

The three-legged stool and the delinquent elephants

By Mr. Joe Perri, Joe Perri & Associates

One of the greatest tragedies in business today is the absence of balance in business leadership and management teams. Especially the absence of mature age executives.

It's been said many times (I firmly believe this to be true) that an employee doesn't really become productive until they turn 50.

At 50 their children have grown up, the pressure of the mortgage has diminished, etc. and finances are healthy. On the work front they have progressed up the tree – have experienced and learnt much and now they are at their most productive and can really and powerfully contribute to a business.

But instead, invariably they are shown the door and end up working at a hardware store or running a lawn mowing franchise instead.

As a result, businesses (and even government) are making horrendous mistakes because the benefit of wisdom and experience are absent.

In business – as in nature – there needs to be balance in the composition of leadership and management teams.

Hence the example of the three-legged stool.

To be successful, businesses need the benefit of age and wisdom from those that came before (leg 1).

Then there is benefit of maturity from those that are middle aged (leg 2)

The third and equally important leg is youth for this group needs to challenge the status quo i.e. the wise and mature. Wisdom and maturity must validate to the young the reason for their decisions and why they believe the business should go in a certain direction.

On being convinced, it's youth that brings the energy and passion to get things done and accomplish the business objective.

Unfortunately, today we have too many three-legged stools with one and two legs missing. For example, believing that an "all youth" team of "go getters" is what's needed to achieve success.

Or equally devastating is when the mature and wise refuse to relinquish authority and shun new ideas or refuse to be challenged.

Balance in leadership and management is vitally important – and it is inevitable that organisations fall over when one or two legs are missing.

Therein is the reason why so many businesses fail.

THE DELINQUENT ELEPHANTS

Years ago, in a wildlife park in Africa, young adolescent bull elephants had inexplicably started killing other animals.

Rangers could not explain why such unnatural behaviour was occurring until they realised the source of the problem.

Years prior, the park had become overrun with elephants who were consuming all the vegetation and basically destroying the park.

So, it was decided that the solution was to cull the old bulls as they were regarded as the least needed in the overall ecology of the park.

Unfortunately, the authorities had failed to understand the many roles of the old bull elephants in the eco system. One key function was to use their superior strength and bulk to keep the adolescent bulls under control when they were in must – a period characterised by excessive testosterone levels that resulted in highly aggressive and dangerous behaviour.

On bringing mature bulls back into the park, balance and the natural order of things returned and the killing of other species by the adolescents ceased.

Does this story sound familiar?

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Managing Director Mr. Joe Perri founded the company in 1995 after working for more than 22 years in the corporate sector. Since then, Joe Perri & Associates has grown to provide PR and marketing focussed communication strategies / solutions for clients in the corporate, SME and non-profit sectors that help them achieve their strategic business aspirations.

Joe Perri's goal is to help clients more clearly define their overall communication objectives and then implement the most appropriate strategy to reach their target audience more effectively.

Every day, Joe Perri draws on his experience to enable clients to improve their business relationship, communication and brand / profile with customers, shareholders, distributors, the media and staff.

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