

Bangkok Post **สยามโพสต์**



Towards the 21st Century

by
Dr. Chira Hongladarom, Executive Director, Human Resources Institute, Thammasat University.

When we started the HRI/POST Cooperation project we thought it might last a few months at most. We were not even sure if academics and the media could work together. Now on this our 12th week I am pleased to say that the readership response has fully endorsed our "product". We have received a lot of positive feedback from managers and officials both in business and government agencies. This is particularly gratifying bearing in mind the competition for everyone's time these days and the upshot is that we are all agreed on continuing the series for at least a few months more.

A big thank you to everyone who is filling in the "Feedback" questionnaire and sending it to us. We will certainly take your views into consideration. I hope you will be lucky and win one of our fellowships to attend a high level training session being sponsored by HRI and the Bangkok Post, each of which is worth 35,000 baht. If not, maybe you will win one of the 25 ALPHATEL telephones instead!

One of the things that has become most obvious during this series is that the people of Thailand need to do some hard thinking about their future. While my foreign friends all agree that Thai people are very capable, they worry that we are too concerned about short term gains rather than planning for long term development. If we continue down this path, as the great Economist John Maynard Keynes once said, "in the long run we are all dead."

Nevertheless we are pleased to see how this column has sparked a renewed interest in human resources issues among the media, and we hope that this in turn might influence government policy. If there has been any criticism from our readers it is that we have not emphasized the dangers of neglecting human resources issues strongly enough. Some people want us to drive the message home with even more force. I tell them that this is exactly what I have been trying to do for the past 15 years! I would urge anyone who is in a position to influence the human resources policy in their company or government office to do everything they can to make this a top priority.

It has also become obvious from our discussions that education is the key consideration in human resources policy making. This is an urgent matter. To produce so many unqualified people is a waste of our most valuable resource, quite apart from the impact this has on the quality of individual lives.

The most recent index of global competitiveness ranked Thailand 23rd. We are rather a long way behind Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia, but if only we can do something about education I'm sure we can quickly climb much higher up the ladder.

Last week I attended an inaugural dinner for MBA and MPA alumni from Sripatum University. The occasion taught me two things: Firstly that private universities are a very dynamic growth industry in Thailand, so much so that I was easily persuaded to accept the invitation to become chairman of their graduate program, and secondly I learned that the permanent Secretary of the Ministry of University Affairs, Dr. Wichit Srisa-an, is a man of great vision. I do not usually find speeches by bureaucrats very stimulating but Dr. Wichit is an exception. His talk on the implications of globalization for education was truly excellent. Dr. Wichit quoted four key elements that a US government study on competitiveness identified as being necessary to achieve global competitiveness;

- quality human resources
- management
- technology
- information

When I look for traces of these in our own educational system, especially at the basic primary, secondary and vocational levels, I do not feel optimistic. Therefore any political party that agrees with my friend Dr. Thomas Leung that people are our "most important strategic resource" gets my full support. The trouble is that like their counterparts in commerce, politicians also tend to play it short, leaving long term concerns for others to address.

This week we look at another vital aspect of human resources management in the workplace; communication. My two good friends, Ron Endley and Dr. Henry Homes have pooled their resources to give a joint talk about "barriers to communication" in the context of Thai culture. I'm sure you will find their ideas very well thought out and of great practical use.

Let me conclude by summarising my own philosophy on how to get the most out of human resources;

- Develop people
- Manage people
- Develop management ethics and correct principles
- Ultimately aim for quality of life and happiness

See you next week.

Comparing international management knowledge



Source: Dr. Fredric William Belerant, AIT

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