

AFRO-CENTRIC LEADERSHIP MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER, 2023

# AFRO-CENTRIC LEADERSHIP

ISSUE 2

**INNOVATION,  
A CATALYST  
FOR BUSINESS  
GROWTH**

**BALANCING LEADERSHIP  
DYNAMICS: A DIALOGUE  
BETWEEN DIRECTING  
AND EMPOWERING**

**EMBRACING CHANGE:  
A LEADER'S 'WHAT IF'  
GUIDE**

**GAINING BUY-IN  
AS A LEADER**

**NAVIGATING THE TECH  
FRONTIER: AFRICA'S  
JOURNEY**

**WELLNESS AND EMPLOYEE  
ASSISTANCE AS  
CORNERSTONES OF  
ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS**

**EMMANUEL AGU, PhD.**  
**MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS GENIUS**



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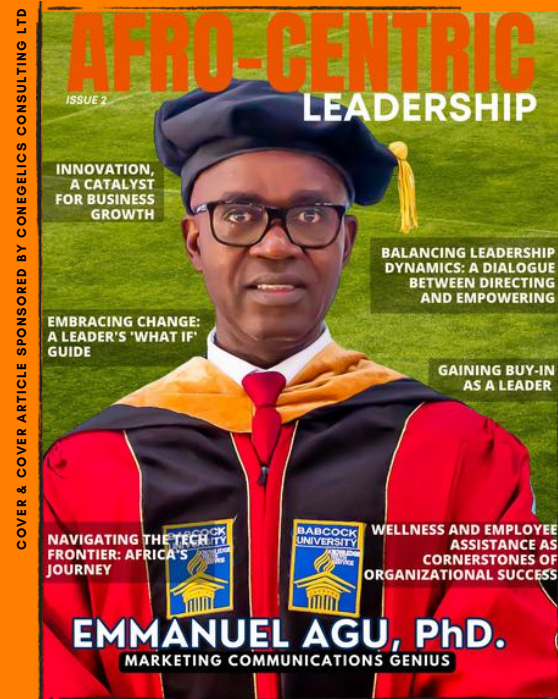
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*Theme:*  
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**September  
14 - 16, 2023**



**NECA House, Hakeem  
Balogun Street, Ikeja, Lagos**



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# AFRO-CENTRIC LEADERSHIP

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Sola is a highly experienced business leader with cutting edge Public Affairs and Reputation Management expertise and over 26 years' experience in Public Relations, issues/crisis management, brand management, corporate and strategic communication & media engagement, government relations, venture and regulatory relations, social risk management, stakeholder management, social performance, corporate responsibility & sustainability design, management and reporting and strategy execution.



### ADEOLU ADEWUMI-ZER

Adeolu is the former Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Allianz Nigeria Insurance Ltd (Allianz Nigeria), a subsidiary of the German multinational Allianz SE. Prior to this role, Adeolu served as the first and only female member of the Allianz Nigeria board as Non-Executive Director. Concurrently, she became the Regional Head of Mergers, Acquisitions and Transformation Africa for the Allianz Group.



### IVY IKPEME-MBAKWEM

Ivy is a highly experienced professional, with over 20 years of work experience as a Customer Experience Leader, Ivy has established herself as a seasoned expert in her field. She has successfully project-managed the implementation of Contact Centers across various banks in Nigeria and Africa, as well as in the Telecommunications and Capital Market sectors. Her expertise extends beyond borders as she has effectively coordinated contact center operations in French, Portuguese, and Swahili-speaking countries.



### DAVE OBADA

Dave has a strong background in broadcasting and tech, hence making waves across various fields. Having worked with different media organizations, he has gained valuable insights into the power of information dissemination and the impact it can have on society.



He is the founder of Oriz, a health tech platform, powered by AI and blockchain, aiming to improve access and efficiency in health and wellness services, ultimately contributing to the well-being of individuals across Africa and beyond.

### VICTOR MISE

Victor is a seasoned IT Service Delivery and Customer Success Professional with about a decade experience. He currently works with Cellulant as a Senior Customer Success Manager, supporting customers and managing technology partners across Africa.

Victor is passionate about Fintech, Innovation, Customer Experience and Entrepreneurship. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechatronic Engineering and certifications in ITIL and Software Quality Assurance(ISTQB).



### YAW MPARE

Yaw is an esteemed Finance and Commercial professional. He brings a wealth of expertise in strategic analysis, financial management, and business development to the forefront. With an illustrious track record spanning diverse sector, he has an MSc in Finance and Investment from the University of Exeter Business School and is a Fellow of The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (FCCA). Yaw exemplifies an unwavering commitment to strategic financial analysis, commercial innovation, and transformative leadership.



### MICHAEL OGU

Dr. Michael Ogu is a Seasoned HR Practitioner, Management Consultant, and Executive Coach with over a decade and a half of multisector and multicultural work experience. He is also an Author of three transformational books.



### CHRIS ABOJEI

Chris is a consultant clinical psychologist, certified employee assistance professional (CEAP), trainer and international wellness advisor. He is a trained crisis, suicide, trauma and grief management expert, who has spent the last decade in mental health treatment, research, and training. Chris is a player in the digital mental health solution space and consults for several tele-mental health projects in and out of Nigeria. He is a member of several professional bodies, including the Nigerian Association of Clinical Psychologists (NACP), the British Psychological Society, the Australian and New Zealand Mental Health Association.



# PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Without commitment you will never start, but without consistency you will never finish, these words from the lips of the legendary American Actor and Filmmaker **Denzel Washington** has been a massive inspiration for us at the **Afro-Centric Leadership Magazine**. Against All odds we are as excited as the first time to have you journey with us with the second edition.

In this edition, our cover page is graced with the accomplished Emmanuel Agu, who is a C- Suite Marketing Executive, he shares with us his journey into the world of marketing communications, his career and his latest accomplishment as a Ph.D. holder in Marketing Communication from **Babcock University, Ilisan Remo, Ogun State**.

Also, in this edition we have been able to assemble a team of accomplished contributors who have availed us of their expertise in their different domain of human influence. We have thought leadership across technology, finance, wellness, leadership, talent management, innovation and more.

All there is, is to take a sit and get ready for a great ride with us in this edition!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emmanuel Agu'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large loop at the end.

**THE PUBLISHER**



## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Reader,

It's amazing to have you experience the phenomenal knowledge this edition of the Afro-Centric Leadership Magazine brings.

As more start-ups are birthed, there is a revelation of an ever-rising void of effective leadership, so much that administrative gate-keeping becomes more dicey than expected.

In this edition, we share with you the immeasurable expertise of visionary leaders who have scaled the tactical threats of leadership, stirred by the radical shift of this century. We hope that they inspire you to be exceptional leaders in your professional sphere.

At the flip of each page, is a dimension of wisdom, waiting to be revealed to that naïve man who wants to thrive in business, the frustrated entrepreneur who is yet to unlock his entrepreneurial prowess.

As I await the emergence of your attainment, I urge you to take a deep breath, immerse yourself in the theories & strategies polished on the pages of this publication, and reflect on your leadership journey so as to unlock your "inner man".

Cheers to greater heights!

Amah-Mercy Samuel  
**EDITOR IN CHIEF**

**Sages & Scribes**  
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THE MAN... HIS INSPIRATION... HIS LEGACY

# DR. EMMANUEL AGU

C-SUITE MARKETING  
EXECUTIVE



## MEET EMMANUEL AGU

**E**mmanuel Agu is a seasoned leader with over two decades of experience across Consulting, Banking and FMCGs. He has graced the following organizations with his expertise, experience and presence: Ernst & Young, Diageo, Heineken and Jotna Group – The LaCasera Company.

He is a well-rounded Business and Commercial Leader with strong track records in business strategy, brand communication and experiential strategy, portfolio commercialization, insight generation that has delivered strong ROI on cutting-edge innovations, and high performing team leadership.

His insight and knowledge of the Nigerian and African consumer space, habits and attitude towards brands, has enabled him to successfully manage 20 brands in the last two decades. These accomplishments earned him industry recognitions such as the Outstanding Marketing Personality of the decade 2021 and Marketing Director of the year 2020 by Marketing Edge Magazine, and Brand Communicator Magazine, respectively. He was also listed in the Top 50 African Marketing Leaders by Marketing World Award.

Agu has also left his mark in the academia with various degrees and certifications. He has an MBA in Marketing Management from Lagos State University, MSc in Media and Marketing Communication from Pan Atlantic University Lekki, and a PhD in Marketing (Marketing Communication option) from Babcock University Ilishan Remo Ogun State. A respected faculty member of Rome Business School Nigeria and Tekedia Institute Boston, USA. He is also a certified Management Consultant (CMC) and a member of the body of fellows of the National Institute of Marketing of Nigeria (FNIMN), Institute of Professional Managers & Administrators (FIPMA) and Institute of Management Consultants (FIMC).

## A DEFINING MOMENT

Absolutely, there was a defining moment in my career journey that truly opened my eyes to the challenges and immense opportunities of marketing within the African context.

This moment was when we were re-launching a product (Life Continental Lager Beer) in South-East region of Nigeria. As the project progressed, it became clear that the conventional marketing strategies and approaches wouldn't cut it for this case, as the local culture, economic dynamics, and infrastructure posed unique challenges that required a fresh perspective.

What followed was a transformative journey of learning and adaptation. Some key lessons emerged from this experience, such as the place of cultural sensitivity, the localisation of strategies and identifying effective communication channels for the audience, building trust which enhances partnerships, becoming flexible and innovative and incorporating social engagement to drive impact.

This defining moment illuminated the rich tapestry of the Igbos of South-Eastern Nigeria, showing that successful marketing requires a deep understanding of the context, a willingness to adapt, and an appreciation for the local culture. It also revealed the incredible potential for meaningful connections and positive change that marketing can bring to the African context.

## CULTURAL NUANCES IN AFRICA

Each African country has culture which is unique, so there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Successful campaigns come from a genuine understanding of cultural nuances, active engagement with local communities, and a commitment to authenticity and respect. It's essential to continuously learn and adapt our approach based on consumer feedback and changing cultural dynamics. However, here are some that I find to have resonated with my African market:

1. Incorporating cultural symbols and icons in the campaigns.
2. Using local language and common slangs in marketing
3. Community and family values should find their way into the campaign.
4. Aligning brand campaigns with respect for tradition and culture.
5. Adopting local storytelling approaches that reflect the richness of Africa's storytelling techniques.

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY ARE CRITICAL IN TODAY'S WORLD

Ensuring that marketing strategies reflect and celebrate the rich tapestry of cultures across Africa requires a thoughtful and intentional approach, remember that cultural diversity is not just about surface-level representation; it's about acknowledging and respecting the complexity of each culture while fostering an environment of inclusion and understanding.



1. **Cultural Research and Understanding:** Begin by conducting in-depth research into the various cultures, languages, traditions, and beliefs across Africa. Understand the nuances and sensitivities associated with each culture to avoid stereotypes and misrepresentations.
2. **Diverse Representation:** Ensure that your marketing materials feature a diverse range of people from different ethnic backgrounds, age groups, and walks of life. This representation should extend to both visual elements and narratives.
3. **Local Partnerships:** Collaborate with local artists, content creators, and influencers who can provide authentic insights and help create content that resonates with local audiences.
4. **Language Considerations:** Africa is incredibly linguistically diverse. Tailor your marketing materials to the languages spoken in different regions. This could involve translating content or creating content directly in local languages.
5. **Cultural Sensitivity Training:** Train your marketing team on cultural sensitivity to avoid unintentional offense. This could involve workshops, guest speakers, or hiring cultural consultants.

## TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES

Certainly! One campaign that comes to mind is the "Dare to Dream" campaign launched by a non-profit organization dedicated to providing educational opportunities to underprivileged children. The campaign aimed to raise funds to build a school in a remote village where access to education was extremely limited. While the organization had successfully run fundraising campaigns in the past, this one faced several unexpected hurdles.



1. **Lack of Local Support:** Initially, the organization struggled to garner support from the local community. The villagers were skeptical about the benefits of education and were resistant to the idea of a school being built in their area. This posed a significant challenge as the campaign heavily relied on community involvement.
2. **Logistical Challenges:** The remote location of the village presented logistical challenges in terms of construction materials and transportation. Roads were in poor condition, making it difficult to transport building supplies to the site. Additionally, there was no local workforce with construction skills.
3. **Funding Shortfall:** Despite the organization's best efforts in fundraising, they faced a shortfall in funding. Their initial goal was to raise a specific amount, but they were far from reaching it.

In the end, the "Dare to Dream" campaign not only successfully built the school but also transformed the village and the lives of its residents. The hurdles that initially seemed insurmountable were turned into opportunities for community empowerment, innovation, and adaptability. The lesson from this experience is the importance of resilience, adaptability, and community involvement. Sometimes unexpected challenges can lead to better, more sustainable solutions.

## INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES

As the market becomes increasingly competitive, innovative techniques have to be employed to differentiate your brand and products in the eyes of consumers. Here are some techniques we employed in our experience:

**1. Personalization and Customization:** Offering customizable options for flavors, ingredients, or packaging can create a unique and personalized experience for consumers. This can be particularly appealing to younger and more health-conscious demographics. eg The different flavours of Bold Franchise (Ginger, Tropical, Orange and Bitter Lemon) launched in February 2020

## 2. Health and Wellness Focus:

With growing consumer awareness of health and wellness, CSD brands can differentiate themselves by offering low-sugar, natural sweeteners, or even functional ingredients that cater to specific health benefits.

## 3. Limited Editions and Collaborations:

Introducing limited edition flavors or collaborating with popular influencers, artists, or brands can generate buzz and excitement, encouraging consumers to try your product before it's gone. We had limited editions of beer brands strictly with festival logos in my days at Nigeria Breweries Plc

## 4. Lifestyle Branding:

Positioning your CSD brand as part of a broader lifestyle can resonate with consumers looking for products that align with their values, hobbies, or interests. LaCasera Apple "Make Next Happen Campaign" which taps into the marketing technology space deemed to be the trending lifestyles of the Nigerian Youths

## 5. Cultural and Regional Relevance:

Tailoring flavors, marketing, and packaging to align with local cultures and preferences can help your brand feel more authentic and relatable to different markets.

The key to successful differentiation is to understand your target audience's needs and preferences and to innovate in ways that add genuine value to their lives. Keep an eye on industry trends, gather consumer feedback, and be open to adapting your strategies as the market evolves.

## TEAM COLLABORATES ACROSS FUNCTIONS

Sharing a behind-the-scenes glimpse of how our team collaborates across functions to bring a new product to market while maintaining a consistent brand identity.

## 1. Cross-Functional Team Formation:

To start, a cross-functional team is assembled, typically consisting of members from different departments such as marketing, supply chain, procurement, and sales. Each member brings their expertise to the table.

## 2. Defining Objectives:

The team establishes clear objectives for the new product launch. These objectives should align with the overall brand strategy and goals. This step ensures everyone is on the same page regarding what they aim to achieve.

### 3. Brand Identity Workshop:

Before diving into product development, the team conducts a brand identity workshop with our creative agency. Here, they review the existing brand guidelines and discuss how the new product fits within the brand's image. This workshop helps in defining the product's messaging, tone, and visual elements to ensure consistency.

### 4. Market Research:

The team conducts thorough market research to understand customer needs, competition, and market trends. This information helps inform product features and positioning.

### 5. Product Development:

The Innovation team takes the lead in creating the new product, while considering the insights gained from market research. Throughout the process, regular check-ins with the cross-functional team ensure that the product aligns with the established brand identity.

### 6. Design and Branding:

Simultaneously, the innovation team is saddled with the work on the product's visual elements. They create packaging, marketing materials, and any other design assets, ensuring that they adhere to the brand's guidelines. This is done in collaboration with an offshore design agency based in South Africa

## DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

In a landscape dominated by digital transformation, we have witnessed traditional marketing channels evolving to remain effective in reaching your target audience.

In the era of digital transformation, traditional marketing channels are indeed undergoing significant changes to remain effective in reaching target audiences. While digital platforms have gained prominence, traditional channels are adapting and integrating with digital strategies to create a holistic and multi-channel marketing approach. Here's how traditional marketing channels are evolving:

### 1. Integration with Digital Platforms:

Traditional channels, such as print media, radio, and TV, are increasingly being integrated with digital strategies. For instance, print ads might include QR codes or URLs for online engagement, radio ads could prompt listeners to visit websites, and TV ads may promote social media hashtags.



# 9<sup>th</sup>

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**Funto 08106773813** or email [events@ldni.info](mailto:events@ldni.info)

## 2. Personalization and Targeting:

Data analytics and audience segmentation are being used to personalize traditional marketing efforts. For example, direct mail campaigns can be tailored based on customer preferences and purchase history, enhancing the relevance and impact of the message.

**3. Event Marketing:** In-person events, such as trade shows, conferences, and product launches, are still effective for building connections and showcasing products. However, these events are now often accompanied by digital components like live streaming, social media coverage, and virtual experiences to extend their reach and engagement.

## 4. Localized Marketing:

Traditional channels like billboards, flyers, and local newspapers remain effective for targeting specific geographical areas. Geo-targeting capabilities are enhancing the precision of these efforts, allowing marketers to deliver relevant messages to local audiences.

## 5. Storytelling and Emotional Appeal:

Traditional channels like TV and radio provide opportunities for impactful storytelling and emotional connections. Brands are leveraging these platforms to tell meaningful stories that resonate with audiences, fostering stronger brand loyalty.

**6. Niche Audiences:** Some traditional channels, like niche magazines and industry-specific publications, remain valuable for reaching highly targeted audiences. These channels are often trusted sources of information in their respective domains.

## 7. Partnerships and Sponsorships:

Traditional channels can also be used strategically through partnerships and sponsorships. Brands can align themselves with events, charities, or causes that resonate with their target audience, enhancing brand image and visibility.

## SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Sustainability and social responsibility play a crucial role in shaping a Carbonated Soft Drinks (CSD) brand's reputation and the perception of its products. As consumer awareness and concern for environmental and social issues continue to grow, brands that actively address these aspects can differentiate themselves and build stronger connections with their target audience. Here's how sustainability and social responsibility impact the CSD brand's reputation and product perception:

## 1.Brand Values and Identity:

Incorporating sustainability and social responsibility into the brand's values and identity demonstrates a commitment beyond profit. This positions the brand as one that cares about the well-being of people and the planet, resonating with consumers who align with these values.

## 2. Reputation and Trust:

Brands that prioritize sustainability and social responsibility earn trust and credibility among consumers. Transparent actions, ethical sourcing of ingredients, eco-friendly packaging, and responsible production methods enhance the brand's reputation and showcase its commitment to making a positive impact.

## 3. Consumer Loyalty:

Consumers are more likely to be loyal to brands that contribute to causes they care about. By supporting environmental initiatives, promoting health and wellness, or addressing social issues, the CSD brand can foster a loyal customer base that feels a deeper connection.

**4. Differentiation:** In a competitive market, integrating sustainability and social responsibility sets the brand apart from others. This can lead to a unique selling proposition that attracts environmentally conscious consumers seeking products that align with their values.

**5. Perceived Product Quality:** Consumers often associate brands with ethical and responsible practices as offering higher product quality. This can positively influence the perceived value and desirability of the CSD products.

**6. Community Engagement:** Engaging in sustainability and social responsibility initiatives allows the brand to connect with local communities and broader social networks. Participating in events, supporting local initiatives, or partnering with nonprofit organizations can foster positive community relationships.

## GUIDING LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES

Navigating both local and global markets require a nuanced and adaptable leadership approach. Over my years of experience, I've honed several key leadership principles that have consistently guided me through these diverse territories:

**1. Cultural Sensitivity:** Understanding and respecting the unique cultural norms, values, and behaviors of different markets is paramount. This sensitivity helps in building strong relationships and avoids misunderstandings that could hinder collaboration or growth.

**2. Strategic Flexibility:** While certain principles remain constant, strategies must be flexible enough to accommodate the variations in local and global market conditions. Adapting my approach based on the specific market's needs and dynamics is crucial for success.

## 3. Effective Communication:

Clear and open communication is essential, particularly when dealing with diverse markets. Tailoring my communication style to resonate with different cultures and languages ensures that my message is understood and well-received.

## 4. Empowerment and Collaboration:

Empowering local teams and fostering collaboration across borders promotes a sense of ownership and accountability. This approach encourages innovation and local insights while maintaining a cohesive global strategy.

## 5. Global Vision, Local Execution:

Balancing a broad global vision with the nuances of local execution is a delicate task. Leaders must ensure that their global strategy aligns with local market realities, enabling successful implementation.

## 6. Continuous Learning:

Staying current with market trends, emerging technologies, and industry developments is crucial in both local and global contexts. Encouraging a culture of continuous learning among my teams helps me to drive innovation and agility.

## 7. Ethical Leadership:

Upholding strong ethical principles fosters trust among stakeholders and maintains my organization's reputation across markets. Demonstrating integrity in decision-making and business practices is non-negotiable.

## AUTHENTIC AFRO-CENTRIC STORY

One such campaign that gained international attention and showcased the authentic essence of Africa was the Malta Guinness Africa Rising Campaign project. Africa Rising is a known concept that elicits a sense of pride and optimism. Confirmation that this is a territory Malta Guinness has the credibility to associate with because it is the Energy of Africa. We could own the association with this concept by creating a Malta Guinness shaped dialogue and due to the fact that we are operating in a territory no one else is.

The African renaissance is now. The continent is alive and bursting with creative talent. In this film the people of Africa come together to literally turn the entire African continent into a worldwide stage. The African stage has become a platform for the people of Africa to showcase their talent to the world. As the stage rises artists, musicians and other ordinary, yet creative people of different ages, from different communities - rural and urban, lifestyles - traditional and modern; and regions in the continent prepare Africa in different ways for its biggest show.

It's time to celebrate and show the world what we are made of. An exciting, energizing track that encompasses the spirit of Africa plays throughout. And the styling is African modern, colorful, trendy, loud and proud. The scenes of preparation are not set in stone but they must be in-line with the Malta Guinness soft drink tonality, where the spirit is playful, optimistic and fun.

In 2012, a group of artists, photographers, and filmmakers from around Africa together to launch the Africa Rising Campaign in Kenya in East Africa. They were inspired by the warm and welcoming spirit of the local community and wanted to share this essence with the rest of the world.

The project involved creating a series of short films, photography exhibitions, and art installations that captured the daily life, traditions, and stories of the people in Africa. It showcased their resilience, creativity, and the strong sense of community that defined their way of life.

One of the most impactful elements of the campaign was the involvement of the local community members themselves. They actively participated in the project, sharing their stories, traditions, and talents. This not only empowered them but also ensured that the campaign remained true to the authentic essence of the region.

The campaign successfully showcased the authentic essence of the African community, emphasizing values like unity, compassion, and resilience. It inspired people from around the world to connect with and learn from this community, fostering a sense of global solidarity. The Malta Guinness Africa Rising project serves as a shining example of how art and storytelling can be powerful tools for showcasing and celebrating the beauty and authenticity of a region and its people.

## CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR PHD IN MARKETING

We are aware that you just bagged a PhD in Marketing, what was your inspiration in pursuing a doctorate taking your very busy schedule into consideration?

Indeed, pursuing a PhD in Marketing was a significant endeavor that required careful consideration and a strong source of inspiration. Despite my busy schedule, the decision to pursue a doctorate was motivated by a combination of personal and professional factors that align with my passion for continuous learning and contributing to the field of marketing.

## ADVICE TO YOUNGER SELF

If I were offering advice to my younger self embarking on a career in marketing in 2023, I would emphasize a combination of timeless principles and forward-looking strategies to navigate the dynamic landscape effectively:

**1. Embrace Lifelong Learning:** In the rapidly evolving world of marketing, staying updated with the latest trends, tools, and technologies is crucial. Dedicate yourself to continuous learning through courses, workshops, and self-study to remain at the forefront of industry developments.

**2. Master Data Analytics:** Data-driven decision-making is the cornerstone of modern marketing. Invest in building strong analytical skills to extract insights from data, enabling you to make informed strategic choices and measure the effectiveness of your campaigns.

### 3. Balance Creativity and Strategy:

Creativity is essential, but it must be grounded in strategic thinking. Align your innovative ideas with well-defined marketing goals to create campaigns that not only captivate but also deliver tangible results.

### 4. Customer-Centric Approach:

Prioritize understanding your target audience's needs, preferences, and pain points. Crafting marketing strategies that speak directly to their desires will foster meaningful connections and engagement.

**5. Adaptability is Key:** The marketing landscape can change rapidly. Develop an adaptable mindset that embraces change and thrives in dynamic environments. Being flexible and open to new ideas will help you navigate uncertainties.

**6. Networking and Relationships:** Build a strong professional network within the marketing community. Collaborating with peers, mentors, and industry experts can provide valuable insights, opportunities, and support.

**7. Global Awareness:** In an interconnected world, understanding cultural nuances and global trends is essential. Familiarize yourself with international markets and diverse consumer behaviors to create inclusive and effective campaigns.



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# ***INNOVATION, A CATALYST FOR BUSINESS GROWTH***

**Victor MISE** 

In a world where technology keeps evolving rapidly, how do we make innovation easier, secure, efficient and impactful for businesses on the continent?

In this piece, I have made an attempt to share with us five strategic and failure proof approaches to make innovation an ongoing experience your business or organisation.

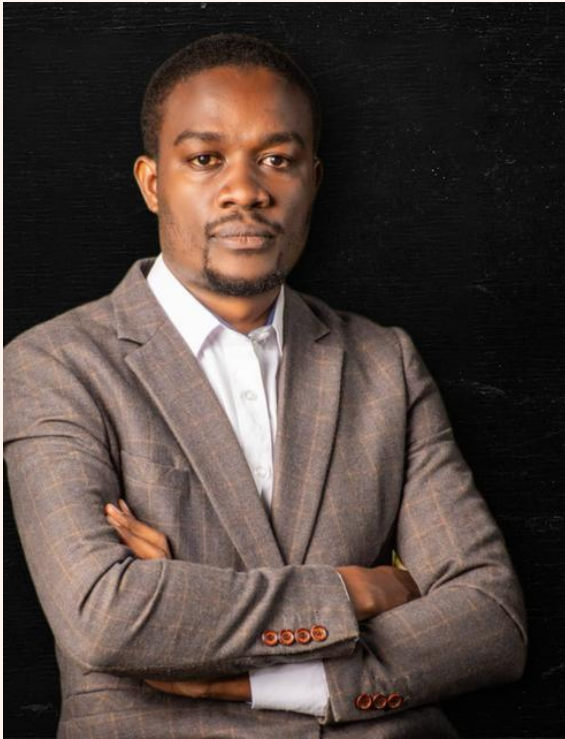
## **1. Customer-Centricity**

Products must be developed with the customer in mind. You can have a good product or service, but the one that determines if you will earn out of it is the customer. The customer can hire anyone, determines the lifespan of any organisation and can fire anyone from the CEO to the lowest ranked employee. It is therefore key to involve the customer in all stages in the product or service life cycle.

A leading bank in Kenya decided to upgrade their mobile app to a super app, a very brilliant idea, but when it was launched customers complained and even moved to competitors because they couldn't access the basic menus easily as they did before. In my opinion, the real users were not involved properly in the journey.



## INNOVATION IN ANY BUSINESS IS NOT A ONE-TIME EVENT BUT AN ONGOING JOURNEY.



Innovation must incorporate customer feedback in the whole journey or else it will be a loss of time, resources, and revenue. A customer that is fully involved will have trust in the process and in the brand, even with little mistakes here and there they'll always be willing to offer ideas and to be ambassadors of the brand.

By actively seeking feedback, analysing data, and engaging with clients, an organisation can develop personalised solutions that add genuine value to their financial journey. Remember, putting the customer first will always be a recipe for success.

“Customer is not king anymore, customer experience is.”

The only constant in a business is the customer, the technology can become obsolete, the employees can be fired but if customer(s) leave the company dies. You are late if you involve the customer only when you are doing marketing.

“Innovation takes birth in sync with the evolution of customer's expectations and demands or vice versa. Either way, organisations around the world must continually innovate themselves and keep up with the people's wants. The failure to do so or being indifferent to your customer's needs will make your competitors win. And then suddenly, customers become indifferent to you- a high-risk gamble to play at.

- Ketan Kapoor, Co-founder, Mercer-Mettl

### 2. Partnerships: Catalyst for Growth

Imagine if you grow the confidence of a customer until they become partners to a point where they bring on board ideas that enable you to collaborate and offer solutions then share revenue? If you ask me, that's the highest form of satisfaction.

that leads us to the different levels of customers from my assessment:

- a). One-time Customer
- b). Loyal Customer
- c). Promoter
- d). Strategic Partner.

Companies and brands can partner with each other to spur growth. It is becoming less of competition and more of partnerships. Each company has uncharted territory, and to speed up entry it needs to collaborate with the ones already dominating. Goodwill and mutual agreement are keys to establishing long-lasting partnerships.

I have experienced a situation where our vendor in the African XOF region became our customer when they set up operations in East Africa - that is partnership. Mutual cohesion and understanding becomes very key in growing technological relationships.

So many startups are riding on the experienced companies to offer better customer experience to their customers, even as they build capacity. if it makes economic sense, why not collaborate?

Embrace these collaborations as they can bring fresh ideas, cutting-edge technology, and streamlined processes for your company.

**3. Internal customers must have a voice.**  
All the focus should not be on external clients, your employees are your internal customers and sometimes tend to have visibility of the products/services before it gets to the external customers. Your employees are on the front lines, interacting with customers daily.

Encourage them to share their innovative ideas and create channels to listen and act on their feedback. Some of the best innovations come from those who are closest to the challenges and opportunities.

You can't expect an employee from a company that has a toxic culture to be a brand ambassador, they'll become detractors. Treat your employees well and they'll willingly offer free marketing for your brand and products and also support external customers well to drive higher brand confidence.

Companies must have programmes and policies that appreciate and reward creativity and innovation. It might just take one creative idea to take the company to the next level, however, are your employees involved in the customer focused decision making?

And are they free to table their ideas without being intimidated or psychological unsafe? Do they feel like their ideas will be used or adopted without getting due recognition and reward for their contribution?

Companies must be keen on attracting and retaining top talent, Africa has unmatched talent that is being sought by international brands...let's build more intellectual capacity.

”  
With new innovations,  
hackers are also improving  
their skills.

#### 4. Prioritise Cybersecurity

The era of breaking a bank and robbing at gunpoint is over, this is the era of cyberattacks and digital conmanship. Data is the new gold and customers will trust a brand that prioritises data privacy and protection, this is because customers entrust organisations with their sensitive information.

Implement robust security measures, educate employees about cyber threats, and stay vigilant in safeguarding your company's digital assets and the customers information. Governments are also taking advantage of Regulatory Technology to come up with strict rules and measures to protect consumers and their digital identity, it must be a collective effort of all stakeholders

Revenues can be lost in microseconds, and this can in turn cause customers to lose confidence in any brand whose security gets breached.

#### 5. Embrace Digital Transformation

Technology landscape is rapidly shifting; therefore, companies must invest in modernising their infrastructure to make it more seamless, secure, and user-friendly.

From traditional ways of doing things to the current era of Machine Learning and AI, these innovations keep enhancing the overall customer experience.

Service management is also evolving with omni-channel solutions where the identity of any customer is harmonised such that response and or support can be given from any channel, whether it is through email, Facebook, WhatsApp, text, Instagram or on a call.

Innovation is time-bound, you don't want to make the mistakes former giants like Nokia did. Move with speed, carrying your customers along before they jump ship.

Competition is becoming stiffer with more innovative solutions, and options are increasing. It's getting easier with time for customers to identify and switch to the next available provider that is innovative.

**INNOVATION CANNOT BE AVOIDED,  
KEEP INNOVATING TO STAY RELEVANT!**



**Victor MISE** is a seasoned IT Service Delivery and Customer Success Professional with about a decade experience, currently working with **Cellulant** as a Senior Customer Success Manager supporting customers and managing technology partners across Africa. He can be reached on  here [\*\*LinkedIn\*\*](#)

# Balancing Leadership Dynamics: A Dialogue Between Directing and Empowering

ADEOLU ADEWUMI-ZER

## The Dance of Styles

Recently, someone asked me which leadership approach resonates best with me. It's a question that never finds an easy answer, considering the kaleidoscope of leadership styles available. In this segment, let's dive into two seemingly opposite styles: directive and empowering.

Directive leadership stands tall as a beacon of clarity in the leadership landscape. Here, a leader orchestrates with specific instructions to ensure tasks are accomplished and goals are met. On the flip side, empowering leadership illuminates a path where authority is delegated, empowering the team to make decisions and troubleshoot autonomously.

## Steve Jobs vs. Jacinda Ardern

When we think of directive leadership, the enigmatic Steve Jobs may come to mind. The co-founder and former CEO of Apple, with his charismatic leadership and groundbreaking vision, was renowned, yet he bore the reputation of being demanding and controlling. While his clear-cut vision was the guiding star, his team was expected to align without hesitation.

In contrast, when considering empowering leadership, the indomitable Jacinda Ardern, the former prime minister of New Zealand, emerges. Recognized for her compassionate and empathetic leadership, she shone particularly during times of crisis. Her work environment fostered camaraderie, respect, and support. Her exceptional handling of crises like the COVID-19 pandemic showcased not only her humanity but also her resilience.

"I AM THE WISEST MAN ALIVE, FOR I KNOW ONE THING AND THAT IS THAT I KNOW NOTHING." - SOCRATES



## Weighing the Scales of Leadership

As we can see, both directive and empowering leadership styles have their advantages and disadvantages, depending on the context and the characteristics of the team. Some of the pros and cons of each style are:


Leadership Style	Pros	Cons
Directive	1.Increases efficiency and productivity by minimizing ambiguity. 2. Enhances quality and consistency through adherence to standards. 3. Boosts morale among inexperienced, unmotivated, or crisis-stricken followers.	1. Dampens innovation by limiting autonomy. 2. Reduces satisfaction among experienced followers seeking growth. Spurs resistance among those interpreting it as rigid control.
Empowering	1. Fosters innovation by allowing exploration of new ideas. 2. Amplifies satisfaction among growth-oriented followers. Cultivates collaboration and trust by valuing input.	1. Dampens efficiency by generating ambiguity for those seeking direction. 2. Jeopardizes consistency by allowing deviations. Undermines motivation among the inexperienced or demotivated.

## Leadership as a Balancing Act

Personally, my inclination leans toward empowering leadership, but the crux lies in adapting to the situation. A directive style could be imperative for swiftly implementing a new IT tool across various countries. Conversely, when sculpting transformative change within an organization, empowering leadership flourishes, encouraging fresh ideas and nurturing commitment.

In summary, the artistry of leadership resides not in a fixed approach but in the harmonious blend of various leadership styles. It's not about being the perfect leader, but about being the right leader for the moment. So, as we continue our leadership journeys, let us also continue to learn as we serve.



Adeolu was the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Allianz Nigeria Insurance Ltd (Allianz Nigeria), a subsidiary of the German multinational Allianz SE. Prior to this role, Adeolu served as the first and only female member of the Allianz Nigeria board as Non-Executive Director. Concurrently, she was the Regional Head of Mergers, Acquisitions and Transformation Africa for the Allianz Group. She can be reached on  [LINKEDIN](#)

**IVY IKPEME-MBAKWEM**

# G A I N I N G BUY-IN A S A L E A D E R

**"Be careful what you wish for, there is always a catch" – Laurie Halse Anderson**

The quote came to life in a transformative period of my career, spanning from 2015 to 2019. Having led various contact centers in Nigeria for over a decade, a restlessness began to stir within me. My aspirations gravitated towards a leadership role that covered Africa. During this time, my prayers and hopes centered around this vision. Even when local job opportunities arose in Nigeria, I chose to dismiss them. Looking back, I'm struck by the unwavering determination and faith I had. The pivotal moment arrived in 2015 when I was offered the opportunity to manage the Service Country heads in 18 African countries for a prominent bank. My joy was unparalleled.

When I resumed, I discovered it to be a new role, which was daunting. And though my deliverables were well defined I couldn't shake off a sense of inadequacy when my colleagues would regard me with a mixture of empathy and concern, cautioning me about the challenges of overseeing people in Africa. They shared that people in other African countries were not like Nigerians; their response time varied and they had their own attitudes towards work and deliverables. I was frightened to say the least because I knew that my success was 100 percent dependent on the regional teams. In those moments I would question the wisdom in my prayer request. Can you imagine that? It was an unexpected internal struggle.

Despite my doubts, there was no turning back for me. I stood exactly where I had prayed to be, and retreating was not an option. My only path was to dance skillfully to the music that was playing. Drawing upon the depths of my leadership knowledge, I instinctively reached into my leadership toolkit stored in the corners of my mind and pulled out this principle: The Law of Buy-in, as illuminated by John C. Maxwell's "The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership."

Embedded in the essence of leadership is the ability to achieve through others. A leader gets things done through people and to get people to do, they needed to first buy into you. The Law of Buy-in says that People buy into the leader, then the Vision. ... and just like that I had to find a way to gain the buy-in of the service country heads in 18 African Countries.

# 4 FAILURE-PROOF APPROACH TO GAIN BUY-IN

## 1.Understand Audience

I needed to be intentional about learning more about our teams in Africa. In so doing, I began to learn and appreciate our cultural difference and the different languages. I discovered that their styles were different, the way they approached life was different. There were easier going than aggressive, which meant they needed a different approach to get them to do.

## 2. Craft a Purposeful Approach

Operating from Nigeria meant I couldn't physically travel to each country. Consequently, our interaction primarily occurred through emails and virtual meetings. However, as the messenger, it was incumbent upon me to devise an inclusive approach that resonated with everyone simultaneously. With painstaking effort, I ensured that my emails were disseminated in three languages—French, English, and Portuguese. Google translate was my friend and my effort broke language barriers and captured their attention.

Another approach I introduced was creating a WhatsApp community. This platform provided them with an avenue to share country-specific challenges and collaborate on solutions. It evolved into a conduit for learning, fostering cross-cultural understanding among us. Furthermore, it granted direct access to a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) within each country, offering speedy support for addressing customer concerns.

## 3. Invest in Personal Growth

Recognizing that we have more French-speaking nations in Africa, I committed to improving my linguistic skills. I invested in a French tutor. This endeavor not only enabled me to engage in verbal exchanges with a little ease but also allowed me to break the ice and connect when communicating. Learning Portuguese on the other hand proved a little more difficult so I focused on learning the basics.

## 4. Resolve Challenges

I was a patient and attentive listener and was instrumental in addressing the issues escalated to me. By making myself available and providing the necessary support, I ensured our teams at the centre were responsive and resolved their challenges. My proactive involvement in issue resolution transformed the dynamics and established me as a dependable resource. I believe that the breakthrough they experienced with getting prompt resolution to their issues once they channeled through me, reshaped their perceptions and enhanced trust in the process. It was another game changer.




### Conclusion

In retrospect, the challenges of steering a diverse team that I never got to meet physically except for one country, were formidable. Yet, it was precisely these challenges that enabled me to unlock profound growth, both as a leader and as an individual. Making it all about them and not about me, brought value to our relationship, enabling me record success through buy-in. Just as I once dared to dream beyond borders, I empower you to do the same—step boldly into the unknown, with unwavering faith and an unshakeable commitment to gaining buy-in as the cornerstone of your successful leadership. And remember that nothing is a barrier, not even language or distance.

*Look forward to  
my next ...And  
just like that  
leadership lesson.*



**Ivy Ikpeme-Mbakwem** is a highly experienced professional, with over 20 years of work experience as a Customer Experience Leader, Ivy has established herself as a seasoned expert in her field. She has successfully project-managed the implementation of Contact Centers across various banks in Nigeria and Africa, as well as in the Telecommunications and Capital Market sectors. Her expertise extends beyond borders as she has effectively coordinated contact center operations in French, Portuguese, and Swahili-speaking countries. She can be reached on  **LINKEDIN**

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# EMBRACING CHANGE: A LEADER'S 'WHAT IF' GUIDE

YAW MPARE



In the dynamic world of global business, challenges arise in predicting turbulence and bolstering resilience against unexpected disruptions. Within companies, two strategies emerge: adapting to the present and proactively preparing for potential shocks.

For transformational leaders, a vital question arises: "What if?" This concise question uncovers hidden future issues, shedding light on an organization's path. Failing to engage in this inquiry is like surrendering to upcoming uncertainties.

Personally, I've found immense value in using the "What if" approach to anticipate shifts and enhance my forecasting abilities. As a financial analyst, I consistently employ this technique, often known as sensitivity analyses, to understand the possible outcomes of business decisions.

Important aspects such as staff, finances, products, markets, technology, and organizational structures warrant thorough exploration through the "What if" lens. Imagine a business leader who's succeeded with a particular product. It's crucial to consider how they'd respond if a competitor introduced a better product or employed advanced technology. This thinking prepares for potential challenges, ensuring the organization's competitive edge persists.

External influences are affected by the "what if" mindset, and analyzing internal factors is equally crucial. Financial stability, essential for any entity, is closely tied to the "What if" principle.



Business cycles introduce shifts, and growth can turn into scarcity due to economic changes. Sound growth requires awareness of possible downturns. This principle extends to financial prudence, addressing the question of insufficient funding in the future.

Unfortunately, some businesses overlook succession planning, making certain individuals indispensable. Forward-thinking organizations anticipate gaps created by key staff departures and plan for knowledge transfer. People are an invaluable resource, and not preparing for staff changes can hinder growth.

Technological advancements drive business today. The "What if" approach challenges traditional methods, prompting consideration of better ways of operation. Business missions remain steady, while visions adapt through the "What if" lens. Leveraging concepts like "mashups" empowers businesses to navigate competition. The eventual decline of camera-less mobile phones exemplifies this concept. As businesses aim for efficiency, the "What if" question fosters innovation and secures a competitive edge.

What questions would you explore today to ensure a sustainable future for your business? Embrace the possibilities offered by "What if" and uncover advantageous business scenarios that shape a brighter future.



**Yaw Mpare** is an esteemed Finance and Commercial professional, he brings a wealth of expertise in strategic analysis, financial management, and business development to the forefront. With an illustrious track record spanning diverse sector. He has an MSc in Finance and Investment from the University of Exeter Business School and aslo a Fellow of The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (FCCA). Yaw exemplifies an unwavering commitment to strategic financial analysis, commercial innovation, and transformative leadership.



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# THE IMPACT OF TOXIC BEHAVIOURS ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

DR. MICHAEL OGU

*Yield: One 12-inch Pizza*

Toxic behaviours are negative and harmful actions, attitudes, or patterns of interaction that can have detrimental effects on individuals, relationships, and environments, including organizational cultures. These behaviours can create a hostile, unhealthy, and unproductive atmosphere, leading to various negative consequences.

Here are some examples of toxic behaviors:

1. **Bullying:** This involves the repetitive and intentional mistreatment of others. It can include verbal abuse, intimidation, humiliation, and undermining someone's self-esteem.
2. **Harassment:** This refers to any unwelcome behaviour, comments, or actions that create an uncomfortable or hostile environment for others. This can include sexual harassment, discriminatory comments, and other forms of mistreatment based on protected characteristics.



3. **Gossiping:** Spreading rumors, sharing negative information, or discussing personal matters about colleagues behind their backs can create an atmosphere of mistrust and anxiety.
4. **Undermining:** Undermining behaviours involve attempting to weaken or sabotage the efforts, accomplishments, or reputation of others. This can manifest through passive-aggressive actions, withholding information, or purposely excluding someone from important discussions.
5. **Micromanagement:** Excessively controlling and monitoring employees' work can lead to feelings of frustration, lack of autonomy, and reduced job satisfaction.

6. Lack of Respect: Disrespectful behaviours, such as shouting, name-calling, or belittling, create a toxic environment that erodes trust and damages relationships.

7. Blame-Shifting: When individuals refuse to take responsibility for their mistakes and instead shift the blame onto others, it undermines accountability and teamwork.

8. Manipulation: Manipulative behaviours involve using deceit, guilt-tripping, or other tactics to control or influence others for personal gain. This can lead to distrust and dysfunctional relationships.

9. Negativity: Constantly focusing on the negative aspects of situations, colleagues, or the organization itself can create a pessimistic atmosphere that stifles innovation and collaboration.

10. Passive-Aggressiveness: Indirectly expressing hostility or resistance through subtle actions, like giving backhanded compliments or intentionally missing deadlines, can lead to confusion and conflict.

11. Discrimination: Treating individuals unfairly or differently based on factors like race, gender, religion, or other protected characteristics contribute to a toxic and discriminatory environment.

12. Unreliable Behavior: Consistently failing to meet commitments, deadlines, or obligations negatively impacts team dynamics and overall productivity.

13. Excessive Competition: Fostered to an unhealthy extent, competition among employees can lead to hostility, secrecy, and an inability to collaborate effectively.

14. Lack of Communication: Withholding information, ignoring messages, or failing to communicate important details can hinder teamwork and decision-making.

15. Scapegoating: Blaming one person or a group for problems, failures, or challenges instead of addressing underlying issues or collective responsibility.

16. Backstabbing: This is a toxic behavior that involves betraying someone's trust, often behind their back, in order to gain a personal advantage or achieve a goal at their expense. It's a form of manipulation and deception that can have significant negative consequences for individuals and the overall organizational culture.

These behaviours have a significant and detrimental impact on organizational culture. When they are present, they can erode the positive aspects of a healthy organizational culture and create an environment that is counterproductive, stressful, and harmful to both individuals and the organization as a whole. They also vary in intensity and impact, however, they all contribute to an unhealthy and vile organizational culture if left unattended to.

# WAYS TOXIC BEHAVIOURS CAN IMPACT ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

1. **Low Morale and Engagement:** Toxic behaviours, such as bullying, harassment, and disrespectful communication, can lead to low employee morale and engagement. When employees feel disrespected or belittled, they become disengaged from their work, leading to decreased productivity and motivation.
2. **High Turnover Rates:** Toxic behaviours can lead to high turnover rates as employees may choose to leave the organization to escape a negative environment. This can result in increased recruitment and training costs, as well as loss of valuable institutional knowledge.
3. **Deterioration of Trust:** Trust is a crucial element of a healthy organizational culture. Toxic behaviours, like gossip, backstabbing, and manipulation, erode trust among employees. When trust is broken, collaboration, teamwork, and effective communication suffer.
4. **Innovation and Creativity Suppression:** A toxic culture can stifle innovation and creativity. Employees are less likely to share new ideas or take risks if they fear criticism or retaliation. This can hinder the organization's ability to adapt and innovate in a rapidly changing business landscape.

5. **Poor Communication:** Toxic behaviours often result in poor communication. Open and transparent communication is essential for a healthy culture where information flows freely and everyone is informed. Toxic behaviors can lead to misinformation, rumors, and misunderstandings.

6. **Negative Impact on Performance:** Toxic behaviours can lead to a decline in overall performance. Employees may spend more time dealing with interpersonal conflicts rather than focusing on their tasks. This can lead to missed deadlines, errors, and a general decrease in work quality.

7. **Health and Well-being Issues:** A toxic culture can take a toll on employees' mental and physical well-being. Stress, anxiety, and even depression can result from constant exposure to negativity and hostility. This not only affects individual employees but also impacts the overall organizational health.

8. **Reputational Damage:** A toxic culture can damage the organization's reputation both internally and externally. Word spreads quickly, and potential employees, customers, and business partners may be hesitant to engage with a company known for its toxic environment.

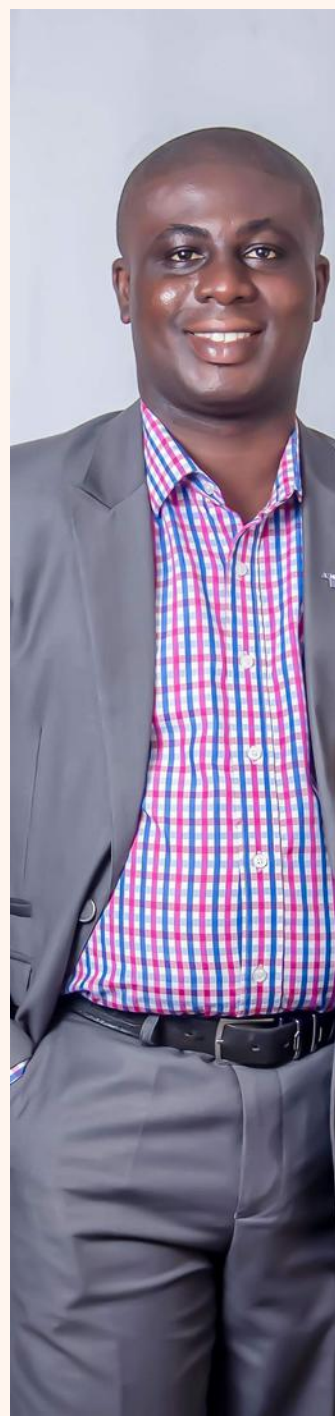
9. Lack of Accountability: Toxic behaviours can lead to a lack of accountability. When blame-shifting and scapegoating becomes the norm, employees are less likely to take ownership of their actions and responsibilities.


10. Cultural Norm Reinforcement: If toxic behaviors are tolerated or not addressed by leadership, they can become ingrained as part of the organizational culture. This sets a dangerous precedent and can be difficult to reverse over time.

Addressing these behaviours requires clear communication, setting appropriate boundaries, and fostering a culture of respect, collaboration, and accountability. To address the impact of toxic behaviours on organizational culture, it's crucial for the organizational leadership to take a number of proactive measures which include:

1. Setting clear expectations for behaviour and communication.
2. Providing training on respectful communication, conflict resolution, and diversity and inclusion.
3. Implementing a reporting mechanism for toxic behaviour.
4. Holding individuals accountable for their actions, regardless of their position.
5. Fostering a culture of empathy, respect, and open communication.
6. Leading by example through positive, inclusive, and enabling behaviours.
7. Applying the Carrot and Stick Approach (i.e. shape in or shape out).
8. Utilizing the Dead Horse Approach.

By addressing toxic behaviours and promoting a healthy and positive culture, organizations can create an environment where employees thrive, contribute their best work, and collectively drive the company's success.



Dr. Michael Ogu is a Seasoned HR Practitioner, Management Consultant, and Executive Coach with over a decade and a half of multisector and multicultural work experience. He is also an Author of three transformational books. He can be  reached on **LINKEDIN**

**PATRICK LENCIONI**  
NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

# The FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS of a TEAM

A LEADERSHIP FABLE



20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY EDITION

NEW FOREWORD FROM THE AUTHOR

Patrick Lencioni's "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team" is a must-read for managers and leaders seeking to enhance team performance and drive organizational success. In this insightful book, Lencioni explores the common pitfalls that hinder teams from reaching their full potential and provides actionable leadership lessons that managers can immediately apply at work.

"The Five Dysfunctions of a Team" offers invaluable leadership insights that can transform how managers lead their teams. By building trust, embracing healthy conflict, committing to decisions, holding each other accountable, and maintaining a focus on results, managers can foster a high-performing team culture. These lessons are not only applicable immediately at work but can also lead to long-term team success and organizational excellence. Patrick Lencioni's book is a timeless resource for leaders striving to unlock their team's full potential.

# BOOK REVIEW

## UNLOCKING TEAM SUCCESS: A REVIEW OF PATRICK LENCIONI'S "THE FIVE DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM

- 1. Build Trust:** The foundation of any successful team is trust. Lencioni emphasizes the importance of vulnerability-based trust, where team members feel safe to share their thoughts and ideas openly. As a manager, lead by example by demonstrating vulnerability and encouraging open communication within your team. When trust is established, team members are more likely to collaborate effectively and take risks, ultimately driving innovation.
- 2. Embrace Healthy Conflict:** Conflict is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it can be a powerful catalyst for creativity and growth. Lencioni argues that teams must engage in healthy, constructive conflict to make better decisions. Managers should create a culture where differing opinions are valued, and conflicts are resolved through respectful dialogue. Avoiding conflicts only leads to unproductive consensus and missed opportunities.
- 3. Commit to Decisions:** Once a decision is made, it's crucial that the entire team commits to it. Lack of commitment is a major dysfunction in many teams. Managers should ensure that team members understand and buy into decisions, and they should hold individuals accountable for their commitments. Clear communication and alignment around goals and objectives are key to achieving commitment.
- 4. Hold Each Other Accountable:** Accountability is a shared responsibility. Encourage team members to hold each other accountable for their actions and results. As a manager, set clear expectations and provide regular feedback. Foster a culture of responsibility and ownership, where team members take pride in delivering on their commitments. When everyone is accountable, the team's performance improves.
- 5. Focus on Results:** Ultimately, the success of a team is measured by results. Lencioni reminds us that team members should prioritize the collective achievement of goals above individual interests. Managers should consistently communicate the team's objectives and monitor progress. Celebrate achievements together and address any obstacles as a team. Keeping the focus on results ensures that the team stays aligned and motivated.



# Navigating the Tech Frontier: Africa's Journey

DAVE OBADA

Hey there, tech enthusiasts! Today, let's dive into a subject close to my heart—the ever-evolving landscape of emerging technology in Africa. From bustling cities to remote villages, the tech wave is sweeping across the continent, transforming lives and breaking barriers like never before.

## **A CONTINENT ON THE RISE: TECH DEMOGRAPHICS**

Picture this: Africa is the youngest continent, with around 60% of its population under the age of 25. With this youth-driven energy, it's no surprise that tech adoption is skyrocketing.

In fact, as of 2021, there were over 525 million mobile internet users in Africa, and the number is only growing.

## **A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE: TECH TRENDS AND STATISTICS**

Let's talk numbers. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is gaining momentum here. In the next five years, it's predicted that the African tech market could be worth over \$300 billion, bringing with it countless opportunities for growth and innovation. From fintech to agri-tech, the possibilities are limitless.

## **STORIES OF IMPACT: REAL PEOPLE, REAL TECH**

I spoke with Jane, a farmer in Kenya who no longer has to guess when to water her crops, thanks to smart irrigation systems. Then there's Ahmed, a student in Nigeria, who's gaining an education through online platforms that reach even the most remote corners. These are just glimpses of how tech is shaping African lives.

**POWER TO THE PEOPLE: RENEWABLE ENERGY AND CONNECTIVITY**

In a continent where reliable power is a challenge, renewable energy solutions are stepping in. Solar power microgrids are lighting up homes and businesses, bridging the energy gap and spurring economic development. And let's not forget the game-changer—affordable smartphones connecting people like never before.


**CONCLUSION: PIONEERING TOMORROW, TODAY**

Africa's tech journey is marked by resilience, creativity, and adaptability. The narrative is no longer one of catching up; it's about leading the way. As the digital landscape evolves, Africa stands tall, embracing innovation and crafting its own destiny.

So there you have it, a glimpse into the transformative power of emerging tech in Africa. From the young minds harnessing its potential to the seasoned entrepreneurs driving change, this is a story of growth, unity, and boundless possibilities.

Until next time, keep exploring the digital frontier!



**DAVE OBADA** is the founder of Oriz, a health tech platform, powered by AI and blockchain, aiming to improve access and efficiency in health and wellness services, ultimately contributing to the well-being of individuals across Africa and beyond. Connect with  Dave on **LINKEDIN**






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# Wellness and Employee Assistance as Cornerstones of Organizational Success

**Dr. Chris Abojei**



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## Introduction

Employee well-being is no longer a secondary concern in today's fast-paced and ever-changing company world; it is a strategic requirement. The link between employee support, wellness, and organisational productivity and profitability is unmistakable. Employers and stakeholders must recognise that promoting all aspects of wellness is not just a moral imperative but also a practical approach that has a direct influence on the bottom line. In this thought leadership piece, we'll look at the symbiotic relationship between health, employee assistance, and organisational performance, arguing for a comprehensive strategy that includes physical, mental, emotional, social, and financial well-being.

## The Multifaceted Nature of Wellness

Wellness is not a one-dimensional idea but rather a multidimensional state of well-being. Wellness is defined by the National Wellness Institute as "an active process through which people become aware of and make choices towards a more successful existence."

This definition emphasises the dynamic character of health, emphasising that it is an intentional journey towards a full life rather than the absence of illness.

1. Physical wellbeing: The state of one's physical health, including exercise, nutrition, sleep, and regular health check-ups, is referred to as physical wellbeing. Employees who are in good health are more energetic, resilient, and suited to meet the demands of their professions. Physically fit employees are less likely to take sick days and are more productive, according to studies.

2. Mental well-being: emotional intelligence, resilience, and the ability to manage stress are all aspects of mental well-being. Promoting mental wellness is critical in today's high-pressure workplaces. Employees who are mentally well are more focused, creative, and problem-solvers. According to the World Health Organisation, mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual is able to fulfil their potential (be the best they can be), manage typical life pressures, and remain productive and fruitful while meaningfully contributing to their community.

This definition emphasises the importance of mental health for productivity. Similarly, our ability to manage life's numerous challenges is closely related to our mental health and well-being. As a result, businesses run the risk of ignoring their employees' mental health.

**3. Emotional Wellness:** Emotional wellness entails being aware of and managing one's emotions, cultivating healthy relationships, and building empathy. Employees who are emotionally well are more engaged, cooperate more efficiently, and are less likely to engage in workplace problems.

**4. Social Wellness:** Social wellness emphasises the development and maintenance of positive relationships with coworkers, friends, and family. Employees who have strong social support networks are happier, less likely to burn out, and more likely to stay with their employers.

**5. Financial wellbeing:** Making informed financial decisions, controlling debt, and planning for the future are all part of financial wellbeing. Employees who are financially secure are less distracted by money concerns and can devote their whole attention to their work, enhancing productivity.

### **The Relationship Between Employee Assistance and Wellness**

Employees will not benefit from wellness initiatives unless they have access to proper support when experiencing personal or professional issues.

Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) can help in this situation. EAPs are comprehensive, workplace-based programmes that help employees deal with a wide range of personal and work-related concerns. These programmes provide counselling, legal assistance, financial planning, and other services. The relationship between wellness and EAPs is apparent, as they work together to provide a friendly and healthy work environment.

**1. Early Intervention and Prevention:** EAPs serve as instruments for early intervention and prevention. They provide employees with the tools and resources they need to resolve issues before they escalate, lowering absenteeism, attrition, and associated expenses.

**2. Mental Health Support:** In an era when mental health issues are on the rise, EAPs provide employees with a secure and confidential platform to seek treatment. Employees who are stressed, anxious, or depressed can seek expert help, leading to greater mental wellness and productivity.

**3. Conflict Resolution:** Workplace conflicts can have a negative impact on production and employee morale. EAPs help employees resolve conflicts, mediate disagreements, and promote a healthy work environment.

**4. Work-Life Balance:** It is critical for general well-being to balance work and personal life. EAPs provide help in striking this balance, which leads to increased job satisfaction and less burnout.

5. Financial Counselling: Employees are concerned about money. EAPs frequently incorporate financial advice, which assists employees in making educated decisions and alleviates one of the most common sources of stress.

## The business case for employee assistance and wellness

The advantages of investing in health and employee support programmes go beyond philanthropy. These activities have a direct and significant impact on the productivity and profitability of an organisation. Here are some convincing reasons why businesses and stakeholders should prioritise wellness and EAPs in their strategies:

1. Increased Employee Engagement: Employees who believe their bosses value and support them are more engaged and motivated. Employees that are engaged are more productive, which leads to increased profitability.

2. Absenteeism Reduction: Wellness programmes and EAPs can considerably reduce absenteeism by addressing physical and mental health issues as soon as they arise. This results in cost savings and increased production.

3. Talent Attraction and Retention: In a competitive job market, delivering effective wellness and EAP programmes can make an organisation more appealing to prospective employees. Furthermore, employees are more inclined to stay with organisations that value their well-being.

4. Increased Morale: A happy staff is one that is healthy and well-supported. Increased teamwork, inventiveness, and general workplace satisfaction result from high morale.

5. Lower Healthcare Costs: Wellness-focused employees are less likely to develop chronic illnesses. As a result, healthcare expenditures are reduced for both employees and businesses... **To be continued in the next edition**



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# COACH ONIKOSI

Leadership in its original design and intent was not to be an opportunity at popularity, neither was it design to make any or everyone happy all of the time.

Leadership was and should be about solving problems and advancing the cause of a people, community, organisation and nations.

The decisions of leadership at its onset might be misunderstood, however, a leader must be at home with being misunderstood.

True and impactful leadership must never always be consultative, even though I believe in consultations and managing stakeholder expectations.

However, leadership must be okay with taking unpopular but life changing decisions that would shape the destiny of an organisation for the best.

*Don't be deceived by the privileges of leadership to forget its responsibilities*

Leadership, like entrepreneurship is a risk and a big one at that, which is why it requires courage.

The courage to be misunderstood, to be called a tyrant or the courage to be an empathetic leader yet be seen as weak. The courage to be regarded as a benevolent dictator, the courage to firm and yet be seen as mean.

Whichever side you are, leadership for the better time is a thankless job, especially while you are in office, until you leave, your good intentions and deeds will never be appreciated.

My advice is for you to have a long rethink before you delve in.



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