

Think-Tank

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November 2012

Introduction

A think-tank is a group of loosely associated persons agreed to think together on common themes of interest. It is an approach commonly used in research, business and academia for promoting liberal and open minded thoughts that create knowledge, solutions and response to operational and business challenges. It can also be used in other spheres of life. Among professionals who are in a common fraternity, it can be used to seek out opportunities, options and new ways of doing things. It can be used as a growth promoter, where different people are agreed to share and exchange what knowledge, competence and experience they have, to benefit from each other. How the generated knowledge is used is left to the user.

Overview on Kenya

The modern work place in Kenya is changing very fast. In the last ten years, many people have found work in the informal sector outside of the artisan work in garages, workshops; and open yards in street corners of urban settings. Of particular interest is the number of women who have come into the work place at decision making and leadership levels in this sector. Moreover, some roles in the formal work place have been transformed. For instance the roles of a secretary, receptionist and clerks that were so popular for women up to the 80's have almost diminished completely. With access to computers, a phone at hand, one can generate more and do more at the office and not need an assistant to do those roles. Investing in a reliable laptop or iPad, and a moderately functioning phone, a single person is as good as an office of about 25 people. Investing also in a defined work place that gives the right atmosphere, ambience and condition is valuable.

Many employed people have suddenly found themselves without work as employers shed off personnel, change strategy or run broke. Some individuals due to personal circumstances have had to leave or drop out of fulltime employed work. Others retired eagerly or retired when they were still very productively active while others have just lost jobs outright. Many have joined the roll of informal workforce that has many academically and professionally endowed people joining the oceans of less academically and professionally endowed, but very few formal opportunities for making an income.

While that is the case, many formal employments provide underemployment to job holders when comparing skills, training, qualifications and competence to income and options and space for growth. This presents a paradox and also dilemmas. Why are so many academically and professionally endowed people, especially women, not fully employed? Many seem to be under-employed if they have any income at all.

On the other hand, there are many, not so well educated and professionally trained persons, who have a booming time with high incomes out of what would seem to be engagements that do not need that high level of education and training. How come that some people start on something that is a very good idea for income and they do not capture the money, while others who are not so clear about the ideas seem to make more money on what might not be considered so highly?

A case in point is Consulting work in Kenya. This sector has continued to expand into new fields. New options and opportunities have come and some have also gone. Some fields have a continuous flow of work while others seem to be scantily needed. In the consulting sector, many have started and somehow after some time the assignments for consultancy stop coming and when there is nothing else they can do, they end up changing suddenly and go in different lines. What is the future of sources of income in this sector especially for people with an education and professional credentials yet they are currently not fully employed for what they have earned in academia, training and experience?

What types of competencies will be needed in the future for stable incomes over time? Is it worth looking at sources of income from the perspective of a "*one-time kill and exit*", to go and enjoy the great harvest? Is the work place as an obsolete relic, and therefore consider to instead, investing in looking (*hunting*) for jackpots from where one can make a scoop for life? Is this the likely trend or is there an alternative more systematic, long-term and better fulfilling?

Thinking it Out

How can one engage in a manner that ensures continuous flow of work in consultancy or any business venture? In "*Starting Your Own Business*", Pete Ondeng' (1987) points out that planning is only one part of the business, the other is finding and knowing what the market is, where it is and reaching it. How could these aspects be tied together? On the other hand, how could one set up something that will grow given the high level competition that the Kenyan market has grown into in business and professional circles? Must every person without a job be a book writer of their life experience, or get into business? Is business the place to go for the jobless, if so how should they approach it? If they failed to keep a job how will they keep a business running?



How could one ensure that they are productively earning an income commensurate to the effort and time they put into it? What could be done to have the millions of people without an income, realize an income; is it just by luck or by government creating jobs? What does it take to create jobs? Who can or should create jobs and how? Every mind has its questions on these issues and it would be advisable to ask them out and loud verbally and also in written form.

Your thoughts on this could be of help to many young and older economically capable persons who at this moment are not productive as they are discouraged either due to being unemployed, under-employed or have lost motivation and interest for work and are utterly straggling.