

ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL SKILLS FOR THE PROMOTION OF TRADE AND INVESTMENT

LEARNING HOW TO LEARN

Let us examine the theme of this session. The key words in the theme are:

1. **Enhancing**
2. **Professional skills**
3. **Promotion**
4. **Trade**
5. **Investment.**

Enhance: According to Webster's dictionary, to enhance means to increase or make greater as in value, beauty or reputation.

Professional skills: Professional skills are profession specific competences as may be acquired by say, an Accountant, a Lawyer, an Engineer, or a Doctor usually gained through training and experience which predisposes them to perform their tasks better. In the words of Guy Le Boter a French expert on the development of competencies, "A Professional is a person who possesses a personal body of knowledge and of know-how which is recognized and valued by the market.

Promotion: We may regard promotion as the encouragement of the growth or development of something.

Trade: Trade is generally understood to mean the exchange of commodities.

Investment: Webster dictionary defines investment as: to commit money in order to gain profit or interest.

We may then ask the question, how to enhance our professional skills to encourage the growth of Trade and Investment through learning?

About Learning:

Indeed a foremost management theorist, the late Peter Drucker said, and I quote **“a worker needs one thing only, to learn how to learn”** end of quote. This is a simple, yet profound statement about the importance of learning.

The process of acquiring knowledge is fundamental and comes naturally to us all. From birth, a child begins to learn about its environment, learning how to crawl, how to stand up and take those initial tentative steps, learning how to talk, and soon, begins to imitate the actions of adults, all these without receiving formal instruction. This form of learning is regarded as informal learning. For our purposes this will be the equivalent of OJT (On the Job Training). Formal instruction on the other hand is when we go to school or are enrolled in a course of program to acquire further regulated skills or knowledge. Both forms of learning are crucial in enhancing professional skills. Man is truly a learning machine.

Learning: A lifelong Journey:

Today’s society is constantly changing, and successful people or organizations are those that are able to adapt to these changes. To adapt means to learn and, to remain successful, means to be in a continuous state of learning such as acquiring new skills, improving on old ones. In other words, both individuals and organization must embark on a lifelong journey of learning, because we live in a Darwinian world where only the fittest survive, and the fittest are those engaged in continuous learning, and are therefore better able to adapt. The need that motivates man to learn has animated thinkers in management with the result that today, we now speak of the learning organization.

Professional skills

Professional skills have been defined earlier in this presentation. It is important to take a second look at it because it is the central subject of the theme of this session. Professional skills are also referred to variously by experts as intellectual capital or intellectual asset because in the new economy, professional skills create the economic values. These values drive the growth and profit of large service industries such as Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Health care, Financial services and Consulting. They also generate profit in the manufacturing industry through activities such as research, process design, product design, logistics and Marketing among others. It is evident that professional skills are the pre-eminent source of economic value and therefore constitute the foundation for success at every level in the organization.

WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF UNENHANCED PROFESSIONAL SKILL

- Poor trade
- Poor Investors confidence
- Economic deterioration
- Flawed system
- Excessive price instability
- Economic Instability
- Decline in supply/demand
- Poor policy regulation and lack of transparency in the field of trade facilitation that covers import, export and regulatory procedures.

Self-Assessment a starting Point:

Learning should begin with self-assessment. An objective self-assessment is critical to identifying strengths as well as areas of weakness that might then need to be improved upon. We generally avoid discussing our weak points, instead we

usually focus on our strengths. To open our mind up for learning we must begin by admitting deficiencies and this will only come from objective self assessment.

Training as Asset Management:

Professional skills taken together constitute an organization's intellectual asset. To prosper and thrive in a very competitive world, we need an effective asset management strategy, and training and retraining is the best way to remain competitive and grow the value of our asset by enhancing the quality of professional skill in the organization.

Enhancing Professional skills:

Yes we need to invest in the renewal of the core competencies of professional members of the workforce for them to function effectively by providing continuing education for them and if needs be customized training to truly sharpen their skills. Enhancing professional skills comes to this: Learning, learning, and, more learning.

Information Management:

Effective use of Information is probably the single most important thing in Trade and Investment. What is the worth of acquiring a skill but being unable to impart, use or share your knowledge. It must therefore be of emphasis to organization not only to enhance the professional competent of their staff but to skillfully manage its relevant and utility.

Communication:

Finally, as a Lawyer and a businessman, I have come to value the importance of good **communication**. I define good and effective communication simply as: "To understand, and be understood". Everything goes wrong when even the slightest

gap occurs and the intended message is lost. Communicating clearly is therefore very important.

Another important point to recognize is that we generally tend to talk more than we listen. It is however more important to listen when we are engaged in communication activity. Mr. Lee Iaccoca former Chairman of Chrysler Corporation had this to say about listening: “I only wish I could find an institute that teaches people how to listen. After all good manager need to listen as much as he needs to talk.... Real communication goes in both directions”.

Conclusion:

Finally, skill development is appropriate in enhancing the present/future global socio-economic challenges inhuman capital development and wealth creation. Enhancing profession skill is therefore an important component for the promotion of trade and investment. Everywhere knowledge, skills and resourcefulness of people are critical in sustaining economic and social development in our society. These are the essential ingredients in enhancing professional skill for the promotion of trade and investment.

Thank you.

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