ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY

LEARNING NOTES

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What? why? How?

LEARNING NOTES
MIND THE GAP
Generational Theory: Managing and Leading People that vary in Age, Culture, Creed and Religion

MANAGEMENT SEMINAR

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Abbreviations

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
MILE	Municipal Institute of Learning
LN	Learning Notes

About Learning Notes

These MILE Learning Notes (LNs) are intended to serve as reminders of key issues, discussions and challenges that emanated from the Management Seminar hosted by MILE in partnership with Corporate & Human Resources on 8 July 2011. They are based on Graeme Codrington's presentation, experience, accumulated knowledge and current thinking. The intended users of these LNs are people involved in leadership and management. Graeme's presentation highlights and identifies 'issues and challenges' to be considered in the field leadership and management. The purpose of the LNs is to assist in the generation of information required to prepare and enhance the quality of leadership and management within eThekwini Municipality. It is hoped that the session will go a long way in assisting management within the municipality to provide practical solutions to generational challenges.

Furthermore, the LNs aim to guide and support practitioners in the enhancement of their skills by providing reminders of issues and recommendations which will help them in dealing with important decisions in assuming their roles. They represent an attempt to crystallise Graeme Codrington's knowledge and experiences. It is also assumed that LN users have had some exposure to leadership and management related matters; however for those less familiar, links will also be provided as a source of more detailed information and examples.

Comments and suggestions for the improvement of these LNs are welcomed. This is an open ended series of LN, updated and improved on an ongoing basis. Additional notes will be added as necessary. These, together with requests for further information, should be addressed to mile@durban.gov.za.

1 Introduction

Management Seminars have become a prominent feature on the MILE agenda. The Municipal Institute of Learning (MILE), in collaboration with eThekwini Municipality's Corporate & Human Resources, recently hosted Graeme Codrington, from the renowned organisation, tomorrowtoday. The seminar focused on managing and leading people that differ in age, culture, creed and religion. It is understood that municipalities and private organisations are faced with similar leadership and management challenges as a result of rapid change. The purpose of the seminar was to congregate municipal management, professionals and officials to share knowledge, skills and experiences with the intent of improving management and leadership in their respective clusters, units and departments.

MILE, like tomorrowtoday, believes that management seminars are an important part of any attempt to change attitudes and behaviours in the municipality. Graeme Codrington, a high profile and world class speaker, provided the participants with a wealth of practical information and inspiration. His presentation style is highly charismatic and interactive. Graeme brought fresh thinking and energy to the seminar.

Prior to the commencement of the seminar, Sogen Moodley, the Senior Manager responsible for MILE, in his introductory note, established useful guidelines to help achieve the desired outcome of the seminar. He set the context by highlighting the objectives of the seminar. Sogen reminded municipal officials that MILE's philosophy was to maximise opportunities for innovation, capacity enhancement, learning and up scaling of municipal performance. The seminars provide practitioners with a platform to begin sharing good practice and learning from others' experiences.

Pam Matthias, the Deputy Head: Human Resources responsible for coordinating the seminar introduced Graeme Codrington, providing the audience with some insight into his achievements and expertise. Pam informed participants that in 2007 an Internal Perception Survey was conducted by the municipality which revealed that key areas, such as leadership, communication, values and culture, require substantial improvement. She emphasised that it was important to have the opportunity to invite one of the country's leading leadership and management experts to facilitate a session on Generational Theory, how value systems are developed and how these influence attitudes and behaviours. She indicated that this award-winning presentation has been requested by CEOs and event planners around the world. It is a multi-media, humour-filled exploration of the different generations. In South Africa, we have begun the journey of embracing a rich cultural diversity. Therefore, as leaders, it is essential that we further embrace this diversity and seek to understand the different generations as well as the values they live by in both our work and social environments.

The purpose of the presentation was to assist participants in understanding why people in different generations than themselves have different value systems, and how the generation gap influences attitudes and behaviours. It concludes with practical applications suitable for the audience – this includes how to attract, retain and engage employees, and how to connect with valued customers and service clients across the generations.

2 Overview

The focus of the seminar was on leadership and management in relation to Generational Theory. It was designed specifically for managers who, presumably, are grappling with issues of management and leadership in the post modern context. The format of the presentation adopted an interactive approach in which learning is not only confined to the traditional slide presentation style but involves discussion, humour and the use of multimedia. It allowed the opportunity for participants to share their management experiences from their respective clusters, units, and departments which enhance learning and sharing and the comparison of approaches.

In addition to drawing on Graeme's experience, the seminar enriched participants' insights into a range of innovative solutions to effectively address management challenges. In a world in which diversity is increasingly being celebrated; the presentation proposes ways in which the municipality can find solutions to create environments where diversity can flourish. Graeme noted that diversity carries three major pillars from a people perspective, namely: generational, cultural and gender. Corporate culture will increasingly be affected by talent mobility, globalization, cultural imperialism, inter-connectivity and inter-dependent economies. The question is, is the municipality ready to respond?

By understanding the impact of different generations, inside and outside the municipality, we can improve customer relationships, and the productivity and interactions of our teams. Understanding why younger and older people – staff, customers, family and friends – have such different expectations and approaches to life, leadership, work and relationships is vital and we can apply the insights immediately and change the municipality forever.

3 Generational Theory: Managing and Leading People that vary in Age, Culture, Creed and Religion

Graeme took us through his presentation. He informed participants that the purpose of the presentation was to discuss how value systems are developed and how these influence attitudes and behaviours. He mentioned that, by understanding the impact of different generations, the municipality can improve customer relationships, and the productivity and interactions of its' employees. In simple terms, management needs to understand why younger and older people have different expectations and approaches to life, leadership, work and relationships. Using his multimedia presentation filled with humour, it became apparent that if management could apply the insights, the municipality would change forever.

How managers influence behaviour determines whether they are managers or leaders. There is an old saying: for every action there is a reaction, hence it is important for management to know what people do and the reasons thereof. People's actions depend on their value systems and their value systems determine what is wrong or right in their eyes. Graeme noted that people establish value systems at the age of 12 and this can be based on race, education, age, socioeconomics, culture, gender, era, religion, and personality. People born in the same era tend to see the world in a similar way and their attitudes tend to be similar. Graeme, in his introductory note, stated that we need to look at generations historically because they are shaped in a different ways. He highlighted four generations, namely, the Silent Generation (30s and 40s), the Baby Boomers (50s and 60s), Generation X (70s and 80s) and the current generation, Generation Y (90s and 2000s). Each generation will be elaborated in the following paragraphs.

3.1 The "Silent" Generation

The Silent Generation is comprised of individuals who were born during the 1930s and 40s. They are currently in their late 50s to mid 70s. According to Graeme, this generation was influenced by the Great Depression, World War II, the Industrial Revolution and Colonisation. Their core values include: dedication, duty before pleasure, adherence to rules, hard work, law and order, respect for position, cautiousness, delayed reward, sacrifice, conformity, modesty, patience, formality, a "waste not want not" mentality, self sufficiency, a dislike of debt and reticence to express emotion.

3.2 The "Baby Boomers"

The "Baby Boomers" (also known as the "Dreamers") were born during the 1950s and 60s and are currently in their late 40s to mid 50s. Born in this era, they were influenced by grand visions and ideologies, the struggle for freedom, relative wealth and freedom as well as the beginning of the "empowered individual". Their defining and driving values are: idealism, image, optimism, team orientation, nostalgia, personal growth and gratification. They group together by similarity of belief, are media savvy, strive for excellence, and are big talkers. They are generally very involved in their work ("work to live"), focused on health and wellness, and live life on credit. They have often been described as the youngest older generation. In South Africa, this is the group that participated in the liberation struggle such as the June 16 Soweto Riots. Graeme noted that managers from this era enjoy visioning, mission statements, purpose, strategic objectives, actions, KPIs and brainstorming.

3.3 Generation x

This generation was born during the 1970s and 80s. They are now in their late 20s and mid to late 30s. This group was influenced by globalisation, PCs and 24 hour television, the information revolution as well as social, political and economic turmoil such as the Cold War, strikes, rightsizing, downsizing, and the broken family (where in many cases both parents had to work to support their lifestyle). Their core values are constant change, choice, global awareness, techno-literacy, individualism, loneliness, lifelong learning, immediate gratification, survival, informality, whining, thrill seeking, pragmatism, and diversity. This group is not afraid of failure; they are self reliant; the family relationship is vital; and they want everything customised.

3.4 Generation y

Generation Y (also known as the "Millennials") were born during the 1990s and 2000s. Most of them are currently teenagers. Their values have been influenced by the global village, internet, cellphones, reconstruction, terrorism and protectionism and the protection of children. Their core values are optimism, confidence, high self esteem, media and entertainment, street smarts, diversity, conservativeness, networking, skepticism, civic duty, achievement, impatience, morality, naïveté, lifestyle centred, techno savvy, global citizenship and awareness and, informality. This group is characterised by a new slang; SMS texting, and instant messaging. The rules of grammar and spelling are disappearing and there is an international language emerging.

4. Lessons Learned

- Management should be able to recall, comprehend, analyse and then apply information on various generations, diversity, and the need for change. They should be able to adapt their existing skills and knowledge to affect the necessary transformations.

- Self-awareness around their own generational, cultural and gender placement and interaction with others is important in management and leadership. Improved productivity, team work and collaboration through empathy and understanding of self and others are also important.

- Management must find ways to better communicate and interact in an increasingly diverse workplace. This will help them gain more understanding of diversity and therefore have more empathy with others who are different.

- There is value in attracting diversity amongst young talent. Therefore, management needs to find ways to retain diverse talent, find solutions to resolve conflict and create an environment in which diversity can be celebrated.

- We may work in the same office as people, but we live in different worlds.

5. Conclusion

Graeme's presentation helped participants understand why people from different generations than themselves have different value systems, and how a generation gap influences attitudes and behaviours. This will help management with practical solutions on how to attract, retain and engage employees as well as connect with valued customers and clients, across generations.

The presentation was fun, interactive and visual whilst using a light-hearted, and edutainment-style approach, with lots of multi-media. He uses an interesting amalgamation of approaches to connect more effectively with participants. In a world where there is so much information available to us all the time via multiple channels, where there is a clear generation communication gap, where the expectations of the workplace have changed, there is always a need for new learning, re-learning and un-learning. In addition to this, young people coming into the workplace are the new generation, who do things fundamentally differently and need practical guidance. Mentorship has throughout history, and in every society, played a very important role in passing on wisdom. This is what young people need, and older people may get some insight into how younger people think. By understanding the generational gap, senior management within the municipality will create a competitive advantage by understanding the drivers of people's behaviour and attitudes, showing them how to influence others.