

**A CASE STUDY OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN  
THE CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
OF A PRIVATELY OWNED NEWSPAPER IN ZAMBIA**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

**MASTERS OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

of

Rhodes Investec Business School

**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

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December 2007

## ABSTRACT

Roles of various constituent elements of Strategic Leadership address deep and continuing issues relating to the creation and development of any organization. What is required to help firms successfully navigate the dynamics and uncertain environment in which they compete today to be successful is addressed.

The founding in July 1991 of *The Post*, a privately owned Zambian newspaper, provided a unique opportunity to investigate the roles that various constituent elements of strategic leadership have played in its success. This is largely because much is already known about how state-owned media are managed, financed, and sustained by the state itself, which is fully involved in their re-capitalization and operating costs.

The themes identified are at the heart of current debates about the capacity of private organizations to respond to new expectations, market realities, no state funding, globalization, technology, and a long list of other challenges so as to become market driven enterprises.

The case of *The Post* is seen to present a story of an enduring publication in times of political, financial, social and other adversities and the research participants have no illusions about the success of the publication. The case study of *The Post* also gives useful insight into the many challenges and obstacles faced by the newspaper. It offers examples of determination, focused courage and innovation, complemented by strategic leadership.

This was done by means of what emerged from the insight and experiences of the six research participants that were part of the founders of the newspaper and those associated with the development of the newspaper since its inception.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to gratefully acknowledge the contribution, support and encouragement to this thesis to the following:

- Post Newspaper Ltd. Management and staff for the financial and spiritual support and sharing the positive and negative experiences of the newspaper during its creation and development.
- Rhodes Investec Business School for opening up the business world with their learning environment.
- MBA 2004 Class for a lifetime experience.
- My supervisor, Dr Clive Smith, for his critical view, guidance and wisdom.
- My family and those involved in the painstaking transcription of the research interviews.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 The Creation of *The Post***

After Zambia's independence in 1964 the print media was largely owned by the private sector with Lonrho publishing the *Times of Zambia* while the Central African Mail, later renamed *Zambia Daily Mail*, was owned by Scott and Astor. In 1969 it was purchased by the ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP) (Banda, 2004).

However, in 1983 the newspaper industry, together with other industries, was nationalised as part of the government's Humanism policy. Zambia's two daily newspapers were transformed into parastatals and were heavily subsidized by the government.

In 1990, there was the introduction of a multiparty government and an open, market-driven economy. Privately owned newspapers were reintroduced and according to the National Archives (2003) 137 publications, both newspapers and magazines, were registered between 1991 and 2002. Most of the registered papers were either aborted before publication or died soon after the first few issues.

*The Weekly Post* started as a weekly tabloid in 1991 (Banda, 2004). In November 1993, publication increased to twice a week – Tuesdays and Fridays – and was re-named *The Post*. On October 23, 1995, the paper went daily. It was the second newspaper in Africa, after South Africa's *The Mail and Guardian*, to go on the Internet.

*The Post* became widely recognized in Zambia as a highly successful newspaper and is now the leading daily newspaper in the country with a daily print run of 30,000 copies and 80 per cent of the market share (Banda, 2004). *The Post* is now considered Zambia's leading independent newspaper, followed by the State-owned *Times of Zambia*. It has enjoyed the highest circulation figures since its establishment and was audited by the London based Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) until 2003. These circulation figures continue to grow significantly since the acquisition of a full colour printing machine.

### **1.2 The Reason for the Research**

Having been actively involved in the newspaper industry since 1989, I am interested in

understanding the role strategic leadership has played in *The Post*'s success.

I was also interested in understanding what it meant to the rest of the founding members and those who had been associated in creating and developing the newspaper from its inception to the present. The establishment of *The Post* was something unique and interesting. It is also my hope that the research will contribute to the understanding of the creation and development of a newspaper, especially for the start-up phase.

The data has revealed that in the case of the newspaper, there was a founder group of four rather than a single founder. The sad feature of *The Post* has been the departure of so many of the senior members – some passed on and others living outside the country.

### **1.3 The Research Question**

The purpose of my research is to investigate the roles that various constituent elements of strategic leadership have played in the success of a privately-owned Zambian newspaper, *The Post*, since its inception in 1991.

### **1.4 The Research Approach**

A case study research method was used. The approach is appropriate when dealing with a contemporary phenomenon in a real life context (Yin, 1984), in this case *The Post*.

The research was conducted within the interpretive paradigm. My intention was to “develop(ing) insights into how participants interpret and make meaning of the world” (Cantrell, 1993, p. 96) of strategic leadership in the success of *The Post* newspaper. The use of qualitative data compliments this objective. Six interviews were conducted with ten of the research participants.

### **1.5 The Research Process**

The research process involves the following:

- 1 A literature review was conducted.
- 2 The participants were selected.

- 3 FM was approached for approval of the research.
- 4 The participants were traced and asked to participate in the research.
- 5 Face to face interviews were planned.
- 6 There were ten participants (the first board chairman died).
- 7 It was noted that a similar pattern emerged.
- 8 Interview guides were prepared.
- 9 Extensive notes were made during the interviews.
- 10 One of the interviews was conducted by both e-mail and phone.
- 11 The recorded data was downloaded and transcribed.
- 12 The librarian at *The Post* assisted in gathering newspaper clippings, minutes, annual reports and other media publications.
- 13 Transcriptions were read and relevant areas were highlighted.
- 14 Themes were identified.
- 15 Themes were compared and categorised.
- 16 Data was analyzed and framework developed based on the main themes.
- 17 The thesis was planned and written up.
- 18 The research will be made available to all participants.

## **1.6 The Outline of the Thesis**

In the second chapter, I discuss a selection of the literature applicable to this research.

In Chapter Three, I discuss in detail the methodology employed as outlined above.

Chapter Four contains the data analysis and shows how the participants understood their roles as strategic leaders in the creation and development of the newspaper.

Chapter Five is an interpretation of the findings of my research.

In Chapter Six, I summarise the main findings of the research and examine the value of my case study by detailing some recommendations and setting out some possible avenues for further research into strategic leadership. It also identifies some limitations of the study that I conducted on the creation and development of a private newspaper in Zambia.

The research has been a revealing and learning experience for me and I trust the readers will identify with the writings.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I discuss the phenomenon and elements of strategic leadership and consider what organizational abilities and individual characteristics can be associated with it. I will seek by reference to the existing literature to examine and evaluate its essence regarding the following elements in strategic leadership:

- 1 The essence of long term-vision;
- 2 Exploiting and maintaining core competencies and developing human capital in an organization;
- 3 How effective strategic leadership interacts with sustaining an effective organization culture; and
- 4 Leadership styles needed in the ever-changing business environment.

This review study will demonstrate strategic leadership occurring as a collective process.

### **2.2 Strategic Leadership**

Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson (2005, p. 386) define strategic leadership as “the ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility and empower others to create strategic change as necessary”. Hitt and Ireland (1999) believe that strategic leadership may prove to be one of the most critical issues facing organizations. They further contend that without strategic leadership, the probability that an organization can achieve superior or even satisfactory performance when confronting the challenges of the global economy will be greatly reduced.

Strategic leadership entails the creation of an environment that will support the achievement of organizational goals and the role of monitoring the external environment to take advantage of opportunities and to defend against threats (Gortner, Mahler & Nicholson, 1987). It involves making decisions regarding the organization’s products, services and markets, the selection of executives, the allocation of resources to primary organizational components, and the formulation of organizational goals and strategies (House & Aditya, 1997 cited in Pechlivanidis & Katsimpra, 2003).

Strategic leadership may also, in addition to what has been outlined above, occur as a collective and participative process (Hitt et al., 2005). Strategic leaders may inadvertently collaborate to attain positive outcomes that may not be available using conventional leadership processes. This collective process may also be built into an organization's leadership structures to ensure collaboration on major issues affecting the business. The strategic leaders in organizations may not be aware of the nature of collective and collaborative leadership processes but they will instinctively utilize this process to attain desired outcomes (Hitt & Ireland, 1999).

Hitt & Ireland (1999) believe that insightful top managers recognize that it is impossible for them to have all of the answers, are willing to learn along with others, and understand that the uncertainty created by the global economy affects people at the top as well as those lower down in the organization. Strategic leadership goes about forming great groups of top managers who accept their responsibilities for the organization's outcomes, seek to learn from multiple parties, and embrace information and knowledge acquisition.

Further, they say that because of the complexity of the new competitive landscape, both in its structure and dynamism, the collective intellect generated by a top management team ["a great group"] is necessary for effective strategic leadership to occur in an organization. An effective strategic leader "finds glory in the whole team reaching the summit together" (Hitt & Ireland, 1999, p. 47).

To be an effective strategic leader, a person needs to execute leadership through interactions that are based on a sharing of insights, knowledge and responsibilities for achieved outcomes (Hitt & Ireland, 1999). These interactions occur between the "great groups" (the strategic leaders) and the stakeholders in an organization and need to satisfy certain constituent elements of strategic leadership already outlined in the introduction and framework of the chapter at the beginning in line with Hitt et al. (2005).

According to Hitt & Ireland (1999, p. 46), members of these great groups have several characteristics, such as accepting responsibility for the organization's outcomes and learning from multiple parties to interpret external information and use it internally for improving competitiveness. Tracking and maintaining an individual's knowledge is another characteristic, as well as understanding the impact of strategic leadership in that it "results in a constantly

changing configuration of responsibilities”.

Strategic leadership therefore assumes that organizations are reflections of their leaders. The values and beliefs show how issues are interpreted, and acted upon. The choices that leaders make then affect organizational performance (Boal, 2000). Cannella and Monroe (1997, p. 5) contend that although the strategic leadership acknowledges that strategies can emerge from below, the perspective holds that top managers are in a unique position to have the most impact on the organization’s strategy.

At the most basic level, strategic leadership theory contends that top managers’ values, cognitions and personalities affect their field of vision, their selective perception of information and their interpretation of information. These intervening information-processing steps transmit the effects of psychological constructs by affecting the options that top managers evaluate and select. Therefore, they see strategic leadership as very much a decision-making theory. Dubrin (2001, p. 365) provides a slightly different yet equally relevant definition of strategic leadership in that it deals with the major purposes of an organization or an organizational unit. It is the process of providing the direction and inspiration necessary to create, provide direction, or sustain an organization.

Another perspective is that it is the type of leadership necessary to effectively carry out strategic management. Strategic management refers to the process of ensuring a competitive fit between the organization and its environment. Strategic leadership is thus a complex of personal characteristics, thinking patterns, and effective management, all centring on the ability to think strategically.

Finally, I use Hitt et al.’s (2005) definition of strategic leadership and use a selection of these key characteristics as a framework for my further review of certain constituent elements of strategic leadership.

**a) *Long term vision*** (Hitt et al., 2005)

According to Collins and Porras (1996), organizations that enjoy enduring success have core values and a core purpose that remain fixed while their business strategies and practices endlessly adapt to a changing world. Another view is a fully participative approach where generally every member of the group will be involved.

Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) argue that for one to be a strategic leader in a successful organization, one must ensure that all participants are aligned with a common vision, with shared objectives and goals to which people can be dedicated. Alignment means everyone's work forms part of the pursuit of a larger purpose embodied in the products or services of the organization. This alignment means that everyone has been convinced that they make a difference to the success of the organization.

Hitt et al. (2005) believe that expressions of vision and mission are essential characteristics of strategic leadership. What it means is that strategic leadership discards discredited systems and desires instead to maximize employee support and cooperation in pro-active ways, so that together they can assist an organization to achieve its perceived vision. This, however, requires a methodology that is pragmatic, efficient and suitable throughout the organization.

Nutt and Backoff (1993) describe strategic leadership with the goal differences between organizations as the most obvious and crucial differences. They state that "public organizations usually have multiple goals that are both vague and conflicting" (Nutt & Backoff, 1993, p. 222). The goal differences are due to public organizations having numerous stakeholders, different interest groups and third parties that create a set of complex and confusing expectations that are often conflicting (Nutt & Backoff, 1993). Public organization goals are set externally; hence, the resulting nature of the organizations' judgment or evaluation is external, giving rise to a broader scope of interests (Gortner et al., 1987).

The concept of "external control gives rise to uncertainty, hostility and risk" (Gortner et al., 1987, p. 43). This is however not the case with the privately-owned organizations because they have less ambiguous goals (Baldwin 1987 in Hooijberg & Choi, 2001). Private organizations usually have a few clear and well-communicated goals and these goals are often used as a measure of success and to ensure efficiency in achieving their goals (Nutt & Backoff, 1993).

In other words, no matter how inspiring a vision strategic leadership may have of their organization, such visions can only be translated into reality by the action of the people. It is for this reason that strategic leadership needs to be aware of the impact that its creative power has on current and future corporate success.

Unfortunately, little is known about the essential properties of vision. However, Nutt and Backoff (1993) suggest that vision should have innovative features that are unique, vibrant and inspirational and that offer a new order. For Boal and Hooijberg (2001) vision would be drawn upon the organization values and culture and connect the possibilities to these values.

Miah (2002) lists two challenges that need to be addressed before implementing a long-term vision and the first, common to all but dictatorial forms of leadership, is the need for a free-flowing conduit of communication throughout all levels and divisions of the organization, which will provide constant, relevant, and relatively simple data-ready analysis. This problem is more acute, naturally, in a system such as strategic leadership, which relies heavily on employees' involvement and cooperation.

The second challenge tends to arise when the chief executive adopts a leadership style closely related to his own personality, rather than a style best suited to the needs of the corporation. Farkas and Wetlaufer (1996) say it is the biggest contributing factor that has led to most cases of Chief Executives being replaced within five years. This is confirmed by the real world experience.

### ***b) Exploiting and Maintaining Core Competence***

The literature shows that core competencies are the sum of the intangible and tangible, physical and non-physical assets of the organization. Core competencies are the source of the company's ability to deliver unique value to its customers. It is imperative that organizations that are not core competence orientated need to engage in core competence development if they wish to qualify in the global competitive arena.

The core competencies idea was developed by Prahalad and Hamel (1990), who describe them as those capabilities that are critical to a business achieving competitive advantage. Their central idea is that over time companies may develop key areas of expertise, which are distinctive to the organization and critical to its long-term growth. It is for this reason that Prahalad and Hamel (1990) define core competencies as "a bundle of skills and technology that enable a company to provide benefit to customers". Core competencies allow the organization to access a wide variety of markets and to participate in diverse businesses that would make a significant contribution to the perceived customer benefits.

A core competence should be difficult for the competitors to imitate (Prahalad & Hamel, 1994). This is supported by Whitehall (1997) who said that intangible assets, or the bundling of intangible assets, cannot be easily duplicated by competitors; however, they would also be difficult to replace if they were destroyed or damaged.

A core competence is usually the basis for a whole variety of end products and services, both now and in the future (Petts, 1997). Individual capabilities stand alone and are generally considered in isolation. Gallon, Stillman and Coates (1995) made it explicit that core competencies in strategic leadership are more than a trait of individuals, and defined them as “aggregated capabilities, where synergy is created that has sustainable value and broad applicability”. According to Hitt et al. (2005), core competence should not only be a change in response to the changing environment but can also be used and designed to exploit the market place.

The sharing of knowledge or intellectual capital that is unique to a particular organization will significantly influence the choices that strategic leadership makes when seeking to use core competencies in novel, yet competitive ways. Hitt and Ireland (1999, p. 49) contend, “with rare exceptions, in the 21st century, an organization’s productivity will lie more in its collective intellect – that is, in its collective capacity to gain and use knowledge – rather than in its hard assets such as land, plant and equipment”.

The definitions of core competencies by Prahalad and Hamel (1994) at the beginning of this section exclude many skills or properties often cited by organizations as core competencies. For example, patents, brands, products, and technologies do not qualify; neither do broad management capabilities such as strategic planning, flexibility, and teamwork; nor do high-level corporate themes like quality, productivity and customer satisfaction. This is the reason that it is important to distinguish between competencies and capabilities.

The most effective strategic leadership practices will be the ones through which strategic leaders find ways for knowledge to breed still more knowledge. Knowledge cannot, however, be emphasised and exploited effectively in the global marketplace without appropriate human capital.

### *c) Developing Human Capital*

The success of any organization is dependent on the leader's ability to optimise human resources (Charlton, 1993). To have an effective organization, one needs to provide for effective and stimulating relations for the people involved in the organization (Paulus, Seta & Baron, 1996). Employees are of paramount importance to the success of any organization.

According to Bartlett and Ghoshal (1995), modern organization has moved beyond the old doctrine of strategy structure and system to a soft, more organic model built on the development of purpose, process and people. This means that organizations need to respond to what their employees want. Rather than just working for a company, employees want to belong to an organization. More than just providing work, companies can help give meaning to their employee's lives.

An organization must realize that its people – and not its policies – produce profits over the long term, and when people are neglected, they operate at levels that are well below their capacities, eventually leading to eroded profits (Hickman & Silva, 1984). Flanagan and Finger (1998) argue that managers must correct their employee performance problems and help employees to grow professionally, in order to allow employees to contribute to the organization while advancing their own careers.

According to the Competence Process developed by Hall (1993), managers need to value and properly manage employee competence if employee productivity is to be truly nurtured. Human competence is increasingly important in distinguishing average from excellent, and leadership is a crucial element of developing people (Charlton, 1993). It is therefore clear that, when attempting to establish the effects that managers have on employees and their performance, one must analyze the leadership being practised by each manager and the consequences thereof.

It is clear from the above that human capital is one of the most important resources usually available to strategic leaders in order to fulfil their responsibilities, therefore it is important to explore the importance of it and how it can be both developed and managed to create value for the firm. It forms the core knowledge and skills of an organization's entire workforce (Rosen, 1987).

Since it is a critical resource in strategic leadership, human capital represents the knowledge, skills and capabilities of an individual (Coleman, 1988). This is usually reflected by the person's education experience and specific identifiable skills (Hitt, Bierman, Shimizu & Kochlar, 2001).

Strategic leaders view the workforce as a critical resource on which many core competencies are built and through which competitive advantages are exploited successfully. Significant educational and skills upgrading investments in the workforce are required of strategic leaders. Individuals in the workforce appreciate the opportunity to learn continuously and feel greater involvement with the general workforce when encouraged to expand their knowledge base (Hitt et al., 2005).

Hitt & Ireland (1999) believe that greater workforce diversity is another issue that will confront strategic leaders in the 21st century. Workforces will comprise individuals from multiple countries and cultures that may have unique and idiosyncratic value structures. Strategic leaders will need to work hard at forming a community of workers rather than individuals working for an organization. Empowerment of the workforce is vital.

One of the essences of strategic leadership is the effectuation of human capital in the organization to create value. To ensure this, organizations must ensure that they appropriate human capital. This will involve carefully evaluating current stocks of human capital, adding and deleting human resources and relationships as needed. This type of strategic leadership is crucial to the organization.

It is for this reason that Ireland and Hitt (1999) believe that in today's knowledge economy, human capital may be the most important resource in corporations of all types because it is thought to be of critical importance in contributing to higher income, life satisfaction and social cohesion within individual economy. Thus, human capital may determine economic growth for nations as well as individual firms (Field, 2001).

One reason that human capital is such a significant resource in terms of forming and using competitive advantage is that it is often a firm's most unique resource. However, the general argument that Ireland and Hitt (1999) put up is that human capital is a unique intangible

resource that is likely to be socially complex (Black & Boal, 1994; Itam, 1987).

It is suggested that its human capital affords a firm an opportunity to achieve competitive advantage which is essential in the strategic leadership of any organization. Firms continue to invest in their human capital to increase their value-creating capabilities, given their link to forming and effectively using firm-specific competitive advantages (*Business Week*, 2002).

Hitt and Ireland (2002) in their research found that organizations with greater investment in and utilisation of human capital experience higher levels of performance. This also applies to organizations that place greater emphasis on the importance of their people and appropriately and consistently reward all employees for their performance (Welbourne & Andrews, 1996). Human capital's importance lies in the fact that it possesses most knowledge in an organization, particularly tacit knowledge. To reach its full potential, human capital must be effectively managed (Lesser & Prusaka, 2001).

Central to the change in the business environment is that the source of competitive advantage is not natural resources or capital, but the management or human capital components of the land, labour, capital and management factors of the production equation (Hitt et al., 2005). This change has thus led to the change in management focus as in the industrial era limiting resources like capital can be maximised through technology and management, whereas human potential can be released through management interpersonal skills.

According to Pretorius (2001), the information age, where communication technology is developing at a fast rate, brings to reality the concept of a global village, where the underlying principle is the concept of global competitiveness. The implications are that the organization that is the best at producing or providing a service will be in a position to have the entire global market, and if not, it will perish.

The competitiveness is driven by 'value innovation', which is a product of strategic leadership's human capital and technological innovation, which Chan Kim and Mauborgne (1999) indicate is the source of competitive advantage in this knowledge economy. Because the scarce resource is knowledge, entrepreneurship is becoming central to business operations, i.e. process and people rather than to systems and structures, when maximising capital.

In line with the above needs in the modern society, Goleman (2000) explains that strategic leadership emerges as key in any given business organization through what he calls emotional intelligence.

For Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence is about knowing what one is feeling and being able to handle those feelings without being swamped, being able to motivate oneself to get jobs done, being creative and performing at one's peak, and sensing what others are feeling and handling relationships effectively. A more concise definition of emotional intelligence, given by Martinez (1997), conceptualises it as an array of non-cognitive skills, capabilities and competencies that influence a person's ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures.

Because of this, Hitt and Ireland (1999) suggest that strategic leaders continuously evaluate, change and configure human capital with other characteristics. This will require, however, that leaders possess astute interpersonal skills and relational competence, and that leaders must be able to identify and be masters at developing relational competencies.

#### ***d) Sustaining an Organizational Culture***

The culture of an organization is crucial to the success of the enterprise, and accordingly it follows that "key task of managers is to understand, monitor and actively manage the culture of their organization" (Davies & Phillips, 2006).

Schein (1998) defines organizational culture as "the basic pattern of assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adoption and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to problems."

Organizational culture may also refer to a complex set of ideologies, symbols and core values shared throughout the organization (Hitt et al., 2005). Culture provides the context within which strategies are formulated and implemented.

Hitt & Ireland (1999, p. 51) say that "effective cultures are ones in which the workforce understands that competitive advantage does not last forever and that organizations must move

forwards continuously”. They further explain that when the workforce is comfortable with the reality of constant change and the need for a never-ending stream of innovations and practices the global competitiveness is also enhanced.

Bates (2002) defines organizational culture as the “set of, often unconsciously held, beliefs, ideas, knowledge and values which shapes the way things happen and makes some courses of action unthinkable”.

It is also clear that for a long time there have been inherent difficulties with defining organizational culture. However, looking at a range of definitions from the literature, organizational cultures are seen to be “made up of shared meanings, official and informal rules, about how to behave” (Hitt & Ireland,(1999). This means the strategic leadership will use honesty, trust and integrity as the foundation for their decisions, and commitment to pursuits in which legal, ethical and social concerns have been taken into account and are thought to be morally right and social economically efficient.

It is necessary for a leader to show the ability to both assess and understand the above underlying assumptions of how to behave, as they are the building blocks of an organization’s culture (Schein, 1984) and form the basis of the creation of the group values that in turn manifest in external patterns of behaviour. A strategic leadership must furthermore be able to influence these basic assumptions and mould organizational culture in such a way as to nurture values necessary to manifest the behaviour by subordinates most likely to achieve both group success and attainment of organization objectives.

Another important aspect of strategic leadership is that it must be able to mould behaviours, and hence influence organizational culture, in ways that will best prepare the environment for successful change management. Leaders must master their organizations and “effective leaders know that whilst you can’t change people, you can change cultures” (Peters, 2003, p. 335).

One of the key barriers to change is culture, and hence a leader must understand the environment in order to overcome the negative assumptions and psyches that exist with an organization. Strategic leadership must not only appreciate their corporate climate, but must also be able to harness the processes of cultural change so as to successfully drive their strategic initiatives (Zeffane, 1996).

In summary, strategic leaders acknowledge and appreciate the importance of organizational culture, understand how the culture of public and private organizations may differ, and are able to apply this knowledge in nurturing behaviours within their own sphere of influence that will maximise the success of their style of leadership in the achievement of the goals of their organizations.

Importantly it must be recognized that (Schraeder, Tears & Jordan, 2005, p. 493), “Indeed, increased knowledge about organizational culture can provide leaders with special insights regarding the fundamental characteristics of an organization, that will, in turn help managing or changing the culture”

This means that culture is rooted in history because it is formed over the life of a company, culture reflects what the firm has learned over time through its responses to the continuous challenges of survival and growth, is held collectively, and has sufficient complexity to resist many attempts at direct manipulation.

Because it influences how the organization conducts business, as well as the methods used to regulate and control the behaviours of organization citizen, culture can be a competitive advantage.

### **2.3 Effective Leadership Styles Needed in the Ever-Changing Business Environment**

Effective leadership is the basis of appreciating the different sides of the modern world, especially its people and its business environment, making the study of effective leadership itself still intangible.

Effective leadership models provide a theoretical basis from which a practical plan of action can be implemented to identify and nurture leadership within an organization.

According to Goleman et al. (2002, p. 22), the true test of the efficacy of effective leadership lies in the results that are achieved by any organization. Effective leadership brings out, identifies and offers solutions to the needs of modern business leadership. It means effective leaders need to constantly re-evaluate themselves regarding the various factors attributed to creating and leading an organization to success. Effective leaders are those individuals who

exploit to the fullest the spiritual, emotional, psychological and material resources available in an organization and its employees to best serve the interests of its stakeholders.

The most effective form of leadership, according to Bass and Avolio (1994a), is leadership which is a combination of both transformation and transaction leadership. They developed what they called “The Full Leadership Development Theory” with its roots in the trait behaviour approaches to leadership theory, and articulate leadership in terms of transaction and transformational leadership styles.

Bass and Avolio (1997) identified some leadership factors in the combination of transformation and transaction leadership. The transformational factors that emerged were identified as charisma (or idealised influence), inspirational motivation, individualised consideration, and intellectual stimulation. The transactional factors that emerged were labelled as contingent reward and management by exception. Laissez-faire or “hands-off” leadership was identified as a non-transactional factor (Bass & Avolio, 1997).

Although not discussed in detail in this research, the outcome factors associated with effective leadership are also assessed by the Full Range Leadership Development Theory (Bass & Avolio, 1997), namely: extra efforts by associates, individual, group and organization effectiveness and satisfaction with the leadership.

Again, I use the Bass and Avolio (1997) definition of effective leadership and use these selections of the above factors attributed to the combination of transformation and transaction leadership as a framework for my further review of certain elements of effective leadership.

## **2.4 Transformational Leadership**

The idea of transformation leadership was first developed by Burns (1978) and was later extended by Bass and Avolio (1997). Burns (1978) defined transformation leadership as a process in which one or more people engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. The explanation was that transforming leaders engage in collective purpose linked to social change, with the ultimate objective of achieving goals that enhance the wellbeing of the human existence.

Transformational leaders achieve a high level of performance that surpasses expectations by

instilling self-pride and communication with followers in an attempt to promote a feeling of personal respect amongst the followers themselves as well as between the followers and the leader, facilitating creative thinking and providing inspiration (Tepper & Percy, 1994).

This means that transformation leadership inspires its followers to take on the organizational vision as their own, while attempting to heighten the values, concern and development of their followers (Cacioppe, 1997).

Transformation leadership has been assessed and defined by different authors, according to McShane and Von Glinow (2000), but the common aspect that comes from all the different explanations and definitions of transformational leadership is that it concerns behaviour that people use to create and develop an organization to success. The important insight is that transformation leaders need not only to adapt to changing circumstances, but also to create the changed circumstances necessary to achieve organizational objectives. Burns (1978) advocates a leadership that initiates and manages development within an organization. In other words the leaders must make the paradigm shift from a selfish, risk-averse situational approach towards a more innovative style of leadership.

Bass and Avolio (1997) provide an appropriate and inclusive definition and breakdown of transformation leadership, and define the transformation leadership in terms of behaviour. Four types of behaviour are the most active and effective forms of leadership behaviour, and this research will focus on this and on the Full Range Leadership Development Theory.

The Full Range Leadership Development Theory identifies the following components of transformation leadership: individual influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual motivation, and intellectual stimulation, each of which will be discussed briefly:

*Individual influence* describes leaders who are exemplary role models for employees. Leaders with idealised influence are trustworthy and are respected by employees to make good organizational decision.

*Inspirational motivation* describes leaders who motivate employees to commit to the organization's vision. Leaders with inspirational motivation encourage their teams to reach the goals of increased revenue and market growth.

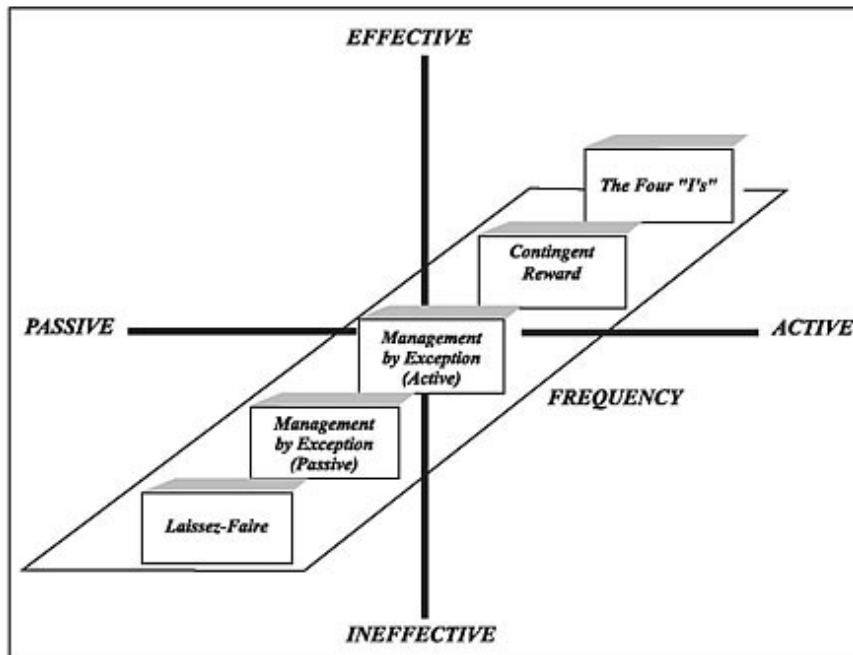
*Intellectual stimulation* describes leaders who support innovation and creativity through challenging normal beliefs and views of employees. Leaders with intellectual stimulation promote critical thinking and problem solving to improve the organization.

*Individual consideration:* leaders with individual consideration act as coaches and advisors to employees. They encourage staff to reach goals that help them and the organization as a whole. The above is simply summed up as follows:

**Idealised influence + Individual consideration + Intellectual stimulation + Inspirational motivation = Performance Beyond Expectation**

These characteristics are four valuable components of the transformation process. When leaders are strong role models, motivators and coaches, they are using the four components to help develop their employees into more productive and successful individuals (Bass, 1985).

**Figure 2.1 Model of the Full Range Leadership Development Theory**



(Bass and Avolio, 1997, p. 41)

## 2.5 Transactional Leadership

According to Bass and Avolio (1990), transactional leaders enhance the follower's readiness to produce and perform at expected levels by offering rewards for acceptable employee performance. This performance results in the performance standards.

Transactional leaders are those leaders who implement structure and are considerate towards their employees (Senior, 1997). As the name suggests, transactional leaders indulge in a process of communication with employees in an attempt to strike a balance between the needs and desires of the employees, and the overall vision of the organization. A transactional leader motivates the organization's employees by offering rewards in exchange for performance (Bass, 1985).

In assessing transactional leadership, the Full Range Leadership Development Theory identifies the following components (Bass & Avolio, 1990): Contingent Reward, Management by Exception, and Laissez-faire.

*Contingent Reward:* This behaviour constitutes a good relationship between the employees and the leader, because employees feel that their work efforts are being recognized by a higher authority, and rewards are offered for their extra effort (Bass cited in Vecchio, 1997). Contingent reward involves an interaction between the leader and his followers whereby the leader supplies suitable rewards when subordinates meet the agreed-upon objectives. Therefore, contingent reward constitutes the most active and effective component of transactional leadership behaviour.

*Management by Exception (Active and Passive):* Transactional leaders monitor and evaluate performance very closely and performance is strictly controlled in order to ensure as few deviations as possible (Bass cited in Vecchio, 1997). Management by exception (active) exists when the leader monitors his subordinates in such a way as to ensure that mistakes are not made, and allows the status quo to exist without being addressed (Bass & Avolio, 1997). Management by exception (active) is slightly more active and effective than management by exception (passive). Management by exception (passive) occurs when the leader becomes involved only once mistakes are made, and attempts to make the necessary corrections (Bass & Avolio, 1997).

*Laissez-faire*: This behaviour indicates an absence of leadership, or the avoidance of involvement, or both (Bass & Avolio, 1997). This leadership behaviour is both passive and ineffective. Laissez-faire leadership occurs when a leader abdicates responsibility to others and does not want to take responsibility for mistakes that are made as a result of decision-making. The leader tries to remain as uninvolved as possible with his followers, and avoids confrontation and conflict by remaining neutral in most situations of conflict.

This type of behaviour occurs when the leader fulfils the minimum requirements of the job in an attempt to remain a member of the organization (Senior, 1997). Although identified by many authors as a type of transactional leadership behaviour, Bass and Avolio (1997) have identified this behaviour as non-transactional leadership as a result of the lack of leadership displayed by the person in charge.

## **2.6 Transactional and Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership enhances transactional leadership in such a way as to achieve a higher level of performance from employees or subordinates. As can be deduced from above, the primary differences between these leadership styles are the methods used by each leader to motivate subordinates, and the types of goals set out by each leader (Lowe & Galen Kroeck, 1996).

As previously, discussed, transactional leaders are concerned with the policies and procedures of an organization, whereas transformational leaders are concerned for the people and interpersonal relationships within the organization (Bennis & Nanus, 1985).

According to Hall (1993), it is the process of leadership – the induction and exercise of influence in order to connect people and performance in pursuit of an overall organizational goal – that leaders have in common. Therefore, it can be argued that transactional leadership represents the managerial aspect of the person in charge, and transformational leadership represents the leadership qualities of the person in charge (Bass, 1985).

Bass and Avolio (1994a) argue that the most effective form of leadership is the combination of both transformational and transactional leadership styles. The managerial leadership model developed by Flanagan and Thompson (1993) provides an aid to assist management in

selecting the appropriate leadership response – that is, the correct combination of transactional management and transformational leadership (Carrell et al., 1997). The managerial leadership model encompasses transactional management and transformational leadership, and includes a third major component: situational sensitivity (Carrell et al., 1997). The style of leadership required in any organization depends on what the company wants to accomplish (Hart & McMillan, 1996). As mentioned previously, most modern organizations need to focus their attention on employees in an attempt to increase productivity. This makes transformational leadership the most suitable leadership style for any business undertaking today (Bass, 1994b).

It is for this reason that transformational leadership will become more prevalent and popular as a result of the chains of bureaucracy becoming flatter, and democracy in the work place becoming a necessity (Elgood, 1993). An organization in modern times needs to increase productivity levels through internal quality. A less bureaucratic and more democratic leadership style is essential for organizational survival (Johnson, 1995). Transformational leadership allows employees to be more involved in the decision-making process so that it nurtures organizational relationships and achieves results for the organization through committed people, and interdependence through a ‘common stake’ in the organization’s purpose.

A more transformational leadership style is essential for the survival of any organization today, because it is a democratic leadership style. Nevertheless, policies, procedures and production are still important aspects in the twenty-first century and, although less people-centred, they are important in ensuring that decision-making stays on track.

Management is important for the direction and regulation of employees (Bennis & Nanus, 1985), and the best style of leadership is the correct combination of transactional and transformational leadership behaviours as postulated by Bass and Avolio (1994b).

## **2.7 Limitations of the Full Range Leadership Development Theory**

The Full Range Leadership Development Theory has some limitations. Although the knowledge of transformational behaviour might be limited, it is still necessary for organizations to assess, as far as possible, the leadership style being practised, in an attempt to ensure that it suits the requirements of the organization. Another limitation of the Full

Range Leadership Development Theory is the fact that it focuses its attentions on the trait and behavioural approaches of leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994a), and pays little attention to the situational aspects influencing the leadership style being practised.

As has previously been mentioned, according to Flanagan and Thompson's model of managerial leadership, the most effective managerial leadership style must diagnose the organizational situation in order to understand which leadership response is appropriate (Carrell et al., 1997).

Despite its limitations, the Full Range Leadership Development Theory does provide a theoretical framework, as well as an instrument for leadership, that is valid and reliable (Bass & Avolio, 1994a).

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The failure or success of any organization depends on how that organization considers its abilities and characteristics that drive the creation and development process. It is the ultimate test of leadership.

The following chapter, Chapter Three, represents the overall research methods employed in the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the nature of research and the strategy that was used to conduct this research. The research was undertaken in order to develop insights into the phenomenon of strategic leadership of *The Post* as a private newspaper. The research presents a unique opportunity to understand and share the founder group's leadership experience in the creation and development of the newspaper over the last 15 years. These experiences have not been recorded and need to be extracted from the minds of the individuals.

### **3.2 The Research Paradigm**

The research was conducted within a phenomenological (interpretive) paradigm in an effort to understand human behaviour from the point of view of the participants (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). The research methodology selected was qualitative research.

This methodology was the most suitable under the circumstances to achieve the research goal (Cantrell, 1993, pp. 81-88). This methodology was appealing to me because I believe that knowledge is constructed within the individual and open-ended interviews lend themselves to the uncovering of how this meaning is constructed (Silverman, 2001, p. 95).

The social interaction of the interviews facilitated the sharing of the experiences, feelings and perceptions of the participants that allowed me to learn through the process (Seidman, 1991, pp. 1-4).

### **3.3 The Case Study**

*The Post* interested me especially as I have been involved with the newspaper for the last 15 years and have seen it grow and change. I was also interested to learn what it meant to both my colleagues and the founding members in terms of creation, development and the dynamics involved within the organization.

According to Yin (1984), a case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (1984, p. 13).

Although the use of a single case study is sometimes criticized and questions are raised concerning the validity of the results (Yin, 1984, p. 37), the case in point provided a unique opportunity to learn “a lot from a typical case (rather) than a little from a magnificently typical case” (Stake, 1995, pp. 243-244). The case itself was of interest – indeed, unique – and I wanted a better understanding of it (Stake, 1995, p. 234).

### **3.4 Data Gathering Tools**

Interviews and document analysis were the two methods of data generation used in this case.

#### **3.4.1. Interviews**

The interview technique was chosen because it is a powerful tool for obtaining in-depth understanding of another person’s experience (Welman & Kruger, 2001). The interviews were open-ended but through guided conversation rather than using structured queries whereby respondents were asked about the facts as well as their own opinions and how they perceived the questions raised in the research goals. The aim was to find out what the basic issues were, how strategic leadership was understood, what terminology people used, and what their level of understanding was (Judd, Smith & Kidder, 1991, pp. 260-261).

The respondents were able to talk about the topic with little direct questioning or guidance and they were able to reply using their own words and views. The data collected in this form were very detailed and captured the emotions, excitement and disappointments of the participants, especially in establishing and evaluating the role of strategic leadership and understanding how the newspaper has responded to that since its creation and development 15 years ago.

Interviews were planned and ten participants within and outside the newspaper were selected for this purpose. These included founders, former and current editors / managers who were (or still are) involved with the newspaper’s creation and development since its inception. They all played significant roles in the creation and development of the newspaper, and included:

- 1 The first Board Chairman,
- 2 Editor-in-Chief and Managing Director,
- 3 Two former editors and founders,

- 4 Current Board Chairman,
- 5 Administrative Managers, and
- 6 Managing Editor.

The interviews took place with respondents at their places of residence or at their offices where they were readily present, and were conducted face-to-face. In the end, only six of the ten potential participants' interviews took place.

Unfortunately, the planned interview with the first Board Chairman, Anderson Mazoka, did not take place as he was taken ill and flown into South Africa for specialized treatment and died two weeks later from lung and kidney failure. The first interview was conducted with MH, the first Editor, by both telephone and e-mail, as he had left the organization and settled in Australia.

I aimed to conduct as many interviews as possible until a particular trend was recognizable in the responses. As soon as there were recognizable recurring patterns and consistent regularities in the responses, that would be an indication that enough interviews had been conducted. The sample only covered those who are or were directly involved at some stage with the newspaper.

The interviews lasted for about an hour each, except the one with the Managing Director, which lasted more than four hours as he wanted to share the whole experience from the start of the organization to the present time and to explain the new developments that were taking place. The interviews were intended to be informal and conventional in nature to facilitate the interviewees' freedom to visit as many factors as possible.

The list of respondents and their addresses was obtained from the company secretary's Central Chambers in Lusaka and from the newspaper records.

Interviewees were asked for permission to record the interview for the sake of accuracy. Regarding any complicated or sensitive issues, I had the opportunity to seek clarification or elaboration with further questions during the interview. In this way, it gave a clear picture of the respondents' position and behaviour because they were free to answer according to their own thinking. Notes were taken during the conversation.

The interview questions were based on the theoretical context as covered in this study in Chapter Two and referred to in the interview Appendix B.

### **3.4.2 Document Analysis**

This involved the study and analysis of documentation pertaining to the subject of the research (Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2002). A number of documents were studied and these were used to gain an understanding of the background to the creation and development of the newspaper, including:

- 1 The Company Registration Process Documents,
- 2 Certificate of Registration,
- 3 Articles of Association,
- 4 Memorandum and Articles of Association,
- 5 Certificate of Incorporation,
- 6 Board of Directors' Meetings and Resolution,
- 7 Mission Statements,
- 8 Editorial Policies,
- 9 Financial Reports,
- 10 The Strategic Plan Annual Reports,
- 11 Unpublished Policy Documents, and
- 12 Press Alerts and Strategic Plans.

The documents were important to help keep abreast of significant changes, and more importantly for supporting statements of the respondents, that took place over 15 years. They supplemented the interviews and gave benefit and depth to the statements and findings of the participants.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

As indicated in the interview section (3.4.1) I took notes as a summary of what was said. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed to ensure that an accurate and complete record was obtained for analysis (Silverman, 2001). The data collected from the interviews was transcribed from the recordings into Microsoft Word. Some of the benefits of Microsoft Word for purposes of analyzing are editing, coding, storage, ease of searching and retrieval,

linking data segments and chapters.

According to Yin (1984) “data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of a study”. The interview and document data was read and areas highlighted that spoke to the question posed or the area under exploration.

Common themes emerged and thematic connections were made (Seidman, 1991, pp. 91-101). This then lead to the categorization of the data (Neuman, 2000, p. 420). The data were interpreted and “rich or thick descriptions” were sought and were used as “the building blocks” to develop my argument (Remenyi, 1999, p. 28). I have therefore conducted an inductive study.

The data analysis was time-consuming and complex because a lot of data were created, both useful and not useful (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

### **3.6 Research Quality**

Van der Mescht argues for “scientific rigour” (2002, p. 50). The absence of scientific rigour is evident in “researchers’ failure to engage critically with their work, consider the ethics of their positions as researchers, question the validity of their findings, and most importantly acknowledge the shortcomings of the method they have used” (van der Mescht, 2002, p. 50).

First I discuss the ethical considerations in my study, followed by evidence in support of its validity.

#### **3.6.1 Ethical Implications of my Research**

I am particularly aware that my status as an insider places an acute ethical responsibility on me. But since the goal of the research is to investigate the various roles that strategic leadership played in the success of the privately owned newspaper, the potential risk of manipulation of the findings is reduced.

I have sought to give careful consideration to the ethical issues arising in relation to the analysis and evaluation of the data that has been collected, mindful that my proximity to the phenomenon I have researched has made qualitative evidence that has been elicited more

complex and sometimes more difficult to process.

Before the research commenced, the Managing Director (one of the founder members of the newspaper) was approached for his approval. The participants were then approached to take part in the research. The purpose of the interview was carefully explained to each of the participants before the interviews were conducted and they also fully understood what was to be done with it on completion (Remenyi, 1998, p. 111 ; Seidman, 1991, pp. 49-52).

When introducing myself to the interviewees, I had to clarify that my role was that of a researcher and not of a representative of the newspapers. It was necessary to assure the interviewees that their most honest answers were needed and would not prejudice them in any way. I also had to make sure that I was always polite, courteous and sensitive during interviews, thanking them for their time and participation at the end of every interview and following up with a letter.

Before starting the interview, permission was obtained from the participant to audiotape the interview and to transcribe it. The researcher must be truthful in presenting data: honesty and trust are necessary.

As indicated, I was already a senior manager in the newspaper, and as such all participants were known to me to a lesser or greater degree. I had worked with many of them since 1993 and we had built up a friendship over the years and become close acquaintances over the past 15 years. The other participants were my colleagues and I had interacted with them on a professional basis for some time. It was at this point that I realized that this closeness to both the participants and the subject could cause problems and I was particularly concerned about the nature of the interviews. I was particularly careful not to be drawn into discussions or to offer my views and to keep the researcher voice.

### **3.6.2 Validity**

Validity is the extent to which the research findings represent what is actually going on in a particular situation (Hussey & Hussey, 1997, p. 57). As explained earlier there were high levels of validity as the data was rich in its “explanation and analysis” and the aim was to capture participants’ experience of the phenomenon of strategic leadership and the meaning they attached to it (Hussey & Hussey, 1997, p. 59). The emphasis is on quality and depth of

the data in the interpretive paradigm and the term “rich” is widely used to describe the amount of detail and the nuances found in the phenomenon that is being studied (Hussey & Hussey, 1997, p. 56).

Using multiple data collection and analyzing techniques provides an opportunity to triangulate (Yin, 1984) data in order to strengthen the research findings and conclusion. It allows the researcher to move beyond initial impressions in order to improve the likelihood of accurate and reliable findings.

Validation was found through concepts from the data. A natural saturation of themes had occurred (Melia, 1997, pp.30-33). There was a very high ratio of participant-to-researcher voice during the interviews with a level of fairness in the presentation of the data. Fairness, for Guba and Lincoln (1994), p.180 is a “quality of balance; that is, all stakeholder, views, perspectives, claims, concerns, and voices should be apparent from the text”.

For the purposes of getting participant feedback on the plausibility of the study, and for ethical reasons, I followed Seidman’s (1991) suggestion to make the entire transcriptions available to the participants. This provided them with the opportunity to point out anything in the document that they were uncomfortable with or that they felt was inaccurate or unfair (Seidman, 1991, p. 54).

Except for one, the participants made no corrections but agreed with what had been transcribed.

### **3.6.3 Generalisability**

This is the extent to which the research results can be applied or are relevant in other similar cases and situations, and generalisability as the research has “contextual relevance across measures, methods, context” (Hussey & Hussey, 1997, p. 58).

First, there is a connection among the experiences of the participants that Seidman offers as an alternative to generalisability (1991, p. 42). He is of the opinion that “such links among the people whose individual lives are quite different but who are affected by common structural and social forces can help the reader see patterns in the experience” (1991, p. A2).

Second, I have attempted to learn enough about the case not “to encapsulate complex meanings into a finite report but to describe the case in sufficient descriptive narrative so that readers can vicariously experience these happenings, and draw their own conclusions” (Stake, 1995, p. 243). This will allow the reader to identify with the situation and recognize their situation (Stake, 1995, p. 243).

### **3.7 Personal Reflection on the Research Process**

There were many limitations to the research, but I have learned a great deal. No amount of reading can prepare the researcher for the unexpected events that occur during the preparation and interviewing process. Some of the limitations regarding the interviews have already been mentioned above.

All of the interviewees were quite keen to be interviewed. The participants did not want to be anonymous despite my having explained to each participant at the outset that they had the right to remain anonymous. During the compilation of the analysis, however, I realized that the participants could be exposed to a number of dangers including prosecution and I therefore decided to retain their anonymity.

During the interviews I met a large number of people who were once connected to the paper in one way or another. The subject of *The Post* was an extraordinarily emotive subject. Many people I saw were defensive, others angry and bitter, and most had extremely mixed feelings about the organization leadership. The writer was also aware that many also had personal axes to grind.

I was forced to guard myself against the pitfall of being a complete-member-researcher, with the tension between my role of participant and that of researcher (Adler & Adler, 1987). I also made efforts to ensure that the perceptions of all participants were clearly stated. My own perception and subconscious bias influenced my analysis although I attempted to reduce this (Adler & Adler, 1987, p. 111). I am also aware of the element of bias in that I was a complete-member-researcher who was part of the first group of people who worked for the newspaper (Adler & Adler, 1987).

It is for this reason that I believe the rich description in the following chapters, where I am very much in the background, will assist the readers to formulate their own ideas and

opinions and decide whether my interpretation is valid or not.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

In concluding the chapter, I am aware of the fact that an “exemplary case study” goes beyond its mere methodology and research procedures (Yin, 1984, p. 101). My method of using an intrinsic, single case study can, and indeed should, have potency greater than that of other forms of research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyze my data and describe how the participants understood the role of strategic leadership in the creation and development of the newspaper.

After having organized my interview and document data, I arrived at the following themes that address my research goal:

- 1 The founders' and *The Post's* origins,
- 2 The founders' vision,
- 3 Accommodating and developing different skills,
- 4 Change and breaking the culture of resistance, and
- 5 Effective leadership at *The Post* today.

Some of these themes (for example, the founders and the newspaper's origins and accommodating and developing different skills) emerge from the data, while others (for example, the founder's vision, change and breaking the culture of resistance and effective leadership at the newspaper organization ) are derived from the literature discussed in Chapter Two.

The main source of my collection of data was six respondents – founders, senior managers and journalists. They either were or are still part of the newspaper's history and instrumental in the creation and development of the newspaper.

**Fred M'membe**, whose transcript is referred to as FM, is an international award winning journalist. He has been the newspaper's Managing Director and Editor In Chief since its inception and still maintains his role 15 years after its founding. He is a qualified accountant and worked for an audit firm before embarking on a journalism career. He has just completed his law degree and is currently waiting for his call to the bar. He was also the majority shareholder at the time of my writing this research.

**Matsauso Phiri** (referred to as MP) was a special projects editor and acted as FM's deputy

and worked on most investigative pieces of stories and was one of the main founders of the paper. He sold his stake in the newspapers at the time of the interview.

**Michael Hall** (transcript referred to as MH) was a freelance journalist based in Lusaka writing for the BBC and several other British publications. He joined the newspaper on a full time basis a year after its launch. He was in charge of all editorial issues of the paper and spent two years at the newspaper before emigrating to Australia. He is still a shareholder of the newspaper.

**Joe Kaunda** (transcript referred to as JKK) is one of the younger generation of reporters, recruited straight from college five years after the newspaper's inception. He was later elevated to the position of Managing Editor, which post he held at the time of the interview.

**Patrick Musengwa** was the Finance and Administration Manager at the time of the inception of the newspaper. He retired and was later recalled to work as the Logistics Manager. In his transcript he is referred to as PM.

**Maurice Attala** was at the time of writing the research Board Chairman and one of the shareholders, and in his transcript he is referred to as MA.

**John Mukela** is a veteran with extensive experience in journalism, media training, project planning, management and coordination. He has assisted in the setting up of several media enterprises in Lesotho, Botswana and Zambia. He has edited newspapers in Lesotho, Botswana and Zambia, and served as a correspondent for Radio Netherlands and the BBC as a producer and presenter on the BBC's flagship *Focus on Africa* programme after being deported from Lesotho. He is currently Executive Director of the Southern African Media Training Trust (NSJ). He is referred to as JM.

All of these had interviews that were structured around a number of guiding questions (details in **Appendix I**) in accordance with the research methodology and how they understood their roles and description of some of the things that emerged. Words that recurred in the discussion were guided by the research question which aimed at exploring the roles that various constituent elements of strategic leadership played in the success of the newspaper.

Some of the research participants spoke in English, which, although the official language of Zambia, is not their mother tongue. In consequence, their turn of phrase is often unusual, sometimes ungrammatical, but always rich, engaging and informative.

## **4.2 The Search for the Road to Success (1990-2000)**

This section of the chapter gives an account of the origins of the newspaper, the responsibilities, fumbling and activities behind the scenes, by founding members, who were mostly driven by their vision and desire in the creation of the success of the newspaper.

### **4.2.1 The Origin of *The Post* and Founders' Roles**

The absence and difficulties of accessing balanced views of information during the change and run-up to the first multi-party election in the country in the early 1990s forced MP to start exploring ways of creating a newspaper to fill the existing gap in information. There were already two daily newspapers owned by the state. He recollects:

The political situation had changed. Independently, I decided to start a newspaper. I mentioned to someone who proposed the name of JM. He had just been deported from Lesotho, so someone asked me to talk to him. I was told that there was a white man who was covering for the BBC here in Zambia whom I should also talk to. And that was MH who had also just been deported from Malawi. The three of us linked up and agreed that it was a good idea to explore. So we decided to go to Lundazi in Eastern Province where a cadre of the UNIP, the ruling political party at the time, was harassing people. So both MH and JK got permission, from the BBC and the London Independent Newspaper respectively, to go to Lundazi because they needed the two organizations to cover the cost of the trip.

The changing political atmosphere and the wind of change that gripped the world, especially after the collapse and the social upheaval of the Eastern Bloc in relation to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), played a role in the formation of the newspapers. JM recalls:

The backdrop was the Berlin Wall crashing down, the *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* of the Soviet Union, that led to the overall uprising of what was going on also elsewhere in Africa and the fight to get the ANC, who had their headquarters in Lusaka, back on track in terms of South African liberation was also heating up. There were riots in South Africa. So overall it was sort of turmoil in the region if I recall. Even here in Zambia, we were having our fair share of the turmoil. There was a lot of discussion at that time about the regime in that there needed to be a change and so on.

Like many good ideas, the then *Weekly Post* was conceived over food: lunch at The Great

Wall of China Restaurant in Lusaka during a discussion on the pro-democracy movement in the early 1990s. It became the first independent newspaper in the post colonial era, and MH recalls:

We talked about how the government-owned newspapers backed then first Republican President Kenneth Kaunda's one-party state, and MP told me of his involvement in the *Sunday Post* in the 1980s, an independent paper that published for a few months before it was forced to close.

MP was the editor-in-chief of the *Sunday Post*, officially registered on August 31, 1982, and it was on the same day that the first 12- page edition came out as a broadsheet. From the first edition the paper showed early signs of trouble. MP further revealed that by the second edition the newspaper had reduced from a broadsheet to a tabloid because of what he termed "powerful forces which decided to withdraw newsprint from *Printpak*, the printers of the newspaper who were based in Ndola, more than 300 kilometres from Lusaka". According to MP, it meant reducing the pagination for the next edition from 12 to eight. The last edition was dated January 16, 1983 and it never bade farewell to its readers. The circulation was pegged at 10,000 copies weekly.

Being a weekly paper, it lasted for only 12 weekly editions, meaning we needed to ask ourselves why the *Sunday Post* failed. As we were going we were discussing the various issues involved in the newspaper for *The Post* and when we came back, looking at the figures involved (you know the story) we were very excited and knew that it would work and began to put in the finer details.

The problems and experience at the defunct *Sunday Post* assisted the three founders at that time in formulating an effective way to deal with the future of the newspaper. MP explains:

We even worked on a questionnaire. These were questions that we prepared and I went round getting people's opinions to get the feel of what kind of a newspaper was needed and so on. Many of my colleagues asked me why the *Sunday Post* failed when I had said it was working well. The answer I gave to that was we tended to concentrate on producing the product and forgot that it was also a business.

The founder members were aware of the importance of the paper being commercially viable as one of the biggest reasons of achieving and retaining the editorial independence, and MH remembers:

The experience of MP and the *Sunday Post* was important in formulating the direction of the newspaper: the *Sunday Post* simply didn't make money in its three and half month's existence.

None of the three – MP, JM or MH – had any business background and experience to ensure the paper was financially viable. MH remembers an unusual encounter with FM and the beginning of a long journey and deep friendship:

I remembered meeting an unusual accountant in unusual circumstances. I had been tear-gassed during a riot in Choma in the southern part of the country covering the trial of former President Frederick Chiluba, who at the time was in the forefront of the political change taking place in the country. This accountant took pity on us and Melinda Ham in Choma at the time of the fracas and gave us a lift back to Lusaka. We were then the only foreign correspondents in Zambia.

I remembered trying to sleep during the ride, listening to the driver talk; about his boredom with the accounting profession – he was an auditor at one international auditing firm based in Lusaka – his interest in politics, excitement at the pro-democracy movement, student days in London and his commitment to Zambia. He made a big impression on me.

The founder members wanted a newspaper that could possess an identity that would describe its distinctiveness, enjoy a long lasting success and be certain where the business was heading, but none of them had the capabilities. JM recalls:

So we came to Lusaka and had a few meetings around that discussion and then Mike actually said to us that he knew a guy that could help us with the paper in terms of helping us draw up the business plan and we said we would like to meet this guy and we arranged a meeting at MH's apartment in Kabulonga. So MP, MH and I gathered and this guy arrived and this guy was FM. That was then the four of us joined by FM.

FM was told of the planned launch of a new independent newspaper by the three and asked for his help in terms of writing a business proposal for the project to raise funds and offered to pay for his service. And FM remembers his reaction to the proposal:

They asked me to do the business proposal for the newspaper. I told them they did not have the money to pay for my services and instead offered to do it free. There was nothing of what the paper was going to be in terms of business, not even the frequency of the newspapers. Not even the issue itself and the vision itself when they approached me in the early 1990s.

It was at that point that FM's advice turned to full-scale involvement and he became the fourth co-founder of the project with a mission of making the paper independent and financially viable. FM remembers:

Things started from scratch, planning and so forth and mobilising of shareholders,

unfortunately the burden fell on me and MH. We had the greatest burden.

It is from the above experiences that opportunities were identified and also how to capitalise on them before the launch of the newspaper. This was done by evaluating and analyzing industry conditions and market opportunities in order to position it strategically. FM remembers this aspect:

Before we did anything we went around to all media houses, spoke to editors, and senior reporters of the two state-owned print media. I was lucky then because I used to be an auditor and was well versed with systems involved in running a newspaper.

We even went round to the electronic media to learn. We looked at the people who had been in the printing industry not only with web presses but other small companies with sheet-fed machines. I remember going with MH to see the late Valentine Musakanya, who started telling us about the history of printing presses in the country and how one was in Livingstone and the other one in Mbala and all sorts of things but very interesting history. I cannot remember it now.

Then we did our homework, we looked at the printing of newspapers in Zambia and analyzed every publication in this country and looked at every reason why they did not last long.

It also meant all the founders making a difference by dedicating their personal involvement. It was all about creating something driven by the strong will and commitment towards the changing environment both politically and economically.

There was a strong will and commitment from the beginning. FM recollects that he needed to change careers and contribute towards the changing environment and found the newspapers to be the best place to do this, compared to what he called a routine accounting and auditing job at KPMG.

The newspaper to me was a continuation of the process of democratisation in the country.

Later all four founder members identified themselves as drivers towards the success of the organization, and each one had a role and desire to play towards building the organization.

MP explains:

Before the paper was launched our idea of how the structure of the company would be was that we would have an editor who would have full responsibility for the editorial side and have a Managing Director to run the business side of the organization.

#### **4.2.2 Developing of the Vision**

One of the main objectives was not to focus so much on today's problems but rather on future opportunities through the plotting of both the vision and mission of the organization.

FM remembers the importance of each member of the team and the different skills and capabilities they brought, and this assisted in plotting their way through the developing of a vision and mission to guide the newspaper to whatever needed to be achieved and how they were going to do it:

If you look at the mission statement, you would see that the political side was very strong and it was from the political position that editorial flowed. So, my strong political background played a big role together with MP's. So it was not a newspaper that was formed from a journalistic idea but from that political idea as well. It was not journalism for the sake of journalism. Certain political causes are required to govern the country fairly.

It was the vision of the founding members that the newspaper was anchored to also match the increasing change in the environment that assisted the organization in drawing up the future and clearly communicated both the vision and the purpose of the newspaper. There were brainstorming sessions and meetings to visualise the direction of what the newspaper wanted to achieve and what it should stand for. MH reveals how it was done:

In terms of vision, we spent a long time discussing and working on a mission statement and philosophy of the business, but just as importantly we worked very hard on doing profit and loss and cash flow projections. I remember staying up until 04.00 a.m. many nights working on spreadsheets with Fred so that we could "visualize" how the business would be, and we revised and revised these projections based on new information.

FM recalls how the burden of setting and determining the vision and its objectives was arrived at and dealt with:

MH and I defined the objectives of the newspapers. On the business side I literally did everything. I think I had a bit of monopoly and knowledge. On the editorial side my political knowledge and collection also helped a lot. It was during the beginning that the objectives in terms of the vision and values that assisted in setting up the political objectives of the newspaper and helped to shape the political direction of the newspaper. So in short the objectives were set up by MH and me.

JM explains the role that FM played in defining some of the objectives of the newspaper before production started:

FM was requested to be the Managing Person to manage the paper so he actually did that. He did a lot of work around that managing, getting things sorted out. Around that time, I was also very much involved with what was going on and the heat that was going on in the region in terms of the unbanning in South Africa of the African National Congress whose headquarters was in Lusaka.

Although the setting of vision was that of a long-term vision, there were also what were called short-term requirements which needed to be consistent with the articulated vision. FM lists some of the key things needed for the organization to move with its vision:

In real life there is nothing like long-term, short and medium vision. They do not work like that. Simply because the future is not built in the future. The future is being built today. What you consider long-term is not independent from your short-term policies.

It is the short-term policies that build the future, not the long term. The long-term policies are an extension of the short-term policies and objectives. It is like elastics – if you stretch it becomes longer. What have we gained? It is the same elastics.

MP described his experience of running a private newspaper in a one party state where most of the parastatals were state-controlled:

I started a newspaper called the *Sunday Post* in 1982. One of the problems it had was that business in Zambia was at that time dominated by the state and its parastatals. Despite promising to advertise in the newspaper, unofficially they made sure we didn't get any adverts. In short the political situation at that time could not allow for a private newspaper to prosper.

In other words it took a considerable amount of personal sacrifice, dedication and frustration, compounded by the lack of capital resources and time and the frustrations that go with a controlled economy of the country at that time. JK sums it up:

With the usual trend of a stifled press under a single party regime, the quartet felt it necessary to establish a newspaper which could accommodate objective news which was being censored by the only media present.

To enable the newspaper to achieve its goals under the then political and economical environment, the founders adopted a mission statement in February 1991 which still reads in part:

Our purpose is to produce the best quality newspaper in Zambia in order to exploit the gap in the market caused by the inadequacy of coverage of the existing press. Our audience should embrace all readers, from a business executive to a taxi driver, who

desire to be informed honestly and independently of events at home and abroad. To achieve this and to ensure that we stay ahead of our competitors, we must strive to understand what it is that readers demand of a newspaper through conducting regular market research.

#### **4.2.3 Developing and Maintaining Core Competence**

In this part of the chapter, the views of the founders are brought out as well as how they went about developing those capabilities that were critical to the business to achieve competitive advantage.

I have drawn the above theme from all of the six people interviewed. I simply reflect their understanding of the importance of maintaining the core competence of the organization in an environment with limited resources and a depressed economy like Zambia.

The founding group was highly committed and dedicated to the cause of making a difference to both the political and economic situation of the country. They were strong and convinced in their belief that they would succeed. They were not daunted by the fact that they did not have the resources in terms of equipment and people at the launch of the newspaper. FM shares the hardship he faced with the newspaper just after it was launched on July 26, 1991:

We launched the publication without adequate resource and that meant making some manoeuvres and changing the nature of management. It meant us doing most of the things including changing the size of the newspaper according to what we could handle. I also tend to feel it was good that way because if we had the money we would have gone for a huge structure with huge expenses that could not have been supported by our income levels and we would have collapsed within six months.

There was an emphasis on growth through innovation, and the focus on developing a more dynamic view of the newspaper so that it could create new knowledge through recombining existing capabilities to deter imitation. MH recalls that the founding group had to find ways of breeding knowledge amongst themselves and making use of appropriate human capital:

I think FM and I respected the fact that we each brought skills to the table: I had a journalistic background and credibility and FM had the commercial experience and status working with a major accounting firm. MP also brought important grassroots political knowledge and John was a well-respected local journalist. So together we were a good credible team and the investors liked that. It was always quite clear what roles people played and there was no confusion between the journalistic integrity of the paper and the financial imperatives.

MH acknowledges the unique experience and leadership that FM provided right from the onset and during its progression, and gives an insight:

FM obviously played a very important role in establishing strong leadership from the outset in establishing and operating the business. FM was able to draw on a wide range of experiences in business -- and more importantly contacts within the wider community -- to ensure the business got off the ground and overcame many of the initial hurdles. Without his leadership the paper would have been short-lived. Fred was able to look at the business from a holistic point of view, not through only financial terms, or journalistic terms, but he understood thoroughly the political context of what we were doing, as well as the critical success factors.

The strategic leadership was also aware of the impact on the long term sustainability of the business and the consequences that HIV could have on the organization and also in trying to protect its investment, employees through greater absenteeism and increased medical costs, reduced productivity and profitability, skills losses, redundancy and recruitment and indeed the entire society.

MH recalls some of the fundamental characteristics that enabled the transformation of the project and that motivated the survival and the prosperity of the newspapers and has a competitive advantage: He also speaks with fondness on the importance of skills, characteristics and experience that everyone brought to the organization beyond the confines of the local industry and organization understanding.

No doubt FM's leadership enabled the paper to survive and prosper. Fred understands politics very well ... and that means understanding people and how to motivate them and that was fundamental in achieving success. He led by example, maintained enthusiasm and was always willing to join in with others to get a job done ... whether driving the papers from the Copperbelt himself or writing an editorial.

#### **4.2.4 Skills and Competencies**

According to MH, the main idea was to focus attention on competencies required to achieve the vision and mission. The central idea was that over time the newspaper would develop key areas of expertise, which were believed to be distinctive to the organization and critical to its long-term growth and sustainability. The development and maintenance of core competency meant having access to a potential wide variety of markets capable of developing new products and services.

One of these critical success factors was the presence among our shareholders of some very successful local business people, several of whom were very committed members of the board of directors. Their presence was important to reassure politicians as well as provide the kind of guidance we required with respect to running the business.

In distinguishing the paper from others the founders realized there was a need to have a unique package of capabilities to resist any attempts of imitation by rivals, and FM explains the benefits:

That helped us have lower overheads in the beginning for the same income we would have gotten regardless what we had invested in the working capital and other things. The low levels of capitalisation in the newspaper made us come up with policies, approach or managing strategy to maximise the income while at the same time put a lid on some costs. That accounted for the earlier accumulation because I had to bring controls that never existed in the institution.

MP narrates the situation in relation to the competitors:

The way we looked at competing with government media was in terms of how this media reacted to us and how government itself reacted and that is what made us realize that we couldn't only be a weekly. If you remember the situation one was coming out on Tuesdays the other on Fridays. On Fridays, we could be very naughty and Tuesdays we had the capacity to respond and in the end that's what forced us to go daily. If you remember, when we went bi-weekly, the sales sort of picked up. Friday had an edge over Tuesdays though at times we would find that a very naughty edition would be Tuesdays in terms of the kind of story that provoked an establishment so that it would also boost the sales.

MP had been frustrated by the old working culture and he found that being part of *The Post* was an opportunity. He was of the opinion that the organization's central idea was that over time companies might develop key areas of expertise which were distinctive to the organization, and critical to its long-term growth – especially the critical areas of the organization where most value is added to its product.

This maintaining of a number of journalists who have grown with the newspaper has helped; that is why the newspaper is better than the others, and they understand. At least, the fact that the newspapers have maintained these people is a big plus for the newspaper. I remember there were some people who were supposed to have been fired when I was still there, in fact I saved them. They could have been fired that time but we retained them. This maintaining of a number of journalists who have grown with the newspaper has helped. That is why the newspaper is better than the others, and they understand the newspapers.

### 4.3 Accommodating and Developing Different Skills

The new workforce comprised individuals from various countries and cultures with unique and idiosyncratic value structures, meaning that there was now a need to work hard at forming a community of workers rather than individuals working for an organization. Empowerment of the workforce was vital.

All the leaders interviewed recognized that developing human capital was the most important resource in the newspaper and was thought to be a critical value in contributing to a competitive advantage. In this case the human capital represented the knowledge, skills and capabilities of each individual working for the newspaper. Fred reflected on the realities that faced the organization:

We were using clerks as managers; from the business side we could not employ a qualified accountant. We could not even employ a university graduate in business or anything with top marketing skills. At that point we had only managed to employ one graduate from the business side, Paul Kaluba, who also did not stay long. He was taken by Coca Cola. From editorial we also had problems attracting high calibre staff who wanted to develop. The existing ones who we thought were good we later realized that they were not as good as we thought. I had to do with the limited manpower that we had available and how we could utilise it. You know those that I had been developing on the editorial and they spent more time with me and tried to use them on the business side as well. It was a tight formulation. I do not know how to describe it whether it produced results or not.

Strategic leaders continuously evaluate, change, configure and leverage human capital with other characteristics including interpersonal skills and relational competence and are able to identify and be masters at developing relational competencies. The leaders had to effectively manage and translate into reality. FM gives an insight into how they were able to achieve this:

With human beings you have to nurture them, you have to transform a human being. And you cannot transform a human being in one day. A human being goes through a pot that starts boiling bit by bit and human beings become fully cooked. Some people have accused of having or..... I have heard people say I am more tolerant now than I used to be. No! I am the same me. It is only that I am dealing with a human being at a different stage of their growth and I have to exercise that patience. What is going on in me is not much. It is the organization that is changing.

MP shares these sentiments, and gives his own assessment about the newspapers:

The problem was in accounting all the things. They haven't maintained a system. This problem was not only faced by *The Post* but by all the other newspapers, where

people in printing or administration steal, the sales are theirs, the returns are the company's. I know that these problems have also been at the state-owned newspapers. The investors or shareholders are the ones who have suffered because they had invested lot of money and their money had been stolen.

Despite the above setbacks, the founders believed that the success of their organization depended on the way the employees performed and interacted with others and rolled out the product to defeat competition, and this was reflected by the person's education, experience and skills. It is for this reason that leaders realized the importance of developing human capital as one of the most important resources in order to fulfil their vision.

However they were faced with the issue of how to explore and develop it in order to create value for the firm and form the core knowledge and skills of the organization's entire workforce. MH as one of the founders was frustrated by the challenges posed by the attitude of the people working for the newspaper and the need for change in maintaining human capital and, together with others, made an effort to correct this:

We realized that good people were critical to the success of the paper and the business. We worked hard at training people who were committed and loyal, rather than trying to pay big money to people who were already established in their career. The idea was to allow people who perhaps had little experience, but who understood what we were trying to do and were committed to making it work to have a go. The founders also worked hard alongside all other employees to demonstrate our commitment.

From the beginning it was realized that the workforce was critical in that significant educational and skills upgrading investments were required. To succeed in skills upgrading it meant the workforce appreciated the opportunity to learn continuously and feel involved and encouraged to expand their knowledge base and this needed more time than expected. FM recalls the efforts they were making to achieve the task:

We had a belief in developing human beings and a lot of time was spent on developing people. Yes, there was pressure of things getting done. But that in all has not killed the spirit of developing people. Now the newspaper operates with three-quarters of our staff, a quarter is out developing themselves in terms of training and exposing themselves to different working environments. There is pressure to get everybody in the house working.

But the pressure has not blinded us from reality that is long-term survival and development and prosperity is determined by how many people you develop. Most of the managers have been developed by the newspaper in its own right not just by mere

promotion but through development in the sense of education, professional experience and exposure. So you look at *The Post* today, it is not really about the money per se. It is a product of a human factor. It is creation of humans. Things at *The Post* tend to flow spontaneously, like there is no planning but they have been planned. You have low calibre employees and managers and then you want to operate like you are top class manager. It does not work.

The strategic leadership was also aware of the dangers and impact the HIV pandemic had on the long term sustainability of the newspaper and the need to protect the well-being of its people.

We were faced with a greater problem with the well-being of our people and their families and we could not ignore the impact HIV had on the cost of keeping our people healthy; greater absenteeism, increased medical bills, reduced productivity and profitability, so on February 11, 2005 over 80 per cent of the total workforce took a voluntary HIV test. The results were highly confidential. It was also voluntary.

It was our own initiative aimed at providing support to those affected. And with the result in terms of the prevalence of the scourge, the newspaper was able to save lives and plan the future of the organization together with its people.

The newspaper was also placed in a better position.

The leaders used human capital as a significant resource in terms of forming and using competitive advantage as the organization's most unique resource. It also afforded the leaders an opportunity to achieve competitive advantage and to increase its value-creating capabilities. FM explains how they went about it:

We are developing human capital to develop our activities. We realize we have bigger challenges. There has been development of human capital and we have developed it ourselves. In the past, we would not be able to do that. I don't need to. Everybody knows when to consult me or consult others. You can confidently go to sleep knowing that good decisions are being taken in general. That's what we are developing human capital for. It is a challenge itself. We have bigger projects, which we undertake which we couldn't because we didn't have human capital even if the financial capital was there. Human capital can create financial capital.

This will involve carefully evaluating current stocks of human capital, adding and deleting human resources and relationships needed. This type of strategic leadership is crucial to the organization. FM explains:

If you don't have human capital you cannot succeed. We didn't start with financial capital, we started with human beings, few as they might have been. It was not money that created *The Post*, it was MH and me. We were not money but human

capitals. It was the human capital that sourced financial capital and created to begin something and started multiplying. For myself, I like emphasis on financial capital; I started with human capital. It was not money. So the beginning of the question is the human capital but it creates financial capital. So the buying is human, so human should be present above money. That's what has kept us going because we have placed human beings above money. That's why today we use 25% of our annual revenue on maintaining and developing staff.

#### **4.4 Change: Breaking the Culture of Resistance**

This section of the chapter discusses the effective leadership of the newspaper interaction while sustaining an effective organization culture throughout the existence of the newspaper.

One of the major challenges for the leaders in the context of sustaining an organization culture at *The Post* was the existing civil service culture type. This was mainly because of the political and cultural realities of the environment at that time in which everybody was required to operate.

The founders realized that the culture of an organization was crucial to the success of the newspaper and the common values to which people needed to subscribe collectively. It was for this reason that their focus was on how to organize and build a tight hierarchy that was highly centralised. MH explains how they initially went about this:

One of the critical principles to establish from the beginning was that everyone worked for the good of the business. Everyone had a role and no-one went home until the job was done. That meant journalists working through the night and the next morning to finish the production. Accounts department working up to midnight putting together management accounts for both board and management meetings.

It was for this reason that the founders and strategic leaders acknowledged and appreciated the importance of organizational culture, understanding how the culture of public and private organizations differed, and they were able to apply the knowledge in nurturing behaviours within their own sphere of influence that would maximise the success in the achievement of the goals of their organization.

The leaders in this case needed to deal with the complex set of ideologies, symbols and core values, which needed to be shared throughout the organization to provide the context within which strategies are formulated and implemented. It mainly had to do with decisions, actions, communication patterns and communication networks. There were inherent difficulties with

defining organizational culture because of the deeply embedded nature of culture existing at that time, as mentioned earlier. In a sense, the newspaper needed leaders' abilities to understand the organization's needs and the nature of realities, as FM recalls:

We had an extravagant culture from people we recruited from state-controlled organizations with low productivity levels. It was the general culture in the country at that time. Since the newspaper was privately owned and people heard of big names as being the shareholders and they were hoping they had pumped in a lot of money which jump-started the newspaper. To convince such people was not easy.

I had to bring controls that never existed in the institution. It became difficult. I had to work with journalists who came from an undisciplined background and both editors and managers at that time did not help with things – they did not share the problems in the vision and so forth. All that they wanted was to do their job and the resources they needed, which were not forthcoming. That nearly destabilised us.

So I started realizing that if I did not assert myself on the editorial side, the paper was not going to survive. I accelerated the deeper understanding and involvement of editorial issues. But you cannot involve yourself in the project that you do not understand and process that you do not know. If you do not know it creates a deeper problem.

With a newspaper business environment predominantly controlled and owned by the state, the negotiated solutions for the running of the newspaper become a priority. MH elaborates:

The monthly board meetings were also critical: they created a sense of accountability to the shareholders right from the beginning. We were very determined to be as transparent as possible in terms of making sure the board knew what was going on and they were ready to help us because they could see we were very committed to sharing any problems/issues with them. The staff also saw our commitment and openness.

The culture of the organization was crucial to the success of the newspaper and there was a need for everybody to understand, monitor and actively manage the culture of the organization. This entailed the acceptance of responsibilities for a number of things. FM explains how they went about it:

For a culture to thrive there has to be a clear sense of what is right and what is wrong. What is tolerant and intolerant? So it was important that key staff participated in the development of those values. Although this could have been championed by one individual it was important everybody participated and contributed to the values and make the ideal appeal to everybody.

And people start to use them as their own ideas and practices and values. They need to feel the sense of pride and dignity in that. Culture is evolving all the time.

It was necessary for the leader to demonstrate the ability to assess and form the basis of the creation of the group values that would in turn manifest in external patterns of behaviour and mould organizational culture. According to FM the behaviour by subordinates helped to achieve group success and attainment of organization objectives.

I think for all our problems today, we have a much higher and deeper sense of a good working culture now than before. That might sound contradictory for somebody who has been longer at *The Post*; there is tendency to think that *The Post* had such a high culture all along since its inception. No.

During the initial stages there was no culture; it was a culture with selected individuals but today, 15 years later, I can say that there are now many people with such values, ideas and characteristics than we have ever had. There are more people who think like me at *The Post* than ever before. If one has to evaluate things today, I will think that *The Post* has had now highest culture today than before. There are more people working more and thinking like me at *The Post* than ever before.

It is widely acknowledged that *The Post* had its own distinct personality and way of doing things right from its inception. The employees love their work and believe that nothing is impossible.

JK remembers some of the methods employed to deal with the high level of theft in what is termed as the “crisis period” between 1998 and 2002 when employees went for four months without salaries.

The newspaper experienced a sudden slump in copy sales. A committee involving all key departments from management, printing, marketing and security departments was formed with a mandate of looking into the problem of declining sales.

Although the problem was addressed, however it was noted that it was due to the manner the company was being run i.e. where FM was expected to supervise nearly all departments and could reverse whatever decision a manager would make, meant that the managers had to wait for FM’s directive. But this problem exposed a number of weakness in the managing of the newspaper. It provided a chance for both management and mere members of staff to jointly address the high levels of pilfering and save the company from collapse.

FM shares the experience during the crisis period, when the employees displayed characteristics of honesty, loyalty and hard work:

Employees spoke about it very proudly and stayed on because we were open about the cash flow problems the organization was going through. We did not have that culture. As management and leaders we had to do certain things to hold on to people. We

came up with certain types of leadership styles that had not been practiced in this institution before. We started having weekly open meetings with all members of staff.

It was during that time when everything was open for discussion at those meetings because I realized that there was going to be a bigger danger. The challenges were bigger, including the commitment requirement from people. We were asking people to forego certain things that they had legal rights to. You needed to convince them through their participation as well.

Should we pay salaries this week or pay for newsprint? Should we pay for that or that which we thought it was fair to do when we are using other people's resources. You have to call them into play and show them the basics. If you can get your money today the consequences are these, the disadvantages or benefits are these. If you get your money after a month you will suffer this way but this will be this further payment. That is the way we operated.

Together with the open-plan workplaces, it created an environment conducive to communication and conversation, which stimulated creation and innovative idea. FM explains:

Anyone who went through that period benefited in one way or another. Their lives are far much better than those who left and collected benefits. I can demonstrate that these were benefits to that critical period. People decided to forego their salaries today for a better tomorrow, it paid off.

According to FM it all had to do with engaging and meeting employees to provide and discuss problems, including communicating to them directly and instilling a passion for the organization.

To attain the culture we have today wasn't accidental. It was a well thought product and its development had been thought out. We presented as a culture through some democratic mechanism and mind conditioning of some sort.

One of the driving forces was the competitive aggressiveness of the firm's propensity to take action that allowed it to consistently and substantially out-perform its rivals. This was contained in the mission statement and read in part:

...to ensure that we stay ahead of our competitors, we must strive to understand what it is that readers demand of a newspaper through conducting regular market research.

The existence of the newspaper involved courage and risk taking and belief in one's conviction and the energy to work hard even in difficult circumstances, including the imprisonment of some of the staff. JKK, who was a reporter, recalls the difficulties and

harassment he went through with others:

The staff were frequently harassed, threatened and even detained in overcrowded police cells where malaria and TB are common. The newspaper was also threatened with 50 lawsuits. FM and others faced more than 100 years in jail. Issues of the newspaper were banned or confiscated. The printing press was stopped several times and the editorial office also raided by Police and pro-MMD supporters and cadres.

*The Post*, which was launched with a circulation of up to 40,000 copies, had dropped to less than 10,000.

#### **4.5 Effective Leadership at *The Post* Today**

The existence of the newspaper was characterised by radical, complex and fast changes barely 10 years after its first edition. The future was further complicated by the immense volatility, sensitivity and political and economical turmoil of the country. It also meant coping with the political pressure and harassment together with increasing presence of international publication. MP shares his experience during that time:

It took *The Post* almost 10 years to mature and from 1998 the newspaper had a lot of cash flow problems leading to difficulties in procuring newsprint and other input materials. From its inception the newspaper relied for most of its income on copy sales. Advertising was minimal. That year, if you remember, the reporters were not even being paid and so on. We had admissions from FM to the Board indicating that we would close by March 2000 if nothing was done. The first serious problem was the harassment from ZRA early in 2000. They needed to be paid K25 million immediately.

I was on the MISA Board and *The Post* Board, so Media Institution of Southern Africa (MISA) Zambia chapter was able to raise money and loan the newspapers with the view that it would be repaid. The arrangement was that once paid back, other media can use it as a revolving fund. Those milestones helped ensure the newspaper survived. The newspaper started again to grow after 2001 when a new government came into power and it was during the election period when the Electoral Commission had no choice but to use all media to advertise. It grew and matured especially after the 2001 elections because during the run-up to the elections, we were able to source advertising directly from the Electoral Commission and immediately after because of the change in political leadership and when Mwanawasa assumed the issue of corruption, *The Post* produced more to carry out that role and that's why right now, business-wise it is better than the government newspapers, business-wise.

It meant the founders being faced with the critical roles and functions of improving performance and quality, increase output, and promote pride of accomplishment by integrating and linking personal and organizational goals under unfavourable conditions.

MH remembers how the organization business strategy was linked to the future as an

extension of the present, providing the freedom to act quickly and the ability to remain detached from the unnecessary detail.

Obviously this was the result of the changing political mood at the time. When you are building a business you need to anticipate growth and respond to opportunities when they arise. I think it was critical that we decided to establish our own printing operation. This made us less reliant on the government-owned presses. We started with Apple Macs on a network, so that made production relatively easy and cheap ... we didn't require huge outlay on technology. With only a few computers we were probably the first paper in Zambia to use desktop publishing technology to produce a national newspaper.

As the newspaper grew, it also became too complex for the leaders to manage directly, especially in a turbulent and risky environment like Zambia, as was the case. It institutionalized everything throughout the management system, meaning that everybody at all levels owned and was involved in executing the change efforts. FM remembers:

It is easier to have internal control when the organization is small, employing 10 to 15 people. The more people you employ and features you add, the more difficult the nature of control becomes. When you are a small group, the controls are personal relation; you may not need to define the rules because rules become assimilated. As we grow the organization becomes complex and the time required assimilating people is reduced.

The direct contacts and interactions I used to have with most employees had been reduced. It becomes more difficult because there was no opportunity to do that until when contradiction started creeping in and emerging. Later things started coming out. The fights between the old and the new started to become visible.

Double standards started to emerge; there was too much bending backwards among the old employees when they dealt with each other as compared with the new entrants. The new ones were dealt with in a formal way and they did not have any problems. So contradictions start to emerge. There was a fight between a formal and informal which one could not resolve one day. You develop to a certain level patience of things because you are dealing with human behaviours and different from machines.

Strategic leadership now focused on results and achievements and not on power and authority, together with effective communication and problem-solving, and selection of the right people. FM explains how they dealt with the issue:

And along the way I realized there was need to put controls in various organs of the company. We increased the number of management meetings, increased meetings within departments themselves; we came up with staff committees. And I slowly gave away my powers to those organs. What I remained to work with was authority not

powers. Look I don't fire and hire people but I certainly enjoy a lot of authority at *The Post*. We are now getting into the rail of not using power but authority. It started with me shedding off my powers. There is no culture of pushing or bullying people. Those who want to rely on power are finding it difficult to work. It's easier to acquire power because it can be given within a minute by just one sentence, but authority is not easy to acquire and it is the most enjoyable form of power. That is what we are starting to use at *The Post*. We are using authority.

FM discusses the implementation of strategic change, which required melding of empowering people with new technology and re-engineering the business process. The efforts needed founders and the managers to possess the capacity to learn and adapt to change.

*The Post* takes advantage of every opportunity that arises, even if it means suspending and delaying of salaries to mobilise resources. It does not matter if even if people cry, the reputation of *The Post* will not be in tatters. If it weren't for that we would not have any reputation today. The opportunities we have today may not be there tomorrow. If there is an opportunity here to borrow money and expand we utilise it because tomorrow it may be not there but you guard against corruption or being blackened. Therefore, in this way that is what has kept us going – the ability to continuously renew ourselves. It is difficult to compete with *The Post* because it changes every day. It comes up with a new initiative everyday. We are continuously building; we are continuously seeing innovation, sometimes it has been too much for some of our members of staff to keep up with the pace and some fall out in the process.

In concluding the interview FM summaries the current strategic leadership at the newspaper and uses himself as a leading example:

Today is mainly taking strategic decisions that may be visible to another person. It has helped to see far ahead. But skills and knowledge are nothing if you are not willing to hard working at the same time and the determination to overcome problems. I was not deterred by many challenges we faced. We faced formidable challenges that actually could have seen the paper close. I think to an extent appropriate leadership was provided at each particular time and at every time.

The way we managed the paper in 1991 was different from the way we managed in 1992/2001 and to the way I am managing the paper today. There was time a when you had to command with little explanation. But people as they develop you become democratic and more accommodating and engaging but you have to weigh what type of people you have. People tend to take the dogmatic approach. You have low calibre employees and managers and then you want to operate like you are a top class manager. It does not work.

You take circumstances as they appeal. Of course people come with stereotype, that is if issues are managed that way, if people are taken that way the difference between a manager and merely staff is this way. We defined by the characters both your abilities as a manager and as those of staff and the resources available. You combine all these

and come up with a leadership style. If you have highly intelligent people you cannot lead them by command you lead them by discussion. If they have no capacity you lead them by directives. So, I think the approach worked well and at most stages we had the belief of mobilisation.

The leadership is very different – totally different – it is not like the leadership that you pick up from the book. It is the leadership that is based on political values and very well founded. It is a leadership that is also acknowledgeable. By this I mean it is the leadership that knows where to get knowledge and formation. Leadership that is willing to learn continuously to develop.

Thirdly, it is the leadership that is willing to do everything, anything, at anytime and anywhere, in short a totally hands-on leadership.

Let me get into the leadership details: I think the leadership at *The Post* has lived within its own limitation and possibilities and because of that it has not exaggerated its capacity. It is well read and exposed. It is a leadership that has been to all parts of the country and has fair knowledge of the country. We have a rich background in terms of culture. We understand the peasant's background not from one area but from all over.

We have people with strong working backgrounds. We have an upper class as well. It is a leadership that has confidence and can transact in any place in this country. It can be poor with a lot of confidence. This has enabled us to take on anybody. I have dealt with the most richest, most pompous and proud and I can deal with them. The other aspect is the international dimension. Before and after the launch of the newspapers those who were involved in *The Post* were people who had some international exposure. They had been to many countries and cultures. They had the ability to take on any anybody in those cultures, lower or higher.

So two dimensions gave *The Post* that confidence, sense of dignity and pride even if the paper was coping well or not, it was a confident product. That stayed even in the members of staff because the leadership was confident. The issue of knowledge even at basic level, the combination of deep political, business knowledge, is it financial understanding is always being continuously upgraded and does not lag behind.

It makes the newspaper an intelligent product because of the hands-on leadership. In fact when we try to alter that we believe total failures when we wanted clerks to do certain things. Look at the classified section of the advertising when we wanted to use clerks to sort it out, we failed for years because we wanted to do that. But we mobilized ourselves at the top level and went for it. We got it at no time something we have failed for years. Look at the small details, even small things like landscaping; shaping up the place it was due at the highest level.

Ten years after leaving the newspapers MP gives his own overview and opinion of the leadership of the newspapers today noting some of its achievement and failures:

I think there has been a lot of training among the staff to the extent that you now have an in-house lawyer. It shows the fact that we need lawyers who could defend us and

the fact many people have maintained by the paper, it is a big plus for the newspaper. This maintaining of a number of journalists who have grown with the newspaper has helped that is why the newspaper is better than the others, and they understand.

MP reveals his experience during his ten years' tenure and shares his thoughts about the leadership at the newspapers at present despite being away for more than five years:

In the end leadership was concentrated in one person and no one could do anything without FM knowing.

At one time, the newspaper hid from the fact that they had problems which were supposed to be discussed. It is very important because they provide you with effective leadership. Problems of communication have been there at the newspaper from the inception.

The newspaper has problems in the accounts, printing and circulation departments. You haven't maintained a system. This problem is faced not only by *The Post* but by all the other newspapers.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The above data has provided an insight or an account of what transpired in the creation and development as seen by the research participants. To ensure that these research findings were told in a life experience and celebration, I sought to present a coherent and interpretative summary of the research findings.

The next chapter will discuss and interpret some important findings in light of the literature discussed in the second chapter and the data.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DATA INTERPRETATION

### 5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented data about the perceptions and experiences of the founders of the newspapers and others besides the founders who were involved in its creation and development.

In this chapter, I provide an interpretation of what transpired with reference to research goals, and question the relationship between the data collected from the my participants, and the literature on strategic leadership.

The chapter is arranged in line with the major themes identified in the data analysis section, and I seek to critically analyze and synthesise the experience of the founders of the strategic leadership in the creation and development of *The Post*.

My research goals have been to use the roles that various constituent elements of strategic leadership have played in the success of *The Post* since its inception 15 years ago. This was done as follows: firstly, to describe the influence of strategic leadership and the impact it has had on the creation of the newspaper; secondly, to recognize the success factors in the strategic leadership of the founders; and lastly, to identify and evaluate the critical factors in the strategic leadership within the organization.

The understandings were arrived at under various themes as captured in the previous chapter and the chapter has been organized around the following themes drawn from both the literature and analysis of the data:

- 1 Plotting the direction and success through vision,
- 2 Getting the best out of people: Unleashing the human spirit,
- 3 Accepting the need to change, and
- 4 Hands-on leadership.

In evaluating the relevance of these theories, it is easy to commit the error of viewing them as hermetically complete expositions of the nature of strategic leadership rather than appreciating that they are simply new, and possibly more appropriate.

## **5.2 Plotting the Direction for Success through the Vision**

Since its early days in July 1991, the founders had a vision for the newspaper “to be the market leader” (Post Newspaper Ltd., 1991) because the paper’s leadership was aware that the critical mass represented by such an organization could serve as a viable market for *The Post* as a product. The founders, according to the data, wanted to produce the best quality newspaper in Zambia.

From the data there is no doubt that *The Post* has grown significantly over the past 15 years. It is also evident from the data that it is a confident business undertaking and riding high on the support of many readers and well-wishers. With a print run of between 35,000 and 40,000 (Post Newspaper Ltd., 2005) copies every day printed by their own modern printing press, the newspaper now boasts 80 per cent sales records and enjoys more than 54 per cent of the market share with the improved quality of printing (Banda, 2004).

At least 70 per cent of the newspaper income comes from circulation, a factor the data reveals has been difficult to alter over the last 12 years.

As can be learned from the research respondent, the strategic leadership was also aware of the need to be able to identify its target market, and in this case, they embraced all readers, from business executives to taxi drivers, who desired to be informed honestly and independently of events at home and abroad. According to the data, to be able to achieve the above, the founders made sure that *The Post* stayed ahead of their competitors and strove to understand what it was that readers demanded of a newspaper through conducting regular market research.

There were numerous local and foreign publications registered and on the market when *The Post* was launched in 1991, and in 2002 there were more than 137 publications, both newspapers and magazines registered. *The Post* is still publishing by capitalising on its strength and courage to ensure continued positive performance to pursue the newspaper vision, according to the data.

The general impression from the data presented in the previous chapter is that the newspaper operates in an unhealthy economic environment, meaning stiff competition for whatever little

business there is in advertising or otherwise – it is survival of the fittest. There are high poverty levels, of over 85 per cent, due to the weak purchasing power of the Zambian currency (Kwacha).

The founding members of the newspaper had the opportunity to dream and brainstorm in articulating a long-term vision (Hitt & Ireland, 1999) of the newspaper to assist in the creation and development of the newspaper, and this assisted in understanding in essence the long-term vision for the newspaper. This is evident from the data when the founders spent countless hours working on the vision and the projected cash flows of the newspaper to make sure that the newspaper could be sustained for a long time and at the same time provide an insight into the direction of the newspaper.

The research respondent was aware that only a business with a strong sense of mission enjoys a long-lasting success. This was evidenced by a blueprint of how they intended to go about achieving the vision through what they called the Mission Statement and Editorial Policy (see Appendix II) adopted in February 1991, six months before the paper was launched.

The founders were equally aware of the dynamics governing the market they were going to operate in and how it could best be used to the business advantage of the paper. This was demonstrated through the identification of opportunities that identify the competitive advantage that one has over the other and that enjoy a lasting success.

The founders made sure that in formulating their long term vision they stayed ahead of their rivals and ensured that their business remained in the forefront of development in line with what Bennis (1990a) writes that leaders “manage the dream”.

The adoption of the mission statement and the editorial policy by the founders meant that the blueprint could then provide the destination and guidance to the running and sustainability of the newspapers. This was to ensure that the core values were preserved to stimulate progress and growth in future even if there was change in operations or strategy (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001).

The respondents felt that providing the picture of the vision of the newspapers motivated the people to be part and share the vision to realize it and which Sergiovanni (1990) describes as

bonding to share the sets of values and commitment for a common cause. The chosen vision meant that it served as an envisioned future and a guide in many aspects of its operations, strategic and other implementing processes. It is acknowledged that some of the biggest challenges were how they were going to deal with employees, leadership and the organization design. It also meant the promotion of loyalty to the organization amongst employees.

It is clear from the participants that they knew what the newspaper stood for. The impact of the chosen strategy also meant that the action was going to be determined by the constant presence and essence of the vision that kept everybody moving despite various forces of resistance, fear of failure, and real hardships such as practical difficulties or problems in the industry and the country in general.

This is illustrated by the respondents' resistance to political and economical harassment that the newspaper and its staff have been threatened with, which included charges of treason and threats of imprisonment. Other hostilities cited are:

- 1 Frequent visitations from the country revenue authorities on account of defaulting relating to PAYE, VAT and corporate taxes while a blind eye was cast on the state-owned media like the *Zambia Daily Mail* and *Times of Zambia*.
- 2 The planting of a state agent to cripple the newspaper in any form.

The newspaper vision was also faced with many gaps especially regarding policy development and implementation. All the founders admitted that it took a long time before the vision could be installed into the followers, as Bennis (1990b) refers to as: "to manage the team" as the strategic leadership was at times faced with hostility by the state and unreasonable demands from the workers during its initial stages.

For the strategic leadership, it meant paying attention to the people who were being led, for them to gain clues as to what was needed in terms of the intended outcomes in achieving the vision. This was described by Bennis (1990b) as "creating a compelling vision that takes people to another stage" because everyone worked for the good of the organization and was determined to succeed.

The findings also highlighted what four of the participants described as the desire of their

vision to act as the one being out in front of people, leading the way, showing them where to go and how to get there. The vision of the newspapers acted as a force and compelled everyone to action and gave it a purpose to become more goal-directed. (Bennis, 1990a).

As MH explains, to create the future the founders created a vision that had meaning and significance. To achieve their vision they made sure that the vision was fixed with the business strategies, and practices were ever-changing according to the environment pertaining at a particular time (Collins & Porras, 1996) and they strove to understand what their readers demanded of the newspaper through conducting regular market surveys.

While the newspaper has grown significantly and is considered a successful entity, there is general acknowledgement from the participants that it lacks sound management structures that could support the vision embraced by the employees. They have all admitted this as being a fetter in the efforts of continuity, as Hellriegel et al. (2004) say “leadership is a process of developing ideas and a vision, influencing others to embrace them in their own behaviour”.

From the above illustration, it is also evident that the efforts needed a higher sense of commitment, courage and time to make sure the newspaper succeeded in its vision. The consistency was in the pursuit of their long-term vision. Despite operating under difficult conditions, it has earned the paper high credibility.

The general feeling from the respondents in describing the paper in its 15 years of publishing, is that *The Post* can be said to be a mature newspaper – three years of weekly, two years of bi-weekly, eight years of five days a week and almost two years of seven days – something that cannot be overlooked in terms of experience. All the respondents agree that the presence of the long-term vision has kept everybody moving and determined to achieve their goal despite various forces and real hardships.

### **5.3 Getting the Best out of People: Unleashing the Human Spirit**

#### *5.3.1 Breeding Knowledge amongst Themselves*

Among the most important dimensions identified in the literature review was Bartlett and Ghoshal’s (1995, p. 132) postulation that the biggest challenge with strategic leadership within any organization is the ability to get the best out of its people. The literature reviewed

in the second chapter emphasises the move towards leadership that focuses more on people than on process: leadership that is able to unleash the human spirit and their values.

The newspaper's central idea, according to the research respondent, was that over time *The Post* would be able to develop key areas of expertise which were distinctive to the organization and critical to its long-term objectives. The maintaining of journalists for a longer period, and other staff who have grown with the newspapers, became crucial to getting the best out of the people working for the organization.

One of the most important insights to the nature of strategic leadership by the participants was the need for mutually supportive relations with other important players within the organization, and this thread runs through many themes identified in the data on the importance of "relying on the connection with other people" (Goleman et al., 2002, p. 7). This is reflected in the emphasis and importance that participants attached to each one's knowledge and skills brought to the newspaper. It is also clear that a formidable team was formed in driving the newspaper's vision. The research respondent went as far as demonstrating the fact that within their shareholding structure, board, and managers, they had successful businessmen, and this served as a unique capability.

According to the data, the feeling is that each one of them brought in some unique experience and leadership but it is FM who is identified with the transformation because of his strong leadership, holistic understanding of the business, and contact with the outside business world, which was identified as a critical success factor to the development of the newspaper.

It is also the understanding of the research participants that reflect the importance of having to concentrate on the unique package of capabilities to resist competition by rivals through the continuous process of retaining, by maintaining and training, the existing employees. This was also extended to the product and its being unique when it became the first newspaper to be printed in full colour in Zambia.

The above important insight of the data was an emphasis on growth of the newspaper through innovation and the focus to develop a more dynamic view of the newspaper that could create new knowledge through recombining existing capabilities to deter imitation, as is the case when the newspaper capitalises on the strength of its employees and their interest. This is

demonstrated by the fact that the organization has a youthful and skilled workforce that is ready to change, and the willingness to learn and perfect whatever roles and duties they were engaged to do made it much easier for the newspaper to drive itself to success.

From the above, it is clear that the founders were aware of the ever-changing economy. They saw the importance attached to knowledge of workers, and were aware that talent and other non-tangible capital were driving corporate value with the competitive strength of companies and were not tied to physical assets or resources, but to the intellectual attributes of their knowledge workers (Campbell, 2004).

The research participants spoke frequently about the need for core competence but the important insight was that of FM's amazing knowledge of how to motivate people through leading by example, and his continuous maintenance of people as suggested by Goleman (1998). MH also saw the importance of a combination of skills, knowledge, abilities, and experience with a consistent structure and rating scale to measure skill levels of individuals within the organization.

According to the data there was no clear job identification and description as everybody was expected to do anything at any time when called upon.

### 5.3.2 *People Critical To Success*

From the beginning the founders realized that the workforce was critical and that significant education and continuous learning was needed. A lot of time was spent developing and training a number of employees. At the time of the research *The Post* was operating with three-quarters of its staff (including the writer) away developing themselves in training and exposing themselves to different working environments.

The findings also point to the fact that most of its managers and editors have been developed by the newspaper itself – not by mere promotion but through development in the sense of professional education and experience. The approach has kept the newspaper going in that 25 per cent of the annual revenue is spent on maintaining and developing human capital.

The respondents were also quick to agree to the fact that the newspaper was created by the presence of human capital because it was human capital that sourced financial capital to

begin something which in turn started multiplying. There is no doubt from the above data that strategic leadership realizes that the people hold the key to an organization's success.

Attention was also drawn to the fact that human capital was critical to the success of any organization because it was central to everything involved in creating and developing an organization.

The findings also illustrate that the viability of the newspaper had as much to do with the people the newspaper employed because of factors like loyalty and how motivated they were as it has to do with business strategy and how the people working for the newspaper stood by it in times of difficulty and harassment from the State.

For all the founders it meant carefully evaluating current stocks of human capital, both in terms of adding and deleting human resources and relationships needed, and this is shown by the fact that the newspaper had a very high turnover of employees during its beginning stages. This type of strategic leadership is crucial to the organization (Hitt et al., 2005).

In the same manner, all the research participants recognized the importance of this trait and they were committed and dedicated to the newspaper during its initial stages despite it not having resources in terms of equipment. MH adds:

The founding group had to find ways of breeding knowledge amongst themselves and exploit effectively appropriate core competencies and human capital.

Some of the respondents recognized how *The Post* managed to create a closely-knit team who were committed to the ideals and survival of the newspaper. In this case, strategic leadership allowed its employees to express their full selves through their work and transform the organization in their own unique way.

The founders realized that people were critical to the success of the paper and the business and worked hard training them to provide some level of loyalty and commitment. The founders believe that the success of the newspaper was hugely dependent on the way the employees performed and interacted through their experience, education and skills.

They all become obsessed with the development of the human resource that was available at

the newspaper by investing in them through training and developing them. The founders realized the untapped ability that existed in the newspaper. Recruiting, training and retaining the best employees is evident as *The Post* is now paying great attention to the training of staff – not only media skills but also other fields such as law, economics and politics, and this has further enhanced the quality of the newspaper and its ability to engage in serious local and international discourse.

The emphasis on human capital in organizations reflects the view that market value depends less on tangible resources than on intangible ones, particularly human resources.

#### **5.4 Breaking the Culture of Resistance**

Among some of the important constituent elements of strategic leadership identified in the literature review chapter was the sustaining of an effective organization culture. From the data, it is apparent that the research participants identified and understood the problem of the existing culture at the time of the creation and during the developmental stages of the newspaper which they termed as “extravagance” on the part of employees.

FM acknowledged the difficulties with the general culture in the country at the time of the transformation from a one party state to that of plural politics. The situation was further complicated by the fact that there were no planned operations to ensure that staff were inculcated in the company’s vision and mission. They all admit that the absence of an organizational structure brought serious conflict among the people working, and expected to work, for the newspaper.

It was worsened by the fact that some of the country’s richest people were linked to the formation and shareholding structure of the newspaper, which created an impression that the newspaper was being formed with a lot of resources, especially money, to spend in terms of salaries and what goes with them.

In fact, according to the research participants, the paper was launched without adequate resources, meaning the right number of people could not be employed, and all participants agreed that the newspaper could only sustain 15 employees.

The situation was complicated by the fact there was a culture of “extravagance”. The people

recruited to work for the new privately-owned newspaper were all from State-owned enterprises, with very low productivity and income, and heavily subsidised by the State, which made it difficult for anyone to be able to recognize and appreciate the difference in culture between the public and private organizations (Schraeder et al., 2005, pp. 494-5).

It was also apparent that a very difficult environment existed where the newspaper was expected to operate because the media industry was predominantly controlled and owned by the State. This was the reason that in creating and developing the newspaper, sustaining an organizational culture became a priority and a big challenge to what was expected from everyone for the good of the organization.

The founders also acknowledged and took notice of the importance of the existing environment at the time and appreciated the difference in culture between private and public organizations with the few people they had employed. When they started developing them, they made it a priority that everybody worked for the good of the organization.

Since there were low levels of capitalisation, strategic leadership of the newspapers came up with policies or approaches or managing strategies to maximise income while at the same time limiting costs.

The impression gleaned from the interviews with the situation highlighted above, especially regarding FM and MH, was that they encountered the issue of changing the culture, and were forced to bring in controls that did not previously exist in the organization.

An experience as portrayed above by all the participants was the frustration of how to deal with the undisciplined culture of extravagance that the newspapers had adopted and that nobody wanted to share the vision, and especially that the resources were not available.

However, in the process the newspaper had also engaged in developing what they called a “youthful and skilled workforce” which was ready to change through their willingness to learn and perfect whatever roles they were engaged in. The founders acknowledge that the changes had not been smooth as presented in the previous chapter, the workforce now had to remain flexible with the strategic leadership of the newspaper.

Sustaining an organization culture has played a crucial role in the creation and development of the newspaper to take advantage and fully explore opportunities towards the success of the newspaper.

The implication from the data gathered was that any employee of the newspaper could be called upon to work at any time and to put in their best to ensure survival – through various threats listed in the last chapter.

### **5.5 The Hands-on Leadership at *The Post***

The understanding of the research participants is that in the last ten years, *The Post* has gone through a lot of development and expansion as part of the transformation process. The participants point to the fact that the workforce has increased from a mere 15 people when the newspaper started to more than 270 by the end of 2006 (Post Newspapers, 2005).

This pride, according to the data, is based on what has become a strong business empire because as a company, *The Post* has diversified and invested in real estate that includes houses to ensure that *The Post* continues to publish even in times of economic adversity.

To drive this kind of development further the newspaper had to reorganize staffing, and a recruitment approach with the emphasis on a certain level of education and rare skills is a departure from the situation where “clerks were asked to perform duties of a manager”.

One of the beliefs learned from the data was that the performance and survival of a newspaper depended on the kinds of people the newspaper employed, whether in editorial production, advertising, or corporate branding. The skill, the experience, the charisma and the passion that some people bring to a newspaper can contribute greatly towards the “branding” of such a newspaper or magazine.

The data also articulates that, as a result of the increased workforce with new entries into the newspaper, it was evident that there was a need to create an interaction between the founders and among employees. Double standards started creeping in while the fights between the old and the new employees became visible.

Monthly staff meetings were introduced and management meetings were also increased from

once to twice weekly. The strategy was meant to increase productivity through employee motivation, teamwork, constant interaction with top leadership and commitment by the staff. The introduction of the meetings ensures that there are structures for maximum staff participation in the policies and decisions made by the Board and management.

The data shows that the introduction of the meetings meant that everything in terms of running of the organization was open for discussion. The newspaper was faced with bigger challenges and needed the commitment of its employees. This commitment was demonstrated by the fact that none of *The Post* staff went on strike, not even when they were not paid for three months. This happened when the paper was going through “the crisis period” from 1998 to 2000. The viability of a newspaper has as much to do with motivated staff as it has to do with a good business strategy.

The data also points to the fact that strategic leadership needed to touch the hearts and minds of all the people and at the same time to create a corporate soul to transform the company into communities of committed people.

The literature in the second chapter recognises the fact that for an institution like the newspaper wanting to compete effectively with others it needed a strategic leadership that must inspire followers, and deal individually with subordinates, to meet their developmental needs and encourage new methods of problem solving (Carrell et al., 1997). From the data, the research participants recognized that for the changing environment and challenges, the newspaper needed to start exploiting opportunities to the fullest through spiritual, emotional, psychological and material resources available in the organization and its employees for its continuous existence.

The previous chapter also points out that it was critical that the newspaper build some kind of enduring institutional image, both to protect itself and to project an image of institutional solidity to the general public. This image was created through the introduction of a free *Educational Supplement*, with the aim of attracting a whole horde of students, pupils, teachers and others to the newspaper, thus further boosting its sales.

The data showed that when newspaper organizations become too large and complex for any one executive or senior team to manage directly, the responsibility had to be shared

throughout the management system. The management of the paper was restructured, systems and controls in the organization were revamped and, as stated in the previous chapter, the business side of the newspaper hinged on three top executives who acted as the chief business strategists.

From the data it is a well-known fact that the developments meant that strategic leadership was also faced with new challenges of managing the newspaper's investment portfolio, people management and the challenges of improving performance and maintaining quality.

An international and regional network was established by means of participation and collaboration with media bodies. The data also points out that the newspaper has since benefited from the strategic relationship with international and regional bodies, which has greatly assisted the circulation of the paper, as well as the signing up of advertising contracts with big clients.

From the data it is clear that *The Post* presents a story of an enduring publication in times of political, financial, social and other adversities. There are no illusions about the success of the publication even from the previous chapter because it is *The Post* that enjoys international recognition by becoming the founder member of MISA-Zambia, the *Zambian* chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA).

In the literature, it was noted that the challenge of effective leadership was not simply the creation of a new system, but also institutionalizing the new approach necessary to achieve organization objectives. This is cited in the data on the measures taken by the leadership. According to the data, the approach is referred to by FM as "Hands-on leadership". In its current structure, the paper has a three-member board of directors that "meets regularly".

Working under the Managing Director is a management team that analyzes the problems facing the paper, and seeks solutions to them. In addition, each department has a daily meeting that ensures maximum participation of each member of staff regarding the decisions of the company.

The research findings point towards an understanding that effective leadership is drawn to the challenges of transformation with a sense of adventure. There is the desire to fully seize an

opportunity and move on to some new and challenging ones, as FM explained: “*The Post* takes opportunities that arise even if it means suspending and delaying salaries to mobilize resources because the opportunities we have today may not be there tomorrow”.

According to FM, despite its limitations the leadership is knowledgeable and is always in the process of continuously renewing, developing and learning and at the same time willing to do anything, at any time, regardless of their position.

The insight into the data shows that in the transformation process, the founders were aware of the change process which needed constant re-thinking. Steps of progress are celebrated and people are rewarded differently depending on the audience and those involved in the change process. This is evident in the data in which mentioned the inception of classified advertising.

From the data, it is seen that the founders started creating and building capacity by identifying and developing their core competencies and values. The combined purpose, human potential and increased capacity shows an inter-connectedness to match up with the growing demands of the organization. This is evident by the description given by FM in the data when he gave up most of the powers meant for the strategic leadership.

The data also points out that the newspaper’s strategic leadership was also aware of the impact of the HIV pandemic, especially through greater absenteeism, increased medical costs, reduced productivity and profitability, skills losses, redundancy and recruitment. The newspaper embarked on an awareness programme which assisted *The Post* to plan the future of the employees and the company.

Over the years, *The Post* seems to have built a strong financial base. In many ways, this could be attributable to the lessons learnt during the “crisis period”.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have attempted to make sense of the insight and understanding of certain constituents of strategic leadership in the creation and development of the newspaper over the last 15 years offered by the participants. I have also reflected on the themes that were identified in such a way as to use the literature review to best address my research goals.

I have sought to probe the phenomenon of strategic leadership through the examination of six agents involved and their experience of the strategic leadership in the creation and development of the newspaper.

In the concluding chapter that follows, I summarise my findings, assess their potential value and address their potential limitations.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This concluding chapter seeks to summarise the main findings of the research. It also examines the potential value of my case study, detailing certain recommendations for strategic leadership practices and setting out some possible avenues for further research on Strategic Leadership. Finally, I conclude with some limitations of my study.

### **6.2 Summary of the Main Findings of the Research**

The understandings of the research participants point towards the need to recognize the importance of strategic leadership in the creation, development and success of a private newspaper.

The main findings are expressed in the following four themes:

#### *6.2.1 Plotting the Direction for Success through the Vision*

Strategic leaders have the ability to make a strong case for the creation and development of an organization through their sense of what support will be required to ensure the realization of their vision.

#### *6.2.2 Getting the Best out of People: Unleashing the Human Spirit*

Strategic Leaders knows that the quality of people is the most important key to successful organization development. They also know that demeaning, demoralizing or destroying their valuable human resources will be counter-productive. They realize that people are the treasure of the organization. They also appreciate that the prospect of any successful organization will be enhanced by selecting people who can both manage and lead, and then allowing them to bring their own skills to bear.

#### *6.2.3 Breaking the Culture of Resistance*

Strategic leaders understands that it is the organization culture that creates change, especially a culture that thrives on challenges and relentless innovation. But an organisation's culture is also the most potent obstacle to change and progress. Culture change is able to challenge negative attitudes and assumptions to break the mould created by the existing environment, and in so doing the potential of people is realized to achieve a meaningful and successful

organization. An appropriate culture will assist in developing an entrepreneurship orientation among employees and the ability to change.

#### 6.2.4 *Hands-on Leadership*

To be effective, strategic leaders use a collection of distinct leadership styles and do not rely on just one. Depending on the business situation and the environment, each in the right measure at just the right time allows flexibility. It means strategic leaders have to be flexible to empower others to create necessary change.

### **6.3 The Potential Value in the Creation and Development of a Private Newspaper**

There is a growing need for any organization's strategic leaders, including in a newspaper as in this case, to break the entrenched bureaucratic culture. It is for this reason that strategic leaders need to be identified and nurtured as the leaders are the ones who will need lead a newspaper towards success.

As a consequence of my findings, the following recommendations for practice are made:

1. In addition to the small but crucial changes that are taking place, challenges facing strategic leaders in the newspaper include both responding to the external environment and managing the internal network, and it is very unlikely that a single individual will possess the capability to master both these spheres of operation.
2. As strategic leaders at the newspaper, they should now concentrate on empowering the managers and staff, to motivate them, and, above all, to serve as their strategic manager, in a bid to encourage the spirit of entrepreneurship among the members of staff who will help generate innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship within the organization.
3. There is a need to plan operations in a manner that ensures staff are inculcated into knowing and believing in the company's vision and mission. This can be enhanced by establishing an organizational design that has a bias towards an organic system with as few organizational levels as possible. This kind of set-up would certainly help to support individual initiative and collaboration among staff.

4. It should be realized that through staff participation the newspaper will create an environment that helps staff to arrive at solutions and efficient approaches in operations that ultimately benefit the organization as a whole.
5. It is clear that the newspaper has challenges, such as new competing publications eating into the already limited market share, a depressed economy which has also affected advertising inflows, increasing operating costs and the need for staff training.
6. The newspaper would benefit from a reward system and performance indicators.

#### **6.4 Recommendations for further research**

The case of *The Post* provides a model for research in understanding the role and character of strategic leadership in the creation and development of any organization, especially a newspaper.

The following broad recommendations for further research are made:

1. This research did not include new and younger members of staff of *The Post* or ordinary workers. An investigation of their perceptions and experiences could provide a more thorough understanding of the role that the founders and some of the long-serving employees play in the strategic leadership arena.
2. Research could be conducted on a much larger scale to include the state owned newspapers to allow for a more thorough understanding of the character and role of strategic leadership on newspapers.
3. An investigation into the role of organization culture in and its impact on strategic leadership in private newspapers could be of interest.
4. Finally, a longitudinal study could be conducted as a follow-up to this study to further understand the role strategic leadership has played over time, to more fully understand the phenomenon over time.

#### **6.5 The Limitation of My Research into Strategic Leadership**

There are specific limitations to the research that I have conducted:

1. My study has been limited to one organization.
2. A small number of participants were interviewed, namely the six leaders involved in the creation and development of the newspaper.
3. There were no research participants from the lower ranks of management.
4. My own involvement in the study coloured the research.

## **6.6 Concluding Reflection**

The data is quite explicit about the fact that the task of strategic leadership in a newspaper contains many inherent paradoxes. Due to the growth in business operations, it is now more difficult to effectively manage the business than was the case when the newspaper was established as a small entity 15 years ago. A number of changes are needed.

These include a recognition of the kind of competencies and talent required which can be best served by a multi-leader structure. Such leaders require self-knowledge and emotional maturity.

While editorial skills are very much in evidence, there is a lack of capacity among current leaders in coping with rapid environmental changes, such as competition emerging from unexpected quarters and the changing rules of business. Furthermore, the organization's expansion goals have begun to outstrip the talent needed to support them. This makes strategic direction difficult. In addition, there is increased competition for talented leaders. However, the talent pipeline lacks the numbers to replace leaders that are or will soon be leaving, let alone to fulfil the increasing need for new leaders.

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# APPENDIX I

## MBA RESEARCH DISSERTATION GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- What is the background of the newspaper and some of the important milestones during its 15 years?
- What are the objectives of the newspaper in terms of long term vision? Who defines them?
- I am interested in strategic leadership in the newspaper. What does it mean to you?
- Let's assume that in 15 years *The Post* is the best managed newspaper in Zambia, how have the following been dealt with:
  - (a) exploiting and maintaining core competencies;
  - (b) developing human capital;
  - (c) sustaining an effective organization culture.
- How do you experience hierarchy and democracy in the organization?
- What kind of skills are required from the managers, journalists or any other employee?
- When compared to other *Zambian* newspapers how you would describe *The Post*?
- What gives the newspaper the strength which has seen it survive for 15 years when others have fallen, especially when government is known to harass critical newspapers?
- What role did the founders play in enlisting the results achieved so far especially for the success of the newspaper?

## APPENDIX II

### **The Mission Statement and Editorial Policy adopted in February 1991**

#### ***The Post's Mission Statement***

- I. To produce the best quality newspaper in Zambia in order to exploit the gap in the market caused by the inadequacy of coverage of the existing press.
- II. Our audience should embrace all readers, from a business executive to a taxi driver, who desire to be informed honestly and independently of events at home and abroad.
- III. To achieve this and to ensure that we stay ahead of our competitors, we must strive to understand what it is that readers demand of a newspaper through conducting regular market research.
- IV. Our political role is to question the policies and actions of the authorities and all those who wield or aspire to wield social, economic and political power over the lives of ordinary people.

We shall aim to protect and promote the newly-emerging democratic political culture, in which the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals are guaranteed, through campaigning on issues that arise from our own investigations, reporting and analysis.

- V. To strive continually for higher editorial standards by closely monitoring the accuracy, balance, clarity and style of our reporting, whilst also improving on the paper's design and quality of reproduction. This demands freedom from interference, but openness to criticism and a commitment to the continuous training of our staff.
- VI. To achieve these goals, most especially the protection of our independence, we must ensure the commercial viability of the newspaper. Our management style must be participative. We must all be fully aware of the competing demands on financial and other resources and the commercial consequences of our actions.

## ***The Post's Editorial Policy***

- I. We have a duty to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards and to defend at all times the freedom of the Press and other media to collect information and express comment and criticism.
- II. We shall at all times strive for balance in the way we select, write and present news, bearing in mind that there are almost always different views on any issue and on the interpretation of events. We have a duty to expose our readers to different sides of the story.
- III. We must as far as possible be accurate, fair and honest. We must not suppress, distort or censor news, unless by publication we endanger anyone's life and we must avoid the expression of comment and conjecture as established fact.
- IV. Confidential sources of information shall be protected.
- V. We will not distort or suppress the truth because of advertising or other considerations, such as the personal interests of our directors or shareholders.
- VI. We shall only mention a person's race, colour, creed, illegitimacy, marital status or lack of it, gender or sexual orientation or political affiliation if this information is strictly relevant.
- VII. We shall rectify promptly any harmful inaccuracies, ensure that correction and apologies receive due prominence and afford the right of reply to persons criticized when the issue is of sufficient importance.