



YOUR PM

...insight lead

**BUILDING HR CAPABILITY AS
AFRICA CONTINUES TO GO
GLOBAL**

By Anita Wiafe-Asinor

BUILDING HR CAPABILITY AS AFRICA CONTINUES TO GO GLOBAL

The globalization of Africa's economy is compelling organizations to rethink their future strategies. It is now widely recognized that transformation is critical to their survival and growth. Business organizations in Africa, especially private enterprises are experiencing winds of change. For the HR function, this is providing a challenging opportunity for HR to manage the complexities of change, transformation as well as building the capability of the HR.

However, issues facing HR in Africa (e.g. managing the cultural differences, attracting and retaining skilled workers, the millennials, developing local content, technology, big data etc.) are expected to change dramatically as Africa continues to develop. As a result, HR professionals must learn to play a key role in dealing with these changes and must develop specific competencies to support these changes as the organization will continue to rely more and more on HR to facilitate these changes effectively. The African HR professional is also faced with a higher demand to develop and manage an international workforce, maintain written and unwritten corporate policies transferable to other cultures, keep top management informed of the costs of not paying attention to the transnational issues and provide their services to a variety of locations worldwide.

Therefore, it is clear that as Africa's economy continues to expand it will continue to impact HR managers by requiring new skills such as language capabilities in order to recruit employees from other cultures and in order to facilitate communication among people coming from a wide range of language backgrounds, for



example in most multinationals, the preferred language is English.

Unlike in the past where HR is considered as a functional need providing mainly an administrative back office support; there is a need now to view HR as a not just a partner but as a business advocate. One of the constant challenges faced in this area is aligning HR to the business. The five R's, therefore, assumes the highest significance in HR strategy. The HR team, therefore,

needs to get it right from the start when the business strategy is defined for Resourcing, Recruiting the right talent, retaining the talent, Retraining and Restructuring.

The focus is no longer just about recruiting the right people reactively but more on how we are going to plan our workforce well and manage the performance of our workforce to deliver results. The challenge of performance management is to create a performance culture where opportunities are provided to enhance performance and where rewarding optimum performance becomes a way of life within the workplace. Training and development are another areas. Again, it is not just about identifying training needs and giving the required training. It is about foreseeing and anticipating the requirements and developing suitable training so that the workforce is well-equipped to handle the challenges of the job and the changing environment.

The implications are clear; HR departments can no longer carry on with its traditional functions. HR will have to be involved in the whole organizational processes and act as a counsellor and facilitator. This is a gigantic challenge for HR to face when in most businesses it is very much an unseen back-office department. In the face of such challenges faced by HR leaders in Africa and people in management, a question arises as to the competencies African HR and people managers require in order to survive in the changing phases of globalization.

So how does HR build capability?

Human Resource Management (HRM) according to Bratton and Gold (2007:7) is "a strategic approach to managing employment relations which emphasizes that leveraging people's capabilities is critical to achieving a sustainable competitive advantage, this being achieved through a distinctive set of integrated employment policies, programs and practices".

Therefore, in order to effectively deal with all the changes, HR leaders and people managers must develop competencies that will allow them to carry out their roles, competencies such as:

- ❖ Leadership,
- ❖ Strategic planning
- ❖ Market knowledge of their industry
- ❖ Organizational awareness
- ❖ Self-confidence
- ❖ Sharing of expertise
- ❖ Global and cultural understanding
- ❖ Multiple language competencies
- ❖ Flexibility
- ❖ Teamwork
- ❖ Communication
- ❖ Change management
- ❖ Analytics



HR professionals also need to increase their numerical and data compilation skills as increasing demands from top management for HR departments to provide specific measurable results that prove effective in their area. Management now seeks quantifiable results from HR that prove that their department is delivering specified outcomes based on the objectives and goals set forth by the organization.

In addition to delivering specific measurable developments, HR professionals will need to be familiar with and administer employee surveys and provide accurate data compilation and HR analytics.

HR leaders in Africa now like their colleagues around the world are forced to be more efficient, more effective and more competitive. They need to respond to the demands of global competitiveness by becoming more familiar with language skills, cultural awareness and diversity promotion. Additionally, African HR professionals must be committed to continuous learning, being familiar with cutting-edge communication and developments in the HR profession to enable them to keep them up to date.

By positioning HR as a business advocate and engraining the organization on a commercial rather than a purely functional level, this means that the HR leader will need to increase its capability to drive organizational change and deliver on business goals as well as shape the organization to be fit for the future. Thus, the HR leader has to build capability both at the individual and organizational level to sustain business success.

Building capability starts with the HR strategy and using data and insights to inform the HR strategy and business decisions. It also requires HR to develop an HR business strategy that aligns metrics with the business strategy as well as redefines HR's role in the business. This means that HR needs to know what it needs to measure and measurement should link to the business outcomes.

Additionally, HR needs to recognize its role in change management by working with line managers to drive change through the organization. HR policies, procedures and systems have to be up to date and support business needs, culture and growth. This means that the HR department has to invest in a good HRMIS (Human Resource Management Information System) that can provide HR analytics effectively.

Human Resource Management in Africa is changing from being predominately administrative to becoming more of a partner to the business. The question now remains; is your HR department fit for purpose? Now more than ever building the HR capability as Africa continues to go global is not just essential but critical.



**Develop transformational
leaders for long-term
business success with OML
Africa's Training and
Development Programmes!**



Phone us: **0302973379**
Email us: **enquiries@omlafrica.com**
Visit us: **www.omlafrica.com**