

Powerful beyond measure

The importance of treating a company as a living entity



Awakening Excellence Pty Ltd, a company that assists organisations in growing leaders, building teams and managing change to help increase productivity and profitability, was borne June 2004 from Dr Mariam Sha's core belief that every individual possesses the resources to achieve all his/her hopes, goals and dreams—and that everyone has the power within to be successful.

Dr Sha, the founder and director of Awakening Excellence and CEO of Investors in People South Africa (IiPSA), who promotes coaching as a valuable tool in the process of developing people (one that encourages sustainable growth and, ultimately, greater profitability), believes that when we are whole we make a positive impact on the people around us, our organisation, community and the country.

Over the past ten years, Dr Sha has helped organisations in South Africa to grow and develop their businesses, driven primarily by the belief that an organisation's greatest asset is, indeed, its people. She works with individuals to discover their passion and purpose as well as with organisations to create a coaching culture by tapping into peoples' purpose and aligning it to business objectives.

The alignment between Dr Sha's core values and the principles of Investors in People, an International best practice Standard, led to her appointment as CEO of IiPSA in May 2013. Dr Sha has worked with thousands of organisations, small and large, in implementing best practice and it is this combination of values, experience and alignment to best practice that enables her to make such a huge a difference in organisations in need of guidance.

Talking to *Leadership* about the importance of treating a company as a living entity, she says although a company is a legal entity, it is the people within the organisation that breathe life into it. "The behaviour, values and ethics of the people constitute the culture of the organisation –and the talent, knowledge and experience

of the people give the company its strength. Therefore discordant, selfish, dissatisfaction, disrespectful and personal greed will result in a dysfunctional organisation.”

Dr Sha is also of the belief that we are all born pure and that the values taught by our elders, peers and experiences, among others, shape our behaviour and who we are. She says behaviour is learnt and can be unlearned; skills and knowledge can be acquired; and it is our belief and attitude that determines our level of success and excellence.

“Neuroscience tells us, located at the base of our brain are a network of neural fibres forming the Reticular Activating System (RAS), which is responsible for among others our awareness. Once we have formed a goal, our RAS acts as a filter and removes anything unrelated from the brain.

“It takes the important information and sorts out the similar patterns that are already present

deal with people sabotaging their own success and happiness.

Often being reminded by Nelson Mandela’s quote in his Inauguration Speech in 1994 “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us...”, Dr Sha advises that it is important to keep in mind that our thoughts are powerful and “if we think we can’t, we won’t; if we think we can we will”.

“Through life’s experiences we have grown to believe what we hear and what is spoken about us without questioning if it is a fact or someone’s opinion. We tend to take on the negative words, generalising and believing that is who we are. We live life focusing on what we can’t do, not on what we excel at. These limiting beliefs become patterns of behaviour and disempower us. Our thoughts block us from taking certain actions, even though it may support us

“Fortunately the RAS can also be reprogrammed by visualising new goals or new outcomes of previous incidents. If you are able to go back to the experience and reframe your thoughts and if you can give new meaning to the incident from the positives that you have derived, you will be able to reframe the meaning of the experiences in your life. Going forward you will be able to make different decisions based on the new meaning you have ascribed to those beliefs that have been hampering your growth,” she told Leadership.

But how does Awakening Excellence go about working with people to stop self-sabotage and to get success back on track?

The company follows a basic coaching model encompassing the fundamental principle of putting the onus of discovery and finding solutions on the coachee from setting the goal, understanding current circumstances, analysing scenarios and finally making the commitment. Through insightful open-ended questions the programme keeps people focused to attain their goals. Dr Sha says it is a simple and effective method.

“Through coaching the individual acknowledges the current reality of his or her current behaviour. We employ many models such as Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), Positive Psychology, and Appreciative Inquiry, to create an awareness of the limiting beliefs that lead to self destructive behaviour. Attention is focused on an achievable and measurable goal and an action plan is developed to achieve the desired goal. We regularly monitor the change of behaviour and the implementation of the agreed action plan,” Dr Sha says.

In her soon to be released book, *The Engaged Workforce: 6 Practical steps to creating a Coaching Culture*, Dr Sha shares with leaders steps to create an engaged and high performing workforce. The book is a must-read and will be available in September 2015. ▲

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in the brain to focus on data that will help us to focus on achieving our goal. We have control of this process. So we all have it within us to be all we want to be. Take for example when you are planning your wedding: when your RAS is activated everything you see around you will relate to the wedding. Although all exists, we only filter that which we focus on. The same applies in an organisation. When there is clear focus on the vision and objectives and people have been involved in developing the objectives, they will begin to see links that help them achieve their objectives,” she says.

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in achieving success. These limiting beliefs filter our experience of reality and affect the decisions we make, which affect the actions we take, which then affect the results.

“Becoming aware of these is the first step,. Once again your RAS plays a role in conditioning your behaviour. Neural pathways are laid down by these experiences by chemical and electrical signals. When these experiences are repeated over time, we become hardwired to respond in a particular way. It becomes the norm, even if it is not good for us. If you are repeatedly told you will not amount to anything, you will tend to believe it and eventually sabotage yourself by not performing to the best of your ability.