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Front Cover features actual active members of HRMATT inclusive of Founding Members, Honorary Members, Present and Past Board Members, Secretariat Staff (Past and Present) and Student Members.

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Dear Readers,

It is with pleasure that I welcome the new and returning writers and readers of HR-MATTTers as we usher in this our third issue of our flagship magazine. As many of you may know, this is my first year as Editor-in-Chief on the Board of HRMATT and the experience has been extremely gratifying and enthralling. There is no mistaking the satisfaction derived from working with the talent and personalities that abound within this association.

We have much in store for you as we aim to please and satisfy your appetites for enriching, motivating and captivating content. The best part is that this corpus of knowledge resides right here with our members at the Human Resource Management Association of Trinidad and Tobago. In as much as we wish to edify through the next few pages; we also hope that the efforts of our writers will serve to be transformative. We hope that our content provides the impetus to not just write the script, but be the actors in your own destiny so as to take you to the next level of your journey.

The hours of dedication and passion spent in creating this magazine is one we should all be proud of, as we collectively have a role to play in shaping the future landscape of the HR profession. To our stakeholders and business partners, we thank you for your patronage, commitment and loyalty to our mission and vision for the leaders of today and beyond. With a collaborative effort, we hope to see our HR professionals transition from the interview room to the Board Room, as we pave the way for strengthened communication, business continuity and success.

We would love to hear from you! Please send your feedback to manager@hrmatt.com.

I take this opportunity to wish the association’s members a Happy 25th Anniversary and a bountiful and rewarding 2015.

Happy Reading!

Cheers and long live HRMATT,

Carolyn Correia MA, BA

The Editor-in-Chief of HR-MATTTers is also a published author, speaker and Communications Consultant.
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Fellow Members,

HRMATT is proud to deliver to you our loyal members the third edition of our annual publication of HR-MATTers, which was first successfully launched in 2012. A second edition was published in 2013, and like the first was highly subscribed to, both locally and internationally.

This edition seeks to take the HR thought and concepts even further as the varying topics are discussed and expounded upon. The local HR talent has once again been highlighted in this edition. We look forward to our readers putting into practice the new knowledge gained from the articles at their respective places of work.

This year’s magazine includes articles from international, as well as local speakers, and a featured interview with the Commissioner of Police of Trinidad and Tobago Mr. Stephen Williams who gives us an HR perspective on the Service. This edition also boasts of topics such as, “Learning to cope with crisis and trauma in the workplace,” “Creating a competitive advantage for your organisation and your HR career,” “Why must HR address productivity technologies,” “Harnessing our human capital- the key to profitability and a sustainable economy” and “Gen X vs Gen Y- striking the balance to ensure business continuity.”

For those of you who did not get a chance to attend HR-MATT’s highly successful 9th Biennial Conference in May 2013, you will now have another opportunity, as HRMATT will host its 10th Biennial Conference in May 2015. Stay tuned for further details.

Additionally, our HRMATT/SHRM collaboration is well on its way. One of our very first initiatives in this regard is the opportunity that was offered to HRMATT members to participate in the SHRM competency based certification pilot for the soon to be launched SHRM-SCP and SHRM-CP certifications. The pilot exam was held on October 24th 2014. One hundred active HRMATT members benefitted from this initiative, which was provided at no cost to them. Trinidad and Tobago was chosen as one of the few countries in the world to conduct the pilot project before SHRM officially launches the certification in early 2015. The participants will assist with the scoring process for the new certification, as well as, if successful, they would become one of the first in the world to hold this new certification.

HRMATT celebrates 25 years of service to you our valued members. On November 30th 1989 the Human Resource Management Association of Trinidad and Tobago was born. The first Executive was immediately elected. It consisted of six members: a President, Vice President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer, Public Relations Officer and Education Officer. HRMATT later added a seventh executive member as the post of Treasurer was introduced.
HRMATT became incorporated under the company’s act in August 2004 as a non-profit company. We presently have over fifteen hundred (1,500) members and the Association continues to grow on a daily basis. HRMATT is presently working on numerous initiatives to lift the standard of the Human Resources Profession locally, regionally and internationally. We thank our members for their continued support without whom none of this would be possible.

We will like to invite those of you who have not yet signed up for membership to do so and become a member of the Association and a part of this vibrant fraternity of Human Resource Professionals in Trinidad and Tobago.

It is my hope that this edition creates as much value for you (if not more) as the previous editions of HR-MATTers. We thank you for making this magazine your magazine of choice for HR knowledge and best practices.

Nigel Marquez
HRMATT President

“The local HR talent has once again been highlighted in this edition. We look forward to our readers putting into practice the new knowledge gained from the articles at their respective places of work.”
Employee engagement is the new buzzword in management-speak today. No management journal, website, blog, newspaper article or magazine, (including this one) is without something on the topic. But is it just the latest HR “flavour of the month”? Or does it have some traction? Does employee engagement really make a difference in today’s business environment?

What is Employee Engagement Anyway?

There are probably as many definitions of employee engagement as there are people talking about it. We define it in terms of four Ss: three Ss we have borrowed from the international consulting firm Aon Hewitt, and one S we have added. Before they were acquired by Aon plc, Hewitt Associates, an American consulting firm, defined employee engagement in the following terms:

- **Say**: the extent to which employees are willing to say positive things about their organization to co-workers, customers, friends and relatives and to recommend it as a great place to work.
- **Stay**: the extent to which employees are willing to remain with their organization, even if offered opportunities to work elsewhere.
- **Strive**: the extent to which employees are willing to exert extra effort, go the extra mile for their organization and exhibit behaviours that contribute to its success.

To these three Ss we add our own S – Satisfaction. We believe that employees can only be engaged if they are satisfied with their physical and emotional working conditions, their organization’s leadership, its strategic direction, its people management practices, its management style and their immediate supervisor. We propose that satisfaction is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for employee engagement. And so, we measure employee engagement in terms of whether employees “say,” “stay,” “strive,” and are “satisfied.”

Intuitively, a person who is willing to say good things about their organization, to stay with it through thick and thin, to work hard for it and are satisfied working with it, such a person should be more productive, more motivated and more committed to the organization. And more and more research is connecting the dots between employee engagement and the bottom line. Simply put, people perform better when they are engaged and organizations more readily meet their targets when people perform better. In other words, employee engagement makes organizational performance happen.

**Linking Employee Engagement to Organizational Performance**

A 2013 study conducted by the Harvard Business Review Analytic Services1 sought to find out the impact of employee engagement on organizational performance. The study surveyed over 500 senior level executives from North America, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and South/Central America, representing several industries. The top four factors identified by these business leaders as critical to their organization’s success were customer service, effective communication, employee engagement and leadership. Specifically, 71% of the business leaders ranked employee engagement as very important to achieving overall organizational success while 72% ranked recognition given to

---

high performers as having a significant impact on employee engagement.

The Harvard study discovered a group of companies the authors call “high prioritizers,” who see employee engagement as an extremely important priority and use a range of metrics and analytics to tie engagement to business performance. These organizations measure their engagement data against customer satisfaction survey results, customer retention and referral numbers, net promoter scores (NPS), increased market share; and a range of organizational metrics, including absenteeism, talent retention, lost-time injuries and productivity.

American best-selling author and “engagement guru” Kevin Kruse concludes from his study of employee engagement and organizational performance that, given the impact that engagement has on the bottom line, companies that ignore employee engagement are at risk of putting themselves at a competitive disadvantage.\(^2\)

**The Empirical Evidence**

A lot of the empirical evidence that links employee engagement to the bottom line comes from the work of global consulting firms like Gallup, Towers Watson, BlessingWhite and Aon Hewitt, among others, who track employee engagement and organizational performance among their clients. Kruse\(^3\) cites a 2012 study by Aon Hewitt, which looked at the relationship between employee engagement and financial performance using data from 94 global companies representing nearly 9 million employees. The study revealed a strong relationship between employee engagement and sales growth, with sales increasing by 0.6% after every one percent increase in employee engagement. The study also found that top quartile companies, which the authors defined as having a 72% and higher employee engagement level, produced Total Shareholder Return (TSR) 50% higher than companies with average engagement levels. And bottom quartile companies – those with engagement levels of 46% and lower, produced TSR 50% lower than the average companies.

In another study, a billion-dollar US company increased its operating income by $20 million with just a 1% improvement in employee engagement and to $102 million with a 5% improvement. In research prepared for

the UK government\textsuperscript{4}, the researchers found that companies with low engagement scores earned an operating income 33\% lower than companies with more engaged employees. Similarly, companies with a highly engaged workforce experienced a 19\% growth in operating income over a 12-month period.

In yet another survey, the Corporate Leadership Council\textsuperscript{5} studied the engagement level of 50,000 employees around the world to determine its direct impact on both employee performance and retention. This study found that companies with highly engaged employees grow profits as much as three times faster than their competitors and their employees are 87\% less likely to leave the organization.

On the other hand, disengaged employees can also cost an organization quite a lot. A study by consulting firm McLean & Company found that disengaged employees can cost an organization approximately US$3,400 each for every $10,000 in annual salary. They also cost the US economy up to US$350 billion per year due to lost productivity. Unfortunately, we don't have the corresponding data for local and regional organizations and economies. But we can well imagine the impact that disengaged employees are having on our organizations and economies!

The bad news is that employee engagement tends to be the exception, rather than the rule.

In the US, the numbers hover around 30\%. That is, less than a third – one in three persons, are engaged in the US workforce.

Our numbers are a bit better. We consistently find in the surveys conducted by our firm, Quality Consultants Limited that just over half – about 54\% of our workforce in Trinidad & Tobago and the region, are engaged. In fact, engagement levels tend to be higher in the rest of the region than in Trinidad & Tobago. But that's for another discussion.

This can't be good for our productivity and our economy. And when you look at the findings of the impact of employee engagement on organizational performance, it's difficult to ignore the importance of focusing on employee engagement.

**Creating an Engagement Culture**

So how do we engage employees? Organizations need to create an engagement culture, where employees want to come to work, want to contribute to the organization’s success and therefore, choose to exert discretionary effort for the organization.

Employee engagement is not just an annual or biennial survey (although you can’t begin to improve employee engagement unless you know where it is in the first place). Employee engagement must be the way of life of the organization, how it does business, how it behaves toward its employees and how it expects its employees to behave toward it. It’s an employee value proposition that says “our employees are our most valuable resource” – and means what it says by its actions!

Employee engagement starts even before a prospective employee joins the organization. It begins with the employer brand: how the organization is seen in its environment. What does it stand for? What are its core values? Its principles? What is its customer value proposition? Is it an employer of choice? A great place to work? What do its employees –past and present – say about it? Your employer brand will attract the kind of talent you want to work in your organization.

The engagement culture continues with the recruitment process, ensuring fit with the organization’s culture and core values; and continues with the onboarding process, retention strategies designed to create employee alignment with the organization’s vision, mission and strategy.

An engagement culture recognizes that engagement has to happen on three levels: the organization itself, the leadership of the organization and the employee. At the organizational level, an engagement culture manifests itself through its people management practices, by the physical and emotional environment that it creates for its people: an environment that people want to come to on a daily basis and give of their best, an environment that helps employees develop to their fullest potential.

An essential part of an engagement culture is what we call the three Rs of employee engagement – **Respect, Recognition and Reward**. In an engagement culture, respect is a core value, and it is demonstrated by the leaders and employees at all levels.

\textsuperscript{4} Cited in Reese Haydon, “Show me the money: The bottom line impact of employee engagement.” June 11, 2013.

\textsuperscript{5} Cited in Reese Haydon, “Show me the money: The bottom line impact of employee engagement.” June 11, 2013.
Engagement cultures also recognize and reward exemplary performance and top performers, something that we don’t seem to do very well, if we are to measure this by our survey results. An engagement culture also spends a lot of time communicating – open, frank, honest dialogue with employees, leveling with them and keeping them in the information loop about their organization and about matters affecting them. Open, clear, continuous communication increases trust and trust is another very important characteristic of an engagement culture.

The three Rs and the three Cs – communicate, communicate, communicate – are crucial to an engagement culture. But, sadly, these are real areas of weakness in our organizations. Also critical to an engagement culture is how the leaders behave, their style and practice of leadership and management. Do they demonstrate the core values on a daily basis? Do they lead by example? Are they open to constructive criticism from any level in the organization? Are they consistent in their behaviour? Do they communicate effectively? One of the interesting findings from our surveys is that, invariably, leaders don’t get high marks from their employees. In particular, employees seem to have a hard time trusting their leaders. Leadership is another area we need to work on.

However employees also have a role to play in creating an engagement culture. Employees need to take ownership of their own engagement. Engagement is a two-way street between the organization and the employee. The employee expects certain things from the organization: a decent salary, a comfortable physical and emotional working environment, respect from superiors and co-workers, recognition for work well done. But the organization also expects the employee to bring their best to work every day, to pull their weight, to go the extra mile and to show commitment to the organization. The recruitment and onboarding processes are central to these employer expectations and employee responsibilities.

The following figure summarizes the link between an engagement culture and the bottom line.

It’s not rocket science to figure out that people who are excited by their job, feel a sense of commitment to their organization and to its success, feel good about the people who they work with and work for, would tend to be more productive. Similarly, they would be more inclined to remain with the organization, more willing to say good things about it and more motivated to go the extra mile, which would lead to improved organizational performance and a better bottom line.
EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING

Do it Right from the “Get Go”

By Cavelle Joseph, DBA Candidate, MBA, B.Sc. 
Head Human Resources, National Insurance Property Development Company Limited

The first days and weeks of an employee’s entry into an organization can be best described as either “the best of times or the worst of times.” For the most part, it is a honeymoon period amongst strangers; often times combined with high expectations and hidden agendas. Considering these factors, it has been established that a new standard for transitioning new employees into organizations is needed.

Typical employee orientation programs can range in complexity as well as time, from a simple 1-day: “here’s the company’s human resource policies and procedures manual,” to elaborate models that span weeks or in some cases months. While this approach may have its merits, a newer more effective method is now being used by many organizations. Employers are now embracing the concept of onboarding in an effort to be best in class organizations.

We may ask ourselves, “Why invest in another process?” But the fact remains that the old adage: “first impressions are often lasting impressions” rings true and your new hire is still fair game to a competitor until she/he is actually onsite. Therefore, engaging the new hire as early as possible has strong merits. Employees are deemed our greatest assets: not only because they are the core of our delivery models; but they also account for our largest expenditure. Hence the reason organizations are investing in this process.

An operational definition of onboarding is a “holistic approach combining people, process and technology to optimize the impact a new hire has on the organization with an emphasis on both effectiveness and efficiency.”

Employee onboarding, has also been referred to as assimilation or organizational entry and socialization; the process by which a new employee is introduced to an organization and its vision, mission and values. Regardless of whether the employee is an internal or external candidate, it is “the process of acquiring, accommodating, assimilating and accelerating new team members to the organization.”

Onboarding begins from the moment a new employee is offered a position and ends when the employee is considered fully functional. It covers an employee’s first year, incorporates various offices and functions, addresses the whole range of employee needs (equipment, accounts, training, networking), and is strategic in focus. Employees are actively involved in the onboarding process.

Onboarding should never be confused with orientation and mentoring programs or their components. New employee orientation, for example, is often a discrete, stand-alone event, conducted by human resources. Unlike onboarding, orientation is transactional in nature and involves such tasks as


filling out benefits forms or paperwork. Orientation “provides the new employee with basic information about the organization.” According to McKimm et al. (2007), mentors are those who help another person through an important transition such as a new job or a major change in job responsibility, as well as career development and personal growth.  

Why is onboarding important?

Onboarding is the second phase of the employee life cycle, which has four identified parts: 1. “forecasting and finding talent; 2. onboarding; 3. managing talent; and 4. transitioning.”

Onboarding is important for several reasons. Firstly, large amounts of time and money are invested in the recruitment and selection of new employees; therefore organizations cannot afford to alienate a new hire at the beginning of his or her tenure. Secondly, the onboarding process ensures that new employees are up and running from the “get go”. Thirdly, according to Workforce Management (2009), if implemented properly, onboarding will enhance new employees’ transitions into the organization and help them become more engaged.

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), studies show that employee engagement is partially influenced by the new employee’s handling of the job during the first...
30-90 days of employment. Finally, a comprehensive onboarding program will include the communication of performance indicators, an assessment of the employee’s strengths and weaknesses and providing feedback, training, and networking opportunities, which can all increase employee performance by 11.3 percent.

Goals of onboarding

The underlying goals of onboarding programs include creating an inviting and positive experience for the new employee. A successful onboarding program delivers on the image that mirrors the environment in which the employee wants to work. The overarching goal of all onboarding programs is to align the new employee with key business strategies and communicate how the new hire will contribute to the overall mission and vision of the organization. This is done by setting individual milestones for the new employee to work toward during that first year of employment and even before the employee actually starts his/her first day. A Society for Human Resource Management (2011) survey revealed that up to 17% of organizations are starting networking and relationship establishment prior to the commencement of employment.

In summary, the goal of an onboarding program is to achieve:

- Higher job satisfaction.
- Organizational commitment.
- Lower turnover.
- Higher performance levels.
- Career effectiveness.
- Lowered stress.

Employee Onboard Tools

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<th>TOOL USES AND BENEFITS</th>
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<td>Company Websites</td>
<td>Websites provide a repository of forms, benefits information, contact information etc. for new employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Networking Sites (Intranet)</td>
<td>Provides opportunities for new employees to learn about job openings, connect with other employees and receive company news and updates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Materials</td>
<td>Video materials provide segments of executive messages to employees, which communicate your company’s vision, goals, culture etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sponsors and Mentors</td>
<td>When new employees have a sponsor or a mentor, it helps them feel more connected to the company immediately and provides an additional contact person (other than their direct supervisi) for questions as they arise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Games and Activities</td>
<td>These increase the new employees’ interaction with the company, enhance their learning, fast tracks their integration into the culture and energizes the new employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees Handbooks, Safety Guides, Benefits Guides, etc.</td>
<td>These hardcopy tools are useful as quick reference guides for new employees to locate company policies and benefits information quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Learning</td>
<td>These are a useful way to present information (for example, Safety Procedures, Management Procedures, Harassment Training etc.)</td>
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Common Issues with Onboarding Programs

Most organizations design onboarding programs with the best intentions, however there are some common errors to avoid:

• Providing too much information too soon
• Providing a “minimalist” program that only provides tactical information
• Including too much lecturing from one speaker or instructor
• Failing to prepare—the employee’s workspace, computer, and/or phone—which is not set up for the first day of work
• Lacking a formal program altogether

Successful onboarding is now a key part of a company’s talent management strategy. When we consider the high cost of recruiting, it becomes clear that we must effectively integrate new employees into the organization to ensure their success. Understanding that the employer owns the onboarding process and controls various steps in the process is vital to onboarding success and its sustainability over time. Taking the time to develop a well thought-out onboarding program will help ensure that new employees start off on the right foot. The key is to engage all the stakeholders in the process and the new employees in interactions that help them understand each another. Effective onboarding programs along with HRM best practices, will result in a faster learning curve for new hires, improved communication and a more productive and engaged workforce.
It happened one Wednesday afternoon. Brenda, the receptionist had a stroke. It was a medium-sized family company and employees came rushing in. Some called an ambulance, others her family, while a couple of us tried to administer first-aid to the best of our abilities. The paramedics came and took her to the hospital. Sad to say, a few days later she passed away. Just like that, Brenda was no more. Everyone was in shock. Warehouse, Production plant, office workers and owners were all present for Brenda’s funeral. It was a testament to her impact on the company.

Suddenly it struck me: What am I to do? I had planned to deliver a three-hour leadership training session on the following Monday after Brenda’s funeral. It was to be delivered to different groups of managers and supervisors. Should I call it off? Should I still go through with it? These were the thoughts that plagued my mind. This was a real personal and professional dilemma and I had no known resources to lean on at the time.

Most Human Resource (HR) professionals will have to deal with some kind of crisis or trauma in the workplace at some point in time. It may be a change in the structure of the company, a natural disaster, an economic emergency or as in this case—the death of a staff member.

When these types of events happen in the workplace, all parties involved will experience an emotional reaction. If this is not dealt with properly, it can have the potential to cause severe distress to the employees. This in turn can impact the entire environment and productivity in the workplace.

While we normally think of clergymen, counsellors, EAP or mental health professionals as the persons who address trauma, in many companies HR leaders are often requested by management to “deal with the issue.” Since I was totally taken aback by this situation, I approached a friend who is an expert in the field of workplace trauma. She assisted me in transforming my programme into a basic session, designed to equip leaders with the necessary tools to deal with trauma in the workplace. In so doing, we succeeded in enabling persons to cope with this real life experience.

Here is what I learnt and subsequently implemented for my team:

Create a Safe Place

Each training session was transformed into a safe place, meaning the session was utilized to discuss this event without making value statements or attacking participants in the session. Everyone is different and each person experiences the same event differently, so their responses varied. The important advice here is that everyone was able to have a meaningful expression of emotion.

When you lead a session such as this one, you will most likely need to provide an example and share your thoughts on what happened. I tried to make it short, sharing the impact of the event on myself and how it made me feel. Once the group felt it was safe to share, everyone felt comfortable to do the same. This also allowed me to demonstrate to the group that I was in control and I had a plan. It assisted in making everyone feel that the ship was moving in the right direction.
**Listening is key at the early stages**

It was recommended that I do not overburden myself at the moment, trying to solve everything immediately. In the initial stages, most employees will only want to know that someone cares. With further research, I discovered afterwards that the first 48 to 72 hours are critical.

After the initial responses to the questions: "How do you feel about what happened?" "How has the situation impacted on you?" "What impact did Brenda have on you?" Other employees felt comfortable enough to now think of ways in which to commemorate Brenda’s memory.

**Capitalize on group dynamics and strengths**

I was also told to build on the strengths of the group. On many occasions employees will envision the best ideas to commemorate the person who departed. So we created a "bowl of gratitude" where all the participants of the sessions were encouraged to write down something that they wanted to thank Brenda for and place it in the bowl. It could have been something that happened long ago or recently, each was valid, no matter how big or small the event may have been. The goal was to share with other members of the group the "thank you" notes first and then as a gesture of appreciation, pay tribute to Brenda’s contribution to the company and to us as colleagues and friends. The notes were then shared with her family.

**Recommendations for Business Leaders**

At the end of these meetings, we shared some final recommendations to which leaders must pay particular attention. One such example was that during the time of adjustment, all supervisors need to take care of the basics. This meant that the supervisors needed to be vigilant and ensure that their colleagues, who were especially affected, were taking care of their own basic needs like eating and sleeping. Sometimes, simple activities like sharing a meal may help a person to get back on track.

Some discussion arose as some supervisors wanted to focus immediately on getting back to work. This can help as well, as it gives employees a sense of control, but timing is critical in this delicate situation. If the leaders focused on returning to work too soon, without allowing a reasonable time for mourning, this may be perceived by others as uncaring and
insensitive.

Unfortunately, the company did not have an Employee Assistance Program, so the employees were unable to get professional counselling. Looking back, it is one of those services that you truly miss, when it is absent in the workplace. In hindsight I see this service as insurance for the well-being of the employees in times of crisis.

During the following days and weeks, with the help of several managers, I was able to monitor closely the progress of different teams and individuals. I was able to determine how they were coping with the situation. This also allowed us to make some follow-up meetings with teams that were having more difficulties in coming to terms with the loss (not surprising in the administrative area).

You may find that some of these recommendations seem “too simple” or “common sense”. Just remember that the simple tools are extraordinarily effective when applied, not because of the tools themselves but because of the extraordinary circumstances.

HR professionals will inevitably deal with company trauma at some time during their career. Your goal should be to ensure that you can help your team and company by not letting the traumatic event go unnoticed and provide a warm space for recovery. These recommendations are practical, economical and will give the team a chance to experience grief in a healthy way and regain the ability to move forward.

**Big NO’s for handling trauma in the office:**

- Avoid: “I know exactly how you feel” instead use “I can relate to what you are saying.”
- Don’t say critical things to the person or minimize the person’s pain.
- Don’t give unsolicited advice.
- Don’t monopolize the grief conversation. Listen more.
- Don’t let people go into “grief competition mode” as some may minimize the pain of others, in order to show that they are “hurting more.”

Don’t do it all by yourself. Ask for help when needed.
What is more difficult to deal with at work? People or the work itself? A former boss once told me: “It’s not the work that’s hard; it’s the people who make it hard.” What he really meant was that poor communication amongst colleagues creates most of our challenges. Sometimes, what should be a smooth, simple project turns into a complex mass of confusion because two, headstrong managers cannot agree on a way forward.

Poor communication impacts our workplace happiness, motivation, productivity and efficiency. If we could all get along, or at least communicate effectively with each other, we would find work a lot less stressful.

There are two sides to our need to communicate effectively at work. Firstly, there is the expectation of improving collaboration, boosting our personal brand and achieving business objectives. A great expectation yes, but we keep hoping for it. Secondly, there is the issue of navigating office politics and difficult situations.

You can craft a communications strategy that addresses both issues by following these steps:

1. Audit your communication style

Is your current style working for you? Do people view you the way you want to be viewed? Would your friends and family say that you are a nice person, but at work, everyone thinks you are aggressive and unapproachable? Are your words often misconstrued? Are you too passive and need to be outspoken to gain executives’ respect?

Ask yourselves these types of questions. Soon you will begin to see your strengths and weaknesses and zero in on the skills gap you need to fill. You can also ask a colleague whom you trust for honest, constructive criticism. Ignore your ego, so that you can assess your style objectively. I’m sure we can all learn from Hilary Clinton’s advice to women, which encourages us to: “Learn how to take criticism seriously, but not personally.”

2. Adjust your communication style

Now that you have thoroughly reviewed your communication style, it is time to adjust it. Let’s say your colleague thinks you are aggressive. In your eyes, you are simply being firm and direct. However, have you considered your tone of voice? Have you considered how the words you use affect the moods of others? Could you avoid being seen as aggressive, by being less blunt? Try delivering your words with positive body language.

You can still directly address the issue, but if you add some empathy to the equation, you can possibly discover elements that can convince your colleague to co-operate. You can begin by genuinely listening to the concerns of your colleagues and acknowledging that you understand their feelings, or you are at least making an effort to do so.

For example, let’s say you are working on a project and your colleague has not been pulling his/her weight. Let them
know that the deadline is approaching and ask if there is a reason they are not working as quickly or efficiently as they can. Is there something going on that is affecting them? Give them a chance to explain themselves. Listen to them. Then try to come up with a solution together.

Note that I am not suggesting that you let people walk all over you. Be assertive – which means being decisive and confident, without being inconsiderate and disrespectful. You are remaining true to your convictions, but in a more personable way. In this way, you are exercising influence.

If your colleague is still being difficult, you will have to be firm. Let them know that you are only being firm, because if you both do not complete the project on time, you will both face dire consequences. That way they know your behaviour is motivated by consequences and not by you having a ‘nasty’ attitude.

Did you recognize how you just turned being blunt into being direct, specific and approachable? This is how you turn a weakness into a strength. This is how you can increase understanding and co-operation.

3. Use empathy to open doors

Listen to understand...not respond. Active listening is key so that you can discover opportunities to find common ground, for example, with your colleague in the previous scenario. If you are thinking of what you want to say while the other person is speaking, you are not listening to them. If you are not listening to them, how can you craft a response that addresses their concerns?

If someone is angry, don’t look at the anger. Listen for the pain behind the anger. Take notes and address that pain in your response. Be clear, concise, confident and considerate. This fosters loyalty and co-operation. If you are a competitive person, you may view empathy as a weakness, but it may well be your competitive edge in navigating tense, office relations.

4. Make people receptive to you

People are sometimes already impatient before you begin a conversation. They may also be wondering:

1. What do you want from me?
2. Is this going to add to my already stressful day?
3. How much of my time are you going to take?

For these reasons, you should get to the point quickly. If you answer the three questions above and outline a few steps that clearly demonstrate how they can mobilize a task, it helps employees to be more co-operative. This would make all the difference, even if your request will add to their already heavy workload. Why? Simply because you are being helpful and considerate.

I can almost hear you saying: “But isn’t it their job to think of a way to do it?” It may very well be. But if you are asking for a favour at 3 p.m. for something that is due at 8 a.m. the next day, it pays to be helpful. Remember you will call on them again. So talk to them in a way that makes them receptive to you.

5. Avoid communication breakdowns

Conflict is a part of work life. No university degree prepares you for this. Arguments get started for many reasons:

- Deadlines,
- Peculiar personalities,
- Who stole whose idea…
- The reasons are endless

To avoid severe cases of corporate malaise, nip issues in the bud early. If you are feeling unappreciated, instead of creating drama with your boss, schedule a meeting to discuss your performance. In this meeting, ask how he/she thinks you add value to the department.

If you do not hear any of the positive points that you were thinking of, by all means mention them in a calm and rational manner. Demonstrate exactly how you think you do actually add value with reference to tangible and specific examples. If you are the one in the leadership position, let employees know that you have an open-door policy. Be open-minded and do not make personal attacks.

6. Have a non-reactive frame of mind

You know just how draining it can be if you have ever been in a disagreement with a colleague. What if you trained yourself to count to twenty in your mind – because sometimes ten won’t do – and force yourself to respond in a non-reactive way? What if you could first answer with logic and be unemotional, while using emotional intelligence? Let’s look at an example.

Picture this: Suzy from Marketing is getting under your skin for the umpteenth time, because she still has not learnt how to prepare an engaging presentation for your employee forum. Instead of shouting at her, being
sarcastic and insulting her work, how about you ask her what support she needs?

Begin by saying to her: “Suzy: I think I know what you are trying to say, but I’m not very clear. Can you explain it to me?” During that conversation, you can give her tips on how to boost her presentation. Disagree by asking open-ended questions, that is, those that require more than just a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response. Suzy recognizes that you think she needs to do a better job, but you are communicating this to her in a non-threatening way which can help her to become more receptive to you.

If you are the one facing criticism, ask the person which specific areas they think that you can improve. Use words like “specifically” and “exactly” to get them to be direct and clear. Critics can sometimes be vague, especially if they are making a personal attack on you. By asking them to be specific, you weaken their subjective position and force them to be constructive.

7. Consider differences in communication styles

When I got my first managerial position at the age of 27, I had to learn how to navigate generational conflict. As the youngest member of a management team that was comprised of mostly persons in their 40s and 50s, I was often considered to be the ‘new
“Sometimes a face-to-face conversation works better than any e-mail, text or WhatsApp message. It might augur well to pick up the phone and build a better rapport with colleagues. Call them before you send an e-mail, which can be misconstrued.”

kid on the block’. Ideally, age should not be a huge factor. Many times it is, especially since each generation views certain situations differently.

For some managers, I had to suggest new ideas about using technology for marketing and employee engagement. It was important that I dealt with this in a way that didn’t make them feel as though I was trying to show them up for not being as technology savvy as I was. For some, I asked questions that led them to internalize and understand my vision.

I visited their offices from time to time, in an attempt to engage in light-hearted conversations about work and non-work issues. This helped me to understand their personalities and way of thinking and to break down barriers to communication. With that understanding, I was able to nurture a positive relationship with each manager and earn their trust and respect, by communicating the value I brought to the table in a way that they could understand and appreciate.

8. Don’t let technology undermine you

Sometimes a face-to-face conversation works better than any e-mail, text or WhatsApp message. It might augur well to pick up the phone and build a better rapport with colleagues. Call them before you send an e-mail, which can be misconstrued.

By supporting a less personal medium such as your e-mail, with a more personal one like the phone or a face-to-face conversation, you can build trust. Moreover, if you are talking to them face-to-face, please resist checking your phone and reading a WhatsApp message while conversing.

9. Find your trademark

For those of us who are naturally vivacious, we sometimes feel the need to quell our high spiritedness. What we do not realize is that this trait can be our trademark and open doors for us.

Many people like being around ‘live-wires’ who can brighten up a room. If you are more introverted, you can still have a strong presence. Some of us command attention by the tone of our voice...some by our refined dispositions. Yet others win support and influence those around us simply by the way we phrase our words, which gives meaning and empathy to conversations.

It is important to tap into a personality trait that makes an impact. You do not have to be the stereotypical professional. If you are using the same template as everyone else, how can you stand out? Effective communication is the key to career success. Be sure to implement your workplace communications strategy in phases. Think, from numbers one to nine, which tips are most applicable to you? And which ones can you start implementing today?

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION

1. Audit your communication style.
2. Adjust your communication style.
3. Use empathy to open doors.
4. Make people receptive to you.
5. Avoid communication breakdowns.
6. Have a non-reactive frame of mind.
7. Consider differences in communication styles.
8. Don’t let technology undermine you.
9. Find your trademark.
According to Thomas Friedman in his book “The World is Flat” he argued that, “Globalization 3.0 makes it possible for so many people to plug in and play, and you are going to see every colour of the human rainbow take part.” As the world flattens, businesses must recognise that they no longer compete in small and closed markets, but now they compete with the world. It is a fight to remain competitive. Only those who can create and sustain that edge would be able to survive into the future. Friedman went on to say that both individuals and companies have been empowered to compete in this new era.

How then can a bookstore for example remain in business with the introduction of the tablet and virtual books that can be bought off the Internet? Perhaps they can offer an Internet shopping experience that can deliver hard copies in a shorter space of time for a cheaper cost. Or maybe they can offer the online versions that customers could rent for a cheaper cost than online purchases. And for those people who like to go into the store and browse they can offer a highly superior customer experience like no other. These options are all people centric.

In Apple’s “Think Different” commercial, (1997) they said, “The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do.” Innovation is key to sustainability and behind it all are the people who come up with the ideas and the people resources that execute. The solution is simple; our Human Capital if effectively equipped with the right resources and properly positioned can ensure that the nation’s economy continues to grow exponentially and remain competitive.

Learning institutions must be on-board to make certain that the right type of individual is developed to enter the business world. Whether geared towards entrepreneurship or working for others, the system must place the human capital one step ahead. Being one step ahead will allow you to compete on a global scale and do so effectively. Your local Human Resource Professional Association should help guide this process.

The Human Resource Management Association of Trinidad and Tobago (HRMATT), the local association for Human Resource professionals in Trinidad and Tobago will be accurately placed to guide the process locally. Our teachers and lecturers who educate at learning institutions must ensure that the curricula is structured in such a way so as to open the minds of students to think not just outside the box, but create and design the box whilst being globally focused and consumer driven. This is the first step in harnessing innovation and getting your human capital to generate the required ideas to stimulate and advance the economy.

What stops a local designer from any country from exporting their line throughout the world? They simply need to receive and act on the right ideas from the human capital that supports their business and it will happen. If properly positioned, and with the right message to attract the appropriate audience, the merchandise can become widely sought after.

The idea that HR professionals prop-
erly harness and effectively use the
talent of their human capital to grow
and expand the business is indeed ne-
cessary for the economy to grow. In my
article for last year’s HR-MATTers, I
spoke of how the role of the Human
Resource professional is changing, in
that the HR professional of the future
should not only understand the busi-
ness, but also must be the business and
drive its strategy. HR must align the
human capital of the business to be the
business’ competitive advantage.

Dave Ulrich in his book “HR From
The Outside In” stated that, “HR effec-
tiveness will show up in customer share,
investor confidence, and community rep-
utation and HR credibility will be drawn
from those outside the company as well as
from those inside.” The idea of creating
a competitive advantage is something
that is not easily copied; it is some-
thing that is both fluid and dynamic.
Human capital can be, in this regard,
an ideal Competitive Advantage.

Bringing that idea back to a nation-
focused perspective, the government
must buy into the concept and gov-
ernment’s policy objectives should
support this direction. Therefore, the
government must reward innovation
and entrepreneurship, as well as es-
establish and implement policies, which
will ensure that HR professionals in
the workplace meet a certain standard.
It will provide for HR professionals to
drive the company’s human capital and
leverage on their people to be the busi-
ness’ competitive advantage. This will
make certain that the country’s econ-
omy will continue to grow.

In Trinidad and Tobago, HRMATT
has begun looking at a licensure initi-
ative for the Human Resource profes-
sional, in the hope that through an Act
of Parliament the HR profession will
be standardised. Once this is done, all
practicing HR professionals in Trini-
dad and Tobago will be equipped with
the tools to make sure that they play
a pivotal role in the business and that
through their human capital they will
not only create sustainable and profit-
able businesses locally, but will also be
able to provide effective competition
on a global scale.

Nothing should stop Trinidad and
Tobago or any country for that mat-
ter from creating the right customer
service environment to be the number
one tourist destination in the world.
One can leverage on the human cap-
ital element to make this a reality. Of
course one must have the government’s
commitment to restore and preserve
all historic sites and tourist attractions,
as well as have effective policy to align
with the tourism initiative. Trinidad
and Tobago can certainly create a per-
fect tourist’s paradise because of the
bounty of our islands. We can compete
globally in the area of tourism once we
leverage our human capital to do so.

India uses their people resource to pro-
vide various services to the world. They
execute their competitive advantage
through people by providing a cost ef-
"The idea of creating a
competitive advantage is
something that is not easily
copied; it is something that
is both fluid and dynamic."
ective and reliable source of labour to the world.

HR must work together with the trade unions to effect buy-in to the process. All parties must understand the realities of competing in a global market. Our human capital is critically important and it is imperative that this model be implemented with our industrial relations system in mind. We must maintain the balance of safeguarding workers’ rights against the ability to remain competitive with the rest of the world. If parties work together, we will ensure that a proper and sustainable system is built. If we are trying to build a system that is people-centric then we have to partner with our various trade unions to confirm that the process has their support. After all they are our workers’ representatives and their role and function is to narrow exploitation while we ensure that workers do a fair days’ work for a fair days’ pay.

Also, of extreme importance is making certain that our leaders (our CEO’s, General Managers and Business Owners) understand the critical role that HR plays in business success and that the Head of HR is adequately positioned at the CEO’s side in running the company. This will allow for the execution of the proper people strategy that will drive productivity, innovation and profitability of the business. This understanding should be at all levels of business no matter the size. The importance of the HR function must be maintained in order to attain the desired results.

Let your human capital be the renewable resource, which contributes significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP) of your country. Our Human Capital can not only build, but also continue to grow and nurture a stronger economy in the long run.
Interview with

MR. STEPHEN WILLIAMS
Acting Police Commissioner of Trinidad and Tobago

by Renatta Tulsie MBA
President & Chief Mindshaper® Caribbean Centre for Leadership Development

LEADERSHIP & STRATEGY

RT: Tell us Commissioner, how and why did you join the TTPS?

SW (flashing a broad smile): Well, it really had to do with a childhood dream. Since I was a little boy, I looked at the profession and considered it a good direction in life to pursue. For me, I liked being a police officer. I was 17 years old when I started to work at WASA as a Water Works Trainee and one year after, at 18 years, I left to join the TTPS. My first posting was at the St. James Barracks, as it was then called.

RT: What does it take to be a good leader in our T&T context at this moment in time?

SW: The best way of summarizing a good leader for our context, is what was proffered by Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan in the book “Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done”. Their writings speak about ‘emotional fortitude’, the foundation of which is ethical leadership. I think that this quality is critical for a leader today in our country, but it also involves all the tenets of authenticity, self-awareness, self-mastery and humility. For me, all these traits form such important features of the leader today, because if you do not master yourself and understand what are your capabilities and shortcomings, you will not be able to portray that genuine nature. Humility allows you to be able to listen to the lowest levels of an organization and take on-board their ideas and suggestions. You need to be strong enough to speak up if something is wrong, regardless of any political implications for you as a leader. Functioning in the domain of Trinidad and Tobago today, you will not stand out as a true leader if you don’t subscribe to some of these tenets. People tend to see through and could easily point out those who do not stand up and stand out. For me emotional fortitude is the core of a good leader, especially for our country today.

RT: What is the single most important strategic decision you ever made as head of TTPS?

SW: It would have to do with the decision to change our policing approach. Previously we followed the traditional Triple-R method, used by most countries in the region and even globally, that is, random patrol, rapid response and reactive investigations to crime
reports. We were very heavily station-oriented. In 2012, I took a leadership decision to move away from that traditional approach to seek out what I would call a Triple-T strategy which involves evidence-based policing that features targeting, tracking and testing. This allows the TTPS to make best use of research-evidence on what works, and let that data guide your policing decisions. For example, we have adopted the issue of “hot-spot policing” which has been tested in numerous countries and popularised in the U.K. and U.S. as a useful approach to crime prevention and crime reduction. We benefited from Cambridge University research, support and training on hot-spot policing and used evidence to guide change in our policing strategy. This resulted in a decrease in crime by the end of 2013 (the lowest annual total for twenty-nine years).

HR & WORKPLACE ISSUES

RT: How do you view your human resources?

SW: Well in many areas we operate in the traditional domain of ‘personnel management’ and have not brought effectively on-board contemporary human resources considerations. In that context, people are speaking but not doing. It’s challenging, for when we sit at leadership we have to move the organization out of that old thinking and norms, into the new domain where modern human resources practices become the feature. It is more difficult for an organization like the TTPS because we are strapped with public servants (apart from police officers) who perform administrative and support functions, but fall within the broader public service. For example, a staff member could be assigned somewhere one day and transferred somewhere else another day. We may speak about titles like Director of HR, Senior HRO and concepts like absence-management but the people who are responsible for human resources, may not readily appreciate what is required to function within the domain of contemporary human resources management.

TTPS is caught up in the broad web of the public service and it’s critical to find a way out of that. At the recruitment stage, I have mandated that recruiting officers during interviews give heavy focus to persons who can truly demonstrate a “passion for people”. The TTPS has struggled with its image historically, so we really want an individual who is warm and welcoming to become police officers. Once we can bring those customer-oriented persons into the organization, then we can train them in police skills. There are additional features which require pre-test scenarios, psychometric evaluation, psychological assessments and polygraph testing which are already in the regulations.

RT: The image of TTPS is always under scrutiny due to the crime situation in the country. How do you engage your officers to project a positive image of the police service?

SW: Well, firstly we start with training all our officers so that they have an appreciation of what their role is as how society sees a police officer. This role involves fulfilling the needs, expectations and demands of society. So, honesty is a key component and it must be
evident at the point of recruitment. We do background checks but that is not foolproof so if you go into a community, because of societal culture, people may not necessarily share all they know about an individual—they prefer not to share at all, rather than share negative information about somebody. This is an unfortunate dichotomy as the society demands a quality officer, but that very same society is not contributing in a significant way so that we can hire that quality officer.

We also host meetings with officers at a Divisional and Station-level to bring them all together and share developments, so that they could have a better appreciation of the direction of TTPS and concerns in relation to current issues. We do use that as a method of reaching out to officers to encourage them to follow ethical standards. Whilst there is a prescribed ‘code of conduct’, it’s also about encouraging and guiding societally-acceptable officer behaviour. As you are aware, the TTPS is always in the public eye.

RT: That leads nicely to my next question—a few corrupt officers may be tarnishing the image of the majority of honest ones in the TTPS. How do you get your officers to value ethical conduct?

SW: Whilst we motivate and train officers, on the flipside we also need to have a strong system of disciplining officers. The TTPS must be seen
as an organization in which the public can trust and hold officers with a level of confidence, as they share information. That relationship is already brittle because of historical challenges and misperceptions.

RT: How active and efficient is teamwork within the TTPS?

SW: Teamwork is critical to policing—especially from an operations standpoint. In the field, if the person cannot work in tandem with you for support and protection, then the individual’s life is on the line. Teamwork is critical as we look to moving the TTPS forward in implementing new policies and strategies. In fact, every facet of the business of policing requires teamwork with our internal and external stakeholders, and so it’s therefore a key component.

RT: If you had to describe the culture of TTPS as an animal, which animal would it be…and why?

SW (throwing his head back, laughing): You know what, I’ll say a donkey….and it really has to do with how difficult it is to change things. So, that ‘stubborn’ nature of the donkey is what I see as the dominant feature, if I have to use an animal to describe the organization.

The second, from the perspective of more local reality, is Dr. Eric Williams. Growing up, there was a clear understanding of the individual who despite limitations, was able to achieve the heights of academia and was seen in the context of having super intelligence. In those days it wasn’t routine for someone to have a PhD. This triggered some interest in me and I saw him as this superhero who had such an effect on the entire country, where as a young boy in school, without ever seeing the individual, there was this larger than life image of the man. And, I would think, if I can emulate a person...
like him and also one day contribute to Trinidad and Tobago and its development.

RT: What are the key principles that govern the life of Stephen Williams?

SW: Ah, for me it’s about Honesty; Integrity; Sensitivity or caring for people but this has both strengths and weaknesses and as a leader it’s about striking the right balance. Also, Patriotism is something bigger than any individual; and lastly Commitment that’s why I have spent my entire career in policing. I became an attorney in 1995 and did not move from TTPS to a more lucrative legal profession. I stuck it out by choice…because I’ve always believed and will continue to believe in this cause.

Commissioner of Police (Acting) Mr. Stephen Williams is married to Ava-son Quinlan Williams and is the fa-
thor of five children namely Blaine, Dane, Colin, Josane and Christopher. He uses his limited free time to enjoy the splendours of nature through gar-
dening and admits to coping with the pressures of the job by praying, reading and tending to his plants.

What’s the legacy he will like to leave behind? It’s for the successful turn-
round of the TTPS as shown by low levels of crime; the consistent delivery of high quality policing service and the public’s recognition of a safer country.
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Over the last 25 years, HRMATT has laid a strong foundation that has led to the widespread recognition of the profession and the broadening of the skills of Human Resource Practitioners in Trinidad and Tobago. After its formation in 1989, in fewer than 10 years the position of HR Manager found root in almost every public sector and state run organization’s chart. The proliferation of HR Managers in the public service is now viewed as an essential component to the public service reform process. The profession has grown in both academia and in business; with mid-size and large companies now enjoying the fruit of having an HR Practitioner as business a partner.

HRMATT as an Association has also enjoyed many successes and to date can boast of still having a fully functional Secretariat and hosting twenty-four (24) successful Annual General Meetings. We have always had a smooth and democratic election of Board members and transition of Boards. The professionals who serve voluntarily at this level of the Association have continuously and graciously transferred the work of building HRMATT to their fellow HR professionals. Every successive Board has upheld and respected the tenets of the 1989 Constitution which has not called for many fundamental changes over the years. This definitely speaks to the foresight of the first members who drafted it. Today, HRMATT has a membership database of over 1200 HRM practitioners in Trinidad and Tobago. We live our motto, “Promoting National Development through People” and we continue in this vein by taking a leading role in facilitating change and transformation in organizations through our membership.

HRMATT has successfully hosted nine (9) World-class Human Resource Conferences in Trinidad and Tobago featuring keynote international and regional world renowned speakers such as Dr. Jack Fitz-Enz the key proponent of Organizational/Human Capital ROI and as recently as 2013, Dave Ulrich the guru of all things HR who was invited to address a room full of enthusiastic HR conference delegates. The lists of hosted Conferences are as follows:

7. HRM without Boundaries – Managing people resources in a Single Market Economy (2005),
8. Building world-class organisations… Unlocking the Human potential (2007) and
9. HR Upgraded…V2k13 and beyond (2013).

Moreover, HRMATT continues to lead the way in the hosting of “just-in-time” seminars featuring the best of HR’s subject matter experts, as well as, several Government Ministers bringing relevance to topical issues. We continue on an annual basis to recognize the phenomena of “HIV in the Workplace” and have hosted four (4) breakfast seminars on the issue over the years. We recently dealt with other topical issues such as “Mental Health in the Workplace” and “Workplace Shutdowns due to HSE Concerns”.

As a mainstay, the HRMATT HR Toolkit (HRTK) programme is a cut above the rest where continuing education and training of the HR professional is concerned. We host at least fifteen (15) HRTK every year, facilitated by industry experts. The structure and content of the programmes are geared toward translating theory into practice and equipping the HR Professional with real HR solutions to existing HR problems. These HRTK programmes have been so successful that we are increasingly being asked to facilitate these programmes on a bespoke level to organizations in both the public and private sectors.

Many may not be aware that HRMATT was one of the first to embrace the need for a National Job Career Fair and Exhibition. HRMATT hosted its biennial Job/Career Fairs (JCF) in 2002, 2004 and 2006 in collaboration with NALIS and other quasi government agencies. The JCF was conceptualized and delivered as a “one-stop-shop” for students, school leavers and eager job seekers. Now career fairs
are a regular feature and although we have passed the baton with respect to organizing them, we regularly participate in job career fairs as an outreach to inform students and job seekers as to the qualifications and competences required of persons entering the HR profession.

Today, as envisioned back in 1989 by the founders and first members, we have a sound relationship with SHRM (Society of Human Resource Management), the U.S. based and largest HR Association in the World. In May 2014, HRMATT signed a Training Partnership agreement with SHRM with the specific objectives:

1. To facilitate the examinations and certifications of HRMATT members and HR Practitioners in the Caribbean who satisfy the requirements of the SHRM-CP and SHRM-SCP new competency based body of knowledge and examinations.

2. To deliver SHRM/HRMATT approved programmes to raise the level of competence of the HR professional beyond the local context.

3. To use the certifications as a vehicle to assist HRMATT and legitimise the effort to attain licensing for the profession via the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and the rest of the region.

To underscore our development of the profession once more, we must highlight that the 2013/2014 HRMATT Board has managed to make the HRMATT Student Chapter (HRMATT-SC) a reality. The HRMATT-SC constitution was approved at the 24th AGM of the Association and the interim committee of young, vibrant, student members has been hard at work developing plans for outreach programmes to all tertiary institutions which will culminate in the hosting of the inaugural HRMATT-SC AGM and the election of a governing Committee in March of 2015.

HRMATT’s members can also boast of having the first Caribbean magazine (in print) exclusively featuring Human Resources and Organisational development matters. The magazine, HR-MATTers, is in its third year, with the third edition being in circulation from January 2015. We have received feedback about the quality of the magazine from as far as Dubai in the Middle East. The magazine’s Contributors range from professionals in academia, to HR Consultants and other well-known “seasoned” HR gurus. This has assured the production of a magazine of quality and variety in content which is important for any professional magazine.

From the very beginning (1989) HRMATT’s plan has been to blaze a trail, set a high standard for its members and make a difference on a national scale. From the HR-MATTers Magazine, to Membership Discount Card, to the Student Chapter and to the strategic objective of achieving licensing of the profession; this and successive Boards of HRMATT have more than their hands full. The six (6) founding members inclusive of the former member of Parliament Mr. Gordon Draper (deceased), then Group HR Manager - Ansa McAl Group; Ms. Maxine Barnett, then Group HR Development Officer - Ansa McA; Ms. Lisa James, then HR Manager - National Flour Mills, Mr. Glenn Wilson, then HR Manager - National Petroleum, Ms. Coreen Jones, then Assistant HR Manager, National Petroleum and Mr. Gerard Joseph, then HR Officer, Amoco (now BP) can safely admit that their dream for the profession and the Association is coming to a reality.
This August I had the pleasure of being a guest speaker at a regional HR Conference in the Bahamas, where I spoke about the evolving shape of HR and how HR must better ‘shape-shift’ to meet business demands. My role at the conference was to bring a non-HR perspective to an audience that was open to fresh insights. The key point of our discussion was the importance of Talent Management as HR’s key contribution to the organization and HR’s role to lead this process.

I’m not the only one thinking that HR needs to evolve and adapt. An August 2010, SHRM-EIU global survey found that C-suite executives believed that the two biggest challenges in the next 10 years would be: 1. Retaining and rewarding the best people and 2. Attracting the best people to the organization.

Whose side am I on?

There is only one side - meeting organizational goals. As a consultant, my job is to evaluate current and desired performance at any stage in the Talent Management Process and generate solutions for my clients to meet their goals. I am not HR, I am Performance. However, I do get to interact a lot with HR professionals as performance often falls within this function (we can debate that another time!), so I understand the unique challenges of HR as they interface between employees, management, stakeholders, culture, industry, HR best practices and the law.

What is Talent Management?

The role of HR is to successfully ARM for its organization. For the non-HR reader, ARM stands for Attract, Retain and Motivate. In a nutshell, HR is tasked to hire the best talent, prepare them to perform current operations, develop them for future roles, close any skill gaps they may have along the way and help management engage employees to ensure retention. HR does this while also performing traditional personnel management tasks such as compensation, employee benefits and employee events to name just a few.

Is ARM-ing easy? Given the old adage that ‘the most important resource, is the human resource’, then the answer would be “no”. If you don’t have the right people, you won’t get the right results. And business is all about results. Thus more than ever, HR needs to focus on getting the right people.

Why should Talent Management be HR’s Everything?

According to a 2005 study done by PwC in the USA, “Almost all of the nation’s fastest-growing private companies, 83 percent, are outsourcing HR functions.” If more functions are being outsourced, what then is your core area of contribution? More than ever before HR needs to focus on Talent Management as its core function to help achieve business results.

Outsourcing is not the only reason to re-focus on Talent Management. There are other reasons: globalization, technology, challenges in managing up to four generations, line management absorbing functions and past failures which decrease HR’s voice in the C-Suite.

According to a Forbes 2014 article, “Positioning the HR function and talent management to contribute to the overall effectiveness and financial performance of the organization is the best way the HR function can add value to corporations.” Did you note that this statement came from the type of magazine management reads? Need I say more? While line management understands the technical needs for a job, HR must function as the guide for all other steps in the Talent Management Process.
How to know if you need to review your Talent Management Process?

If two or more of the following are true for your HR Team and organization, it’s probably time to call a team meeting.

- The words ‘Talent Management’ do not ring a bell
- You do not know the steps in your process by heart
- You have been hiring, on-boarding, developing and motivating your employees in the same way for the last 3 years
- You feel the need to defend the way you ARM and feel you don’t need to know anything else

If you cannot relate to any of the above, pat yourself on the back and keep doing what you’re doing.

The Talent Management

The Talent Process actually includes two activities happening simultaneously:

1. HR Team Development
2. Creation of the organization’s Talent Management Process

Change is as much an internal process as an external one.

At the same time that HR is driving the Talent Management Process, they must work on the team’s skill gaps. Perhaps the team members need training in areas so as to develop business acumen, communication or consulting skills, in order to better understand business needs and effectively communicate with their audiences. Perhaps you will need to have someone trained in change management or project management on your HR team as many HR initiatives are projects that require a strong change agent approach/process. Only by closing their own skill gaps can HR then support the business to do the same.

There are several options in developing your own Talent Management Process: do the research, study best practices, decide which would be a fit for your organization, select the KPIs/metrics aligned to strategic goals, get working on them and communicate, a lot. Most of all, think like management – we always ask: “What would be the best decision for the business?”

The Talent Management Process is the output of the HR team. It is the way for HR to positively impact the bottom line. Getting better results in performance through your people and processes is everyone’s job and HR is well positioned to lead the way.

Give it your all, ‘cause it really is ‘Talent or Bust’.
The world of work is changing and organizations need to understand and adapt to these inevitable changes. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) has special expertise panels that identify topics of importance to the HR profession and insights to uncover human resource trends.

The following are a few challenges that will have a significant impact on the workplace and the HR profession in the coming years:

- There has been an improvement in many aspects of economies throughout the world; however there lies challenges which may have implications for budgets and business strategies;
- The need for skilled and educated workers is rising and is influencing everything from employment branding to global relocation practices;
- The ongoing influence of developments in information technologies and the use of social media have become especially important;
- Across the world, workforces are aging and the Millennial generation is beginning to make its mark on the workplace. More generations are working together and the workforce has increased diversity, which will increase the need for flexible and effective work/life strategies;
- Metrics and more in-depth data analysis are required to demonstrate the return on investment of key HR expenditures;
- Increased globalization, market interdependence and other factors such as political unrest and partisanship in countries around the world are making uncertainty the "new normal."

In addition, the SHRM Foundation’s Thought Leadership Initiative has identified three top trends impacting the workplace in the next 5 to 10 years. This will have major implications for talent management and include the following: employee engagement and retention, the manner and location where work gets done and defining work that better allows for new, more efficient, sources of labour that may include individual contractors and volunteers.

As leaders start engaging and integrating a global workforce, cultural integration and conflict will continue at both societal and corporate levels. HR leaders must use talent analytics for competitive advantage as the talent shortages will continue to grow globally. This will require HR to become the provider of human capital analytics for input into strategic business decisions.

Creating a COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE
For your organization and your HR career

by Robert Garcia, MBA, SPHR, GPHR, HRMP
Director of Global Business at the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).
THE VALUE OF HR CERTIFICATION

In order to address the existing business challenges and those in the future, you need not only be knowledgeable in the HR disciplines, but demonstrate a mastery of these competency-based skills through certification. In recent years, there has been a growing appreciation of the benefits of HR credentials among HR professionals and a commitment to career-long development.

The benefits of certification include career progression, recognition, knowledge and personal achievement. Certified individuals perceive themselves to be more marketable and thus pursue more opportunities for new jobs and advancement.

Organizational benefits include an increase in the collective HR knowledge and an increase in the confidence of employees in their job. Additionally, certification helps the reputation of the organization and stimulates HR employees to think more strategically and to even improve company profitability. On average, HR professionals attributed a significant personal and organizational return on investment to professional certification.

In 2012, PayScale, a compensation solutions company, conducted research with a database of over 35 million profiles and 250 compensable factors. Their data revealed that HR certification credentials are becoming an integral step to building a successful HR career. PayScale reviewed the impact of HR certifications on the careers of HR professionals and found that acquiring an HR certification led to faster career growth and higher salaries. The positive impact of the credentials was seen across job titles, industries and geographies.

EVOLUTION OF HR

Business is changing and employers...
are demanding that HR professionals adapt to that change. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is committed to ensuring that the certification our members achieve is recognized as world class and distinguishes and prepares them for today’s marketplace.

We now live and work in a global economy, in which geographic borders are virtually non-existent and innovation, agility and strategy are critical success factors. The HR profession operates at the core of this global economy, ensuring the alignment of organizational strategy with a high-performing workforce. The new SHRM credentials, SHRM Certified Professional (SHRM-CP) and SHRM Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP), address these new roles.

UNIVERSAL SKILLS AND RECOGNITION

SHRM Certified Professional (SHRM-CP) and SHRM Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP) are based on a single, comprehensive SHRM Body of Competency and Knowledge™ (SHRM BoCK™) and are relevant worldwide, giving professionals the recognition and flexibility to use their knowledge, skills and competencies anywhere their career takes them.

COMPETENCY AND KNOWLEDGE

SHRM-CP and SHRM-SCP test HR competencies as well as knowledge of their application so as to ensure the professional’s ability to demonstrate what they know and the effective transfer of their knowledge in the various situations encountered. Alex Alonso, PhD, SPHR, Vice President, Research, SHRM, asserts: “Competencies are vital in terms of accreditation in large part, because they are a way of ensuring that you are proficient of not just what you know, but how you apply what you know.”

PREPARING FOR THE EXAMINATION

Each certification has an examination that is based on a body of knowledge and competency. The exam content is created and validated by practicing HR professionals through a practice analysis study. In addition, each certification has eligibility requirements that include professional and educational experience that must be met in order to register to take the exam.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the world’s largest association devoted to Human Resource Management, has developed the SHRM Learning System materials to prepare for these certification exams. The new SHRM Learning System for SHRM-SCP and SHRM-CP features an enhanced user experience complete with updated content that reflects the body of knowledge and competency on the certification exams. It includes application exercises and modular exams to develop specific HR competencies. HRMATT is a training partner throughout Trinidad and Tobago and is planning the certification preparation programs and seminars in early 2015.

About SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management)

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the world’s largest association devoted to human resource management. Representing more than 275,000 members in over 170+ countries, the Society serves the needs of HR professionals and advances the interests of the HR profession.

Founded in 1948, SHRM has more than 575 affiliated chapters within the United States and subsidiary offices in China, India and United Arab Emirates. In addition, SHRM provides resources, global best practices and a network of valuable contacts to its members throughout the world. Outside of the US, SHRM has Member Forums to encourage local networking among its members and provide programming and additional resources.
UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

with Author of Adventures of an HR Manager,

Jeremy Francis, B.Sc, PGDHRM

Author, Managing Director/Principal Consultant of Beyond Consulting Limited

HRMATT is all about enhancing and facilitating the professional development of its members. Our goal is to keep you informed about our growing membership so that you can learn from their experiences, thereby inspiring an ethos and support system for meaningful endeavours. In keeping with this objective, our Editor-in-Chief Carolyn Correia chatted with Jeremy Francis about his journey to publication.

Jeremy Francis is the Managing Director/Principal Consultant of Beyond Consulting Limited—a company that focuses on People and Process Development. His experiences has led him to publish his book: Adventures of an HR Manager which is the story about an HR Manager who made a mess of a strategic HR presentation during a very critical meeting with his boss. He is granted five days to redo the presentation and possibly save face. With the help of a friend, he makes a fresh start and learns a few key elements about how to make HR relevant to business.

He asserts that his experiences in HR and his pursuit of entrepreneurship stemmed from working in the HR and Process Improvement fields over the past 14 years.

"I recognized that productivity and efficiency issues within companies are not simply a "People or a Process issue," but involve a delicate balance between these two dynamics within an organization. Beyond Consulting offers services that bridge that gap. I started the company in early 2009, mainly because I always found it difficult to work for people and was interested in defining my own brand of HR Management."

Jeremy says that his inspiration behind the book emanated from witnessing the struggles of HR professionals to make an impact in the boardroom. He says: "as a consultant, I’ve learned over the years how important it is for HR to forge a strong relationship with the leadership of the organization. In so doing, we strive to avoid becoming a rubber stamp for management decisions."

What differentiates Adventures of an HR Manager from other competing titles in its genre?

"Most business books are not written in story/parable format. It is similar to the One Minute Manager series, but unlike those books, the focus here is HR. The simple, easy to read format proves effective in breaking down technical areas of HR into an implementable program for any business."

The author’s recommendations for upcoming HR professionals and aspiring authors are to:

"Document your process. Write it down. Copyright it."

Francis says that it is not always necessary to copy and regurgitate information, but rather to believe in your ability and establish your brand.

HRMATT extends congratulations to our member Jeremy Francis on the publication of his first book! We do hope that his story inspires other members passionate about writing and HR to follow their own dreams.

Available on Amazon on kindle and paperback.
At present, there are many challenges facing both the State and Trade Unions in our country. Challenges such as outstanding negotiations, contract labour as well as Occupational Health and Safety compliance are issues that continue to be addressed in more of a confrontational rather than collaborative approach.

Prolonged labour disputes have a negative effect on productivity, employee morale and negatively impact the economy of a country. The labour legislation is established to improve the standards of workers and also to promote stability in the country. Section 40 of the Industrial Relations Act Chap. 88:01 of 1972 provides for compulsory recognition and a duty to treat with recognised majority trade unions and Section 42 of the said Act also provides for protection of trade union members against victimization for trade union activities.

The labour legislation provides protection for both parties, (employers and trade unions) and an opportunity to resolve disputes in a civil manner. The purpose of the Industrial Relations Act of 1972 is to make better provision for the stabilization, improvement and promotion of industrial relations. The Industrial Court which consisted of two (2) divisions: the Essential Services Division and the General Services Division expanded to four (4) divisions to include a Conciliation Division and the Occupational Safety and Health Division. Under Section 10 of the Industrial Relations Act, Powers of the Court, "the Court may in exercising its powers shall make an award in relation to any dispute before it, as it considers fair and just having regards to the interests of parties and the community as a whole."

Section 12 of the Act states that the Court may also attempt to promote a settlement of a dispute through the conciliation process. The Court through the conciliation/mediation process encourages parties to make further attempts, after reporting an unresolved matter, to engage in dialogue with the assistance of a Conciliation Judge and to work towards settlement of the dispute. The Industrial Court in its annual report, indicated that as at 31st July 2013, 25 percent of the matters before it were disposed of through the conciliation process. The conciliation/mediation process is an opportunity to have earlier and less costly resolution of disputes. The Court has been adopting this approach more frequently in an effort to promote a collaborative approach to dispute resolution.

The President of the Industrial Court, Her Honour Justice Deborah Felix in her message, referred to significant attempts on her assumption of office to

1 The Industrial Relations Act Chapter 88:01
address the issue of the backlog of outstanding judgments and that there has been some positive movements in that regard.

The number of judgments delivered by the Industrial court during the period 2010 to 2012 is shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judgements delivered by the industrial court</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 - judgments delivered by the Industrial court for the period 2010 to 2012.²

The Industrial Court in its 2013 annual report, provided statistics on the number of matters filed before it in the Table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Matters filed before the industrial court</td>
<td>692</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>878</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 - Matters filed before Industrial court for the period 2009 to 2013

²Annual Report 2013 Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago.
This is an indication that the system of having matters determined through the Court via the legal process is active. Generally the industrial relations climate nationally has not been as volatile in the past.

The improvement in the Minimum Wage legislation; the introduction of the Maternity Protection Act of 1998 with a recent amendment to increase maternity leave from 13 to 14 weeks, as well as the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 2004 with amendments by Act 3 of 2006, point to attempts by the legislature to recognize the need to ensure workers’ rights are addressed. However, more efforts could be made toward the improvement of workers’ rights and also address some of the concerns of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in relation to a Decent Work agenda. The Workmen’s Compensation Act Chapter 88:05 was to be replaced with the Employment and Injury Benefit Bill, which has been outstanding for many years.

Compliance to the OSH Act seems challenging and I am uncertain how active and effective the OSH Agency is, given the present disruption of work in many state sector organizations. I am also uncertain if there is sufficient understanding of the procedure to be followed, as outlined in the OSH Act under Sections 15 to 19 of the said Act, which provides guidance on:

i. The refusal to work
ii. The report of refusal to work
iii. Refusal to work following an investigation and the investigation by Inspectors and employees.

What we do know, is that work stoppages at the Immigration Offices in Port of Spain and San Fernando, The Government’s Treasury Department, The Inland Revenue Department (Ministry of Finance) and the National Insurance Board’s Port of Spain Office have caused serious inconvenience to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. As a result of the stoppages, work permit and passport issuances and renewals have been delayed with the resulting backlog and time consuming queuing of many working persons - private sector employees, entrepreneurs and other persons. All of this impacted negatively on productivity and the national economy. The impasse at the Immigration Offices seemed to have continued for too long without any meaningful attempts toward resolution.

The Trinidad and Tobago Government and the ILO were engaged in efforts to promote labour and management cooperation for a peaceful and productive society. On 31st October 2000, the then Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, The President of the National Trade Union Centre (NATUC), the Chairman of the Employers Consultative Association (ECA) and their representatives signed the agreement - Compact 2000 and Beyond: Declaration of the Social Partners to address Economic and Social Issues. Compact 2000 was essentially an agreement committing the parties to enter into serious, social dialogue with the following objectives:

- To improve labour and management relations
- To explore the potential of tripartism in the social dialogue process
- To recognize the need for increased investment and rapid economic growth and development
- To promote a stable currency and international competitiveness
- To focus on all stakeholders
- To increase the awareness of the responsibility of social partners for national development

We recall the political impasse that followed the two general elections and the change in government in December 2001. In 2001 the ILO engaged in the PROMALCO project, (Promoting Labour/ Management Cooperation) which identified best practice companies in terms of industrial relations and labour management cooperation. Interestingly, Trinidad Cement Limited (TCL) was identified as one of those companies together with Republic Bank and National Flour Mills. When one reflects on TCL’s impasse during its collective bargaining process in 2012 and the devastating impact of the 90 day strike on our economy, the construction sector and overall infrastructural development delays due to the IR climate, it is difficult to understand the drastic change in management and labour relations over the past decade. The economic impact due to company losses would have also been a major concern for mutual funds managers, since many invested in TCL shares. TCL in its 2013 Annual Report highlighted a loss of $344.5 million.

The President of Petrotrin, Mr. Khalid Hassanali attributed the TCL’s losses to the Industrial unrest. There were other operational challenges facing the company as well. Hassanali informed the T&T Guardian that industrial action taken against the company by the Oil-field Workers Trade Union (OWTU) earlier this year cost more than TT$700 million, i.e., TT$100 million for each of the seven days of the strike. He said returning the refinery to optimum levels of productivity took an additional 14
Petrotrin, together with the OWTU, at the November 2013 National symposium held by the Mediation Board of Trinidad and Tobago, proudly shared with participants a major step toward labour and management cooperation. The oil spills which followed in December 2013 and the subsequent laying of blame by either side produced significant negative impact on oil production during this impasse. At National Petroleum (NP), the Chairman of the Company Mr. Neil Gosine, lamented to the Sunday Guardian in October 2013 that 190 million dollars in losses was as a result of twenty (20) illegal work stoppages over a 24 month period. The OWTU on the other hand stated that the losses over the said period were due to poor management by the company. Again OSH related issues led to the work stoppages and 68 employees were dismissed due to alleged illegal work stoppages.

The Central Statistical Office (CSO) recorded in its third quarter Labour Force Bulletin that the Trinidad and Tobago unemployment rate was at 3.7%. However, an ongoing major concern for trade unions and workers in Trinidad and Tobago is the feature of fixed term contracts in the public service, which increasingly erodes the rights of the worker in accordance with ILO Convention No. 87–Freedom of Association and the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining.

An ILO Committee report also referred to this emerging trend and stated:

*a job for life formerly enjoyed by public servants has been undermined or disappeared. In some countries, most of the employees in many public institutions are freely appointed and removed. The repeated use of short term temporary contracts and their non-renewal deny workers access to freedom of association and collective bargaining rights, particularly when they hide real and permanent employment relationship and moreover some form of precariousness can dissuade workers from trade union membership.*

This is a challenging issue for all stakeholders. Given the nature of this matter and our country’s past experience of social unrest decades ago on labour related disputes, dialogue will be more effective than a confrontational approach from either side.

Investors both local and international would look at various factors when considering investing in an economy.

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2 Trinidad Guardian Tuesday October 8th 2013.
3 Sunday Guardian Sunday 27th October 2013.
The main challenge for Trinidad and Tobago is to build trust between employers and workers’ representatives. The opportunities that dialogue can provide the parties in dealing with the challenges at hand are many.”

One of those factors would be the stability of the industrial relations climate. Trinidad and Tobago would have felt the effects of the global financial crisis of 2008/2009 and continuing. The World Economic Forum, Global Competitiveness Report, 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 indicated that Trinidad and Tobago’s global competitiveness slipped two places downward from 82 in 2011/2012 to 84 in 2012/2013. Business lending maintained a downward trend and these factors are attributed to an overall economic slump in growth over the past few years.

Real GDP according to the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago has been recorded at -2.6 for 2011, 1.2 for 2012 and 1.5 for 2013. The T&T economy, which had been growing at a slightly faster-than-expected pace last year, had a mixed economic performance in the first three months of 2014. In its latest monetary policy announcement, the Central Bank of T&T (CBTT) said while the non-energy sector maintained its growth momentum into 2014, the rebound in the energy sector in the fourth quarter of 2013 did not fully carry over into the early part of this year.

The present Industrial Relations climate based on the many unresolved disputes on labour issues has the potential to lead to widespread industrial unrest. The present crime situation as well as the poverty rate which has been recorded at over 21% by the last CSO report 2011 are continued challenges that need to be brought under control. Our present economic status could move from a state of promising economic growth, to an unhealthy position if national unrest or further widespread work stoppages continue to increase. This would lead to a further downward spiral if parties do not make efforts to engage in meaningful dialogue and treat with the ongoing concerns of either side. Both Government and Labour should set aside the win–lose approach to the issues at hand, or the alternative could be widespread social unrest. In the interest of the welfare of all citizens of our beloved country, it is hoped that meaningful efforts are made for Government and Labour to make steps to sit at the table and talk about a way forward in addressing all the matters that are presently causing discomfort for either side.
The old adage is true—first impressions are lasting. Many experts believe that you have only 7-10 seconds to control that first impression. Knowing how to convey the right image can boost your confidence and maximise your prospects of success and a happier life!

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Consider this: Growing up in a world of click, tap and touch! Click to Google anything imaginable. Tap to access online professors via email or chat rooms. Touch one’s mobile phone to reach Facebook friends and chat on Skype, BBM and WhatsApp messenger. With the advent of technology, many Millennials cannot picture life without this new sensation…something the generation before existed without for so long. Although it may make life easier for some, a divide may exist when challenges arise in the workplace, as both generations seek to strike a balance.

Meet Jill: My 24 year old friend who I chatted with at a party last Christmas in Maraval, Trinidad. In the world of corporate work, Jill is adjusting to day-long team meetings, which she feels can be more valuable through a web-conference using her mobile. Or at times she finds herself combing through large documents of policies and procedures, which she says is “not the most creative use of my time!” Jill, like many of her contemporaries fits right into the generation between 19 to 25 years (also known as the “Millenials”, “Nexters” or “Bridgers”). They are on the cusp of the new millennium that ushered in the digital generation of click, tap and touch.

Equipped with advanced tertiary qualifications and technical expertise, Gen Yers seem ready to meet the demands of a tech savvy world. One where maneuvering between iPods, iPads and iPhones is second nature to them. The race for talent and market share puts them front and center of the pack as the boomer generation gets ready to retire and happily exit the world of work. Employers must now create workspaces that encourage inter-generational sensitivity, as they eagerly embark on embracing a younger workforce that can fill the ever competing demands in a global economy.

In this article, we will examine some new workplace norms and expectations of the Gen Yers. It will reflect on offering employment contracts which embraces multi-generational work units through teamwork, training and collaborations as a new model for business success.

Most HR leaders and executives get frustrated when they spend a lot of time and money on training and development programs, only to see employees walk out the door months later. It means that companies are spending money for their competitor’s new hire, which does not make good business sense and questions the validity of expansive training budgets. HR executives also know that several factors drive employee retention including: employee morale, values alignment and organizational changes. In the past, the typical work relationship guaranteed long term (permanent) employment and a career ladder that took you from office assistant to executive. Today global market changes and technological advances, have forced companies to redefine their employment contracts to ‘rightsizing’ and shorter term (contractual) employment to adapt to the needs of an ever changing dynamic workforce. Thus while HR executives search the market for tech savvy professionals who can fulfill business demands, they must also face challenges of new hires (Gen Yers) whose norms include shorter-term contracts, more flexibility, work-life balance and growth opportunities.

A MULTI GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

There are several scholarly studies which show that each generation comes with its own life events, set of beliefs, values and norms. Yet these
different characteristics need not create tensions in the workplace, if we use these differences as mere starting points for communication. One of the first steps is acknowledging some commonalities: all workers want a strong work/life balance and an opportunity to advance professionally. Therefore it will benefit business leaders substantially, to create environments where employees are more engaged and happier, willing to collaborate, feel better supported in getting tasks done and more effective in driving the company’s mission.

Let’s review the case of an HR executive of an energy-based company in Port of Spain, Trinidad. She reported some observations and challenges in managing team expectations between Millennials and the older Baby Boomers (Generation X) in the workplace. She posited that the Millennials had a more casual approach to work. They wanted to stay connected to their iPods and iPhones while on the job, were less concerned with formalities around ‘policy and procedures’ than with the actual work output and they completed tasks in shorter time frames leaving more time for chatter. The older workers however were resistant to mentoring ‘younger upstarts.’ They were critical of their styles and felt disrespected by the younger ones who were considered too ‘laissez-faire’in their approach to work.

While this may have been a dilemma for one agency, it is important to note that the generational descriptions are mere generalizations and do not represent experiences for every work environment. Therefore great managers can help guide the process for integration according to A. Keith Barnes in his ATD article, “Breaking through Generational Stereotypes”. In the hiring process, Barnes recommends that we “choose people based on talents, potentials, and on other personal traits—and not on generational stereotypes”. Barnes also emphasizes the need for
a clearly stated mission, providing opportunity for learning and “making workers aware of the nature and significance of their efforts.” Additionally, cross generational mentoring is another valuable tool in any multi-generational team where boomers can provide institutional knowledge while benefitting from the innovation and technical aptitude of Gen Yers.

In looking at profiles of the younger Gen Yers, one of the key findings according to PwC’s NextGen: A global generational study, shows that 71% of Millennials do not feel that excessive work demands are worth the sacrifice to their personal lives. In other words, they prefer a strong work/life balance, easier working relationships such as tele-commute and tele-conferencing as well as shorter work days. 41% of the Millennials surveyed also prefer to be rewarded/recognized for their work as part of their career development when compared to their Gen Xer counterparts who measured 30% in that area.

So how can organizations consider transformational shifts so that there is win-win situation on both sides: i.e. achieving business goals and employee expectations at the same time? As managers, you want your employees to help transform the organization for the future and as employees you want the company to help transform your career for the long term. HR executives who are now charged with finding ways to integrate expectations of age groups with the productivity demands of the organization may find it helpful to consider three factors which impact business productivity.

1. **TRAINING UPWARDS**

A major training opportunity for HR executives may lie in finding ways to ‘grow’ Gen Yers into leadership positions. While many of the younger generation may be qualified academically, technologically savvy and have an easy grasp on the success indicators for business, few are innately emotionally intelligent. This requires adaptability, managing conflict, building relationships, working with diverse teams and navigating some of the nuances while in a corporate culture.

HR executives must now develop innovative ways to identify and nurture Millennials for leadership roles through Succession Planning, mentor/mentee relationships, coaching programs and activities which help develop these leadership skill sets. Corporations can also partner with educational institutions to develop customized training, internship and apprenticeship programs. This can greatly assist graduates on their way up the corporate ladder.

2. **TEAMWORK IS KEY**

In The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Patrick Lencioni states that “Teamwork remains the one sustainable competitive advantage that has been largely untapped”. Yet many managers will attest that one of the greatest challenges is getting groups of people to agree in the interest of common business goals. Lencioni identifies five areas that embody team dysfunctions: 1) absence of trust 2) fear of conflict 3) lack of commitment 4) avoidance of accountability and 5) inattention to results. [Lencioni 2002:188].

If we look around at our organizations today, one or two of these issues plague teams. Consider a manufacturing facility where someone in Research and Development (R&D) spends weeks unsuccessfully trying to get help from the manufacturing department to run a few tests on a new prototype. Meanwhile, people in manufacturing complain about ‘newly hired’ R&D engineers who expect them to ‘drop everything to help with another one of R&D’s pet projects’.

There is little doubt that the lack of communication in this scenario led to unclear expectations, which developed into mistrust for the R&D Millennials. We can draw on more examples among marketing and sales force teams, IT and communications units...
and the list goes on. However with the right amount of dialogue and time for airing and clarifying issues, the R&D Millennials can get more buy-in from manufacturing. Thus all parties would feel encouraged to work together towards one common goal.

3. COLLaboration

In his book The Alliance*, Reid Hoffman states that “The business world needs a new employment framework that facilitates mutual trust, mutual investment and mutual benefit” [Hoffman 2013: 8].

It is a world where employees should now be considered allies for business success. This new alliance is where the employer and employee develop a relationship based on how they can add value to each other by aligning the organization’s mission to personal goals. This also provides a spawning ground for Millennials to share some networked alliances that define their lives. Whereas the old business model focused on fulfilling a job description and enhancing one’s position within the company’s hierarchy, a more competitive global model requires businesses to capitalize on all its networks, including employee networks as business intelligence. Organizations must now encourage employee networks for example, where persons reach out to their own friends to help make better decisions or scout for competitor information and key tech trends. We can appreciate that a more networked workforce may generate more valuable intelligence, as Gen Yers help resolve some of the key business challenges in the company for which they work.

Millennials operate networks through a digital collaboration that reach beyond borders. This may be extremely helpful especially today when many companies service multi-national accounts and need seamless collaboration beyond geographic boundaries. As managers face mounting pressure to do more with less, they can find creative ways to encourage Gen Yers to lead this new wave called Enterprise 2.0 (E 2.0) so as to place their business on the cutting edge [Harvard Business Review, On Collaboration 2013: 113].

As compared to the past where Gen Xers would have frowned upon social media, it may be useful to encourage Millennials (with a structured Social Media Policy) to utilize their Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts during business hours to tap into this new demographic of users.

While it may be difficult to measure the value of initiatives like mentoring, emotional intelligence and collaboration, HR executives courageous enough to try these strategies, will agree that their power cannot be denied. Businesses that function in this new paradigm do not merely survive, but thrive beyond expectations. Therefore understanding the needs of Millennials who are now at the forefront to drive an organization’s strategy, will ensure not only business continuity, but success for future generations.

Sources:


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ATD Publications (2013) T&D issues, June, September, December

“Gen Yers like most other groups, want to know that their inputs are valuable and are making a difference in driving the organization’s mission forward.”
DO YOU REALLY CARE?
The Shifting Roles in the Workplace

by Maxine Attong
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Certified Facilitator, Certified Evidence Based Coach
and Certified Management Accountant
VP - Corporate Planning at Guardian General Insurance Company

In our Caribbean isles where we are all connected by what is termed as a ‘pumpkin vine’, the onus of ‘caring’ often weighs heavily on the manager. We have all heard or said variations of the tag line “we spend over 40 hours a week together” which suggests that we are mindful of the environments in which we work and how we treat each other while at work. The proverbial question remains: “Do we really care? More importantly how do we show it?”

At the organizational level, caring is evidenced through initiatives such as Sports Clubs, Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP), Reward and Recognition Programmes, Health, Safety, Security and Environmental (HSSE) standards that are common to the gas and oil sectors. These initiatives all set benchmarks for how industries can build care into work systems. The OSHA Act, along with the increasing costs of litigation, encourages non gas and oil companies to adopt HSSE policies that protect and care for persons who enter their premises. This notion of caring extends to the relationships within the organizations as well.

Most managers who I encounter in my coaching practice, want to create a family-like atmosphere at the office. An environment where people treat each other with respect and there is a level of personal care that extends beyond work. These managers are often bewildered when employees do not buy-in to this concept. Consequently they interpret employees’ lack of motivation, inability to take initiative and irresponsible behaviours as a rejection of their care.

While families are complex structures that continue to morph in meaning, some commonalities still hold - there are the parents and children. The parents take care of and provide guidance to the children, teaching them values and principles until the children have grown up and form their own families. Yet, we all know that there is no such thing as a perfect family; there is always a level of dysfunction that has to be managed in all family interactions. We find that, children do not always behave; not all parents treat children well, some parents cannot let go of their adult children and some children never grow up.

Extend this family dynamic to the office and consider: “Who are the parents and who are the children?” Managers often display paternalistic attitudes towards employees when they adopt the role of parent. These managers take care of employees, displaying kindness and generosity, as long as employees tow the line or “know their place.” These managers think that “Father knows best” and tell employees what to do. They assume that they know what
The females who buck this tradition are labelled cold at best. Employees often proclaim that “we have a right” to benefits beyond what is stated in the company’s policies and procedures. When paternalism and maternalistic expectations meet, the manager and employees become locked into co-dependent relationships that play each off of the other causing moods and behaviours to become indelibly linked.

Many times employees develop a need for the leaders’ approval and will do almost anything and take any treatment that is meted out to them, since they want to please the manager. They do not push back or set boundaries for the managers and often feel guilty when asserting themselves. The manager in turn, believes that he/she can fix everything that goes wrong, including the employees’ personal lives and therefore covers up or excuses the shortcomings of the employees. Both employee and manager believe that they are responsible for each other’s feelings and as long as each plays his/her part, no problems will exist. When things go wrong, each blames the other for not taking enough care. When employees do not conform, the manager gets offended and thinks less of the employees. When the manager does not play along, employees get disillusioned or demotivated.

As with all complex relationships, paternalism, maternalism and codependency do not occur in isolation. A manager may display different behaviours toward different employees in the same team. I ask you the reader to now take a look around your office and examine the type of relationships that exist between managers and employees. What is the way forward?

We managers need to accept that we are not mothers, nor fathers to employees so we do not have to take care of them. We can truly care for employees but this cannot devolve to treating them as children.

Therefore we can mentor, coach, or offer advice but we cannot make decisions for employees, nor tell them what to do. We need to honor that employees like us have thoughts, ideas and dreams and invite them to bring these to the table on a daily basis.

What would it be like if we built relationships with the adult parts of our employees; the parts of them that make difficult decisions every day, as they raise their children, juggle budgets, take care of ailing parents and manage complex situations? If we do this, we will work with responsible adults who are more or less on the same page. We will not have to bargain, cajole or coerce for work to be done. Employees will show up, get the work done, contribute ideas and take initiative. I never suggest that clients give up their dream of “we are all one big happy family”. I ask that they redefine who constitutes the family and how they interact. Per-haps there are no children involved, perhaps it’s a group of aunts and uncles who truly care for each other, who live full lives and agree to disagree as they come together to achieve a common cause.

What type of relationship are you and your employees locked into? How do these manifest themselves in the office? What type of relationship do you want to have with employees?

Adapted from Maxine Attong’s book – Lead Your Team To Win

MaxineAttong.com
How can Human Resource positively impact your BUSINESS BOTTOM LINE?

by Dr. Carlton Guy, DPhil
Human Resource Consultant

A structured plan of action is an imperative enabler for human resources to positively impact the bottom line of any kind of business entity. While the inherent major challenge is to ensure that all employees are going in the same direction, it is not impossible and can be achieved with time. It begins with effective leadership, risk assessment and proper management of your human capital to achieve the desired result for your business.

**Adopt a people-centric focus**

Human Resource practitioners require time to plan and craft strategies that will establish a positive employee relations culture at the workplace. This is essential in order to support the achievement of any organization’s financial plan. The human resource practitioner or the business leader must create a working environment, which would allow employees to operate with high energy, purposeful passion and an effective, efficient and cohesive team. This will certainly distinguish the organization as an employee-oriented and profit driven entity which places emphasis on the quality of its leadership, the selective recruitment practices, the value of appropriate training, the significance of rewards and recognition, the embracing nature of communication and the instructive effect of feedback. These elements are integral to HR positively impacting the bottom line, since they link the HR plan and the organization’s strategic plan through optimization of the human resource to achieve the organization’s goals.

**Develop creative and pragmatic risk management procedures**

The leader of the organization must not be risk-averse. Effective risk management should rely on human resources to manage related costs; for example, advertisement, recruitment and communication. Rigid control of these costs with related efficiencies can positively impact the business bottom line. The leader who plans and establishes a positive work culture; should be the driving force towards the company attaining high levels of employee retention, effective succession planning, improved productivity, organizational branding, cost control and a positive business bottom line.

However, it should be noted that some of these risks can be shared through partnering with other entities so as to reduce costs and foster collaboration. These cost reductions may take the form of mentorship for employee retention and continuity which would enable the organization to achieve its objectives. Additionally, through collaboration senior management can create synergies in the areas of counseling and consulting to encourage initiative in a particular sector.

The bottom line can also be controlled through shared costs and personnel. For example, a reduction of consultancy fees can result if the company instead chooses to hire an administrator to execute marketing plans or provide guidance or assistance on human resource issues. Timely and appropriate human resource strategy which is aligned to the business strategy, will enable the organization to meet its target. This is attained by persons possessing the right attitude with the requisite resources and support from management and operational employees.

Some fundamental aspects of this strategy are the identification of several costs in relation to quality. These are the costs of prevention, appraisal, failure and the cost of lost opportunity.
These have a clear impact on the business existence and how the organization makes concerted efforts to meet customers’ needs. This effort should extend into the future simultaneously both as the customers’ requirements expand and as the business grows. Organizations would need to change their structure, operational processes and work environment to deepen cooperation amongst employees. This will aid in the delivery of reliable and timely products and services to customers. Evidently, efficiencies are achieved and maintained while costs are reduced.

**Ensure internal and external stakeholder satisfaction**

Dynamic leaders or human resource practitioners should connect profitability to sustainable business and customer satisfaction, since both appear to be inseparable. Happy people translate to increased productivity, efficiency, employee retention and repeat business. Unnecessary delays arising from human resource issues involving employees’ discipline, grievance, negotiation, mediation or arbitration can interfere with the bottom line. Utilization of policies and procedures would allow for the expeditious attention of these issues thereby reducing costs. This is achieved through familiarization with adequate knowledge of the organization, engagement in the acquisition of more relevant knowledge and a committed drive for excellence.

Human Resource practitioners and leaders are ultimately responsible for employee performance and must be cognizant of their own influence on employees. Their role as visionary, change agent, strategist, communicator, motivator and performer will ensure that employees’ involvement redound to organizations’ continuity and profitability. Indeed, human resources can positively impact the business bottom line by the implementation and monitoring of some of the stated strategies.
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Is Facebook An APPROPRIATE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION TOOL?

by Janel P. Phillip, MSc.
HRMATT’s Secretary OD Practitioner & Certified NLP Practitioner

I subscribe to many Human Resources and business blogs and I am also a member of both SHRM (US) and CIPD (UK)—organizations dedicated to the advancement of the Human Resource community. For the last five years, I have noticed a proliferation of the view, especially in some blogs, that there is some validity in the use of Facebook as a selection tool or screening “instrument” to determine the suitability of candidates to interview or to hire. With “nearly 50% of resumes containing factual errors,” it is understandable why employers are leaning on the side of caution. I don’t mind at all companies that use their Facebook pages to attract talent (recruitment), but I am stating up front that I have not heard of any good reason to employ screening of job candidates as a selection strategy. I am yet to be convinced as to how viewing a candidate’s profile on Facebook ensures that the organization hires the right employee for the organization.

How does Facebook tell the whole story of a person and how that person will function in your organization or in a specific job? Is this a form of discrimination? Many people, young and old, rightly or wrongly use Facebook for their personal enjoyment. They use social media in general to express themselves to their “friends” or family by posting “status updates”, “photos”, and “events”. They “like” Pages based on their interests, they play games (ugh) etc. That’s their choice. Social Media is private information and activity that takes place in a public environment, with the applicable security features to restrict access. SHRM and CIPD have both conducted conferences or included tips and strategies that were featured at conferences, to help HR Professionals leverage the benefits of Social Media and Facebook. It was designed to help them understand the drawbacks of the phenomena and its threat to workplace productivity and data protection rules.

I have always advised my coaching clients to remind their employees to be careful about “posting” information on any social media site. Based on the position they hold in a company, they should censor what they post about themselves or activities, politics, topical social issues in the media and the like. However, this advice is usually for office holders. Many employees, even here in Trinidad and Tobago have allegedly posted material on Facebook which has led to their termination, as those postings were judged by their HR officials as an offense: “bringing the company into disrepute”.

Facebook Profile screenings for the purpose of evaluating a candidate’s suitability for a job is now widespread.

and are conducted generally, unbeknownst to the job candidate or potential candidate. In my opinion and as a seasoned HRD Practitioner, this practice—is unethical, inherently biased and discriminatory.

Don Kluemper of Northern Illinois University helped conduct a study that suggests a person’s Facebook page can predict job performance and academic success. He published that there are red flags to be found on the candidate's Facebook page and there are some flags that are “redder” than others.

Figure 1 - Courtesy Forbes.com

69% of professionals admitted that they rejected candidates based on what they saw on their Facebook site. In August of 2009, www.insidefacebook.com reported a study from CareerBuilder in which 45% of employers admitted to perusing applicants’ “social pages” during the hiring process. That includes Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and personal blogs, among other sites. This is considered exercising “due diligence” by some. One blog recommended that the Facebook screening should be structured with an evaluation form where each item examined can be ticked along a Likert scale. See Figure 2. Looking at the evaluation criteria alone on this chart baffles me. Any HR Professional or department that debases their job to recruitment, using this instrument or any like it requires immediate intervention. Is this practice legally compliant? Has this been EOC tested?
Many bloggers advise job seekers to select the appropriate privacy settings to block employers and recruiters, while others say if you block too much then your future employer cannot assess your personality and you may be overlooked for a job interview. HR Professionals should not engage in any activity for the purpose of selection or hiring without the knowledge of the candidate and this also relates to conducting background checks. Transparency in selection works both ways; I “select” to work for your organization, and you select me.

My Facebook profile, for instance, is what I would consider “sanitized” because in part I am always cognizant of the job position I hold now and because I have a personal belief that the whole world does not need to know my personal business. One thing I do frequently is post a lot of Christian related scripture verses and share a lot of posts from specific pastors and well known American Preachers. Will a potential recruiter who is not Christian or who may have a view about American Preachers judge me negatively and deem me unsuitable because of their internal bias? That’s the risk of using this process. A perfectly good candidate can be overlooked because he or she does not meet the requirements of the personal liking of the person evaluating.

Hiring the right candidate for the right job is a technical process (some would say scientific), subsumed in psychological factors and requires significant skill on the part of the HR Professional implementing the process. I hope the business world now knows that your hiring practices can break your organization, as the human capital you invest in must bring an eventual return on investment. Hence, many professionals and HR practitioners have moved away from the one interview recruitment, to a selection strategy. This includes many phases and instruments to assess candidates against the determined needs of the job and the organization.

Any organization playing casual with Selection is playing Russian roulette with their future income. However, this new trend of using Facebook as a selection instrument must be stopped. It is encumbered in subjectivity and undermines legitimate Selection tools that have been tried and tested as credible and valid. How valid is Facebook recruitment? It may be cheaper than psychometric testing and an assessment center, but all I am seeing is my profession being cheapened.

Many HR Professionals reading this will still argue that “candidates lie”, they practice “impression management” when completing psychometric tests and we could never know what we are really getting. Therefore, Facebook is a next step to find out if the person has been entirely truthful to you. I have one word: unacceptable! What’s next, recruitment by Instagram?

Janel P. Phillip – MSc, SNLP is an HRD Practitioner, Certified Motivational Coach and Certified NLP Practitioner in Trinidad and Tobago
Regional Human Resource professionals simply aren’t doing enough. Worker productivity is taking a serious hit as new technologies enter Caribbean companies, leaving most watching in stupefied silence, doing nothing.

You may know what I mean if you have ever participated in a meeting and watched as the presenter lost the battle for attention to electronic devices. Perhaps the attendees started with a quick glance at their screens, continued with a longer stare as they scrolled read some more, then tapped away intently, revealing the fact that they were now completely gone. They were now in the zone of “fake listening,” pretending to pay attention but finding more interest in a message, status update or tweet.

If your reaction was one of annoyance at their poor manners then you just failed an important test. In other words, you missed the point. Etiquette is hardly a corporate priority and I doubt that your company offers a single hour of training in this area. In today’s companies, employees are expected to teach themselves subjects such as good manners, Microsoft Office and how to use a smartphone. Gone are the days when these topics were the subject of one day training sessions.

The reason you missed the point is that the greater cost is not to people’s sensibilities or reputation. Instead, the damage is directly related to your company’s productivity. You see, the reason they are behaving in a way that offends your social graces is not to be rude: it’s a desperate attempt to save time... a time management technique. Their multi-tasking appears to them to be a suitable alternative. It actually comes from ignorance, but not because they weren’t brought up the right way.

They probably don’t have a clue about the latest research which shows quite clearly that there is simply no such thing as multi-tasking. What human beings actually do is called switch-tasking, which means switching our cognitive attention back and forth from one thing to another. When we do so, we waste valuable time refocusing on one thing and then the other. Both tasks end up taking longer.

There are many who insist they are the exception: unlike everyone else, they are able to multi-task well. Unfortunately for them, research shows that professionals who believe they are skilled at this behaviour are actually among the worst. Apparently, continuously indulging in the practice makes one more distractable - less able to focus on a single activity at a time. This more than erases any perceived gains to be made from the practice.

Unfortunately, board members and executives are often the worst culprits. They were the first to receive smartphones and the first to develop bad habits. They demonstrate these behaviours to staff members who learn that practices like checking email while someone else is talking are a sign of busyness, or worse, importance.

Human Resource professionals, by contrast, are often the last to adopt the
latest mobile technologies. This means that by the time HR realizes what’s happening, company-wide productivity has already been negatively affected by technology-enabled habits like multi-tasking. Even if the realization is late, what can HR practitioners do to move from complaining about the problem to offering solutions?

1. Take Responsibility in a Fresh, New Way

In the modern corporation, there’s no such thing as a Personal Productivity Czar - someone who is responsible for creating an environment where employee productivity is maximized. Instead, executives take partial responsibility by making a purchase of new technologies and getting IT to deploy them. HR may not even know that a technology-driven improvement initiative has been launched.

At the end of the day, however, in almost every company there are employees who have used their company-given smartphone to adopt bad habits such as texting while driving, multi-tasking in meetings, using devices at the urinal or toilet, and annoying other employees with poor manners. At that point, no-one is willing to be responsible, even though there may be lots of complaints.

The remedy is for HR to assume responsibility for employee productivity - starting right now.

2. Go Back to School

The biggest single culture change in companies in the past 50 years was one that went unnoticed by most Human Resource practitioners. The advent of email in the mid 1990’s has changed everything, but HR was a bystander as mail servers were installed and many practitioners remain ignorant of widely accepted best-practices for managing electronic communication.

That culture change was already missed, but there is still time to get ahead of one: mobile computing. In order to have a chance of impacting employee productivity proactively, human resource professionals can opt to return to school. Doing so would bring their knowledge up to the level of the average Millenial, which would be a start. It would help them be able to convince other executives that HR needs to be included in productivity technology decisions.

Before a new technology is introduced, it’s a good idea to include a company’s learning professionals at the very beginning to determine the learning cycle. For example, a simple decision to change email software is usually made by IT professionals, who are hardly experts in behaviour training or productivity. Another decision to give a Blackberry to every employee, bar none, requires new policy if there is an unspoken expectation that it needs to be on at all times - including vacations, sick days and in more than one case I have encountered in my workshops: between contractions.

It’s a pity that HR has been late to the party on these decisions, but that need not be the case in the future. HR must retain its relevancy as the safeguard of employee productivity.

3. Speak the Right Language - Monetize Concerns

An HR Vice President that gives her CEO feedback on his lack of manners is likely to face some resistance. However, the same behaviours can be effectively addressed if they are cast in terms of productivity losses, and then monetized. HR must use the latest thinking in psychology, behaviour science and engineering to show a CEO how to boost productivity and drive value to the bottom line.

It’s not easy to speak this language - but it must be done. Only then can HR convince executives that new policies are needed to ensure that individual productivity needs to be protected, before it’s enhanced. Today, these issues are falling through the cracks, but as I say in my book “Perfect Time-Based Productivity”, it’s up to empowered executives to take an extraordinary level of responsibility to make a difference.
Governments, corporations and other organizations lose vast amounts of money annually due to the mismanagement of conflict. When organizations have effective dispute resolution systems in place, the benefit in terms of money and time saved is significant. The result is also a workplace that tends to be less stressful with better working relationships and greater productivity.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is the term used to refer to the various ways individuals, organizations and countries attempt to resolve their disputes. There are a number of processes along this resolution spectrum that can include:

**Prevention/ Negotiation/ Mediation/ Arbitration/ Tribunals/Litigation**

As you move from left to right on the above spectrum, costs in both time and money increase, processes become more formal and stressful and the disputing parties lose control of the process and resolution.

We encounter disputes within our families, communities and workplaces. Conflict is part of our nature and intrinsically it is neither positive nor negative. What gives conflict that negative or positive spin is how we deal with it. If we deal with conflict ineffectively typically there will be negative repercussions. However, if we deal with it effectively, we can expect it will yield positive results. Therefore, it is to any organization’s benefit to ensure that members/staff are effectively trained in conflict resolution and that an appropriate dispute resolution system is in place.

The primary purpose of this article is to briefly describe a process for the establishment of an effective dispute resolution system. A secondary purpose serves to demonstrate that such a system does not have to consist of only one process or approach. For example, mediation and arbitration can co-exist within one dispute resolution system. Anyone suggesting that a unionized organization should get rid of its grievance/arbitration process would do so at his/her own peril. Unions fought long and hard for this right and in many ways the process has served them well. Unfortunately, however, arbitration is not the panacea many expected. It is generally a costly and time consuming, stressful process where the disputants do not have control of the resolution - a resolution where there is a winner and loser. And often the winner and loser have to go back into the same work environment and are expected to co-exist peacefully together.

Creating a dispute resolution system is no easy task – it involves the time and hard work of many individuals. The practitioners within the dispute resolution system must be well respected by others and professionally trained in their fields of activity. If persons within the organization have little faith in the professionalism and
integrity of the dispute resolution system, and those working within it, there is real risk of the system failing. And if it fails, remember that the employer, employee and organization all lose the benefits.

The design approach briefly outlined herein is referred to as the DIRECT approach and is described in much more detail in Allan Stitt’s book “Alternative Dispute Resolution for Organizations: How to Design a System for Effective Conflict Resolution” (John Wiley & Sons Canada, Ltd., 1998). The DIRECT approach relates to Diagnosis, Interests, Rights, Exits (and re-entries), Creativity, and Training.

**Diagnosis**

When creating a dispute resolution system, a design team must be selected and the make-up of the team is critical to the success of the task. The team should include representatives of all levels of the organization, including but not necessarily limited to: senior management, the union, human resources, legal, sales, and consultants. If any group is perceived as potentially opposing the new system, it is wise to have representatives of this group on the design team. There are numerous tools the design team may utilize including interviews, open meetings, questionnaires, and reviews of other organizations and structures. The team will want to examine and clarify many issues including:

- the culture of the organization, including hierarchy, decision-making, communication, and availability of resources.
- the types of conflicts existing, or expected to arise, in the organization.
- the process of conflict resolution currently in use and its effectiveness.

**Interests**

A highly recommended source relating to ADR systems design for organizations is “Getting Disputes Resolved” by Ury, Brett and Goldberg (Jossey-Bass Inc., 1988). In their book, the authors outline the three general approaches taken to resolving disputes.

1. **Power-based approach** – in a dispute the resolution is determined by the party with more power. An outcome is reached but the potential of anger and lack of “buy-in” lies with the party who is forced to accept the outcome. The causes behind the conflict may not have been resolved.

2. **Rights-based approach** – in a dispute the disputants present their cases and a third party determines the resolution. Litigation and arbitration are examples of this approach. A successful resolution may be reached but there are risks when the parties do not determine the resolution to their own dispute and there is a winner and loser.

3. **Interest-based approach** – in a dispute the disputants must work together in determining a resolution to their conflict in such a way that their interests/needs are met. A third neutral party may be involved, but this third party does not determine the resolution. Mediation is a key example of this approach.

In structuring the dispute resolution system, it is recommended that the Interest-based approach be the first approach used. There is a better chance for buy-in if the parties’ create their own solution. Also this approach tends to be more creative as well as less
stressful, time consuming and costly.

**Rights**

At times an interest-based approach may not result in settlement or, in fact, may not be appropriate. If a public precedent is sought, the Interest-based approach may well be inappropriate. Mediation is a confidential process and a public precedent normally is not within the realm of this process.

Even with its potential shortcomings, the Rights-based approach can serve a very useful function in conflict resolution. This approach can involve investigations and decisions by a neutral third party or management. Arbitration is commonly utilized as a rights-based process.

**Exits and Re-entries**

In a dispute resolution system, different approaches (Interest-based and Rights-based) should be made available and certainly can co-exist. Both will likely be used with neither always succeeding nor failing in resolving disputes. It is recommended that each approach be given exit and re-entry points, sometimes referred to as “loopbacks”. For example, if an employee has a grievance s/he may file the grievance thus ensuring it is in the grievance/arbitration (Rights-based) process. This employee may then be encouraged to take part in mediation (Interest-based). If the latter does not seem to be working for the employee, this individual may then exit and re-enter the Rights-based (arbitration) process. This loopback may occur more than once during the resolution process. This is one way to encourage persons to enter the Interest-based approach when it is new to them (ensuring comfort and confidence).

For unions, the mediation approach offers a very favourable opportunity. It is somewhat of a challenge when two or more unionized employees are locked in a dispute with each other. Challenging as it is the union’s responsibility to represent all of its members. Having voluntary, non-binding mediation available with a neutral third party mediator is a creative and constructive way of resolving the dispute without directly involving the union in the settlement process between its own members.

**Creativity**

For many, “change” is viewed as threatening – fear of the unknown. When the design team is considering the structure and operation of a new dispute resolution system, it is crucial that the members be open to creative solutions. Current organizational policies, or existing methods of resolving conflict, may appear as obstacles to creativity. So may mistrust and misinformation. That being said, obstacles to the design team should be seen as opportunities to search for new and innovative solutions.

**Training**

Years ago when Employee Assistance Programs were introduced to the workplace, the training and marketing involved was substantial. In an EAP, buy-in by employees is crucial to the success of the program. To a degree, the same challenge may be faced in the introduction and use of a new dispute resolution system. The dispute resolution practitioners must be professionally well trained in the field of ADR and have the respect and trust of the staff. And employees must be exposed to the functionality and benefits of the system. This will include awareness initiatives of various kinds including, but not limited to: seminars, guest speakers, educational material and training courses. It is important also that a dispute resolution system must be well entrenched in the organization’s policies and procedures.

The model described above includes both interest and rights-based components. For the many reasons described herein, there is a general tendency to move to the interest-based (mediation) approach. The savings in dollars alone can be significant. For example, the American corporation Toro has estimated it is saving $900,000US annually in settlement claims since it began using mediation as its primary dispute resolution process. Of their disputes sent to mediation, in excess of 95% have settled.

The rate of compliance in the mediation approach tends to be very high. Parties who have mutually determined their own settlement in mediation are generally more likely to follow through and comply with the terms than those whose settlement has been imposed by a third party decision-maker.

Organizations that neglect to deal with conflict effectively will find that a disproportionate amount of time, energy and money will be spent on simple matters that then can escalate to significant costly conflicts. When an effective dispute resolution system is put in place, the gains for the organization and its members are substantial and quantifiable.
Executive Certificate in Conflict Management

Learn advanced mediation skills, negotiation skills, dispute resolution skills, and how to deal with difficult people. The Stitt Feld Handy Group is an international leader in mediation and negotiation training, as well as ADR services. We have been providing training in Trinidad & Tobago and Barbados since 1999.

“This was an exceptional workshop! I am now very informed in the subject and I have been applying the concepts and principles learnt. Excellent facilitators.”
- Kamini Heeralal-Khan, Human Resources
Trinidad & Tobago Postal Corporation, Piarco, T&T

“This training exceeded my expectations. The course was very hands on and the lessons learned here will be life long for me.”
- Coreen Copland-Villafana, Human Resources
Century Eslon Limited, Port of Spain

Upcoming 2015 Public Workshops: group discounts available

- **Advanced Alternative Dispute Resolution** - Port of Spain: March 3-6, Nov. 3-6, Bridgetown: Sept. 22-25
- **Applied Alternative Dispute Resolution** - Port of Spain: Nov. 24-27
- **Dealing With Difficult People** - Port of Spain: March 25-27, December 2-4, Bridgetown: May 20-22
- **Online Negotiation Course** - 8 hours
- **Online Difficult Conversations Course** - 4 hours

After completing each course, you will receive a certificate from the University of Windsor Law School. After completing all six courses, you will receive an **EXECUTIVE CERTIFICATE IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT** from the University of Windsor Law School.

Inhouse Customised Workshops:

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**Lead Instructor**

Peter Dreyer is a mediator, negotiator, investigator and trainer. He has lectured in the field of ADR at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, and at both the University of Toronto and University of Windsor Law Schools. He is a Chartered Mediator (C. Med. - ADR Institute of Canada) and a Certified Mediator in Trinidad & Tobago. He has international experience in mediation and ADR training and has been providing ADR services throughout the Caribbean for over 14 years.

*If Mr. Dreyer is not available, a qualified instructor will take his place.*
Why you should become a
HRMATT MEMBER

Dear Reader,

The field of Human Resources is a very dynamic profession which requires excellent networking capabilities to keep abreast of contemporary HR thinking and practice. As Human Resource (HR) practitioners we need to follow the various HR issues closely, while being recognized and respected in the field in which we work.

The Human Resource Management Association of Trinidad and Tobago (HRMATT), is committed to “Promoting National Development through People” and by extension, through organisations. It is our goal to ensure that the HR discipline is respected and play the key role of transforming organizations. To achieve this, the association engages in a host of events and training seminars in an effort to capture and bring to the forefront burning topics and issues that affect the HR fraternity.

Becoming a member allows you to engage and interact with the wider HR fraternity, whereby ideas and solutions can be developed. It is the intention to keep our members abreast as to what is taking place in and around the HR and business world.

Here are some reasons why you should join:

**BENEFITS**

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- **Access to HRMATT’s very own Industrial Relations Court Judgments online library as well as Labour Laws of Trinidad and Tobago**
- **Access to the HRMATT online sample HR Policies and updated Job Descriptions library**
- **Prompt delivery of the inaugural HRMATT Magazine and exclusive online access to the articles and authors**
- **Access to HRMATT’s HR Forums where subject matter experts and HR Leaders exchange ideas with you and offer practical solutions to your HR challenges**
- **Access to viewing of our online HRMATT Strategic Plan**
- **Discounts on all Toolkit programmes**
- **Networking opportunities with other respected HR professionals**
- **Exclusivity in joining HRMATT’s very own Consultancy Pool**

**COMING SOON**

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- **Online Members Profile Pages**
- **Online HR Vacancy and Job Search Database**
- **Online HR Jobs Compensation Survey and Results**

Call us today at (868) 624-4519, (868) 624-9606 or visit our website www.hrmatt.com to find out how you can become a member.
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As a global leader in Human Capital consulting, Deloitte’s Human Capital services leverage research, analytics, and industry insights to help design and execute critical programs from business driven HR to innovative talent, leadership, and change programs.

Our strategic human resources solutions range from helping companies align their people and business strategies to reorganizing their service delivery models and architectures.

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Email: trinidad@deloitte.com

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# 2015 Training Calendar

**Human Resources Management Association of Trinidad and Tobago**

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<th>JAN</th>
<th>Conference</th>
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<tr>
<td>MAY</td>
<td>Breakfast Seminar</td>
<td>7th May</td>
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<td>MAY</td>
<td>HR Analytics - HR Audit/HR Metrics</td>
<td>10th - 11th June</td>
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<td>MAY</td>
<td>How to have that Difficult Conversation with Employees</td>
<td>24th June</td>
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<td>MAY</td>
<td>Effective Business Writing</td>
<td>26th - 26th June</td>
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<td>JUN</td>
<td>Job Evaluation Techniques</td>
<td>14th - 15th July</td>
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<td>JUN</td>
<td>SHRM Seminar</td>
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<td>JUL</td>
<td>Breakfast Seminar</td>
<td>14th August</td>
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<td>AUG</td>
<td>The HR Professional as the Internal Consultant</td>
<td>10th September</td>
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<td>SEP</td>
<td>Critical HR Records Management</td>
<td>22nd &amp; 30th September</td>
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<td>OCT</td>
<td>Using your Employee Benefits to gain Competitive Advantage</td>
<td>14th - 15th October</td>
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<td>OCT</td>
<td>HR Analytics - HR Audit/HR Metrics</td>
<td>20th - 21st October</td>
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<td>OCT</td>
<td>HR Ethics and the Law</td>
<td>28th October</td>
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<td>NOV</td>
<td>Seminar on Inaccurate Credentials/Fraudulent Documents</td>
<td>30th October</td>
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<td>DEC</td>
<td>Employee Engagement for Business Success</td>
<td>18th November</td>
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<td>DEC</td>
<td>SHRM Seminar</td>
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<td>DEC</td>
<td>HRMATT Year End Event</td>
<td>28th November</td>
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<td>DEC</td>
<td>No Training Programmes Offered</td>
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### Courses

- **Industrial Relations Best Practice**
  - 21st – 23rd January
  - $3500 plus VAT

- **HR Data in the Cloud... “peril or plus?”**
  - 25th February
  - $1500 plus VAT

- **Effective Business Writing**
  - 26th – 27th February
  - $2800 plus VAT

- **Staffing the Contemporary Organisation**
  - 3rd March
  - $1500 plus VAT

- **Designing an HR Strategic Plan**
  - 5th & 12th March
  - $2500 plus VAT

- **Mastering Competency Based Interviewing Techniques (including Assessment Centres)**
  - 18th & 25th March
  - $2500 plus VAT

- **Managing Excessive Absenteeism**
  - 14th April
  - $1500 plus VAT

- **Administrative Professional Celebration**
  - 22nd April

- **HRMATT Annual General Meeting**
  - 29th April

- **Conducting Effective Internal Investigations**
  - 30th April
  - $2500 plus VAT