

**UBUNTU  
MANAGEMENT  
PHILOSOPHY**



# UBUNTU MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

exporting ancient African  
wisdom into the global world

Johann Broodryk

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# DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the legendary businessman, Sir Richard Branson, who has proved that the family style of human management is an amazing and exciting recipe for extraordinary success in the real world of international management.



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# INTRODUCTION

*An international Ubuntu entrepreneur*

*Sir Richard Branson*

The time has arrived for Ubuntu to be exported to the international arena, because both employers and employees can benefit by applying a more human approach to management for better productivity and service delivery in an appropriate environment.

The problem is: how would the international world interpret the ancient African management and life concept of Ubuntu with its different cultural perceptions, especially in terms of management?

Is there an internationally acknowledged manager-leader who will appeal to both the African and international worlds and prove that there is much in common in the management styles of Ubuntu and those of the global world, especially if management occurs within the spirit of family?

It is for this very specific reason that this book is dedicated to the ultrasuccessful, legendary tycoon and manager-leader, Sir Richard Branson, who shocked conventional leaders in the Western business world by adopting a new human management philosophy and style based on a family-type happiness and even fun in the workplace!

After all, some may reason, work is work.

To autocrats, work is not about having fun!

Branson is probably the world's most favourite businessman and is generally regarded as the people's entrepreneur.

The reason for this hero worship of Branson lies in his endless and admirable efforts to provide services and products at lower prices, in his caring for the poor and those infected by terminal diseases, and in the humane manner in which staff members are treated and respected.

People working for Branson's companies usually regard it as a very great honour to be associated with the happy Branson/Virgin family: it gives them a sense of pride and boosts their self-esteem.

I dedicated my doctoral degree on Ubuntu to Nelson Mandela, former State President of South Africa.

In my literature research on Richard Branson, I realised that Branson could be described as the Nelson Mandela of management: like Mandela, he is charismatic, modest, caring, brave, adventurous, enthusiastic, informal and humane, seeking and creating happiness.

Ubuntu is precisely about practising these attitudes.

Although Ubuntu philosophy has its origin in Africa as a practical worldview that determines everything man does and thinks, and the way in which man acts, the basic values of Ubuntu are so universal that the whole world could apply them to all aspects of life, management included.

This type of Ubuntu value application in the real world of management is what Branson has achieved.

The Branson and Ubuntu styles of management both embrace the basic values of humanness, caring, sharing, respect and compassion.

Proof of this is even to be found in the critical book on Branson by Bower (2002). Although Bower sought to disgrace Branson, he actually proved Branson's humanist style to be the best model in modern management.

Branson practises the basic values of Ubuntu that have been mentioned.

Examples of Branson's humanness are

- his simple way of doing good for society, like establishing a student advisory centre to help young people solve their daily problems. (The unemployed and the suicidal were invited to telephone for assistance.)
- his acts of kindness towards the employees of his companies are legion (All employees form part of a humane and caring enterprise and are even encouraged to establish new, smaller businesses (small is beautiful) and become entrepreneurs themselves as part of the larger, extended business family of the Virgin Group of companies (Bower 2002:x, 9, 21, 75, 109, 135, 143)

Caring is manifested in Branson's sales belief that his business will be cheaper by serving the community. Resources are used to do good, for example for his involvement in the catastrophic problem of HIV/AIDS (in South Africa, Branson is well known for his efforts in the struggle against AIDS, with the blessing of Nelson Mandela, for whom Branson has a deep admiration).

As a result of his earlier efforts to ensure safer sex, condoms in the United Kingdom were even sold at no profit.

In his private life, he has a high profile as a doting father to his children and numerous photographs of Branson and his family have been published in newspapers (Bower 2002:2, 15, 21, 80, 82, 119).

Sharing is illustrated by Branson's notion that he did not go into business with the main motive to make money, but to establish commercial ventures for society's good and for the benefit of employees.

His employees are regarded as the best people (human beings) and as fantastic staff. His policy of providing products at lower prices has earned him the title of "Consumers' champion and charitable businessman" (Bower 2002:17, 168, 295).

Respect is a cardinal value in Ubuntu philosophy. Branson's gentleness, trustworthiness, open-handedness, easy lifestyle and non-complicated personality have earned him respect and acceptance by the general public since his early years. He is seen as an icon of integrity (Bower 2002:15, 297).

Branson's most important characteristic is his compassion for life and for his fellow human beings.

He is forever exuding personal warmth and is known for his lust to live life to the fullest. This passion for life and adventures has culminated in various adventures.

Branson, the billionaire businessman, owner of Virgin Records, Virgin Trains, Atlantic Airlines, the Virgin Islands (to name but a few) and star of the TV show, "The Rebel Billionaire", has travelled all over the world in hot-air balloons, has set the speed record for crossing the Atlantic Ocean by boat, and has initiated the Virgin Space Shuttle (Spiegel 2005:84).

Branson believes in rewarding his staff in the form of parties and weekend breakaways, which is related to the Ubuntu concept of *pungwe* (work celebration). This idea of celebration has a long history in Africa and originated when farmers used to harvest one another's lands in a spirit of

collectiveness. After a day of hard work and sweat, the hosting farmer would provide free beer and food as a sign of thanksgiving to the participants.

Branson's charisma is stunning: entering a hall of celebration in a modest way, he changes the whole mood of the event – he has a “presence” aura around him. He seldom wears ties (he is described as the “tie-less one”), which goes completely against conventional business dress ethics (Bower 2002:38, 48, 81, 92, 97, 117, 119).

In this respect, he shares a spirit of informality with Mandela, who never dresses up in a Western sense and usually wears informal African shirts. Mandela, like Branson, excels with his modest charm.

There are countless examples of Branson's passion for building staff cohesion through social events, which automatically leads to greater loyalty and better productivity (Bower 2002:49, 59, 99, 114).

To conventional managers, management is autocratic, with relations being formal and the work structure hierarchical. In the Ubuntu and Branson style, the work environment is democratic, happy and informal.

Ubuntu and Branson favour the creation of a family atmosphere in the workplace.

Countless references are to be found to “the Branson team” or “the happy Virgin family”, (“Virgin” being the umbrella name of Branson's companies) in which the employees are always referred to as “us” or “we” (Bower 2002:16, 51, 54, 65, 66, 67, 140, 298). Employees are even regarded as members of the same “tribe” in an African sense and are issued with tribal cards which provide them with access to special discounts on certain products!

In Ubuntu business practice, profits are regarded as essential to meet expenses and pay salaries, but extreme

profits are regarded as less important. The happiness of people and a sense of belonging are more important needs.

The idea of the highest and most outrageous profits at all costs is also absent in Branson's business style (Bower 2002:17, 53, 61, 163, 165).

These are examples of how Bower's arguments have actually backfired in favour of the management and leadership style of Branson.

What about Branson's views on management?

Branson himself provides more than enough evidence that his management style is practised in the Ubuntu spirit, complementing the notion that a more human management style can be applied successfully to all societies (Branson 2002).

Humanness, caring, sharing, respect and compassion are all important ingredients in the Branson work and life practice.

Humanness and caring are reflected in his rejection of the previous apartheid system and its brutality against the majority of people in South Africa.

On one specific occasion, and at the request of Nelson Mandela, Branson provided assistance to a Black empowerment group that had landed in financial trouble. Thousands of people would otherwise have lost their jobs.

In the business world, he despises companies that offer expensive, poor-quality products (Branson 2002:105, 219, 394, 495, 544, 509).

Sharing is integral to the Branson convention.

Profit is to be made, but he states that he is prepared to share more of the profit with customers so that they're both better off.



No one should get a bad deal. He has never, he states, gone into any business purely to make money (Branson 2002:58, 296, 392, 499, 505).

He insists that staff members make suggestions to improve the work situation and respects their opinions. He disciplines himself by making notes about conversations and meetings he attends.

He regards Nelson Mandela as the man he respects most in life (Branson 2002:496, 502, 503).

If one compares Mandela's leadership style with that of Branson, this admiration is understandable. Both believe in being soft on people without lowering working standards: this is a manifestation of a simple belief in compassion.

COMPASSION is the basis of the Branson methodology.

Life is to be lived to its fullest and every minute of it should be enjoyed. He takes pleasure in his business. Work should be fun. First and foremost, any business proposal has to sound like fun. More than any other element, fun is the secret of Virgin's success. He however indicates that he is aware that the idea of business being fun and creative goes against the grain of convention.

He grew up in a happy family, for which he would have died, and he expanded the principle of the family atmosphere to include staff. The staff members of the business are regarded as extraordinary, for he realises that the success of the business rests on them. Therefore, staff members come first, not the customers. If staff members are happy, this will result in good customer service.

Convention dictates that a company should look after its shareholders first and foremost, its customers next, and, last of all, its employees.

Virgin however did the opposite: for Virgin, the employees matter the most. This is common sense in Branson's view, for, if the workforce is happy and well motivated, the customer will be happy and, in due course, the resulting profits will make the shareholders happy (Branson 2002:58, 220, 350, 491, 505, 541, 551).

As indicated, these ideas and suggestions can be linked to Ubuntu management philosophy.

The challenge for organisations is to implement this simple, successful and positive philosophy on a massive scale, not only for better profits, but also in a serious attempt to make this life a happy one for all: after all, employees spend most of their lifetime in the working environment.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Dr Johann Broodryk* was the first person to obtain a doctoral degree on the philosophy of Ubuntu (humanness), which he dedicated to the former State President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, for being an exceptionable example of a leader in the true Ubuntuist sense.

*Johann Broodryk* obtained this qualification from the University of South Africa (UNISA) in the Department of Philosophy. He has also served on UNISA's Research Unit for African Philosophy.

Acknowledged African thinkers on Ubuntu philosophy have mentored him on ancient African wisdom. He has conducted empirical research on the Ubuntu philosophy in various parts of Africa and has written four books and several academic articles on Ubuntu.

*Johann Broodryk* further has a broad business and organisational background.

In the business environment, his broker business excelled in the marketing of real estate, life assurance and the promotion of celebrity products.

In the organisational world, he facilitated the recruitment of, and managed and led, 110 stipend-paid and thousands of non-stipend-paid youth volunteers responsible for implementing income-generating and community development projects, based on the principles of Ubuntu, in the Gauteng Province of South Africa.

He is also a founder member of the Ubuntu School of Philosophy, which is a training consultancy on Ubuntu management and African life-coping skills.

This book, *Ubuntu management philosophy – exporting ancient African wisdom into the global world*, is dedicated to Sir Richard Branson of the Virgin Group of companies for being an example of an international Ubuntu entrepreneur.

In this book, the values of practical Ubuntu philosophy are discussed as practical and exciting alternatives to everyday management.

As indicated in the book, various role players in both the private and public sectors in South Africa have already applied Ubuntu Management Philosophy (UMP) with great success.

**In this unique book, managers internationally are challenged to implement ancient African wisdom, as contained in Ubuntu Management Philosophy, for improved staff performance, higher productivity and excellent service delivery in a happy work environment.**

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# 1

# THE AFRICAN CONCEPT OF UBUNTU

## INTRODUCTION

“Ubuntu” means humanness.

This is a reference to humanness in its most intense and natural sense, a genuine human approach to fellow human beings and the environment, including the real world of management.

Ubuntu should not be confused with the general philosophy of Western Humanism. Ubuntu as humanness is African.

The basic difference between humanness and humanism is described by Ramose (1999:155) as addressing two different perceptions of, and perspectives on, reality or being. Humanness regards being or the universe as a complex wholeness involving the multiplayer and incessant interaction of all entities. The human being is constantly interacting with its environment and with nature in pursuit of self-preservation.

Man is however central in this interacting process, and this human interaction with other human beings is of cardinal importance for human survival.

The basis of this humanness is captured in the slogan, “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*”, meaning, “I am a person through other human beings”.

Reviving and expanding humanness in the management and leadership field all over the world, and improving human relationships, will alleviate humanly created vicissitudes of life.

In the words of a prominent Black consciousness leader (Biko 1970:47): “We believe that in the long run the special contribution to the world by Africa will be in this field of human relationship. The great powers of the world may have done wonders in giving the world an industrial and military look, but the great gift still has to come from Africa – giving the world a more human face.”

Giving the world a more human face is a reference to ethics, and ethics is also applicable to management. Ethics is the concept known in Greek as *ethos*, which means “character”. Character is closely connected, philosophically, to morals. Morals refer to human conduct or human values.

For the creation of improved human relations in the workplace and general life, managers and leaders need to reconsider their approaches to management values based on humanness. In the human environment, alternative conceptual frameworks have to be developed which will encourage critical thinking regarding the implementation of human-based strategies.

In the corporate world, material and machinery usually form part of a company’s basic resources, but human beings are responsible for increased productivity and the maintenance of healthy interpersonal relations. It is therefore essential for corporate survival to lead or manage people.

In the institutional world, more, and better, service delivery is demanded to improve the conditions of people, especially the poor. The appropriate slogan is, “*Batho Pele*” (people first).

To many managers, Ubuntu management means a change in their established management styles. Usually managers and people in general are reluctant to change because of a fear of the unknown, insecurity and inconvenience.



This reluctance may even lead to resistance, because of current management styles, perceptions, habits, concepts, values and comfort with current styles, usually referred to as paradigms.

A paradigm is a particulate vision of reality shared by managers in a work environment or community.

In a more personal sense, the concept of paradigm has the strength of a worldview, meaning that it affects the thinking, communication and behaviour of a person.

A paradigm shift is a drastic change in a person's worldview, which is more often than not quite a traumatic experience.

Change is sometimes uncomfortable, even if it is for the better.

Managers are generally reluctant to delegate and expect subordinates not to be creative, but to perform their duties as they were performed in the past; in other words, do not behave like a human being, but like a robot; do not use imagination and mind for improved performance. A management style of real involvement of all staff members (including those on the lowest levels), resulting in the creation of a cohesive feeling of belonging, is, broadly speaking, absent in the daily business of management.

In the history of management philosophy one finds styles like Just in Time Inventory (JIT), Total Quality Management (TQM), Total Productivity Management (TPM), Purpose-directed Management (PDM), Strategic Management (SM), Quality, Service, Cleanliness, Value Management (QSCVM), Management By Involvement (MBI), Managing By Walking Around (MBWA) and Continuous Improvement Philosophy (CIP), all of which are examples of new ideas that were originally regarded with some scepticism. Ubuntu Management Philosophy (UMP) may therefore meet with the same resistance from traditional-minded managers, especially those schooled in the bureaucratic environment of top-down military management.

On the other hand, UMP is universally so attractive that links with other management styles are quite possible, for example with MBWA.

MBWA (Managing By Walking Around) is about developing a broad network of contacts and sources of information, both formal and informal (Thompson & Strickland 1995:304). This management style entails regular, consultative meetings or discussions with key subordinates, listening to rank-and-file employees and observing the situation firsthand. This is done by visiting “the field” regularly, or by consulting with regional or decentralised offices of the organisation. In this sense, UMP is applicable: surely it is a human deed for management to consult with employees on a regular basis? Not only does this create more awareness of obstacles experienced at grassroots levels, but it also contributes to better cohesion in the workplace.

George Drake, founder member of Willards Chips in South Africa, made it a habit to regularly visit the production units of the business from the very beginning, because he wanted to be part and parcel of all the processes. On Friday evenings, he used to take his wife to the drive-in theatre and, afterwards, he would buy hamburgers and take these to workers working the late shift! This is an example of MWA and UMP and is a simple deed reflecting humanness, caring, sharing, compassion and a sign of respect for ordinary workers.

The exciting challenge is for the Ubuntu management-related styles to be implemented on a larger scale internationally. Certain international tycoons are already implementing human approaches successfully without necessarily being aware of the word “Ubuntu”: their essence may simply be known as humanness.

The challenge is to manage people in a more human way; in other words, to be kind to people as human equals and to treat employees with respect and dignity – for example, to follow a down-up management style in terms of which

subordinates have a bigger say without managers experiencing this as a threat to their own security as managers. A threat implies danger. Managers feel insecure when their decisions and current styles are questioned or are regarded as out of date.

Managers in the corporate world are especially sensitive to change, because they realise that sound business management is essential for the successful running of a business. If the business is doing relatively well already, and profits are used as the determining criterion for success, change may seem unnecessary.

However, managing people as people will ensure and strengthen the positions of managers owing to the increasing demand for management acknowledgement of humanness in the workplace.

This reference to humanness in the workplace also indicates that more attention should be devoted to the wellbeing of staff members.

Customers are important, but the belief that customers should come first and are always right took a serious knock in the management styles of more recent, prominent business leaders.

One such leader is said (Pitt 1997:8) to be Sir Richard Branson (to whom this book is dedicated).

Branson was the founder and manager-leader of the very successful Virgin Group of companies. The Virgin Group's operations span cola, cinemas, mega stores, an airline, a potential super-space airline, health clubs and trains.

In an interview with the media, Branson suggested that the customer was indeed not the most important individual. Instead, he stated, the employee was more important!

If an organisation regards and treats employees as being the most important, and like family members, employees will, in turn, treat customers accordingly, resulting in a long-term effect of caring for the needs of customers and shareholders. This is an indirect attack on the fallacy that the customer should come first at all times and that the customer is always right!

One often notices how ill-mannered customers are to waiters in restaurants, which is a consequence of them not recognising the dignity of restaurant personnel as human beings. Customers are not always right.

As will be argued in this book, managers should also give more attention, from the Ubuntu perspective, to human approaches regarding employees. The consequence of this is that more staff members will be prepared to commit themselves of their own free will to better productivity, leading to higher profits and quality work!

It has been pointed out (Mbigi 1996:5) that a great threat to society is the inability to create this type of performance which is essential to service delivery and economic development.

Managers should be more dynamic and less static in their management approaches, implying that a change in thinking is cardinal. Change is generally acceptable when it is understood, when it does not threaten security, and when it is planned collectively.

The intention in this book is precisely this: to provide managers as well as leaders of organisations with the necessary information to understand Ubuntu as a realistic management philosophy based on humanness and so ensure better performance. If change is analysed, and if consensus on adjustments or adaptations is reached collectively, feelings of insecurity will be replaced with enthusiastic endeavours to reach objectives.

## LAYOUT OF THE BOOK

In this first chapter, the philosophy of management will be analysed in an effort to reach clarity on what is to be understood by this concept.

After defining the concept of philosophy, the phenomenon of Ubuntu will be defined. These definitions will consequently be reflected in Ubuntu as practical philosophy, and especially in its relation to management philosophy.

In chapter two, comparisons will be made between management and leadership to determine the differences and similarities between the concepts. The reason for drawing comparisons is to gain a better understanding of what management and leadership entail.

Chapter three examines the management environment.

The work environment in its physical, institutional, socio-welfare, economic and cultural context is investigated and the possibilities for Ubuntu management in these environments are identified. It will be argued that Ubuntu is applicable to the whole working environment.

The important role of Ubuntu as a worldview in the life styles and the life cycle of people will be indicated. The cultural influence of Ubuntu will be highlighted and basic concepts like *lobola*, *mahala*, *ilima*, *simunye*, *shosoloza*, *tsotsi*, *sangomas*, religion and ancestors will be explained. The traditional role of storytelling and body language will also be discussed.

In chapter four, the Ubuntu personality and happy approaches are discussed. This discussion includes references to concepts applicable to conventional management tools like transparency, decision making, democracy, supervision, organisation, motivation, vision, mission and situation analysis. Moreover, it is indicated how the Ubuntu approach is of relevance to these concepts.

Chapter five deals with a variety of traditional Ubuntu concepts. Aspects like the influence of death, religion, ancestors and the extended family are also discussed.

Chapter six deals with developing a strategy for the workplace the Ubuntu way. The ONPO analysis is described as a new tool for developing a mission, vision and strategy plan. It is also an exciting alternative for the outdated SWOT analysis.

Marketing the Ubuntu way will be investigated in chapter seven.

Issues like the importance of African names, the phenomenon of African time, and African attitudes to capitalism and profit making are explained.

Chapter eight deals with Ubuntu values in the managerial context. Educational values are discussed, paving the way for a discussion of the core values of Ubuntu management. Managers should find it easy to measure actions and evaluate performance in terms of Ubuntu core values.

After this discussion on values, intercultural Ubuntu aspects are discussed in chapter nine. The discussion will also provide information on intercultural communication and conventions.

In the final chapter, chapter ten, important issues like practical Ubuntu management guidelines and their possible spin-offs receive attention.

Topics include management and leadership in the family spirit, cohesion, performance, training and the expansion of Ubuntu management styles in the global arena.

Finally, a conclusion is drawn regarding the viability of practical Ubuntu Management Philosophy on a universal basis.

Case studies are not presented in the first chapter of the book, since this section deals mainly with theory.

## **MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY**

### **Seeking wisdom is the key activity of philosophy.**

In an academic sense, philosophy investigates the understanding of underlying principles and the ultimate, real truth of the human situation.

In the Western world, the foundation for philosophy was laid by Greek thinkers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

While differing in approaches, they basically believed that certain virtues like wisdom, bravery, temperance, risk and justice are qualities necessary for human growth and leadership roles.

One of the basic ideas is to build the moral character of people and society. In the management and leadership world, the maintenance of good morality is of cardinal importance. No working environment and country can prosper if morality and integrity are not regarded as being of primary importance.

In the African perception, the moral philosophy of Ubuntu is as old as the “beginning” (Koka in Broodryk 2002a: Foreword).

The basic quality of Ubuntu is the inner value and dignity of the human personality, which is none other than “humanness” instilled in man.

Both Western and African ethical philosophy seek to improve the morality of man. This morality is universal: it is about the striving for the good and justified. It is about doing what is humanely correct, what is morally “right”.

These applications are of relevance to organisations and their managers as well. In this respect, management philosophy becomes crucial.

The point is: ALL ORGANISATIONS NEED A BASIC MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY.

Without a basic foundation of philosophy to influence the vision, mission and strategic plan of the organisation, the organisation is doomed for disaster. The philosophy of an organisation determines its character.

Character influences the perceptions of people.

The perceptions people develop about an organisation will, once they have become established, be extremely difficult to change afterwards. In fact, one basic, positive perception will even lead to the formation of other positive perceptions of an organisation. For example, people love to be associated with the Virgin Group of companies whose corporate philosophy has always been to make the people who work for the company its first priority: the perception that was created is that a company is only as good as its people. This basic perception gave birth to other perceptions in terms of which Virgin is seen as portraying humanness towards its employees in a happy and, consequently, productive working environment.

The management process also has its roots in the philosophical context, meaning that the manager has to utilise philosophical skills to be successful.

These philosophical skills refer to thinking about current practices and considering alternatives to improve productivity and service delivery from a certain philosophical perspective.

Philosophy of management is not unique or new.



Philosophy in real life, as well as in the world of management, is about making sense of a process, or existing practices; in other words, being critical and rethinking the viability of these practices. It is therefore theoretical, but, in the real world, the possibility of implementing the specific management philosophy in practice is essential in order for the philosophy to be of any value.

It is about thinking or brainstorming (a rational exercise), prioritisation of possible outcomes, analysing and planning implementation actions.

It is like an architect in action: he or she thinks about, and draws sketches of, the structure (a rational activity) and only thereafter can the structure be built. The structure is theory being changed into something practical and concrete.

Practical entities have their origins in theory. Theory and practice are related: theory only precedes practice.

The theoretical process will be influenced by the management philosophy applied. If the purpose is harsh-capitalistic, meaning that the highest profit at all costs is pursued, the underlying value of absolute greed will dominate the planning of activities.

Ubuntu as management philosophy will have humanness, and not greed, as its underlying primary value.

## DEFINITIONS OF UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY

Ubuntu is in essence African. Throughout the continent, all African languages have words that define this humanness.

Ubuntu is about the art of being a human person. In this sense, Ubuntu is an ideal: the ideal of being a good person. This does not mean that all Ubuntu people are good people. People are trying to live out their Ubuntu values just as religious people strive to be good. But religious people also land up in jail because of criminal activities.

Ubuntu is found all over Africa. It is recognised by the different African languages in the following words:

- in Zulu as *Ubuntu* or *Umtu*
- in Sesotho as *Botho* or *Motho*
- in Shangaan as *Numunhu* or *Munhu*
- in Venda as *Vhuthu* or *Muthu*
- in Xhosa as *Ubuntu* or *Umntu*
- in Tswana as *Motho*
- in Tsonga as *Bunhu*
- in Shona as *Unhu* or *Nunhu*
- in Swahili as *Utu*
- in Ugandan as *Abantu*
- in Afrikaans as *Mensheid*
- in Cape Afrikaans as *Menslikgeit*

(Broodryk 2002b:27)

Characteristics of Ubuntu are, inter alia (Bhengu 1996:5):

- the humanist experience of treating all people with respect
- humanness, meaning that being human encompasses values like universal brotherhood and sharing, and treating and respecting other people as human beings
- a way of life that contributes positively to sustaining the wellbeing of people, the community or society

- a non-racial philosophy applicable to all people as human beings

The following descriptions of Ubuntu philosophy are given (Koka 2002b:7) as recipes for a new universal world order:

- a non-racial philosophy or value system through which all people are regarded and treated as human beings – the art of being human
- a philosophy of tolerance and compassion
- a philosophical concept that accepts that mankind is one integrated whole comprising various racial groups
- a supreme goodness breathed into the “nostrils” of matter (man) which transformed man into a living soul, a being called “human”, reflecting the image and likeness of God in man
- a divine spark which, as soon as it was instilled in the human soul, immediately transformed and elevated man into a distinctively different being endowed with intelligence and power of dominion over the rest of the created beings
- the quality and dignity of the human personality

The emphasis is placed on the human aspect: “The value, dignity, safety, welfare, health, beauty, love and development of the human being, are to come first, and should be promoted to first rank before all other considerations, particularly, in our time, before economic, financial and political factors are taken into consideration” (Vilikazi 1991:70).

Ubuntu is also defined (Broodryk 2004:4) as a comprehensive, ancient African worldview which pursues primary values of intense humanness, caring, sharing and compassion, and associated values, ensuring a happy and quality human community life in a family spirit or atmosphere.

The moral values of Ubuntu are to be honoured by the communitarian ethic serving the preservation of the group or family as a whole (Radley 1999:66). The group is regarded as superior and has more status than the individual.

From an economic perspective, Ubuntu finds expression in the “economy of affection”, which involves solidarity action with extended family members, peers, comrades and political groups. The economy of affection has effectively subsidised the formal economy by providing informal social welfare for the indigent and care for the aged, sick and orphaned (Otter 1999:4).

## **UBUNTU AS PRACTICAL AND USEFUL PHILOSOPHY**

Ubuntu is a philosophy that is “lived” by Africans on a daily basis. In this respect, it can be viewed as a practical approach to life and work which encompasses all activities of the human being.

It is claimed (Khanyile 1995:1) that Ubuntu is the common, spiritual ideal by which all Africans south of the Sahara give meaning to life and reality.

Their concept of Ubuntu is thus usually described as the spiritual foundation of life.

Ancient African wisdom and the origin of moral Ubuntu date back to the period 1 500 years before the discovery of the Ten Commandments (Koka 1999:5).

Ubuntu was then captured in the holy Netchar Maat, which was associated with seven cardinal virtues, or the key to human perfectibility, namely truth, justice, propriety, harmony, balance, reciprocity and order.

From these basic virtues of ancient African wisdom, practical guidelines such as the following for correct daily living were deduced:

- not to steal
- not to murder
- not to do any harm or cause pain to others
- not to lie
- not to become angry
- not to cause terror
- to be faithful to beloved ones

These guidelines have since then been transferred from generation to generation in an oral way. They taught Africans how to behave and were the basic moral laws of traditional African societies (Broodryk 2000:3).

Ubuntu manifests itself in the way one thinks, talks and acts.

If one thinks happy and passionate thoughts, they will become one's utterances. What one says will in turn influence one's actions.

Practical examples of Ubuntu behaviour are

- the way one talks (good, positive words uttered in a relaxed, informal manner)
- the way one walks (relaxed, in an unstressed way)
- the way one smiles (in a friendly way, naturally, heartily and not by grinning)
- the way one treats others, especially elders, children and those in need
- the way one greets (in a friendly way, and by hugging and enquiring extensively about the other's wellbeing)
- the way one practises moral values like caring, sharing, respect and compassion in daily life

(Broodryk 1998:28)

Ubuntu behaviour is also described (Maphisa 1994:2) as a person's state of being, where behaviour is governed by the ability to reason and think rationally. This behaviour focuses on positive values like love, sympathy, kindness, etcetera.

Actions that can be described as part of positive Ubuntu behaviour or living are simple deeds like visiting sick people, extending condolences to a family that has lost a dear one, adopting an orphan as one's own child, providing food for the needy, assisting the elderly by cleaning their homes, and greeting others in a friendly and compassionate way.

In the working environment, Ubuntu rests heavily on the family spirit.

If all employees regard themselves as members of the extended family of the workplace, this shows that there is respect for the Ubuntu notion of personhood or brotherhood. In such an environment, everybody regards themselves as brothers and sisters of the same family.

Ubuntu harnesses the phenomena of family and extended family approaches in general life and in the management domain.

The solidarity principle of Ubuntu is not a mere vague concept, but a practical demand by man to experience unconditional respect, dignity and care from the relevant group, community or organisation.

Trade unions and the way they operate in a spirit of "oneness" are a practical example of the solidarity aspect of Ubuntu philosophy. All workers are treated equally and are respected equally.

If one takes the original meaning of democracy into consideration, namely *demos* (people) and *kratia* (rule or authority), it follows that Ubuntu democracy allows people

at all levels, even the lowest levels, to play a practical and meaningful role in the workplace and in the decision-making process. Ubuntu signifies grassroots democracy.

In the private sector, various South African companies like Norwich Union, Colgate Palmolive, Sanlam, Telkom, Group Five, Escom, Liberty Life, South African Airways, Pick 'n Pay, Mageu Sorghum Beer, First National Bank and Absa Bank have arranged courses for staff members to enable them to obtain a better understanding of Ubuntu and Ubuntu culture.

All these companies are leading successes in their respective fields and, by accepting Ubuntu as their philosophical base, have indicated the importance of humanness in modern management.

Sanlam is one of the biggest life assurance companies in South Africa. Its commitment to Ubuntu is portrayed and reflected in advertisements in which the company uses the following wording: "Sanlam: Embracing the spirit of Ubuntu".

Reuel Khoza, Chairperson of Escom, supplier of electricity in South Africa, believes (*Enterprise* October 1994:85) corporates will be more successful if they adopt the people-centred approach of managing the Ubuntu way. This implies that people must come first – they come before products, profits and productivity. Once people have been attended to, productivity, products and profits should receive attention.

The success of Escom is reflected in its after-tax profit of R5,2 billion that was attained in a period of 15 months up to the end of March 2005.

Liberty Life was founded in 1957 by Sir Donald Gordon, who has gained international respect for his philanthropic approaches to life and in business. Leading others in a human way, Liberty International is today a giant in the British property sector, with 14 shopping centres and a market value of R39 milliard.

In South Africa, the company, Liberty Properties, has as its marketing departure point the human slogan, “Making space for you”.

Gordon also embraces the idea of approaching work as fun.

South African Airways regards Ubuntu as a practical philosophy in business (Wolmarans 1995:4) and Ubuntu has, since 1994, been the driving force behind SAA’s service.

If one considers the publicly stated SAA values of pride in performance, customer orientation, employee care, corporate citizenship, integrity, safety, innovation and teamwork, it is obvious that these can all be merged with the Ubuntu philosophy.

Raymond Ackerman of Pick ‘n Pay, the leading chain store giant in South Africa, is known for his standpoint that employees come first. In the years of apartheid when housing for Black people was not readily available, he went out of his way to arrange accommodation for employees. This resulted in extremely loyal staff, which, in turn, had a positive influence on productivity, building up the business to what it is today.

Mageu Sorghum Beer, after distributing material and flags with the slogan, “Mageu No 1: We salute the spirit of Ubuntu”, introduced the telling of stories in *The Sowetan*, the biggest African daily newspaper in South Africa. People sending in the best stories illustrating how Ubuntu manifested itself in their daily lives would receive some remuneration. In this way, the company won the trust of millions of consumers, resulting in it becoming one of the biggest sorghum beer enterprises in the country.

The above-mentioned companies respect the influence of Ubuntu as a winning philosophy for more effective business.



It therefore makes sense that more managers in both the private and public sectors need to be educated thoroughly regarding this practical philosophy so that they are able to utilise the principles of Ubuntu for better productivity and service delivery. Ubuntu also requires managers to show more interest in the personal obstacles of employees in order to ensure that employees work in a happy and caring environment.

In this respect, Tom Marais (Managing Director of the Living Made Easy enterprise, which teaches people, especially illiterates or people in the lower-income groups, how to budget for their personal monthly expenses) refers to the “five Fs” namely

- F-aith
- F-amily
- F-inances
- F-itness and
- F-un, culminating in
- F-ulfilment (Happiness)

Faith is seen as faith in oneself, one's managers, one's dear ones and religious convictions.

Family refers to the bonds at home, and, at the extended level, includes even one's friends.

Financial problems can have a demoralising influence on people, and people therefore need to be assisted to spend their money within the limits of their incomes.

Fitness not only includes physical wellbeing, but also fitness of mind and spiritual issues.

Fun is to enjoy.

If all these factors are in place, the employee will experience a sense of fulfilment or happiness, which is conducive to progressive productivity in the workplace.

Productivity and doing what is worthwhile in turn create a feeling of satisfaction, which is also a positive experience.

That productivity also leads to happiness and a sense of satisfaction cannot be denied. In fact, people feel good if they are productive or are doing worthwhile things that result in success.

The basic point is that it is a sound strategy to create an environment in the workplace where people feel at home in the company. In this way, people will deliver higher productivity to the family-type corporate.

For managers, the main advantages of the practical values of Ubuntu are

- basic to living a human life
- consistent and universal
- common to all religious communities and customs
- informative and directive of all activities and actions

Ubuntu and its values have already been incorporated in legislation and other activities in the Republic of South Africa.

Ubuntu enjoys a presence in, or forms part of,

- the White Paper on Welfare, where it is described as a caring principle
- the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service – all civil servants are expected to deliver service in the spirit of *Batho Pele* (people first)
- the Draft Policy on Families
- the value base of the Constitution, where specific mention is made of the human rights of people
- the school syllabi of various provincial education departments, where it is part of the subject, Guidance

- national education values
- policies of other government departments, which are implementing Ubuntu as a practical guideline in the fields of safety and security, law and order, tourism, family affairs and health
- various disciplines at tertiary institutions, such as business administration, economics, philosophy, anthropology, political science, tourism studies, law, religion, African languages and communication (Broodryk 2004:21)

This prominent presence of Ubuntu in the aforementioned spheres illustrates the importance of Ubuntu philosophy in South Africa.

It is common knowledge that, internationally, traditional management has been based on aggressiveness and harsh, competitive attitudes reflected in the approach of “let’s go and battle it out”, in which alternatives like being cooperative and participative are ignored.

People were not born to be the soldiers or slaves of an organisation.

Although the basic resources of an organisation, like material and machinery, are essential, people are the dynamic coordinators of organisational activities and people are therefore not less essential.

Management is about the management of people as human beings. Only people can bring about an improvement in productivity. The needs of the organisation therefore have to be adapted to people’s needs in order to improve productivity and to create job satisfaction in the workplace.

Creating job satisfaction is about implementing humanness and happiness in the workplace in the spirit of family and belonging.

Work should be fun, a pleasure.

The exciting challenge is for the philosophy of Ubuntu management to broaden its horizon and strive for greater international recognition. Already America, Australia and Europe are showing enthusiasm for learning more about this simple, but practical and effective, philosophy.

As the saying goes: “*Ex Africa semper aliquid novi*” (out of Africa always something new).

# 2

## UBUNTU MANAGEMENT

### THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY

Management philosophy is similar to management theory.

In both philosophy and theory, the manager is compelled to consider certain viewpoints, value guidelines and ideas as to how to perform the task of manager effectively.

Three basic theories of management are therefore distinguished, namely

- the traditional theory
- the human relations theory
- the human resources theory

(Mol 2003:15)

These theories are similar to the autocratic, *laissez faire* and democratic leadership styles respectively.

Traditional theory is about boss-ship.

In the case of this type of management, people are not trusted, supervision is of a very close and autocratic nature, and the top-down management process is rife. It is a repetitive style of management where subordinates merely obey orders and are not allowed any initiative or creativity. This style is usually applicable to the military and police milieus.

This theory appears to be the most prominent belief in the history of management, where the managers have specific assumptions about workers, such as

- workers are basically lazy and find work unpleasant
- workers do not go the extra mile and will endeavour to get as much as possible out of the employer
- workers refuse to take responsibility and the employer needs to take decisions himself
- workers are not capable of thinking for themselves or using their own initiative

These assumptions have certain drastic consequences. The employer will practise a top-down approach and happiness in the work environment, as well as an open, friendly relationship between employers and employees, will be absent.

These attitudes have a negative influence on production.

Human relations theory is based on the belief that extraordinary attention should be given to the wellbeing of employees, including the satisfaction of social needs.

Practitioners of this theory believe that, if workers are treated well, they will be motivated to perform better.

Those holding this theory believe that

- workers want to be treated as human beings
- workers are not merely replaceable production factors, but are people with feelings and emotions
- workers excel in pleasant working environments
- workers need to be informed about the progress and development of the enterprise

In modern times, many enterprises follow this theory, propagating an open-door business approach. The tendency usually is to consult with managers up to a certain level in the spirit of participative management. Workers are however not always included in the decision-making process.

This style is also found in the total, open-door approach where employees need not respect confidentiality at all, reflecting a bottom-up management process.

Human resources theory places the emphasis not on treating employees well, but on using employees well. Utilising employees well will lead to more work satisfaction, to better quality of work, and to employees taking more decisions themselves on a democratic basis; hence, in terms of this theory, employees are allowed more responsibility.

Managers applying this theory believe that

- workers find work enjoyable if they are utilised according to their skills, knowledge and other capabilities
- workers use their thinking abilities and initiative
- workers are trustworthy and responsible

In practice, managers seem to be reluctant to allow employees too much initiative and decision making, although this appears to be an ideal situation.

Ubuntu management is definitely not pro traditional theory, since a distinction is acknowledged between managing based on power relations (traditional theory) and management based on democratic consensus (Ubuntu philosophy).

Ubuntu management philosophy appears to be a combination of the human relations and human resources theories. It also allows for openness, but openness in a responsible way: one remains accountable for decisions taken and executed.

Ubuntu management is not unique, and deserves confirmation where human aspects are not recognised.

The focus is on the aspect of positive human relations and people-centricity.

The management point of departure should be to treat people with kindness. As a response, people will act in a similarly kind way. What one does to others, they will in return do to you.

Employees should also play a cardinal and equal role in the management process and they cannot be treated as mere subordinates without any say whatsoever in their work affairs.

Traditionally, an African king was viewed as a king by virtue of his subjects, which is related to the slogan, “I am a person through other persons”. The king was influenced by the opinions of his council. These opinions would eventually be debated thoroughly and be unified as consensus or common acceptance of decisions. This is a practical example of the Ubuntu approach to decision making.

This is also known as the shepherd style of management, which was introduced by former State President Nelson Mandela with unbelievable successes in post-apartheid South Africa.

Similarly, a manager depends on other colleagues to be able to manage and cannot perform a solo act of management.

The basic skills of general management include the themes of planning, organising, leading, control, communication, decision making, motivation, coordination, innovation and creativity.

These skills will, as stated in chapter one, be discussed from an Ubuntu management perspective in chapter four.

## **MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

“Management” usually refers to a broad type of involvement in the various activities of the organisation, while “leadership” concentrates on the leading of people.



It has been observed (Bennis & Nanus 2005:41) that the problem with many organisations, and especially the ones that are failing, is that they tend to be overmanaged and underled. They may excel in the ability to handle the daily routine, yet they never question whether the routine should be there at all.

This reminds one of the type of attitude, “This is how it has always been done”, an attitude in which the questioning of tasks is not easily tolerated.

Management and leadership are both important, but differ fundamentally.

Management is to bring about, to accomplish, to take charge of or take responsibility for, or to conduct. Leadership is to influence, guide in a direction, course, action or opinion. The distinction is that managers are people who do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing. The difference is summarised (Bennis & Nanus 2005:41) as activities of vision and judgement (effectiveness) versus activities of mastering routines (efficiency).

An effective manager is not necessarily an efficient leader, and an efficient leader is not necessarily an effective manager. A manager may be excellent at the execution of procedures, having everything in order, constantly meeting deadlines, monitoring performance, etcetera, yet be weak in the motivation of staff, gaining trust and being an inspiration to others to come up with new and exciting alternatives.

A leader, on the other hand, may be less concerned with procedures and red-tape issues and more with concentrating on initiatives and exploration.

For purposes of greater clarity, management and leadership will be discussed under separate headings.

# Management

The definitions of what a manager, and especially a good manager, is all about, are diverse and controversial.

It has been noted (Mintzberg 2005:53) that good managers are seen as doers, while others see managers as thinkers. Managers are sometimes even regarded as good leaders.

Traditionally, managers are applauded for being those who excel at the function of control.

Management is generally regarded as a process that provides direction to all the resources of an organisation, with the main objective being to achieve the highest productivity possible or the best service delivery possible.

A manager is traditionally tasked with the responsibility of implementing management and policy. This includes formal processes like control, regulations and procedures to reach the objectives of the organisation.

“Management” refers to the following functions:

- recruiting, interviewing and appointing personnel
- providing or facilitating training
- taking the lead
- taking control
- *attending meetings*
- developing objectives
- making decisions
- managing people or staff members
- *attending meetings*
- appointing staff
- managing time
- administering
- *attending meetings*
- preparing speeches and press releases
- accounting
- *attending meetings*

- attending to general red-tape issues
- organising the implementation of strategic plans
- taking disciplinary steps
- *attending meetings*
- reporting
- monitoring
- *attending meetings*
- evaluating

Did you notice the enormous amount of time that is spent on *attending meetings*?

Is it therefore correct to conclude that the main function of being a manager is to plan and facilitate meetings?

Meetings are described (Lencioni 2005:521) as a puzzling paradox. On the one hand, they are critical, because meetings are the activities at the centre of every organisation. On the other, some meetings are painful, frustratingly long and seemingly pointless.

The manager has to be selective regarding the priority of meetings.

Meeting phobia is quite a universal phenomenon in the managerial arena and managers should indeed ask themselves whether it is really essential to devote so much time to meetings.

The issue is: are meetings in general not merely plain time-wasters?

In a less formal and closer working environment where there is direct, daily contact with staff members and an open-door policy (or a policy of being more approachable to staff members), informal dialogue takes place ponderously, but results in the free flow of information. This may reduce the need for having an overdose of meetings.

On the other hand, crucial matters justify meetings, especially if financial matters and policy need to be discussed.

The main task, then, is for the manager to differentiate between what is important and what is less crucial before calling a meeting.

The manager only needs to stipulate the purpose of the meeting, allowing for an open agenda where staff members can add items to the agenda for discussion. This will lead to more possibilities for participation and the sharing of decision-making responsibilities.

If meetings will deal only with minor matters which do not require the presence of the manager, the attendance thereof should be reconsidered. A manager does not have to attend all meetings.

It is stated (Lencioni 2005:521) that there is nothing inherently bad about meetings and that it is entirely possible to transform them into compelling, productive and fun activities.

It is customary in Africa for meetings to start with joyful singing and informal dancing. This creates an atmosphere of fun and happiness that is conducive to natural and open discussion.

In the African and Ubuntu milieu, meetings are held only when necessary, but, once one attends a meeting, one is expected to attend until all matters have been discussed and consensus has been reached. This could be a lengthy process that takes up a lot of time.

In general, four characteristics of management are identified, namely

- management labels, usually striking labels in the form of acronyms to make an impression, like TQM (Total Quality Management), BPR (Business Process Re-engineering), etc.

- management concepts that describe specific management issues in general terms, leaving managers with the problem of designing their own solutions
- management concepts offering a general solution to identified problems – these do not provide rules or guidelines for specific problems
- proposed solutions provided with reference to well-known firms that have already implemented the concept (Karsten & Van Veen 1998:26)

Ubuntu Management Philosophy (UMP) may also be seen as being labelled, but this is a normal, conventional practice. References to success stories are also normal practice and are sometimes required by potential customers.

Guidelines regarding cases or problematic situations are, from the Ubuntu perspective, relatively simple. Each situation is measured in accordance with the basic, primary Ubuntu values of humanness, caring, sharing, respect and compassion.

For example, a problematic situation has arisen in that a staff member is not performing.

The relevant criterion for deciding how to approach the situation is for the manager to determine which actions on his part will demonstrate humanness, caring, sharing, respect and compassion. The idea is to consult and listen actively and diplomatically to the staff member in a human way, showing care for his or her standpoint, attempting to share (being empathetic to) his or her possible complex problem, showing respect for his or her views and creating a warm, understanding atmosphere to indicate compassion. These value applications are of relevance to all problematic situations.

In many cases, it is the lack of motivation skills on the part of the manager that result in the non-performance of employees.

Management requires skills, and the art of management the

Ubuntu way is to apply humanness when exercising skills like strategising, planning, marketing, financing, project management and especially people skills.

Generally, management consists of top, middle and junior levels. All three levels are involved in applying skills in the work situation.

The Ubuntu management style has the following unique features:

- The philosophical base is humanness, which manifests itself in a practical way in how others are to be treated
- The style is informal
- The manager is central to, and part of, the work team, like the captain of a soccer team (management through involvement)
- Everybody is regarded as part of the organisation's extended family (as a brother or sister) in an atmosphere of togetherness and solidarity
- All are regarded as equal: people merely have different roles to play, with different responsibilities
- Decision making occurs through reaching consensus (participative management)
- All staff members participate in decision making as is relevant
- Cooperation replaces individual competition
- Friendliness and a spirit of comradeship or family are encouraged
- Mutual respect is encouraged
- Teamwork is the norm
- Transparency and openness govern
- Active listening is recommended
- An atmosphere of warmth is created and maintained
- The dignity of all is respected, regardless of political, religious or other convictions

The manager has a choice: to spend his or her time mostly on administration or mostly on leading.

He or she should however endeavour to be more of a leader than an autocratic boss, involving himself or herself with the core activities of the organisation.

This can be compared to the role of a gardener (Mandela 1994:476): to plant a seed, watch it grow, to tend to it and then harvest it. Involvement offers simple, but enduring, work satisfaction.

A manager should also tend his or her garden in a caring way: sow the seeds and then watch them grow, cultivate them and harvest the results. Like the gardener, the manager as leader must take responsibility for what he or she cultivates and must be involved in the whole process all the time.

### ***Four Teats of a Cow Management***

The manager is presented with a wide variety of approaches to choose from in order to drive or run the organisation.

In the case of the non-autocratic style, management takes place in a more visible and dominant way, thus subtly.

Staff members should be included in the decision-making process and the strength of participative management lies in the co-responsibility for decisions taken.

To work and decide together as equal human beings is similar to the situation found in traditional, extended-family farming cooperatives where responsibility and profits are shared and enjoyed.

This Afrocentric approach of communalism is intrinsic in Ubuntu philosophy, which manifests itself in the Ubuntu management process.

The Ubuntu management process has been developed because, in the new (or post-apartheid) South Africa, there is a tendency to review old Eurocentric management practices and to adapt them to Afrocentric styles. The period of colonisation finally ended with the demise of apartheid as official government policy. This brought with it a new spirit of freedom to investigate which colonial practices could be Africanised or simply abolished.

Managers should also be hypercritical of old practices. As Chinweizu (in Broodryk 1997:7) puts it: “A renaissance of African civilization in an industrial mode implies a far-reaching renovation of African cultures. Renovation calls for selectivity guided by the new objectives. Like a plank, brick or tile being used to renovate a house, every cultural item for use in renovating African civilization has to be critically appraised to see if it meets the specifications demanded by the new objectives.”

The new objectives seem to be clear: they are about Africanisation, scrutinising Afrocentric values versus Eurocentric values, and determining new approaches that will fit the post-apartheid scenario. These activities are applicable in all fields of life, in a holistic way, and therefore also include a review of management.

South African management of the past, as typical of the apartheid and colonial era, was closed and rigid.

The following are some examples:

- Top-down approaches existed (the boss decided and the workers obeyed without questioning).
- Management was closed in the bureaucratic sense, as reflected by an attitude of telling and instructing: “This is how it is done and one obeys regulations, rules, conventions and interpretations unconditionally.”
- Only Whites were appointed in decent jobs. (Blacks were not considered for promotion or appointment in sophisticated jobs and were mainly employed as physical workers, for example cleaning buildings and making tea.)



- Relations were formal and a limited flow of information was allowed.
- Staff members were rigorously treated as subordinates and not as equals.
- Rigid time-consciousness existed which did not allow for tolerance time. In other words, it was not considered that Black workers' living conditions differed from the living conditions of those in power as a result of the vast distances from the workplace, unreliable transport and taxi wars, all of which influenced punctuality in a negative sense.
- Emphasis was placed on competition (not only competition between individuals, firms and companies, but also competition with the whole world).
- Rewarding of, or giving incentives to, the individual and not the team or group (the team was not a team, but was regarded as a loose entity consisting of motivated and competing individuals).

These autocratic managerial practices, which are in direct contrast to the democratic Ubuntu management practices, are said to have their origins in the Western world (Binedell in Christie et al 1994:4).

The theoretical origins of previous South African management practice can be traced mainly to European and American management literature and practice, and the latter is found in the largest bureaucracy that preceded modern industrial organisations: the military.

An “army approach” towards management would indeed be rigidly closed and frightening.

The basic principle of Ubuntu is that man is a social being and not a mere number as is to be expected under a rigid, military-style management. Man is also not a mere cog in a machine in the industrial world; nor is man some sort of animal. Man has a right to be treated in a spirit of humanity and is entitled to basic human rights.

As part of the application of the human managerial style, the dedicated manager should make a special effort to become aware of the obstacles staff members in their individual capacities may be encountering, such as

- physical problems (accommodation)
- emotional problems (relationships)
- financial stress (bad debt)
- poor self-image
- mental disabilities
- sexual harassment
- diseases and illnesses
- lack of free-time activities (boredom)
- a dysfunctional marriage or family life

By bearing in mind the obstacles to harmonious and happy living, the manager can now readjust his approach and communication strategy regarding staff members. The ideal is not to unintentionally, or out of ignorance, offend staff members with problems, but rather to utilise this better perspective, based on information regarding the particular circumstances, to motivate staff.

These factors justify an evaluation of a more human and open Ubuntu or Afrocentric approach to management, which is a paradigm shift from dictatorship to a democratic Afrocentric relationship.

Afrocentricity is described (Khoza in Christie et al 1994:18) as

- being about Africans putting Africa at the centre of their existence. It is about Africans anchoring themselves in their own continent and entails authentic, Africa-based behaviour in the sociocultural, economic and political arena. Ubuntu is about Africans embracing African values, norms and a worldview.
- being neither racist nor anti-anybody. It acknowledges Ubuntu and also stresses the importance of the person. Ubuntu thinkers formulate their views in terms of “a person is a person through other persons”.

- being about bold, African self-assertion, which is also a feature of the Ubuntu worldview.

This description of Afrocentricity fits the philosophy of Ubuntu and Ubuntu can therefore be regarded as such an Afrocentric approach.

The challenge is to apply Ubuntu Afrocentricity ideas to management; in other words, how can Ubuntu wisdom be applied as an alternative in the workplace?

For example, the management proposal is made (Andrews in Lascaris & Lipken 1993:28) involving an Ubuntu paradigm in which the management process is explained in terms of the chassis of a vehicle with four wheels: “The environment is one wheel which is constantly turning. It is connected to another wheel which is the strategy you adopt to manage the environment. If your strategy does not fit your environment, you snap your discipline and create a stress point on that axle. But your strategy, in turn, is interlinked with your culture as the third wheel. In fact, your culture determines your ability to deliver a strategy, and you create another stress point in the organisational axle. And the fourth wheel is the leadership of the company which drives the culture.”

A vehicle is used as the basis of explanation, but, in an African context, another example may be more useful.

Replacing the example of a car with that of a cow could easily Africanise this model. The four wheels can be replaced with the four teats of a cow.

A cow is an important concept in African thinking, especially in economic terms. The following are examples of the importance attached to a cow in African life:

- The number of cattle he possesses measures a person’s material wealth.

- The parents of a bride-to-be are rewarded with a number of cattle/cows by the bridegroom (as thanksgiving under the *lobola* system).
- Cows are slaughtered at sacred and social events like weddings, birthdays, festivals and funerals.
- *Sangomas* (spiritual medicine men) communicate with cows.

The four teats of a cow have, as their function, the provision of milk. Milk may be compared with output or productivity. The teats are usually milked in a certain order and style, and all four are used in this process, either for purposes of human consumption (consuming the milk) or for economic motives (marketing of the milk to generate a profit). The Ubuntu management process similarly depends on four aspects in order to generate productivity or profit in an Africanised milieu. These aspects may be linked to the four teats of a cow. Consequently, these aspects will be dealt with under the headings of the Leadership Teat, the Social Environment Teat, the Culture Teat and the Strategic Teat.

### **The Leadership Teat**

Discipline is a very important aspect of Ubuntu.

One cannot associate Ubuntu with aggression, disorder or chaos. A management team cannot facilitate or plan if there is no order in the milieu.

The cardinal task of the leader is therefore to see that discipline in the workplace is maintained in an open environment.

Openness must prevail. If there is a lack of openness, it could result in disorder and a situation where there is no discipline. This may lead to conflict between leader and followers. Openness allows for spontaneous participation and trust. Trust goes hand in hand with the possibility of

reaching consensus after discussion, and it also allows for pragmatic approaches.

Resolutions reached may at times be adjusted to unforeseen circumstances.

If a poisonous snake bites a cow that has been selected for slaughter, the decision to slaughter the beast may be revised. The reason for revising the original decision reached through consensus must however be transparent and accountable.

This open style of management differs from the closed and military management approach in that the leader is part of the working team and is not the boss at the top of a pyramid ruling “his” subordinates from top to bottom with an iron fist.

It should be noted that this open style is not necessarily unique. Many open organisations in the modern world have also adopted open management systems, discarding the inherited, closed systems that originated in the military systems.

### **The Social Environment Teat**

A community does not exist in isolation. It is part of a living, vibrant environment in which various roles are played and thus environment manifests itself on the natural, political, social, economic, cultural and psychological levels. Each of these levels must be interpreted in its Afrocentric context as it appears in the workplace.

As an example, the political environment may be referred to, and specifically how democracy, which is a political concept, may be understood. If the strategy is to fit the social environment, the leadership must be aware of precisely what the political environment entails so as to avoid indiscipline and the creation of stress. In an open and democratic system, all must have a say.

## The Cultural Teat

The manager should be well informed about the cultural profile of his staff component, since culture tends to influence strategy.

Rigid Western standards may not be appreciated in an African milieu, which can lead to unwanted stress and conflict.

In Africa, cognisance should be taken of cultural concepts like *shosholoza* (teamwork), *simunye* (solidarity) and African time.

These and other cultural concepts are dealt with in more detail in the next chapter.

## The Strategic Teat

Determining the strategy is a collective effort involving all staff members.

An analysis has to be conducted to determine the status quo of the organisation, followed by the development of a strategic plan.

It is important to keep the whole process, and especially the language, simple, because not all staff members may be comfortable with intellectual, verbal exercises and jargon.

The basic steps are the following:

- analyse the leadership styles and efficiency
- analyse the environment
- determine the culture profile
- determine a vision (the ideal organisational picture)
- work on a mission (how, definition-wise, can the ideal situation be achieved?)
- concentrate on strategic questions as part of a plan (what are the objectives?; which steps should be implemented)

to reach the objectives?; why are these steps important?; prioritise the steps – which activities should be completed first?; identify skilled members to champion the implementation steps) and add a time period for reporting back on each step.

The strategy development process called Obstacles, Negatives, Positives, Opportunities (ONPO) analysis will be dealt with in more detail in chapter six.

## Leadership

Leadership is a major component of management.

Leadership is a skill and its most important objectives are to motivate and influence people towards positive attitudes, beliefs and work-related activities to reach specific objectives of the organisation.

As a process, leadership is about planning and deciding on correct actions, and about implementing these actions through the energising of team-mates.

The leader builds a team through fairness, motivation and recognition.

In the Ubuntu sense, the leader has to motivate team-mates by

- facilitating vision and mission development
- being kind and approachable
- having insight and seeing actions in perspective (not being judgemental)
- understanding actions through practising empathy (putting himself/herself in the shoes of others)
- being able to win trust and respect
- trusting team members

- being sensitive to the intercultural values and beliefs of others
- being involved as a team member
- remaining cool, calm and contented in all circumstances despite possible provocation
- allowing for mistakes (one learns from mistakes)
- being able to communicate accurately and by practising active listening skills
- giving praise where praise is due
- simplifying and not complicating issues

Sound leadership is required to run any organisation successfully, and the challenge of contemporary leadership is to ensure less societal or organisational authority. In the past, leaders were aware that they were invested with formal authority like kings, generals, etcetera. Organisations today are less hierarchical and to get people to move in the right direction requires personal influence, diplomacy, motivation, communicating and conflict-resolution skills.

Characteristics of effective leaders are identified (Harvard 2004:191) as being

- caring: to empathise with other people's needs, concerns and goals
- comfortable with ambiguity: to operate in environments of uncertainty where guideposts are few
- persistent: to maintain a positive, focused attitude in pursuing a goal, despite obstacles and failures
- excellent at communicating: to know how to listen closely, make presentations, and speak in public
- an effective negotiator: to be able to negotiate with outsiders and one's own people
- politically astute: to have a solid sense of the organisation's power structure, listening especially carefully to the concerns of the most powerful groups, and to know where to turn for the support and resources needed



- humorous: when the situation warrants it, to know how to relieve tension
- level-headed: in the midst of turmoil and confusion, to maintain inner calmness
- engaging: being effective in gaining the commitment of others with regard to organisational goals
- challenging: to convince others that they should set high standards and accept goals that make them stretch
- self-aware: to know how behaviour affects others
- future-bound: to organise short-term tasks according to long-term priorities.

These characteristics are all applicable to the Ubuntu way of leading. But, in the Ubuntu environment, the value of close, humane relations is more prominent. This is very similar to the emphasis placed during the French Revolution on the values of freedom, equality and brotherhood.

Thus, freedom of opinion and thought, the equality of all races and sexes, and the brotherhood or sisterhood of all employees, including the leaders of the organisation in the spirit of family, are critical characteristics.

Leadership qualities like discussing, listening, caring, and creating warmth and commitment through engagement are essentially Ubuntu qualities.

Generally, leadership as reflected in Western practices has in the past been conceived of as

- the focus of group processes
- a matter of personality
- a matter of inducing compliance
- the exercise of influence
- determining particular behaviour
- a form of top-down persuasion
- the creation of power relations and ranks
- an instrument to achieve goals
- an effect of interaction
- a differentiated role

- the initiation of structures

(Bass 1990:33)

The activities mentioned are however universal and are also applicable to the leadership styles of other cultures.

The motivating essence, which is so crucial when dealing with people as part of the extended organisational family, is however lacking.

Ubuntu leadership can be regarded as the critical ingredient behind successful human endeavour at all levels in organisational life, since it motivates ordinary people in the family to do extraordinary tasks.

The leader in the African context is said to be anybody whom the community can look up to (Ndaba in Broodryk 1994:13). It could be a good teacher, a good nurse, or a kraal head – provided that he is moral, fair, just and honest. In other words, a leader is any member of the society who does not necessarily want to be associated with any movement, which is sometimes not about good and harmonious living.

In an organisational context, Ubuntu has a classless approach, meaning that academic qualifications or specific schooling are not necessarily the most important criteria for effective leadership. Many successful politicians and business leaders in South Africa do not possess advanced tertiary qualifications.

Leadership in this sense can be seen as a process of determining the most applicable vision for the organisation and of motivating or energising people to make it happen willingly and not by force or intimidation.

This Ubuntu leadership process succeeds if the team of people in the extended family context collectively

- develop a vision and mission

- work out a simple plan of action
- accept ownership
- create cohesion and solidarity
- commit themselves willingly to their tasks
- trust others and are trusted themselves

People entrusted with responsibility, and who are encouraged to use their own initiative, tend to adopt a responsible attitude.

### *The Shepherd Style of Leadership*

The Shepherd Style of Leadership was introduced by former South African State President, Dr Nelson Mandela (Mandela 1994:29).

This style of leadership is a practical example of leadership in the Ubuntu tradition.

Leaders who can master this technique or style will reap many fruits, since it has been proven beyond any doubt to be one of the most successful leadership styles ever applied in Africa.

The Shepherd Style of Leadership was first implemented by Mandela in a top structure, namely the national government, in 1994 as he was leading the country into a new era of transformation after its first democratic election. The world was amazed at the ease and smoothness with which Mandela performed this very important and historical leadership role. He not only proved to be the most effective leader ever to be produced in Africa, but is also generally regarded as one of the best leaders the world has ever produced.

As from the early 1990s, management and leadership philosophy in South Africa based on the autocratic military models of the Western world was gradually replaced by a more open and democratic approach honouring the African humanness of people.

During this period, various thinkers on Ubuntu management styles started to publish books. Prior to this period, however, there was no literature available on Ubuntu, since the values of Ubuntu had been transferred in an oral way from generation to generation in African societies.

Owing to this absence of written references to Ubuntu, the author had to organise a number of workshops on Ubuntu, inviting academics, business people and people from different disciplines to prepare and deliver papers on how they perceived Ubuntu in their respective fields. In this way, 80 papers on Ubuntu were delivered, which served as literature research for the completion of a D Litt degree on Ubuntuism as a worldview for structuring society.

Leadership concepts linked to Ubuntu philosophy and openness came to the fore, like transparency, flexibility, transformation, consensus, and democratic and participative human leadership.

For the first time in the history of the country, a national government of national unity was established in which all political parties had a right and opportunity to voice their opinions. All opinions, including those of opposition parties, were welcomed and considered before decisions based on consensus were made.

Managers and leaders gradually started to follow the new trends, which form the very basics of Ubuntu management philosophy.

What was the origin of this management and leadership style?

## CASE STUDY: THE MANDELA RECIPE FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Mandela (1994:19) states that his notions of leadership were profoundly influenced by observing the regent and his court during his early childhood days in the rural parts of Africa.

He watched and learned from the tribal meetings, which were not scheduled, but were called as needed.

At these meetings, national matters such as drought, the culling of cattle, policies ordered by the magistrate or new laws decreed by the government were discussed.

Everybody was welcome to attend these meetings, and ordinary people would travel by horseback and on foot to attend.

At the meetings, the regent was surrounded by his counsellors. These counsellors were wise men who retained the knowledge of tribal history and custom in their hands and whose opinions carried great weight.

The magical strategy of the regent was this: he would open the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance and would explain the purpose of the meeting. From this point on, he would not utter another word until the meeting was nearing its end! Only at the end of the meeting, as the sun was setting, would the regent speak. His purpose was to sum up what had been said and form some consensus from among the diverse opinions.

Everyone, be it chief or subject, warrior or *sangoma*, shopkeeper or farmer, landowner or labourer, who wanted to speak, did so.

It was democracy in its purest form. People spoke without interruption and meetings lasted for many hours. The meetings would continue until some kind of consensus was reached. They ended in unanimity, or not at all, even if unanimity was to agree to disagree, or to propose ideas to reach a solution at another time.

The foundation of these deliberations was that all men were free to voice their opinions and all were equal in their value as citizens.

Majority rule, or democracy in its Western sense, was unknown, as was a minority being crushed by a majority.

Mandela followed these principles during his later years as a leader with extraordinarily successful outcomes.

Often, he states, his own opinion would simply represent a consensus of what he observed and heard during a meeting.

This consensus would become a resolution(s). The magic of this type of decision making was that everybody had a part in it or ownership of it.

Mandela always remembered the regent's axiom: a leader stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go on ahead, whereupon the others follow, not realising that all along they are being directed from behind!

As an exercise, leaders should consider the possibilities which exist for applying the Mandela recipe for effective leadership in practice.

Is it practical to strive for consensus in all situations?  
Are the opinions of all people and staff members relevant?

Is it a good practice to have integrated meetings with staff members of all ranks? Can ordinary workers really contribute to the thinking processes of the organisation? How does one avoid a loose or *laissez-faire* leadership process if all opinions are tolerated?





# 3

## UBUNTU AND THE MANAGEMENT ENVIRONMENT

One should be aware of the environment of one's friends, team members or colleagues for the purposes of empathy, understanding the other's milieu and consequent good human relations.

This also applies to the managerial situation in the workplace.

The workplace finds itself in a specific environment. This environment comprises the general environment and the operational environment.

The general environment refers to the social, technological, physical, economic, legal and political circumstances and the operational environment refers to suppliers, customers and labour potential.

In the literature, one generally finds references to the social, economic, cultural and psychological levels, which are interpreted and understood in the context as they appear in the environment.

“Environment” also refers to the microenvironment (international, physical, political, social, economic, technological, natural), the market environment (suppliers, competitors, customers, distributors) and the microenvironment (internal resources like people, functions).

A very descriptive acronym is PEST, which refers to the political and legal subenvironments (P), the economic environment (E), the sociocultural environment (S) and technology (T) (Pitt 1997:30).

For the purposes of this chapter, the environment, and, more specifically, the role of Ubuntu philosophy in the management environment will be discussed in its physical, institutional, economic, socio-welfare and cultural contexts.

It is essential that the manager take proper note of these environments. Environments determine general and specific strategies and policies. A simple example is that of the physical environment: if there were no water available in a certain area, it would be wise not to develop vegetable gardens in that specific environment.

The environment has direct influences on the organisational direction, strategy formulation and strategy implementation of an organisation.

From the Ubuntu perspective, attention must first be paid to human resources.

## **PHYSICAL OR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

Managers should be aware of the physical circumstances of staff members and of the area in which the organisation is functioning.

In Africa, scepticism exists regarding the view that man is to be defined in terms of lone, individual qualities. Instead, the view is that man must be defined by reference to his environing physical community.

The greater environing wholeness is, according to Ramose (1999:80), primary to human individuality. This means that there must be mutual understanding, interaction and acceptance of roles between the greater environing wholeness and human individuality, but that the aspirations, problematic issues and needs of the community come first.

The community respects various traditional rituals and conventions, and the individual is expected to obey these in a committed and participative manner.

All members of the community for example attend funerals and the individual has to arrange for ample time off at the workplace.

Generally, “physical environment” refers to the natural milieu.

The availability of natural resources can influence the outcome, planning and viability of projects.

Farming is difficult, if not impossible, without the availability of water.

The physical or natural circumstances under which teammates or colleagues live are also important to note, since these could have a direct influence on their behaviour, moods and personalities. There is a general tendency to assume that all people live in comfort and decency. However, the harsh reality is that the majority of people in South Africa do not live in the comfort of houses, as understood in the Western sense.

Many live without any shelter in the open veldt (rural areas), but this does not imply that there are no passionate relations between the people flocking together in this way.

Also, living in the poorest of the poor areas does not preclude the enjoyment of experiencing true human warmth.

Mandela (1994:71), for instance, remembers the old Alexandra township (suburb) near Johannesburg as being exhilarating, but precarious. Its atmosphere was alive, its spirit adventurous, its people resourceful. The roads were unpaved and dirty and were filled with hungry, undernourished children scampering about half-naked. The air was thick with the smoke from coal fires in the braziers and stoves. A single water tap served several houses. But, Alexandra was regarded by him as a community home where he had no specific house, in contrast to Orlando, where he had an individual house, but not a home in the same community sense.

This differentiation between home and house is important: a house is a physical structure, a home is where there is an atmosphere of Ubuntu comradeship, warmth and belonging. The type of building, or the nature of the structure, is of secondary concern. A home has a feeling of warmth, irrespective of its appearance to outsiders, and home is therefore of cardinal importance to individuals and family institutions.

Home is where the true meaning of Ubuntu care is found.

In African community life, it has been noted (Broodryk 1997:67) that Ubuntu is daily experienced by children, teenagers and adults as a reality.

Every facet of African life is shaped to embrace Ubuntu as a process that reflects the warm African customs and values.

This African heritage originates at home as a place of interpersonal warmth where Ubuntu stories are told to transfer morals to youngsters, where Ubuntu life lessons are learned, where the sick are cared for, where informal counselling is provided to those in distress, and where a general, caring atmosphere is maintained.

Homes in the physical sense are often found in open living spaces with no fences around them – people live in trust and peace together, like an extended family. Togetherness is the backbone of Ubuntu socialisation.

Homes are often situated far away from the daily workplace, with the result that people find it difficult to be punctual for work or meetings owing to transport problems (buses, trains and taxis are late/taxi wars are rife, etc.), are disciplined and are even dismissed from work.

Enquiring, with humanness, why a friend or team member is late is therefore considered to be a sign of showing a bit of Ubuntu warmth and good African manners, instead of drawing negative conclusions and using unnecessarily

insensitive methods, such as reprimanding the person or taking disciplinary action.

## **INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

No organisation can escape the reality of politics and of government interference or influence.

In KwaZulu-Natal, where Ubuntu, especially in the rural areas, is “lived” practically in everyday life, one used to find a high degree of violence (especially in the early, post-apartheid stage when the democratic political situation was still new).

This increase in violence brought on by political factors tended to make people wonder how intolerance could be reconciled with Ubuntu.

In this respect, an old man at a kraal (a traditional home) explained that there was room for only one bull in a kraal, implying that Ubuntu allows only one political party to be active in a certain geographical territory.

This may however also be regarded as an outdated, traditional viewpoint, for a modern Ubuntuist may argue that, owing to the existence of democratic political systems, all parties are indeed welcome in all kraals.

The point is that traditional and modern Ubuntuists may differ on various fundamental issues like the acceptance of various opposing political parties in the same environment, but politics is a harsh reality.

Traditionally, family members did not oppose one another outside the sphere of the family: instead, differences were settled within family boundaries.

The manager should make a thorough investigation of the politics in the area of operation of the organisation and of

the influence of government tiers (national, provincial and local) on the activities of the organisation. This influence may take the form of laws, ordinances and regulations.

The institutional field refers to political parties, state departments, unions, democratic society (civics, street committees) and organisations. Ubuntu is present in the activities of each of these structures and it influences them in regard to the extent of openness, transparency, humanness and critical attitudes.

Critical attitudes refer especially to phenomena like the labour unions, which are now a permanent feature of the working and institutional environment.

Labour unions as legal entities are unlikely to disappear from this environment and they are instrumental in securing the fair treatment of employees. Unions have to be informed of all details where disputes arise.

It is essential in the workplace that team members, individuals and managers educate themselves with regard to the activities of unions and other institutions associated with the workplace in order to sustain open and positive relations with them.

## **ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT**

The manager should have first-hand knowledge of the economic environment.

In rural areas, poverty is usually greater than in urban areas, which has a direct influence on spending potential.

The Ubuntu way of being involved in economic activities differs from that of harsh capitalist economics. In terms of Ubuntu, the group concept based on a large family unit or extended family is extremely important. In this respect, *shosholoza* (work as one) comes to the fore, with group work

rather than individual efforts being praised. Group participation is also part of the *stokvel* or informal cooperative enterprise and economy.

Referring to the history of the *stokvel*, Lukhele (1993:1) mentions that Black people in South Africa had a tradition of helping one another.

At ploughing time, members of one family would offer their services to their neighbours, who, in turn, would lend them oxen with which to plough their mealie (corn) fields. This eventually led to the formation of social *stokvel* clubs in which participants became involved in collective enterprises based on a tradition of cooperation, communalism and sharing.

*Stokvels* also manifests themselves in the form of savings clubs, burial societies and various economic activities by groups of people as joint undertakings (Lukhele 1993:20).

According to Lukhele (1993:5), there are more than 800 000 *stokvels* in South Africa. In a research of 24 000 *stokvels*, it was found that they exchanged R84 million during one month. This emphasises the important role these communal *stokvels* play in the economy of South Africa.

There is a tendency for *stokvels* that enter the business arena to become formalised business enterprises which register as cooperatives. In these cooperatives, the group works together and shares the profits on an equal basis.

Of all the legal business entities (public and private companies, close corporations, etc.), the cooperative system based on the *stokvel*, owing to its group character, suits African conditions the best.

The *stokvel* as a business concept can easily be utilised internationally.

In an article, Kok (2005:27) couples the *stokvel* principle with the Dream Drive savings and buying plan of Daimler-Chrysler, which had its origin in South America.

Under the latter scheme, groups of people comprising up to 60 investors can buy a car as a group, free of interest and without any bank red tape, with each having the use of the car on a monthly basis!

This implies that ordinary people may be driving luxurious cars like Mercedes-Benzes on a *stokvel* basis!

Profit, as in any other business, is important (otherwise, why are you in business?).

The desire for personal riches was however unknown in Africa until it was introduced by the political economy and materialism of the West. Africans witnessed how the colonialists (planters, farmers, miners, traders, etc.) were all striving to make more money for themselves, while the remainder were largely underpaid and living in poverty.

In the African enterprise, the main goal is not about making the highest profit at all costs, and especially not about the highest profit where other human beings are being exploited in the money-generation process.

This more humane approach to business is a form of capitalism with *siza* (humanness), and may be described as social capitalism.

Social capitalism the Ubuntu way may be defined as a social form of capitalism in which economic activities are based on extended-family systems (we are all brothers and sisters) in



the same business and profits are generated for the benefit of all the members as collective shareholders. It is not about generating profits for the exclusive benefit of a single shareholder or the privileged few.

The traditional description of capitalism (Van Pletzen 2005:1) as that of companies continuously involving themselves in greater production and viewing society as being composed of individuals each pursuing their own interests to the good of the greater society, is not recognised in Africa.

## **SOCIO-WELFARE ENVIRONMENT**

All communities have some form of social life.

Managers need to take note of this, and, in some cases, must even adjust with regard to certain customs so as to be part of the accepted life and norms of the environment.

Social life implies certain do's and don'ts.

Culture differs, and what is acceptable in one culture may offend others in another culture.

In the socio-welfare field, it is especially as regards cultural issues as found in everyday living that Ubuntu and Western practices differ largely.

In contrast, Eastern practices share more similarities with Ubuntu, since the concept of family closeness also plays an important part in Eastern culture and even business.

China is on the lips of everyone these days owing to its growth in the world economy. As in Africa, the essential requirement for conducting good business with the people of China is about creating good social relationships. These social relationships are of such a close nature that they have been referred (Retief 2005:1) to as relationships resembling the nature of bosom friendship. Business is conducted in a social environment of family spirit, brotherhood and consequent absolute trust.

People tend in general to refer to the concept of uniqueness. The problem with uniqueness, however, lies in the concept itself, that is, the methodology used in determining the uniqueness of anything; in other words: precisely when is something unique?

It is customary for people to refer to something as unique when it is in fact merely different from known ways or experiences. An African loves the rhythm or beat of the drum, and enjoyment of the drum may be regarded as a unique experience. In this way, messages are sometimes sent over long distances to other tribes and people.

Westerners, on the other hand, have rock or instrumental bands where drum playing is part of musical entertainment. Enjoyment of the drum may therefore be seen as different in these examples, but enjoyment of the drum as a drum is not unique.

The drum is appreciated in both practices: it is only the application of the drum that is different. To the one, it is about sending messages; to the other, it is about musical expression. To appreciate these different applications of practices and conventions, intercultural communication has an important role to play. Intercultural communication is the process of sending and receiving, or exchanging, messages from different cultures. A message is sent by a person from one culture to a person of another culture, and the person who receives the message will respond in his or her own way (according to how his or her culture has taught him or her to respond and to send messages).

For effective communication, it is therefore essential to be informed about what the customs of other cultures are.

It is a logical assumption that people from the same culture will communicate more effectively than people from different and even contrasting cultures. One does not find that cultures are so alike that the members will act or respond in the same way. It is therefore helpful if a person is aware of what

culture and background prescribe concerning what one thinks, says and does in all situations.

People are brought up being influenced, or even indoctrinated, by specific perceptions. These perceptions are about body language, the use of words, beliefs, traditions, and adherence to specific values, etcetera.

A Westerner believes that another person should be greeted with a firm handshake, because this confirms personal power. Africans regard a firm handshake as unfriendly, and even as a sign of hostility. Africans tend, therefore, to offer a soft handgrip.

Encounters with other cultures may therefore result in a cultural shock, that is, in disbelief or in a feeling of uncomfortableness with the manner in which the other person behaves.

The solution for the purposes of successful intercultural communication is to bring the different individuals or factions together and initiate the exploration of differences in the life cycles of the cultures. One will normally find that the values of cultures are more or less the same, but that the way in which they are applied in the life of a person is different.

The author has identified examples of these differences in the African and Western world, as indicated below, and a case study method is ideally suited for this intercultural dialogue.

# CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

The manager should be aware of the effect of culture, since each society is characterised by certain behavioural patterns that are manifested in the habits, conventions, norms, values and laws practised in society. These patterns are passed on from generation to generation and are usually regarded as actions of a respected and even “sacred” nature.

Cultural differences of people should be known and respected.

African and Western societies differ on a number of cultural aspects. These differences relate to general cultural aspects of African and Western societies. Some Western societies may, for example, not be so different from African societies regarding certain practices. Western could therefore be viewed as Euro-Saxon.

The following table provides information on cultural practices that are different in African (Afrocentric) and Western (Eurocentric) societies in general:

Table 3.1: *Different cultural practices in African (Afrocentric) and Western (Eurocentric) societies*

Practice	African	Western
Baby-sleeping	Mother’s back	Cot
Baby-feeding	Breast-feeding	Bottle-feeding
Punishment	Verbal	Corporal
Marriage	Ubuntu norm (Lobola: rewarding the parents-in-law)	Class

Family	Extended (many fathers and mothers)	Nuclear
Elders	Part of family	Old-age homes
Death	No hell; moving to ancestor world	Heaven or hell
Burials	Mass community participation	Private
Ancestors	Present	Hereafter
Medical	Sangomas (herbal)	Western medicine
Education	Initiation of students	Formal, school pupils
Greeting	Informal, heartily	Formal
Laughing	Uninhibitedly, happy	Inhibited, grinning
Respect	Communal	Individual
Life style	Spontaneous	Reserved
Relations	Open, extrovert	Closed
Time concept	Tolerance	Rigid, punctual

These distinctions are based on traditional assumptions.

Globalisation, migration and the acceptance of aspects of other cultures may have influenced the differences of cultures in some ways.

Africans who have become capitalists may therefore be seen as living according to Western life practices instead of old African practices.

## **CASE STUDY: TWO BUCKETS AND A BOTTLE OF SOAP**

According to Janse van Vuuren (2005:28), Joyce Ramoloko, owner of Joyce Car Wash in Temba near Hammanskraal, started her business with two buckets, a bottle of soap and a bottle of car polish. That's it.

Three years later, she boasts a monthly turnover of R30 000, providing work for five other people.

The physical environment of Temba consists of buildings, mostly built out of zinc and other scrap metal. The inner walls of some buildings consist of double pieces of wire filled with old newspapers. There is a scarcity of fresh drinking water and people stand in long queues to fill their buckets with water. The roads are all gravel roads and are in a poor condition.

Owing to the gravel roads, taxis are always dirty and need to be washed regularly.

Temba is regarded as an informal settlement (squatter camp).

As regards the institutional environment, the local government opened an office nearby and the Department of Trade and Industry has an office there. The latter helped Joyce with the registration of her business and to draw up a business plan.

From an economic point of view, only a few spaza shops (home trading outlets) and a shebeen (African pub) are

to be found. Ninety percent of the citizens are unemployed and it is only through the practising of Ubuntu (sharing food and whatever one has) that people are not starving to death. Most enjoy only one meal per day.

Apart from providing a service in respect of the taxis and the few cars owned by residents, Joyce has a contract with the local Escom electricity office to wash its cars twice a week.

On the socio-welfare side, the incidence of the deadly HIV/AIDS disease is very high and, consequently, funerals take place almost every weekend. In addition, there is only a small clinic serving the health needs of thousands of people.

Joyce has received a merit award of R20 000 from the SAB KickStart Programme, which she intends to utilise to build a lapa (social hut) with a braai (barbeque) facility and a big-screen television so that the locals can watch soccer on Saturdays.

Joyce believes that this social activity will contribute to the creation of some moments of happiness among residents who suffer daily as a result of their poor environmental circumstances.

Discuss the merits, in terms of Ubuntu, of Joyce's decision to use her award to build a social facility instead of spending it on another environmental need.





# 4

## UBUNTU PERSONALITY AND CONVENTIONAL MANAGEMENT

In this chapter, the Ubuntu worldview and its personality profile will be discussed, as well as how these could be applied in conventional management.

Conventional management includes issues like planning, organising, leading, and decision making and control.

### WORLDVIEW

Ubuntu is, in a philosophical sense, regarded as a worldview.

A worldview is how a person sees the comprehensive reality and attaches meaning to it.

Giving meaning to one's life implies that one gives orientation and direction to one's life.

A worldview influences everything man thinks, says and does.

Understanding the Ubuntu worldview and its values contributes to a better understanding of African management, economic and political thinking, social practices and culture.

Philosophy is defined (Van der Walt 1997:9) as the process which is determined by some or other culture, especially in its worldview dimension. There is also an obverse relationship: that of philosophy to culture.

As in the case of a worldview, philosophy provides a total picture of reality; it seeks to achieve a conception of the

whole. Whereas a worldview is more implicit, philosophy is explicit.

The Ubuntu life style and reality are determined by a conception that it is desirable for man to have a close relationship with his fellow men as part of brotherhood.

This relationship applies to those who are alive, but also those who are dead, and explains why the forefathers are not forgotten and why their continued presence as ancestors is respected.

An example of this is the African tradition of pouring beer on the soil for the forefathers to enjoy as well.

The African conception of man should be understood (Teffo 1996b:100) in terms of a set of beliefs or pictures of man in the form of empirical generalisations. An African person is an integral part of society and thus, as an individual, he can only exist corporately. The view that the individual should take precedence over the community is discouraged. The African adheres to a collective consciousness or communalistic worldview.

The manager should therefore be aware that, in the African workplace, staff members will regard themselves as a close community or extended family. The advantage of this is that a close esprit de corps, or cohesion, will, to a certain extent, already exist between them. The further benefit hereof is that loyalty and teamwork are relatively less difficult to establish.

## **UBUNTU PERSONALITY**

The manager has to adopt certain mannerisms and customs of the dominant culture in his environment.

As the slogan goes: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do".

Thus, when you are in Africa, do as the Africans are doing.

In order to be acceptable and enjoy cohesion, even the personality of the manager may have to be adjusted to the personality profile of the average person(s) in the area of operation.

In Africa, this profile is known as the African or Ubuntu personality, and managers have to determine to what extent they can be comfortable with the descriptions of the Ubuntu personality.

Westerners tend to be individuals, and Africans are group people. For example, Westerners, when enquiring about the wellbeing of another person (How are you?), direct the enquiry at the person addressed *per se*. Africans, however, use the word *ninjane* (How are all of you?) in a plural sense to establish the wellbeing of all the group members (extended family) related to the person addressed.

It is important to accept that the whole greeting and enquiry procedure may take some time, because, usually, the wellbeing of all are reported on in detail.

The least managers in Africa can do is to understand and respect the Ubuntu personality, which is explained in certain basic descriptions, since this personality that is described is generally applicable to all Africans.

This personality profile is a model for people all over the world pursuing alternative ways of living and appreciating human life.

It would be wise for managers to think (thinking is an important aspect of management) on how these could find application in the workplace.

If all team-mates can strive to live out aspects of this Ubuntu personality, a friendly and caring working environment will be established, resulting in staff cohesion and close relationships between all - which is conducive to a happy workforce.

The basic descriptions of the Ubuntu personality are as follows:

- **My neighbour and I have the same origins, same life experience and a common destiny.**

The emphasis is on sameness and togetherness. We are together in this life and we are heading for the same end result.

Let us then be brothers in our common brotherhood.

- **We are the obverse and reverse sides of one entity.**

Ubuntu brotherhood is based on the expression: "I am a person through other persons".

If it were not for the comradeship of others in the workplace or community, I would have had less enjoyment in life. Meaning of life relates to the interdependence of people.

People rely on one another for survival and support.

As individuals, people are weak: if they stand together and rejoice in collective coexistence, they are strong.

- **We are unchanging equals.**

In Africa, all people are equal.

There is an absence of material class forming.

If a person is enjoying more material gain than others, the extras will be shared with the underprivileged brothers and sisters.

Africa does not allow that some eat whilst others go hungry, or that some sleep warm whilst others are left out in the cold.

Social classes based on wealth are absurd in African living.

- **We are mutually fulfilling complements.**

Sharing is an important African value. People have different qualities, talents and resources and these should be shared in a spirit of cooperativeness for positive living.

Everyone will cooperate as sharing human beings.

This is indicative of the living of values like open-handedness and supportiveness.

- **My neighbour's sorrow is my sorrow.**

Sympathy is vital in Ubuntu life and it is practised especially in times of sorrow.

Sorrow is an obstacle in life and it is inevitable that sorrow will appear from time to time in the form of death, sickness or other hurtful events like dismissals in the workplace.

When sorrow strikes a neighbour who is also a brother, a person suffers from that sorrow as well and weeps with that brother, because it is through that brother

that a person is a brother to others too. It is realised that sorrow is temporary.

- **My neighbour's joy is my joy.**

Life is about experiencing the greatest, true form of happiness possible at all times, and joy should also be part of one's daily life task.

This is also called qualitative happiness.

This form of happiness is obtainable through the creation of a spontaneous brotherhood of people.

By standing together, and by enjoying and celebrating together, a spirit of cohesiveness is established.

This is also referred to as togetherness, warmth and cheerfulness.

- **He and I are mutually fulfilled when we stand by each other in moments of need.**

Empathy is being able to put yourself in the place and situation of another. The person who can master empathy successfully will also experience satisfaction derived from overcoming the need.

- **His survival is a precondition for my survival.**

In Africa, people show their care and love for human beings in very explicit ways.

One sees public leaders and ordinary people hugging one another while heartily greeting one another; and lengthy enquiries may follow about the wellbeing of the other person, his family, extended family, etcetera. This is in sharp contrast to some other cultures where a cold and formal way of greeting is the convention.

The survival of all is important and this is all part of expressions of compassion.

- **No community has any right to prescribe the destiny of other communities or any person.**

Respect for other persons and their spiritual, religious, political, economic and cultural beliefs and customs is of cardinal importance in all spheres of life.

Another person or community is never prescribed to or forced away from his or her or its own conventions.

Africa has a long history of colonial oppression by Western countries, including Western prescriptions of destinies for communities and persons. Africans were confronted with the acceptance of Western political, religious and economic dogmas, dogmas that were in sharp contrast to the beliefs of Africa itself.

In the political arena, democracy the Western way was enforced, ignoring the way Africans practised their own traditional consensus model of democracy (government of national unity).

As regards religion, traditional religious beliefs and religious mediators were made a laughing stock by Western missionaries. The missionaries did not appreciate the seriousness of African beliefs in the continued existence of the ancestors.

On the economic front, Westerners succeeded in making the perception of capitalism extremely unacceptable to Africans. This was especially the case where capitalism financially favoured a few privileged Western owners of huge enterprises, resulting in the exploitation of underprivileged African workers.

- **My neighbour is myself in a different guise.**

People have a tendency to judge and belittle others when others are obedient to strange or unfamiliar customs or behaviour patterns. The point is that people should show greater tolerance with regard to different religions or to other beliefs and cultures.

African people are, for example, not easily rushed for purposes of punctuality.

Westerners have a reputation for being ruled by the watch and by the belief that time is money.

However, time is not money: productive and long discussions can take place, which can generate more money as a result of more thorough planning.

- **Equals do not oppress each other.**

Oppression in Africa is not a popular concept.

Oppressive attitudes are rejected by the masses and in family life oppression is not tolerated at all. Love is highly honoured and emotive feelings are manifested in various bodily ways and body language. All people are treated as equals. The assumption that some are more equal than others does not exist in Africa.

There are certain rituals that are obeyed which may appear to be contradictory to the equality of all, like the example of not looking dignified persons such as chiefs or elders directly in the eye. This gesture, however, is merely a sign of respect. Chiefs and people in leadership positions are known to be democratic and supportive to all.



Everybody is granted an equal opportunity to state cases or opinions.

- **To be inhumane is to be like an animal.**

The most important lesson Africa can export to the world is how to appreciate the value of being non-barbaric, or the practice of humanness. Humanness is also the very essence of Ubuntu. It is because of this affinity with humanness that apartheid South Africa never experienced a bloody revolution.

This is the humanness which saw a politically convicted, but civilised, Nelson Mandela leaving prison after 27 years, not as an embittered man, but propagating understanding and reconciliation between the races of South Africa.

- **All that one lives for is to be the best that one can be.**

To be the best that one can be is to be an African personality living his life in peace and harmony.

Life has its ups and downs, but it is the harmonious person who finds solutions to daily problems. The best of one person and the best of another person will differ according to talent and blessings. But if everybody strives to be a better person according to the values of Ubuntu, a new world order to the benefit of all is bound to arise.

- **Wealth must be shared and your neighbour's poverty is your poverty.**

Redistribution of wealth is a known convention in certain cultures and religions. Wealth does not include material assets only, but could also refer to

non-material resources like knowledge and morality. It is an act of nobleness if those who have knowledge can share it with the have-nots.

The same applies to morality: if values of morality are unknown to an individual or group, it is only fair to educate those on the moral expectations of society.

Owing to the high growth rate of the HIV/AIDS disease in Africa, many orphans from affected families who cannot be accommodated within extended families may become street children. Street children are very likely to suffer from a lack of morals, since there is no family educator to teach them about life's social norms and values.

It is therefore necessary for informed persons to redistribute their knowledge of social morality to these orphans.

- **One's father and mother are one's law; my relative's and society's law is my law.**

Mores and customs are learnt in the family and in extended family life. Ubuntu has been transferred in a verbal way throughout generations to give order to African societies.

To obey the law of the family and society is to prove obedience to the values of your environment.

- **Knowledge is the challenge of being human so as to discover the promise of being human.**

The African personality embraces humanism and the art of being a human person.

Embracing humanism and humanness is an indication that a person has gained vast knowledge of the subject. Gaining human knowledge is primarily to learn about Ubuntu and African humanism, which is wisdom.

The manager should understand that these beliefs and guidelines are meant to make life in general, and that of the person, more meaningful.

This is also applicable to the workplace. The workplace is also a place where quality time is spent.

A successful manager will therefore ensure that work time is also quality time.

These descriptions are typically African and, from the Ubuntu perspective, these guidelines are all to be honoured, valued and lived.

## HAPPINESS

The pursuit of happiness is among the inalienable rights of mankind (Parrott 1987:3).

To experience life with inward joy, one has to realise that happiness is a process, a pursuit, and a way of life. Happiness is a habit that dominates all other attitudes.

The most important characteristic of a human being is his habit of happiness. This habit is of a replicating nature: happy people are usually surrounded by other happy people, and this attitude of being happy is also inherited by their children, just as neurotic mothers have neurotic daughters and unhappy parents have unhappy children.

The attainment of happiness is sometimes like lovemaking: it starts with having fun (merriment or amusement), paving the way for joy (intense gladness), leading to an orgasm (immoderate excitement), and culminating in a state of ecstasy (excessive joy) and the experiencing of gradual contentment (situation of satisfaction).

The most important lesson of Ubuntu is for mankind to accept, strive towards and live according to the basic and simple human values and principles (as mentioned above under "Worldview") for the attainment of the greatest individual and communal happiness. This happiness is spiritual, mental and physical.

Spiritual happiness is about abstaining from earthly wrongdoing and about eliminating obstacles affecting peaceful and meaningful life. Hindering activities for spiritual life are especially the social milieu people find themselves in, like the obsession for the greatest material gain, greed, the exploitation of people, the pursuit of self-interest, and the use of physical, emotional and institutional violence.

Happiness in a spiritual sense is to be found in the pursuit of abstract beliefs; in other words, the non-visible and non-provable. It is about serious and intense believing.

In Africa, the belief is that there exists a Supreme Being who is approachable through the ancestors, who serve as mediators between the Being and brotherhood.

If one simplifies religion, it could similarly be argued that Christians believe, in almost the same way, in a God, and that Muslims and Buddhists arrive at God in a more or less related way.

From belief, values are derived which give meaning to life.

For the African, these values are the Ubuntu values and related values, especially values such as love, compassion, kindness, generosity, peace and harmony.

These values are applicable to all beliefs and cultures, but are not practised by all people.

Imagine the better world we could create if all people, irrespective of how they arrive at God, can live these communal values in practice and allow them to manifest themselves in their daily actions. By doing this, each will contribute a small piece to the ideal of the Ubuntu ideal of godly living.

Godly living is spiritual.

This is also a reference to the happiness of mind where the power of thought is of cardinal essence. Happiness of mind is embedded in the brilliance of being a free thinker: one can actually choose which thoughts one prefers to accommodate. A happy person will embrace a happy mind. Happiness of mind is the prerequisite for enjoyment of qualitative life to the fullest. Qualitative and meaningful living is spiritual, mental and physical.

It is holistic and all-encompassing, embracing the simple art of enjoying and appreciating life even in the dark moments of sickness, pain, distress and when encountering life's negative obstacles.

The ideal is to be at peace with all and everything, whether in pain or in old age, or whatever.

The solution is to acquire the ability to transform the negative into the positive, and to leave everything alone that one cannot control.

Remember that life is only once.

Branson (2002:20) recalls the wise words of his grandmother who lived to 99 years of age before she died. Shortly before her death, she wrote a letter saying that the previous ten years had been the best of her life; in other words, the years from 89 years of age onwards! She lived life to the fullest

and her attitude was: "You've got one go in life, so make the most of it."

The lesson is to live life to the fullest while it is possible. Death may strike all of a sudden, or some unforeseen event may end the life of a person(s) unexpectedly. One often reads about scientists predicting that asteroids will hit the planet Earth in time to come, with disastrous consequences.

Practically speaking, all life will come to an end. This could be inevitable, but inevitable events have to be accepted. Everybody has to die: it is an inevitable fact. Nothing is as certain as death to all people and animals.

Disasters linked to natural forces like the tsunami at the end of 2004 and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, which injured and killed people and severely damaged property in New Orleans in 2005, are beyond the control of man: this is reality.

The positive consequence of the discovery of the nearing asteroids is that scientists are already planning how to employ nuclear methods to drive these asteroids from their courses and so prevent such a tragedy. This will however just be a temporary postponement of death for people, and, in the interim, people will have to consider ways and means of making this life a better and meaningful one.

In African thinking, one becomes an ancestor after this world, meaning there is no hell after this world. Members of other religious sects and faiths do not necessarily have to appreciate this belief, but the consolation is that, in all religions, whatever happens after this earthly life seems to be for the better anyway.

# UBUNTU AND THE BASIC SKILLS OF CONVENTIONAL MANAGEMENT

The basic skills of general management refer to topics like planning, organising, leading, communicating, decision making, motivating and control.

These topics, and the relevance of Ubuntu to them, will be dealt with under separate headings.

## Planning

The Ubuntu method of planning is to plan collectively and creatively as equals in a rational way, striving to reach consensus in the planning process.

In the Ubuntu-based planning process, a winning organisation will make the time to determine whether actions are of an Ubuntuist nature: is the activity evidence of humanness, caring, sharing, respect and compassion?

For example, how are the values of Ubuntu recognised?

Table 4.1: Ubuntu checklist

### UBUNTU CHECKLIST

Humanness	Caring	Sharing	Respect	Compassion

Although managers have more power in the workplace as consensus makers, all colleagues have an equal opportunity to voice opinions.

Planning entails the development of visions, missions and strategic objectives.

Planning the Ubuntu way respects the shortcomings of teammates and allows for the optimum utilisation of the strong points of individuals in positive group relations.

Before a builder can get on with the activity of building a house, an architect has to develop a building plan.

The same applies to an organisation embarking on a business or service programme and projects. The concrete is preceded by theoretical philosophising and thinking (including *recherche*).

The planning process is a rational process, meaning that a lot of thinking has to be done regarding the specific goal(s) and course of action of the organisation.

If it is a one-person business, the onus will be on the specific person to sit down and determine what, how and when he or she is to execute. Others may be invited to assist, such as potential customers or clients.

If others are involved as co-owners or partners, they need to be the joint planners/thinkers and implementers. From the Ubuntu perspective, the same applies with regard to employees, that is, if there are any at the beginning stage.

The first step in planning, which is thinking being transformed into action, is to determine basic criteria for the setting of objectives.

The acronym **SMART** can be used for this purpose, meaning



**S** (specific, that is, focusing on the results required)  
**M** (measurable, that is, in respect of each objective set)  
**A** (achievable, that is, set against trends and constraints)  
**R** (realistic, that is, set against time and budget considerations)  
**T** (time-linked, that is, set with goals as to when the objective should be reached)  
(George 2001:64)

They should, from the Ubuntu perspective, be discussed to determine whether they comply with the basic Ubuntu requirements; in other words, are they objectives that speak of human caring, sharing, respect and compassion?

After determining the goals, thought should be given to the implementation phase by working on an operational or action plan, on organisational aspects, on managerial responsibility sharing, on decision-making levels and on monitoring structures.

The action plan should be simple and all participants, and even outsiders, should be able to understand it. It should be written down, preferably in a column format as indicated below.

It could also include a pre-process entailing the situational identification of problems, the determination of solutions, the prioritisation of problems in order of urgency or importance, and actions to solve these problems.

A major action plan should cover all the activities of the organisation.

Apart from the major action plan, minor action plans, that is, action plans for specific programmes and projects, may be developed.

The action plan in its simplest form could comprise the following:

- What? What action must be taken and what other actions are to follow? Action is a logical step following from planning and it should be very clear precisely what action (or prioritised actions) is to be taken. Special care should be taken to ensure that people are involved in activities they have been trained for or have experience in. For example, people participating in a team sport often specialise in certain positions, and to play them in positions they are not comfortable in would be inviting failure. The same applies to the role of the captain: not all people have the capacity or interest to be captains or leaders, but are quite happy to perform their duties in excellent ways as co-players or followers.
- When? When must the actions take place and in what order: first things first, secondary things later, and the rest later. Certain steps follow the primary steps. Business can only commence after all the legalities have been completed, like registration and the payment of legal fees. The sequence of the actions provides a logical picture of the process. It provides milestones or indicators to measure the progress of the undertaking and whether or not the actions were effective. It is important, though, not to stress unnecessarily that all actions be completed strictly on time: some actions may need to be debated and rethought thoroughly and it may be concluded that it would be a rationally better option if a specific action were to be taken at a later stage than that originally planned. Life is dynamic and new facts and circumstances may influence action implementation, leading to a delay.

- Who? Indicates the person/section/part of the family who/that will be primarily or specifically responsible for the action or activity. For example, a hall must be reserved for an important function by Ms Secretary, which will enable Ms PRO to invite the honourable Mayor to the function, which will lead to Mr Communication Section informing the media of the event, which will also lead to Mr and Ms Family Caterers starting to plan for the eats and drinks. This will lead to Mr Coordinator scheduling a follow-up meeting with the above persons as a subcommittee to check on progress and ensure a happy and successful function! If a task needs the assistance of others, those who are appointed or who volunteer should have the right to delegate tasks to others, who will only be co-responsible for the work performed, but not interfering with the main responsibility of those originally tasked. Work must always be meaningful: if a person excels in preparing tea, it should not be left to the toilet cleaner to provide tea and to the "tea experts" to clean the toilets.
- How? How should a certain action take place? From an Ubuntu perspective, it is immoral to give tasks to people and simply assign a date for completion of the work. People must be capable and have the required know-how to do the job. Nothing is more frustrating in the work environment than being allocated tasks that one does not have the experience or qualifications for. If people need to be trained, provide training in a quiet period: stressed people cannot learn under pressure. Also remember that newcomers will make mistakes. Allow them to learn from these mistakes: things do not have to be right the first time. When something has to be done again, better quality will probably result.

- Happy? Indicating that everything is under control and that all are productive. This can be ascertained at an evaluation meeting or during a discussion check-up. Remember to praise good performance: people love their productivity and creativeness to be recognised.

The action planning process should be recorded in the following format, which provides a simple and logical picture of task allocation and implementation:

Table 4.2: Action plan

ACTION PLAN				
Activity (what?)	Deadline (when?)	Responsibility (who?)	Methodology (how?)	Cohesion (happy?)

## Organising

After the planning of all the activities, organising the execution of the action plan has to take place. In other words, the action plan should now become practical: it is not theory any more.

Organisation may therefore include the recruiting of staff, the designation of jobs, the placing of personnel, the allocation or delegation of all the tasks and the operationalisation of the organisation.

The chief tasks are revisiting and evaluating the practicalities of the goals and objectives, determining or endorsing the primary tasks, dividing main tasks into secondary tasks, endorsing the responsible persons or sections that will perform tasks, and monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of the action plan and progress.

From the Ubuntu viewpoint, work division is of the outmost importance. People and teams should be involved in tasks that are meaningful to them. Surely employees operating actively in a conducive work milieu that is understandable to them will maintain productivity?

If tasks are not necessary or meaningful, they should not be performed.

The work in enterprises can be divided into basic categories such as top management, administration, personnel, finance, marketing and production.

All these categories may have certain subdivisions. Marketing may include a public relations section, a communications section and a sales section. This organisational division will differ from enterprise to enterprise, because the needs of organisations are to a very large extent unique.

The task of organisation may be based primarily at head office level, but the different categories will generally be better equipped to determine the process of organisation in their work environments.

Organisation in this sense is not merely the allocation of tasks.

Apart from task allocation, numerous other aspects have to be dealt with: salaries and worker benefits and contracts; the involvement of unions; legal requirements for the running of the organisation; the capacity of employees to perform their tasks has to be considered; personnel with relevant

capabilities have to be canvassed; substantiations for effective new staff members have to be made; ensuring financial support for staff appointments, new projects, advertisements, campaigns, product manufacturing and marketing gimmicks, etcetera.

The challenge of transforming to Ubuntu management also relies on effective organisational change.

This change specifically involves the following:

- analysing the applicability of Ubuntu management philosophy on an organisational level (in a harsh, capitalist and individual-based, competitive working environment, Ubuntu will be more difficult to implement than in a socialist or cooperative environment)
- educating decision makers and staff regarding greater productivity using people-centred approaches
- introducing the family spirit into the organisation
- setting new goals based on humanness and other Ubuntu values
- planning the incorporation of Ubuntu values in day-to-day activities
- collectively planning the details of change
- implementing the change challenge in a human way
- regularly checking and workshopping the challenge and progress

Many managers make it a habit to keep informal notes during the day of all ideas they develop regarding the daily work activities (and even at night when they evaluate the day's activities). These ideas form part of the daily "to-do list" and tasks are prioritised continuously. All staff should be motivated to keep similar lists regarding organisational aspects. Special meetings to discuss innovative ideas about organising the organisation should be encouraged.

Life is dynamic and change is constant: the same applies to the work set-up of all organisations.

## Leading

As was noted in previous chapters, leading is an important aspect of management.

A variety of ways exist for leaders to exercise leadership, but leadership styles are traditionally divided into three main streams, namely the autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles (Kroon 1990:401).

The autocratic leadership style is manipulative and strong - decisions are taken individually, and there is rigidity and non-delegation. It is expected of subordinates to execute orders rigidly and to be totally dependent on their autocratic leaders.

The benefit of this style is that tasks are completed relatively quickly, but, on the negative side, the initiative and development of subordinates are adversely affected.

The democratic leader does not use authority in such a rigid sense and leaves more space for subordinates to use their own initiative and participate in decision making. Delegation is also exercised.

This approach improves teamwork and stimulates the development of successors.

The laissez-faire leadership style is the extreme example of democratic leadership, characterised by a "let-it-be" attitude in the workplace. In terms of this style, the setting of objectives and standards and decision making are left to subordinates.

For the purpose of providing examples of leadership styles as found in conventional management and in African management, I shall refer to four imaginary characters, namely General S, democrat Charles C, King Z and socialite Ritchie R.

General S is a no-nonsense man. He seldom listens to the advice of others and his subordinates never discuss problems with him.

His advisors, the agents of military intelligence, only provide him with information that they know he loves to hear about the enemy (the General is constantly at war, even in peacetime).

Consequently, he takes decisions on the basis of the perception that all is well and that the enemy is actually no enemy at all: how would they dare plan an attack on the smartest country in the world?

His management style is to instruct and his dialogue is based on telling (never requesting).

He believes that to ask is for weaker men, and not for not the tough and the brave.

When he enters a room where others are present, an immediate silence fills the room. He interprets this as discipline and respect for his title.

He has never heard of management by fear.

He regards his management style as simple: simply tell subordinates what their roles are, what they should do and how they should do it, and when tasks must be done. Never allow any discussion.

The golden rule for subordinates to follow under this type of management is: execute the orders of your General obediently and immediately, or else.

Democrat Charles C loves persuading staff members to buy into his viewpoints. If staff members disagree, matters are put to the vote.



He delegates if he feels the other person is trustworthy and reliable.

As a manager, though, he at least allows his team to voice opinions, provided that they are more or less in line with his own perceptions.

He provides direction though and is at least supportive of his team members.

He believes in transparency and openness to a certain extent.

King Z is an ardent supporter of Ubuntu, especially in the region where he rules, where people have to share all they have with others in order to survive.

To him it is immoral that people should go hungry while others eat luxuriously in 5-star hotels, or that people should sleep without shelter while others have homes so large that their dogs occupy rooms of their own.

He believes in participative management and consults regularly with his indunas (advisors), staff members and other people.

His role is to coordinate decisions and the execution thereof.

Although his people are poor, he appreciates their compassion and natural lust for life.

Ritchie R loves delegating.

Delegation is easy and shifts the responsibility for performance to others.

He is very concerned about the wellbeing of his staff members and seldom has time for actual work.

As head of a state department, he is actually ensured of a monthly income anyway.

He is eager to be involved in umbrella decisions to keep the boat sailing.

The Ubuntu way of leading is about attending to human considerations, being subtle and working in a suggestive style.

"Subtle" in this sense means to facilitate actions indirectly or diplomatically; and "suggestive" means to suggest or propose action instead of giving blunt orders.

The emphasis is on creating participation willingly. The Ubuntu leader will therefore be part and parcel of the team, and will not operate individually.

One also finds that leaders in the Ubuntu sense prefer to sit in circles when meeting team-mates and during discussions. Sitting in a circle emphasises teamwork and equality of all, with the manager-leader being central in the deliberations.

Leading entails active listening and encouraging inputs from everybody.

## **Communication**

Communication in Africa often takes place in the form of storytelling. It is mainly through the medium of storytelling that values have been transferred from generation to generation in an oral or verbal way.

This transferral of values was coupled with the use of dramatic gestures, body language, music, dance, proverbs, rituals and symbols.

In the real world of management and business, storytelling as a means of communication can play a positive role. For example, it can be used to

- explain the management philosophy of the organisation
- arrive at a vision and mission for the organisation
- explain the roles of different categories of staff in the operational sphere (Animals like lions, rabbits, birds and snakes are all part of mother nature, but perform different functions in order to survive.)
- to communicate messages together with songs and dances (The song, "Shosholoza", meaning "working as one" or "solidarity", originated in the gold mines and was composed by labourers telling one another of the joy experienced when people are "working together as a team".)
- relieve the stress of employees as a form of narrative therapy
- teach staff about their functions and job descriptions, especially if workers are illiterate
- assist with promotions and the marketing of ideas or products

Storytelling is not unique to African living, as people of all cultures are used to stories. However, storytelling has a very special role in Africa, for it deals with the transformation of theory into concrete practice. Stories have moral lessons or teach people about specific tasks, roles and relationships.

In the schools of KwaZulu-Natal, storytelling is used as part of the Ubuntu syllabus to emphasise the importance of respecting authority, law and order. Pupils are also taught to respect the authority of employers when they leave school and enter the workplace.

In this sense, Ubuntu can be described as a worldview to order society.

It is important to ensure that messages are understood.

Communication can also be non-verbal, for example in the form of body language. Body language has different forms, depending on the traditions and customs of people from different cultures.

Eye contact is a good example. Westerners take pride in looking people straight in the eye, but, in African culture, this is regarded as being ill-mannered.

Because of the relaxed manner of Africans in general, greetings build bridges among the various groups in trains, buses and taxis. African people talk loudly and openly. They laugh heartily and are extremely vocal, even in public places like libraries and churches where the maintenance of absolute silence is usually expected of visitors.

Westerners, or Europeans, view such informal cultural behaviour as a sign of backwardness or plain indecency.

Generally, a Westerner would rather read a newspaper or a book than talk to a "stranger" sitting next to him or her. Westerners are more reserved and generally have an attitude of "speak only when you are spoken to".

## **Decision making**

In this section, a distinction is drawn between the traditional, general decision-making process and the Ubuntu team-mate, decision-making process.

Steps in the general decision-making process include

- defining the problem and philosophising about it
- obtaining perspective by obtaining more detail

- analysing choices and their possible consequences
- allowing the consequences to influence the making of a wise choice
- making a decision and then abiding by the decision (if the decision is an unwise one, reconsider and learn from the experience)

Processes are seldom without problems and obstacles.

One of the major reasons for obstacles is insufficient information about the issue or planned activity at the moment of decision making.

Even natural events like tsunamis cannot normally be predicted and can result in a wrong decision, like hosting a conference in an area doomed to be flooded as a result of such a natural disaster.

Information gathering in the decision-making process is therefore vital, but is still no guarantee that unforeseen factors will not nullify the wisdom of decisions.

The benefit of the Ubuntu style of team-mate or group decisions is that integrated groups tend to make wiser decisions, since more information relating to similar circumstances may be available. More options can also be proposed and considered, since people have different backgrounds, experiences and educational know-how.

The negative aspects of such a style are that decisions take longer, especially if potential solutions are debated intensively, and that there may be hidden agendas (people with personal aspirations may try to benefit from the decisions).

However, decision making should never occur autocratically.

A team effort is at least more democratic and assists in arriving at resolutions that ensure participative ownership of the decision-making process.

Decisions may take longer, but it is a fact that decisions are of a higher quality if they are taken after thorough team deliberation.

This process of group decision making the Ubuntu way is based primarily on human considerations, a process that involves the following phases:

- involve all relevant team-mates as a collective
- attend to the detailed description of the problem
- analyse facts thoroughly
- identify human-based solutions
- identify human alternatives
- allow free and democratic participation and encourage all to voice their opinions
- decide, on the basis of consensus, on the best solution in terms of Ubuntu values
- analyse all possible outcomes
- make provision for actions regarding possible outcomes
- implement resolutions
- evaluate feedback

The benefits of this participative decision making are that

- the democratic process is honoured and the equality of staff members is acknowledged
- more opinions are heard, opening up possibilities for better perspectives
- ownership of decisions is shared by all participants
- participants feel involved in the bottom-up process

- responsibilities regarding decisions are understood and are more easily accepted
- cooperation is voluntary and of one's own free will and is not the result of instruction

## **Motivation**

Motivation is the driving factor that activates people to pursue their goals.

Motivated people are easily recognisable: they are the ones who will walk more than the extra mile in order to achieve organisational or personal goals.

These people are characterised by a drive to succeed and to perform.

"Drive" in this context is comparable to a burning need - a need to excel.

This need could also be regarded as an expression of self-actualisation.

Self-actualisation is identified as a typical human need in one of the most common theories of motivation found, namely Maslow's needs theory.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs distinguishes between physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, ego needs and self-actualisation needs.

The theory behind these various needs is that, once a person's goals have been achieved, the need subsides and the individual returns to a state of normality before new needs again arise.

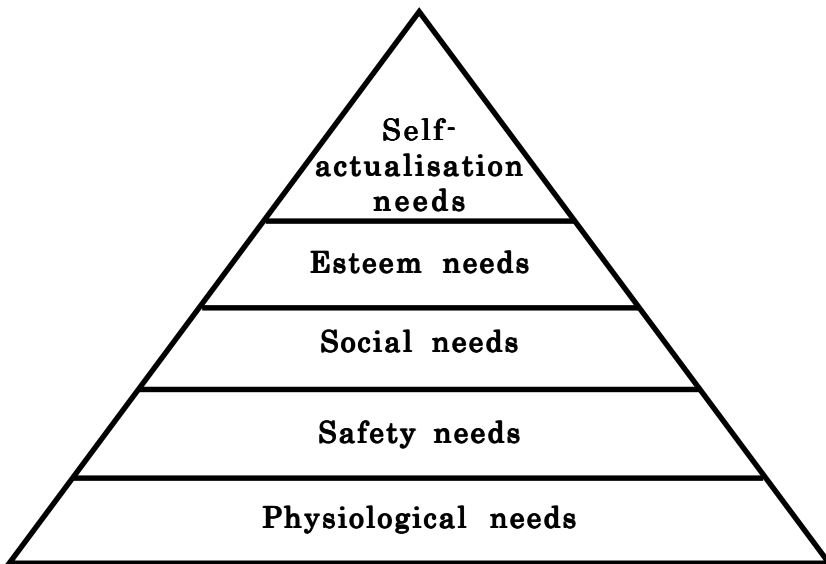
The needs, from a priority point of view, are as follows:

- physiological needs, such as the need for food, liquids, warmth, sex and shelter

- safety or security needs, such as the need for security and protection
- social needs, which include the need for a sense of belonging, acceptance, love and friendship
- self-esteem needs such as status and recognition
- self-actualisation needs, which refer to the need to reach personal goals, the need to realise one's potential and the need for self-fulfilment

Maslow argues that, if the lower needs of people are satisfied, they will gradually aspire to have the other needs satisfied as well.

Maslow's model (George 2001:132) is illustrated as follows:



*Figure 4.1: Maslow's hierarchy of needs*

From the point of view of the Ubuntu mindset, this analysis of needs also seems to be acceptable. In fact, Maslow's description of needs is so universal that all cultures can associate with it.



However, in the Ubuntu-type, needs hierarchy, one will probably think of group actualisation needs, group esteem needs, group social needs, and group physiological needs. The emphasis on needs applies not to the individual self, but to the group or family/extended family. Man is part of an entity and is dependent on the wellbeing of this entity. A human being is a human being through other human beings.

Ubuntu, with its emphasis on humanness, togetherness and belonging can especially ascribe to the aspect of social needs.

Love and recognition are major components of Ubuntu philosophy. The wellbeing of the human being is generally to be considered before all other considerations.

The problem that arises is what to do if a person performs exceptionally well and should be considered for some recognition or reward.

In Western or Eurocentric culture, it is an accepted practice to reward a winner in financial terms. Consequently, the individual will usually receive some form of bonus.

In African culture, however, an individual is usually part of a team. Thus, it is not the individual that should be rewarded, but the whole team. Alternatively, the award is divided among team members.

Motivation of staff is important for the achievement of the best results in the workplace, but, it can be argued, Ubuntu motivation does not necessarily entail individual financial rewards.

Other motivational methods therefore have to be considered, like praising or recognising the whole team.

People's egos are influenced in a positive way by recognising performers.

Recognition is one of the most powerful tools managers can use to inspire staff. Recognition is a simple way of motivating people. People who are given due recognition during meetings or on special occasions will be inclined to perform even better in the workplace.

The manager should therefore ensure that work celebrations are of a qualitative nature and that performing teams are recognised in style.

If staff members are not performing, Ubuntu-orientated managers tend to be tolerant. Tolerance means tolerating non-performance and using a diplomatic style of cautioning non-performers.

This compassionate technique is about talking out the problem or act of non-performance.

Talking out implies that non-performers should not be insulted or threatened in any way, especially in the presence of others. The non-performers are still part of the organisational family, have human rights and should rather be approached in a brotherly or sisterly spirit.

This technique is also a reference to "silent diplomacy".

Silent diplomacy is to tolerate mistakes or misconduct and to reprimand in a wise and caring way, that is to be soft on others.

Non-performance is often the consequence of a poor self-image. This low self-esteem could be the consequence of illiteracy, a poor background or unfamiliarity with the strange facets of other cultures.

The manager-leader therefore has a cardinal role to play by influencing non-performers to adopt positive life styles and to develop and maintain self-respect.

One method of developing self-respect is to ensure that team-mates are working in environments that complement their interests and academic and professional backgrounds.

For example, technical people are not interested in academic issues and academic people battle to cope with technical operations.

The human approach is to challenge teams of people to enjoy the work for which they are suited, in a creative but responsible way.

This approach changes sombre attitudes into happy working environments.

On the negative side, not giving team-mates responsibility, scolding others, becoming impatient with them, and not allowing individual thinking and styles (even where these differ from the conventions of managers) are guaranteed to break down self-images and lead to disaster.

The basic lesson is this: provide team-mates with the opportunity and challenge to prove themselves. The satisfaction and happiness flowing from this challenge of proving themselves will be a motivation in itself.

This will also complement Maslow's social need satisfaction, for there will be a feeling of acceptance and comradeship in the working environment.

## **Control**

The purpose of control is to determine the extent to which the objectives and goals of the organisation are likely to be achieved.

In the Western or Eurocentric world, control is of an individualistic nature. Control in this sense is also a measure of whether the individual is performing in accordance with the guidelines laid down. The individual is accountable for his or her work performance, effectiveness and decision making.

Objectives, norms and standards are prominent concepts in the work set-up. Objectives refer to what must be achieved in future, while standards and norms refer to minimum acceptable levels of performance.

This type of control could be quite a nightmare for employees who do not meet the set criteria. They will often be subject to unexpected inspections, will be compelled to submit regular reports and may face disciplinary action if they are deemed not to be performing during the evaluation process by supervisors.

In Africa, control is more team- or group-bound, and the stress experienced by the individual as a result of control is therefore less.

A democratic approach predominates and tasks are delegated to individual members of the team.

Control in Africa does not have the same negative connotation as in traditional Western management.

This negative connotation is related to the fear evoked when staff members are evaluated (and even interrogated intensely) about their performance in the workplace.

Management by fear never works. Fear has a devastating effect on positive productivity and destroys creative thinking and a willing, working spirit.

Control in the Ubuntu sense is friendlier and is based on natural feedback being given to the team or collective. There is an absence of bossy supervision by an individual manager.

For example, start the day with a cup of coffee or tea in the morning: invite staff to the occasion and encourage them to talk about their work experiences the previous day and their expectations for the new working day. This is informal feedback given in a friendly atmosphere. Depending on the culture of the organisation, team-mates can even indulge in a few happy songs and dances to start the day in a positive spirit!

By giving feedback to the family team, staff members are measured in terms of performance. If performance is not adequate, the team (of which the manager is part, but not as a dominator) must deal with the non-performance. It may request reasons and evaluate the situation in a brotherly spirit.

Evaluation as part of the function of control is therefore necessary for the rectification of non-performance, but it should never be threatening.

Mistakes and non-performance should be allowed for and be forgiven. People learn from their mistakes and non-performance and should be encouraged to continue and improve.

Once improvement becomes visible, the manager must give genuine praise to the new performer. Genuine praise and giving credit boost the self-image of team-mates and will encourage them to continue with their good performance.

The manager should also record instances of good performance and use them as motivators.

In other words, be soft on people without discouraging quality work.

## **CASE STUDY: BEING PART OF A TEAM**

Staff members must be encouraged to work closely together as a closely knitted team.

An organisation in the community development business has been struggling to get off the ground, but, eventually, a huge breakthrough is made when the business is awarded a government tender.

The organisation has also been invited to nominate delegates to attend an international conference where the latest developments in this field are to be workshopped.

Ten loyal and deeply committed staff members are delegated to attend this conference as a team representative of the organisation. They are to travel to the conference by air.

Eight staff members are to travel in the organisation's mini-bus to the airport. The remaining two prefer to travel individually in their own cars, which may have an influence on team spirit, because all are not together right from the beginning.

The latter two are consequently accused of not wanting to be part of the greater group ("they are not part of us").

The manager-leader is approached with a view to intervening.

How should the situation be handled?

Should the latter two be compelled to take the mini-bus instead in order to promote a better team spirit?

# 5

## UBUNTU CULTURAL CONCEPTS

To ensure good communication and cohesion in the workplace, it is essential that the manager becomes aware of the cultural differences in the working milieu.

All aspects of life are touched and affected by culture: it determines behaviour in a comprehensive way.

Culture encompasses everything people do, including material and economic activities.

People in the workplace as well have different worldviews that determine their cultural expressions, perceptions and convictions regarding all issues relating to life, work and labour.

The greater people's defences, the harder it is to ensure effective communication between manager and staff members, as well as among staff members themselves. Ineffective communication results in misunderstanding, and even conflict, which could have a negative influence on productivity and cohesion.

Effective managerial communication indicates that a process of creating and submitting meaningful messages to staff, and receiving understandable messages from staff in return, is taking place successfully.

Messages become more understandable when a relationship based on empathy is created.

Team-mates will then tend to listen in a more attentive way, without conditions, and, by placing themselves in the situations of others, understanding is developed.

The reality of the need for improved intercultural communication is a worldwide phenomenon.

For example, in the United States of America, people come from Western, African-American and Indian backgrounds; in Australia, citizens come from Western and Aborigine backgrounds; and, in New Zealand, people come from Western and Maori backgrounds. In New Zealand, Western managers are even expected to learn the Maori language to avoid misunderstandings with Maori staff.

In Africa, managers should also endeavour to learn an African language, but should at least have a thorough knowledge of the Ubuntu culture. Africans have a specific or unique way of life and personality: a way of speaking, singing, dancing, painting, sculpturing, and even of laughing and crying.

In order to have a better cultural understanding of Ubuntu, it is essential to investigate the meaning and value of the cultural elements and conventions that comprise Ubuntu.

These elements include phenomena such as tolerance or African time, the cultural *stokvel*, the extended family system, folk tales, informality, *sangomas*, ancestors, death and religion.

## AFRICAN TIME

African time, meaning a tendency not to be punctual, is a controversial issue: some Africans say there is not something like African time, since time is time.

African time is sometimes referred to as tolerance time, meaning exercising tolerance with regard to latecomers. Africans do not understand the motive for blaming Africans for practising this when unpunctuality occurs in all cultures.

Others might argue that the Western clock or wristwatch is European time, and that, in the past in Africa, these clocks



or watches did not exist. In those days, time was measured by events like sleeping time, feeding time, and, in particular, sunrise and sunset. One rose at sunrise and finished the day at sunset.

Arriving late for work and meetings is regarded in the time-conscious environment as inexcusable. Time is seen in such an environment as money. If the maximum time is not used for work purposes, it automatically leads, according to this viewpoint, to less profit or delivery. However, whether this time is really spent productively seems to be a secondary consideration in some cases.

In its modern sense, African time refers to this phenomenon of arriving late.

Not being punctual is however not peculiar to African people, since people of all cultures can arrive late for events.

The reasons for arriving late could be due to people residing long distances away from workplaces, serious transport problems or other problems (taxi wars, strikes, unreliable means of transport, ill health, family issues, death in the family, etc.).

Europeans are extremely time-conscious and punctual: wristwatches rule their lives – and punctuality is a rigid norm which influences various actions.

As noted, some managers view time as money.

These extremely time-conscious attitudes lead to serious stress – one has only to look at all the worried faces of Western motorists during peak hour, who fear that they may be late for work or an appointment, to understand how seriously Europeans value punctuality and rigid time adherence. No wonder stress in its many hidden forms is killing so many Europeans.

On the other hand, an African labourer may reason that the work never ends and may therefore regard rigid punctuality as being not so important.

If the labourer is an illiterate who cannot even tell the time using a watch, how can one expect him or her to be rigidly punctual at all times?

In this respect, one can argue that, if the labourer is half an hour late, one should allow him to work half an hour later and call this flexitime (productivity will remain the same)!

Other job categories will have to be treated differently though – one expects pilots to be punctual, because the nature of their work is different and rigid time-consciousness is essential. If pilots were to arrive at the airport whenever they wanted to, this would lead to aeroplanes circling the airport, waiting for a chance to land. They could even run out of fuel, with dramatic and serious consequences, which cannot be associated with Ubuntu!

A corporate, cultural approach should ideally be developed within the corporation and inputs from both workers and managers on the issue of African time or tolerance time should be obtained.

In the civil service, it is expected of officials to provide citizens with certain services at specific times, and, in the private sector, time is seen as being linked to moneymaking. In both these cases, punctuality is therefore important.

It is conducive to good relations in social life and the work situation to take note of the reality of African or tolerance time.

The leader or manager should be sensitive to time and should manage time in a very diplomatic and human way.

This does not imply that punctuality must be abandoned in the workplace. Lessons can be learnt from countries where similar, problematic concepts of time are encountered.

It has been pointed out (Van der Walt 1997:138) that Japan is a country with a culture which is, in many respects, similar to African communalism. Japan has nevertheless become a major force in the international economy. In a comparative study between Japan and Africa to determine the secret of Japan's economic success, it was found that Japan has kept its traditional concept of time, which is similar to the African concept of time. However, when Japan deals with the Western world and its technology, the Western concept of time and, consequently, punctuality is honoured.

## CULTURAL *STOKVEL*

We have already touched on the importance of the *stokvel* (informal African cooperative) as an economic enterprise.

*Stokvels* also have a cultural component of collectiveness or togetherness: as a collective, life is experienced together and not in isolation.

The *stokvel* came into existence as a social event when people started socialising as groups. Gradually, these social encounters led to the formation of savings clubs and burial societies operating as *stokvels*. Even businesses are established in this way.

The *stokvel* has its origin in the togetherness of the subsistence farming system.

Neighbouring farmers, or members of the extended family structures in an area, would come out to be together on a large scale. Without necessarily being requested to do so, but more as a cultural custom, they assisted a farmer in harvesting his lands.

To show his gratitude, the farmer who benefited from this collective undertaking would afterwards treat all to a feast of slaughtered cows and calabashes filled with beer in the spirit of togetherness, solidarity and cohesion.

Celebration in Africa is seen as a reward for hard work done and as a necessity for giving a more joyous flavour to life. It is compassionate.

The communal group would the next week move to the lands of another farmer and repeat the process. In this way, all the lands in the area would soon be harvested.

This cultural version of helping others followed by celebrating is known as *Ilima*.

To socialise as a group is a well-known event in Ubuntu life and may also be complemented by some spontaneous singing, informal dancing or *toy-toy*. *Toy-toy* is merely a dance used to express happiness and brotherhood. To sing spontaneously and happily is part and parcel of African life. Celebrations, dancing and singing are cultural highlights in life and organisations should be encouraged to arrange these events, especially after worthwhile work objectives have been reached. Apart from rewarding the participants for productivity, this will also be a positive gesture contributing to the cohesion of staff members. Staff members should always be regarded as part of the brotherhood or extended family of the organisation. This spirit of unity is also called comradeship.

Greater comradeship or brotherhood will indeed create a happier and friendlier organisational environment.

## EXTENDED FAMILY

The family as an institution has enormous creative and positive potential.

In this sense, the manager should think about and plan concerning the exciting possibilities where the workforce/team-mates regard themselves as a family or extended family of the organisation and carry out their work accordingly.

One way of achieving this sense of family is to create open spaces in the workplace, without barriers or walls, which can be used as collective offices.

All team-mates must however consent to this type of accommodation, since people of some cultures appreciate privacy.

If the family becomes dissatisfied, and even disordered, this has the potential for chaos and destruction.

The family is generally regarded as the primary institution of societies. Some of the major functions of the family include socialisation, informal education and the transmission of cultural values to young members of society. The family everywhere is controlled, sustained and protected by the mores and laws of society or community. A function societies and communities universally expect families to help perform is to pass on the cultural heritage, like the basic values of Ubuntu, since this helps to create civil and decent behaviour, as well as a fruitful and happy life.

Children raised in a family atmosphere of Ubuntu are characterised by their distinctive Ubuntu personalities.

Morally corrupt families lead to morally corrupt societies. It is therefore essential that the rebuilding of the moral fibre of individuals and communities constantly receives attention so as to ensure the restoration of the positive values of families, communities and organisations.

In an address to delegates at an international conference on the family, a rural African leader in KwaZulu-Natal, Ndwedwe Inkosi Judith Ngcobo, declared (Zulu 2005:2) that Ubuntu is something that all families and communities need, and that families need to go back to their roots and to strengthen bonds: "There are many families where there is only one spouse. Even if a child is not yours, take care of that child. Teenagers need to realize that there are so many opportunities out there, and if they want to live a long life, they need to appreciate life".

## How does this apply to organisations?

One example is that of Raymond Ackermann, who has been one of the most successful businessmen ever in South Africa. He established the Pick 'n Pay supermarkets, building them up from a small enterprise to one of the most successful businesses in the history of the country. The reason for this resounding success has been his conviction that, in an organisation and business, everyone should be regarded and treated as respected family members (interview with SABC 2 on 6 March 2005).

Being a member of a proud family, even in an organisational context, gives one a sense of pride, belonging and patriotism in respect of the family institution.

It has already been noted that various other companies also adhere to the family notion, taking care of their employees and promoting the spirit of family. And, internationally, the Virgin Group ascribes to the same business philosophy.

The Ubuntu extended family system is found all over Africa and is, for instance, closely related to the *Ujamaa* system in Tanzania.

*Ujamaa* was an effort by Tanzanian leader, Nyerere, to develop a kind of family organism that combines family and society. This is related to the concept of universal brotherhood or African socialism.

*Ujamaa* is also closely related to the concept of *Umoja*, which means togetherness, or a spirit of togetherness. In a community, people are interrelated and are dependent on one another.

According to Nyerere (in Luthuli et al 1964:67), socialism is like democracy – it is an attitude of mind. In a socialist

society, it is the socialist attitude of mind, and not the rigid adherence to a standard political pattern, which is needed to ensure that people care for one another's welfare.

*Ujamaa* or familyhood, with its belief in human brotherhood and the unity of the people of Africa, reflects this socialism. It is opposed to harsh capitalism that apparently seeks to build a happy society on the basis of the exploitation of man by man; and *Ujamaa* is equally opposed to doctrinaire socialism, which seeks to build a happy society on a philosophy of inevitable conflict between man and man.

In African family life, a child has many fathers and mothers. The brothers of his natural father are also regarded and respected as his fathers, and the sisters of his mother are all addressed as "Ma" (mother). There are therefore no orphans in traditional Africa: if the natural parents of a child die, the other fathers and mothers in the extended family automatically take over custody of the child. This is a natural deed and is accepted by all.

Since a person has many fathers and mothers, the conduct of an African applying for leave, or to be excused from work more than once, to attend the funeral of one of his fathers or mothers should be valued in this context.

Elders have always been highly respected members of the extended family, and, in the African context, an old-age home is an unknown phenomenon. Elders are not cast aside, because they are respected too much for their accumulated wisdom, life lessons and the selfless way in which they raised their children and, often, grandchildren.

The extended family system is in some instances seen as including even people outside Africa, since it is the basis of the brotherhood of all people all over the world.

Universal brotherhood is the same as the concept of the family of man. Family of man is a distinctive, collective consciousness of Africans as manifested in behaviour, expression and spiritual self-fulfilment, but it could also be experienced internationally.

The extended family system is also described (Ramose 1999:49) as part of a family “atmosphere”, which is a kind of philosophical affinity and kinship among and between the indigenous peoples of Africa. In this sense, the Ubuntu family atmosphere is the basis of all African philosophy.

The extended family system or atmosphere is to be respected in all environments.

In the work situation, all personnel of all sections, branches or departments could be regarded as brothers and sisters of the same extended family working cooperatively for the sake of the family. This approach creates more cohesion and loyalty to the workplace, because it is a natural tendency not to let down your family – one is part of it. One has ownership in the family institution.

Needless to say, this all leads to greater productivity.

This method of working/operating as an extended family or as a collective is successfully applied by various businesses today which have accepted Ubuntuism as their business philosophy.

According to Shutte (2001:29), the extended family is probably the most common, and also the most fundamental, expression of the African idea of community. The family in the African conception goes far beyond the nucleus of genetic parents and children.

The author has found two manifestations of the extended family during empirical research in KwaZulu-Natal.

In the one case, people were staying together in a small geographic area consisting of broader members of the family.



In the second case, extended family members were distributed over a much larger area and each smaller family was living on its own little piece of land.

This communal living is the basis of the community concept of management. In a small community, people tend to function as a family: one finds more transparency, sharing (also information sharing), trust and easiness.

This type of communal living is also typical of the traditional village. The family bond in a traditional village is strong and it is even acceptable for children to be reprimanded by the adults of other households (in fact, this is even encouraged). In Africa, it is a common practice for all adults to assist in the raising of children and even to apply corporal punishment to children who are not their own: this amounts to a collective upbringing of children.

In Alexandra outside Johannesburg, which is an urban township, a third case of an extended family is to be found. People divide themselves into informal areas or zones and members of a specific zone play an intimate and supportive role in respect of one another.

The idea of the extended family has the potential to be extended even beyond those related by blood, kinship or marriage to include strangers. In a sense, the person, and even humanity itself, constitutes a kind of family.

This is another way of understanding the notion of the family of man.

## **FOLKLORE**

Elders are regarded as wise people because of their life skills and their knowledge of the lessons of life, which they have acquired throughout the years.

Job status is not as important as the age of a person and a younger person who occupies a senior position is expected

to honour the elderly in spite of the more inferior work positions they may occupy. A young managing director will therefore treat the elderly who occupy positions as gardeners or tea makers with as much respect as any other senior staff member.

In Kenya, the sages are regarded as wise people and as philosophical counsellors. These sages are approached for solutions to the day-to-day problems of life.

In rural KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, old women in the villages or kraals are generally regarded as wise. One finds that the chief or leader of the village will assign a special hut to the eldest woman, from where she teaches children about Ubuntu tradition and values. She also provides adults with advice on their daily problems.

The oral way of teaching and storytelling is an important tradition in African life and it is customary to tell moral tales surrounded by the magic of the African fire. Members of the community, especially youngsters, will assemble around the fire at night with an elder telling them moral stories or teaching them about the lessons of life. This is done in quite a dramatic way and storytelling has developed into a respected art in Africa.

Ubuntu itself has been transferred from generation to generation in an oral way, often by means of storytelling with a moral bite or specific lesson about life.

Africa is said (Savory 1988:Introduction) to have a wonderfully rich store of folk tales that have been passed down from one generation to the next. There are stories about how the world came into being, stories that tell of the relationships between human beings and between man and his environment, as well as the lessons to be learned from everyday experience. The tales are like the fairy tales told all over the world, but they have a strong African flavour that is as real as the smell of rain on the hot earth.

These tales take the listener into an enchanted world where animals can talk, where human beings are often changed into different forms and where magic is commonplace.

Despite numerous setbacks, things usually turn out all right in the end, which is very much in line with positive thinking.

An example of such an African tale (Savory 1988:93), called “The Punishment of the Faithless One”, a Matabele story, explains why the male trumpeter hornbill seals the entrance of the nest after the hen has laid her eggs. He leaves only a small slit open through which he can pass food. The hen is imprisoned inside until the young birds are old enough to be fed from outside by both parents. The reason for this imprisonment of the hen is her previous unfaithfulness to her husband when she flirted with a young, handsome male, leaving the eggs all on their own. The objective of the story is to teach faithfulness between couples and spouses which will ensure a happy and positive togetherness.

The strongest marketing tool today in African villages is still the “by-word-of-mouth” communication method. This method involves mobilising volunteers to go out and tell people in an oral way about a forthcoming event like a market day or a celebration. It is unbelievable how quickly the invitation spreads, since Africans love talking, and talking a lot. Nothing is hidden and all information is shared in an open and transparent manner.

## **INFORMALITY**

Managers should allow the relaxed African way of living and working, since a stress-free work environment will ensure better productivity and better quality of products or services. People working in an unhappy and stressed environment tend to make more mistakes and are less productive.

Examples of informality are to be found in the manner one greets, talks and acts.

As already noted, the Zulu word for “How are you?” in its plural sense is “*ninjane*”.

When using “*ninjane*”, one not only enquires about the wellbeing of a single person, but also about the wellbeing of the persons’ relatives and friends.

This may result in a lengthy information-sharing session, which is typical of the hearty, caring, informal spirit of Ubuntu communication skills. Ubuntu people are known for their pleasant and warm personalities and these positive qualities are reflected in their natural communication with others.

Tolerance as regards time therefore has to be exercised.

In Sotho, the word “*dumela*” is not only a way of greeting a person, but also an enquiry as to the other persons’ friends and relatives. Ubuntu life is informal in a very natural way, and this manifests itself in hearty and uninhibited laughing (not mere grinning), loud and spontaneous communication/talking, and relaxed/informal/happy behaviour.

The morality of Ubuntu is claimed (Shutte 2001:30) as being intrinsically related to human happiness and fulfilment. The deepest moral obligation is to become more fully human, which implies entering more and more deeply into community with others. The goal is personal happiness and fulfilment where selfishness is to a great extent absent or excluded.

It has been noted (Parrott 1987:131) that it appears to be a fact that some people live radiant, happy, productive lives while others, who for instance attend the same church, hear the same sermons, and sing using the same hymn book, live lives in which they feel beaten down, defeated and anxiety-ridden. It is also a fact that some people seem to take all that life hands them in their stride, rising above disappointments and heartaches in a continuing attitude of happiness, while others who enjoy the same educational advantages, live in the same suburbs and have comparable

incomes are dominated by feelings of anger, boredom and loss of enthusiasm.

It is also found that some managers can be transferred to any community, can be assigned any new challenge, and can face any series of obstacles when they arrive there. Factors that initially appeared beyond their control in the new situation suddenly begin working to their advantage. Their own positive and happy attitudes, plus the attitudes of the people with whom they work, start working in their favour.

At the same time, other managers who find themselves prisoners in a culture of unhappiness go through a career plagued by dead-end job assignments, bad decision-making patterns and a totally negative approach to living, which eventually brings their working environment tumbling down around them.

Negative and unhappy people cannot succeed in life, and the same lesson applies to managers.

The Ubuntu way of informal living could therefore be advantageous to managers, especially when staff members are also persuaded to work more productively in a more relaxed, friendly family atmosphere.

## ***SANGOMAS***

The belief in the ability of *sangomas* (traditional healers) to heal man of illnesses, instead of using the medicine of Western medical doctors, is very strong in especially the rural areas of Africa.

Sangomas are also regarded as wise people with the gift of communicating with the ancestors.

The manager should respect and be understanding of the belief in the healing and spiritual powers of the *sangoma* or medicine man.

It is stated (Von Meck 2005:12) that many political ministers and members of parliament consult with their ancestors with the help of sangomas in South Africa. This consultation is an effort to obtain advice before decisions are taken on important issues.

All ancestors are believed to be good and to provide only good advice. It would therefore not be surprising if leaders in the managerial environment were also to seek advice from ancestors with the help of sangomas.

In Zulu culture, one finds the *nyanga*, who has inherited the *sangoma* profession from the family. A *nyanga* is a herbalist or diviner. A *sangoma* is a person who has received a “call” from the ancestors to become a medicine man, psychiatrist and someone with the skills to interpret dreams, use herbal medicines, diagnose illnesses and communicate with the spirits.

Traditionally, there were five types of doctors in African societies (Lenaka 1995:6). The first four were healers who performed special tasks, while the last one was a killer.

The first type of doctor used bones to diagnose an ailment. The divining bones also indicated the herbs to be prescribed.

The second type of doctor did not use bones. One simply informed this doctor about one’s problem or the issue concerned, and the doctor in turn provided one with the necessary herbs to heal the sickness or to treat the ailment.

Apparently, this doctor was a counsellor and a psychologist as well and assisted patients with their life and work problems and their relationships with other people.

The third type of doctor was a psychiatrist who specialised in treating mentally disturbed patients.

The fourth type of doctor was a rainmaker. During times of harsh droughts, people appealed to this doctor to bring rain.

The fifth type of doctor was a witchdoctor whose main task was to kill by poisoning victims or by sending a *tokoloshe* (a bad, devilish-looking little creature) or lightning to kill those who were in disfavour with the witchdoctor.

In modern times, *sangomas* still act as traditional herb healers or African doctors. They still have as their main functions the prescription and preparation of herbal medicines, the interpretation of dreams, psychological or philosophical counselling, and communication with ancestors.

They are regarded as wise and good and they are highly respected in the Ubuntu communities. Many Ubuntu patients would rather be treated by a *sangoma* than by a Western medical practitioner.

*Sangomas* claim not to treat the symptoms of an illness, but the root or cause of the illness through a holistic, curing approach.

In a brochure, a well-known *sangoma* in Soweto advertises his services as including: communicating with the deceased parents or other deceased relatives of a person; helping in the case of a spouse who is unfaithful; removing bad luck; assisting in the winning of the heart of the one a person loves; combating the misuse of alcohol and drugs; healing sicknesses or diseases; eliminating bewitchment; assisting in attracting more customers to a business; helping a person regain self-confidence and self-esteem; translating or explaining dreams; predicting the future of a person through *dolos* (the art of bone throwing); assisting with infertility; and even the curing of weak sexual erections.

Ramose (1999:97) notes the procedure followed in a psychiatric case. After the discovery of the mental illness, the victim, rather than the patient, is reported to the ancestors with the help of a *sangoma*. The purpose of the report is to inform the ancestors of the state of affairs and also to establish from them what wrong the victim has done to deserve such an affliction. The end result of this report

should be a cure in the sense that the healthy members of the family will then do what is necessary to appease the ancestors. This is a spiritual act in the sense that there must be a relation between the bodily illness and the disturbance of harmony and balance in the relations between the living and the living dead (ancestors). *Sangomas* have a crucial role in facilitating such communication with the ancestors.

Witchdoctors, on the other hand, are still regarded as bad and evil, since they use parts of human bodies for medicine. They are more often than not the murderers of people and young children, or the instigators of such murders, in order to obtain these human parts for *muti* (medicine). They also involve themselves in combating curses put on people by witches and the perception exists that they possess some occult forces. According to general belief, witchdoctors are to be avoided and isolated.

*Sangomas* are experienced more positively and they are seen as being vital to the success of primary health care initiatives, such as immunisation programmes, family planning and HIV/AIDS education.

An exciting tendency is the greater collaboration between traditional and Western medical practices in South Africa.

This tendency is however not unique to South Africa. There are several, similar joint efforts in countries like Singapore, China, Cuba and the Philippines.

## ANCESTORS

The ancestors are experienced as being present in all people's daily lives.

In the African tradition, "other persons" in the Ubuntu saying, "I am a person through other persons", is a reference that includes the ancestors. The person is eventually to become an ancestor.



Death is therefore a type of homecoming in the homes of ancestors.

Ancestors however remain part of the living family and community and the family forever remembers them, especially on special occasions and during ritual events.

In community life when people are enjoying themselves around a calabash of beer, one may find a little bit of beer being poured on the ground for the ancestors to enjoy as well. They are especially honoured at community mealtimes or during offerings and sacrifices. This convention applies to Western-educated Africans as well.

At the inauguration of Professor C Tsehloane Keto (who has obtained various qualifications in the Western world) as the new principal of the University of Vista in Pretoria, South Africa, on 6 April 2002, Professor Keto ended his address by paying tribute to his ancestors in his traditional language in order “not to disturb them”; in other words, to remember them.

It is generally believed that people should try their utmost to be at peace with the ancestors to ensure harmonious living. This is an example of how real the ancestors are experienced as being by Africans, including intellectual Africans. Many Africans believe in God through the ancestors as mediums. God is experienced as being very far away, whilst the ancestors are here in the midst of ordinary people.

The belief in the existence of ancestors should however not be regarded as unique or as being so strange.

As Khoza (1994:89) puts it: “Nobody has the right to say I am barbaric because I believe in the dead, particularly when they themselves believe in Isaiah and Abraham.”

It appears as if the living dead in African family life are finally forgotten personally after five or six generations.

As regards the eternal aspect, they become part of the spiritual world. There is therefore no heaven or hell awaiting them. They will merely enter a world of spirits, becoming spirits themselves.

There is a unique communication relationship in the spiritual world between ancestors and *sangomas*.

Spirits can possess living human beings.

An example is provided by Motshekga (1988:155) of an accused who was charged with two counts of murder and was wrongfully viewed by the court as being insane.

The accused, in accordance with African thought, could not be regarded as insane, but should rather have been seen as being possessed by an ancestral spirit, which could have been allowed to settle and serve as a guardian spirit.

The detention of spirit-possessed people in Western mental institutions is also incomprehensible, because they cannot cure a spirit-possessed person. It is the task of a *sangoma* to cure the affected person. Owing to the psychic training and experience of the ancestral spirits of the *sangomas*, as well as their own purification, they have learnt to “see” and not just to observe. “Seeing” implies moving beyond ordinary sense perception and understanding. *Sangomas* regard themselves as engaged in a war of good against evil forces in nature.

## DEATH

Death is a complex concept in Africa.

Traditionally, there were different versions of the origin of death and the hereafter, which were transferred orally from generation to generation.

The death phenomenon and the manner in which Africans view and experience death are unique when compared with various other cultures.

The custom is that, after death, a vigil is held the night before the funeral. There are historical reasons for holding vigils.

According to Lenaka (1995:5), there were no mortuaries in the olden days. People used to bury their dead the same day they died, and in the middle of the night because of their fear that the witches would dig them up and cut off some parts they needed for their evil deeds. With the march of time, the dead were placed in huts until the following day and were then buried. The witches then got the chance to remove the bodily parts they needed. Seeing this, the relatives of the deceased began to hold a night vigil so as to guard against the witches tampering with the corpse.

Today things are done differently. In the past, the night vigil was a family affair. Now it has become a community commitment.

As soon as word spreads that someone has died, people rally to extend their condolences to the family and do all they can to try to ease its pain and suffering.

In the evening, they come together, offer prayers and sing hymns. They also read from the scriptures and address a few words to the family and the community present.

Death is a very serious and extremely traumatic experience in Ubuntu society. The greatest insult one can level at a person is to declare that you will not attend his or her funeral one day. It is experienced as being totally destructive to a human being if a person resents one to such an extent that there will be someone who is absent from one's funeral one day. The funeral is the event where one becomes part of the world of the ancestors and everybody in the community or village is expected to attend the burial ceremony to show their last respects as the transferral to the world of the ancestors is taking place.

Most funerals are held over weekends, because this gives those who wish to attend a funeral a chance to get there, for, during the week, people go to work. People will also come from far away to attend funerals. They may even walk for days to attend the event.

In the olden days before there were coffins, people slaughtered a beast and used the hide to wrap the corpse and lay it to rest in the hide.

The meat of the beast was given to those who attended or helped with the funeral. Today, the practice of slaughtering a beast is still maintained. This is done for two reasons: the beast should accompany the deceased into the world of the ancestors, as was the case before, and there must be enough meat for the many people attending the funeral.

Consequently, enough cattle will be slaughtered to ensure that all have enough to eat and as gratitude for their effort in attending this sacred event.

## **RELIGION**

According to Shutte (2001:212), South Africa is said to provide an ideal setting for a critical experiment in evaluating and influencing religion by means of an ethic of Ubuntu.

Ubuntu is regarded as acceptable by all religious beliefs because of its universal character of humanity and associated values.

South African society is one of the most explicitly religious societies in the world and is a place where religion plays a major role in both private and public life. According to the most recent census, only slightly more than one percent of South Africans claim to have no religion.

Religion is viewed (Louw 1998:2) as depicting an ultimate, all-encompassing frame of references.

In this sense, it can be compared to a worldview, since it shares this all-encompassing nature with the concept of worldview. Worldview is one's view of the world or the picture one has of the way things are in reality.

This reality is formed and influenced by the values of people, which, in turn, provide meaning to the existence of people.

Africans and Ubuntu people are extremely natural believers and religious people.

African religion can be seen as a triangle (Parinder 1967:15).

On top is God, the head of all forces.

On the two sides of the triangle are the next two forces, gods and ancestors, and at the base are lower forces where medicine and witchcraft are involved.

Man is in the centre and has to live in harmony with all the forces, which affect his life, family and work.

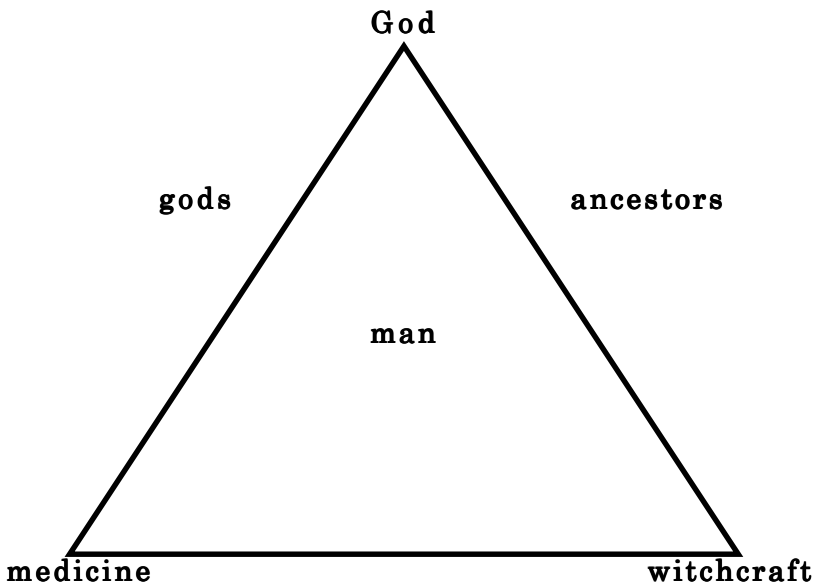


Figure 5.1: African religion as a triangle

The belief in witchcraft is present all over Africa.

A distinction is made between a witchdoctor and a witch: a witchdoctor helps people, but a witch is a bad witchdoctor and is therefore rejected and hated. In this respect, a witchdoctor and the *sangoma* are the same type of being. *Sangomas* are believed to have the ability to communicate with ancestors, who, in turn, are closer to God.

One therefore finds that Africans believe in God as a supreme being who is approached through ancestral spirits. These spirits are the mediators between God and man.

On a question of whether an African person believes in God, the answer may very well be: "Yes, but I believe in God through the ancestors". The reason for believing in God through the ancestors is that God is very far away and the ancestors are right here in the midst of people: it is logical rather to believe in and praise God through the ancestors.

According to Lenaka (1995:8), a study of the Basotho people indicates that an area that causes a lot of confusion among the Basotho tribe is where the Christian religion clashes with their culture. A parallel was drawn between African and Western religion and it was discovered that the Ten Commandments, for example, have a lot in common with Basotho customs. The Basotho also have Ten Commandments. The commandments and Basotho laws are the same: for the Basotho, although unfamiliar with Western man's Christ, it is very wicked to be ungrateful and disobedient to parents, to rob, to kill, to commit adultery, to covet the property of another and to bear false witness.

Where it is stated that man must not worship anything else but God, the Basotho say man must worship God through the mediation of the ancestors.

The differences mentioned create constant conflicts and it is argued (Lenaka 1995:9) that the missionaries should have taken the trouble to study the culture of the people first

and accommodate those issues that were in line with the scriptures. Ancestor worship, for example, has never fully given way to Christian religion. The two usually go hand in hand in most African communities.

*Prayer may assume a variety of forms, but, in essence, it is a form of intimate communication with the supernatural.*

*One form of prayer involves starting communication with one's deceased ancestor, a lump of mute, speechless soil. It may be unreasonable to involve oneself in communication with speechless, mute soil (the graves), since the decomposed ancestor now returned to dust is devoid of the senses and consequently cannot see, hear or even reply to the praying person. As is pointed out (Ramose 1999:68), however, even prayer through the intercession of saints or Jesus Christ is based on the same principles, except that it derives from different cultures.*

## ***SIMUNYE***

*Simunye* is the spirit of oneness, that is, the solidarity, collective unity or inclusivity that gives extraordinary synergy to the work team.

*Simunye* is about African societies thriving on the solidarity principle of Ubuntu (Teffo 1996a:1).

The principle of group solidarity (“*munhu munhu*”) implies that man is entitled to unconditional respect, dignity, acceptance and care from his significant, relevant group or community. In return for this security offered by the group, the individual will have to conform on survival issues. This group compassion, care and conformity, survival challenges, suffering and change form the heart of Ubuntu unity.

A man is a man through others: I am because we are. One has to encounter “we” before discovering the “I”.

This is also called the collective African fingers theory. The Tsonga proverb states: “One finger cannot crush the grain on its own”. The Shona proverb states: “The thumb cannot kill an aphid on its own”.

This version of African unity is described (Koka 1999:9) as an indivisible oneness of people in a workplace or community involved in a common task, and sharing a common purpose and vision.

It is reflected in the proverb, “Cross the river in a crowd and the crocodile won’t eat you” (Leslau 1985:38).

The principle of solidarity is further underlined (Ramose 1999:143) by the saying, “*go ya kamagoro gase go tswane melato re a rerisana*”. This means that, even if we go our own way, whenever urgent and vital issues arise, we still have the obligation to come together and try to find a common solution to these issues.

Just imagine what miracles can be achieved in the work situation if all employees work together in the spirit of such group or team solidarity!

Managers and employees should indeed be expected to work spontaneously in complete unity, especially in the field of common interest.

Unity is seen as a task that is carried out in spite of ethnic differences, political affiliations or ideological differences.

Workers and managers must acknowledge one another’s validity and significance. They must also accept the humanness (Ubuntu) in them that binds them into a solid unit.

This approach is also known as *umoya* (togetherness) and is the basic element needed for success: in other cultures, a similar saying is: “United we stand, divided we fall”.



Another saying illustrating solidarity or *simunye* stemming from the years of the struggle against the supremacy of apartheid was: “An injury to one is an injury to all”.

## ***SHOSHOLOZA***

*Shosholoza* is about teamwork in a collective sense.

Teamwork is also done in unity and illustrates solidarity, standing together and being together.

It is of utmost importance for the manager promoting teamwork to create an atmosphere of this collective loyalty to the workplace and other staff members.

Traditionally, teams of labourers working together in the fields, on roads or in factories encouraged team spirit, cohesion and solidarity by singing the song, “*Shosholoza*”. In this sense, the word means “we are working as one, and man must work to eat”.

*Shosholoza* is also present in traditional African life and in the family cooperative economy where members work together in a harmonious spirit, with each being allocated specific tasks.

The characteristics of the family cooperative are as follows:

- Each African family has a law that everyone at home must respect and obey.
- An African family life is structured by long-standing rules.
- A disciplinary code of conduct is established in each family unit.
- In each African family, children are taught family laws.
- There is a proper way of communicating within the family system.
- In the event of a crisis or serious problem, a family meeting is held.

- Everybody works for the advancement or development of the family or home.
- Everyone in the family, young or old, owns a cow(s) or goat(s). These form the basis of the family economy.
- Supervision and management during performance are emphasised.
- Young members of the family take orders from the elderly and experienced members.
- The concept of family covers a wide range of members: an extended family.
- Whoever defies the family law is punished severely.
- The African family is closely knit.

(Bhenghu 1996:38)

## ***LOBOLA***

*Lobola* is a social system and custom in terms of which a bridegroom donates bride's gifts in the form of a number of cattle to the family-in-law.

In modern times, the gift can take the form of money and, in some cases, it could be paid in instalments!

The manager should respect this much-valued custom and be aware that, in some instances, a bridegroom employee may request a loan against his salary or pension money to be able to pay his bride's gift.

The practice of paying *lobola* (*bohadi* in Sesotho and *ilobolo* in Zulu) is not readily acceptable in Western culture. *Lobola* is regarded as undesirable in Western culture and is often debated in the media, or openly by those who oppose this convention.

But to the African people practising it, it makes a lot of sense: the woman married in this way feels proud because the husband and his people have shown that they value her and thank the parents who brought her up the way they did.

The *lobola/bohadi* practice is also a way to guard against a divorce, because, in such a case, her people have to return the *bohadi* cattle they received. It is also a way of preventing the husband from assaulting or ill-treating his wife. He treasures her because of the price he has paid for her.

*Lobola* was originally regarded as a token and it was not even necessary to pay the full amount or number of cattle at once. In most cases, men ended up paying the first few cattle, or half of the money demanded, and the remainder was eventually written off. The tendency today is to overcharge the son-in-law or his people and demand full payment before the marriage can be finalised: this type of demand is however generally regarded as highly undesirable.

## ***TSOTSI***

A *tsotsi* is a bad person or criminal.

Most Africans suffer in order to be able to survive and it is therefore regarded as totally immoral if poor people are robbed. The robbers are named *tsotsis* and this curse or label may be applied lifelong.

Managers should take note that it is an absolute insult to call an innocent man a *tsotsi*, even if done jokingly.

## ***ILIMA***

*Ilima* is about harmonious exchange, about helping another.

This assistance and caring deed apply to both happy and sad events.

Traditionally, the head of a kraal, his wife(s) or senior members of the kraal would invite certain individuals to help the head harvest the lands. He did not need to tell them about the celebration that would take place afterwards, at which food and beer would be enjoyed, for it was common

practice. The work done culminated in an after-work party, and this was a reward for *ilima*.

Although all are supposed to enjoy themselves to the fullest, it is customary in African life not to indulge in excessive alcohol consumption.

*Ilima* is also an operational tool for rewarding team-mates in the workplace. African employees thrive on well-deserved recognition, and recognition is a universal, positive motivator.

Recognition should therefore not only be given in a verbal or written form, but also in the form of having work *ilimas*.

*Ilima* is known in the Shona culture (Mbigi 1995:40) as *mukwerera* (production festival ceremony) or *pungwe* (work party).

The production festival ceremony is a strategic event to celebrate agricultural achievement as well as the planning of the new season.

In the case of a formal cooperative, all managers, workers and even their families are invited to the celebration. This will last for a full day and workers will sing traditional songs, adapting the words to selected work themes.

Celebrating work success is an integral part of African life.

## CASE STUDY: DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

It is immoral for man to make judgements about the customs and values of other cultures if man has not endeavoured to learn more about other cultures first.

For this reason, two major banks in South Africa, Absa Bank and First National Bank, developed cultural projects involving their employees so that they could experience other cultures first-hand.

The purpose of these cultural projects was to bring employees from diverse cultures closer to one another after developing a better understanding of the life styles and cultures of others.

First National Bank reportedly (Retief 2004) named its exercise Project Vuka. The project was aimed at exposing employees to other cultures in a physical sense. White employees were taken to Black townships (informal living areas) to experience daily African environments, and they even had to sleep over in these areas. Managers were provided with just enough money to commute by train or taxi.

Absa Bank sent its employees on intercultural dialogue sessions, after which they were taken to similar areas.

These exercises are to be recommended, since people experience the reality of Ubuntu cultural concepts in this way.

As an introductory process, groups of employees can be divided into discussion groups and be asked to indicate their perceptions of cultural concepts as discussed in this chapter.

The following need to be determined:

- How are the concepts understood?
- Are there similarities between these concepts and concepts in other cultures?
- Are there differences that cannot be assimilated by other cultures?

# 6

## UBUNTU STRATEGY

In this chapter, the manager/reader is provided with ideas on the development of a management strategy based on humanness.

These ideas may appear to be controversial, but need to be considered seriously.

The Obstacles, Negatives, Positives, Opportunities (ONPO) analysis is provided by the author as an alternative to the conventional Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis.

The SWOT analysis focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of the external environment, while the opportunities and threats of the internal environment are also evaluated.

The main reason for introducing the ONPO analysis as a tool to develop a strategy is that it allows more room for debate and open discussion, since, in contrast to the SWOT model, the ONPO analysis does not make a distinction between the internal and external environments. It allows for free and open brainstorming possibilities on both the external and internal levels.

The ONPO analysis is inclusive in nature and not exclusive.

# DISCIPLINE EMBRACING COMMITMENT

Discipline is a very important aspect of Ubuntu.

One cannot associate Ubuntu with aggression, disorder or chaos. A shepherd-style leader cannot facilitate or plan properly if there is no order in the milieu. He or she has to practise certain virtues like executing discipline in the spirit of family.

This style of management differs from the closed and autocratic management approach in the sense that the leader becomes part and parcel of the working team. The differences in this regard can be compared by way of pyramids. These pyramids illustrate a closed pyramid style (autocratic management) and the open pyramid or Ubuntu management style, which is an Afrocentric process.

The shepherd leadership style, which is an open process, can be summarised using the following acronym:

<b>L</b>	=	love and loyalty
<b>E</b>	=	empathy, embracing, equality
<b>A</b>	=	adaptability and adjustment
<b>D</b>	=	decision making and democracy
<b>E</b>	=	energetic and eagerness
<b>R</b>	=	responsibility and respect
<b>S</b>	=	self-discipline and family discipline
<b>H</b>	=	humbleness and humanness
<b>I</b>	=	inspiration, initiative, uninhibited
<b>P</b>	=	praise, positive and people-conscious

The closed style of management differs drastically from the open style of management.



In the closed style, there is no openness, a lot of secrecy and, to get to top management, an employee must move through various ranks and levels as in an army set-up.

In the open style, there is free movement and contact and discipline is vested in the openness of this style: although it is open and free, chaos is not implied. The employees are supposed to enjoy this freedom and openness in a responsible way. They must be committed to the collective cause of the organisation and this commitment must drive the attainment of objectives.

Friendly discipline is therefore created by the commitment of the participants.

## **CASE STUDY: MEETING AT THE DUCK DAM**

This case study focuses on the difference between an open and closed management approach.

A new manager has been asked by the Director to arrange a meeting with 20 employees to determine their opinions regarding the contents of a new brochure intended to explain to others what the organisation is all about.

The manager decides to have this meeting at a holiday resort to make the employees feel comfortable and release the dynamics of creative thinking.

The Director only discovers this on the day of the meeting. He is furious, because the organisation has a well-equipped boardroom for such meetings. Why go to other meeting venues at holiday resorts?

He rushes off to the resort and, at reception, enquires about the meeting venue or room for the manager and employees.

“Oh Sir, they are at the duck dam”, the receptionist says.

“Where the hell is the duck dam?” the Director asks, annoyed (thinking: How are outdoor meetings to be reconciled with hard work?).

“Next to the swimming pool, Sir. They are sitting under a huge tree next to the *braai* (barbeque) area where we will have a *braaivleis* (barbequed meat) at lunch time.”

The Director rushes off to the duck dam, observing with dismay the manager and employees sitting on the lawn in jeans and informal clothing.

He explodes, sticking his index finger into the nostrils of the manager, shouting: “You are FIRED!”

Discuss this case study.

## CASE STUDY: CLOSED AND OPEN MANAGEMENT STYLES

The closed and open management styles are the two very basic examples of management and are also called (Harvard 2004:5) top-down and bottom-up approaches.

Other styles are more or less related to these two main styles of management.

In the top-down approach, management sets broad goals and each employee is assigned objectives that are aligned with, and support, these broad goals. This approach is a very appropriate one when rank-and-file employees need close supervision, are new to the organisation or are not familiar with unit or organisational goals.

In the bottom-up method, employees develop their own goals and their manager integrates these into larger organisational goals.

This bottom-up approach is most appropriate when employees are fairly self-directed and when they clearly understand the strategy of the business/organisation, customer needs and their own role in the larger scheme of things. Employees are thus involved in the process.

In simplified terms, one can refer to these as autocratic and democratic examples.

The following exposition summarises the main differences between the closed and open styles:



Figure 6.1: Open and closed styles of management

Note that the closed style is an upward, hierarchical process (army-wise) and that the open style is a downward, non-hierarchical process.

As an exercise, determine how the advantages and disadvantages can be identified.

Where does the Ubuntu management style fit in?

## TRANSPARENCY

It should be noted that the above open style of Ubuntu leadership and management is not unique.

One finds that several open societies and many open organisations in the modern world have also adopted open management systems, discarding the inherited, closed systems which originated in the military.

This openness goes hand in hand with transparency. In the past, there was no transparency in apartheid South Africa. People were ruled and managed by an undemocratic and secretive White minority heavily supported by an amazingly effective network of security structures that had as their main objective ensuring that the ruling minority was kept in political power at all costs.

In the public service workplace, this manifested itself in a state system where files were marked ultrasecret, secret or confidential. Only a limited number of screened staff members had access to information.

These staff members were also classified as ultrasecret, secret and confidential staff, providing them with access to information in accordance with their classified status.

If rated confidential, the staff member had access to confidential files only. If rated secret, the staff member had access to both confidential and secret files. Staff members with a ranking of ultrasecret could have access to all the files, and these staff members were usually to be found in top positions in the civil service and political ranks.

This state of affairs has now been replaced by a policy of management transparency where information is available to everyone and even critical attitudes are welcomed. An example hereof is the labour unions, which, at times, severely criticise government actions on the grounds of information supplied by government. In the past, labour unions were illegal in apartheid South Africa and their operations were against the law.

Workers and employees are now free to criticise actions, conventions, regulations, etcetera, in a constructive way and to request debates on such issues. Managers should accordingly make themselves available for such encounters.

In the African milieu, chiefs have always been approachable and open to listening to and discussing the ideas of followers or members of the tribe/extended family.

## **PARTICIPATION**

The sketch on the next page (fig. 6.2) reflects the importance of the Ubuntu style of open and thorough communication.

This open and free style of communication flows from the Ubuntu traditional style of deliberation based on the slogan, “Sitting under a tree and talking until some form of consensus has been reached”.

All have a say.

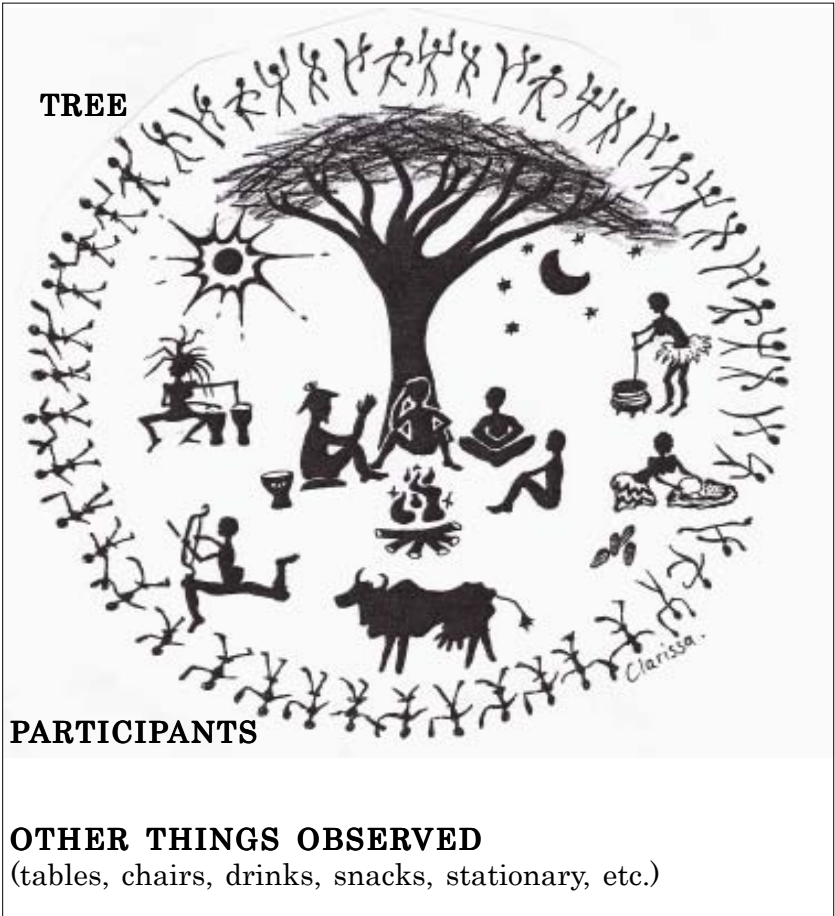


Figure 6.2: Sketch indicating seating arrangements and main participants

All are therefore also responsible for decisions made based on the consensus reached.

This is a method that has been applied by Africans over centuries.

For democratic management practice, it is desirable that discussion groups or interactive forums be established in a similar manner, which is known in Africa as *umhlanganos*.

Open discussion leads to joint resolutions/decisions and may be described as participative management in its true sense – all participants and team-mates are regarded as having the status of equal “managers” and thus, in a similar way, have a democratic say.

Ranks are irrelevant: bosses and ordinary workers are all on the same rank, namely team-mates.

They all sit and talk “under a tree” until a consensus has been reached. “Tree” in this sense is symbolic and deliberations can take place at any venue.

Meetings can take place in the form of

- an *indaba* (open discussion by a group of people who share the same interest)
- a *lekgotla* (a meeting lasting hours which takes place at a secluded venue)
- an *imbizo* (which is broader and on a national level and takes the form of a mass congregation or public meetings).

Informal meetings take place spontaneously on occasions where people discuss those things that affect their lives extensively.

## CASE STUDY: AFRICAN DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

It is suggested that readers and managers (if living in Africa) test the validity of the notion that African democracy is based on concrete consensus.

Take a drive through any suburb and see ordinary people participating at these informal meetings that are taking place in open spaces like public parks (especially on Sunday afternoons).

Go there, introduce yourself in a very friendly manner, enquire about everybody's wellbeing, and ask whether you may join the discussion.

Sit with the people.

Listen actively to the people. This is also known as the art of listening, that is, listening by concentrating fully and with a focused mind.

How are they participating in the conversation?

What are the issues?

Are the issues real and relevant?

How does the group arrive at a decision?

Do you experience the reaching of a form of consensus in the group?

Did all eventually accept the resolution?

Note where you were seated and where the main participants were operating from (in the middle, from the front, from behind, etc.).

Before proceeding to the ONPO analysis, a vision and mission need to be formulated.

## **VISION AND MISSION**

Vision in general is seen as the ultimate destiny of an organisation.

It is like having a dream: where would one like to see the organisation eventually?



In the Ubuntu sense, the mission will contain a positive message of service and not harsh profit.

For example: A people-driven organisation providing products to satisfy the life assurance and insurance needs of the nation.

The mission is a short summary indicating how the organisation will reach this dream.

It is the broad action statement.

In the Ubuntu sense, it will refer to actions based on human considerations.

For example: to consolidate all human and other resources available to the organisation in order to provide outstanding life assurance and insurance service delivery to mankind.

## **THE ONPO ANALYSIS**

It is general practice for organisations to conduct a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis (SWOT) in order to arrive at some plan of action and a way forward.

This analysis distinguishes between internal and external phenomena.

To allow freer and more creative thinking without any barriers like internal and external phenomena, the writer proposes an ONPO analysis, which will contribute to better brainstorming exercises.

All components address both external and internal factors simultaneously.

An ONPO analysis is also applicable to other specific problematic situations in the workplace, for example, in the situation where performance has to be addressed. In this

example, all participants can work on an ONPO analysis of, and reach consensus on resolutions on, the following elements:

- the concrete and real obstacles that the organisation is experiencing
- the negative tendencies related to, or flowing from, these obstacles
- the means or tools available to replace these negative tendencies with positive tendencies
- opportunities – through a process of consolidating the findings of the analysis of the three topics mentioned and transforming them into real and practical opportunities

For example, an ONPO analysis is conducted by all the team-mates of Organisation X in which staff members are not performing satisfactorily.

The team-mates should be allowed to discuss their issues and ideas in a spirit of the greatest freedom of speech and opinion. This should be done as a brainstorming exercise where all opinions are listened to and all suggestions are considered.

There are no right or wrong answers: all opinions are welcome.

The analysis in this example could proceed as follows, with conclusions being formulated based on consensus reached regarding the following elements:

- obstacle: team-mates are not performing because they are not working in an environment of their own free choice and interest (for example forced placements)
- negative tendency: clients are dissatisfied with the poor service rendered
- positive input: redeploy and reposition staff in accordance with their professional background, academic qualifications and interests

- opportunity: happy team-mates will perform better and the organisation will reap the benefits of effective service delivery

From these conclusions, the team has to develop a strategy to implement the consensus detail reached through the ONPO analysis.

The challenge now is for the organisation to draw up a simple programme of action.

The programme of action can consist of the following steps:

- a description of the problem or problem statement (what?)
- a description of the cause of the problem (how?)
- identifying, reaching consensus and prioritising the best solution(s) to the problem (what's?)
- listing activities in respect of each and every solution that is to be implemented (what and what's?)
- deciding on the actors and implementers for all the activities and determining specific and realistic time frames for all activities (specifically when?)
- designing evaluation and measurement tools

The ONPO analysis is an uncomplicated process and organisations should be able to use it as a means to revitalise the team-mates in a cohesive way.

The process should be seen as fun.

Doing this as a team, or extended family of the organisation, will ensure joint ownership by all participants.

Joint ownership indicates joint decision making, joint responsibility and joint accountability.

Success in this sense is collective: it is joint success.

## THERAPIES AND ICEBREAKERS

It is amazing with how much more enthusiasm and energy team-mates participate in planning exercises when they are taken away from their daily workplaces to other venues.

It is a psychological motivator to exchange the daily workplace for another temporary venue. Routine has to be broken at times.

Being away is like therapy: the mind is filled with other observations and thoughts.

It is like a *calabash* (traditional clay pot) filled with beer. If it is filled with beer, there is no space for any other fluid.

The same example applies to the mind: if the mind is filled with creative ideas, there is no space for negative fluids or thoughts.

Therapy as a healing tool to overcome depression, frustration, boredom, sadness, etcetera, is a natural and effective process when people are removed from their conventional environments.

Therapy takes place naturally when people observe the surf and waves of the sea, look at the mountains, listen to music, participate in drum playing, tell stories around the flames of a fire, enjoy good food, jog, stroll, go to the gym, meditate, and so on.

In South Africa, the government and private sector often take employees to *bosberade* (bush meetings or imbizo). The change in scenery and environment is a form of therapy. Team-mates are more relaxed and this stimulates productive participation.

In such a process, it is recommended that the method of utilising icebreakers be resorted to in order to make team-mates feel at ease.

Some examples of icebreakers are the following:

- Introduce participants and enquire about their expectations of the deliberations.
- Brainstorming: provide a word (for example: “lust”) and let each mention the first other word that comes to mind.
- Group participants in two’s and let them get to know each other better. Then ask one partner to introduce the other to the group.
- Let participants brag about their biggest achievements in life.
- Take them for a walk in a forest, not allowing any verbal communication whatsoever, and take note of what their senses are experiencing (what do they see, hear, taste, feel and smell?).
- Let each person tell the group about an embarrassing event that was experienced before.
- Take the group on a game drive and have fun.



# 7

## UBUNTU MARKETING

From the Ubuntu perspective, marketing programmes are appreciated, since it is a human act to satisfy the needs of people.

In terms of this perspective, marketing is a noble and respected activity.

Ubuntu, however, does not favour marketing activities and gimmicks (dirty play) that have as their outcome huge commissions and profits flowing from the exploitation of customers.

The international challenge is for marketers to understand and execute a humanist type of business.

This is a reference to business as a “transformation or paradigm shift which goes beyond the traditional quest for productivity and profit to embrace such issues as achieving more congruence between our innermost values and our work, creating a more caring workplace, empowering people to unleash their full creativity and vision at work, and recognizing the responsibility of business to be a positive force for change in the world” (Human & Allie 1988:40).

Caring should be the main driver of the marketing enterprise.

People are becoming more and more aware of the traditional exploitation process in the marketing environment, and the Ubuntu challenge is to introduce the concept of caring marketing as a means to serve humankind, which, in turn, will lead to healthy, long-term marketing relationships based on trust.

The basic questions the marketer should consider from the Ubuntu perspective are the following:

- Who comprise my target group?
- What are their real needs?
- Do I have the right product to satisfy those needs?
- Is my product of good quality?
- If not, can I refer them to marketers that are better equipped to assist them?
- What is a fair price at which to sell my product?
- Am I not exploiting the customers?
- Will I feel good if the transaction is successful?
- Will I gladly face the customers after the sale?
- How soon will I deliver a follow-up, after-care service?

## **SKILLS AND PERSONALITY**

Marketing is a comprehensive, daily process and encompasses much more than the selling of products or services.

Marketing also includes activities such as public relations and advertising.

Public relations is concerned with the creation and maintenance of good relations between the organisation and its customers and staff.

Advertising is a marketing tool to attract attention and convince customers to invest in a certain product or acquire a service.

General skills needed by marketers include

- first and foremost, being able to act with genuine integrity
- observing (identifying the target market, observing the marketing environment, detecting marketing patterns, being aware of marketing behaviours and body language)



- prospecting (approaching clients and markets that are truly in need of the product)
- fishing (casting with the rod and practically carrying out the marketing act)
- active and intense listening (disciplined, caring listening to real needs expressed)
- maintaining perspective (endeavour to understand the feelings and preferences of customers in relation to the real need for the product)
- emphatic questioning (not interrogation, but asking relevant questions for information purposes)
- weighting (weight information to decide on the selling option)
- implementing (proposing a fair deal)

It is said (Sample 2005:356) that people generally are terrible listeners: they actually think that talking is more important than thinking. This applies to marketers especially.

The marketer should acquire the skill of artful listening. Artful listening is an excellent means of acquiring new ideas, gathering and accessing information, and establishing the real needs of clients. If the marketer can listen attentively without rushing to judgement, he will often gain a fresh perspective that will assist him in the successful closing of a sale.

Listening attentively creates an image of a committed, caring and trustworthy person – a person with integrity.

The most important precondition for effective marketing in a human environment is the marketing of the image of the marketer himself or herself.

This image is influenced by the cultural behaviour of the marketer, which, in turn, is based on the opinion the marketer has of the self. The opinion one has of oneself eventually becomes the opinion others will develop of that person.

If the marketer has an opinion of the self as being a committed, happy, warm and informal person in relations with others, these positive attributes will be reflected in behaviour.

One tends to behave in accordance with one's self-image: how one sees oneself. If the self-image is negative or sombre, the resulting behaviour will appear as unappealing, harsh and asocial.

If the self-image is positive or happy, the resulting behaviour will appear as being appealing, warm and socially attractive.

The astonishing fact in marketing is that people and marketers do not always realise that marketing is a full-time process. People are in fact writing their own testimonials in everyday life on a full-time basis through the way they socialise and interact with others.

In this way, all people are marketers marketing themselves as nice and kind people, or as just plain miserable beings with whom one does not wish to socialise.

The latter perception of a person or marketer is disastrous for a happy and successful life.

Successful marketing the Ubuntu way is underpinned by the positive attitude and self-image of the marketer. Ubuntu people are the most confident creators of atmospheres of happiness one can find. These atmospheres of happiness are closely related to the concept of a family atmosphere.

Family atmosphere is characterised by attitudes reflecting

- human approaches
- harmony
- friendliness
- kindness
- cooperativeness
- caring

- trust
- unconditional acceptance

Unconditional acceptance implies warm acceptance of other people and their uniqueness as they are.

This acceptance is based on the analogy of different drums and different drummers (author unknown): “If I do not want what you want, please try not to tell me that my want is wrong. Or if I believe other than you, at least pause before you correct my view. Or if my emotion is less than yours, or more, given the same circumstances, try not to ask me to feel more strongly or weakly. Or yet if I act, or fail to act, in the manner of your design for action, let me be. I do not, for the moment at least, ask you to understand me. That will come only when you are willing to give up changing me into a copy of you”.

The challenge is to readjust marketing strategies to suit the needs of customers, and not the greedy aspirations of exploitative marketers.

It is through this creation of family spirit that the marketer excels in the Ubuntu milieu. In this environment, it is not necessary to mislead, uninform, misinform, or lie in order to gain positive results.

This is an alternative approach which will ensure constant business with, or service to, clients.

It means a change of mindset to many marketers. The emphasis is not on maximum short-term gain, but on constant long-term returns and contentious expansions of marketing operations.

In this new or alternative paradigm, marketers have to rethink ongoing issues like marketing mix, the marketing plan, punctuality, trust and prospecting techniques.

## MARKETING MIX

The actual marketing of products or ideas is preceded by research into the needs of customers, by developing new products or by adjusting existing ones to satisfy these needs, and by marketing the benefits of these products to relevant customers.

In this marketing process, the products are made available at a certain price, are made available in specific areas or places, and involve methods of promotion.

These marketing instruments are called the four P's of the marketing mix, namely Product, Price, Place, and Promotion.

The integration of these four instruments forms the primary content of a viable marketing programme and complements marketing activities.

This marketing mix was generally known originally as McCarthy's 4 P's and has played a prominent role in the development of the marketing strategies of marketers in the Western/Euro-Saxon world.

From the African and Ubuntu perspective, consideration should also be given to the addition of another P, namely People.

"People" refers to the people (marketers) appointed to execute marketing, as well as the people (customers, consumers) to whom products are marketed.

People appointed to practise marketing should have excellent human-orientated marketing skills, concentrating on the real needs of others (customers) and going full out to satisfy these needs.

Needs are distinguished from mere wants. Satisfying a need differs from satisfying a want.

The emphasis in the human business and marketing environment is not on the highest profits and commissions at all costs, but on the greatest satisfaction of the real needs of people (customers).

The focus is on genuine benefits for customers: the financial rewards for marketers will eventually be realised as a result of long-term relations created in a spirit of human trust and a people's partnership.

To be able to keep customers is an important aspect of marketing.

The South African Association of Life Assurers has proposed a constant marketing and service commission for marketers selling life assurance, instead of a prepaid commission. The problem with a prepaid commission is that marketers are tempted to sell assurance on a massive scale without really satisfying customers' needs: the emphasis is not on quality service, but on the highest commission at all costs.

This proposal met with a positive response from the Ubuntu-orientated Sanlam life assurance giant, which declared (*Beeld* 21 June 2005:9) that the proposal would not really affect the commission of marketers in a negative way. The benefit of constant commission is that marketers who provide human service to customers will not suffer from the early surrendering of policies. Early surrendering of policies is in many cases the result of customers being influenced to obtain policies that do not really meet their needs, or because customers cannot afford the premiums on policies. Greedy marketers, on the other hand, customarily try to sell products at the highest cost or premium to obtain the highest commission in the short term.

Ideally, the marketed product should provide all the benefits really required by the customer. It is no use selling products with benefits that are not really required by the customer.

Human-orientated marketers should guard against the temptation of becoming greedy: in the long run, greed backfires.

Consequently, it is important to consider price applicability.

It will be better to market products at reasonable prices. If prices are outrageous, customers will not buy, and, if they buy in a moment of emotion, they will cancel the deal anyway at a later stage.

It is acceptable to ensure that the price will cover all production costs, salaries and all other costs, plus a reasonable profit.

What is not acceptable in terms of Ubuntu, is the harsh capitalist approach of the highest profit possible at all costs.

The Talking Beads enterprise has created job opportunities for 4 500 female South Africans in a short period of three years (Marais 2005:27).

The reason for its success is simple: participants are trained not to go for the highest profit, but to determine a price for their beadwork products that is affordable to all.

Participants are taught to measure the number of beads in their products by the spoon and to couple this measurement with a price: in this way, they cover all expenses and costs and make provision for a profit that is above the poverty survival line!

In this way, too, the products are not only affordable to others in the community, but also to those in the national and international market.

“Place” refers to distribution outlets: where and how will the product or service be distributed?

In rural areas, people pay more for a product because of additional transport costs. Once again, the Ubuntu approach allows for the covering of such costs, meaning that such costs may be added to the price of the product as long as these additions are reasonable.

This is also a reference to the space gap: many products are produced at one central point or in one geographical area, but are distributed all over the country.

“Promotion” refers to activities such as advertising and publicity. It is of utmost importance to advertise by taking the cultural milieu into consideration. Body language in Africa is in many ways different from Western practices. African people should, for example, be addressed and greeted in a specific way to make an impression that results in the successful selling of products or services.

The basic lesson is to honour cultural traditions and plan the marketing strategy accordingly.

## **MARKETING PLAN**

The marketing plan is described (Hisrich & Peters 1991:66) as a roadmap to guide someone trying to find a specific location or destination.

It is designed to provide three basic pieces of information: Where have we been? Where do we want to go (short term)? How do we get there?

The answers to these three basic questions provide the basic structure for an effective marketing plan.

Accordingly, the plan should consist of the following items (Hisrich & Peters 1991:73):

- an executive summary
- a situation analysis (past performance, market opportunities and threats, strengths and weaknesses)
- objectives and goals
- a marketing strategy
- action programmes
- the assignment of responsibility and target dates
- budgets
- controls

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis may be replaced with the ONPO analysis as already discussed. This implies that internal and external elements are not distinguished in the latter analysis.

From the Ubuntu perspective, the employees should undertake the development of the marketing plan as a collective in the spirit of family. The marketing strategy should accommodate the values of humanness.

Depending on reasonable criteria, the determination of a time frame is important. Care should be taken to lay down deadlines for tasks in a rational manner.

## **PUNCTUALITY**

African or tolerance time, as pointed out in the previous chapter, manifests itself in what is usually perceived as non-punctuality.

Punctuality is sometimes regarded as a prerequisite for operational success. Lateness is as such seen as a deadly sin.



It is a typical Western practice (Bird 1986:52) to abide by certain time conventions when a meeting is to be held: start relentlessly on time and reprimand latecomers; rather be early for meetings; stipulate precisely which documents should be brought along so as not to waste the secretary's time looking for documents; include not more than one really critical item on the agenda; arrange morning meetings to finish at a set, early time (say 10:30); do not start at such a relatively late time; at least state the finishing time well in advance; minimise time-wasting, routine meetings; keep the discussion continually relevant to the stated aim of the meeting; settle the action in respect of every item to be in the minutes before going on to the next item; set an alarm clock to go off 10 minutes before the finishing time; start wrapping up the action points in respect of the current item straight away; distribute copies of the minutes to everyone concerned within 24 hours; and carry over unfinished business to another meeting (this is better than dragging on, thereby disrupting several people's schedules).

What is the alternative to such rigid punctuality?

Although punctuality is desirable, in most cases it is not the end of the world if people occasionally do not turn up on time.

Nobody likes to make mistakes and everybody realises that it is advisable to be on time, but, sometimes, there are circumstances bedevilling punctuality.

The Ubuntu-minded marketer has to realise this fact.

African time should rather be referred to as tolerance time, meaning adopting an attitude of tolerance towards latecomers.

Exercising tolerance is especially applicable to clients.

If non-tolerance is applied to clients, this may lead to negative outcomes for the marketer. As a general guideline, it is acceptable to allow 10 minutes for tolerance time.

If it is a public meeting or *imbizo*, one can consider making the time of the meeting an hour earlier. This allows an hour for tolerance time.

Another possibility is to arrange fun events, lasting about an hour, before the meeting starts. If the meeting is due to start at 10:00, advertise the time of commencement as 09:00. An invitation can be drawn up as follows:

INVITATION

You are cordially invited to attend a meeting to discuss the following topic:

Date:

Time:09:00 for 10:00

Venue:

Programme:Registration  
Refreshments  
Cultural songs  
Meeting: Composition of agenda

As regards marketers themselves, it is obvious that they should endeavour at all times to be punctual. If however circumstances do not allow them to be in time for work, it is acceptable to provide reasons for the latecoming in an apologetic manner. Time should not be regarded as an absolute in the rigid sense: marketers are not involved in a war situation of absolute precision, but in a family situation where the family of clients is served or attended to in a warm, open atmosphere in which occasional mistakes are allowed and tolerated.

One learns from one's mistakes.

An attitude of tolerance with regard to time also applies to the outdated army approach of doing it right the first time (unless the organisation is in the business of war-making).

Tolerance should, from the Ubuntu perspective, be applied to workers/marketers not doing things right the first time.

They may not be up to date with regard to the language or jargon used, or they may simply be mentally incapable of grasping work procedures or methodology, thus making it impossible for them to "do it right the first time" in all cases.

This does not give others the right to use insulting language or reprimands because additional time has to be spent on repeating actions.

The criterion for action is once again: what is the human thing to do regarding the approach to the repetitive actor?

The Western approach is usually based on time, impatience and correctness; the African approach is to be tolerant, and to be patient in respect of time and experimenting.

## **IMPORTANCE OF NAMES**

It is generally known in all marketing cultures that the names of people are important.

By remembering the names of people, an atmosphere of friendliness and openness is established: people feel more comfortable when called by their names or surnames.

In Africa, names have an even deeper dimension, since names refer to a specific event at the time of the birth of a person.

A name has a certain significance: it gives people's names a special and unique meaning.

Examples of names and their meanings are Thabo (joy), Polane (soft rain), Moya (wind), Gatsha (small branch), Refilwe (present from God), Letabo (happiness), Busi (grace), Funeka (need), Thuso (help), Nqobile (courageous), Bhekizwe (love-giving), Sibongile (thankful) and Kensane (grace).

It is important to acknowledge the significance of the names of staff members in the workplace as well as of those outside the workplace.

A manager/marketer should always enquire about the meaning of names: this is a way of recognising the dignity of one's fellow man.

## **TRUST**

Trust is regarded (Pearce 2005:373) as the fundamental requisite for people to listen to others without filters or fear of suspicion.

Many who hold the position of leader feel comfortable occupying their positions as autocratic bosses, believing that their authority guarantees obedience from others.

The mistake they make is that people may pretend to listen to autocrats, but listening does not imply commitment to, and acceptance of, orders, requests and suggestions. Leaders or managers who master the art of creating trust are more likely to obtain the full commitment of others and a willingness on their part to perform. The point is that, in an atmosphere of trust, even work becomes more pleasant.

By being reasonable regarding simple issues like African time, by treating human beings in a soft way and by recognising cultural differences, trust is created.

Another factor contributing to the creation of trust is the ability to solve problems. Problem solving requires being

conscious of time patience and tolerance, consultation and cooperation with all stakeholders.

In the marketing world, potential clients will not become clients if there is no trust in the marketer.

No small or huge marketing exercise can hope to be of any significance if the marketers are not trusted.

Marketers should therefore know about Ubuntu traditions, customs and mannerisms in order to perform well in the Ubuntu marketing atmosphere.

Without trust, people tend to become suspicious of the motives behind the marketing effort and will not necessarily buy into it. Patience and integrity must prevail and, only as trust develops, will positive responses emerge.

This implies that marketers should be transparent. For example, avoid not informing clients about hidden costs and, if asked about the commission on products, reveal to the client exactly how much commission will be earned by the sale of the product to the client.

## **HARSH PROFIT MAKING**

The African perception of harsh profit making is a negative one and such profit making is seen as the main motive of capitalism.

Capitalism, and specifically the African perception thereof, is regarded as wealth being enjoyed by a few privileged persons at the exploitation of other human beings.

The history of this perception dates back to the years when colonial powers invaded Africa, enslaving the local inhabitants and making them work for minimal wages, thereby enriching the settlers.

It is therefore argued (Broodryk 1997:11) that a new culture for enterprises is needed. This culture is about striving for decent survival and working towards profit making, but not striving for the greatest profit at all costs, especially not at the exploitation of human beings, in order to attain goals characterised by greed and selfishness.

The Ubuntu perspective on profits is formed by business ethics (human considerations) and it manifests itself in specific styles of marketing.

The Ubuntu style of marketing is in direct contrast to the harsh marketing method.

Examples of unacceptable, harsh marketing are

- emotional indoctrination (creating an atmosphere of beauty, or any other attraction, in order to close a business deal in a moment in which the person concerned is overwhelmed, or feels confused or indoctrinated)
- hard selling and personal conflict (creating an atmosphere of fear or uncertainty)
- exploitive manipulation (that is, where a weak characteristic, or unpleasantness, is exploited)
- disinformation techniques (that is, where the truth is withheld or false expectations are created based on wrong data or information)
- profit sharing (a commission or cut in the profits is allowed)
- bribery (money is provided for entering into a good deal that is in fact crooked)

Not one of these examples can be regarded as forming part of Ubuntu marketing techniques.

## THE *SIZA* APPROACH

*Siza* is the Zulu word for people-ness.

The *Siza* value to marketing and business has been referred to (Vilikazi 1991:3) as being that aspect that underlies the Ubuntu approach of dealing with human beings.

The Ubuntu approach and guidelines to marketing can be summarised as follows:

- rethink the self-image of the marketing agent or marketing strategy (is it confident, happy, positive, kind?)
- improve the self-image so that it is more human, kind, gentle and humble
- create trust in a warm, family atmosphere by making use of empathy (feel as others feel and see problems from their side)
- keep it simple (do not impress with complexities)
- market benefits, not products or services per se (what benefits will the client gain from the product/service?)
- ensure that these benefits are in line with the real needs of the client
- rather go for reasonable payments than unreasonable premiums so as to ensure continuity of instalments
- provide all information available regarding the product/service (do not indulge in disinformation)
- provide a regular, after-care service

## PARTNERSHIPS

Symbolically, partnerships are about wearing the same mythical masks as your customers or clients.

In the Congo, the Teko mask was used for social and political ceremonies by people of the Ogane tribe. In West and Central Africa, passport masks were worn by travellers so that they could be identified and safeguarded by indigenous people on their journey. In Nigeria, the Eket mask was worn to pay

homage to the power of the sun and moon cycles during the Yam harvest festivals.

Wearing the same mask means identifying with the myths, rituals and conventions of the tribe.

In the same way, the marketer should wear the symbolic “mask” of Ubuntu to provide a trusted service.

In the following guidelines for an Ubuntu approach to marketing, a partnership or family relationship is developed with customers:

- In the business and service world, people/customers come first.
- Honour this relationship.
- Customers love referring others to an organisation where human and personal needs are satisfied. If they have been treated as “brothers and sisters”, this treatment will result in other people wanting to join this family relationship.

The Ubuntu way of marketing is focused especially on the word-of-mouth methodology.

Satisfied customers will express their satisfaction to potential customers about the product or service, thereby boosting the marketer, because they see themselves as family or brotherhood partners of marketers.

Recommendation through word of mouth is the most effective advertisement of a product or service.

It has been a tradition in Africa over centuries to provide good news by word of mouth.



## CASE STUDY: MEETING EVERYONE'S NEEDS

In addressing representatives of the life assurance industry at its annual convention, Mr N Nzimando, Chairperson of the Financial Sector Campaign Coalition, called on the life assurance industry to start meeting the needs of all South Africans (Cameron 2005:10).

This call is in line with Ubuntu values and is applicable to all marketers of all products, and all marketers should therefore make practical efforts to respect this important call.

Nzimando informed the convention that the needs of consumers are the following:

- to be treated fairly and justly
- to be treated with honesty and respect
- to be treated with dignity when faced with a crisis
- openness and transparency
- to be able to understand products in their own languages
- value for money and to receive what they pay for without hidden costs
- affordable products that offer a degree of comfort and security
- the government to step in and protect their rights if things go wrong and their expectations are not met

Consumers do not want to

- be misled or manipulated (forced)
- be given empty promises to enrich others while they themselves are left impoverished

- be treated like mushrooms (being kept in the dark)

Marketers need to define precisely what these concepts mean in their specific fields.

What is meant by “fair treatment”, “transparency”, “respect”, etcetera?

Practical examples should be identified to illustrate these concepts.

Openness could, for example, be achieved by informing clients how much commission is being earned on sales, by informing them about new products entering the market, and by indicating the guarantee details in respect of the product.

Respect could be linked to the way one addresses others.

In South Africa, it is a sign of respect to address an old man as *baba* and an old woman as *mama*.

Similarly, marketers could apply Ubuntu concepts to all their promotions and marketing activities.

# 8

## UBUNTU MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

### VALUES

Values are the assegais (weapons, spears) you use to defend, manage and construct your own personal life and influence or protect that of brotherhood.

Values are the basic foundations of each person's view of how life is supposed to be lived. They influence choices, attitudes and goals in life. Since they are accompanied by strong feelings, it is proposed that they be regarded as the assegais of a person in his or her cultural and general life.

In this chapter, values are scrutinised, especially in the context of Ubuntu. Core values will be discussed and associated values will also be identified, since values are seldom, if ever, not linked to other values.

The Ubuntu self-management process is African.

It is derived from a worldview in which the basic values of humanness like caring, sharing, respect and compassion are of cardinal importance in order to practically “live” and enjoy life cemented in true, real and selfless happiness.

American and European cultures may also claim to be “living” the liberal ideal of happiness. This “happiness” however appears to be one that is in isolation from other values like spontaneous warmth. To Africans, this version of happiness could be experienced as cold and exclusive.

Africa's version of happiness is warmer and inclusive: all are welcome to enjoy it in an integrated manner. Wedding

receptions and all other celebrations include the participation of whole communities based on the public invitation, “Come one, come all”.

The Ubuntu way of “living” happiness is more intense and genuine and is closely interwoven with other precious, core and associated ancient values.

Some of these precious, core and associated values in happy living as identified by the author are the following:

Table 8.1: Some precious, core and associated values in happy living

Core values	Associated values
Humanness	Warmth, tolerance, understanding, peace, humanity
Caring	Empathy, sympathy, helpfulness, charitableness, friendliness
Sharing	Giving (unconditionally), redistribution, open-handedness
Respect	Commitment, dignity, obedience, order, normative
Compassion	Love, cohesion, informality, forgiving, spontaneity

These core values will be discussed below in separate sections.

In the management process, certain cardinal elements can be linked to, or associated with, Ubuntu philosophy.

These elements are to be found in the following Ubuntu acronym:

## **UBUNTU**

- U** - universal: global, intercultural brotherhood
- B** - behaviour: human, caring, sharing, respect, compassion
- U** - united: solidarity, community, bond, family
- N** - negotiation: consensus, democracy
- T** - tolerance: patience, diplomacy
- U** - understanding: empathy

## **CORE VALUES**

The core Ubuntu values of humanness, sharing, caring, respect and compassion are practical tools for determining the status of the human presence in organisations.

The values will therefore be discussed and their practical value in the life and work environment will be indicated.

### **Humanness**

Humanness or person-ness is also known as *Siza*.

Humanness is the most basic value in understanding Ubuntu.

As already indicated, the best translation of Ubuntu in English is also the word “humanness”. A human person is an empathic person who identifies with the problems and sufferings of others in an understanding way. He or she treats all human beings equally. The human person shows his or her humanity visibly in the way persons and the environment are treated.

Human beings have human rights, which are to be respected, and it is stated (Ramose 1999:81) that all theories of human rights regard the facet of being human – the humanness aspect that is Ubuntu – as their starting point. These human rights theories ascribe value to, or determine the worth, of the facet of being human. The primary focus point of human rights is human relations.

In spite of their differences in perspectives and emphasis, all theories of human rights have one fundamental characteristic in common, namely that being a living human being deserves recognition by all other human beings. In this sense, theories of human rights are ultimately concerned with one fundamental, basic human right, namely the right to life.

The right to life involves the freedom or liberty of the individual human being to strive constantly towards the defence and protection of life. Purposive human activity is thus oriented towards the preservation of individual life in the first place.

The right to life implies the human rights to life, freedom of speech and thought, freedom of association, the right to work, and the right to own property.

Human rights to life tolerate different applications of the values and norms of different cultures. Gratefulness is a common value of cultures generally, but it is applied differently by different cultures.

As already noted, it was for instance customary in Africa for the husband-to-be to reward his future parents-in-law with cattle, or, in modern times, with money in appreciation for the woman they raised, while this is an unknown custom in other cultures. Other cultures have however no right to be prejudiced about this application of gratefulness.

Citizens have the right to voice their personal beliefs regarding life, politics and religion. Opposing viewpoints are therefore to be endured in the spirit of humanness and democracy. The right to work and to be empowered for work are fundamental to the rights of a human being. People should be encouraged to build their capacity and receive training in order to be able to perform effectively in the work situation.

Africans have always attached value to the subsistence farming system, which is also a way of living characterised by the harmonious coexistence of families and extended families. To be free to own property for such purposes is therefore a logical right.

The right to life also affects the love life of a human being. A responsible person suffering from a sexual disease like HIV/AIDS will refrain from spreading this disease to his loved one(s) and other persons.

In general, body language is an important instrument in determining the humanness of a person: this is manifested in the attitude and manner a person adopts in conflict situations, in the manner or grammar used in talking and communication in everyday life, and in the behaviour towards people, the environment and even animals.

Animals are highly respected, and to hunt animals for the mere pleasure of hunting, and not for food, is an unknown and unacceptable practice in Africa.

Humanness, or the inherent Ubuntu quality, will therefore also determine how a human being will treat animals.

## **Caring**

The importance of caring has already been emphasised.

Caring is an important pillar in the Ubuntu worldview. It is true that all cultures have caring attitudes, but, in the Ubuntu culture, this caring is of a very intense nature.

Caring is reflected in the way one treats others. It is about how parents and adults treat children, about how children behave towards parents, about how married spouses behave towards each other, about how the aged are attended to, about how the disabled are looked after, about how the underprivileged are assisted, and about the extent to which a person controls his or emotions in all circumstances.

Many people tend to become irritated or annoyed when approached by beggars for a small financial contribution. The Ubuntu guideline in this respect will be to give. Just give whatever you can afford or have, even if it is not money but some other commodity like fruit or vegetables.

Caring is about putting the problems, interests and circumstances of all others, including those of beggars, at a high level in a loving, empathic and sympathetic spirit.

In contrast to these harmonious approaches, caring also manifests itself in strong, intolerant moral expressions and behaviour.

It is for example unacceptable in the Ubuntu environment to be patient with social misbehaviour and injustices.

Examples of social misbehaviour and serious malpractices are observable in all societies.

Newspaper headlines generally provide shocking information such as the following:

- A mother of children was killed without justification after a drunken man had alleged that a dead girl was lying in her backyard.
- A shebeen (African pub) queen was stoned to death after she had been accused of killing a boy whose bodily parts



- were to be used for the preparation of *muti* (medicine).
- A 78-year-old woman was hacked to death after being accused of placing a curse on children.
- A dog was killed because citizens believed that it was bewitching them.
- A tortoise was necklaced because citizens believed it was preventing them from finding jobs.

Some other poster headings recently observed were the following:

- “Child’s corpse found at graves”
- “Mother plans father’s death in presence of children”
- “Child pornography: more celebrities to fall”
- “In the clutches of a rapist”
- “Boy (15) caught for raping 2 year old”
- “House friend strangles teenage girl”
- “Eight men rape schoolgirl”
- “Sex-slave daughters: mother guilty”

If the newspapers reflect the true nature and essence of society like some weird mirror, we are in deep trouble. The images in the mirror, or what one sees, are indeed very frightening and reflect a very sombre, depressing and sick picture of society.

These incidents are however in direct contrast to the caring value of Ubuntu.

It is obvious that, in these events, Ubuntu is absent and that the caring value of Ubuntu has to be revived. On the other hand, it is also true that Ubuntu reflects the ideal situation and that people are bound to err and sin.

In this sense, it may be argued that a true and infallible Ubuntu society is not a practical possibility. This should however not be a stumbling block for human beings to strive to live out the Ubuntu ideals, especially the notion of caring for others. By caring for others, caring for oneself is a logical implication: a person is a person through others.

## Sharing

*Mahala* is an African concept that says that it is fine to give something to others free of charge, not expecting something in return.

This type of giving can occur by means of certain comrade-type activities or the sharing of physical objects.

A comrade-type activity is, for instance, that of visiting a hospital, not to visit a sick relative or friend only, but all those in hospital, even the ones you do not know. This is also not a cold and speedy visit: the patients visited are approached in warm ways and in-depth inquiries are made about their places of residence and whether any help can be rendered to assist them.

Examples of caring are notifying relatives of a patient's admission to hospital, sending letters to others, assisting with the payment of the patient's crucial accounts, like the water and lights account, and for anything else that is needed.

If the manager shares the frustration of other team-mates, this sharing is recognition: the other person is acknowledged.

In daily Ubuntu life, assets or food are shared without compensation, almost as if the belongings of the individual are also the belongings of the rest of the extended family or community.

In the African culture, it is an insult to other human beings if an individual does not share food with others around him or her, and this convention also applies to refreshments not being shared by all at meetings and events or in the workplace. Africans grow up sharing food with the rest of the extended family members and everybody around. Those visiting a family may even find that they are given preference and are allowed to eat first.

An ethical issue that deserves more attention is the extent to which one is morally obliged to share belongings with others.

Is it, for instance, moral to drive a luxury car in an environment where nobody possesses cars? Or to live luxuriously in an environment where others have no shelter at all? Or to eat in exclusive restaurants when others have to rely on dumping sites for food that is often rotten and hazardous to their health?

These are real, practical dilemmas.

The answer is probably to be found in the nature of the conscience of a person. If a person's conscience does not terrorise that person for living in abundance without sharing, there is not much that can be done to change the situation: one cannot compel people by law to be morally conscious. It is a matter of the heart. Heartless people will not be at ease with the ethical expectations of Ubuntu.

It is normal in the Ubuntu environment to feed others without income in the sharing spirit of Ubuntu. This is also a recipe for the reduction of the effects of poverty, namely for those with income to provide for those without income. A shebeen (pub, bar, drinking place) is a respected and dignified, but very informal, venue for uninhibited socialisation. In a particular case it was observed that those who were socialising were seated around a table as a group. The first person stood up and bought drinks for the whole group. Once the drinks were finished, the second person stood up and ordered drinks for the whole group. After finishing these, the third person however remained seated without offering to sponsor a round. Eventually, the fourth person, without any questioning, stood up and bought another round for everybody. This was accepted in the greatest harmony, in spite of the third person not providing any drinks. The reason for this apparently strange behaviour is simple: the third person did not have the material means (money) to buy a round. This however did not exclude him

from continuing to enjoy drinks bought by the other members of the group.

What happened is that the group members realised that he had no money, or had to use what he had for something more important, like food for his family. They also instinctively accepted that, once he was in a better position, he would contribute to the socialising process again.

It is like the example of the cow: if the milk of the first cow is enough for me, I share the rest of the milk with others. You do not sell it to others; you just give or donate it for *manhole* (nothing).

Sisulu (1993:1) provided an example of the traditional help people would render during times of ploughing the fields.

Those with cattle would, without expecting something in return, lend their cattle to those without cattle so that they could plough their lands. The cattle were merely provided and this was gratefully accepted.

The same principle applies to material assets: if I have too much money or land, I am expected to share these in some way or another with the underprivileged.

In practice, this means that the owners of more than one home, especially when the additional housing is not used, like holiday homes and other types of accommodation, should morally be expected to provide accommodation in this unutilised accommodation for the homeless.

Such a gesture could even be regarded as a safety precaution, since people will be staying in the houses and looking after them during those times when the owners are not making use of them. This is a noble thing to do and a win-win situation for all concerned.

## Respect

Respect is an important concept in the Ubuntu life style and is related to discipline, law and order.

Respect is known as *Ukuhlonipha* in the Zulu language and is generally regarded as the most central theme of the Ubuntu worldview, and one that embraces a number of customary rules governing relationships at different levels of society. Respect stipulates the authority of the elders over younger people, parents over their children, leaders over their followers, and, traditionally, men over women.

Respect not only emphasises respect for people one knows, but even for those who are not known.

Respect also means respecting the opinions of others.

In the African milieu, a human being is the most important element of society and man is dependent on the goodwill and acceptance of others. One therefore has to conform to the values of Ubuntu, which include showing respect for all and, in return, receiving respect from all.

Communities would look after their aged and this nullified the need for old-age homes. An old-age home is an unknown phenomenon in traditional Africa. The aged are highly respected for what they have done for their children and for the wisdom they have shared with youngsters.

Africans traditionally produced many children. This was a form of annuity or pension, for a greater number of children guaranteed that their elders would retire within their extended family and not in an old-age home.

Likewise, children are respected: children who lose their natural parents will be accommodated as own children by the members of the extended family, thereby solving the problem of orphan care.

Respect is reflected in humility, since it is generally accepted that a humble person will respect others as they are. This manifests itself in the way superiors are approached, in the sharing of food and drinks with other human beings, and even in how the ancestors are approached.

Respect also manifests itself in the way one obeys leaders and other authority figures, in the way one welcomes strangers and people one does not know, and also in how one behaves towards others and lives one's life.

The Ubuntu norms and values of the community are similarly respected, since they determine life in that community. If a member of the community has offended one, other extended family members will collectively become involved in discussing the offence in order to resolve the problem and so maintain peace and unity.

## **Compassion**

Compassion manifests itself in the way a person lives.

The ideal, or art of the Ubuntu type of person, is to be a true human by being human, caring, sharing, respecting, tolerating, loving, being natural without pretensions and being a showpiece of happiness.

In this manner, young people, old people, the environment and all aspects or elements of life are treated in a style that concretely reflects compassion for all.

Compassion is an important value in the African person's life and is also more intense and prevalent in rural areas.

Rural people have been influenced less by Western values and still live their original values the way they were taught.

Compassion is a quality in man that goes a long way in binding people together. And it cements all forms of relationships and friendships.

Accordingly, it manifests itself through people's desire to reach outward, out of them, and, in turn, they experience self-fulfilment and self-accomplishment.

In giving, they receive again.

Compassion and reaching out to others are what humanness is all about: you are enlarged and enriched when you go out of yourself.

Compassion integrates people and binds them together. Compassion is therefore related to empathy or a feeling for the suffering of others, prompting one to give help selflessly or to understand the sorrow or problems of others.

It is claimed (Du Preez 1997:28) that, according to the Ubuntu ethic, the individual is encouraged to achieve, but never at the cost of his fellow man. This is a reflection of compassion, since the dignity and humanness of the other person are at all times taken into account and are even regarded as of being of a higher priority than one's own situation.

Compassion is evident in the traditional, warm and all-embracing community life.

It is a key element of African life to socialise informally and heartily: the challenge is for all people of the world to likewise become happy and friendly, informal human beings.

Greeting is always a joyous occasion and, in Africa, the shaking of hands is often done according to a three-step process which reflects how you are, that you are fine and confirming that the other person is also well. African people tend to keep on holding hands for quite a while to foster a spirit of warmth and compassion for each other. Men are often seen walking hand in hand, not because they are homosexually attracted to each other, but to illustrate their comradeship or companionship.

A new manager in the African workplace wanting to see body language in action should arrange a pleasant social event for his staff and make mental notes of what people from different cultures do as they arrive.

- How are they greeting? (Are they hugging or shaking hands?)
- How are they mixing? (Are the races separating themselves from one another or are they socialising in an integrated manner?)
- How are they dancing? (Are they doing ballroom dancing or dancing loosely?)
- How are they talking? (Are they talking loudly or are they reserved?)
- How are they behaving in general? (Is their body language closed or is it vibrant and warm?)
- How are they eating? (Are they using knives and forks, or are they eating with their hands?)
- How are they drinking? (Are they nosing wine or downing beer/alcohol?)
- What is their body posture or body language? (Are they walking straight up and fast, or in a slow and relaxed manner?)
- What are their body gestures? (Are they informal and close, or do they allow a lot of personal space?)
- What are their facial expressions? (frowning, expressive?)
- What type of eye contact is there? (evasive or direct and harsh?)
- What is their appearance? (formal dress or traditional?)
- What body decorations do they have (earrings, necklaces?)
- What noises are they making? (loud expressions?)
- Are they touching one another? (holding onto one another, being intimate?)
- What is their greeting style? (firm or limp handshakes, hugging, kissing on the cheek, etc.?)



## **CASE STUDY: MAKING OBSERVATIONS AT A SOCIAL EVENT**

As a case study, the manager can request a few team-mates to memorise or write down their observations on this occasion.

These notes can then be compared and discussed at a staff meeting, and staff members could comment on the findings that have been noted. This will contribute to a better intercultural understanding in the workplace itself, thereby leading to greater staff cohesion.

## **APPLICATION OF UBUNTU VALUES**

The popularisation of Ubuntu values has been receiving attention from several different role players to order society, and in both the public and private sector Ubuntu has become a vision, mission and strategy.

The Gauteng Department of Education has, for example, introduced Ubuntu in its schools as part of the subject, Guidance, for pupils of all races.

In this way, children are taught about the values of Ubuntu and it is recommended that other education departments follow suit. This is essential in order to restore positive social values where they have disappeared and to popularise Ubuntu amongst children of all cultures. The reason for saying this is that, by teaching Ubuntu to all children, a new value-driven society will be created, especially since Ubuntu is easily understandable and is of significance to all cultures and beliefs. It is a practical philosophy which can be enjoyed by all.

The Department of Education has identified (Ubuntu syllabuses:100) the values of sharing, caring, kindness, forgiveness, sympathy, tolerance, respect, love, appreciation, consideration and the rights of children as the main pillars of Ubuntu.

These values will now be discussed below:

## **Sharing**

Children should be assisted to acquire the virtue of sharing at a very young age, and, apart from educational institutions, the family should influence children in especially the early childhood stage to develop giving and sharing mentalities. Children should be taught that it is through giving that they will also receive when it matters. In the school milieu, children should feel free to share all that they have in an unselfish way, and feelings or ideas related to greed should be suppressed at all costs: individual greed and selfishness are two of the major stumbling blocks to harmonious interpersonal human relations.

Schools should, in the spirit of Ubuntu, consider introducing a monetary kitty system to enable those children who have, to donate their extra pocket money to such a kitty, and those who do not have, to be given money from this kitty without having to feel shy or inhibited in accepting the money: it is normal that, in life, some will have and others will not have. Children should know this truth and that it is right for those who have, to share. Doing this during the various stages of growing up will ensure a future culture of natural sharing.

Natural sharing includes sharing of material sources, like providing special accommodation for strangers and travellers; sharing food during communal eating; lending food or household items to those in need; sharing physical strength, for example where young people assist older people to carry heavy parcels or bundles of wood; sharing during bereavement, like visiting the sick in clinics or sharing

other's sorrow in times of death; and social sharing, like the communal preparation or donation of beer at celebrations or weddings.

## Caring

Caring goes hand in hand with loving attitudes.

Someone who loves and appreciates human beings, animals and the environment as they appear in life will also have a caring personality.

The concept of caring is universally present in human society.

In African life, caring manifests itself in the respectful and humble way elders and superiors are greeted and addressed.

In Sesotho, the word “*ntate*” is used to address an old man or respected father figure. This is also the term used by the author in his dedication to the African philosopher, Kgalushi Koka, in a book (Broodryk 2000:Introduction) reflecting his respect for a wise old man and father figure.

Children should be taught that it is acceptable to show love to parents, family members, friends and others. Love is to be observed when people hug or greet one another passionately: it should be a happy event to see the other person. The opposite, which has to be avoided, is a mere cold grin, or saying “hi” to a person. Educational authorities should promote and foster the practice of caring. This must manifest itself in the way children are treated and attended to by teachers. This manifestation should be observable in a person's body language and in the way ordinary language is used (language can be abusive and insensitive and could have a lifelong effect on children if it results in wrong perceptions or if wrong messages are received). The volume of speech should also be controlled, since too much volume sounds like aggression.

Caring is probably the most central concept and value of Ubuntu philosophy.

The following extract underlines its general value to human life:

“Caring is loving  
Listening and acceptance  
Caring is communicating  
Understanding and respecting  
Caring is openness  
Sensitivity and availability  
Caring is supporting  
Promoting and responding  
Caring is cooperating  
Participating and sharing  
Caring is bearing  
Forgiving and fraternizing  
Caring is kindness  
Sympathy and concern  
Caring is needful  
Beautiful and joyful  
Caring merits thinking  
Training and targeting”

(Katholi 1997:5)

## **Kindness**

Kindness is a virtue. Kind people stand out in a crowd of people. It is amazing how friendly, kind people are respected by others. In a room filled with people, the whole mood or vibe changes when kind people enter the room. It is as if a warm and kind personality affects all in a small space.

Children should live to be kind.

Adults are sometimes the worst offenders when it comes to kindness, mainly because of stressful obligations and intolerance as regards time: the shopping must be done, meetings must be attended on time, etcetera, leaving very little room in the mind for showing kindness as well. Children are fine observers of moods and behavioural malpractices and should be brought up to forgive adults for minor offences: children's mission in life should be to improve on adulthood (by living out Ubuntu kindness).

## **Forgiveness**

To forgive is said to be divine.

This is a popular notion, but it is seldom observable in practical life. In Africa, forgiveness is a reality in the sense that Africans are quick in forgiving. An example of this, and one that has already been referred to, is the forgiving attitude of Nelson Mandela who showed no signs of bitterness and hatred after being in prison for so long as a political prisoner.

Children should always be encouraged to be original and creative, even if their creativity is in strong contrast to the outdated conventions of adulthood.

Everybody makes mistakes, but mistakes should be seen as opportunities to do better next time, or even as lessons of life. It is only through erring that many people learn.

If people do make mistakes, they should be forgiven, and, if others are rude, try to see their behaviour in perspective through empathy. In other words, put yourself in their position or predicament and think what the reason could be for this type of behaviour. This may assist in one's understanding of this unacceptable, but forgivable, behaviour.

## Sympathy

After this process of being forgiving and employing empathy, the value of sympathy should be practised.

Children should have sympathy with offenders.

Having sympathy enriches the sympathiser spiritually, because the person showing sympathy is actually reflecting something of his or her own inner divineness. If all can reveal a little bit of inner divineness, the total sum of divineness of brotherhood revealed will result in a peaceful, meaningful, coexisting spirit.

## Tolerance

Meaningful coexistence implies that people should be very tolerant of one another.

Children have to be educated that there are many different cultures, beliefs, social customs/etiquettes and conventions in life and that these are often in direct conflict with one another.

Some children are brought up believing that there is only one specific religion that is right and that this specific

religion is to be honoured exclusively: other religions are regarded as destining their adherents for hell or are labelled as disastrous. This is wrong.

In the major part of Africa, there is the greatest tolerance imaginable for different religions and all are equally respected. This is another virtue of Ubuntu, since all religious beliefs may be linked to the support of a positive value of Ubuntu-like tolerance.

## **Respect**

Children will be wise to show respect for authority, elderly people and the environment.

It is true that elders, like all elders and other people in general, deserve to be respected. Children will also be respected if they deserve such respect as a result of positive attitudes and activities. It is in fact a two-way process.

Ubuntu teaches respect, since respect is the basis of a structured and disciplined society. If families are to be evaluated, the principal criterion by which they should be judged is the respectful conventions that are visible and found in that family: respect indicates whether or not a person is decent or civilised.

## **Love**

Love is fundamental to Ubuntu.

It is amazing how it is reflected when children are brought up in an atmosphere of love and compassion. Children growing up in an atmosphere of love are usually children who also live the values as discussed: they are kind, forgiving, empathic and sympathetic.

It is African to show one's compassion for others. Showing love has dramatic effects: it immediately warms up any environment.

Coupled with the value of loving is the value of happiness. Love should always be experienced in a happy way, and, by doing this, children will also experience more meaning in life. Love is not jealous. Love forgives and endures everything. It determines happy attitudes and the positive acceptance of all events in life.

## **Appreciation**

To be appreciative is to be grateful.

Many people accept basic necessities of life like food, water and shelter as a given and do not show gratefulness for receiving these blessings. Many people in Africa and other parts of the world are without these basic commodities.

Sometimes children in poverty-stricken families do not eat because it is not their turn to eat: imagine not being able to eat when one is hungry, but, due to scarcity (or the absence) of food, having to wait until it is your turn to eat.

## **Consideration**

Children should always take others into consideration.

This applies especially to the development of non-greedy attitudes.

Greed is negative.

Individual greed is the cause of many financial malpractices and of unhealthy competition in order to gain the most and the best at all costs. This leads to exploitation of human beings and the environment.

Consideration favours attitudes of cooperation and peaceful coexistence.

## **Children's rights**

Children are also human beings and, as such, are equally entitled to normal human rights.

A right is a principle of morality and justice.

Child abuse is a sickness of our time and is in no way justifiable either from an Ubuntu perspective or any religious perspective.



Children should be informed of their rights: they have a right to be protected from abuse, to be fed, to have shelter or a home, and to have a decent upbringing in an environment of child friendliness and compassion.

The right to food is regarded (Ramose 1999:182) as a fundamental right that gives meaning and content to the right to life. All other traditional, fundamental rights or basic liberties revolve around, and derive their proper significance from, the right to food.

It is therefore recommended that governments make feeding schemes available to all, but especially to needy children wherever they are: in crèches, schools and even on the street. Street children have as many, and the same, rights as other children.

Children also have a right to education. To refuse children education owing to a lack of financial resources is immoral. In South Africa it is against the law for schools to refuse to admit children if they cannot afford school registration and education fees. Such schools can be reported by the public in order for the necessary disciplinary action to be taken by the relevant authorities.

Note how many of these mentioned values correspond with the original Ubuntu values and associated values identified above.

These values are not only for school pupils. Imagine what a better society we can create if all people, teachers, parents, family members, community members, etcetera, commit themselves to live out these values. These values, which are in essence African, should not be regarded as mere vague guidelines for a positive and happy life: they should be employed as concrete weapons for the elimination of depression, negativism and all bad influences in the world.

The range of moral virtues that make up Ubuntu is said (Shutte 2001:31) to be very wide.

Moral values can therefore be divided into two groups, namely those concerned with relationships with others externally, and those that characterise the relationship to the self internally.

As regards relationships with others, the most fundamental are such virtues as reverence or respect and sympathy. These imply that one values others as one values oneself. From these, other virtues become relevant like loyalty, courtesy, tolerance, patience, generosity, hospitality and readiness to cooperate.

Regarding the relationship to oneself, Ubuntu takes the form of a spirit of integrity. It manifests itself in confidence, endurance, joyfulness, vitality and dignity.

According to the syllabus of the above-mentioned education department, the living of Ubuntu values is manifested in traditional life through

- family life: the family is seen as the main institution for the transferral of values.
- songs: Africans are known to be singing people and practise this even in the workplace.
- hymns: values and religious beliefs are often praised and popularised through hymns.
- poems: poetry reflects the sorrow of ignored values and rejoices in the positive outcomes in life.
- eating habits: food should be shared and those who have should provide for those who do not have.
- celebrations: where there is joy, celebrations play an important role in rewarding the cause of the joy and all are invited.
- body paint: body paint is often symbolic of values that are to be honoured in traditional society. The

painting of naked bodies has become a field of study at certain tertiary institutions.

- music: music is a mystical methodology to give manifestation to messages of the mind and heart (Africans are emotive human beings and this is often reflected in music and songs). Music is described (Ramose 1999:59) as the conception and harmony of being in African philosophy. The dance of being is an invitation to participate actively in and through the music of being rather than being a passive spectator thereof. This explains the difference in both the attitude and reaction to music (the dance of being) between the African and non-Africans: an African does not listen to music seated.
- dances: apart from traditional, ritual dancing, Africans love dancing as a natural response, especially to happiness. Africans grow up dancing.
- clothes: African informal dressing became very popular in the world as a result of former South African State President, Nelson Mandela, wearing his informal and colourful African shirts (the “Madiba shirts”), even on official occasions.
- shelter: no one can sleep warm while others are cold; there is always space for another additional person in a house, dwelling, motor vehicle (taxi), etcetera, and space should be shared.
- ornaments: ornaments and sculptures are found to initiate brilliant messages of value and African art is valued highly and is respected in the international world.
- stories: folktales and storytelling are well-developed arts in Africa and these are the most effective ways to instil the value of positive life styles in others.

These manifestations of Ubuntu values are still applicable in present-day life and can similarly be practised by the individual as a self-manager. It is a challenge to the individual to make sense in his or her own life by merely

living out these positive values and their manifestations on a daily basis, even in the workplace.

Community is more complex: in community development, four basic environments are relevant, namely the physical, institutional, economic/financial and socio-welfare environments.

The manager, individual, organisation, life skills trainer or practitioner should encourage the living out of these values in all environments.

## **MORALITY AND CORRUPTION**

Corruption may be defined as moral depravity or badness (Nyarwath 2002).

Corruption must fundamentally be seen as a moral issue emanating from moral ignorance or confusion. It should be seen as a moral issue because it affects human welfare in general in a negative way. An act which augments human wellbeing is morally right, and an act that worsens human wellbeing is morally wrong.

Corruption is generally regarded as an act whereby a person misuses personal power. This includes nepotism, misuse of power, favouritism and bribery.

The Centre of Public Integrity, a non-profit, independent organisation, conducts research and provides reports on public policy matters in the United States of America and various parts of the world.

In April 2004, the Centre published the World Integrity Report in 25 countries. The country reports were written primarily by local experts in the various countries, providing a closer perspective of each country's regulative aspects regarding the fight against corruption (Minnaar van Veijeren 2005:27).

An index was provided to measure the existence, effectiveness and approachability of the institutions used by citizens to hold their governments accountable for public interest.

The countries were divided into strong, average and poor categories.

The countries regarded as strong on this aspect included the United States of America, Portugal, Australia, Italy, Germany and South Africa.

In the case of South Africa, it is certainly the moral influence of Ubuntu that makes it strong on this issue. This does not imply that corruption is not taking place. What it does imply is that awareness of moral rights and wrongs is strong.

The world was flabbergasted when President Mbeki released his Vice-State President, Jacob Zuma, from his duties in 2005 after serious allegations had been made about the latter's involvement in corruptive deeds for the purpose of advancing his personal political power.

The point is that, in terms of Ubuntu, corruption is not tolerated in South Africa.

Morality is applicable to both individual persons and groups of people, even in large numbers. Once again, the world was shocked to learn about actions of moral decay after Hurricane Catherine had hit New Orleans in the United States of America. Immoral actions involving collective, daylight robbery, vandalism and rape were reported in the newspapers.

The fundamental question is: what causes this moral depravity?

Corruption as such is described by Nyarwath (2002:278) as being caused by the lack of commitment to one's moral beliefs, which, in turn, is due to a weak moral will.

Two points should be noted in this regard.

First, moral beliefs, principles and values exist in every society.

Secondly, there exists moral commitment.

It is this aspect of commitment that should be strengthened in societies. Ubuntu has a vital role to play in this strengthening of the values of morality in all societies.

Moral commitment also applies to the world of management.

Managers of organisations and in all disciplines, economists included, should admit the need for normative aspects in their respective fields.

It is not only about the “what is” situations, but also about the “what should be” issues.

There is always a normative aspect in choices and managers make choices each and every day (Presbey 2002:284).

In the world of management, a soft approach must be taken regarding interaction with people. Corrupt actions are however not tolerated in terms of Ubuntu, which is very strong on issues like these.

This does not imply that the offenders will not be forgiven.

There are usually reasons why people commit these immoral deeds.

The point is that these immoral deeds are not acceptable at all, but the people themselves may be forgiven. Human beings do make mistakes.

The challenge is for managers to encourage moral commitment. This can be done by means of codes of conduct, an example of which is presented in chapter 10.

## CASE STUDY: THE STORY OF THE *TSOTSI* BOY

It has been reported (Jordaan 1995:10) that a South African film, “*Tsotsi*” (criminal), received two prizes at the Edinburgh Film Festival in Scotland.

This touching film attracted a record number of movie-goers, who were driven to tears.

The film is a sad story of an orphan who became a ruthless criminal. During a highjack attempt, he kills the mother of a baby and, as a result, lands up in a situation where he has to take care of the orphaned baby. This act of caring becomes such an emotional affair that the criminal finds himself in a soul-searching state in which he has to examine his own perceptions and application of humanness (Ubuntu).

This story is based on reality.

People, even criminals, have some measure of good in themselves.

Even in the workplace, wrongdoers should be treated with more empathy.

At the Leeukop Prison outside Johannesburg, a very successful rehabilitation programme for young offenders has been initiated.

One of these offenders, Simon, summarises the basic problem of the offenders as follows: “We children need to be taught about loving, caring and the awareness of moral values” (Tintinger 1999:Back cover).





# 9

## INTERCULTURAL UBUNTU RELATIONS

### INTERCULTURAL ASPECTS

The manager has to be very aware of the customs, values and conventions of team-mates. He should be aware of the likes and dislikes of the various cultures and of the languages they speak.

Cultural diversity is a fact.

In Brazil the official language is Portuguese; the Dutch are not fond of Germans; forget trying to speak English in France; South Africa has 11 official languages.

People apply values in different ways and care should be exercised not to embarrass those with different customs.

In this chapter, intercultural aspects and communication will be discussed and various suggestions are made to assist with smooth intercultural relations.

### INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Intercultural communication demands a diplomatic approach from managers.

Diplomacy requires an objective and informed approach to the different conventions of culture formation.

For the purposes of successful intercultural communication, the following guidelines are provided:

- be tolerant if participants are not punctual (establish in a private conversation what the reasons are for them being late)
- smile (Africans are known for their brilliant laughing skills – it is alleged that Westerners cannot laugh, but can only grin!)
- establish a warm family atmosphere (allow participants to introduce themselves fully)
- allow everybody to inform others about the meaning or origin of their traditional names
- encourage participants to determine discussion formalities (or house rules) themselves (like switching off cell phones, punctuality and tolerance time, open dialogue, etc.)
- begin with a brainstorming session during which all are free to voice opinions without any fear of criticism
- allow cultural ways of addressing others (Westerners may prefer to address others as “Sir” or “Madam”, whilst Africans may prefer to address others as “Brother” or “Sister”)
- be patient as regards voice volume (Westerners may wish to communicate in soft voices, while Africans may communicate in loud voices)
- encourage participants to sit in groups with the same interests (mixed) and not in isolated cultural groups
- allow participants to communicate in the language of their choice (if necessary, arrange for an interpreter)
- base the discussion on the principle of agreeing to disagree
- avoid opening the discussion with prayer if people are not of the same faith (propose self-prayer instead)
- let participants decide about the topics for discussion

## INTERCULTURAL DIFFERENCES

The manager should equip himself or herself with the conventions of cultural groups.

Examples of such conventions are the following:

- ways of greeting (Westerners are sometimes quite at ease not even shaking hands, but merely saying “hello”, while Africans love shaking or holding hands and hugging others.)
- manner of addressing others (Westerners address strangers formally, while Africans address others informally, for instance by using the term “Comrade”.)
- voice volume as already referred to
- eye contact (Westerners look people directly in the eye. Africans however regard such direct eye contact as disrespectful.)
- preferences regarding discussion items (Westerners may wish to discuss stock exchange matters, while Africans may prefer to talk about welfare-related issues.)
- punctuality (Westerners may insist on punctuality, while Africans may prefer tolerance time in respect of those who may arrive late.)
- respect for agenda items (Westerners may wish to discuss only the given agenda items, while Africans are talkative and may deviate from formal topics.)
- personal space (Westerners like their personal space, while Africans are less bothered with the space between people.)
- humour (Westerners may find pleasure in jokes, whereas other people may be humiliated by them. Africans have a deep sense of empathy and may sympathise with the lot of others and the humiliated.)

- word of welcome (Westerners love short, formal words of welcome, whereas Africans love to sing and dance as an informal introduction to an event.)
- consent (Westerners will say “yes” to indicate consent to a proposal, while Africans use the word “yes” as an indication that they have heard an argument or proposal. This however is not automatically consent.)
- resolutions (Westerners adopt resolutions quickly, while Africans like to debate an issue in every detail and to decide by consensus.)
- professional consciousness (Westerners are easily influenced by the opinions of experts, whereas Africans attach value to the opinions of everyone.)
- individuality versus collectively (Westerners take individual decisions, while Africans decide as a group.)
- resolution style (Westerners are influenced by rationality, whereas Africans are influenced by emotion)

There are various differences between customs, and the following are some examples of these differences:

- eye contact (as noted): Westerners establish direct eye contact whilst communicating with others. To the Westerner, a refusal to engage in direct eye contact is an indication that something is being hidden or that some form of dishonesty is present. Africans, however, regard it as extremely bad manners if people make direct eye contact: a person is to be respected, and especially elders or people in authority are therefore not to be looked in the eye.
- greeting: Westerners greet politely and are reserved; Africans greet loudly and without inhibitions/heartily.

- wellbeing: Westerners enquire politely about the wellbeing of others; Africans are more comprehensive and enquire about wellbeing in detail (about a wife or wives, about the members of the extended family, about friends and, in Kenya, even about the wellbeing of cattle).
- leading the way: Western men let women lead the way out of respect; African men lead the way to protect women and to ensure that there is no danger.
- funerals: in the case of Westerners, only the closest family members and friends attend; in the African environment, the whole community and all are welcome to attend.
- after-life convictions (hereafter): Westerners believe in heaven and hell; Africans traditionally believed in the spiritual world, and heaven or hell was irrelevant.

It should be mentioned that, as a result of Westernisation and globalisation, many Africans have deviated from their traditional customs and are following international tendencies and customs.

One finds, for example, that African business people now tend to think more in capitalistic profit terms and that many have converted to other religious beliefs.

## THEMES FOR INTERCULTURAL DISCUSSION

Themes for intercultural discussion can be determined by organisational needs.

Alternatively, stimulating discussions may evolve by considering themes for discussion like the following:

- intercultural life cycles (birth and baby conventions, childhood and teenage years, young adulthood, adulthood, old-age customs)
- *lobola*: benefits and problems
- the roles of doctors and *sangomas*
- initiation schools
- transport problems (taxis)
- bigamy versus polygamy
- cultural differences (greeting, eye contact, eating, drinking, talking, etc.)
- the influence of Western culture on African culture, and vice versa
- affirmative action and transformation
- the death penalty
- any other issue agreed on

# COMPARING WESTERN AND AFRICAN MANAGEMENT STYLES

The following summary is provided to illustrate the differences between the traditional Western/Eurocentric and African/Afrocentric management styles.

Table 9.1: Summary of the differences between traditional Western/Eurocentric and African/Afrocentric management styles

## Western and African styles of management

Western	African
Individualistic Punctuality Time is money	Collectivity Tolerance Time is time

Self-actualisation	Family prioritisation
Competitive	Cooperative
Exploitative	Sharing
Risky	Stability
Introversive	Extroversive
Societal	Communal
Rational	Emotional
Highest profit	Subsistence
Loyalty	Commitment
Top-down	Bottom-up
Management resolutions	Group consensus
Exclusive	Inclusive
Self-reliant	Team-reliant
Greed	Open-handedness
Wealth	Community wellbeing
Production-minded	People-minded
Rewards	Recognition
Autocratic	Democratic
Class consciousness	Classless
Limited delegation	Unlimited delegation
Reserved	Inhibitionless
Cold relations	Warm openness
Confidentiality	Transparency
Snobbish	Humility

The above classification is based on general, traditional perceptions.

It may be argued that some of these aspects are controversial owing to the influence of other cultures.

These are however stimulating aspects for healthy debate and groups are welcome to air their opinions.

## CASE STUDY: DIFFERENT LIFE SYSTEMS

Different life systems are apparent in the diverse societies of the world.

As a case study, team-mates can discuss value systems and determine their similarities and differences.

As a guideline, the following distinctions between African and Western value systems as presented by Du Preez (1997:5) can be discussed:

Table 9.2: Distinctions between African and Western value systems

<i>African</i>	<i>Western</i>
Together	Alone
Mind	Material
Whole	Pieces
Past	Future
Harmony	Control
Shame	Guilt

These concepts can be understood as meaning the following:

“Together” refers to the custom of togetherness of Africans.

“Alone” refers to individualistic attitudes.

“Mind” refers to spiritual beliefs and dimensions.

“Material” is a reference to physical structures like cathedrals, luxury houses, etcetera.



“Whole” is like the *sangoma* treating a whole family when an individual is sick, and not the illness alone. It reminds one of the concept of a great unity: we are one.

“Pieces” are like thinking in compartments: there is a time for everything. Things are not dependent on one another. Individualism is the norm.

“Past” is what has already happened.

“Future” is what still has to happen.

“Harmony” is to be at peace and to discuss issues with all before decisions are taken.

“Control” is to decide quickly without necessarily consulting others in order to manipulate others.

“Shame” is to feel uncomfortable with wrongdoing, but also to put blame on outsiders.

“Guilt” is to feel rigidly ashamed.

These distinctions and their descriptions may be open to debate.

It is however precisely the purpose of the discussion to determine how they are to be accommodated, rejected or adjusted.

The manager and staff members may involve themselves in a constructive discussion of the above distinctions and explanations.

Do they agree or disagree with them?

Can they provide reasons for their findings?



# 10

## UBUNTU MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

Philosophy will remain a theoretical issue if it is not implemented in practice.

As noted, Ubuntu Management Philosophy (UMP) has been implemented in African societies since the existence of the Netchar Maat principles in the period dating back to 1 500 BC. This implementation has taken place over many centuries and from the times of clans, tribes, kingdoms and the empires of ancient Africa. During these periods, African civilisations survived successfully by practising the principles of Ubuntu.

The main advantage of Ubuntu as a practical management philosophy is its simplicity and practical applicability.

This simplicity makes it possible for ordinary people and team-mates to enjoy the benefits of Ubuntu management. These benefits include the smooth running of organisations and institutions comprising committed and dedicated members in a friendly family atmosphere.

There is ample evidence that the benefits of this philosophy are increasingly being recognised and acknowledged.

It was pointed out by way of examples of various organisations all over the world that, although some have never heard of the word “ubuntu”, they are nevertheless practising Ubuntu Management Philosophy in a practical and successful way.

## MANAGEMENT IN THE FAMILY SPIRIT

Years ago, in the kinship system, the father (*baba*) played an important role in society.

He was highly respected and his role as leader was to provide leadership in consultation with advisors. He was the head of the family, but remained part and parcel of the family. He was not an outsider who did not share the needs and fears of the kinship. Decisions were taken only after lengthy and democratic discussions.

The *baba* concept is applicable to organisations as well.

In the African leadership style, it is acknowledged that the best results are achieved if leadership is based on democracy. The most efficient leader is the one who has excellent listening and consultation skills.

The simple act of active listening and thorough communication is the practical success recipe of the leadership of Escom, Africa's biggest and most successful electricity company. Escom has also achieved all ten key objectives it set itself over a period of ten years. These objectives were formulated in accordance with the Reconstruction and Development Programme of the South African government.

The following are some suggestions for management in the family spirit:

- make team-mates (family members) feel at home (begin in friendly ways)
- provide detailed information on the history of the organisation and its objectives
- apply management by involvement: involve team-mates and allow them to suggest methods as to how to improve on services and production, quality, innovation and high morals

- allow team-mates themselves to determine what specific roles they can play in the daily operation of the organisation: work must be fun
- be approachable at all reasonable times, like the *baba* discussed above
- give praise where praise is due
- have regular, informal feedback sessions (avoid the concept of formal reporting) as part of evaluation

## LEADERSHIP IN THE FAMILY SPIRIT

The leader has to develop and maintain the family spirit in the organisation.

The key word in the family-building process is the word “cohesion”.

Cohesion is about people sticking together. In other words, there are binding factors like group loyalty, mutual respect, warmth and empathy.

It is like the sheep in Mandela’s style of shepherd leadership: they flock together and thrive on their happy togetherness.

The following are suggestions for attaining this ideal of cohesion and togetherness in the spirit of organisational family:

- Arrange an intercultural communication, brainstorming session to determine similarities and differences of the members of the group, emphasising similarities, but acknowledging differences.
- Encourage members to address one another by their first names and as brothers and sisters of the same (extended) organisational family.

- Emphasise the interdependence of group members and encourage cooperation as a prerequisite for family cohesion.
- Tasks and activities should be of such a nature that the family members are compelled to work together; for example, work should be done by teams which operate as smaller units of the greater (extended) family organisation.
- If a group excels in working together, give the group some kind of reward (not necessarily money, but something that can be enjoyed in a group relations context, like a weekend away, after-work celebrations or free tickets to a sports event).
- Ensure that all members are accepted as they are, even if some are culturally different, ill, disabled or even lazy (the lazy ones may turn out to be very productive once they are motivated by the spirit of family and group cohesiveness).
- Treat all as equals: in a family, preference is not given to certain brothers and sisters.
- Encourage initiative and creativity and avoid outdated rules and regulations: creativity demands freedom of thinking and acting.
- Determine and revisit objectives of the organisational family collectively with the democratic participation of all.
- Make use of the cohesive words “we” and “us” in everyday communication and avoid the egocentric words “I” and “my”.

## MANAGEMENT COURSE (UBUNTU)

Managers making use of the ideas, knowledge and arguments provided in this book can facilitate a course on Ubuntu Management Philosophy (UMP).

The following is an outline of the proposed contents for such a training course, as used by the Ubuntu School of Philosophy in its training:

- background: diversity of cultures
- understanding diverse values
- understanding the Ubuntu values of humanness, caring, sharing, respect and compassion
- definitions and practices of the Ubuntu worldview
- cultural concepts (*shosolozza, simunye, ilima, tsotsi, tokoloshe, stokvel, mahala, sangomas, lobola*, extended family, traditional names, initiation, religion, death, ancestors, tolerance time and the art of storytelling)
- intercultural communication (transparency, time, mannerisms)
- management practices (organisation style, labour relations, decision making, human resources, affirmative action, leadership, environment, strategy) and the relationship to Ubuntu practice
- motivation and life skills
- vision, mission, the ONPO analysis, self-counselling process and development of a strategy plan
- Ubuntu in the community development context (physical, institutional, economic, socio-welfare environments)
- practical workshops on the application of UMP in the workplace

## MANAGEMENT BEHAVIOUR

Ubuntu management behaviour is based on the art of interacting with others in a human fashion.

Human-orientated management is about the development of exceptional skills of motivating, influencing and enabling others and teams to contribute to the success of the organisation.

Managers can determine themselves whether they potentially qualify as Ubuntu-type managers by using the following criteria:

- humanness: being soft on people
- caring: being empathetic
- sharing: being generous
- respect: respecting all people, cultures and beliefs; family-spirit discipline
- compassion: facilitating, creating and embracing happiness and fun
- positiveness: being optimistic and confident
- tenderness: promoting kindness
- sincerity: being earnest
- self-control: being calm and relaxed
- democratic: allowing different opinions
- motivation: increasing the morale of others by simple acts of encouragement, praise
- modest: remaining humble at all times and not boasting about oneself
- consultative: management by participation
- involvement: being central in the process and being an example to obtain the best results

The following list of statements has been designed as an exercise to determine how an Ubuntu-type manager would behave in certain circumstances.

The reaction to the statements can be discussed during a group discussion.

Instructions:

Read each statement carefully.

Consider the merits of the statement and whether the



manager should engage in the behaviour described in the statement.

More importantly, though, decide whether the manager would

- always
- often
- occasionally
- seldom or
- never act

as described by the statement.

Indicate your finding after each statement as follows:

**a** (always)  
**of** (often)  
**occ** (occasionally)  
**s** (seldom) or  
**n** (never)

Have fun!

A manager of a team in the Ubuntu family sense would:

- favour blonde females for promotion, since this improves the public image of an organisation
- divide the team into very small entities, because he rules by division
- do little things to make it pleasant to be in the team
- keep management information secret
- assign specific tasks to specific people
- be the spokesperson of the group
- allow for two hours of tolerance time at meetings
- refuse to explain his actions
- never act without consulting the team-mates
- treat all the team-mates as equals

- lay down regulations and standard rules himself
- ensure good eye contact when communicating with others
- emphasise that work is not to be regarded as leisure
- organise after-hours parties
- allow others to take over the leadership role in the group
- coordinate the work of team-mates
- insist on formal reports
- scold the lazy ones
- reward individual performance
- act in a professional way by being reserved and not mixing with others
- strive for the highest profit at all costs, even if people have to be exploited

## UBUNTU CODE OF CONDUCT

Behaviour is often influenced by a code that prescribes certain ethical conduct.

Managers and people in positions of authority are often compelled to abide by certain rules of behaviour.

Managers may therefore consider incorporating Ubuntu values in their daily and professional conduct, as recorded in the Ubuntu Code of Conduct.

On 23 October 1998, all political parties represented in the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa (with the exception of only one small, White, right-wing party) accepted a Code of Conduct based on the values of Ubuntu for persons in positions of responsibility.

As a preamble, it was stated that all persons in positions of responsibility have a duty to serve the people of South Africa with integrity.

These included elected representatives of the people, officers of the government in the legislatures and public service, and those with authority in political, economic and civil organisations. This noble obligation is reflected in the following principles of Ubuntu, which constitute a Code of Conduct for all those in positions of responsibility (the undertakings had to be signed individually).

## UBUNTU CODE OF CONDUCT

- **Integrity**

I will conduct myself in such a way that my speech and acts are honest and trustworthy, able to nurture a culture of truth and reliability.

- **Incumbency**

I will not accept any financial or other obligation to individuals or organisations which could lead me to act unethically in my duties and responsibilities.

- **Good faith**

Recognising that there can be conflicts of interest, I accept the obligation to declare any personal interests which may affect the interests of those I serve.

- **Impartiality**

In carrying out my duties, including making appointments, awarding contracts, grants, or recommending individuals for benefits, I will make fair choices, which do not duly or unjustly favour those with whom I have other ties.

- **Openness**

I will be transparent in my decisions and actions, and will not withhold information which is in the public interest.

- **Accountability**

I recognise that I am accountable for my decisions and actions, and will submit to whatever scrutiny is appropriate.

- **Justice**

I will act justly, and promote the culture of respect for the law.

- **Respect**

I will act in a way that promotes respect for all people regardless of their beliefs.

- **Generosity**

In speech, attitudes and behaviour, I will seek to be generous and hospitable towards others.

- **Leadership**

I shall promote and support these principles, seeking to recommend by personal example and serve the fundamental moral principles on which a successful community can be built and maintained.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Witness:

Witness:

## **UBUNTU PLEDGE**

The Code of Conduct for people in responsible positions was followed by the development of the Ubuntu Pledge for people in general and for employees.

Ancient Ubuntu principles were portrayed in the religious-ethical Pledge on Ubuntu.

The National Religious Forum of South Africa was mainly responsible for this development. The Forum represents the Traditional African Religion, the Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism.

At a summit in 2001, the Forum defined Ubuntu as meaning to be human, to value the good of the community above self-interest, to strive to help other people in the spirit of service, to show respect to others and to be honest and trustworthy.

The Forum consequently proposed national support for the following guidelines for general life, named the Ubuntu Pledge, which members of all different faiths were expected to follow and implement in their daily lives.

Imagine what a winning team the workplace members can become, especially regarding better interpersonal relations and the establishment of a positive culture, if employees sign and support the Ubuntu Pledge. Surely this commitment will contribute to better productivity and service?

## **UBUNTU PLEDGE**

**I shall try my best to:**

**Be good and do well.**

- I shall look on all other people as fellow human beings.
- I shall not condemn others, nor show prejudice to any regardless of race, religion, or gender.

**Live honestly and positively.**

- I recognise that our spiritual nature is dishonoured by practices such as bribery and corruption.
- I respect both public and private property, and shall not steal, nor accept or deal in stolen goods.
- I shall faithfully observe all traffic laws, and strive at all times to set a good example as a careful driver.

**Be considerate and kind.**

- Every life is precious; I shall respect everyone's need for shelter and food, health and education, dignity and spiritual development.
- I shall reach out to at least one person who is hungry, hurt, lonely, disabled or in need.

**Care for my sisters and brothers within the human family.**

I shall respect the needs of others, and personally support the struggle against poverty by actions such as:

- Giving regularly to those who have less than I have.
- Sharing my skills with other people and helping to train them.

**Respect other people's rights to their beliefs and cultures.**

- I shall respect the right of others to their religious beliefs and cultures, and to their political affiliation.

- I shall strongly build on the things that unite us, and shall seek common ground with my fellow citizens.

**Care for and improve our environment.**

I recognise that I and my family, my work, my recreational pursuits and my attitudes should damage no environment. I shall become environment-conscious, and shall seek to improve the environment in some of the following ways:

- I shall avoid the spreading of litter both in private and public.
- I shall promote and support the development of recycling as a national custom, and buy products which are least destructive of the environment.
- I accept responsibility for preserving our environment both for us and for future generations.

**Promote peace, harmony and non-violence.**

- I shall oppose all forms of violence and aggression.
- I shall at all times seek peace and peaceful solutions to any problems.

**Promote the welfare of my country as a patriotic citizen.**

- I shall do my best to reduce and remedy the social problems threatening our freedom, which include racism, poverty, oppression, corruption, greed, violence and disregard for human life.
- I reject the practice of finding fault with, and blaming others.

The ultimate responsibility rests with each and every one of us.

## IN CONCLUSION: THE INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGE

In the past, people, especially those on continents outside Africa, were not aware of the Ubuntu worldview and philosophy.

Ubuntu has only received exposure by means of the written word since the early 1990s.

Prior to this period, it was, as the custom was, transferred from generation to generation only in an oral or verbal way by the African people.

Africans regard Ubuntu as very special and even of a sacred nature.

It is only now that Ubuntu is shared with other cultures in a written format and therefore Ubuntu Management Philosophy is ready for the export market.

A well-known international businessman known for practising open business styles, after noting the contents of the book on African life-coping skills, *Ubuntu: Life lessons from Africa* (Broodryk 2002), apparently remarked to staff members: “Ubuntu! This is precisely what the world needs!”

Coupled with the global revolution as a result of which people are communicating through technical means and computers, more can now have access to the hidden treasures of Ubuntu.

The management approach proposed in this book differs from conventional practices, but is not necessarily unique.

Managers all over the world may already be implementing some of the basic Ubuntu principles, like the Virgin Group of companies where employees are regarded as members of the same extended family or “tribe”. Employees of the “tribe” thus have a common identity and they even have tribal cards



which allow them to obtain certain products at tribal discount prices!

The general problem is that, although many managers are aware of the core values of humanness and the benefits of its practical application, few have been practising them. Why?

There are major risks involved in a change of management style, especially if profits or service delivery are of a satisfactory nature.

The autocratic style of management, which still rules in closed organisations, is a comfortable style of management: the boss decides and the subordinates follow, or else ... .

Sometimes this style is applied as a result of a poor self-image or low level of natural intelligence on the part of the manager, who does not know how to cope with others who have a positive self-image or who are on a higher level of natural intelligence.

Therefore, in terms of this outdated management style, there is no need to provide workers with explanations for decisions taken, or to invite staff involvement in the decision-making process. Work is not supposed to be a happy affair or fun: the customers come first at all times and staff must ensure that client satisfaction is of the highest priority.

To change an autocratic management style is an effort – it is a risk to the manager's convenient comfort zone and change is a rational process which many fear, because rationality implies thinking and philosophising. To some, thinking is a time waster: just do the job and that is it.

A democratic style is at times complicated, because of the variety and diversity of opinions and options which are to be evaluated, whereas an autocratic style is usually based on a sole opinion and conviction and is therefore quite simple.

The choice to change the management style should not be a complicated matter. It is basically a simple, moral decision: to start treating people in the organisation with respect and dignity, creating opportunities for personal growth, and basing motivation on the acknowledgement of the rights of personnel or teammates and the creation of a collective unity.

The challenge, especially for organisations in the international sphere, is to opt for a more human face: the humanness as exposed in Ubuntu Management Philosophy.

To be human is to have fun. To have fun is to be human.

Be happy.

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# GLOSSARY

Abantu	Ugandan term for Ubuntu, also described as a fellowship of tribes.
Baba	Sign of respect towards an old man.
Batho pele	People first.
Bohadi	A Sesotho word for lobola.
Botho or Motho	A Sesotho term for Ubuntu.
Braai	Barbeque facility.
Braaivleis	Barbequed meat.
Bunhu	A Tsonga term for Ubuntu.
Dolos	Art of bone throwing.
Dumela	Not only a way of greeting a person, but also an enquiry as to the other persons' friends and relatives.
Ex Africa semper aliquid novi	Out of Africa always something new.
Go ya ka magoro gase go tswane melato re a	Even if we may go our own way, whenever urgent and vital issues arise, we still have the obligation to come together and to try to find a common solution to these rerisana issues.
Ilima	Harmonious exchange, helping another.
Llobolo	A Zulu word for lobola.
Imbizo	Bush meetings – meetings of a mass congregation or public, which is broader and on a national level.
Indaba	Open discussion by a group of people who share the same interest.
Indunas	Advisors.
Kratia	Rule or authority.
Lapa	Social hut.
Lekgotla	A meeting lasting hours which takes place at a secluded venue.
Lobola	A social system and custom in terms of which a bridegroom donates bride's gifts in the form of a number of cattle to the family-in-law.
Mahala	An African concept that says that it is fine to give something to others free of charge, not expecting something in return.
Mama	Sign of respect towards an old woman.
Mensheid	Afrikaans term for Ubuntu.
Menslikgeit	Cape Afrikaans term for Ubuntu.
Motho	Tswana term for Ubuntu.
Mukwerera	Production festival ceremony.

Munhu munhu	Implies that man is entitled to unconditional respect, dignity, acceptance, and care from his significant relevant group or community.
Muti	Medicine.
Ninjane	How are all of you?
Ninjane	Zulu concept - plural for how are you?
Ntate	A Sesotho word to address an old man or respected father figure.
Numunhu or Munhu	A Shangaan term for Ubuntu.
Nyanga	Herbalist or diviner.
Nyarwath	Corruption.
Pungwe	Work celebration.
Sangoma	Spiritual medicine man.
Shebeen	African pub.
Shosholoza	Teamwork in a collective sense.
Simunye	Solidarity.
Simunye	Solidarity or spirit of oneness.
Siza	Zulu word for people-ness (humannes).
Spaza shops	House trading outlets.
Stokvel	Informal cooperative enterprise and economy.
Tokoloshe	Bad, devilish-looking little creature.
Tsotsi	Bad person or criminal.
Ubuntu	Zulu concept that means ‘personhood’, and which is also known as unhu in Shona and botho in both Tswana and Sotho. Ubuntu is the essence of being human, and is a positive perception of African personhood. It refers to the collective interdependence and solidarity of communities of affection. Ubuntu literally means ‘I am because we are, I can only be a person through others’.
Ubuntu or Umtu	Zulu term for Ubuntu.
Ubuntu or Umuntu	Xhosa term for Ubuntu.
Ujamaa	Tanzanian concept – Family hood. This relates to the concept of universal brotherhood or African socialism.
Ukuhlonipha	Respect in the Zulu language.
Umhlanganos	Democratic management practice – desirable that discussion groups or interactive forums be established in a similar manner.
Umoja	Togetherness.
Umuntu	I am a person through other humanbeings.
ngumuntu	
ngabantu	
Unhu or Nunhu	Shona term for Ubuntu.
Utu	Swahili term for Ubuntu.
Vhuthu or Muthu	Venda term for Ubuntu.

# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BPR</b>	Business Process Re-engineering
<b>CIP</b>	Continuous Improvement Philosophy
<b>JIT</b>	Just in Time Inventory Management
<b>MBI</b>	Management By Involvement
<b>MBWA</b>	Managing By Walking Around
<b>MWA</b>	Managing By Walking Around
<b>ONPO</b>	Obstacles, Negatives, Positives, Opportunities
<b>PDM</b>	Purpose-directed Management
<b>QSCVM</b>	Quality, Service, Cleanliness, Value
<b>SM</b>	Strategic Management
<b>SWOT</b>	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
<b>TPM</b>	Total Productivity Management
<b>TQM</b>	Total Quality Management
<b>UMP</b>	Ubuntu Management Philosophy



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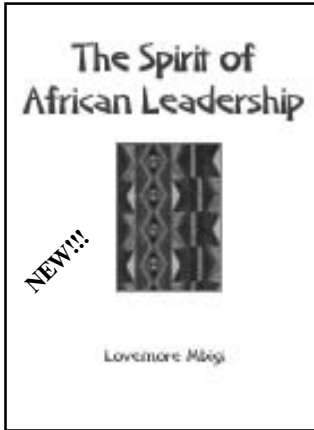
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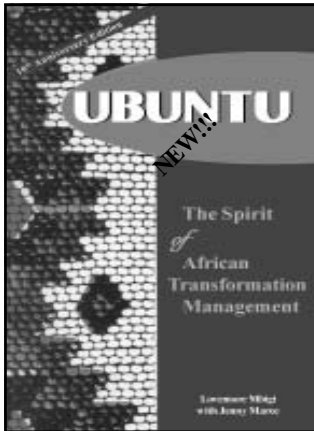


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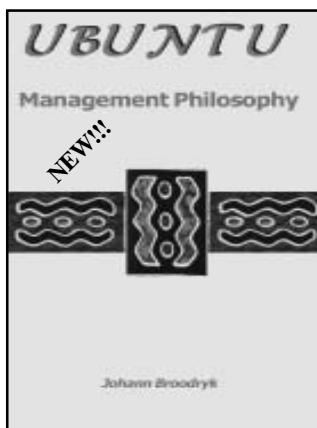
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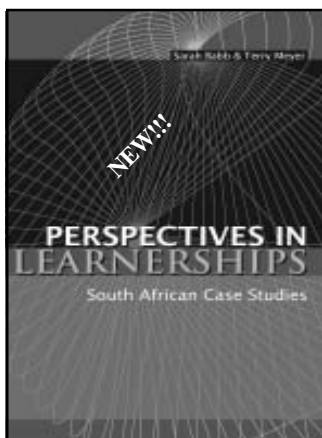
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**Edited by:** Italia Boninelli and Terry N.A. Meyer

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This book will provide new insights, inspiration and practical tools to improve the ability to grow the human capital that organisations need to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

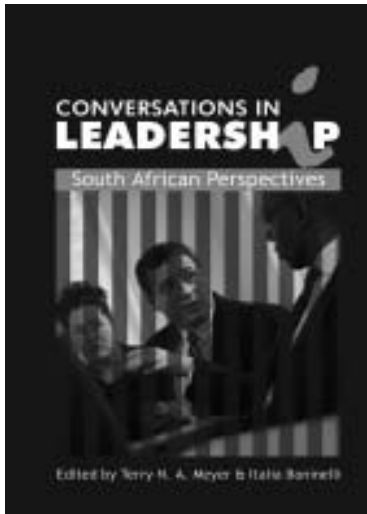
The editors have chosen **five major themes** for this book.

1. A discussion about the **nature of landscape** within which HR needs to position itself, including some interviews with a number of leading thinkers on the subject.
2. The key issue of **how to measure** the value of HR is explored.
3. Then **key issues on the HR agenda** are addressed
4. A number of interesting **case studies** of HR in action.
5. The **future of the HR function** as a profession in South Africa is put under the spotlight.

**Contributors include:** Dr Anne-Marie Biccard \* Steve Bluen \* Derick Boshard \* Mark Bussin \* Johan Herholdt \* Clair Hock \* Prof Frank Horwitz \* Italia Boninelli \* Huma Janse van Rensburg \* Mpho Letlape \* Terry Meyer \* Nene Molefi \* Adele Naudé \* Dr Pat Naves \* Lungi Ndlovu \* Dennis Ritter \* Willie Rudolph \* Martin Sutherland \* Gary Taylor \* Conrad Viedge \* Dr Renate Volpe \* Albert Wöcke \* Dr Shirley Zinn

**Prof Frank Horwitz, Director, Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town** says ... “*Building Human Capital: South African Perspectives* is really a first in respect of a publication of real substance and considerable breadth of scope aimed at practising managers and executives who believe that managing human capital effectively is critical to organisational performance and competitiveness. The editors should be highly complemented for bringing together such a wide range of issues written by the leading experts in South Africa.”

**Dudu Msomi, Chief Executive, Institute of People Management’s** opinion ... “In a time when South African business challenges are calling for unique and relevant South African human resource solutions, this book of contributions from leading HR professionals, consultants and academics is a must-read”.



## **Conversations in Leadership: South African Perspectives**

**Edited by:** Terry N.A. Meyer and  
Italia Boninelli

R259.00

ISBN: 1-86922-058-7

The genesis of this book lies in dozens of conversations which occurred between the editors and leaders in various leading organisations:

From these conversations a number of questions emerged which are of central importance to this country, such as:

- What is the nature of South African Leadership?
- Is it different to “western” leadership?
- What are the issues facing the next generation of leaders?
- Where will the next generation come from?
- What will they look like?
- What are the challenges imposed on South African leaders within a rapidly changing global economy and a rapidly changing world order?

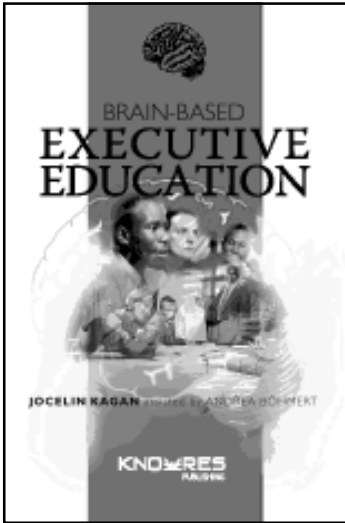
The editors have chosen three major themes for this book:

1. There is a discussion about the nature of leadership itself, including some interviews with a number of leading thinkers on the subject.
2. Many of the key issues in leadership are explored.
3. The processes involved in growing leaders is explored with some best practice case studies.

Contributors include: **Italia Boninelli \* Piet Calitz \* Lydia Cillié-Schmidt \* Prof Elisabet Engellau \* Dr Adrienne Feldner-Busztin \* Pieter Geldenhuys \* Deon Greyling \* Prof Stan Hardman \* Denise Holloway \* Chantell Ilbury \* Andy Johnson \* Prof Manfred F.R. Kets De Vries \* Dr Hendrik Kriek \* Mpho Makwana \* Terry Meyer \* Dudu Msomi \* Prof Hellici Ngambi \* Prof Stella M. Nkomo \* Niven Postma \* Cynthia Schoeman \* Prof Rob Taylor \* Dr Susan Wolmarans**

*Conversations in Leadership: South African Perspectives* has ended our search by bringing together the work of our foremost thinkers to increase our knowledge of this powerful topic. This book will further strengthen our ability to unleash our business and organisational potential, first in South Africa and then in Africa as a whole”.





## Brain-Base Executive Education

By Jocelin Kagan \* Andrea Böhmert

Price: R259.00 ISBN: 1-86922-055-2

*"This book not only teaches us why we are prone to think, say and do such foolish things. And be honest, we've all been there, done that, got the T-shirt. More importantly, it contains a solid selection of articles from experts in the field of the brain as well as executive coaching and education which suggest ways of knowing more about ourselves so that we don't fall into such traps again. Even more positively, the book tells us how to use our imagination and intuition to be leaders in business and generally become more well rounded*

*human beings in the world at large.*

*In summary, what this book provides for lay people like myself is a wonderful road map of the brain. Life will never be the same again. Whenever I have a bright idea in future, I shall wonder which motorway or by-road my idea is whizzing down. I shall be sensitive to all the deviations and traffic jams to which my idea may be subject before emerging into the clear blue light of day. What's more, I'll be able to argue the toss with all the 'yes, but ...' brigade who want to put my idea down, because I'll have an idea about their road maps as well."*

**Clem Sunter**



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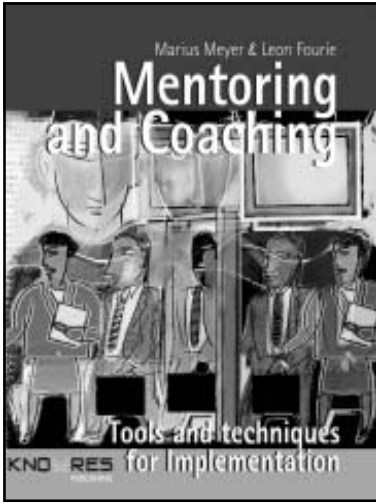
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*Dr John Tibane is a management and leadership consultant. His corporation TIBANE CONSULTING specialises in maximising human capital. He is well known for his insights on leadership, potential development, service excellence and productivity.*

*DO it ... BECAUSE YOU CAN! is a book for its time, with a timeless message.*



**Mentoring and Coaching:  
Tools and techniques for  
implementation**  
Marius Meyer & Leon Fourie

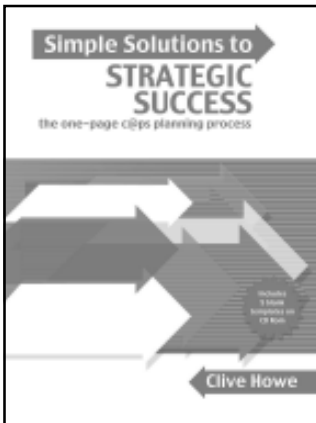
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*Mentoring and Coaching* is the ultimate South African handbook for becoming a world-class mentor and coach. Firmly rooted in the South African context, it provides tried, tested and benchmarked guidelines for managers, team leaders, facilitators, mentors or coaches who are required to do some form of mentoring and coaching as part of their jobs.

**Includes** case studies, examples, checklists, evaluation, agreement and self-assessment forms, role-plays, plans and toolboxes to help you to:

- assess your organisation's mentoring programme, your mentoring and coaching potential, the talents of mentees, as well as the readiness of your organisation for mentoring and coaching
- deal with the pitfalls of mentoring and the management of diversity in the mentor-mentee relationship; draw up a mentoring agreement, a development plan for a mentee, and a mentee performance self-assessment form; adapt your current coaching practices to the national unit standard.



**Simple Solutions to Strategic Success:  
The One-Page c@ps Planning  
process** by Clive Howe

R175-00

ISBN 1-919919-20-1

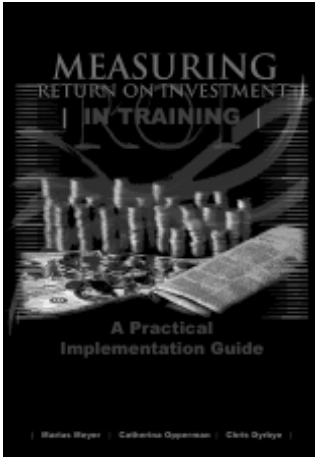
(Includes a CD-ROM)

Simple Solutions to Strategic Success provides you with a strategic planning process that is simple enough for the plan to fit onto a single page.

You will find *Howe's* model incredibly easy to understand and implement.

It is imbued with such a strong sense of focus that it will allow you to align every

single function and daily activity with the vision of your company. In this way the model has become the ultimate link between strategy and operations.



**Measuring Return on Investment in Training A Practical Implementation Guide**

*M Meyer, C Opperman, C Dyrbye*

R299.00

ISBN: 1-86922-019-6

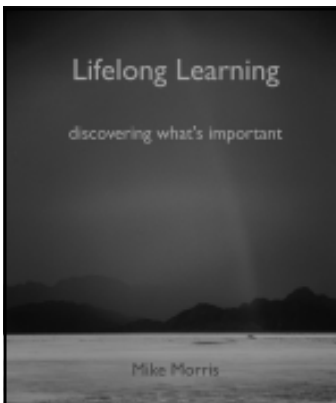
**This book is intended to help human resource- and training managers to obtain the necessary knowledge and skills to determine ROI in training programmes.**

“Measuring Return on Investment in Training” provides a systematic and integrated approach to the theory and practice of ROI. It also provides a more

holistic understanding of the correct application of ROI measurement in the workplace.

You will learn how to...

- Measure Return On Investment (ROI) to determine the value of training for your company
- Motivate the use of ROI for the organisation
- Apply the steps to measure ROI
- Calculate ROI for a training intervention
- Avoid the pitfalls in ROI measurements
- Provide guidelines for the correct calculation of ROI
- Implement the ROI process in an organisation
- Overcome resistance to ROI
- Compile a ROI report for a company



**Lifelong Learning: Discovering What's Important by Mike Morris**

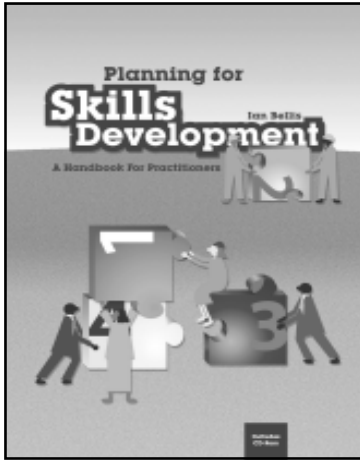
R239-00

ISBN: 1-919919-18-X

*Morris* believes we can create the life we want through self-reliant learning - if we direct our learning to what is important to us.

His central question is "What is important?" The search for this answer is facilitated by a simple and practical model. The premise is that adults learn through their day-to-day experiences. As a result he examines the role that experiences and

self-reliance play in learning. The book becomes a personal mentor.



## Planning for Skills Development by Prof Ian Bellis

ISBN: 1-919919-23-6 (For handbook)

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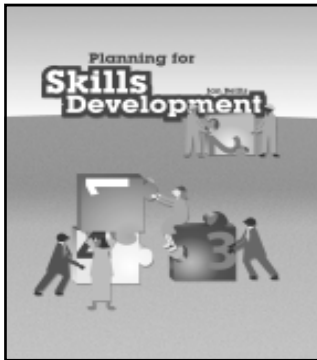
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*Ian* created a package, consisting of a Handbook for Practitioners with Checklists and Worksheets on a CD-ROM and a Video and Facilitator's notes.

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In the handbook *Ian* provides the reader with a basis for thinking about and planning for skills development that is consistent with an outcomes-competence based approach to education, training and development and which is aligned with the requirements of the South African Skills Development legislation.



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should be used interactively with specific sections of the planning process in the Practitioners Guide.

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