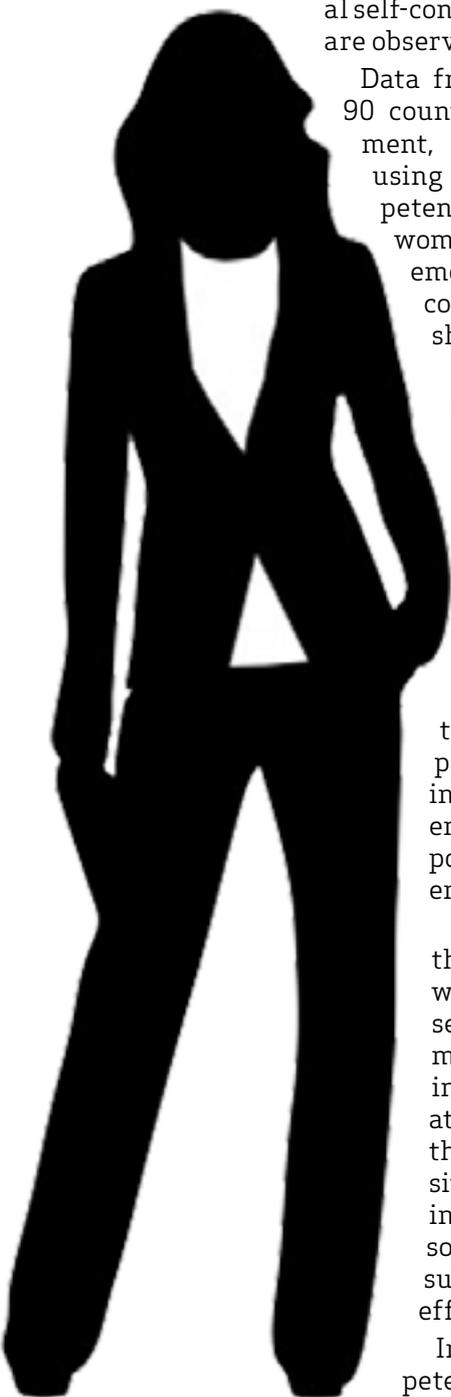
- \* The greatest difference between men and women can be seen in emotional self-awareness, where women are 86 per cent more likely than men to be seen as using the competency consistently (18.4 per cent of women demonstrate the competency consistently compared to just 9.9 per cent of men).
- \* Women are 45 per cent more likely than men to be seen as demonstrating empathy consistently.
- \* The smallest margin of difference is seen in positive outlook. When it comes to this emotional intelligence competency, women are only nine per cent more likely to exhibit the competency consistently than men.
- \* Other competencies in which women outperform men are coaching and mentoring, influence, inspirational leadership, conflict management, organisational awareness, adaptability, teamwork and achievement orientation.
- \* Emotional self-control is the only competency in which men and women showed equal performance.

"The data suggests a strong need for more women in the workforce to take on leadership roles," said Goleman, co-director of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organisations at Rutgers University.

"When you factor in the correlation between high emotional intelligence and those leaders who deliver better business results, there is a strong case for gender equity. Organisations must find ways to identify women who score highly on these competencies and empower them."

As organisations increasingly recognise the importance of providing resources to further nurture and develop female leaders, women who score highly in these emotional and social intelligence competencies will rise to the top, the researchers said.

Through greater emotional intelligence, both men and women are able to boost performance within their organisations, accomplishing their goals through both internal and external stakeholders.



# Need for Succession Planning

By Clement Wadegu

The word succession planning has been defined by many scholars as a process of identifying and developing internal people with the potential skill to fill key business leadership positions in the organisation.

There are many reasons why organisations need to be thinking about succession planning. The most important, of course, is that we rely on staff to carry out our missions, provide services and meet our organisation's goals. We need to think about what would happen to those services or our ability to fulfill our mission if a key staff member left.

A succession plan, simply put, is a component of good HR planning and management.

Succession planning acknowledges that staff will not be with an organisation indefinitely and it provides a plan and process for addressing the changes that will occur when they leave. Most succession planning focuses on the most senior manager, the chief executive, but all key positions should be included in the plan.

Key positions can be defined as those that are crucial for the operations of an organisation and,

because of skill, seniority or experience, will be hard to replace. Organisations need to be viewed as a going concern by having a documented exit policy or strategy that will allow continuity even after a good employee has left. This means that organisations should have continuous mentorships programmes and training.

Employee exits is inevitable, though organisations must develop a motivation policy so as to attract and retain competent employee. This includes internal promotion of junior employees to senior positions and only out sourcing when there is no competent person to fill the position. But then again, if recruitment is done from outside, it could show there is no succession planning within.

My experience with county governments shows lack of succession planning as new faces are brought in to fill very senior positions while there are very competent personnel. This increases the wage bill and demotivates other employees. All organisations, no matter their size, need succession planning as a culture.

Clement Wadegu is a member of IHRM. [cwadegu@gmail.com](mailto:cwadegu@gmail.com)

## Millennials muddle future growth plans

A recent surge in young workers is giving senior executives sleepless nights in crafting a workable succession plan, says a recent survey by Deloitte.

Most companies say they are becoming overwhelmed by young employees who prefer shorter working hours and are constantly changing jobs.

In addition, employees aged below 30 years, technically referred to as millennials, hardly stay in one organisation for more than three years.

"More organisations are saying they don't have leadership in place to drive the growth agenda the way they would like to. It's becoming a barrier in a country that is exporting most of its workforce to other geographies," said Deloitte senior

human capital manager Debbie Hollis.

More than 163 business leaders and human resource managers interviewed in the Human Capital Trends 2016 said the shifting attributes in the workforce are making it difficult to attract and retain high-potential leadership talents.

Millennials are also demanding accelerated learning and career growth and have a sense of purpose in what they do, which is piling pressure for organisations to structure their value propositions.

The survey that reached out to 7,000 business leaders from 130 countries shows only eight per cent of local firms have a structured succession plan for millennials.



# Impact of Social Media in the Workplace

*Do online platforms add value  
or disrupt operations?* By Lucy Kirima

**S**ocial networking websites are becoming an indispensable part of our larger society, with many businesses using them as tools to enhance a better relational experience with their employees and customers.

The sites are a technological innovation that cannot be ignored anymore in the workplace, but they carry enormous benefits as well as detriments that could hinder organisational

productivity if not effectively managed. The preponderance and ubiquity of online networks in recent years has caused business leaders to think about their effect on business processes.

More and more people are using social networking sites to connect to friends and family, search for business contacts, collaborate on work processes that cut across organisational hierarchies, and create databases of social interests, news links and affiliations that may

influence their buying decisions. Organisations that learn and adapt faster to social networking trends will have a clear advantage in the market place and ultimately increase their bottom lines (Caloisi, 2008).

Employers are faced with the need to develop social media policies that allow the company to reap the positive benefits of social media use while minimising the negative effects. Employers must decide if the use of social media outweighs the potential for negative impacts.

Creating and maintaining company social media profiles allows the company to have an easily searchable online presence which can help the company reach out to new clients. The use of social media as a promotional tool also requires that the company have at least one person on staff who is trusted to update the corporate social media profile. This person is also required to respond to any client questions, concerns or feedback posted to the profile page.

Problems occur when employees abuse work internet access for personal use during work hours. Allowing employees to access social media profiles online during work hours can be a distraction. Employees may lose valuable work time playing games, talking to friends and updating their own personal profiles.

To keep employees away from the distraction of social media networks while on the job, many companies have chosen to implement a social media policy to limit the use of company property for personal internet media. However, these policies are difficult to enforce if employees are allowed to use their personal cellphones or bring their own laptops to the workplace.

An added benefit of social media in the workplace is that it can be utilised as a public relations tool for companies. It allows a measure of transparency to the company through posts, blogs and pictures and makes the company easier to relate to for the average consumer. Companies can use social media to gather mailing lists, distribute sale and special offer information, showcase product pictures and post positive media reviews. Use of social media for work is a very inexpensive, often free, way to promote the business to a wide audience.

Using social sites actually helps workers be more productive throughout the day. No one can concentrate on work for eight hours straight. Like the water cooler of yore, Facebook and Twitter are great places for workers to clear their heads before returning to the job at hand with a fresh outlook.

Additionally, instituting Facebook-friendly office policies helps you draw a younger employee base to your company. Because they've grown up using social media, employees in their twenties

and thirties are often hesitant to take positions at companies that block these sites. Adopting more lax practices with regard to social media will help the company keep younger staff, as well as the new perspectives they bring to your business.

Of course, pro-online policies are not without their drawbacks. Allowing social media usage on the job may leave your company liable should an employee post something inappropriate online. Training employees in the usage of social media is the best way to prevent them from posting anything that could be considered libelous or harassing while in the workplace.

Another downside of using social media in the workplace is the possibility of opening the corporate network to malware. Malware is intrusive software that can potentially damage company computers and networks. This type of software can also create an entrance point into the company's network for hackers, causing a possible security breach, and place viruses in the system that can corrupt files.

Most corporate grade firewalls protect against the intrusion of software such as malware. Given the often high use of work computers for internet access, technical support teams for companies generally scan the system regularly for malware.

If used effectively, social media can provide business with the opportunity to enhance its communications both external and internal as well as assist with management of business brand and reputation. However, by its very nature, social media creates many difficulties in the workplace. Its 'one to many' and 'many to many' structure combined with its immediacy and viral capacities, can create confusion as it blurs the lines between personal and public.

It's clear that social media usage in the workplace has both positives and negatives. However, in Facebook as in life, a little common sense goes a long way. Instead of banning social sites, or blocking them on your employees' computers, consider requesting that workers use these platforms occasionally and responsibly. Along with being polite and friendly to fellow employees, workers should take care when speaking about the company online.

In reality, each workplace needs to handle the issue differently depending on their culture, industry and expectations. However, there is no doubt that a paradigm shift is needed by employers to stop seeing social media as a problem. There have always been disruptions in the workplace and this will continue because at its core, people are social beings. Employers can be proactive and take the opportunity to see social media as an advantage and put policies in place to manage the negatives.



Dr. Lucy Kirima is a lecturer at the Africa Nazarene, Meru Campus. [lucymukatha@yahoo.com](mailto:lucymukatha@yahoo.com)

# What am I saying?

## Developing self-listening skills as a communication strategy

By Esther Ndirangu

**O**ftentimes, it has been said that good communication is that which gets the intended message across to the respective audience. In other words, the message, the encoding of it, the audience as well as the medium must be carefully planned.

In most cases, the intention is fulfilled without much fanfare. However, there are cases in which the unintended message receives more attention than the intended

**Effective communication will always keep in mind that devices are easier to recall than words are to retract**

message.

There is a popular local advertisement for one of the telecom firms operating in the country. In this advert, a young man needs to hold a phone conversation for a certain period of time so as to earn enough airtime to talk for unlimited periods of time. As a strategy, he decides to call his mother and tell her whatever comes to his mind. Indeed, he achieves his intention because he gets the free airtime to call his girlfriend.

However, he does not reckon with the unintended consequences of having his enraged parents' arrive at his doorstep in the middle of the night. It is almost certain that he had a moment of regret at his rash words, and an even more difficult time convincing his parents that he was just joking.

It is, therefore, important to first listen to yourself, and to follow your words to see what effect they will have. It is then that one can make plans to mitigate against any unintended consequences, or at least minimise the negativity it may create.

Following your words means developing a mental process that helps you put yourself in place of the recipient, interpret the message and analyse whether or not it has achieved its intention. This reduces the instances where one has to keep going back to clarify issues and clear misunderstandings. Some misunderstandings can cost a great deal to resolve or correct, hence it is better to get things right first time.

I know little about the game of golf but there is one thing I have observed; before the player hits the ball, he focuses on the



direction where he wants it to go, and once he hits the ball he follows it with his eyes until it lands. And only then does he move. He probably uses the time in between to strategise on the next move. If we could learn to listen to our words before we say them, then follow them to see the recipients' reactions, we would then be in a better place to make the necessary amendments so as to make the greatest positive impact.

These self-listening skills may be hard to learn or practice at first, but when the cost of errors is factored in, it then becomes clear that it is always better to err on the side of caution.

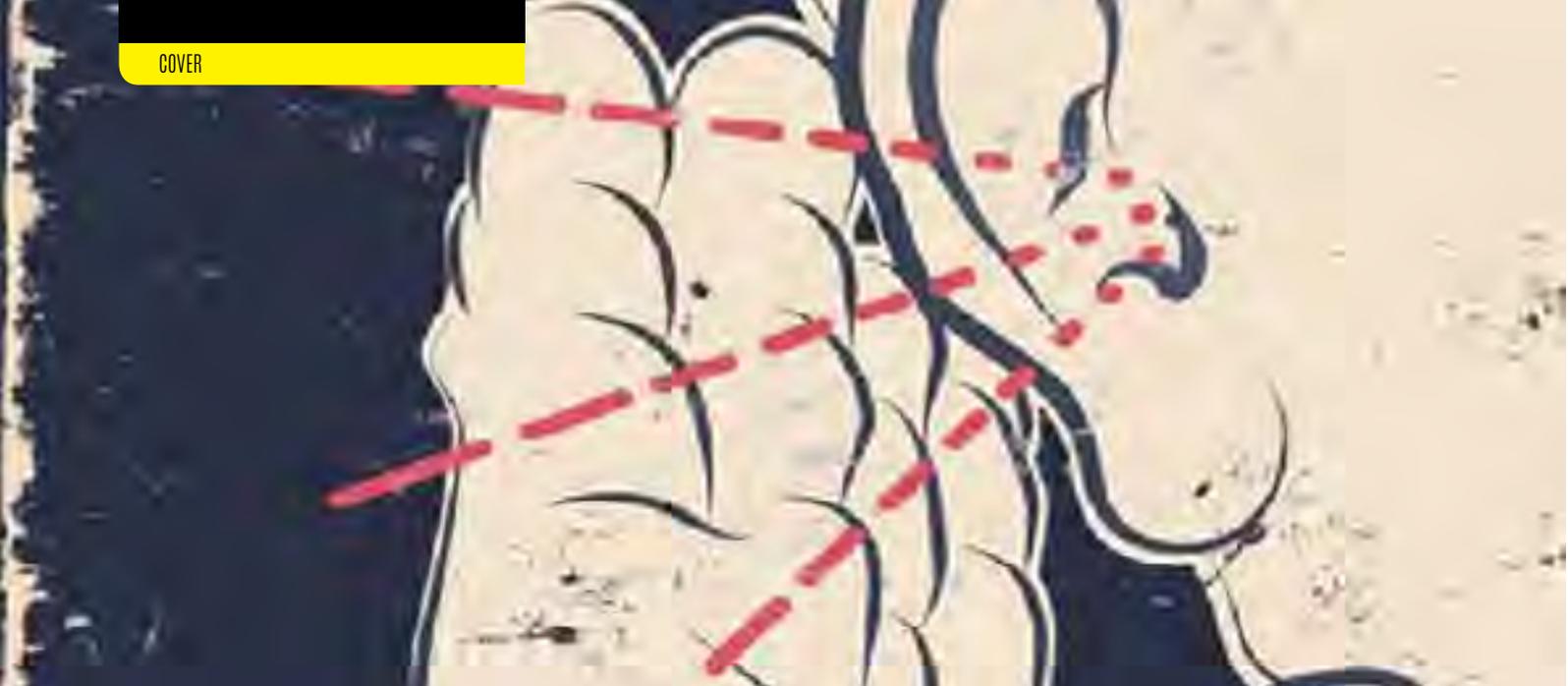
Technology and its array of devices have not made it any easier to listen to our words either, both verbal and written. Mobile phones and computers are normally equipped with auto-correct and predictive text options, designed to make our communication more efficient by reducing the time taken to type out each letter of the intended message.

However, this auto-correct option has been known to cause a few problems for those who rely on it too much. This is

because the word suggested in some cases may be conveying an entirely different message altogether. Some suggested words distort the message so severely that it becomes a matter of litigation, while others sour relations between friends.

When we send written messages without double-checking them, we fall into the danger of confusing the recipients. We are then forced to retract our messages and send out the correct message, a task that is time-consuming at best, and in the worst case scenario can lead to loss of business or finances. Several people have found themselves facing judges in a court of law because of sending text messages that they thought were harmless. Others verbally assaulted people, not realising that, these days, technology has a way of storing up our words and voices very efficiently, and when evidence is produced by the aggrieved person, there is no recourse for them. They probably regret it but the damage has already been done.

In developing self-listening skills, we need to always have our target audience in mind and then match our language to suit



the audience. This is because each audience is bound to respond differently to the way a message is couched. Even a simple greeting could elicit varied reactions depending on the audience involved.

It would be awkward to walk into a business summit and salute the participants as if they are all in a very informal social gathering. In a mixed-audience forum, it would also not be acceptable to use street language that is only suited to a younger audience.

Some might argue, "what's in a greeting?" but really the message starts much earlier. It really begins with the body language. We also do need to be aware of our body language skills. We must ask ourselves whether our words are conveying one meaning and our body another. In effective communication, both the verbal and non-verbal skills are required, and there is need to have them in harmony. Do we "listen" to our gestures and follow them through to see their reasonable effect on others?

Let us take two scenarios: in the first one, you walk into an office with a request for a service and you are told it will take a certain period. You then ask how you will be notified of the outcome. The official attending to you just casually tells you that you will be informed when it is ready and dismisses you with a hand gesture. Chances are that you will walk away knowing (or believing) that you will not be communicated to, unless you take the initiative yourself.

The second scenario is the same, only this time the official looks you in the eye and tells you that it may take up to a fortnight to resolve, but that you were free to call if

you wanted any clarification on the issue. Though in both cases the duration is uncertain, in the latter case you will have a more positive outlook and will likely look forward to a communication from the other end.

Words are powerful tools that every industry needs in order to build their business, and when it comes to the service industry, words are indispensable. Words earn millions in revenue for several businesses, especially in the telecommunication sector. They are also what advertisers use to attract customers, newspapers use to ensure faithful readership, and salespersons convince buyers that they have actually received the deal of a lifetime.

However, when a careless word is uttered or printed, the cost to a business is enormous. It is for this reason that words need to be pre-tested, much the same way that a new device is pre-tested by a manufacturer before being released to the intended consumer. All the parts of this device are normally carefully fitted together to function optimally. Any small defect is corrected before the device is released to the consumer. Recalls are also done if a defect is noted after release, so as to maintain confidence with the consumer.

Therefore, in learning to "listen" to our own words and mentally following them to see their effect on our audience, we minimize the cost of issuing retractions, the embarrassment of having to offer apologies and the pain of prolonged legal battles. Effective communication will always keep in mind that devices are easier to recall than words are to retract.



Esther Ndirangu is a Counseling Psychologist and Motivational Speaker. [ndiresther99@gmail.com](mailto:ndiresther99@gmail.com)



# Modern HR practices

## *How to mould highly-motivated employees*

By William Birech

**W**hy are employees in some organisations happy to stay on while others look for a change?

The reason is that some organisations know how to take good care of their employees and provide a working environment that helps them retain their identity, while proving themselves and growing along with the organisation.

Here are some of the best Human Resource practices that help in the creation and development of a highly-satisfied and motivated work force.

### *The work environment*

A safe and happy work environment makes the employees feel good about being there. Each one is given importance and provided the security that gives them the motivation and incentive to stay. This is usually achieved through employee satisfaction surveys to establish whether they are happy or not and if not what they think needs to be done to make the work place good and nice for service delivery.

### *Open management*

Employees don't like the feeling of being kept in the dark about what is happening in the organisation. They feel motivated and develop

enthusiasm only when the management opens up to them and discusses the company policies, sales, clients, contracts, goals and objectives.

This encourages participative management which can be done through meetings, forums or on line comments. An ex-CEO confided to me that he used to have "Friday Tea" once a month and he was able to engage and motivate workers on one-to-one basis.

Asking them for ideas on how to improve will get their creative juices flowing. Being open about everything related to the company will help in building trust and motivating the employees. This open management policy can be practiced using several tools examples are cited above.

### *Bonuses and incentives*

Every good performance is appreciated in the form of a pat on the back, bonuses or giving some other compensation for a job well done. Organisations that struggle to keep up with the attrition rate are mostly those that think employees are "just" doing their job. Even if it is the employee's job, completion in an appreciable manner calls for an incentive, and this goes a long way in boosting the staff morale. These incentives can be implemented at the individual as well as the team level and it has been seen that this works wonders in getting the best out of the

## Surprise deserving employees—when they are least expecting it.



from it. Even innovative ideas that the management deems fit for employees to see, can be stored here for all to see.

### *Broadcast employee achievements*

Every company has some employees who outperform others. Such performances should be highlighted and displayed where other employees can look at them; such as on the display boards and intranet etc. This will encourage others to give their best. A proper system should be set up to make a list of high performances at specific times in a year.

employees. But it is important to keep in mind that these bonuses should not be given without a reason, unless it is a commitment for annual bonuses or some such thing. Doing so will only reduce the perceived value of the bonuses.

### *Employee performance feedback*

This is one of the methods that is being followed by many blue chip organisations. Feedback is not only taken from the superiors, but also from other seniors and subordinates. This is a 360 degree process which is cumbersome yet very effective.

Previously, appreciation was only sought from the immediate boss or the management, but now organisations understand the importance of collecting performance feedback from several quarters. The opinion of everyone matters, especially for someone who is in a leadership role at any level. Each person in the team is responsible for giving constructive feedback.

This kind of system helps in identifying people who can perform well as leaders at higher levels in the organization. Even the senior level managers can use this system to their advantage, as a tool to improve themselves.

### *Employee evaluation*

Every company has an employee evaluation system in place but a good system links individual performance to the goals and priorities of the organisation. This works well when achievements are tracked over an year.

For a fair review of each employee, the evaluation, apart from being done by the boss, should be done by another person at a higher level, for whom the employee's contribution is important. Ratings can also be obtained by other employees. This ensures a fair and accurate rating of each and every employee.

### *Knowledge sharing*

Knowledge sharing is a wonderful strategy that helps in the betterment of the employees and their work. Keep all the knowledgeable information in central databases that can be accessed by each and every employee. For example, if an employee is sent on some training, the knowledge that is acquired by that employee can be stored in these databases for others to learn

### *Discussions*

Successful organisations nurture ideas and they understand that employees who are actually working and know the business can provide the best ideas. The management should have discussions with employees to get these ideas out of them. There can also be suggestion boxes to capture these ideas. Through this system, managers can find talented employees and develop them.

### *Rewards*

While recognition of talent is highly important, this recognition has to be made public and what better way than holding ceremonies and announcing to the whole world (the employees), the achievements of a fellow employee. There can be nothing better for an employee than the heady feeling from a resounding applause.

### *The surprise factor*

Who doesn't like a surprise? Surprise deserving employees—when they are least expecting it. It could be a gift certificate or a small reward of some sort. This surprise doesn't have to be limited to the best performers, but it can be randomly given to others as a motivating factor too. Anyone can be given this surprise reward. In 2008 while still working with the Postbank, we came up with a surprise to our staff at all the branches on Valentine's day and it worked wonders in that we arrived very early to our offices and unleashed a flower and card wishing the nice valentine's day to each member of staff entering the office. It was marvellous!! What creativity?

Such healthy HR practices encourage the growth of the organization as employees after all play a major role in the well-being of a company. Making an employee feel like a million dollars pays in the form of the success of an organization.

William Birech is a member of IHRM and Manager, HR & Administration at the Commission on Revenue Allocation.

# Becoming Indispensable at Work

*Some employees never leave, never get demoted*

*By Chris Gaborit*

**E**very business goes through a restructure at one time or another. Some companies seem to do this every few years, some every year, and some seem to be undergoing one massive restructure!

Have you ever noticed that some people are restructure-proof? Fear does not grip their body at the mention of that word. They never leave. They never get demoted. They are important to the company.

This reminds me of a story:

A big corporation hired several cannibals. "You are all part of our team now," said the HR manager during the welcome briefing. "You get all the usual benefits and you can go to the cafeteria for something to eat, but please do not eat any of the other employees."

The cannibals promised they would not.

A few weeks later, the cannibals' boss remarked, "You are all working very hard, and I am satisfied with you. However, one of our secretaries has disappeared. Do any of you know what happened to her?" The cannibals all shook their heads, "No," they said.

After the boss left, the leader of the cannibals said to the others angrily, "Right, which one of you idiots ate the secretary?" A hand rose hesitantly in admission. "You fool!" said the leader. "For weeks, we have been eating managers and no one noticed anything, but you had to go and eat someone important!"

Are you someone important to your company? Are you so valuable that they would miss you if you were no longer there?

When most people hear that dreaded word 'restructure,' fear fills their mind and the thought arises: "Am I going to be made redundant?" This is generally followed by a blubbering cry of, "Who will hire me? I have a mortgage to pay, car payments, and I need money to run my life!"

How can we make sure that we are someone important? What can we do to be in the best position to remain in the company? How can we be one of those people that are indispensable?

These are the 10 keys to becoming indispensable at work:

## 1. Hold the mindset that change provides opportunity

There is an ancient wisdom etched into Chinese vocabulary. The Chinese ideogram for crisis consists of two separate characters. One means danger; the other means opportunity. The proper translation is that a crisis is a dangerous opportunity. When confronted with a crisis, you need to recognize both the danger and the opportunity. Often the danger is more readily apparent, while the opportunity can be deftly concealed, since opportunity never dresses itself in the way everyone expects. The thing to keep in mind is to look for the opportunity as well as the danger. Crisis holds the potential for both.

In studying hundreds of famous people, whether politicians, sportspeople, business people, or spiritual leaders, I have found that crisis comes to every person in some way. Those who rise in the midst of crisis and see it as an opportunity to change and

# A kick in the teeth might be the best thing in the world for you

grow become greater and more powerful. They reach heights that they would never have attained had they never experienced that crisis. As masterful innovator Walt Disney put it, "You may not realise it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth might be the best thing in the world for you."

When change is imminent, hold the mindset that change provides opportunity, remain positive, and do not dwell on the danger but dwell on the opportunity.

## 2. Do not over-focus on the next job position but rather on the skills to be developed

I think that most people today are aware that the company does not have the same amount of loyalty to you that they used to a few years ago. There was a time the company would have a track for your life. You could go and meet with your Manager and they could tell you where you are going and when you will get there.

Today, you are your Manager and you need to plan out your own career path to your dream job. Therefore, it is important that you are not focused on the job position, but rather on the skills required.

I like to say it like this: "You have to do the job before you get the title." In other words, if you want to be the CEO, then you need to develop the hard and soft skills required for a CEO; you need the education of a CEO, you need to start dressing like a CEO (how you dress is how you will be addressed), acting like a CEO, speaking like a CEO, and then one day, when you have had the right amount of experience, someone is going to say, "I think so and so would make a great CEO!"

## 3. Building relationships with key decision makers

It is not only what you know but whom you know. I have seen people scoot all the way up the ladder of a company through being

connected closely with key decision makers.

Think of football coaches: they build their team and work with players for years, and then they get headhunted to another club as head coach, and what is the first thing they do? They try to get their key players to move to the new club, as well. They are like a positive cliché. Where one goes, they all go. Some coaches and key players move together all the way through their playing life.

Why? Because just as the players think that the coach has made them succeed, the coach thinks that the players have helped him or her succeed. They are a powerful team, and they feel powerful together. Sir Edmund Hillary needed Tenzing Norgay to climb Everest. We all need to find an "internal coach" whom we can work with and who would support us to climb our Everest.

## 4. Exhibit the ability to get 'stuff' done.

How do you build these key relationships? You build them by working on projects with key stakeholders, complimenting their skills, and making them look good.

As one Senior Manager put it to me, while probably you have not been the best at brainstorming new and creative ideas, in many situations be able to take a 'kernel' of an idea from other staff members, pour some fertiliser on it, and make it grow and flourish into a great program and actually implement it."

In projects, there are two key parts - the front end and the back end - people and tasks, marketing and operations, talkers and doers. If the key stakeholder is a talker, then you need to be a doer. If you are the key doer to the key stakeholder, then you are not going nowhere fast! They need you to keep making their projects succeed.

## 5. Treat everyone with genuine respect

It is not just about managing well, but also about how you treat your peers, team

# *There is never a shortage of opportunities for people who add value to their employers*

members, and vendors alike. You never know who you may be working for or with some day, so treat everyone as you would want to be treated and keep confidences when someone confides in you and wants some advice. As one senior manager in a global I.T. company put it to me, "I believe in creating good karma with those you interact with."

Along with the other things I have mentioned, this will stand you in good stead with decision makers and bring you allies and supporters in the organisation. When business takes a turn for the worse and they are considering who to cut, you often will not make the list if you have built those relationships and have shown the ability to deliver with quality over and over again.

## **6. Be truly engaged**

When decision time comes, and one of two people needs to be retrenched, the one who exhibits the keys to becoming indispensable at work will remain. The most important point is flexibility. A crisis means an opportunity for change in one's own work responsibilities, voluntarily and with individual foresight.

As one reader puts it, "In our business, we find time and time again that it is the truly engaged employees who rise to the occasion - and they are the ones you want to hang on to."

## **7. Provide exceptional value**

Consistently demonstrate exceptional value to your clients and to your business or organisation. In order to do this well, you have to invest time, energy, and creativity to understand your clients' and stakeholders' business, goals, and requirements.

Are you sugar or a diamond? Are you a commodity, or do you differentiate yourself from others? The better you deliver

and act on these principles the more value you provide to your employer. Any successful person will deliver quality and maintain good relationships with decision-makers. However, this fact alone will not make you stand out. Never be a commodity, always work to differentiate yourself, and stay hungry to differentiate yourself.

## **8. Multitasking is crucial**

Multitasking is crucial, and being able to juggle multiple balls without letting any drop is critical to being considered indispensable. Make sure to follow up as promised.

## **9. Watch out for signals from the business**

Watch out for signals from the business on appetite and readiness. There are times when it is all systems go and other times when it is back to basics. Those who are seen as indispensable always know the difference between the two and are ready to embrace the change. Learn to read the signs.

## **10. Growing Your Network Outside Your Company**

There is never a shortage of opportunities for people who add value to their employers. One of the greatest ways of doing this is to develop your network outside your company. I learnt this lesson later than I should have, but when I saw the power of networks, I worked hard to build and communicate with my network and build strong relationships that have brought benefit to businesses for which I have worked.

Never burn your bridges. This means: Keep in touch with your network. If you choose to leave a company, always leave it respectfully. Observe your obligations under your contract. Growing your network and gaining their trust takes years.

Chris Gaborit is  
managing director,  
The Learning Factor.  
Courtesy: LinkedIn

# Alcohol and Drug Abuse

*Control is urgent to enhance people development*



By Cyprian Kirimi

County governments are a relatively new concept in Kenya. They are meant to take development closer to the people, governed by the people themselves at the grassroots.

With the entrenchment of devolution, though, an attendant concern has risen: alcoholic drinks. Alcohol has for long been a constraint in the development of the country. It adversely affects human capital development as people under its influence cannot perform well, either in formal or self-employment.

To their credit, most county governments have developed alcoholic drinks control mechanisms to deal with the problem. This control is developed at the community level direct stakeholders have an input to it.

If well-crafted and executed, the measures have potential for a great impact on people's development by changing the habit and culture of drinking and drug abuse, as well as transform and save the lives of Kenyans.

The alcohol control mechanism involves a wider range of substances that destroy people's lives, particularly the youth. These substances include bhang, heroin, cocaine, alcohol and

tobacco. Effective execution of this control should take into account the following:

## LICENSING OF BARS

The issuance of licences for bars should be restricted to town centres only. There should be no bars in the residential areas as this is a security risk. The selling of alcohol, particularly hot drinks, in kiosks should be prohibited so as to enhance security and prevent access to underage people. Many kiosks across the country are known to sell spirits and drugs under cover of darkness where young people are the main target customers.

## ILLICIT BREWS

Production of illicit brews should be eradicated. Brewers enrich themselves at the expense of people's health. The brews have ruined many families as many men have abandoned their homes and it is worse when women take to drinking. It has also claimed a whole generation in some parts of the country due to irresponsibility on the part of men in forsaking their conjugal duties.

Illicit brew is cheap and therefore attracts many people. It encourages laziness due to poor health, and has claimed lives of many people through vehicle accidents, fights, poisoning and

Cyprian Kirimi is a member of IHRM and Kenya Institute of Management. [cgkirimi@yahoo.com](mailto:cgkirimi@yahoo.com)

# *heavy penalties should be imposed on suppliers of the drugs*

related diseases including loss of sight. It attracts mainly low-income earners and the unemployed who spend part of their income on illicit brew rather than family needs.

## ADVANTAGES OF CONTROLLED ALCOHOL SALE

Properly controlled alcohol sale promotes a healthy citizenry. It reduces idleness and laziness and encourages people to work and seek income-earning opportunities. It helps create responsible families and parenthood as well as enhancing security and safety in the locality. Control improves personal and community development.

## DRUG ABUSE

The effects of drug use are well known. They have ruined lives of many people and efforts should be made to eradicate them from their source, distributors and consumers. Heavy penalties should be imposed on those involved.

## STREET CHILDREN AND GLUE

Street children who are involved in glue sniffing and drugs are a menace to society. They are potential criminals and thus a security risk. They should be removed from the street and returned to their families, where these are identifiable. Rehabilitation centres should be established to cater for those whose families cannot be retraced and heavy penalties should be imposed on suppliers of the drugs.

## CHALLENGES

There are a number of challenges in the control of alcohol. There is lack of a political will among leaders. The giving and accepting of bribes is quite entrenched, making it difficult to eradicate the menace.

Lenient penalties handed to offenders tend to embolden them in the practice.

Often, there are complaints by the public that at times police and courts release offenders instead of charging and prosecuting them accordingly. There are times when offenders collude with county administrators, members of the public and police, which goes counter to alcohol control efforts.

The conduct of some chiefs and assistant chiefs as part of National Government at the grassroots is wanting as they are allegedly involved in abetting alcoholism, particularly illicit brews, in their areas through bribes.

## INCOME GENERATING OPPORTUNITIES

The control of alcoholism and eradication of illicit brews may result in loss of income for those involved. Efforts should be made to educate them and others on identifying other suitable opportunities for income generation. This will give a human face to the process and motivate people towards development.

## ROLE OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Our National Government has a major role in the control of alcoholism.

This responsibility, as President Uhuru Kenyatta has said many times, cascades to the County Commissioners and those below them. This disease can be eliminated if they are determined and committed to eradicate it.

NACADA, the agency charged with responsibility for fighting alcohol, should intensify its fight in the wake of numerous deaths caused by illicit brew countrywide. It should not relent in the fight and all Kenyans should cooperate with the purpose of eradicating the menace from our midst.

