

Towards sound entrepreneurship in Rwanda



In this issue

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- Think in terms of goals, not procedures
- Focusing on what you do best yields success
- Upcoming BPN Seminars



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**Think in terms of goals,
not procedures.**

As is custom in our country, one of my nieces used to help us out in our household. She was taking care of our little son and was in charge of some of the household chores. This helped me a lot. She was a very honest, loving and sincere person. She always gave her best, and she loved our son. Now she has moved on. She is studying at the university.

When she started working with us though, **there was something about her working style that puzzled me for the longest time.** My niece was a very hard worker and she would clean the floors in our house every single day, no matter whether they were dirty or not. I told her that this was not necessary, but this is how she liked to do it. Given all these efforts, you would expect my house to be the cleanest in all of Kigali, but this was not the case. The problem was that she would always clean the same places, but never change her routine. When I showed her that dust was piling up under the bed, she would be surprised and clean under the bed without complaining, but after some time she would fall back in her old habits. There was never a lack of engagement or effort, but if I wanted something

to be cleaned that wasn't part of her daily routine, I needed to ask for it time and time again.

Why was this so? How come she didn't seem to learn from previous experiences? These questions made me think a lot, especially because **I saw similar things happening with BPN entrepreneurs.** One time, it had just rained heavily when we visited an entrepreneur. A large pool of brown, dirty water had flooded the space between two buildings. There was no way we could cross. One of the employees was moping the water towards the drain using a floor wiper, but despite his best efforts the water level wasn't dropping. The business owner standing there with us, watching, got nervous. "Ko bitinda ra?", he said. "It's taking long. What is it?". The employee explained "Erega hazibye", "What can I do? The drain is blocked, the water can't go in faster" and he continued moping. It was clear, it would take a while before the water would disappear into that blocked drain. The entrepreneur said "Yewe, shaka indobo n'itorosho uyayore"; "Listen, you need to pour away that water using a cloth". The employee did so and in less than five minutes we could cross.

These two examples have one thing in common.

It is a story about people who work hard, do things the way they have learned to do them, but who are not fully successful in their actions. **Over time it became clear to me that what I was seeing were people who are thinking in terms of procedures instead of thinking in terms of the goal they want to achieve.** They are performing tasks as if they mechanically follow recipes or take orders rather than understand the underlying principles and apply them to the situation. It was as if my niece never had a clear picture in mind of what a clean house would look like, but instead carried out the series of tasks she saw as her job description. Same with the employee, who didn't take a step back to reflect on what it was that he was trying to achieve, but simply kept on moping.



Thinking in terms of procedures prohibits you to be flexible or creative when a situation demands it. It makes you prone to making errors, because following a predefined script might not be well suited to a particular situation. It also creates a resistance to change and blocks opportunities for self-improvement, since change requires you to get out of your comfort zone. **Thinking in terms of goals makes you act very differently.** You are focussed on what it is you try to achieve and you will define and redefine all the steps that are needed to get you where you want to be. It will give you ownership over what you do and it will make you proud of your achievements. Certainly, you will still make errors, but you will learn from them and be able to apply what you learnt to new situations. Thinking in terms of goals puts you in the driving seat of your life.

Some entrepreneurs might recognise some of this procedural thinking in their business and have some examples of their own. Some entrepreneurs might even say: "This is how it is. Employees in Rwanda are like this. We can't change it".

Still, certainly, this procedural thinking is something you want to avoid. What you want is for your employees to not mindlessly execute the tasks assigned to them, but for them to be eager to reach a specific goal. **So what can be done about it? How can we make our team work responsibly and take ownership, rather than being passive and non-reflexive?**

The first step is to be aware of this phenomenon and recognize it when it occurs. Then you take the time to explain in great detail to your employee why things should be done in a certain way and you make sure that he or she understands the underlying principles. It might sound like this will take way too much of your time. But think about it. The alternative is that every time again, you have to correct the same mistakes and every time again you need to invest money to correct these mistakes.

If you consequently work with your employees in this way, you will find that they will start executing their jobs very differently. Realising this change will not be easy. And it will not happen in one day. But change will happen, slowly but surely. If your employees make a mistake and you empower them by explaining what the problem is, they will grow as an employee. After some time, they will not only execute their tasks better, but they will start thinking about new solutions that will help your business forward. There are many examples of employees who have made valuable suggestions on how a production process can be made more efficient. Just in the same way that you as an entrepreneur are proud of your products and your company, **your employees will be proud of their job, their role in your company, and the products that they produce. Just imagine what good this can do for your business.**

BPN is here to help you with your business. Our team listens to the challenges you might be facing and together with you we search for solutions. **You are always a welcome guest.**





Agnes Uzarerwa
SME Coaching
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Focusing on what you do best yields success.

It was on Christmas 2014, when I decided to visit some orphans and share with them the festive season. For Doris, a seven year old boy, I had brought with me a list of items that boys of his age adore. I started giving him a chocolate, some cookies, yoghurt and enjoyed to see his excitement when he received the gifts! He was happy to collect one after the other, automatically putting the previous gifts aside so he could receive the new ones. In the end he was totally confused and undecided on what he was to do in order to contain all of his properties. He ended up holding only the sporting shoes in his hands as they were the items that he truly cherished.



I found the behavior of Doris fascinating. It reminded me of Joanita, a woman entrepreneur whom I once visited who shared with me her business story. She had spent five years working in a bakery and finally decided to start her own business. The business had become very successful and profitable. Her bread is so sweet and her clients are happy with her products, preferring it to other manufacturers on the market. She even sells to supermarkets and restaurants. Given the high profits that this business had earned her, she had started a juice manufacturing factory and a yoghurt manufacturing factory.

She thought that someone who had come to buy her breads could at the same time walk away with some fresh yoghurt and juice. Clearly she would become a multimillion business woman in no time. In reality, things didn't work out so well. She worked very long hours trying to make it all work, but the new businesses didn't become successful. Even worse, even the bakery business started to suffer because she could not devote enough attention to it.

Many a times, entrepreneurs find themselves handling various business ventures. **They are successful in one business and think the success will automatically transfer to the new businesses.** What they often forget however is the expertise and experience on which they build the success of their first business. Joanita knew the bakery business before she started, but had no experience in juice and yoghurt processing. This caused many mishaps and many losses. Starting a new business without deeply understanding the business field is a daunting task. **The simple prospect of increasing profits by opening more businesses does not so easily translate into reality.** Before you acquire the necessary expertise in the new business that can make it profitable, a whole lot of money will have been spent.

If you focus on your core business, your expertise and experience will make you successful. If you want to expand your business activities, it might be wise to stay within the same field. In the bakery business for example, you can expand by adding new bakery products, like mandazis or baguettes; or you can increase your capacity by buying new machines. You might make some small mistakes going through these changes, but you will be able to avoid big mistakes because you understand the products, you understand the market, and your company can build on its experience.

„There is only one thing in the longrun
more expensive than education:
no education.“

John F. Kennedy

Upcoming BPN Seminars

Leadership



17 - 20.06.15

Kigali

Venue:

To be communi-
cated later

Speaker:

Hans Wilhelm

Many companies perceive their employees as work force only. Personnel development is unusual and the employer is rarely aware of his/her social responsibility. This seminar points out the importance and the potential of motivated and competent employees for the business. It teaches leadership principles such as: responsibility, motivation, constructive way of thinking, visionary and goal-oriented working methods, as well as communication skills and conflict resolution methods, personality and knowledge of human nature in leadership using the DISC personality model.

Finance Management



23 - 26.06.15

Kigali

Venue:

To be communi-
cated later

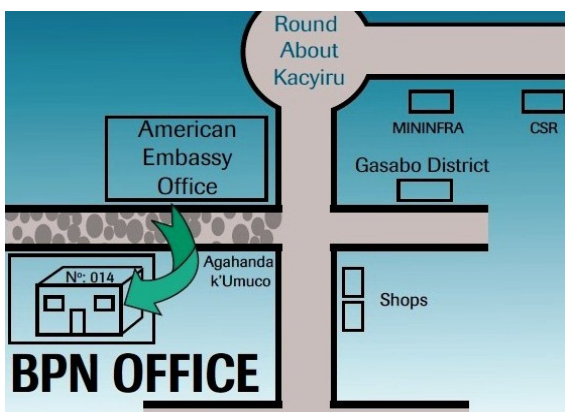
Speaker:

Hans Wilhelm

The goal of this training is that the entrepreneur knows the most important financial tools for his business and can make use of them. He/she learns to optimize his/her production with the help of budget and actual figures. He/she is aware of the importance of depreciation and provision. During the seminar the entrepreneur develops a personal management-cockpit. Financial management is addressed as a leadership instrument. Basic concepts of accounting, financial tools, and the calculation of the break-even (costs of productions/profit and loss making zones) are extensively explained.

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