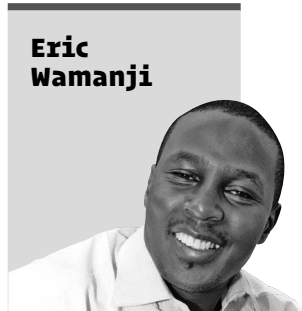


INTEGRITY Reputable organisations hire competent individuals who can deliver the set goals

Professionalism is king in profit battle



Eric Wamanji

We suffer several misfortunes daily. A rude bus conductor, an indifferent waiter, or a corrupt public official, all play out in a predictable pattern as if an adept scriptwriter chose to produce and dispense racketeering.

Yet, the marketplace economy - where competition is fierce - rides on a fundamental wheel - professionalism. It is what Adams Smith, the father of capitalism, partly espouses in his seminal works *Wealth of the Nations* and *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. He aptly notes: "by selling products that people want to buy, the butcher, brewer, and baker hope to make money. If they are effective in meeting the needs of their customers, they will enjoy the financial rewards."

The operative word here is effectiveness against financial rewards which we call profit. Effectiveness denotes professionalism - which has become a buzzword, (unfortunately mostly hollow) in corporate milieu and has defined the "financial rewards" or losses for many organisations.

Gold standard

Professionalism is the gold standard and discipline of a profession. Beyond the obligatory skills and competencies - gained through rigorous training and experience - for performing a duty, keeping fidelity to the codes of the profession and generally of the organisation is what sets experts apart.

Professionalism is a cocktail of diverse attributes that generally dictates the acceptable demeanours expected of a profession. This could be civility and collegiality, decency and decorum, efficiency and confidentiality. By meeting these sacrosanct tenets, we bring honour to our professions and organisations. This is how reputation is seeded and nurtured.

Recently, I engaged wonks on organisational behaviour and professionalism. From our musings I gleaned other cherished essentials such as honesty, courtesy, transparency, integrity, responsibility and excellence as the finer fibres of professionalism. The very concept of professionalism is critical both to the professional and the organisation. The individual gains the respect and prestige and

therefore advances in career, the organisation is afforded the support for growth, respect, and reputation. A professional environment is a productive one. In such realm, people are happy and protective of the essence of their brand.

The private sector knows this too well. Profits are reflection of how professional an environment is. It is what Smith venerated as "financial rewards."

The marketplace is like a barometer; it tests our fit for purpose. This explains why it is the professional actor who the market favours. The blue chips understand this concept just too well. Their goods and services are to be delivered in the most professional manner as possible.

The private sector is also very sensitive to Grecian horses so unmissed in most organisations. These portraits, besting in mediocrity and sway on lore, neither harbours noble intentions nor boasts of any shred of effectiveness as counselled Smith. To suppose immaculate felicity of financial rewards in their reign is confession of naivety and myopia.

If unprofessional elements go untamed, they will manipulate the system, misadvise management for personal gratification, spawn disenchantment, and eventually haul the

organisation to Armageddon.

Therefore, unprofessionalism is an error that should be unacceptable in any business environment. They are costly.

Similarly, professionalism manifests better institutional capacity, sound leadership and value for money - it attracts admiration and support from stakeholders.

International politics

But why would organisations sink to the gutters of unprofessionalism? Surveys on most companies indicate that chasms in the chain are a cause. Ideally, the top should be the avatar of professionalism. Leading by example, having a firm grip on affairs of the organisation and allowing for innovative urges to blossom and thrive.

When leadership loses traction either through omission or commission, and the chase of the trivial and the narrow, missing the big picture, there is a likelihood that the rest will be restive and resort to the messy path of unprofessionalism. In international politics, this is the dangerous Hobbesian state of nature.

Such anarchic organisations are destined for a flop.

Thus, to beat the curse of unprofessionalism, hiring the best brains is non-negotiable.

An unqualified, incompetent and myopic team is burdensome to the realm. It is the genesis of anarchy and corporate losses. Leadership too must remain focused and continuously redefine the image of the organisation.

All reputable organisations that we admire were neither created overnight, nor were they accidental.

They are products of continuous reflections and reviews. These organisations have taken their time to understand the dynamic nature of human beings, and have painfully trod a thorny path to greatness.

Such are, what Peter Senge in the epic *Fifth Discipline* calls 'learning organisations' with willing leadership and team wise enough to appreciate that the boat will certainly sink in the reign of mediocrity, triviality and paranoia. If it is the Smiths butcher, brewer, or baker, they will close shop.

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Leonard Ngaluma



Innovative and honest public officers vital

Over the years, the Kenyan Police Force (now Police Service) has acquired the dubious distinction of being the most corrupt institution going by many surveys and Transparency International's annual reports.

Predictably, any institution that suffers negative ratings on any measure - be it corruption, service delivery or productivity - often has its public image battered following wholesale condemnation. In all fairness, this should not be the case. In every public institution, there are bright spots; officers who perform their duties diligently and with professional distinction.

A case in point is Corporal David Kipng'eno Chumo, a traffic police officer based at the Bomet Police Station, who, among others, was recently honoured during the third Huduma Ombudsman Award ceremony. The Award is an initiative of the Commission on Administrative Justice that seeks to recognise and reward outstanding public officers and institutions.

Corporal Chumo was crowned the winner of the Individual Category for upholding integrity in public service, selflessness and going beyond the call of duty to promote the rule of law. Coincidentally, the Independent Policing Oversight Authority was the best in the institution category for professionalism, making the police accountable to the public thereby securing the rights of citizens, and enhancing trust in the police service.

The award scheme is in line with policy interventions such as Kenya Vision 2030 which lay emphasis on policy-driven and service-focused government institutions as prerequisites to attaining national aspirations. The enabling ingredients have been packaged around administration and service delivery in the entire public service.

The World Bank, in its March 2016, Kenya Country Economic Memorandum report, observed the need to focus on improving public service effectiveness to leverage on economic growth for shared prosperity.

The Commission prides itself for being a key player in the continuing effort to transform public service not only through the award scheme, but also by facilitating the setting up of, and building complaint handling capacity in the sectors of public service, public offices and state organs.

To this end, the Commission has trained over 12,000 public officers on good governance, complaints handling and ADR methods; and provided technical support to over 250 in an array of areas including development of complaints policies, service charters and institutional complaints handling procedures. As a result of these interventions, public institutions are increasingly becoming more responsive to the public.

The Huduma Ombudsman Award is, thus, the Commission's modest gesture to reward officers who, notwithstanding the limitation of resources and other challenges that impede service delivery, continue to go beyond the call of duty and impacting their sphere.

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