



IN THIS EDITION

Vol 3 · No 2 · JUNE 2011

Business Acumen	1
Our next edition	2

EDITORIAL

Are we developing our teams' business acumen? It's a question that managers need to ask themselves.

We answer unanimously that it's a key competency that all of our resources must possess in order to help us evolve and remain competitive. However, how can it be developed and what environment can facilitate our people's using their business acumen to its full potential?

Reading our e-newsletter could provide you with avenues worth exploring and time to step back and assess your teams' business acumen. Do we always take action as would business owners? Are we on the lookout for what could be done differently for the greater benefit of our organization? Do we give our resources the necessary latitude to question our ways of doing things?

In short, do we actively encourage our resources to develop their business acumen, which is without a doubt a key factor in optimizing our ways of doing things to differentiate ourselves in today's highly competitive markets?

Enjoy our e-newsletter—we hope it will give you food for thought.

Isabelle Côté, President

WHAT'S BUSINESS ACUMEN?

There's a general consensus among consumer groups about Apple management demonstrating great business acumen at the beginning of 2000 by marketing the iPod and thus breaking into the huge online music market that was then becoming popular and accessible internationally. Closer to home, only a few months ago, Videotron also showed great business acumen by capitalizing on disgruntled mobile phone users frustrated with limited calling times.

Business acumen includes developing a totally new idea for a market or exploiting the weaknesses in a market to one's advantage by providing a new or improved service. But there's more to it than that. It is a much broader concept that can be hard to define, but that we'll attempt to clarify.

What's business acumen?

Though the term is well known, it is often attributed different meanings so that you may not actually have a clear understanding of what it encompasses.

Business acumen is in fact a set of values that shape corporate culture. According to SAJE*, these values are:

- **Leadership**
- **Sense of responsibility**
- **Autonomy**
- **Creativity**
- **Solidarity**

(*Services d'aide aux jeunes entrepreneurs)



Why is it important to demonstrate business acumen?

At the personal level, well-honed and well-applied business acumen enables you to:

- Find new business opportunities that will benefit your employer;
- Take into account the various internal and external factors involved in making profitable decisions;
- Implement highly creative ideas and solutions;
- Increase the efficiency of your organization's processes;
- Improve collaboration among colleagues;
- Undertake sound initiatives as you would if you owned the company.

As an employer, why is it important to insist on your resources' business acumen?

- Business acumen facilitates collaboration and understanding among resources performing different corporate functions, as well as their various issues and objectives. General consensus and acceptance of the corporate strategy is thus much easier to achieve.
- Over the long term, your resources' business acumen could help your organization differentiate itself in the marketplace through a more creative or value-added service offering. And it could allow you to create new business opportunities.
- Several experts also believe that organizations' business acumen can help them overcome crises more easily.

We often associate business acumen with senior management, even though people at all management levels can develop and demonstrate their business acumen since any employee can hold the values mentioned on the precedent page

Would you like to share your comments on this article or previous e-bulletins?

Or suggest a topic for a future e-newsletter?

Please write to us at info@ssasolutions.com

TEAM INFO-SOLUTIONS



CHANGE MANAGEMENT
TEAM EMPOWERMENT
500 Place d'Armes
Suite 2900
Montreal, QC
H2Y 2W2

www.ssasolutions.com

info@ssasolutions.com

How can we develop our business acumen?

Business acumen is not necessarily innate and can't necessarily be learned with schooling. This competency is therefore not linked per se to our education or learning.

Here are a few elements to help you develop your business acumen:

- **Be informed:** Know your market and your clients specifically in order to spot key business opportunities;
- **Keep an open mind and develop your interests:** Sharpen your analytical sense beyond your position or responsibilities; a resource who demonstrates business acumen takes into account other corporate departments that could be affected by decisions to be made;
- **Collaborate and rally:** Your colleagues can put forward new viewpoints or solutions. Drawing on your colleagues' competencies and rallying the team around a project or idea, participating in special teams or committees responsible for leading exciting initiatives that present challenges, such as improving quality, generating higher revenues, reducing costs or reengineering processes are definite skills.

Although business acumen can certainly be developed by acting on one or several of the above suggestions, one of the best ways is to learn through hands-on experience that poses various business challenges and scenarios.

The corporate environment is also a determining factor in developing this competency since resources must be given the necessary latitude to challenge our ways of doing things. Several means and tools are available to create a favourable environment and develop your teams' business acumen.

As such, SSA can help you in various ways, for instance by leading a workshop on business acumen or by providing customized mentoring at the support or expert level to develop an idea generation program for employees. Visit our website at www.ssasolutions.com to find out how we can work with you and your teams to develop business acumen—a key competency to achieve your business objectives.

Conclusion:

Business acumen is a complex topic. **When it is well-developed and applied, it can help you differentiate yourself as an individual and as an organization.** It is therefore important to give serious consideration to this competency and build awareness among all employees about the critical issues surrounding business acumen.

OUR NEXT E-NEWSLETTER: Starting in a new position: A honeymoon or trial?

Research reveals that less than a year or two after their hiring, 30 to 40% of new managers quit, are fired or underperform. The impacts of an unsuccessful hiring are substantial not only for the manager but for the entire organization.

During the first few months of a new hiring, success is far from guaranteed and requirements are demanding. Often called the "honeymoon", this period at times feels like a trial for some, due to high expectations held by the new team and different stakeholders within the organization.

What are the most common errors? Is it possible for new managers to be well-prepared to succeed in their new role? What kind of support can be provided by organizations? What are possible solutions?

We will discuss this central topic in the September issue of our e-newsletter.