

Leading multi-faceted organisations and teams in Kenya

Nairobi, Kenya – Due to the rise of business development initiatives and FDIs (foreign direct investments) within East Africa, leaders are in positions where they must empathize with the complex work environments in which they operate. This involves grasping dynamics on the ground, fulfilling the company vision and satisfying the complex interests of foreign and national stakeholders.



It is highly probable that leaders will be dealing with workers from different backgrounds, once these differences are understood, they become valued, and leaders can leverage these differences to tap into the benefits of a diverse workforce. Diverse groups are by definition outside the mainstream, and the alternative perspectives that they bring can help companies adjust to market changes, leading to increased profitability, creativity, flexibility, organisational and individual growth.

Within Kenya, leaders must be open-minded. In 2014, Kenya's FDI inflows hit 97.8 billion, a 95% increase from the previous year. As existing companies grow their set-ups and global heavyweights stake their claims, the increasing level of regional development and the changing dynamics of stakeholders have forced leaders to balance the various thought processes and employ them to beneficial use.

Self-awareness benefits leaders in today's work environment by enabling them to better understand the individuals with whom they interact. Self-awareness can be developed by formulating systems and questions that push one to reflect on one's own actions and behaviours and their external impact within the working environment; it is important to deduce whether one's own actions have a positive or negative impact.

A core aspect is to become more aware of personal biases. Leaders who do not understand their own biases run the risk of expecting others to mirror their own values. This may cause leaders to marginalize team members with different values and to prioritize their own worldview.

This narrow-minded attitude will prevent leaders from realizing the benefits of a diverse workforce, which also brings along different points of view (diversity and difference also include varied attitudes and methodologies in the execution of operations), and such diversity of opinion can potentially lead to more innovation and better sales, if managed effectively. Leaders can potentially lose access points to a broader range of clients, and a seemingly narrow-minded organisation may appeal less to clients. This fortifies the idea that leaders can harness the potential of difference through self-awareness, by first understanding it and then instilling its benefits within the organisation.

By practicing self-evaluation, proactive leaders should be able to handle these changes in order to create a more inviting and flexible persona that can attract the benefits of difference. In today's world, there are ever more frequent interactions with different values and normalities, so that leaders cannot focus exclusively on their own personal viewpoints to achieve their goals. Through self-awareness, leaders will gain the benefits of open-mindedness and diverging perspectives. In an environment of increasing competition and globalisation, leaders need to learn to benefit from the diversity that exists within their own organizations. Leaders must be humble and willing to learn, because engagement in the present is a necessary process for organizations that want to succeed.



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