

Chapter XLIV

2007 Leadership and Human Resources Training in Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

This chapter originated as a reflection of the communication between U.S. facilitators and a Rwandan host as they collaborated in planning international leadership and human resources training for Rwandan leaders. The authors maintain that electronic collaboration or e-collaboration is a viable practice for use in effective communication with persons in developing nations. It can be used as a way to reduce the cost of providing support and services. For this action research project, facilitators accepted an invitation to train, collaborated to complete all planning via the Internet, and traveled to do the work successfully addressing all of the substantive requirements. In preparing this chapter, the authors have shared pre, during, and post work considerations hoping to make a case for increased use of e-collaboration in establishing effective work relationships and improved international communication. The chapter includes substantial details for context and the issues that necessitated the training.

INTRODUCTION

Conducting training requires planning regardless of where it is done. When it is done around the world, it requires additional levels of understanding and planning not normally considered. For this training, a Rwandan host requested that

U.S. facilitators provide assistance. The facilitators approached the training initiative based on a single question: How might U.S. facilitators provide leadership and human resources training for Rwandan leaders onsite? To address this question, the preparatory work was done using e-collaboration.

The process of planning the conduct of this training for Rwandan leaders provided an opportunity to study the process and the adjustments needed to succeed. As such, action research was the process used to methodically track what was done, why, and how. In that some of those involved were working from international locations, it was necessary to find an economical way to collaborate and e-collaboration was chosen.

According to Dick (1997), action research is a process by which change and understanding can be simultaneously pursued. This process is usually described as cyclic, with action and critical reflection taking place in turn, and with reflection used to review the previous action and plan the next one. This meant that this team could have an experience, reflect on what occurred, change, and use the new action. Clearly this collapsed the time for the work.

Similarly, Earon (2005) explains e-collaboration as interactive sharing of information with the potential for increasing productivity and efficiency. The e-collaboration used for this project included completing an assessment, formulating the requirements, scoping the work, designing the work, and proposing the follow-up. In the pages that follow, we explain how the research unfolded using the online collaboration.

BACKGROUND

There was good reason to expect that much of the leadership literature would not be appropriate in that it explained concepts used in U.S. bureaucratic organizations. One could also expect that there would be limited universalism of the leadership and human resources constructs. These positions were unfounded. Though parts of the African continent have been in turmoil for years there is a strong desire on the part of the Rwandans to become more businesslike. This is in spite of the fact that turmoil in certain areas has been manifest as devastating violence. In Rwanda, a country in

the African Great Lakes Region, this generation has seen violent conflict erupt into genocide, taking the lives of 800,000 people during a 90-day period in 1994.

Since the genocide, many individuals and groups have worked to stabilize and support the country. The Africa Great Lakes Initiative is one such group. For years they have worked with the Rwandan Yearly Meeting, a Quaker organization, to host peacemaking workshops. In October 2006, a Rwandan Yearly Meeting leader requested onsite Leadership and HR Training for leaders desiring to do a better job of leading. In planning this training, it was important to understand that the leaders were volunteers and represented 25 organizations such as elementary/middle/high schools, programs for HIV infected women, orphans programs, peacemaking training, and a seminary correspondence program for religious leaders.

For years, the Rwandan leaders have worked to understand change, prepare for change, and respond to change—both internal and external—to their organizations. The internal changes, especially the foreseeable ones, have in some instances afforded the leaders time to understand their needs, plan, and act to change. Rarely has that been true for the external changes where they have simply needed to react. This has been true for war, disease, and weather.

Presently, the leaders understand that all around them the world is changing and they must change, too. They must learn new ways and new tools. In doing so, they will create strategic and contingency plans in their organizations to address ongoing conflicts, disease, shortages, and environmental concerns.

It is also clear to them that they cannot manage organizations that serve larger numbers of people, with the same level of expertise they have had in the past. As a result they are seeking knowledge that they can use to help them be proactive rather than simply reactive regarding change. This leadership and human resources training was part of the preparation.

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