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Post COVID-19: Raising The New Digital Workforce

BY DUNSIN FATUASE

The world, six months ago, could not predict or foretell these trying times we currently experience. It is no news that every continent has had its fair share of the proceeds of this pandemic, not leaving out their industries. By 'proceeds', I am referring to both positive and negative proceeds from the pandemic.

I will stick to the positives here though, as I believe we already have an ear-full of the negatives of this pandemic. While confusion has become the order of the day for world powers, not leaving out the big guns in the industrial space, some undervalued industries have experienced unexpected growth. It might be difficult to explain how Zoom (A teleconferencing app) had 2.13million downloads the exact day the UK announced a lockdown. Business insider reports that Zoom has had 100 per cent stock spike since January as Coronavirus forces millions to work from home.

Just before you conclude that Zoom is the only beneficiary of this positive 'proceed', please note that there are currently nine companies largely considered to have enjoyed benefits from this period. CNBC identifies these companies (and their products) to include - Telemedicine: TytoCare; Teleconferencing: Zoom; eCommerce: Amazon; Victory SuperMarket Chain of Israel;

Logistics and Delivery: Wolt and Streaming Services: Netflix. I co-authored a book on this subject and you should read the research-based book titled, '10 Industries that the Coronavirus Will Make Bigger'.

This reality leaves us with many probing questions: What did these organisations do differently? What was their unfair advantage? How can your organization leverage on this advantage and change its COVID-19 'victim' status?

In data, we will find answers and from study you will see that all resilient industries are those who are creating products and solutions towards the future of work and engaging emerging technologies creatively.

It's quite sad to see that in a swift-paced disruptive and fast-changing world, Africa as a continent is yet to fully embrace the emergence of new technologies. Organizational structures and models of operations in various industries are a notable reflection of how non-compliant we are with the changing narratives and Nigeria is not an exception. Our limited ability to conduct tests for only a few thousands as well as the unexplainable deaths in the northern region of the country, is a testament to this truth.

This therefore presents the need for Africa to think of its self-sustainability. We should concentrate on a forward-thinking approach

for a post-COVID19 economy. The post-Covid-19 economy is unavoidable especially for developing nations like Nigeria, as some developed economies are currently in its reality. China is a perfect example.

We should not be quick to forget that the pandemic has given many organisations a so-called genuine excuse to lay off dozens of their staff. In fact, according to CNBC, the U.S economy lost 20.5 millions jobs in April tipping the unemployment rate to a 14.7 per cent. While there are claims that 18.1 million of these jobs will be restored, there are no guarantees that they will be.

However, many of the laid-off workers have resorted to alternative jobs and embraced online job models that allow them to work and earn without leaving their room. It will interest you to know that even senior citizens are at the forefront, picking up writing gigs, voice-overs and a lot more jobs that allow for flexibility. People with computing and online business skills are now in top demand more than before. I am talking about high paying skills like Data Science,

Virtual Reality Engineers, Automation Engineers, Content Creators of all sorts, Artificial Intelligence Shapers.

The millennial in Nigeria are not doing so bad this period, if anything, the lockdown has provided them the opportunity

to work remotely, leverage on the gig economy and freelancing strategies, trade blockchain assets, build online brands and become YouTube Lords and TikTok Princesses; all of which are not peculiar to Nigeria alone.

The dominating factor that makes all of these possible is 'The Internet'.

The new workforce is rising fast before our eyes, while many still live oblivious to this development. The basic question to be asked here is: How should your company respond to this fast-paced change? And it is safe to answer this question by asking if your firm has in place a Remote Work Framework that supports and tips the productivity of its workforce, despite having them work from home.

Reports show that many organisations are finding it hard to recall their workers to work because the workers currently enjoy more income working from home. If you must know, do not be surprised if 3 of your best talents already work for your competitors while they still retain their role in your firm. They simply can do much more without having to waste 5 hours in daily transit in order to appear at the office.

While Remote Working is just one out of many other variables of the New Workforce Order, your framework should put into consideration how to recognize and give your workers

more chances to chase their own dreams within and outside your organization rather than micromanaging.

To benefit from this new order, your firm must pioneer its adoption by empowering its workforce during this period with skills highly

compatible with this digital work pattern. Skills such as: Interpersonal, Critical thinking, Collaboration, Presentation, Cognitive flexibility, Emotional Intelligence skill and the likes. It will not be safe to leave your workers in the arms of emerging opportunities while you wait to engage them after the pandemic wears off.

As a leader in your organisation, your critical assignment this period should be to find new ways to keep your business relevant and create new roles for your workforce in your likely new direction.

If you ever get the chance to speak with business owners who experienced seminal crises and had their businesses disrupted, they will tell you that things never really get back to normal. They always resort to creating a new way of doing business. And this path will not be far-fetched for us in this era. As brutal as this may sound, the truth is, if you do not evolve, you die. Death, in this case, might mean losing your best talents to a new wave of digital workforce.

-Fatuase writes from Abuja.

FAMILY BEING

Why Family Planning Services Should Not Suffer Under COVID-19 Impact

BY SOCIETY FOR MEDIA ADVOCACY ON HEALTH, NIGERIA

In a world with more than 4.5 million COVID-19 cases and more than 300,000 deaths, logically the single focus of global health systems right now is, limiting the impact of the pandemic.

But, there are other important health issues with real consequences that can't be ignored, notably family planning and reproductive health

services. UNFPA estimates that 47 million women may lose access to modern contraception if the situation continues for six months and could lead to nearly seven million unintended pregnancies.

Also, researchers from the Johns Hopkins Centre for Communication Programs-led (CCP's) Breakthrough ACTION project recently alerted countries worldwide warning them about the dangerous consequences of neglecting family planning amid

COVID-19 pandemic on reproductive health in low- and middle-income countries.

The journal's reported; "We estimate that a 10 percent proportional decline in use of short- and long-acting reversible contraceptive methods in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) due to reduced access would result in an additional 49 million women with an unmet need for modern contraceptives and an additional 15 million unintended pregnancies over the

average TFR, rated 5.5 -5.7 children per woman which is higher than the African average of 4.7 children per woman.

Nigeria is considered the populous country in Africa with annual growth rate of 2.8 percent, meaning that the population is growing by nearly three million people every year.

To put this in perspective, in 1911, the population was 16 million. It grew to 114 million by the year 2000 and to an estimated 174 million in 2014

downwards into further socio-economic decline in the face of the pandemic.

Lamenting that global health attention is currently on the coronavirus pandemic, Dr. Amina Aminu Dorayi, the new Country Director, Pathfinder International Nigeria, noted that this is obviously going to impact family planning efforts in Nigeria.

Elaborating, Dorayi said the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the lives