

Productivity in the 21st century

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The late W. Edwards Deming emphasized; in his book, *Out of Crisis*, that quality need not suffer in the wake of productivity, nor should productivity suffer in the wake of quality. Indeed, if productivity is to take place, there has to be matching quality. If economic stability is to be achieved in the 21st century, the global workforce has to be armed with a new mandate.

The problems that the world community has faced in this past decade are very apparent. Europe and the West have had to face the economic boom in the Pacific Rim. The fact is, economic power has truly shifted from Europe and the West to Asia.

There have been various concepts put forth by management consultants and theorists to achieve global productivity. One of these concepts is called Reengineering, which was created by two United States consultants, and has enjoyed a degree of worldwide appeal, especially in Europe. Reengineering is simply the changing of operational metaphors and redoing strategies that have been in place to insure maximum efficiency. Unfortunately, although Western corporations and businesses have spent millions on reengineering projects, reengineering has proven to have serious downfalls: it has resulted in layoffs, and has actually failed to deliver its promises of enhanced quality and productivity. In fact, its creators have admitted its failures, and are now emphasizing the process aspect of reengineering.

What many scholars have failed to recognize is that, as we enter the 21st Century the workforce will not

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training, unless they understand the dynamics of symbolism and the resulting metaphors and superstitions that result from symbolic activity. Metaphors and myths are synonymous. What is symbolic is anything which implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. In other words, a symbol is that which possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning. A symbol implies something vague or unknown or hidden from us. Symbols have traditionally been thought of as a necessity of human thought by scholars throughout the world. This is not true. Symbols and symbolic behaviour are counterproductive and have caused distress in the workforce for centuries.

The global workforce and management must realize that if economic stability is to be achieved in the 21st Century there has to be a radical change in the way we do business. That radical change is the discarding of symbols and symbolic behaviour, which means the discarding of decisions based on metaphor or

Symbols, which have their origin in Africa, have been used throughout the world. However, Africans have used symbols and symbolic behavior in a very aggressive way, and this has resulted in symbolic behavior that has been entrenched in mythology, superstition and ritual. That has also been the case with Asia, Europe and Latin America, but to a lesser extent. Where you have heavily entrenched symbolism and mythology, you have severe conditions of poverty, non-productivity behavior, and an inability to make decisions based on reality.

It must be emphasized that the economic and cultural conflicts around the world are conflicts based on symbolism and the acting out of its mythology. You will find that in Africa with the conflicts in Rwanda and Zaire; in Europe with the conflicts in Ireland between the Protestants and Catholics; and throughout Asia with the conflicts between different religious and ethnic factions. What I am saying here is that these conflicts will persist and increase in severity unless we

ongoing mythologies. In fact, racism is a result of mythological thinking, and the West uses the myth to try to continue its worldwide domination. The West is very nervous about China and its great economic potential. You must realize that countries that have people of color pose a great threat to the white economic populace, who have been accustomed to having complete economic control of the world.

That is why it is extremely important for China and the rest of Asia to realize that it must form strong links with geographical areas like Africa. That is indeed the West's worst nightmare. Joint ventures have already been formed at a high rate between countries like Malaysia and Zimbabwe, and numerous other Asian countries are involved in economic ventures throughout the continent of Africa. This is an exciting phase of global business transactions, for it combats the various European economic blocs. One cannot avoid the issues of racism and religious conflicts, for they impede productivity around the world and have a severe effect on economic stability that continues to bewilder and perplex the world's top economists. This refusal to deal with these sensitive issues continues to raise havoc on the world economy. In the United States, these issues are so sensitive that in some quarters it is forbidden to discuss them. That is why the United States and Europe are in such a great state of denial. And this is why it is so important for China, and the rest of