

Harambee a call to action By Grafton Whyte

The Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP) as a call to action, exploded into the consciousness and daily lexicon of the Namibian public creating excitement, anticipation, and skepticism all at the same time.

The President certainly knows how to grab the attention of the nation!

In the words of the President, "Harambee will only succeed if those tasked to implement are assigned key performance indicators (KPIs) which can be monitored and measured."

Embedded in this statement is the assumption that those KPIs are measuring areas in which management capacity (among other skills) actually exist. We have argued previously in this column that this management capacity is very scarce. But in the spirit of Harambee institutions like the HP-GSB are ready to respond to the call for action and help build the management capacity of the nation. Indeed, the HPP demands our engagement!

Our analysis of the Namibian landscape suggests the requirements for management training have shifted over the past few years. Employers have become more cost and quality conscious and are less willing to send employees off to South Africa (or elsewhere) to participate in packaged courses which seem to yield little value to the company.

They prefer in-house training where teams of staff can attend. The advantages are cost effectiveness, industry-specific and industry-ready learning with a strong team-building component as colleagues facilitate each other's learning.

At the same time employees are beginning to recognise that managing business (and organisations) is a complex affair requiring specific competencies and they cannot afford to muddle along as Absent or Accidental Managers. (As explained in our previous column, Absent Managers may find themselves ill-equipped to handle the complexity of the working environment and therefore abdicate some or all of their core practices. In a real sense they are absent from their role. Accidental Managers have typically experienced success at some point in their career, but from that point on, they spend the rest of their career looking for opportunities to reprise that success.

To this class of manager every problem can be solved with their solution, in much the same way hammers treat every problem as if it were a nail.)

Rather they need professional skills that cannot be acquired in five-day short courses. These employees are demanding courses that are accredited or are on a path to some recognized, transferable management qualification.

This is great news for the Government and the economy; one of the greatest impediments to employment and economic growth is the lack of employee mobility. Educated managers are confident managers, and confident managers are not afraid to leave their jobs to explore new challenges either, in a new job or starting a business. This mobility sucks new people into the market and creates employment. Where employees are poorly educated, they lack confidence and stay put in jobs long after their sell by date; they become stagnant and cause the economy to stagnate. HP-GSB has crafted a strategy for management education based on what it calls the Core Management Competencies (CMCs) required by all managers whether in the public, private or not-for-profit sectors.

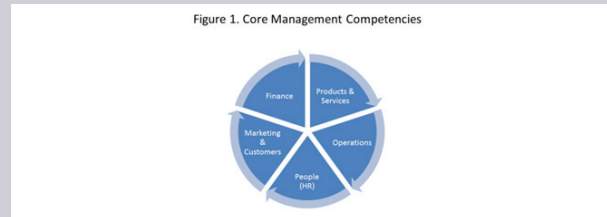


Figure 1 describes these CMCs.

In any business or enterprise the manager needs to understand the core product or service being delivered to his or her customers, and this will differ from industry to industry. Lack of understanding in this area will cause managers to be ineffective and wasteful as they expend lots of energy on things that are unimportant or non-essential to the company value chain.

Next managers need to understand the operation process that produces these products and services. Key to any modern organisation is managing or better still, leading the human resources (people) in that organisation. In a country as culturally diverse as Namibia, this competency is even more critical. Marketing to, and looking after your customers is another core competency. Finally,

understanding if you are making a contribution to the company financially is essential for long-term survival, whether you are a cost or profit centre. These CMCs are the same (with only some variations in emphasis) for entrepreneurs in a start-up business, owners of family operations or managers within a corporate enterprise.

Management theorists have been telling us this for the last 75 or so years. HP-GSB has applied this thinking to the Namibian market with a twist, creating a management training strategy with four components:

- i. Training interventions for organisations are delivered in-house and are built on the Core Management Competencies. Every person doing general management training or education at the HP-GSB will be exposed to these core competencies.
- ii. The product or service component of the training will be tailored to focus on the core business of the client organisation, and where the HP-GSB doesn't have the expertise, it brings in international experts.
- iii. Training interventions uniquely aim to deliver competencies on three levels
 - a. Outputs – areas of knowledge participants are expected to acquire
 - b. Impacts – participants will be equipped with tools that will enable them to make an impact the working environment
 - c. Outcomes – identifies the areas of measureable change that should be apparent in the organisation as a result of the training intervention.

The School recognises that what can be achieved will depend significantly on the quality and motivation of participants.

We understand this, but just because it's hard, does not mean it should not be done!

iv. Training interventions will seek to provide participants with links to professional managerial qualifications such as those offered by the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) UK and links to higher education qualifications recognised by the Namibian Qualifications Authority.

In conclusion, as we look forward to the roll-out and progress of the Harambee Prosperity Plan, the HP-GSB among others will be working feverishly in parallel to equip the nation with the management competencies needed to make Harambee a success.

***Professor Grafton Whyte is the Director of HP-GSB**

