NAVIGATING THE VUCA WORLD THRU EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

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Theory of evolution taught us that those species who could not adapt to its changing environment would go extinct! Same with every organization- it is either embrace the change or perish! Organizations that could not adjust and adapt to all forces of change from internal and external environment would be “phased-out” sooner or later. For quite a long time, Change has popularly gained the definition “the only thing that stays”. The constancy of change has caused the dawning of more challenging situations-volatile, uncertain, highly complicated, ambiguous and disruptive in nature which gave birth to the term “VUCA”.

VUCA.org defines VUCA and clearly describes its characteristics:

VOLATILITY is when the rate of change is so fast, events unfold one after the other and determining the cause and effect becomes more difficult. UNCERTAINTY is when things and situations become very unpredictable and it becomes very hard to anticipate what will happen even if past experiences and historical forecasts are to be used as basis. COMPLEXITY is when issues become harder to understand and to handle due to multi-layered factors, that every action may result to several counter reactions and that choosing one single path is almost impossible. AMBIGUITY is a condition when things are not totally clear or precisely determinable which call for decision makers to be more willing to take the risks for their every decision.

For leaders and managers, leading an organization in this VUCA era would require more imagination to cunningly thrive in this kind of environment. The situation
requires leaders and the entire organization to take a major leap from the merely existing by doing the known best practices to evolving and developing by practicing “best thinking to create new ways of dealing with challenges”.

There is a need for fresh approach to management and leadership to successfully navigate in this VUCA world. Vuca. Org suggests the following: Counter VOLATILITY with VISION, UNCERTAINTY with UNDERSTANDING, COMPLEXITY with CLARITY and AMBIGUITY with ADAPTABILITY and AGILITY.

Organization with a deep sense of understanding about its purpose or reason for existence would be more than willing to take all measures to work their way to their targets-focusing on what matters most and how each member can contribute regardless of the obstacles. They would be more than willing to try several options and adjust their strategies if they have to.

How can a leader turn his people into team players who could help the organization survive VUCA situations? Teamwork and cohesiveness are necessary and it would be more possible if leaders know how to communicate their vision, their mission and strategies to help everyone go up alongside with the organization. Effective communication could be the key to getting things done amidst the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity of situations.

When does communication become effective? Alessandra Martelli defines effective communication as delivering an information unambiguously, so that the receiver can decode it correctly. She also cited the 7Cs of Communication by University of Wisconsin Professor Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center in their book Effective Public Relations (1952) which describes what effective communication should have: completeness, conciseness, consideration, concreteness, courtesy, clarity and correctness. It explains that in an effective communication, the receiver gets all the information he needs to process the message and take action. Aside from this, effective communication
contains content that is brief, exact and straight to the point, focusing on the important. It also has to take into account the receiver’s background and points of view, respecting the receiver’s culture, values and beliefs. Furthermore, message has to be specific, tangible, vivid, supported by facts and figures for enhanced credibility. Another important thing is to observe correct grammar and syntax vouch for increased effectiveness and credibility of your message.

Communication is quite a powerful tool that it make or break an organization. The challenges of leading amidst the VUCA work environment can be overcome if leaders invest on finding ways to enhance the quality of communication within the organization and communication with the external stakeholders and environment. With excellent communication, leaders can be sure that people will be more guided and aware of what they should be doing to help their team become more resilient while taking the risks of evolving to ensure its relevance to the changing landscapes of work environment.

References:
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