

**LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY – CREATING
DISTINCTIVE RESULTS BY ENGAGING ORGANISATIONAL
COMMITMENT (PLEASE INTERPRET ORGANISATIONAL TO
INCLUDE COMMUNITY)**

A Speech Delivered

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**LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY – CREATING
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His Excellency Ambassador Christopher Thomas, Chairman of the proceedings, fellow businessmen, policy makers, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. Also, I extend a special good morning to the Honorable Senator Angela Cropper, other presenters and facilitators. It is an honor to be asked to present to you today on the topic of leadership and responsibility. Only God seems to know how much our region and more specifically our nation needs effective and relevant leadership to rise up and truly take us into this new era of global competitiveness. And so today's discussion, I don't take lightly but accept that it is a part of my own personal commitment to building a competitive Caribbean and indeed a Developed Trinidad and Tobago. It is my hope that some of the ideas and directions to which I point will become guidelines for a renewed leadership trust and move our beloved Trinidad and Tobago into a position of true global prominence.

I am especially thankful to the DFL and their leadership for recognizing that we must continue speaking about leadership, responsibility and performance.

First, permit me to posit an understanding of what is meant by a ‘developed nation’. A ‘developed nation’, concisely put is a ‘competitive nation’. It is a nation that can reasonably withstand strict global scrutiny of its performance and emerge with strong results and consensus reviews. A developed nation can and will sustainably provide high quality goods and services to and for its citizens consistent with their needs and the country’s strategy.

Let’s agree to work with this definition if only for today, and then let us indulge in some visioning for a moment. First, what is our vision of Trinidad and Tobago as a developed nation? The vision statement reads as follows: **‘We are a united resilient, productive, innovative and prosperous nation with a disciplined, caring, fun-loving society comprising healthy, happy and well-educated people and built on the enduring attributes of self-reliance, respect, tolerance, equity and integrity, where**

Every Citizen has equal opportunities to achieve his/her fullest potential;

All citizens enjoy a high quality of life, where quality healthcare is available to all

**and where safe, peaceful, environmentally-friendly communities are
maintained;**

**All citizens are assured of a sound, relevant education system tailored to
meet the**

**human resource needs of a modern, progressive, technologically
advancing nation;**

Optimum use is made of all the resources of the nation;

**The family as the foundation of the society contributes to its growth,
development and stability;**

**There is respect for the rule of law and human rights and the promotion
of the principles of democracy;**

The diversity and creativity of all its people are valued and nurtured.

Before I get into the meat of my presentation this morning, let us discuss where we are today and so that we may have an appreciation of the gap that we are committing to close. Today as we look around sweet T&T we see a country where our youth feel and experience little reason for hope, where young professionals struggle to break into the closed ‘good old boy networks’, where our abundant energy wealth is inequitably distributed, where families are falling apart under social and economic strain, there is

underperformance and general failure in our health and social services, where productivity especially in the manufacturing sector is low and where our goods and services are uncompetitive.

As investors you probably remain unimpressed by the fact that to date a viable and widely agreed to economic model has not been developed for the region. With the consequent lack of focused and prudent investments many of our economies continue to sputter and not start, further contributing to the poverty and hopelessness in the region.

Such a picture defines a wide gap that can and will only be closed by distinctive performance and a new style of transformational leadership. If we are to emerge and rise in the ranking of the Global Competitiveness of Nations, it cannot be business as usual. We must begin to challenge every cultural norm and tradition that conspire to bind our thinking, our actions and our performance. Our leadership needs an injection of new ideas and new blood to provide some new energy and vigor. To be blunt we must develop a new paradigm around performance and delivering on the promises that our leaders make to our people. Where then do we start?

The convenience of having the above vision statement for my talk is that it clearly indicates what is required of our leadership and organisations that is pertinent to our needs and which will meet the expectations of our people.

To set the tone for my presentation, I am drawn to the words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:-

The heights by great men reached and kept

Were not attained by sudden flight,

But they, while their companions slept,

Were toiling upward in the night.

Standing on what too long we bore

With shoulders bent and downcast eyes,

We may discern--unseen before--

A path to higher destinies.

Nor deem the irrevocable Past,

As wholly wasted, wholly vain,

If, rising on its wrecks, at last

To something nobler we attain.

These words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow are taken from his famous poem St. Augustine's Ladder. I find them appropriate to begin this discussion on **LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY IN BUSINESS: A TIME FOR THE NEW CARIBBEAN.**

Wadsworth's words tell us quite a bit in the selected three short verses. First, that the heights that great men reached were not reached by sudden or fortuitous ascent, but by measured and conscientious effort. That resounds today with my call to you that an important part of leadership talent development requires deep soul searching and a drive toward personal mastery, hopefully in the process shedding some of the cultural baggage left unchallenged by independence. This is a necessary precursor to regional development and leadership, without which we will not attain the greater heights of performance and accomplishments, implied by Wadsworth.

Further, Wadsworth asks us to lift our shoulders and lift our gaze, to gain a new rise in confidence and begin to discern the brilliance of our possibilities. Indeed this is a major task of leadership, especially in our region and especially during difficult times. Leadership has a responsibility to set alight in the hearts of all touched a fire that burns with endless hope and abounds

in multiple brilliant possibilities. Like Faith without work is dead, leadership that does not create a spark of hope is dead and without use.

And finally, Wadsworth implores us to not see the past, despite its darkness as lost or wasted, but instead to use its lessons to attain more noble accomplishments. And here we have some connection with our colonial history and the subsequent birth of a young nation – now an adolescent trying to find its way in a world of mature giant adults. Our leaders are mandated to find us the path to light out of this dark and no longer attractive past. A past connected to external and absentee rule, crushed self-esteem and the destruction of many aspects of our indigenous cultures.

All together Wadsworth's message speaks of the requirement for hard and smart work, focus and sustained effort and empathy built upon a foundation of a properly audited past and the need to lift up our sights and attain high noble achievements. This is our call to action today, just as all great periods in our world's history were indeed preceded by a call to action and many came after traumatic and difficult periods – even disasters. And so I posit that a major challenge of our leadership today is to take us beyond and

above the pre-Independence possibilities and to simplify the way forward and embed a spirit of hope and triumph.

Our awareness of where we are and the current wealth of our nation must then spawn many opportunities. Always an important challenge for leadership is to seize these opportunities as they arise, take them on the chin and deliver superior performance to your constituents.

Once in a great while, tragic circumstances, even social decay present us with challenges for which we simply cannot prepare. Today the crime wave that is rocking our country might in some morbid way be a blessing, since it may indeed provide the call to action. If this doesn't then indeed we are the proverbial ostriches with our heads buried in the sand.

That said the managerial rule books fail us at these difficult times, when people are searching for meaning and a reason to hope for the future. There is, however, something leaders can do in times of collective pain and confusion.

In recent years there has been a significant amount of research and discussion on emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is carried through an organization through the moods and predispositions of the leader. The leader's mood spreads inexorably. High levels of emotional intelligence create a climate in which information sharing, trust, healthy risk-taking, entrepreneurship and learning flourish. Low levels of emotional intelligence create a climate of low productivity, fear and anxiety. Because even tense or terrified but talented employees can be very productive in the short term, these organizations can produce good results, but the results are not sustainable. A major task of leadership therefore is to recognize that sustained high performance is only possible with their ability to nurture in themselves emotional intelligence and allow it to become as much a part of their culture as is fact-based analysis and other management skills.

Research conducted by Goldsmith and colleagues in their ground breaking book "Global Leadership: The Next Generation", indicates the following:- good global leadership requires a new set of competencies blended with a wholeness of emotional experiences. These include technological savvy, the ability to anticipate opportunity, personal mastery, constructive conflict,

thinking globally, appreciating diversity, building partnerships, sharing leadership, creating a shared vision, demonstrating integrity, empowering people, leading change, developing people, ensuring customer satisfaction, and maintaining a competitive advantage. To achieve these competencies requires dedication, practice, and most importantly, a place to begin! Today then I believe that we have selected a place to begin and now the work is required to develop these competencies, thus my selection of Wadsworth's encouragement.

Many aspects of the competencies identified in this publication are captured in two bigger subject matter areas – (1) development of emotional intelligence and, (2) adaptive leadership.

Given the quantum leaps that we must make to attain the performance levels required to achieve Vision 2020, I believe that a leadership model built around emotional intelligence and adaptive leadership will place our country in good stead.

The above discussion of emotional intelligence finds itself in my discussion because it is lacking on our leaders and this short coming contributes to

much of the sadness that prevails in Trinidad and Tobago today. I also believe that the presence or lack of emotional intelligence is probably the greatest predictor of success in transformational leadership today.

Let us pause and talk about the work of leadership. Then we will follow this discussion with a detailed discussion of the role of leadership behaviors and competencies in creating a high performance culture.

A leading thinker Kenichi Ohmae wrote eloquently about a 'borderless world', about the free flow of ideas, ideals, people, culture and capital. Though his examples were taken from Asia, Europe and North America the essence of his commentary applies equally well to our situation in the Caribbean. We are seeing today, greater challenge to traditional institutions; freer flows of people, their ideas and ideals and cultures evolving and emerging with strong advocacy to take a place at the head table. We are living in a time of evolving social systems with a greater demand that we do better at recognizing, valuing and incorporating diversity. Many of the people with whom we now interact, look like us and sound like us, but have different values, different expectations and different ways of doing things.

This scenario provides an adaptive challenge, not dissimilar to one posed in a corporation by disruptive technologies. Changes in societies, markets, customers, competition, and technology around the globe are forcing organizations to clarify their values, develop new strategies, and learn new ways of operating. Often the toughest task for leaders in effecting change is mobilizing people throughout the organization to do adaptive work, and again their commitment to consistently perform at their best.

Adaptive work is required when our deeply held beliefs are challenged, when the values that made us successful become less relevant, and when legitimate yet competing perspectives emerge. We see adaptive challenges every day at every level of the society and the workplace - when companies restructure or reengineer, develop or implement strategy, or merge businesses. We see adaptive challenges when marketing has difficulty working with operations, when cross-functional teams don't work well, or when senior executives complain, "We don't seem to be able to execute effectively." Adaptive problems are often systemic problems with no ready answers, but I offer two ready solutions, though I'm sure that many more examples exist.

First, mobilizing an organization to adapt its behaviors in order to thrive in new business environments is critical. Without such change, any organization today would falter and fail. Indeed, getting people to do adaptive work is the mark of leadership in a competitive world. Yet for most senior executives, providing leadership and not just authoritative expertise is extremely difficult. Why? There are probably two reasons. First, in order to make change happen, executives have to break a long-standing behavior pattern of their own – i.e. providing leadership in the form of solutions. This tendency is quite natural because many executives have reached their positions of authority by virtue of their competence in taking responsibility and solving problems. But the locus of responsibility for problem solving when a company faces an adaptive challenge must shift to its people. Solutions to adaptive challenges reside not in the executive suite but in the collective intelligence of employees and constituents at all levels, who need to use one another as resources and support, often across boundaries, and in the process learn their way to those solutions.

Second, adaptive change is distressing for the people going through it. They need to take on new roles, new relationships, new values, new behaviors, and new approaches to work. Many employees are ambivalent about the efforts and sacrifices required of them. They often look to the senior

executive to take problems off their shoulders. But those expectations have to be unlearned. Rather than fulfilling the expectation that they will provide answers, leaders have to ask tough questions. Rather than protecting people from outside threats, leaders should allow them to feel the pinch of reality in order to stimulate them to adapt. Instead of orienting people to their current roles, leaders must disorient them so that new relationships can develop. Instead of quelling conflict, leaders have to draw the issues out. Instead of maintaining norms, leaders have to challenge "the way we do business" and help others distinguish immutable values from historical practices that must go. Leaders must also become very comfortable with being challenged.

In both cases as you can tell the highly valuable skill of developing emotional intelligence in organizations is called upon. The literature coupled with some of my own investigations and observations provide six principles for taking on the adaptive challenges of leadership:

1. Taking the high view,
2. Identifying the adaptive challenge,
3. Regulating distress,
4. Maintaining attention,

5. Giving the work back to people, and,
6. Protecting the voices of leadership from their peers.

(1) **TAKING THE HIGH VIEW.** Some great leaders have the ability to roll up their sleeves and work hard in the trenches while keeping the whole big picture in mind, as if they are standing in a higher place and taking an eagle's eye view looking down from 35,000 feet. The average person because they are so engaged in the day to day details, might fail to recognize the larger patterns that are emerging but these leaders will quickly understand.

Really good leaders have to be able to view patterns as if they were eagles operating at 35,000 ft. It is no good for them to be swept up in the field of action. Leaders have to see a context for change or create one. Leaders must be able to identify struggles between values and power, today's performance realities and future opportunities, recognize patterns in people's recognition of the importance of work and family, and watch for the many other functional and dysfunctional reactions to change.

Without the capacity to move back and forth between the field of action and the high view, to reflect day to day, moment to moment, on the many ways in which an organization's habits can sabotage adaptive work, a leader easily and unwittingly becomes a prisoner of the system. The dynamics of adaptive change are far too complex to keep track of, let alone influence, if leaders stay only on the factory floor.

(2) IDENTIFYING THE ADAPTIVE CHALLENGE. When leaders and their organizations cannot learn quickly to adapt to new challenges, they are likely to face extinction. Often deep transform is required to deliver a new and different service or simply face disappearance and irrelevance. More than anything else these transformations require changes in values, practices, and relationships throughout the organizations and in their external relationships. An organization whose people relate and behave in functional silos and value pleasing their bosses more than pleasing customers could falter. Organizations must be dedicated to serving people, acting on trust, respecting the individual and making teamwork happen across boundaries. Values must change and be protected. People must learn to collaborate and to develop a collective sense of responsibility for the direction and

performance of the entity. In such cases the identified, essential adaptive challenge is to create trust throughout the organization.

Creating trust goes to the heart of an organization's values. Reginald Van Lee and his colleagues at Booz Allen Hamilton have elaborated on the challenge of translating corporate values into and through strategy to create value. The central theme in their dissertation is that values must translate at some point to the creation of trust and this is a cardinal responsibility of leadership.

(3) REGULATING DISTRESS. Doing adaptive work will cause displacement and disruption. Norms will be challenged and sacred cows will die. Leaders must realize that people can learn only so much so fast. Leaders must strike the delicate balance between having people feel the need to change and having them feel overwhelmed by change, leadership is a razor's edge and this creative tension is important.

A leader must attend to three fundamental tasks in order to help maintain a productive level of tension. Adhering to these tasks will allow him or her to motivate people without disabling them.

- First, a leader must regulate the pressure that is placed on his constituents.
- Secondly, the leader must not neglect his responsibility for providing direction, protection, orientation, managing conflict, and shaping norms.
- Thirdly, a leader helps the organization maintain those norms that must endure and challenge those that need to change.

Importantly, leaders must demonstrate presence and poise; even while regulating through a messy change process. Although leadership demands a deep understanding of the pain of change - the fears and sacrifices associated with major readjustment - it also requires the ability to hold steady and maintain the creative tension. Otherwise, the pressure escapes and the stimulus for learning and change is lost.

(4) **MAINTAINING ATTENTION.** Different people bring different experiences, assumptions, values, beliefs, and habits to their work. This diversity is valuable because innovation and learning are the products of differences. No one learns anything without being open to contrasting points of view. Yet managers at all levels are often unwilling - or unable - to address their competing perspectives collectively. They frequently avoid paying attention to issues that disturb them. This avoidance of new perspectives is most prevalent during change processes, simply because so much is already on everyone's plate. Who then really wants to deal with someone who has a different view and thinks that it is important? A leader must get employees to confront tough trade-offs in values, norms, procedures, operating styles, and power.

(5) **GIVING THE WORK BACK TO THE PEOPLE.** Everyone in the organization sees the world, the organization and its problems and challenges from his or her particular vantage point. They all see different needs and opportunities. The organization will thrive if it can bring all the information to bear on tactical and strategic decisions. When people do not act on their special knowledge and unique backgrounds, businesses fail to adapt. Letting people take the initiative in defining and solving problems means that management needs to learn to support rather than control.

Workers, for their part, need to learn to take responsibility. A leader has to let people bear the weight of this responsibility. The key is to let each employee discover the problem. Leaders won't be successful if people aren't carrying the recognition of the problem and the solution within themselves.

(6) PROTECTING THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE. Giving a voice to all people is the foundation of an organization that is willing to be innovative, to experiment and to learn. Sometimes without a respectful environment in which persons listen for content rather than listen to refute, creative deviants, and other such original voices routinely get smashed and silenced in organizational life. They generate disequilibrium, and the easiest way for an organization to restore equilibrium is to neutralize those voices, sometimes in the name of teamwork and "alignment".

Sometimes these voices are not as articulate or polished as one would wish. Of course, that often makes it harder for them to communicate effectively. They pick the wrong time and place, and often bypass proper channels of communication and lines of authority. But buried inside a poorly packaged

interjection may lie an important intuition that may lead to the next great invention and the creation of a new stream of revenue.

Over the previous few minutes I outlined two major competencies that I believe are critical to the Vision 2020 value creation and social transformation expectations. Close examination of the vision statement and the definition of the gap that currently exists, suggest that the key role of national leadership at all levels will be to transform our society to one that is focused on creating measurable results that add value in important ways. So there must be a commitment to rigorous performance management. As such and because of the daunting task ahead, I believe that the third most important competence for Trinbagonian and Caribbean leadership is the ability to create outstanding results through engaging the commitment of ALL of our intellectual capital.

I expect you as leaders to embrace the lessons of the first two competencies to provide the impetus and overcome the inertia that often precludes solid consistent and sustainable results, in your companies and in our country.

An important role of leadership is to ensure that an environment is created where all employees are strategically focused on the achievement of corporate goals and objectives. The creation of value and maximization of shareholder return is thus an excellent test of leadership capability, and therefore the most important role of senior managers in any entity is to provide an environment where the maximum power of their people is manifested through individual initiative acting in common harmony with the most important objectives of the corporation. A corporate culture so created demonstrates distinctive patterns of human behavior that are based on the core values, beliefs and norms of the corporation. In the described culture the heads, hearts and hands of all the constituents remain committed for long periods, employees take ownership for results and hold themselves accountable for poor performance.

Companies are made or broken by their values. The journey of change leadership can be long and lonely, but it is critical that employees are seen as citizens in a meritocracy and where it has become obvious that when one fails the other being so inextricably linked that their failure is also inevitable. Leaders must do their best to make employees feel comfortable expressing

their true feelings, without fear and with confidence that in speaking their ‘truths’ they are making a positive difference for themselves and the company. All of this guidance is captured in the values statement, and leaders are required to bring this statement to life in all that they do and through strategy. The statement of values is a management tool that becomes a part of the genetic code of well run organizations. It informs structure, behavior and performance and is intently focused on achieving the shareholder ends.

A recent publication by a colleague Allen Saville identified seven factors that make up performance. As you will see as I list these factors these are indeed the responsibilities of every leader in every organisation. The factors are:

1. Purpose – clear understanding of the goals and objectives of the organisation;
2. Commitment – the level of drive and desire that individuals within the company demonstrate toward meeting corporate objectives;
3. Competencies – the knowledge, skills and attributes needed to accomplish the corporate goals;

4. Alignment – the degree that everyone is working together toward the same objectives
5. Speed – the rate at which tasks are accomplished and functions performed;
6. Quality – the level and thoroughness of the outcomes;
7. Economy – the attention to the value details of costs, and overall stewardship.

The first four factors are the **‘effectiveness factors’** while the last three are the **‘efficiency factors’**. Leadership has a role to ensure that they apply all of their capabilities in emotional intelligence and adaptive leadership to create the impetus for a strong sense of purpose, a commitment to the corporate objectives, the voluntary and enthusiastic development of necessary competencies and the alignment of all employees behind the goals and objectives of the organisation.

The efficiency factors may be seen as specific roles and tasks of managers - this responsibility being to create an environment where products are delivered better, faster and cheaper. The above separation of the roles of

managers and leaders is important yet debatable, because it must be pointed out that good leaders also manage and good managers also lead.

To do all of the above is to begin the journey to maximizing shareholder return. However, I will present you with three challenges in the form of working hypotheses, as we attempt to develop a unique leadership model for Trinidad and Tobago. Such a model by definition must be carefully customised to our specific needs and our vision. The model must have some cultural specificity and become the DNA of 'Brand TnT'. Such a model will ensure that indeed we are maximising the human and shareholder capital entrusted to our stewardship.

1. First, leaders also have a moral obligation to maximize the human capital entrusted to them. In so doing they are guaranteed to realize superior returns to shareholders, and make as positive a contribution to the communities as can be expected. Empowered employees, who are well prepared for life, tend to take responsibility for the ethical and governance issues faced by the company. These employees see the culture as a democratic one and will do their best to protect it from evil and external threats.

They are very likely to become the biggest proponents of the organizations strategy and performance systems. In today's organization this is where most of the shareholder invested capital resides – in its people!

2. Secondly, leaders have a moral obligation to act ethically. The high cost of unethical behavior has recently been demonstrated in several scandals and the disappearance of some companies, for example Enron and WorldCom. Ethics also encompass the ways in which employees are their concerns are managed. All constituents must be able to have confidence that what is said is what is intended, and that your word represents a bond to act in a certain way. Leadership must deliver what they promise or suffer the scorn of their constituents and expect social system breakdowns.

3. Thirdly, leaders have a moral responsibility to treat the environment ethically. The environment is an important piece of the intergenerational equity that is passed from generation to generation, and the leadership of corporations will be making a

significant contribution if they are sensitive to environmental protection in their strategy and actions.

We will achieve the lofty vision of 2020, when and only if our leadership develops ability to meet these three moral obligations. Only with their seizure of these responsibilities can they truly maximize shareholder value return and produce more competitively priced and quality produced goods and services for their communities and stakeholders.

Our nation today stands at the threshold of a fully globalised state. There are challenges and obstacles. It is critically important that we focus on helping our nation and our region maximize its human capital, develop a strong ethical basis for action and protect its environmental resources, while returning maximum value to shareholders. As leaders today we must secure a wealthy and hopeful future for the next generation! We must sustain our economic vitality, and continue to attract new businesses that create sustainable, value-added job opportunities that ensure our people and communities are better equipped to take care of themselves.

This then is the ultimate challenge for today's globally prepared Trinbagonian leader. I trust that I have offered you some insights that better prepare you for this exciting journey. Be courageous, act with a strong sense of self, leave the door open for new thoughts and ideas, however uncomfortable and be certain that your company's culture is ethically and morally strong.

May God Bless each of you, may God bless our nation and its leaders, thank you for your attention and for the invitation to spend some time with you today on this very important topic, please enjoy the remainder of the conference! Thank You!