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\n[toc title="Table of Contents"]\n

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1. [Management Development: A Case of Britannic Assurance](#) \n \t
2. [Introduction](#) \n \t
3. [Conclusion](#) \n \t
4. [Works Cited](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Management Development: A Case of Britannic Assurance

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Introduction

This paper reviews a case study of a management development programme initiated by an insurance company based in the United Kingdom dubbed Britannica Assurance. It reviews the company before and after the adoption of the management development program in regard to its general performance. Subsequently, an evaluation and analysis of the case study is presented detailing the contributions of other literary works on the topic of management development. Essentially, the analysis and evaluation is to develop an understanding of the benefits or otherwise of the management development program and its importance or lack of it thereof in the performance of the organization.

Britannic Assurance is an insurance agent and company based in Birmingham in the United Kingdom (enQuira, 2014). The company has over 130 years in experience offering financial services. Majority of its clientele

are in the business sector where clients are composed of small and medium sized businesses but also incorporate corporates and multi-national corporations. That is why Britannic Assurance is committed to the development of managerial skills to ensure the success of business enterprises (BCS, 2014).

Historically, management training at the company has focused on short to medium term solutions to everyday problems that concern the management of the business. Managers were, therefore, equipped with skills to deal with issues 'there and then' rather than provide a future and long-term management approach to the management of problems. With effect, the short term solutions approach to management has been linked to the employee demotivation, job dissatisfaction and a lacking in organizational commitment among employees (BCS, 2014).

Recognizing this shortfall, the company has made strategic steps to improve the management approaches to effectively enhance efficiency and effectiveness of operations of the company. To achieve this the implementation of management development program that addresses long-term management challenges in the organization have been initiated. In essence, effective management development has not only improved the way in which business is managed but also makes the organization more attractive to employees (BCS, 2014).

Similarly, management training at Britannic Assurance is focused on the development of organizational culture that brings on board various parties in the organization from management to subordinates and all partners in between. Through the development of a democratic culture of management,

Britannic Assurance has developed better leaders who are able to understand and meet the needs of employees at the workplace. Resultantly, efficiency and effectiveness of the organization's operations have been met through a motivated workforce (BCS, 2014).

Provision of support for the management development initiative involves the development of a library that is fitted with resources such as books and journals that managers can use to develop their skills further. In addition, the company has provided a team of management coaches to help other managers perfect their skills and expertise based on their experiences. Ultimately, the management forum has empowered managers to use their skills to motivate employees, engaged middle level managers in long-term decision-making processes as well as fostering long-term staff development (BCS, 2014).

The company Britannic Assurance found itself in a wanting situation in the sense that the management of the organization was ineffective in adequately addressing issues of management at its disposal. In this regard, the management failed to achieve its long term objectives due to the training that was focused in management of challenges through the implementation of short term solutions. Management development is a process of improvement and development of managerial skills that Britannica Assurance set to achieve through its management forum. It essentially is the development of management leadership in the organization which has been proven to present various benefits (McBain et al., 2012, p. 4).

A growing problem in the United Kingdom in recent times has been the growing numbers of ineffective managers heading both middle level and top

level management positions. It is often the case that the managers are ineffective due to a mismatch between their provision and the most effective development decision required for addressing certain challenges (McBain et al., 2012, p. 6).

Hence, the decision to engage managers by developing their leadership skills has enabled them to grow not only by developing their skills but also in mentoring others and directing service and resource in the organization. This has with effect sustained proper utilization of resources in the organization while at the same time developing adequate leadership qualities that employees also appreciate. McBain et al. (2012) observe that effective line managers will most certainly achieve employee engagement. For this reason, organizations must be prepared to spend on management leadership development as it is an investment worthwhile in the long-run (11).

The aim of training managers to effectively handle challenges that they may face in their management agenda lies in the assurance that such training will yield some level of competitive advantage for the organization (Barney et al., 2001, p. 632). The company recognizes the dynamics of the environment in regard to increasing levels of competition, concerns about mergers and takeovers, new regulations, pressure on profit margin and prices in the market among other factors that require attention. This attention can be termed as effective management which is the goal specific, flexible, efficient and timely. Essentially, the achievement of this management objectives requires that line managers be provided with the adequate and appropriate training that would suit them for the job by preparing them for the task ahead.

According to Anthony, Rosman and Eze (2009) competitive advantage can only be realized through corporation coordination and interaction. This is when individual members of the organization come together to establish norms and relationships that are based on mutual understanding. A forum such as the management forum developed by Britannic Assurance serves to ensure that the managers are able to break the hierarchical protocols that are in most cases unnecessary and time consuming. As such ideas can be shared in a timely manner that in turn translate into actual solutions to addressing managerial challenges.

Management training is as well a means of developing managers and employees in the organization. As Lipman (2013) observes management and employee development should not be neglected given the current dynamics in economic and financial circles since this may cost the company talent. The company Britannic Assurance has made strategic investments in ensuring that it does not lose its employees and staff through the lack of engagement that empowers them with the skills and expertise to becoming efficient at their roles. In this respect, the company has developed a flexible learning outcomes environment where managers gain practical skills and knowledge through experimental learning.

Experimental learning allows managers to apply theory in their work roles. In such an arrangement managers are able to take on any management position within the organization but more importantly are capable of tackling a myriad of challenges that they may face during their managerial responsibilities. In this regard, the forums arranged are meant to bring managers together and help them identify their strengths and o weaknesses

in regard to taking charge of particular responsibilities. Through this platform, managers are able to evaluate their efforts and make proper adjustments to ensure that they improve on them where necessary. The importance of management development cannot thus be underestimated as it is primarily concerned with the nurturing and perfection of managerial skills, knowledge and expertise which are essential for the improvement of the performance of the organization (Gray & Mabey, 2005, p. 467).

Therefore, engagement of managers helps in developing organizational skills and talents since inherent people care to know if the organization is interested in their future development. The affirmation of this fact leads them to build loyalty in the organization and its systems in turn increasing productivity in the organization. Eventually, talented people equipped with the right training will naturally want to advance in their achievements and hence supporting the management development program (Lipman, 2013). Experimental learning to the company is also about sharing experiences in the form of a cyclical exchange of knowledge. Managers go through concrete experiences that involve them responding to events. They then engage in reflection on these experiences when they share the knowledge that they have gathered during the forum sessions. Integrating experiences involves drawing inferences from experiences and charting future decisions based on these experiences. Ultimately, the cycle goes back to the beginning where managers find themselves in entirely new experiences. The outcome is such that the business constantly improves on its performance due to the quality of knowledge that is added onto the skills of managers through shared experiences. Moreover, such managerial training outcomes have been found

to develop the capacity of the organization in regard to the improvement of its performance owing to the improved standard and quality of decision making achievable through learning outcomes in the management (Wong et al., 1997, p. 44).

As part of the development of the management team, it becomes essential that management development is made part and parcel of the routine activities of the organization. More often than not organization make management development an informal undertaking. As a result, this means that it does not necessarily require members to take it as a component of their individual development in regard to the training as a means to improving their performance. Making management development an informal activity provides the managers and employees with a leeway for making excuses not to attend them. This in turn serves contradictory in efforts towards achieving the goals of the management training to begin with. Management training requires participation of stakeholders actively throughout the process to meet its goals and objectives adequately (Grensing-Pophal, 1999, p. 1).

The Britannic Assurance management forum brings together to ensure that resistance to change process is dealt with effectively. Bringing the team of managers together is achievable by breaking down the boundaries in hierarchy and bureaucracy making decision making a participatory exercise. Through the management training forums, managers at Britannic Assurance can share ideas on an equal member's basis regardless of their rank in the hierarchy. In turn, this enhances teamwork by ensuring corporation and developing team mentality in the leadership of the firm.

Another element of management training that is essential in ensuring the success of the organization is developing an understanding of the needs of the self as well as those of others. Through the development of this understanding the management forums held at Britannic Assurance has enabled managers not only understand their needs but also those of others. Needs form a basis for motivation on which people strive to attain certain achievements in the workplace. Guided by an understanding of personal needs as well as the needs of others, managers are in a position to accurately predict what they need to do satisfy these needs while also identifying what motivates employees to perform better at their duties while at work. Essentially, this understanding of needs and motivating factors develops means for motivation that works towards the improvement of performance in the organization. Griffin (2003) describes this understanding as personalizing one's own management development. The personalization is not only to one's self but also personalizing attributes to others that suit the purposes of management in its operations.

Conclusion

Primarily, management development is the process of training managers to be better at their job. The management training program at Britannic Assurance has proven to be effective in delivering on the goals of management training. Initially, before the implementation of the management training program the trend was such that management decisions in the organization served only to meet challenges in the short run. The solutions developed for addressing managerial problems were day to

day basis development of solutions for immediate challenges. The hierarchy in authority was as well bureaucratic making sharing of information between management and staff ineffective. As a result, employees became demotivated at their jobs. Job dissatisfaction translated into diminishing performance at the firm and the ultimate inefficiency of the company as discussed in the case presentation.

However, when the management training was initiated all this changed in an instant. The bureaucracy that was there was replaced by opening up channels of communication between top management and subordinates. This in turn enhances information sharing that improved the quality of decision making in the organization. Furthermore, information sharing ensured that middle level managers and employees participated in decision making that made them feel appreciated as contributors to the success of the organization.

Similarly, the management training sessions allowed for the exchange of information where managers could exchange knowledge on their managerial experiences. Further, the sessions provided a learning experience which served to improve the managers' skills, knowledge and expertise in future decision making and management of the organization. In addition, the managers could identify personal motivation for their jobs as well as motivators for employees that they employed to motivate themselves and others towards the achievement of the organization's goals.

Centrally, management development in Britannic Assurance has served to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness in the management approaches adopted by the company. Hence, the program proves to be substantive and

efficient in ensuring the enhancement of the productivity of the company in regard to optimization of the performance through appropriate management initiatives.

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