

South Africa goes into its second decade of democracy saddled with a serious management problem. In both the private and public sectors, the weakness shows. "Non-delivery" has become a constant complaint. To fix the problem, executives need to rethink what's in their toolkit.

Some companies perform outstandingly; they're truly world class. Most have a rougher time. They get beaten up by foreign firms that come here, and make little headway in export markets. They're not great innovators. Their service is wanting. Their profits are disappointing.

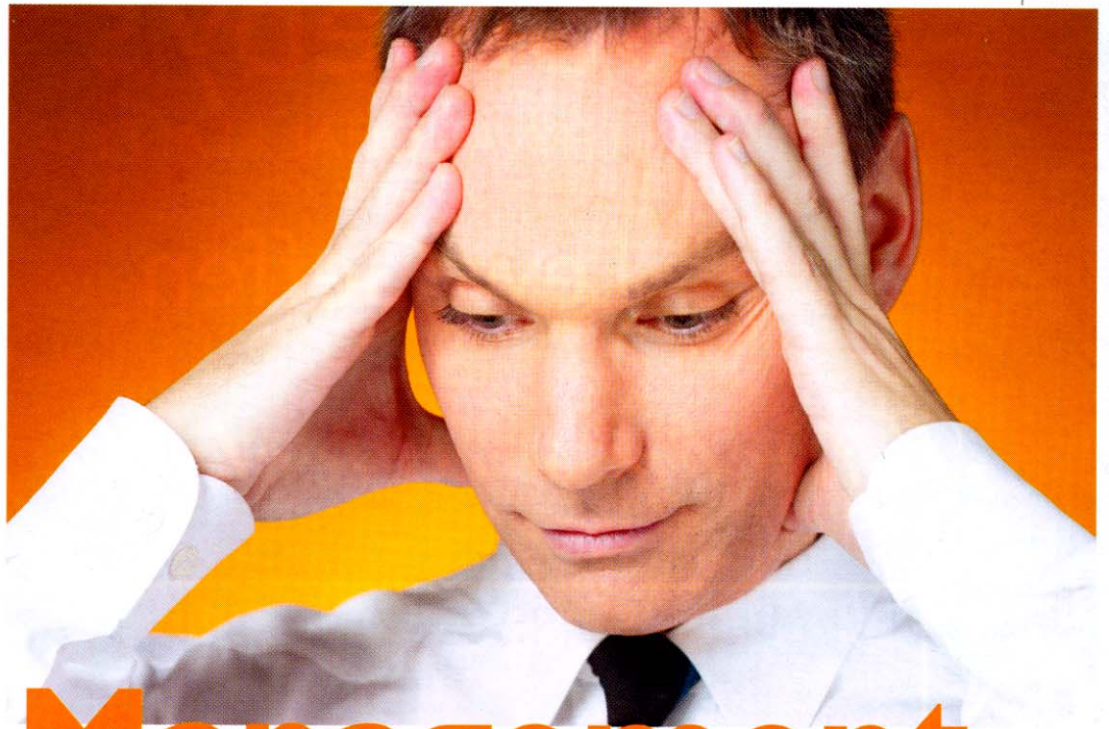
Some public sector bodies also do well. But the woes of many others are well documented. Almost daily, media reports tell of lousy performance, appalling waste, and careless spending. Every department seems to have a fine vision and mission statement, but often there's a gap between intentions and reality.

Make no mistake, operating here is no cakewalk. As Pik Botha famously said, Africa is not for sissies. Challenges abound. But when organizations fail, management must take the rap.

It's a matter of pressing urgency that we produce more managers – and more effective ones. This should be seen as a key task for the next five years.

But how to do it?

I've worked as a consultant to a wide range of organizations for close to 20 years. In my view, one reason managers struggle is because they're unsure of their tools. They're utterly confused by the concepts that should help them. They chop and change frenetically. They befuddle themselves and everyone around them.



Management toolkit for tomorrow

Tony Manning

In fact, every organization has to get just a few things right to do well.

This is not hard to understand. But these ten ideas can make a huge difference to the results of any organization.

We should teach them, preach them, and do them.

Excellent performance is only a distant dream because managers make it hard to deliver. There are easier ways. And now is the time to start applying them.

*Tony Manning is an independent consultant in strategy and change management. His latest book, **Tony Manning's Management Toolkit**, will be published shortly. He can be contacted at strategist@tonymanning.com.*

1. Recognize that if you don't make a difference, you don't matter. You have to offer something unique, or you get lost in the crowd.
2. Replace your vision and mission with a clear statement of purpose. You don't need lots of words. You do need to explain why your organization exists – there's "the hill" we're aiming for.
3. Make your strategy simple and understandable. Agree three value drivers that will get you there. Set three goals for each of them, and three actions for each goal. This short list makes work do-able.
4. Subject all decisions to the "ten-buck test." Imagine you have ten rands in your hand, and lots of ways to spend it. It's impossible to do everything. Where will you lay your bet? What trade-offs will you make?
5. Answer the three critical strategy questions: "Who is our customer?" "What value will we offer?" "How will we do it?" Be as precise as you can about your answers.
6. Bust a gut for your "right" customer. Some customers are better for your organization than others. So concentrate on them. Do whatever it takes to meet their needs. Keep improving and innovating to keep them loyal.
7. Get passionate about three principles: focus, value and cost. Focus your resources where they'll make the most difference (on those right customers). Drive value up. Drive costs down.
8. Acknowledge people as the ultimate competitive resource. Leadership is getting results through others. They need to know what to do, why, how, and how well, and they need feedback on how well they're doing. So talk to them. And listen to them!
9. Deal with strategy, leadership, and change management simultaneously. Involve people early and often in decisions. Give them information, resources, and support. Help them grow. Give them space to perform.
10. Craft and conduct an effective strategic conversation. It's the No. 1 management tool, and makes all the others work. Consider three questions: "What do we talk about obsessively?" "Who's involved?" "What's the quality of the conversation?"