

2017 in Review: Reflections on Leadership in Fiji

Corporate Advice



Caryn Walsh

Caryn Walsh coaches the 2016 Australian CEO of the Year. She is an International Business Consultant, Executive Coach, Keynote Speaker. She is in Fiji four times a year.

As the year ends and a new one unfolds, many of you will be taking the time to think about your last year – what it looked like, what did not work and what you need to do better moving forward.

Standard continuous improvement, although many businesses don't take the time to do this.

A challenging Year for the world

2017 has been a challenging year for the world. Events have shaped the world rapidly this year – the developing impact of Brexit in the UK and Europe, escalating tension between some world leaders, ongoing conflict in the Middle East and North East Asia, increasing concerns about climate change and heightened terrorist activities in many countries.

The world is not the same as it was five years ago, placing additional demands on current leaders and the businesses they lead.

The issue of Technology in Commerce today

Rapidly advancing technology is allowing Organisations around the world to do business in a more efficient and stream-lined way.

But with that comes others struggling to keep up with the rapid changes and to hold their own in an increasingly demanding time.

Not all companies have the necessary resources to implement complex and rapid IT responses to the demands of modern day business, but unless they do, overtime they run the risk of becoming irrelevant.

Winston

Cyclone Winston, in February 2016, was the most-costly on record in the South Pacific region and left many parts of Fiji devastated in its wake, with many victims still struggling to rebuild their lives.

Costing Fiji more than \$4 billion and leaving 44 dead, *Winston* was the strongest to ever hit Fiji and is a firm reminder to the world that nature's wrath can be unforgiving, at best.

The Economy

The foundations of Fiji's economy are broadly sound and increased transparency and accountability in service sectors continues to grow strongly (largely driven by the tourism industry) and along with construction, manufacturing and retail activity, are the main drivers of growth. Tourism remains Fiji's main source of foreign exchange, with visitor numbers grow steadily each year, reaching over 785,500 in 2016 – a new record. Australia remains Fiji's largest tourism market, accounting for over 45 per cent of

visitor arrivals in 2016, followed by New Zealand (21 per cent) and the US (nine per cent)

The challenges facing Modern Day Leaders in Fiji

Demands on modern day business leaders continue to grow, with increased competition from new players, changing customer needs and in some cases, an ever-changing market – all which place increasing demands on a leaders' ability to lead and motivate others, grow their people and develop their businesses simultaneously.

These, coupled with the intersection in which Fiji finds itself regarding modernisation and traditionalism, provide significant challenges and opportunities for this small but vibrant country we all love so much.

Put your employees first, your customers second and your investors third and, in the end, everyone will be happy, Richard Branson.

Branson's three critical Leadership Qualities

1. Listening – If I listen to my people, I learn from them, more than they learn from me.
2. Learn: Learning and leadership go together. All of Virgins success belongs to its inspiring and inspired people
3. Laughter: Enjoy what you

do. Leadership and running a business is hard work. Love what you do.

Fijian leaders have done well this year and will continue to thrive moving forward.

There are areas we need to focus on, as does any nation, and the common factor in the interviews with these five prominent leaders is developing human capacity in organisations.

By focusing on building the skills and competence of your people at all levels, making them accountable and responsible for their roles and outcomes and to empower them, daily, in ways that helps them grow as employees and leaders, will ultimately ensure organisations thrive.

A nation full of thriving organisations, filled with productive and competent people, create communities and societies that thrive – ultimately leading to a booming nation, with a strong economy and committed dedicated people who drive the country forward.

As the year ends, I felt it was a great opportunity to get feedback from some of Fiji's most prominent leaders about their roles, what they believe our leaders have done well over the last year and what more can be done, moving forward.



Ariff Ali

Governor of the Reserve Bank of Fiji

A working environment that encourages high trusting relationships is always the most productive.

What I enjoy most about my role: As Governor, my role is to lead Fiji to economic success.

Growing people and providing them with opportunities to help them reach their full potential is

what I find fulfilling. Watching them grow when given opportunities to learn and thrive is at the core of effective leadership for me.

What is most challenging in my role:

Making decisions that may affect people adversely is never easy at any level of leadership but I have a responsibility to my people, the Bank and Fiji to lead competently and effectively and that is what I do to the best of my

ability.

What one thing have our leaders in Fiji done well this year?

A unique factor of leadership in the Pacific is our culture that is built around community and family and it really shines through in how we lead our people.

The same values we instill in our families we apply in the workplace.

Leadership is about building and strengthening relationships

and we do that well.

One thing I believe leaders of Fiji need to focus on in the future to continue to help the country thrive?

Our people are our most important asset and we need to improve our soft skills. It's through our people that we ensure our organisations (and Fiji) thrives and it's critical we stay connected to them at every level. If our people are on-board, engaged and empowered, we will always achieve the outcomes we want.



Jenny Seeto

Territory Senior Partner, Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC)

We have to get our people strategy right, organisationally and as a country, to ensure we are all working together to grow and create wealth for all of us.

I provide leadership to the Fiji operation, setting the tone as a role model, creating optimal environments for high quality outcomes to support PwC networks overall strategy, developing meaningful relationships at all levels with staff and clients and I drive a culture of trust, upholding professional stand-

ards at all times.

What I enjoy most about my role:

Having great staff and clients and being able to provide solutions to clients always gives me a great sense of achievement. I love the diversity of my work and collaborating with my people to deliver quality outcomes is what makes me tick. The diversity in my work and being part of a terrific PwC network has provided me with great insights and life skills.

What is most challenging in my role:

Recruiting the right execu-

tives for clients who have the relevant experience and skills – both soft skills and technologically - required for the role now and in the future so they can transform the organisation and enable it to deal with the challenges and opportunities of the future. I also find keeping abreast of accounting interpretations and legal frameworks challenging.

What one thing have our leaders in Fiji done well this year?

They have a greater awareness of, and are focusing on, accountability and good governance.

One thing I believe leaders of Fiji need to focus on in the future to continue to help the country thrive?

There are various: To embrace new ways of doing things, encourage innovation and harness our workforce. Then productivity and efficiency will increase and the spirit of entrepreneurship will develop at a faster pace as ideas are put into action.

We have to empower our people by giving them better technical and value based training and support so that they have the skills and competencies to do what is best for their organisation and the country.



Visvanath Das

CEO, Fiji Revenue and Customs Services (FRCS)

Everything depends on a leader's ability to connect with, engage, and motivate their team.

What I enjoy most about my role: I am responsible for the overall strategic leadership and management of the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service (FRCS), ensuring operational efficiency

to maximise revenue collection, facilitate trade, travel and border security through cooperation with stakeholders, including regional and international trading partner countries. My work fits directly into the socio-economic development of Fiji (helping Fiji grow) and making the lives of Fijians better - that gives me immense satisfaction.

What is most challenging in my role:

Getting the right team of people

(middle and senior leadership) to feel the urgency for sustainable transformation for the future world-class organisation we envision.

What one thing have our leaders in Fiji done well this year?

They are starting to see a broader national vision whilst focussing on business strategy and profitability.

One thing I believe leaders of Fiji need to focus on in the

future to continue to help the country thrive?

Growing human capital and having strong relationships with our people - the difference between success and failure is a direct result of a leader's ability to connect with, engage, and motivate their team.

Everything else should fall into its place if those exist.

We look after our people, they look after our customers which in turn evolves the whole business.

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Raj Sharma
Acting CEO of HFC Bank and Chairman of Fiji Rice Limited (FRL) and Copra Millers Fiji Limited (CMFL)

The most important aspect of any business is their people. We need to focus on developing them at all levels

What I enjoy most about my role:
At HFC I execute the strate-

gies approved by the Board and at FRL and CMFL I sit on the Boards, formulating the Vision and strategic direction of both Organisations. A strategic role, I enjoy being organised and delivering outcomes in a timely, accurate way.

What is most challenging in my role:

A lack of prioritisation can lead to time management problems of my people, that can affect outcomes at times.

What one thing have our leaders in Fiji done well this year?
They are innovative and creative in their thinking – ‘thinking outside the box.’

One thing I believe leaders of Fiji need to focus on in the future to continue to help the country thrive?

Developing their people and driving exemplary performance through key coaching relationships and appropriate rewards and recognition.



Tony Whitton
Managing Director of Rosie Holidays, Malolo Island Resort and Likuliku Lagoon Resort

What I enjoy most about my role:

Leading an amazing team of travel professionals who share a common vision to build a world class Tourism and Hospitality company here in the Fiji Islands. Realizing that by our activities we can improve the social and economic well-being of every Fijian through this amazing industry through the creation of jobs and the circulation of the Tourism dollar to every corner of our community is what drives me.

What is most challenging in my role:

Being able to stay inspiring & optimistic as a leader when I face set-backs either in business or person-

ally.

What one thing have our leaders in Fiji done well this year? You can be world class, but on a small scale. Fiji is a tiny island with a very small land mass but being small is not a disadvantage. You can leverage it to your advantage – and be world class. Fiji Airways a (small airline by world standards) and Fiji’s national

Rugby 7’s team that won gold at the Rio 2016 Olympics are two examples.

Small country. Big rugby heart. Last month two resorts were voted number one and two by Conde Nast Magazine readers Both within the Rosie Group - Malolo Island Resort and Likuliku lagoon Resort. Fiji has an amazing capacity to be the very best in the world even though small. Small and powerful.

One thing I believe leaders of Fiji need to focus on in the future to continue to help the country thrive?

Create more jobs and ensure every company plays its role in improving the prosperity of the surrounding community within which the company operates. Rosie Holidays builds schools in Yaro and Solevu villages.



It has truly been a pleasure to work with so many wonderful people and leaders in Fiji for the last 7 years, helping you grow and develop. Roll on 2018 and beyond. It continues to be a privilege for my team and I, for which we are eternally grateful. A big thank you to the Fiji Sun for continuing to publish our articles. We are grateful for our great relationship with you.

Caryn Walsh
Chief executive officer of Pure Magic International Business Solutions

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