

Something for Something

Something for something is known to be an old cliché, the origin of which probably dates back to the days of slavery and pre-colonial times. The use of term 'something for something' was applicable to the times when the barter system was widely used in the exchange of goods. The Wikipedia free encyclopaedia described the barter as a system of exchange by which goods or services are directly exchanged for other goods or services without using a medium of exchange, such as money. It is distinguishable from gift economies in many ways; one of them is that the reciprocal exchange is immediate and not delayed in time.

History will recall that the barter system was widely used during the age of the triangular slave trade, where the Europeans trade in slaves on the West African Coast, by purchasing slaves in exchange for guns and other European produced goods. In today's world the barter system may yet exist, but the exchange of money is the accepted mode of doing business. However you look at it, the bottom line is that there is something for something.

To apply this to the workplace, employers have an expectation of their employees that they will be productive and efficient and therefore justify the wage or salary that is paid to them. On the other hand, employees expect a fair wage for a fair day's work. Where is the expectation that employers will provide good conditions of service, the employee is expected to demonstrate a good work ethic. These are all measured and reasonable expectations and actions which both the employer and employee should both honour.

The demands of the today's workers is to be better remunerated for the service that they provide. It leaves the employees to resort to the use of the medium of collective bargaining. This occurs where the employees establish a bargaining unit, and proceed to work through their trade union or staff association, in negotiating a new wages and salaries agreement and improved conditions of service. This fair exchange comes about once employers are prepared to place a value on the work of their workers, and appreciative of the need to compensate them appropriately.

It should never be the case that workers should be placed in a position where it is made to appear that they have to beg or coerce the employer to treat to them fairly. It sometimes is mind boggling to understand why a company would declare millions of dollars in annual profits, undertake to spend large sums in the sponsorship of events, but fail miserably to offer a salary increase and other benefits to the employees. May be it is that those employers who engaged in such a practice, are more inclined to identify

with the capitalist orientation to invest in the area where there is supposedly greater, immediate and larger returns. That simply means invest in attracting more customers through the selling of services and products, for the express purpose of further increasing the bottom line.

If something for something is to make sense, then employers would recognize that without the human resource to drive the business, from production to marketing and management, the growth of any business will be retarded. Enhancing the remuneration of employees, providing them with other incentives, a safe working environment, security of tenure and good working conditions will go a long way in ensuring the viability and sustainability of the business.

Where the working conditions are good, and the evidence points to the fact that employees are respected and treated fairly, It is reasonable to expect that workers are not ignorant to the fact that they must give back what is expected of them. For them something for something should be nothing short of commitment and dedication to the job, and the delivery of quality work.