Mission Critical

The term 'mission critical' is often used in identifying what is urgently required or essential to achieving success. In an instance where an organization, enterprise or a country appears to be under severe stress from both internal and external pressures, this can be a sign that there are failings which threaten the functionality of the organization. In some cases, the leadership can be accused of having lost its way. An authoritarian, autocratic and/or dictatorial leadership can be the catalyst of the problems which an organization faces. Matters can even be worse where there is evidence of indecisive leadership.

That being said, a mission critical state can be avoided where there is proactive, aggressive, assertive, decisive, prudent and responsible leadership. Where the leadership has become devoid of ideas and the indicators point to a lack of vision, initiative and strategies to turn things around, it is at this point that the term mission critical, in terms of action and rescue has real meaning.

For the most part there are warning signs that the organization or enterprise is bordering on entering into a dysfunctional state. Experts suggest that the visible signs of the leadership and/or management losing its way, emerge from the misunderstanding of the organization's mission, a clear break down in communication, open division within the walls of the organization and where there is the absence of any consensus of opinion in resolving emerging problems.

This decline within an organization usually occurs where the bond of trust and confidence is broken. The wilful hoarding of information and the intent of not sharing it with other players, is symptomatic of the fact that there are cracks within the walls of the organization. The decision not to share information is bad, as it serves to destroy the team cohesion. This cannot be in the best interest of an organization, for it prevents the members of the management team from developing a consensus of opinion when attempting to find solutions to problems. Furthermore, it hinders the momentum in the drive to achieve the organization's agenda.

What this does is to create tensions and division among team members. This is an unhealthy feature of any organization, for on the radar are the signs of internal political divisions. It is more problematic where the leader comes under the microscope. The leader can, in fact be more a part of the problem than the solution, particularly when the individual fails to ensure that all team members understand the strategies which the group has identified in meeting the organization's objectives. What this does is remove them from having a sense of identity and belonging in the management and execution of the strategies.

Another contributing factor to the chaos which can plague an organization is poor decision making. This along with the exclusion of team members from participating in the decision-making process can prove to be problematic. This unfortunate circumstance exists where there is a lack of astute leadership. Leaders who think of themselves as 'all important' and having all the answers are less likely to embrace others. They are more prone to marginalize participation and reduce the role and input which others contribute.

Organizations which suffer from this foot and mouth disease, would tend to find that the leader usually has an ego problem and tends to engage in micro management. There are several instances where organizations find themselves challenged to meet their goals and expectations because of the fact that the leadership sets unrealistic deadlines and deliverables. When this happen, it lends to the name and blame game being given currency.

For trade unions, mission critical becomes a real issue when there is a fracture in the leadership and management of the organization, the credibility and confidence in the leadership is under the microscope, the loss of membership is apparent and the organization and/or recruitment of new members is a challenge. Mission critical becomes an important issue when a trade union begins to lose its influence, appeal and respect. If the integrity of the trade union is being questioned and there is an apparent lack of interest and enthusiasm amongst the membership, then there is a real cause for concern regarding its functionality, effectiveness and the standing it enjoys in the community.

While the leadership and management of trade unions tend to focus on financial matters and declining membership as issues that warrant crisis intervention, it is important to note that micro management, and the planting of seeds of discord within the organization through the creation of a political divide, will test the strength and character of the organization to overcome the fallout. The easy solution would be to create a bond of unity as opposed to creating a divide which is fueled by internal trade union politics, serving partisan political interest and or self-serving interest.