

Adem and Woldu are good colleagues who work in a well established service giving organization. During their discussions in one of the nicest café in Asmara, with a group of friends with several work experience, Adem and Woldu maintained that they have and still are working diligently and faithfully in their organization for many years. They rather praised themselves that; they are so tied up with their work that they could not even ask for an annual leave for more than ten years. Their discussions were overheard by Hassan, a management expert, in the nearby corner of the same café house. Rather surprised, what a waste! Hassan exclaimed to his friend who was sipping a macchiato. What do you mean? Asked his friend, Tecele. These two gentlemen are simply not an important asset to their organization in the first place, said Hassan. Further commenting, Hassan underscored that according to the basic principles of management, it appears that there is a loose leadership quality in their organization. Tecele was curious to learn more from Hassan as he seems not to comprehend what his friend Hassan was talking about. Tecele is also a workaholic and similarly he did not take his annual leave for so many years. Deep inside him he felt attacked by the piercing comments of Hassan.

What do you mean? Tecele has to ask over as he was bewildered by Hassan's comments. Tecele continued," as for me, these people seem to be quite busy and they have been working day and night for the wellbeing of the organization at the expense of the rest they deserve to enjoy. I therefore seem to fail to understand why you are trying to belittle the efforts of these two gentlemen. Meanwhile Tecele was struggling to suppress his nervousness.

Rather smiling, Hassan has to go into details as to why he has to utter such comments. Listen Tecele said Hassan; I am not trying to belittle their work. From their discussions they are demonstrating that they have a good sense of loyalty and dedication. This is acceptable in its face value. However one has to know that basically man kind needs a break to renew his mental and physiological energy. These gentlemen might think that they are hard workers, but in reality they are overworked and surely exhausted. They have drawn out all of their energy for many years. Management scholars say that over work or fatigue is not a battle honor but it is a crime. One is not paid to be busy, for any fool can be busy, but one is paid to be effective. It is only by being effective that the organization can reap the expected profits and together with the determination to cultivate its staff members. Tecele felt the pierce of such serious comments and could not hide as his face blushed.

Hassan continued to explain. He said, by working long hours some people portray themselves as dedicated workers and their superiors usually choose them for promotion. Managers who work long hours are "Poor Role Models". They do not have time to read books, periodicals and any other written materials relevant to their business activities. As a result they could not cultivate their subordinates. It is said that those who shackle themselves to long hours of work have no good sense of the management of time. Effective management system evaluates employees not on their long hours of work but on their actual performance. Organizations that give reward to those who work long hours are in actuality penalizing those effective people. Such organizations would indirectly encourage the staff to defer their annual leave on continuous basis thereby leading to ineffectiveness.

I can tell you, Hassan went on, that if the organization would continually undertake a work measurement or monitor and evaluate their performance they will find that the productivity of these two gentlemen has reduced considerably. It is to be known that the more one would be so much engaged in a given work situation, no matter how time flies, the more one would yield a diminishing return of productivity. So much work pressure can even adversely affect the health situation of the seemingly exemplary worker. One has also to understand that if one simply piles up the workload time will expand proportionally. If one would purport to work 168 hours a week, time is there waiting him/her to fill it up. Time will extend infinitely.

In trying to further elaborate about this important topic of discussion, Hassan went on to state that, two people were working on part time basis three days a week and for two hours only for each working day, in an efficiently run whole sale distribution organization. After one year of their stay the management told them to go on leave. The workers were astonished to hear from the management for such arrangement as they believed that working two hours each for three days a week could not even warrant them as full time employees and thus to deserve an annual leave entitlement. Therefore they did not see the need for an annual leave. Being the policy of the organization the management insisted that they have to go for their annual leave. The workers were rather skeptical and thought that it could be an indirect way of being terminated of their services. Rather reluctantly they took their leave and after the allowable leave days they have to return back to the organization simply to find out whether they will continue or not. The management welcomed them and allowed them to continue with their part time jobs. Ever since they were to work hard attentively and every year they longed to have their annual leave.

Tecele seems more attentive to learn more from such interesting explanations of Hassan, who has already studied the snoopng body language of Tecele.

Having overheard the whole conversations of Adem and Woldu, Hassan was to assume that these two gentlemen seem to hold senior posts. They were talking about operations and finances. From the inference Hassan told Tecele that if the files, he doubts whether there is good filing system in the personnel, of the two gentlemen and the whole staff for that matter, would be reviewed there could be several unnoticed days of absenteeism taken in the pretext of visiting weddings, social religious feasts, funerals, sick leaves and what have you. Tecele felt the nudge as he usually takes unnoticeable short leaves.

As I said earlier, continued Hassan, it appears therefore that the organization has a loose leadership style for it is easy to realize that there is a lot of accrued leave everywhere in that organization. In money terms this is a great loss to the organization. If one of these two gentlemen would take his accumulated leave at once it would surely be to a tune of about one year of an annual leave. Letting a staff for about a year would simply signify that the organization is poorly managed. When a person is allowed to take an accrued leave the financial entitlement would be calculated in terms of the current salary. So many salary changes could have been made in the previous years. From an employee's point of view, outstanding leave may have personal and hidden financial implications. In this case the organization would tremendously loose in financial terms.

Organizations hardly realize the leave liability when the overall management lacks good

leadership quality.

The fundamental purpose of annual and long service leave is for rest and recuperation of employees. It is a system of maintaining their good productivity if they are allowed to rest. In fact as far as the white collars are concerned, "Mental fatigue is much more serious than physical fatigue". An overdrawn mind will eventually simply fall apart.

Employees may have many and varied reasons for deferring leave. Continuous attendance at work over an extended period, however, as I have said earlier, may prove detrimental to an employee's mental and physical health.

There are several reasons for employees for not taking their annual leave, Hassan continued to explain.

Employees may feel that they may not have enough money to go on leave and manage some travels.

Commitment to work: Some people at senior levels may believe that they are irreplaceable. Such notion will impel them to stay long without taking leave for considerable period of time.

Concern over Job security: Many believe that they might not return to their place if they go on leave. They suspect that the organization might have already put someone on their place.

A number of good management practices are recommended by scholars for an effective leave Management programs:

These include:

*Providing information related to the leave status of all employees to line managers regularly. This information can then be used to balance the demands of current and future workloads.

*Opportunities to train staff across functions should be provided in order to ensure that skills are available to fill temporarily vacated positions. Programs such as mentoring and succession planning are useful for ensuring skilled staff are available across the organization. This process will require a serious commitment of resources to ensure that all employees have the opportunity to broaden their skill base.

A good personnel management is the backbone of any organization stated Hassan. Managing humans, the greatest asset of an organization, needs quality management skills because things have to be accomplished through the services of other people. If leave management are effective, the organization will have a sustainable growth which can be built to last.

Tecele has to confess to Hassan that he has considerable accrued leave. He thanked him for all the explanations given. He admitted that he has been enlightened and considered himself a changed person. He vowed to clear out his outstanding work, train his immediate subordinate and ask for an annual leave. Hassan humbly accepted the compliments and assured his friend Tecele that they will have further discussion in their next meeting about the Management of Change and other issues.