

AMBASSADORS FOR CHANGE GEN Y GEARS UP

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN DOHA TO BECOME MORE AWARE THAT THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION WHICH IS OCCURRING THROUGH THE MIDDLE EAST IS AN INDICATOR OF THE CHANGING EXPECTATIONS OF THE YOUNGER GENERATION.



iving in the Middle East at the present time is exciting; there is little doubt about that! All around us we see massive change, when we first came to Doha in 1981 the Sheraton was on the very edge of town, the West Bay Financial district didn't exist and the national vision for 2030 hadn't been presented.

Doha and Qatar are changing, there can be little doubt about that; and yet many things remain comfortably the same. There is a strong desire to maintain the cultural values which make Qatari society unique.

It was a privilege to be present at the recent presentation of the national development plan in that same Sheraton Hotel, which was just a skeleton in 1980. The fo-

cus on education and the development of Qatari youth was emphasised by the Deputy Emir His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani.

Coming back to Doha in 2009 to teach (amongst other things) Leadership at the Qatar Finance and Business Academy, I have been reminded of the responsibility that expatriates have for transferring skills. Those same skills that are required to achieve the national vision. I have come to also realise that it is important for the business community in Doha to become more aware that the social revolution which is occurring through the Middle East is an indicator of the changing expectations of the younger generation. Fuelled by the extraordinary speed with which information is transferred today. There are few secrets on Facebook and Blackberry!

My son told me after working for three years in the financial services sector in London, that my generation (the baby boomers) had much to learn about Gen Y, the generation that is now moving into positions of Leadership. The Gen Y is used to technology – it expects technology, whereas for my generation it was a wonder – I think I took the first personal computer my company had seen to Africa in the 80s, now my wife has three! Gen Y is impatient, my generation stayed in a job for life to draw a pen-

sion. This new generation is quite happy to change jobs on a regular basis for a better position, a more interesting job, more responsibility, a better package. And of course history has taught them that the pension pot might not be there anyway.

In Doha today we are faced with a challenge, there is massive competition for skilled Qataris to fill leadership positions. Because this is the Qatari Gen Y, the corporations that want to keep its young leaders long enough to achieve their company goal, will in the present need to demonstrate the leadership skills in their own organisation. The same skills which they expect in the Leaders they need for the future. There is no ideal portfolio of Leadership skills, it is situation dependant, but there are behaviours which work and there are those which definitely do not.

What does this mean in practice? It means that people in organisations who have potential expect that their bosses are interested in their development.

Much is spoken of the annual appraisal process (April edition of *Qatar Today* speaks of the 'dreaded time of the year'), but the appraisal process and the accompanying development plan, can be a tool for motivation. If the appraisal process is not a HR tool, but rather the means by which the employee has a clear agreement and under-



THE LEADERS:
PARTICIPANTS AT ASPIRATIONS FOR SUCCESS PROGRAMME AT QFBA

standing of his or her role in achieving the company's (Nation's) goals and aspirations: and if the development plan sets out the way in which the employee will gain the skills that are required to achieve those goals: and finally if the plan is a development plan and not a training schedule, then we can hope for great changes.

The Leader who spends time with those in his/her organisation who will take his place in the future, is a very wise leader, it is an investment in the future. Which of us when asked about the value of Learning and Development, would wish to hear that the company would be run by those in whom we had not invested the skills required to do so effectively?

Recognising the potential shortage of skills in the financial services sector - which is an important cornerstone of the knowledge economy envisaged in the development plan - the Qatar Finance and Business Academy was established in 2009, with a mandate to address that skill gap. A part of our journey is the Aspirations for Success programme, which is currently running, and helping high potential Qatari leaders from the sector on the Leadership Learning journey. I hope to be able to share more of this journey in future editions of Qatar today, meanwhile I am pleased to be able to

report that words like 'life changing, transformational,' are creeping into the vocabulary of our class of 2010. We recently spent time on our way back from following in the footsteps of Mandela, writing our 'elevator speeches'. For those of you not accustomed to the term, an elevator speech is what we prepare for the two minutes we have when we meet the CEO 'in the elevator'. On our induction week in the desert, one of our aspiring leaders told me she would never dare to speak to the CEO! Now she's preparing a case for transformational change in the financial sector and preparing to take her skills to London to practice them.

Change! What change?

Speaking about this recently at a lunch for the Lord Mayor of London, attended by HE Sheikh Abdulla bin Saoud Al-Thani, Governor of the Qatar Central Bank, I was pleased to note that there is a growing recognition of our responsibility for this transference of skills, and making this an explicit part of the agreement between the skilled expatriate and the national mentee.

At my stage of life as there are more career years behind me than in front, I have come to realise that I get more pleasure from seeing other people's success than

I ever did from my own. As an expatriate all of my working life I also recognise that I have a responsibility to give back to the communities who have given me the chance to experience the varied cultures of all the places we have lived as a family. I do this (now) willingly, knowing that as I do the value in my working life won't end with the retirement age of 60, it's just started!

I had a boss once who told me that the most difficult thing about dealing with me was my passion for learning - she was kind enough to tell me it was also the best thing about me too!

As leaders are we passionate about learning? Do we wake up in the morning and ask what can we do for the team we are responsible for? Or to (mis)quote a famous American president do we ask what the nation can do for us.

So Ambassadors for Change, who are they?

Our aspiring Leaders are the Ambassadors. As they learn the skills required to lead, much of it through on the job experiences, they will challenge the status quo. It's natural, it's Gen Y, it's what's happening all around us.

And the way we respond will determine if we will have a new generation of leaders ready to take on the responsibility of achieving the national vision.

Will we respond with the status quo? Or will we listen lead by example and want to receive their feedback and suggestions on how we and our companies can improve? Will we spend time in town hall meetings listening to the ideas our staff have for achieving the goals and vision of our company?

If we do, we might be surprised, it might not just be the Gen Y who are Ambassadors for Change, we could be as well. Wouldn't that be fun?

In next month's *Qatar Today* I want to share with you more of the journey which eight Qatari leaders have undertaken over the last several months and the changes which have been happening to all of us. Yes, I've changed too in my understanding and expectations! Perhaps I still have a chance to be Gen Y. *Life begins at 60!* ■

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