

PAPER: NEW STRAITS TIMES (1KLASSIFIEDS)

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CORPORATE COACH



Q&A

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VISIONING IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Q My company has just undergone a painful phase of cost cutting and restructuring to keep it afloat. In the process, we lost a number of people whom we had to ask to leave. The rest are still somewhat shocked and unsettled by what they saw. I know life in the organisation is going to be different now.

What has happened is the owners have promoted me as the new head of department. This is a huge responsibility for me because I have to rebuild the organisation again. I am thinking of a lot of things to do,



ORGANISATIONAL COACHING

"Leaders show how they arrive at the decision. Over time, their followers will grow in confidence and thinking ability, and gradually they can make bigger and bigger decisions too." - Michael Heah

and not to do. What do you think I should be doing now? - New Leader

A What you want to see is that everyone has the past behind and is now directing their energy towards a new chapter in the organisation's future. In moving forward, this usually means going into an area where your organisation wants to participate and chart the pathway of getting there.

The Bottom Line: The logical place to begin is to set a clear vision with pragmatic strategies on how to get there. This is best done when you have completed your research to know the current and future opportunities and what the challenges are.

Take for instance if you want your organisation to be a high quality player in the field of cosmetics that caters to the younger generation of 20-30 years old. The opportunity that exists is probably a huge market of potential users of this

generation but the challenges could be having a short span of interest, and some are fickle and adventurous, and are always looking for something new to try.

So this may imply that your organisation will be constantly innovating new or improved products that excite this generation of users. Once this is clear, then all the energy is united to deliver the objective. Doing this will ensure that everyone and every process is aligned to achieve the common objective.

Powerful Questions: What made it necessary for your organisation to undertake the recent restructuring? What lessons did you learn from the exercise? How can this be converted into a new vision for your organisation? What is the common area for everyone to be united in doing?

DISCERNING WHAT CONSENSUS MANAGEMENT

REALLY IS

Q I believe in "consensus management" which means not making any decision alone, but involve all stakeholders. Complying with this principle, I have passed many of the decisions, which have been entrusted to me by my key managers who are part of the Executive Committee. Together, they study the situation and jointly make the decision.

I personally feel this is true democracy at work, aligned to my value of not discriminating anyone. However, I am now at logger heads with my boss who thinks I am irresponsible and uncommitted when I do it this way. He wants me to play a more active role in decision making. When I asked him whether he wanted me to be more autocratic, he said no.

I am confused (and angry too) as he is suggesting that I interfere in the work of others? Can you give your views on this? - Fair Guy

A Obviously, your boss is jumping into the picture now as the results are not showing the way he wants to see. Try putting yourself in your boss' shoes to understand why he feels this way. Some of these feelings could be: you are a weak leader who dare not lead from the front but rather from behind, or you are safeguarding your position as you can push the blame on the others.

All in all, your boss feels that as a leader you can be totally democratic in a decentralised way of decision making. To him, you need to be in the picture, guiding them, but eventually you make the decision.

The Bottom Line: Actually I am a "cautious" believer in consensus management. While small ones are fine, bigger ones have to be made by the leader. Of course, we have to consider every viewpoint but ultimately, it is the leader who makes it.

The followers then learn

from the leader as to how they arrive at the decision. Over time, these followers grow in confidence and thinking ability and gradually, they can make bigger and bigger decisions.

Total consensus management must be carefully considered as it may not work in all situations. The best argument is that it brings harmony amongst the people; but does it really, or it is only "skin deep" - for having smiles and no quarrels do not equate to high performance and desired results.

In many cases, the respect for the leader diminishes because the followers expect greater guidance and support rather than be thrown into the deep end. At the end of the day, followers want a leader who can lead, who can show them the way, who can coach them to be both confident and capable, and who is also a strong critic and dare to challenge them to be better than what they think is their best.

Powerful Questions: What are the interests of your people and your stakeholders that you have to consider holistically? What does that tell you ought to do? How can you let go without letting off? What will please all parties, including you?

* For coaching and non-coaching programmes, call 03-62054488 or log in www.corporate-coachacademy.com. Read the "Stories That Coach" at <http://mikeheah.blogspot.com>.