


**STRUCTURING TRAINING FOR  
ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE  
IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES:**

Introductory Handbook for  
Human Resource Developers  
& Students



**CUSTOMER SERVICE**

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*Structuring Training for Organisational Change in Developing Countries: Introductory Handbook for Managers, Human Resource Developers & Students stresses the role structured management training can play in reducing visible indicators of poor performance in ailing organisations. The author points to some of the literature that outlines shortcomings that have diminished the ability of management training institutions in developing countries to build effective organisational leaders. She underlines that, to spearhead change, training institutions must first improve their capacity.*

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## **CHAPTER ONE:** **PERFORMANCE - INTRODUCTION**

### **Exercise:**

- Define the terms “effectiveness” and “efficiency” as specified in this chapter. In the context of the definition of “effectiveness” and “efficiency” outlined in this chapter, how would you characterise an efficient organisation?

### **1.0 PERFORMANCE: INTRODUCTION**

This chapter defines effectiveness as the ability to achieve the 'desired' or 'set' result, and efficiency as the ability to get the desired result with the use of minimal resources, which include time, money, material and human resources. The chapter outlines some characteristics of an efficient and effective organisation. It is pointed out that, in addition to the essential elements of efficiency such as speed or cost effectiveness, efficient work is also said to be reflected in the moral principles (ethics) applied during its performance.

### **1.1 EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS – DEFINITION**

Defining each of the concepts, efficiency and effectiveness in isolation leads to omission of the meaning that each derives from the other. Defining each separately also adds negative connotations which would not portray the meaning that the particular definition wishes to convey. Though not used interchangeably, in the context of this handbook, efficiency and effectiveness are perceived as being important concepts that are supportive of each other.

Defining efficiency as the optimum use of resources looks acceptable. Extending this to mean utilizing minimum resources to get the highest value out of products, services and people could be seen as only partially acceptable as a useful definition, since it can be argued that utilizing minimum resources to get the best out of people can lead to employee ineffectiveness, as in the case of employees who are paid low wages for the sake of maximizing profits or value. In view of this, the need to maximize the use of resources, which include human resources, must be balanced with the interest which the organisation or employers have in being effective.

In the context of this handbook, 'effective' is defined as the ability to achieve the desired result, in other words, accomplishment of desired goals. 'Efficiency' is seen as distinct from effectiveness because, while 'efficient' also assumes accomplishment of desired goals, efficiency puts added emphasis on the production of those goals with use of minimum resources. In this context, the word 'efficient' can be used to reflect both 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency' when describing an employee who performs his/her duties well and who achieves the desired result, having used the minimum/optimal resources possible, including time and money, while so doing.

## **1.2 ETHICS AND AESTHETICS AS COMPONENTS OF QUALITY**

The quality of a product that is the end result of 'efficient' work is not only reflected in its aesthetic value, namely, its beauty. A quality product should also reflect the high principles, including moral principles, applied in its production, as well as the speed with which it is produced, and whether it serves the purpose for which it is meant. In this respect, organisations where corruption is rife cannot be acclaimed for having a quality product or service.

### **1.2.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFICIENT, EFFECTIVE ORGANISATION IN TERMS OF PROFITS, AESTHETICS AND ETHICS**

Flowing from the above, an organisation which we view as a good performer is one which is efficient and, where appropriate, profitable. In such an organisation, activities not only achieve the desired purpose, but are also carried out quickly and at the lowest cost possible. As stated above, in an efficient organisation, focus is not only on profits and on the aesthetic quality of the product, but it is also on the ethics on which the decisions are based and the rules of conduct followed during development and delivery of a product or service. It is the ethics on which the decisions are based and the rules of conduct that enhance the quality of organisational performance.

Corruption, which is rampant, endemic and pervasive in many developing countries, puts the behaviour of numerous employees in organisations in those countries at odds with the description of the behaviour of high energy accomplished competent and efficient individuals. Within the context of the description of efficient and the emphasis placed on ethics in this chapter, an employee cannot be described as productive or talented when their product/service has its basis in corruption.

### **1.3 DEMONSTRATION OF EQUITY AND CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

Especially since the 1990s, a good performing organisation has more and more also come to be identified by its demonstration of care for the environment, by its success in achieving gender balance, and by the organisation's respect

for equity, in relation to salary, and with regard to other benefits and appointments in the organisation.

#### **1.4 SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS AS HINDRANCE TO GOOD ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE**

Throughout the 1970s and, especially, with the economic hardships in the 1980s, the socio-economic and political conditions of many developing countries, especially in Africa, did not facilitate the development of good performing organisations, based on the criteria outlined above. Continual political and economic crises have often led to workers' inability to meet even the basic expenses. This has caused workers who are experiencing extreme economic hardship to engage in unscrupulous behaviour. This has resulted in many private and, especially, public organisations in developing countries, for example in African countries south of the Sahara, being identifiable by existence of numerous visible signs of inefficiency and poor performance.



## **CHAPTER TWO:** **VISIBLE SIGNS OF POOR PERFORMANCE**

### **Exercise:**

- As you read through the information outlined in this chapter, list ten indicators of poor performance that you have personally observed in one or more organisations.
  
- State whether the abundance of the identifiable indicators of poor performance exhibited is the result of internal or external factors.
  
- State how some of the causes of poor performance related to these factors can be reduced.

## **2.0 VISIBLE SIGNS OF POOR PERFORMANCE**

This chapter outlines ten common visible indicators of poor performance, which include poor attitude towards and poor relationship with customers, and engaging customers in illegal activities and transactions. The chapter argues that the performance of an organisation can be greatly enhanced even with just the reduction of a few visible indicators of poor performance. Training can play an important role.

### **2.1 SIMPLEST INDICATORS OF POOR PERFORMANCE IN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS**

Currently, in many developing countries there are numerous visible indicators of poor performance in many organisations. Some of the visible indicators of poor performance can be interpreted by top management as simple indicators of the quality of customer care provided by their organisation, for example. These visible indicators can, further, be used as a

starting point for developing more positive detailed performance indicators in performance-improvement efforts for individual organisations, departments and sections.

The existence of numerous indicators of poor performance in an organisation may be a result of internal factors within that organisation, or may be due to external factors. The latter is particularly the case where an organisation is impacted or even controlled by one or more external agencies. External forces may include the macro socio-economic and political environment that may be prevailing in the country. An example of an internal cause of poor performance is when reduced revenue collection in a training institution negatively impacts a lecturer's ability to acquire appropriate training resources. An example of an external factor is when frequent power failure impacts the ability of a restaurant to accomplish their desired goals in an efficient manner.

Based on my experience as a project coordinator, coordinating long-term or short-term projects, and having been in work environments in a number of developed as well as developing countries, I provide below a sample outline of some of the more common visible and easily identifiable indicators of poor performance exhibited in an organisation. These can be placed in several categories which may include the following:

### **1. Poor staff attitude.**

Poor attitude towards and poor relationship with, as well as poor treatment of customers/ clients/members of the public, colleagues, subordinates and superiors, among others, may include:

- (a) Visible lack of respect or consideration for customers, reflected in an employee's 'body language'. This is reflected in sitting, standing and walking postures, for

example slanting forward at a counter with an elbow on the table and hands on the cheeks when talking to customers.

- (b) Moving around the office slowly and leisurely while exhibiting the 'I don't care' attitude and ignoring the customer.
- (c) Continuing to talk to colleagues unnecessarily while customers wait.
- (d) Reading newspapers or a novel while customers wait.
- (e) Brazen rudeness, for example shouting at, 'lecturing' to, or showing off to customers/clients. Using inappropriate and/or impolite language when communicating with customers.
- (f) Unnecessary use of casual, informal and un-businesslike language when this causes offence to the customer.
- (g) Exhibiting lack of common etiquette, for example eating or sleeping at front desk.
- (h) Not respecting the queue when serving customers.
- (i) Disrespecting clients who are in their office by continuously interrupting transactions in order to receive phone calls, including personal calls. Initiating non-urgent or unofficial calls and talking unnecessarily or too long on the telephone while customers wait.
- (j) Wrong priorities, for example signing non-urgent correspondence while customers wait or while talking to customers.

- (k) Taking too long with one customer while others wait; giving insufficient time to the problems of customers that are not known to the officials/staff who are providing the service.

## **2. Neglect of duty in the course of serving customers/clients.**

This may include:

- (a) Unhelpfulness.
- (b) Unwarranted absence from a front-desk counter or from office while customers wait.
- (c) Refusing to carry out expected service, for example over- or under-charging customers at post office counter as a consequence of staff being too lazy to weigh the letter or knowingly using defective scales to weigh letters due to unwillingness to walk to appropriate weighing scale.
- (d) Failure by phone receptionist to pick up ringing telephone and/or unacceptable length of time before a ringing telephone is picked.
- (e) Carelessly and intentionally or unintentionally supplying wrong information to customers as a consequence of not putting the required effort to keep up-to-date and well informed or to keep accurate information.
- (f) Carrying out wrong/inappropriate action as a result of the above.
- (g) Sewing, knitting and carrying out other forms of handiwork instead of carrying out official duties such as monitoring patients.

(h) Non-response to inquiries and to correspondence.

### **3. Engaging customers, including pressuring them to engage in illegal activities and transactions.**

This may include:

- (a) Extorting bribes and tips, blackmailing, directly or indirectly forcibly soliciting presents or favours or future services from customers.
- (b) Denying free service to customers/clients.
- (c) Charging for what should otherwise be a free service.
- (d) Carrying out fraudulent activities and stealing from clients.
- (e) Taking advantage of uneducated, ageing clients, children, foreign visitors or new customers/clients.

### **4. Poor work-output and shoddy service.**

This may include:

- (a) Providing poor quality service, for example sending out mail that is full of typos and grammatical errors, and taking too long to reply to letters/queries.
- (b) Supplying incorrect or insufficient information.
- (c) Exhibiting poor interpersonal, oral and written communication skills, for example poor listening when dealing with customers/clients.
- (d) Complicating the life of customers with unnecessarily long processes, due to unreasonable rules, poor records, and unclear, inconsistent and unstreamlined procedures.

**5. Poor appearance of the physical environment, including filthy looking building structures/work facilities.**

This may include:

- (a) The appearance of the physical environment and structures, including outside and inside appearance of buildings.
- (b) Holes in the floor, walls, or watermark on the ceiling.
- (c) Dusty or dirty doors, windows, floors, walls, ceiling etc.
- (d) Broken and unrepaired light fittings.
- (e) Over-flooded dustbins in offices, and trash and other inappropriate items left lying around offices.
- (f) Blocked drainage and dirty toilets.
- (g) Persistent leakage
- (h) Dirty and/or torn mosquito netting or wire mesh, for example in a clinic or hospital.
- (i) Bad smells.
- (j) Unrepaired side-walks and untrimmed grass in public spaces.
- (k) The poor state of items such as beds, curtains, patient lockers, for example in hospital and schools. Having rodents, bugs and cockroaches.

**6. Visible signs of lack of control and/or organisation, and visual symbols of mismanagement.**

These may include:

- (a) Long and/or disorganised queues.
- (b) Unnecessarily higher levels of noise.
- (c) Heaps of uncollected garbage on road sides due to mismanagement at City Council and other agencies.
- (d) Lighted street lights during the day-light hours.
- (e) Non-replacement of broken windows, light bulbs, etc. in places such as libraries.
- (f) Perpetual pot holes.
- (g) Acceleration of a state of disrepair through permanent non-repair of official houses, offices etc., which initially need simple repairs. Acceptance by the responsible in charge of the sleazy looks as the new norm, and making excuses for the perpetuation of the conditions year in and year out.
- (h) Universal water leakage and running taps.
- (i) Unnecessary provision of poor, monotonous or insufficient institutional meals, for example in hospitals, schools and other institutions, often as a consequence of financial mismanagement and corruption.
- (j) Pay delays.
- (k) Unnecessary falls in sales, profits, production etc.
- (l) Artificial creation of shortages of commodities such as stationery, fuel, utensils, medicines or food.
- (m) Increased harassment of and high levels of disputes between staff.

- (n) Abuse of authority through official misuse of resources, including use of subordinates to accomplish personal activities, and abuse of other resources, for example vehicles, facilities, stationery, etc.
- (o) Long and frequent action delays, for example late delivery of commodities.
- (p) Late addressing of issues and concerns brought forth by clients, for example, sending out very late replies to letters/ queries, further negatively impacting clients.
- (q) Absence of time management and self-discipline visible to clients, for example unpunctuality, including late arrival at meetings and appointments and late air flights.
- (r) Significant mismanagement and unhealthy attitudes and behaviors on the part of managers and supervisors, for example reflected in the way managers and supervisors shout at and ill-treat staff out of sight of or even in the presence of clients.
- (s) Visible signs of budget mismanagement.

## **7. Other significant Indicators of poor performance at broader level.**

These may include:

- (a) Increase in car thefts and/ or general crime.
- (b) Increase in the number of complaints and increase in allegations and counter allegations.
- (c) Poor school performance in examinations, sports, etc.
- (d) Reduced audiences.



- (e) Indicators of poor economic performance such as inflation, unemployment, declining income.

**8. Non-availability of the necessary tools/equipment, as a consequence of poor planning and poor management, despite availability of budget.**

This may include absence of simple control measures against petty thefts, for example in offices. Other indicators may include:

- (a) Absence of computers for staff.
- (b) Non-functioning telephones.
- (c) Broken photocopiers.

**9. Cost inefficiency of services and poor value for money.**

Indicators may include:

- (a) Payment of exorbitant prices for goods and services which could be purchased at a lower cost.
- (b) Visible wastage of resources such as stationery.
- (c) Wastage of resources such as electricity.

**10. Visible signs of non-responsiveness to change.**

Visible signs of unresponsiveness to change and to the changing environment may include, for example:

- (a) Insisting on use of typewriters or provision of computers only to secretarial staff in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, due to rigidity and resistance to change rather than a result of genuine budgetary constraints.

- (b) Staff inability to use simple tools such as e-mail or Internet due to top management refusal to accept change.



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