

Ulysses program in price water house coopers



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The Ulysses Program is a leadership development program that is partnering with PricewaterhouseCoopers to enhance leadership potentials. The incorporation of Ulysses to PwC has led to the emergence of a diversified team in the global field (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2000). There are several competitive challenges that motivated PwC in developing the Ulysses Program:

Q1

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and other partners saw a need to initiate a new design in the leadership training that could help in bringing up executives, who would fit in the global diversity and transnational nature of the operations of the firm in the late 90s (Storey 2003). The firm needed to orient people to become leaders who had a wider scope in the leadership skills that did not only fit a particular situation but rather could handle any arising challenge across the globe. The quest to conform to this situation led to the emergence of the Ulysses Program which was perceived to incorporate most of the best traits that were needed in the partnering PwC, to bring out developmental leadership links to various communities. Ulysses was meant to instill concepts of leadership qualities among personnel in the PwC which would enable it to meet its core goals (Sparrow et al., 2004).

The program was initiated in the year 2001 where the firm sent a number of people to the developing countries where they were supposed to employ their leadership qualities in environments that posed different challenges. Compared to their home countries, the developing countries experienced political, social and economic challenges that called for a totally different approach in both running and management (Pless & Maak 2009 pp. 58). PwC

therefore had to be multicultural oriented and accustomed to relatively poor technological advancements that the developing countries had. In realizing this, small teams were dispatched to operate in these fields on rotational basis, each constituting eight weeks working with NGOs, intergovernmental agencies and community based organizations. The exercise mainly comprised working to confront Aids epidemic scourge, poverty challenges, conflict and environmental degradation (CS).

It was back in the year 2000 that the leadership team of the PwC drew attention to the global ever-changing trends in business running and management. PwC however lacked a global leading capacity to meet with the challenges presented by the intricate worldwide business and was at the verge of being left behind as top performing partners in leadership. Other big companies were taking a lead in the Ulysses Program in efforts to nurture leaders all over the globe through exposing them to varied environmental situations so that their leading skills are enhanced. Within a period of five years, the Ulysses Program had already dispatched 80 partners through its program and with 22 participants in the year 2006 (Marquez 2005 pp. 50).

In the year 2004, the firm resolved to deploy its staff in countries in Africa that were experiencing varied problems that ranged from health to economic. Most important of the teams that comprised of 18 young partners coming from different PwC boundaries was one sent to combat challenges presented by HIV/AIDS in various African countries especially in Namibia and Uganda. Other included landmine improvement in Eritrea, reintegration of ex-combatants in East Timor and the small project development in Ecuador (Hofstede, 2004)

Learning activity in the Ulysses project was program to take several levels for each individual team and in the organization levels where there is cross exchange of the acquired knowledge between clients and the organization. All the members who were sent out for a particular mission were supposed to report back to the firm on their experiences during their leadership responsibilities. These briefing were critical in analyzing what was better to adopt which enabled the PwC to keep on refining the Ulysses model so as to meet the global leadership requirements in a better way (Marquez 2005 pp. 51).

Q2.

Ulysses program has been able to make PwC's business strategy and goals successful. On its launching, the firms were more inclined towards the partners from Europe and USA only. This posed a misbalancing which Ulysses came as a solution by ensuring a multicultural and geographical diversity amongst all the teams. Its wider scoop of approximate 8000 partners from member firms of 768 cities coming from 139 countries made it possible to effectively incorporate different cultures and locations. All the participating candidates in the Ulysses project were required to have been selected from the heads of each company from respective territories. These nominations were based on excellence and thus ensured candidates with the best leadership potential per took the leadership roles (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2000).

The joint PwC and Ulysses for instance applied their global business expertise in Southern Belize which turned out to be very successful. In the program, Brian McCann, a PwC client service that was a partner from Boston

and who specialized in merges and acquisition, the rewards- both personal and professional, took part in the Ulysses project, was recruited and surprisingly found himself as the only member originating from the US team. This team (Belize) consisted of other colleagues from Malaysia, Sweden and Germany (Patton, 2004). The team lead in activities of leadership with Ta`axche Conservation trust (YCT) which was an NGO located in Southern Belize. The local government and the private sector were also involved in evaluating the growth and income-generating potential of the eco-tourism market in the region. The priority for the team incorporated building capacity in YCT, to ensure excellent services in meeting the needs of the local Mayan people. Economic conditions in southern Belize were desolate, with approximately half of the population being no employed and 75% earning less than \$200 a month (Patton, 2004).

In spite of the tough circumstances and a short time framework, the team was able to deliver an exceptional work product for the clients. Through them, an international microgrant program looking for a local partner in Belize was put in place. They also wrote a proposal for YCT which was to offer micro funding for 100 new and on hand small businesses in the region over the following two years.

The Ulysses team also started up a business training workshop for members of a Mayan women's craft center, developed a business plan for YCT and its woodworking training center, put up a computerized accounting systems for the Trust, and evaluated income generating opportunities for the Belize Forestry Department (Patton, 2004).

Q3.

The effectiveness of the Ulysses program can be determined through weighing on the Success of the outcomes of various projects under which were steered by Ulysses. It is therefore important to evaluate them against the programs goals which were:

- To recognize and build up future leaders of PwC to take on senior leadership responsibilities at national and international levels within a time span of five to ten years.
- To put up a global network of PwC leadership talent
- To enhance PwC's capacity to capitalize on its diversity and transnational nature of its operation
- To train leaders to guide the leadership in the global world of ambiguity and tension between diverse interests and stake holders groups
- To encourage the business sector to move towards a more responsible and sustainable business model

In reflection towards this, Ulysses was successful in promoting a co-learning environment and openly worked with the participants on their interpersonal improvement tactics concerning to what the desired to learn from NGO partners. Further, the program was able to bring out cultural differences as an enabler as opposed to earlier perception that it was a barrier. The incorporation of diverse cultures was able to enhance on team acceptance, quality and more innovations which became part of the culture of PwC. Building relationships with clients and stakeholders across borders brought more collaboration which resulted to more success (CPID, 2005).

Reports coming from PwC show that the program cycle has advanced offering the participants with wider global perspectives which are relevant to any company running its businesses all over the world (CS). Douglas Ready, a director in the International Consortium for Executive Development Research noted that the Ulysses Program has helped candidates to confront challenges that are beyond the strict confines of accounting and consultation skills. In addition, he argues that the program has instilled ideals like the community involvement that are elementary to its business culture (CRME, 2005).

Ulysses has also offered a chance to partnering firms to rely on. The program has forced them to take on projects that are not in their proficiency. An example is during 2003 summer where McCann developed a business plan for an ecotourism group in Belize (Hempel & Porges, 2004 p. 74). This development castigated more innovation in diverse fields. McCann's most vivid memory is a dinner that he had with a Mayan farmer after spending a day discussing on a plan; Though the conditions were not favorable due to lack of electricity (CS).

All PwC partners agree that they've already put into practice their experiences to the charge of administrating people and clients. A Malaysian partner Jennifer Chang once pointed out that her team noticed a shift in her managerial style after the Belize trip. She listened more and became more flexible. According to her, it is after witnessing how other organization took long to effect decisions that one gained the patience for the people that one is working with. Ayub was among those promoted in June 2003 who became a manager of 20 partners. In his view, face-to-face conversations were better

over e-mail due to the low-tech approach, building trust. The adoption of this technique made him achieve a significant progressive difference in Namibia. Ulysses is even prone to be more than a expedition of personal discovery for a handful of partners. It could help build leaders capable of confronting the challenges of an increasingly global business (CS).

Q4.

Ulysses program presents both advantages and disadvantages in offering leadership development programs to its partners. During the short duration that candidates are enrolled in the program, they develop skills of leadership which arms them with good network as future leaders of PwC taking responsibility for longer periods of five to ten years (Evans et al., 2002). This is a relatively shorter training period as compared to other traditional ways where courses take up three to five years. On the other hand, the longer serving term takes the perspective that the world being highly ambiguous with tensions amid varied interests and stakeholders groups exists. Future PwC leaders are then predestined to forefront and shape a business model that is more accountable and sustainable and allows joint venture between business and civic societies (Dickmann & Harris, 2005).

The Ulysses program poses another benefit in that the concepts instilled to participants are directly related to building leaders who in return can be able to build businesses. The program thus focuses on unlocking performance and embracing diversity that makes its models well versant with global business environments and the demands related. Its can be argument reasonably that, whenever a brand is made, a sustainable business is also created to complement it (Jain 2004 pp. 13).

Further, Ulysses eight-week program project in developing countries that merges NGOs and inter-governmental organizations seeks to bring a cohesive forum that is able to meet most of the challenges that a respective country may be experiencing. As opposed to the traditional ways, this program is more involving: participants are required to deliver developmental project managed by a partner organizations which moulds them to be innovative (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005). In East Timor for instance, a UN project attempting to give ex-combatants of the independence struggle new meaning to their jobs and lives in their communities; PwC partners were drawn in to access the efficiency of the project. It was able to deploy its multinational teams and transfer them to the area to apply their capabilities and develop strategies that reflected new skills and behaviors. In additional, Ulysses participants benefit in the program, among other the GP initiative where there is a strong focus on support for intra-company network building (Harris et al., 2003).

On the other hand, Ulysses is an expensive program that snatches away the original glamour of PwC as the enormous leading firm in training global world leaders thus a disadvantage.