

VISION CHAIN: Miguel Goede

From question to answer to question, to....well, sometimes more questions than answers. The Vision Chain is a series of articles based on a question posed by an interviewee to the next one. As the series progresses, a chain of questions and answers is created in which the visions of several individuals are depicted. With each edition of Chamber Business we bring you another interviewee.
Synthesized Visions

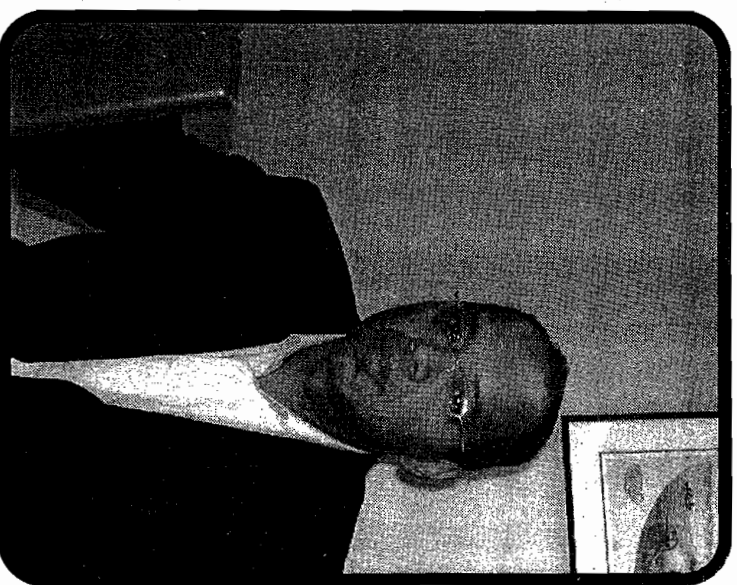
L-Zone: the Center of Knowledge

'In fact, we are already very close to being a Knowledge Center. I call it an L-Zone, where the L stands for Learning. We have so many ingredients already in place on the island. We have many institutions that are training people in a diverse range of disciplines. So, the infrastructure is in place, we just don't yet see it as a Knowledge Center.'

In our three previous editions of Chamber Business, Jac Heide, Chehadi Eddine and Ernst Horwitz presented their views on several issues concerning Curacao's economy. While Heide focused on the global outsourcing trend and its effect on the Curacao economy, he came to the conclusion that Curacao should find a niche that caters to the global market in the same way that India is fast becoming the world's premier provider of IT solutions, and China is rapidly conquering much of the world's production. His question to Eddine then, was, 'What can and should our island specialize in, and why?' But Eddine did not pick up Heide's philosophy on niche-serving. An avid believer in the 'value and norm' economy in which people are at the center of all things, Eddine believes that by basing the economy on the strength of its people, you have the key to survival and recovery from hard economic times. His thoughts focused on the need for an entire population collectively working towards one common goal. His question, posed to Ernst Horwitz, was therefore, 'How do we create this new population?' Horwitz believes in the power of our people, saying that we have a fountain of talent on the island, but there is no fertile ground in which this talent can flourish. He found that there was a lack of leadership, combined with little opportunity for talented people to spread their wings and nurture their talents. He proposed to create a Center of Excellence in Curacao, a place where people can try out new ideas and use their talent to solve issues that can then be used as an example to other countries with similar struggles. This led Horwitz to the question, 'Where can we start the Center of Excellence in Curacao that would sow the seeds of hope for tomorrow?' He posed that question to Miguel Goede who shares his view on the matter in this article.

Getting There

If we want to establish a Center of Knowledge, we shouldn't do this alone. We have to form alliances with foreign. Evidence shows that this will bring a multitude of benefits and opportunities. Firstly, globalization calls for international input in curricula, and with this in mind we need to attract more foreign teachers/scholars. Secondly, as there is no need to re-invent the wheel, we can rely on their educational expertise, and at the same time develop these partnerships, fine-tune them to meet



the demands of our students and market the entire product extensively. And thirdly, we have to reach out to the global market by attracting foreign students to the island. Everything is pointing in direction of the Latin-American and European markets; students there are keen on spending part of their studies or internships here. Our 'quality of life' is a big magnet that draws them here. Alliances will also help us to market our product more effectively either by word of mouth or by being included in their marketing efforts. We can offer foreigners a unique product. Our educational force can offer both European and American academic traditions. We have a multi-cultural society that enables us to comfortably address and capitalize on cultural issues and easily build bridges to other communities. We speak the languages, we have an affinity to these markets and we are very open to other cultures. This is particularly helpful when assisting foreign students in crossing any cultural boundaries, an inevitable step needed for them to adapt to the globalization of the world economy. We are intelligent, talented people. When it comes to the arts and artistic expression of any kind we are undeniably good - 'I'm talking Andrew Jones, Maruga Boogard, Izaline Callister, Hensley Meulens, Randy Corseren, just to name a few. Let's make use of what comes naturally to us and turn it into a product that we can sell.'

Goede thinks all the theories of the previous interviewees can be put into practice, coming together in one synthesized vision: Curacao as a Knowledge Center. 'I think the knowledge of our people is the niche Heide is looking for and I strongly agree with Horwitz on most of what he said, especially in making the island a Center of Knowledge. That way we are building strong people, like Chehadi proposes, while capitalizing on many strong pillars without having to give up on opportunities.'

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One Shared Vision

But to reach the L-Zone state, the key is to align all these learning centers into a common vision for the island, and that is where we have encountered a stumbling block. It is only this shared vision that will provide the impetus for us to better allocate funds, put legislative measures in place, carry out the logistics, and move diligently forward towards a common goal. Just to give an example: local students should receive their education at a better price than foreign students. But as long as there is no shared vision as to where we want to go with our educational system, we will fail to come up with the right fiscal infrastructure to attract the foreign students that we crave; not to mention the fact that permits and other paperwork issues are seriously hampering this development.'

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A Better People

'I truly believe that if we can agree on a collective Center of Knowledge for the island, within six months we will be able to align things in order to arrive at a consensus on actions within the educational sector. To me, the benefits are crystal clear. For one reason, our own students will receive a top-of-the-line education, right here at home. In addition we will attract students that are at the pinnacle of their academic achievements, which will counteract the 'brain drain' that we are currently facing. And most importantly, they will bring their friends and families to the island and maybe even get married here and stay permanently. In short we will attract highly educated people to our population. In this way we reach Eddine's vision: a people better equipped to

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be pro-active and to bounce back, instead of easily resorting to drugs, criminality and other actions that are more likely to arise from a lesser-educated society.'

Why We Fail

'Why? I don't know why, really. Vision without action is a dream. We often don't reach the point of collectively getting into gear towards one common goal. I think this is because we lack belief. If you lack the faith of your convictions, you will not be able to withstand the pain when the going gets tough. If you do believe, then you can picture the goal and persevere when times are hard. Those who don't believe usually panic during hard times and are overcome by fear. They change direction and jeopardize the unified effort towards a common goal.'

So I guess that brings me to my question: 'Why can't we materialize our visions?'

Goede poses this question to Sidney 'Bicho' Justiana. Don't miss our next edition of Chamber Business.



Jack Heide

Cherrah Eddine

Ernst Harwitz