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## **“TEAMWORK IN LEADERSHIP”**

### INTRODUCTION

I am very honoured to have been invited to speak to you this evening. I am not unaccustomed to being around powerful women.

Scotiabank Jamaica boasts one of the highest representation of women in senior and executive management; both in corporate Jamaica and the Scotiabank group. In fact, women make up more than 50 percent of the leadership.

As far as I know, the biologists say that nature tends to balance the genders 50:50 in the population; so except in times of war, there are equal numbers of men and women.

I know Jamaican men claim that there are more men than women in this country. In any case, the reality is that Scotiabank Jamaica has a higher proportion of women in leadership than the population ratio. So I have been well prepared for this moment.

It is also very timely for me to be speaking to you on the topic of teamwork and leadership, since these subjects are very much on my mind having addressed our Employee Annual General Meeting this morning in Kingston.

## THE DEMANDS OF LEADERSHIP

I am sure that I do not need to go into detail about the changing nature of the world economy. As business and professional women, I know you are quite aware of the impact that globalisation and rapid technological developments have had on the way we conduct our affairs.

The truth is that the old organizational structures no longer serve the challenges and opportunities that accompany this knowledge and information age. In addition, globalisation has intensified competition to an unprecedented level.

Buyers have unlimited access to products services and information. As a result, companies must now reexamine their strategies to ensure that these will grant them a sustainable competitive advantage. Even industry leaders like Scotiabank cannot afford to rest on their laurels.

In fact, once you are the leader you are the target of all competitors and you must constantly re-examine the way you do business to ensure that you defend this position. The strategies that brought success in the past are not likely to do so in the future.

### Corporate Social Responsibility

Another feature of modern life is the increase in the interest and power of various stakeholders. While it is still important to return increased value to shareholders, today corporate performance is measured by more than numbers. Employee morale, stakeholders' opinion and customer loyalty are also on the CEO agenda.

This has resulted in an expanded view of corporate social responsibility that includes:

- a commitment to diversity,
- creating a “great place to work”
- environmental consciousness

- high ethical standards
- and contribution to the community and nation.

## THE ROLE OF TEAMS

Given these demands, business and professional leaders like you must create organisations with structures that are flexible enough to change to meet the demands of the market. The idea is to break down the boundaries between different levels and divisions so that ideas, people, information, tasks and resources can circulate freely throughout the company.

And this is where the concept of teamwork is gaining support, as opposed to the traditional functional and divisional structures. The team approach to organizational structure allows companies to form and disband teams as necessary to fulfill a particular strategic objective.

By doing so, firms can make the best use of the diverse talents among their people. The question is: what approach to leadership is required in this new environment?

## **LEADING TEAMS**

First, permit me to say a few words about management and leadership. It is very popular these days to talk about leadership as if it has somehow replaced management in organisations.

The reality is that companies do not employ leaders; they employ managers. However, we need these managers to be leaders as well. As managers, they must deal with complex issues; ensure that their team executes tasks with order and consistency; monitor results and plan structure.

As leaders they must be able to cope with change, develop a vision for the future, communicate that vision and inspire commitment to the vision among team members. In fact in the words of Rudy Giuliani: **Leaders need to be optimists. Their vision is beyond the present.**

Therefore the manager/leader must possess the combination of skills and attitudes that will enable her to fulfill these functions. I will speak only to four of these requirements, since I'm acutely aware that ***a good speech has a good beginning and a good ending, both of which are kept very close together.***

However, before I go into these four attributes, I must mention one important task of leadership in today's environment. This is to choose and articulate a set of core values for the company and live by these values.

Core values are important because they serve as the glue which holds the company together through all the turbulent changes which come with the modern competitive environment. Leaders must not only preach these values but live them on a daily basis as an example to their team.

But let me now turn to the four requirements I wish to focus on this evening.

## THE ROLE OF COACHING

The first is the role of coaching. At Scotiabank we have been placing great emphasis on the role of coaching in leading teams. The reality is that in today's environment, the management style must evolve from control to instruction and guidance.

**The story is told of the manufacturer who is showing his machine factory to a potential customer. At noon, when the lunch whistle blows, all workers immediately stop work and leave the building. At exactly one o'clock the whistle blows again, and all the workers return from their break.**

**When the tour is over, the manufacturer turns to his guest and says, "Well, now, which of these machines would you like to order?"**

**"Forget the machines," says the visitor. "How much do you want for that whistle?"**

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That kind of management may work in a factory, but the leader who wishes to foster teamwork, must focus on developing people. This requires you to spend time with people, helping them to celebrate and solidify their strengths and work on closing gaps in their performance. Like I said, this takes time.

It also takes a genuine commitment to the development and growth of team members.

## THE ROLE OF LISTENING

The second guiding principle is that the leader of the future must be a good listener. Ken Blanchard said: **In the past a leader was a boss. Today's leaders must be partners with their people. They no longer can lead solely based on positional power.** Do you become a better listener when you become a leader or is it the other way around?

The answer is yes to both questions. We should place persons who know how to listen in leadership positions. And if they are doing it right, the practice they gain at listening should make them better listeners. (***Women claim that they have a natural advantage in this area; but I don't know the scientific basis of that claim.***)

Whatever the case, (***and I would not argue it in a room where I am in the minority***), the truth is that the collective wisdom of all of us is significantly richer than the insights of a few. Team members must feel free to give feedback without fear of rejection or reprisal.

They must know that when they speak, you will listen with an open mind and a non-judgmental attitude. Otherwise their great suggestions as well as their dissatisfactions, with go unexpressed. The team, and indeed the entire company will be the worse off for their silence.

## THE ROLE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The leader in the team-based organisation must also have some basic conflict management skills. At Scotiabank we've taken this so seriously that we have set up an internal conflict management unit that operates on ombuds principles. We also recognise that individual leaders must be willing to acknowledge the existence of conflicts and deal with them appropriately. That is why all our leadership positions require some basic training in conflict resolution; which our unit provides in-house.

Experts say that teams go through 4 stages before disbanding: forming, norming, storming and performing. Conflicts are likely at every stage and in fact in many cases it is out of conflict that an organisation may gain valuable creative insight. Therefore the leader of today and tomorrow must not fear conflict, but view it as something they must manage appropriately.

## THE ROLE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Finally, I would like to emphasise the importance of accountability in teamwork. The fact that the team becomes the unit of focus does not reduce the need for individual responsibility.

**A film crew was on location deep in the desert.**

**One day an old Indian went up to the director and said, "Tomorrow rain." The next day it rained.**

**A week later, the Indian went up to the director and said, "Tomorrow storm." The next day there was a hailstorm.**

**"This Indian is incredible," said the director.**

**He told his secretary to hire the Indian to predict the weather for the remaining of the shoot. However, after several successful predictions, the old Indian didn't show up for two weeks. Finally the director sent for him.**

**"I have to shoot a big scene tomorrow," said the director, "and I'm depending on you. What will the weather be like?"**

**The Indian shrugged his shoulders. "Don't know," he said. "My radio is broken."**

In that case the team leader had not checked out the source of this team member's credentials. But humour aside, as leaders we must ensure that team members understand their role in the team and that they are equipped to perform this role. Then we must create an ethos that nurtures accountability.

## **CONCLUSION**

You may be thinking; this teamwork approach to leadership sounds like a lot of work. And you are right. The competitive nature of modern economies is making leadership more challenging.

On the other hand, teamwork reduces the need for the heroic leadership of the past, because it taps into the skills and innovativeness of the wider group. The leader who has makes coaching, listening, conflict management and accountability and integral part of her skill set is better equipped to succeed.

Thank you for listening. I wish you all the best in your future endeavours.