

My People are the problem – Philip Viljoen (CEO TOCSA)

This is a statement that I encounter more and more. It is not that people resist change, they are doing their work but are unwilling to do more leading to improve the organisation. The people are not interested to improve, they are not motivated, absenteeism is high and they are never happy with their pay and want more without doing more.

These are undesired effects or assumptions, essentially assigning blame.

One of the basic assumptions of the Theory of Constraints is that when we blame others, we make bad assumptions about them even though the person is not bad. Another basic assumption is that there are cause and effects in systems that are using human capacity – the thinking of the natural sciences can be applied to human systems and therefore it is assumed that people are rational. Valid?

Are there common bad assumptions about people? S/he is lazy, does not care, is obstructive, incompetent, defensive, etc.

Fire them, is often a first response, but firing people is very often not easy because of legislation protecting the employee and it causes the loss of capacity that can disrupt flow significantly. Too often, a case is made that the capacity is no longer needed and used to get rid of undesirable people, of course not without significant additional expenses, inevitable loss of important skills and often significantly reducing the ability to deal with the effects of variability and dependencies. And it takes years to recover if ever.

What if we simply consider these assumptions as invalid, when we find ourselves stating them? How would that change the way that the manager and the employee behave?

Or perhaps a systemic core problem exists?

This is my hypothesis.

The objective is to grow the organisation. In order to do that we must minimise expenses and we must maximise human capability or potential. We are assuming that human capacity is the greatest expense and it limits growth.

The dilemma is that in order to minimise expenses we resist spending on people development and in order to maximise human capability we have to spend on people development.

Can this dilemma be solved if we decide that people development is an Investment and to maximise the ROI through people's contributions?