Prof. Dr. Karl Wagner, Integrating Talent Management Across Your Organisation

1. Considerations and Barriers in Talent Management
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1. Considerations and Barriers in Talent Management (TM)

Talent management "represents the human factor in the organisation: the combined intelligence, skills and expertise that gives the organisation its distinctive character" (Bontis). It is there for all and plays a vital role on the way forward into an organisation's future. Due to its unique cultural diversity and its location in between India and China as the upcoming economic powerhouses, organisations in Malaysia are more then ever poised to make future use of talent management. Section 11 of the 9th Malaysia plan devises considerations linking TM to Human Capital Building. Together with Singapore, in many branches Malaysia falls under the rare species of countries in the world requesting a dedicated 1 % of salary and wages to be paid for its dedicated Human Resource Development Fund (HRDF).
However, one can find it questionable whether or not there was a real break-through during the past 10 years, which is the time period the author has spent in the country. Quibblers maintain that the country has developed a first world infrastructure in many central areas, but cannot keep track and change an obsolete third world country mentality by TM for their workforce.
Whether false or true, the yardstick to gage and measure success of talent management in any organisation derives from the demand for international competitiveness. In how far does an organisation comply with the global necessity of customer orientation and total quality management?
The rules to make business are simple, as every move we make refers back to four pillars building up human capital for external and internal customers:

- *Timeliness*: are the products and services offered when required by the customer?
- *Optimum Capacities*: Do we utilise our potential rationally according to fluctuations?
- *Defect Reduction* (Defects-Failures-Mistakes): In how far do we realise progress to better serve customers?
- *Reduced Cycle Time*: Can we reduce the required time to market?

Table 1: The 4 Magic Pillars of TQM for Human Capital Building enabled by Talent Management

Prior to in-depth studies, internal and external customers might find self-evidence for a lot of backlog in many organisations throughout the country:

Have you experienced that
• Staff don't come up with their suggestions to improve the business according to the TQM-pillars? • Staff show up late if the boss is late? If he or she is not around, they allocate time for different activities? • Ice-cream is being served together with the soup in a 5 star restaurant? • Cab drivers ignore aggressively the stipulated meter system and enforcement by Aduan cannot be expected to help? • The response rate of staff returning customer calls is less then 50%?

All of these instances are detrimental to productivity. However, they are evitable by modern TM starting out with higher education. They then protrude into training-on-the job as well as the execution on-the-job. Attitude- and behaviour-related weaknesses are not evitable because they cost extra-money, but because there is proven record that they are significantly reduced in countries that can serve as benchmarks. We will explore in 3. "how".

2. Integrating Talent Management as an Overall Process – Systems & Structures

Recent research conducted by the Harvard Business School filters out a significant reason why General Motors posted a record loss of 38.5 billion $ in 2007, whereas General Electrics gained a profit of 22.5 Mio $. It is because of applied TM. An organisation that wants to implement TM making full usage of the workforce's talents is then well advised to follow 4 steps[1]:

1. Provide a **qualification profile** and **process guidelines** for the required TM in ALL specific jobs and what-to-do in critical situations. The 4 magic pillars of TQM can serve as a generic model for HC building or tailor-made profiles and processes. Own research for Malaysia's wood and forest industry scrutinised those skills in detail. In terms of processes, transparent, simple and all time revisable workflows devised by talented staff are preferable compared to lengthy SOPs of consultancies.
2. Provide **tools for staff to act flexibly** as simple as by creating an open learning culture for their daily practice. "When people know their ideas are welcome, they will offer innovative ideas to lower costs". As a systemic TQM-result, the Singaporean call-a-cab system is based upon

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[1] Edmondson, Amy, The Competitive Imperative of Learning. Harvard Business Manager 07-08 2008.,p. 60ff.

an integrated satellite system requesting the cab at the nearest location to the prospective customer to fetch him.

3. **Collect performance data** based on customer satisfaction. With the help of interviews and regular statistical tools hot issues and backlog can be allocated instead of ignoring them. In addition, KPIs for TM can be derived for the overall organisation, allowing staff to gage their individual performance to satisfy customers' needs.

4. **Reflection and amendments** are conceived of as a continuous process. Teams will translate the data collected into customised action plans. Organisation-wide, a prevailing management-by-default culture will be steadily replaced by a proactive.

3. Other Talent Management Best Practices

Apart from these insights, in order to jumpstart TM to move a leap forward, we are advised to look over the garden fence of local boundaries into international best practices deploying the 3A-principle: *a*pplicable, *a*doptable and *a*ttractive. Out of many globally renowned ideas, only two are mentioned for further discussion:

1. One of the principles is the GREAT[2]-principle that can be turned into practical everyday life activities to make people involved people concerned and customers are conceived of as guests! The "T" stands for TM to recruit, train and retrain staff complying with this idea.

2. Finally, Malaysian organisations can conduct further research on Hofstede's cross-cultural approach to benchmark them against the 5 main implications of the country's own cultural assets for TM-Building:

a) Because Malaysia is a **collective** culture, one of its unravelled hidden strengths is teamwork. More focus should be given to learn tools enabling the team to work together successfully.
b) The extreme **high Power Distance** which is critical can be retrained by creating any forms of feedback culture (e.g. "Leading Up", actively asking staff for digestible feedback and ways how to improve).
c) Malaysia's **medium High Nurturing** Index must seek for a balance between business and private goals.
d) The **high poly-chronic orientation** may lack of focus, when too many things happen at the same time. Internal and external customer needs have to be the focal point ever more.
e) **Low Uncertainty Avoidance** and **high Context Orientation**: Clear-cut strategies should replace self-explanatory, hidden between the lines agenda.
TM is a great challenge and there is a long way to go. Institutions of Higher Education, external and internal training providers and an Innovation Centre can act as the spearhead of talent development in the world.

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[2] Johnson Ong Chee Bin, From Good to Great Service. In: Human Capital 03-04/2008, pg. 56-58.