

**CLOSING REMARKS DELIVERED BY:
DENNIS DE PEIZA, GENERAL SECRETARY, CTUSAB,
TO THE WEEK OF EXCELLENCE WORKSHOP.**

Tuesday 22 February, 2011, Solidarity House.

Theme: 'Engaging, Empowerment and Effectiveness

Results: Getting Employees and Employers to Deliver Excellent Customer Care.'

When one speaks of excellence, reference is simply being made to 'quality.' I am inclined to believe that you will agree with me, that we have been treated to two excellent presentations in today's workshop. Firstly; we have had the joint presentation on Health and Productivity by Prof. Henry Fraser and Mr. Ian Carrington, secondly, the presentation by the gracious Ms. Kim Tudor on the subject of Service Excellence. On your behalf and that of the members of the Organizing Committee of the 2011 Week of Excellence, I congratulate, compliment and thank them for a job well done.

If I may take a lead from the game of cricket, most cricket fans would tell you that there is a need to have a good and reliable opening batsman to lay the foundation for a good start to the innings. Today, we had as our opening batsman Mr. Andy Armstrong, President, B'dos Chamber of Commerce. He provided an excellent start to the day's proceedings, and so, we must thank him for his insightful comments.

In contemporary cricket, we now have a match referee, and today that role was ably discharged Mr. Julian Hunte, Senior Assistant General Secretary, BWU. He is to be applauded on the efficient manner in which he chaired and guided the discussion session.

No cricket game is complete without players. It goes without saying, you the participants were the players in this workshop. Thank you all for attending and for your active participation. This definitely has contributed to the success of today's exercise.

As the last man in the batting line-up, I beg your indulgence as I make a few observations, which I will direct in the main to the subject of Health and Productivity.

Today, we have been challenged to make a connection between health and productivity, and to identify ways of measuring the effectiveness and performance of our organizations. These may be determined to be mutually exclusive, but what is important, is what lies at the core. I suggest that we are being called upon to focus on both quantitative and qualitative measurements, which would position individual organizations to assess their effectiveness and performance.

It is my considered opinion that a healthy workforce is one of the most important economic assets of a nation, and hence the issue of health and productivity are inextricably linked. Following on this, there are two considerations that immediately surface. These are the economic costs to be borne where workers are too sick to work or function effectively, and the consequential reduction in productivity.

The experts identify three major sources of lost economic productivity which is related to health reasons or circumstances. These are adults who do not work because of poor health or disability; workers who miss time from their jobs as a result of health problems; and workers who, while working, are less productive than they could be as a result of their own health problems or worries about sick family members.

The seriousness of the health and productivity issues become more apparent, taking into account people who are unable to work or drop out of the workforce because of serious health problems or disability of one kind or another. The startling reality is that these individuals do not generate economic output, pay taxes on earnings, or help raise the nation's economic standard of living.

The picture becomes gloomier when the issue of down time is added. There is the loss of man hours by virtue of persons missing time from work. This is further compounded when persons who are in good health, are forced to stay at home to take care of family members who are either ill or disabled and require care.

There is also the incidence of reduced productivity on the job, which manifest itself in instances were workers show up for work even when they do not feel well, or are worried about a family member who is ill. The down side of this is reflected in the instance where an individual, who is not well, is exposed to the risk of injury, or held responsible for the spreading of an infectious disease.

In moving to the action stage, the question which you may individually wish to consider is,.....what plan of action would you encourage your management to pursue in order to drive excellence, ensure higher levels of performance, improve the effectiveness of the organization and its service delivery?

Based on the apparent growing incidence of absenteeism that is said to be recorded at workplaces, which is often said to relate to sick leave, occasioned by illness of one kind or another; the suggested first order of business would be that of moving the health agenda forward. The aim should be to place a focus on primary prevention strategies that are intended to help people stay healthy and productive.

It would require that emphasis is placed on health promotion, health education, lifestyle management, safety engineering, hazard recognition, job ergonomics, screening and early detection programmes, nutrition, prenatal care, immunizations and other wellness services.

These should be seen as *preventive care strategies* that are directed at improving health and productivity. This would be an effective way of enabling early diagnosis and treatment of acute illnesses, as well as to allow for the ongoing management of chronic conditions.

Employers could even play a decisive role in addressing the issue of health and productivity, by putting in place a plan to ensure that **all** workers have health insurance coverage. This would allow for preventive care, the benefit of which would be improving in the health status of employees, and creating the potential for improvement in the levels of productivity.

Employers are urged to go further and undertake to address the needs of the most vulnerable, whom we refer to as those lowly paid workers in our society. They can do so by providing them with a decent wage which would allow them to afford or contribute to a subsidized health insurance policy, or to afford individual comprehensive health insurance coverage.

Employers ought to give consideration to establishing workplace health and wellness programmes, which ought to be integrated into the daily operations of the organization. This may require a change in the organization's culture. Inasmuch that this represents meaningful change which lends to improving health and enhancing productivity, it ought not to be feared but embraced.

Least it is overlooked, let's recognized the importance of putting structures and systems in place to support employees who are returning to work after an illness, or having to cope with a disability. It demands that training is providing for supervisors and managers in the workplace, so as to equip them to be able to deal with issues of employees' health, productivity, absenteeism, disability, and employees returning to work after a period of absence due to illness.

Finally, if we are to successfully monitor and evaluate the trends in the workplace as it relates to health and productivity, it requires that proper data structures, adequate data collection and reporting systems are in place.

The need for information of this nature for the purpose of decision making and measuring effectiveness and performance, requires that matrix measurements are a must. This is the defining way of determining if standards of excellence are being achieved.

It therefore should be the pledge of all participants, to recommit to working towards identifying measurements and defining performance characteristics, which promote productivity and the attainment of standards of excellence. The use of your matrix will surely assist your organization to account for its invested resources, which includes its human resource, to continually improve the organization's effectiveness, and to describe its strengths and differentiate itself from other agencies and organizations.