



ITS ALL ABOUT PEOPLE

Things fall apart

By Stuart White
Printed in the Sunday Standard
Sunday 15th November 2010

Turning and turning in the widening gyre;
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

This week I kept hearing in my mind these lines come from William Butler Yeats' poem *The Second Coming*, describing the atmosphere in post-war Europe and likening it to the Apocalypse. It also pricked in my memory my high school set workbook *Things Fall Apart* (the title of which was taken from Yeats' poem) by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe. His novel was about the influence that British colonialism and Christian missionaries had on his Igbo community during the late nineteenth century. Both shared the feeling that nothing was going to be the same again and predicted a gloomy future with no hope.

That pretty much summed up how I was feeling this week. It felt like everything that should have been functioning wasn't and instead of moving swiftly on, things were falling apart. From BTC's lack of bandwidth affecting telecommunications in the country, the power outages which had shops closed for nearly a whole day, and the multiple road works and the redirecting carnage, I jokingly suggested to a few people that I came into contact with that perhaps the country should just shut down for 24 months, recollect itself and reopen brand spanking new ready for business in 2012.

Executive Recruitment | Strategic Planning | Organisational Transformation | HR Outsourcing
Management Assessment and Development | Training and Executive Coaching | Psychometric Testing

HRMC
Management Consultants

www.hrmc.co.bw

It often feels like this. When things don't seem to be gelling, everywhere we turn and whichever way we look there appears chaos and anarchy. Of course oftentimes underneath the mayhem which we perceive, there is really order and structure along with purpose and progress, albeit so well-hidden that it doesn't always feel like it. When it all happens at once you are left feeling exasperated and all you want to do is go home and escape into DSTV land. Alvin Toffler in his book Future Shock talks about too much change in too short a time – it felt like a bit of a future shock this week and it was overwhelming and impossible to see any method in the madness.

Or was it? Things are often not what they seem and our reaction to them often reflects how we ourselves are feeling. A mate of mine (lets call him friend no 1) mentioned another friend (no 2) who he had come into contact with and commented on how 'down' he was. I then asked the supposedly 'down' one about how he was feeling. He said he was doing great but made mention that friend no 1 had seemed very sad when they met. I couldn't help but wonder if they weren't projecting their own subdued energy on to each other.

May sound a bit farfetched but it is real and well-documented. Psychological projection or projection bias is the unconscious act of denial of a person's own attributes, thoughts, and emotions, which are then ascribed to the outside world, such as to the weather, the government, a tool, or to other people. Thus, it involves imagining or projecting that others have those feelings. Projection is considered one of the most profound and subtle of human psychological processes, and extremely difficult to work with because by its nature it is hidden. But you know it happens all the time when people project their issues on to you!

Have you ever found yourself getting angry with someone and then realised that the emotions and attitudes you were accusing the other of having were the same ones you were possessing, and that getting angry with them was a manifestation of your annoyance at yourself? Recognising our accusations towards others as being what is deep inside us is a step toward freedom. When we accuse someone of being a certain way, we should automatically ask ourself "what part of myself am I trying to suppress, deny, ignore?" Let me give you a real example of this. There are times when I feel frustrated if there is not enough energy in the office. When people aren't working as hard as they should be or being as committed as I would like, it makes me angry. But if I really stand back and objectively witness what is happening and my role within it – I see the leader who has taken his foot off the management accelerator, weakening his commitment and resolve and needing an injection of energy himself.

So here's the realisation. When I see chaos all around or lack of purpose, is that the way the world is or how I am projecting this week? I think we all know the answer to that. Both Yeats' poem and Achebe's novel deal with feelings and circumstances that transpired more than 50 years ago... nothing really changes – not the people nor the situation. What does change and sometimes on a weekly basis is how we view the world and project all of that onto others. Post-war reparations and rebuilding and post-colonialist identity crises are high on the demoralising scale, BPC outages and GCC roadwork's fairly low, but in all instances there's not much we as individuals can do to tackle the root cause. What we can do is make the most of a bad job and refuse to let any such tribulations get to us too much.

Agree or disagree with this? Don's twitter amongst yourselves – tweet your chirps to http://twitter.com/Stuart_Botswana

Managing Director

HRMC

Phone: 395 1640

<http://www.hrmc.co.bw/>

Follow Stuart on twitter: http://twitter.com/Stuart_Botswana

Executive Recruitment | Strategic Planning | Organisational Transformation | HR Outsourcing
Management Assessment and Development | Training and Executive Coaching | Psychometric Testing

HRMC
Management Consultants

www.hrmc.co.bw