



Theme: PRODUCTIVITY

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Freeway

Doing more with less

Productivity is good: everyone wants it. We all love the idea of producing more raw materials, more goods or better services with less effort and at lower cost. By so doing we could contribute greatly to human welfare in all its many aspects. So how could Zambia's productivity be promoted; and where is this most needed?

This issue of the journal looks first at Total Quality Management as a general approach to raising levels of productivity in all kinds of institutions, whether industrial, commercial or administrative. The article is followed by accounts of successful attempts to improve productivity in agriculture, manufacturing and construction.

The last article in the group looks at an unsuccessful attempt at establishing a National Productivity Council under governmental auspices. Its author goes on to suggest how better progress could be made.

The questions of whether or not this is a useful approach, and of what kinds of

productivity are most needed in governmental bodies, are not considered here. They are beyond the scope of this issue of the journal. They will be addressed in our July issue on the theme - 'A performing civil service'.

This issue concludes with a thought-provoking article by Eustace Davie of South Africa's 'Free Market Foundation'. The author propounds an original idea on how to promote employment for desperate people, yet without disadvantaging those who are already employed. Food for thought in Zambia?

Promoting Productivity Through TQM

By Muyunda Mwanalushi

Patriotic Front Government has undertaken to raise the standard of living of the citizenry. How this vision will be achieved is yet to be clearly spelt out. Nonetheless, it is generally acknowledged that improving basic living standards for all our people - improvements in housing, education, health services, and so on - will be possible only if the country as a whole creates more wealth. This, in turn, can only be done by promoting economic growth. There are two ways of promoting economic growth: by pouring more

resources into the economy (if you have the resources in abundance) or by increasing productivity. Studies of advanced economies indicate that they derive between 60 and 70 percent of their economic growth from increases in productivity and only about 30 to 40 percent from additional resources. For quite some time now there has been a growing realization among social partners in Zambia (the Government, Employers and the Labour Movement) and the business community in general that productivity is the only firm foundation for economic growth and prosperity. The late Milton Friedman put it bluntly: "Nothing is more important for the long-run economic welfare of a country than improving productivity." Productivity growth is the key to economic prosperity as it provides the basis for making organizations more profitable, increasing real wages, and investing in the physical and human capital which contribute to economic growth.

Defining Productivity

Now, what is productivity? Productivity represents the relationship between output and the input used to produce that output. At its simplest, productivity implies the efficiency with which resources - i. e., labour, capital, materials, energy, etc - are utilized. High productivity would, therefore, mean accomplishing more with the same amount of resources, or maintaining the same level of output with fewer resources. Essentially, high productivity entails maximum output at minimum cost. It is perhaps for this reason that it has been claimed that managements are responsible for about 75 percent of productivity gains. This is because managements are responsible for the effectiveness with which all the resources under enterprise control are utilized.

Approaches To Productivity Improvement

A number of approaches to and strategies for improving productivity have been developed. These fall into two broad categories: the technical approach and the human approach. The technical approach comprises industrial engineering techniques

and economic analysis methods which include work study, work simplification, just-in-time production or delivery, Pareto analysis, cost-benefit analysis, zero-based budgeting and cost-productivity allocation. The human approach comprises behavioural techniques which include organization development and performance improvement planning, brain-storming, force-field analysis, gain-sharing schemes, industrial cooperation, etc. However, the efficacy and benefits of these methods are usually short-lived because often they are used in isolation. Further, many organizations have found that these initiatives have lasting benefits only if they are applied within a culture where everyone in the organization is committed to continuous improvement.

Thus, productivity improvement entails three things: knowledge and skill, an appropriate value system, and an assumption that times and things are changing and require a continuously adaptive response. In short, productivity improvement is all about adapting to change, development and learning. Total Quality Management (TQM) provides such an adaptive framework. This is because TQM is anchored on the bedrock of continuous improvement; it is also an innovative approach to work organization and management as well as to the development, motivation and effective utilization of workers.

TQM is essentially an approach for increasing organizational effectiveness. It is concerned with the overall culture of the organization in order to engender enthusiasm throughout the workforce (from the top to the bottom of the organization) for achieving the highest possible quality standards and to search continuously for improvement. TQM is guided by four basic principles or Absolutes, as the late Philip Crosby referred to them. The four Absolutes are as follows:

- Quality has to be defined as conformance to requirements, not as goodness;
- The system for causing quality is prevention, not appraisal;
- The performance standard must be

zero, not “that's good enough”; and

- The measurement of quality is the price of non-conformance, not indices.

The first three Absolutes are self-explanatory, but the fourth one requires further elucidation. Quality is measured in terms of its cost and the measure is known as the price of non-conformance. The cost of quality is the expense of doing things wrongly; that is, the scrap, rework, service after service, repair, reprocessing, warranty, etc - which arise from non-conformance to customer requirements - translate into costs. TQM is founded on the premise that continuous quality improvement results in lower cost, higher productivity, and stronger competitive position. How does this come about?

If employees routinely do the right things right first time, productivity improves and costs are saved since there is less waste; high productivity results in increased production and reduced operating costs which, in turn, enable the organization to price its products or services at affordable levels, thereby expanding its customer base and enhancing its competitive advantage.

Clearly, TQM makes the difference between success and failure for an organization. It is probably for this reason that John Young, the former President and Chief Executive Officer of Hewlett-Packard, asserted that: “In today's competitive environment, ignoring the Quality issue is tantamount to corporate suicide.” That is probably overstating the case for TQM, but many organizations in Japan, North America and Western Europe which have incorporated TQM as a business strategy have reported very favourable outcomes directly attributable to TQM.

TQM has transformed organizations, communities and economies elsewhere in the world. If Zambian organizations embraced TQM and made it part of the corporate woodwork, we would be launching a cultural revolution that would ultimately change the work ethic in the nation, thereby strengthening our enterprises and enhancing productivity. Improved productivity would enable the

nation to provide and sustain a high standard of living for its citizens. In other words, the more productive we are, i. e., the better we utilize our human, capital and material resources, the higher our standard of living will be.

Author: **Prof. Muyunda Mwanalushi is Chancellor of Copperbelt University**

Making Small Scale Farming Productive

By Peter Aagaard

Conservation Farming offers an extraordinary opportunity to increase the productivity of Zambian farmers. When correctly applied the technology increases the yields of a wide range of annual rain-fed crops. It also reduces the amount of labour required and makes better use of increasingly expensive farm inputs, thus reducing production costs.

For the most part, nature has endowed Zambia with good soils, reliable rainfall and abundant land, and we have been spared the problems of the excessive population pressure and political instability suffered by some of our neighbours. Despite these advantages, we are seldom self-sufficient in maize, our primary staple crop.

What are the negative agricultural practices which are destroying our land and undermining our future? Most significant are the existing methods of land preparation known as 'conventional tillage'. These start with the current practice of burning crop residues from the previous season, instead of leaving them to protect the soil. After this comes ploughing, or, in eastern Zambia, ridging with hoes. By causing overall soil disturbance these practices expose the soil to erosion, compaction and oxidation.

No less serious is late planting, a universal menace in Zambia. Farmers who lack their own animals often have to wait to hire oxen from neighbours. This can delay planting for weeks. To give an example, a delay of 4 weeks from the first opportunity to plant maize reduces the yield by 40%. Every year tens of thousands of farmers plant late. This causes many to abandon their crops

altogether, especially if the rains cease early or the farmers have planted larger areas than they can weed.

In contrast to these destructive methods Conservation Farming practices are easy to follow, and they produce dramatic benefits. Farmers who adopt CF reduce their costs, raise their yields, increase their profits and, in time, improve the fertility of their land.

Delivering the training and knowledge to enable thousands of small-scale farmers to convert to CF and to change ingrained habits is a big challenge. However, steady progress is being made and it is now estimated that over 175,000 Zambian smallholders have adopted CF methods on portions of their land. The current CF campaign, organized by the Conservation Farming Unit (CFU) of the Zambia National Farmers Union, and sponsored by the Norwegian government, is a continuation of efforts that started in 1996. Through a lead farmer extension system the CFU trains 140,000 farmers 4 times a year and at the end of each season holds 900 field days attended by over 80,000 farmers.

The basic principles of CF in Zambia are as follows:

- Maximize soil cover to the extent possible by retaining crop residues rather than burning them or incorporating them into the soil.
- Reduce soil disturbance to the extent possible by converting to Minimum Tillage or Zero Tillage. No overall digging, annual ridge splitting, ploughing or harrowing of soils to prepare the land for planting.
- Complete land preparation in the dry season.
- Target the placement of seed, fertilizers and lime accurately.
- Plant as soon as soil moisture is adequate for the crop to emerge.
- Rotate legumes with maize and other cash crops to the extent possible.
- Utilize herbicides to control weeds and to eliminate further soil disturbance caused by inter-row weeding with cultivators and other mechanical

equipment after the crops have emerged.

Any farmer who adopts CF and gets it right will experience the benefits that farmers the world over strive to achieve. Labour inputs and costs involved in land preparation and weeding are significantly reduced, irrespective of whether the farmer relies on hoes, oxen or machinery to establish and maintain his crops. Guess work is eliminated and seeds and fertilizers, whether inorganic or organic, can be applied far more accurately. Compact layers in the soil are shattered, allowing crop roots to penetrate further, and rainwater is harvested more efficiently, reducing crop stress during extended dry spells.

All this adds up to higher crop yields, with improved productivity, improved food security, more money at the end of the season and the opportunity to expand areas under production.

Conservation Farming can enable Zambia to become a major exporter of agricultural commodities. It also offers tens of thousands of rural families the opportunity to improve their livelihoods through higher productivity, while also addressing the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation.

Author: **P. J. Aagaard, Conservation Farming Unit, Lusaka**

Productivity through Partnership - A Zambian Example

By Murray Sanderson

How can businesses best promote productivity? Answering that question is a tall order, far beyond the scope of an article. Why? Because the subject is immense, involving, as it does, methods, technology and relationships. This article is concerned with relationships - with obtaining the fullest co-operation between capital and labour, owners and employees. In trying to maximize its own income, each party tends to ignore the interests of the other. Countless attempts have been made to overcome this problem, but the writer knows of only one example in Zambia.

Its origin was the establishment in Kitwe in 1967 of Medwich Clothing Limited. The purpose of the business, in addition to making money by producing clothing, was to create a partnership based on mutual interest between owners and employees, with a view to developing industrial harmony and maximizing productivity.

It took 3 years for the clothing business to become moderately profitable. The directors then decided to encourage employees to buy shares in the company with money saved from their wages; and several did so. Two years later the board decided to allocate annually part of the company's annual profit to employees of a year or longer, for the purchase of shares. At the same time employee shareholders became entitled to elect a director to the board. This was followed by quarterly meetings in the factory, at which progress reports were given, and employees had the opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

The Company continued to grow and to make profits. This encouraged the directors to propose the adoption of the Scanlon Plan. The Plan was a system used in America for rewarding increased productivity. Its originator, Joseph Scanlon, was a trade unionist who was, unusually, also a cost accountant. Under the Plan relationships between sales and salaries are calculated over a period of perhaps three years. Bonus entitlements are then earned to reflect improvements in sales as against salaries. In this way the Scanlon Plan links salaries to productivity, as reflected in sales. All employees, without any distinction, share in the bonus entitlements in proportion to their salaries. This provides a strong incentive to promote quality production.

An important feature of the Plan is that monthly payments are limited to 75% of the bonus pool, with the 25% balance being withheld to the end of the financial year. The purpose of this provision is to provide a reserve against any months with shortfalls. The balance remaining after deducting any shortfalls provides a 13th payment at the year end.

After reading a book about the Scanlon Plan

(there were then no computers) the directors decided it merited careful study. Members of the Works Committee and of management were invited to join board members at a two day meeting, with the guidance of an industrial consultant. The Plan was explained in detail, and discussed at length. The participants then agreed unanimously to adopt it, with minor modifications.

The Scanlon Plan worked well for seven years, during which Medwich Clothing expanded to employ over 200 workers. But in the later Kaunda period a weakening economy, severe import restrictions and mounting inflation caused serious problems. These culminated from 1988 in 5 years of three digit inflation, which forced the company into liquidation. Thus ended what seems to have been Zambia's first and only sustained experiment in encouraging employees to commit themselves wholeheartedly to promoting productivity.

Author: **Murray Sanderson, Former Chairman, Medwich Clothing Ltd.**

A \$300 Idea that is priceless

Applying the world's business brains to housing the poor

From the Economist 28th April 2011 (with permission)

FRIEDRICH ENGELS said in "The Condition of the Working Class in England", in 1844, that the onward march of Manchester's slums meant that the city's Angel Meadow district might better be described as "Hell upon Earth". Today, similar earthly infernos can be found all over the emerging world: from Brazil's favelas to Africa's shanties. In 2010 the United Nations calculated that there were about 827m people living in slums - almost as many people as were living on the planet in Engels's time - and predicted that the number might double by 2030.

Last year Vijay Govindarajan, of Dartmouth College's Tuck School of Business, along with Christian Sarkar, a marketing expert, issued a challenge in a Harvard Business Review blog: why not apply the world's best

business thinking to housing the poor? Why not replace the shacks that blight the lives of so many poor people, thrown together out of cardboard and mud, and prone to collapsing or catching fire, with more durable structures? They laid down a few simple guidelines. The houses should be built of mass-produced materials tough enough to protect their inhabitants from a hostile world. They should be equipped with the basics of civilised life, including water filters and solar panels. They should be "improvable", so that families can adapt them to their needs. And they should cost no more than \$300.

Mr Govindarajan admits that the \$300 figure was partly an attention-grabbing device. But he also argues that it has a certain logic. Muhammad Yunus, the founder of Grameen Bank, has calculated that the average value of the houses of people who have just escaped from poverty is \$370. Tata Motors has also demonstrated the value of having a fixed figure to aim at: the company would have found it more difficult to produce the Tata Nano if it had simply been trying to produce a "cheap" car rather than a "one lakh" car (about \$2,200).

Related topics

The attention-grabbing certainly worked. The blog was so inundated with positive responses that a dedicated website, 300house.com, was set up, which has attracted more than 900 enthusiasts and advisers from all over the world. On April 20th Mr Govindarajan launched a competition inviting people to submit designs for a prototype of the house.

Why has a simple blog post led to such an explosion of creativity? The obvious reason is that "frugal innovation" - the art of radically reducing the cost of products while also delivering first-class value - is all the rage at the moment. General Electric has reduced the cost of an electrocardiogram machine from \$2,000 to \$400. Tata Chemicals has produced a \$24 purifier that can provide a family with pure water for a year. Girish Bharadwaj, an engineer, has perfected a technique for producing cheap footbridges that are transforming life in rural India.

Another reason is that houses can be such effective anti-poverty tools. Poorly constructed ones contribute to a nexus of problems: the spread of disease (because they have no proper sanitation or ventilation), the perpetuation of poverty (because children have no proper lights to study by) and the general sense of insecurity (because they are so flimsy and flammable). Mr. Govindarajan's idea is so powerful because he treats houses as ecosystems that provide light, ventilation and sanitation.

Numerous innovators are also worrying away at this nexus of problems. Habitat for Humanity, an NGO, is building durable houses of bamboo in Nepal. Idealab, a consultancy, is on the verge of unveiling a \$2,500 house that will be mass-produced in factories, sold in kits and feature breakthroughs in ventilation, lighting and sanitation. Philips has produced a cheap cooking stove, the Chulha, that cuts out the soot that kills 1.6m people a year worldwide. The Solar Electric Light Fund is demonstrating that you can provide poor families with solar power for roughly the same cost as old standbys such as kerosene and candles.

Profits and other problems

These thinkers, like the advocates of the \$300 house, must solve three huge problems to succeed. They must persuade big companies that they can make money out of cheap homes, because only they can achieve the economies of scale needed to hit the target price. They need to ensure sufficient access to microloans: \$300 is a huge investment for a family of squatters living on a couple of dollars a day. And they need to overcome the obstacle that most slum-dwellers have weak or non-existent property rights. There is no point in offering people the chance to buy a cleverly designed house if they have no title to the land they occupy. Solving these problems will in turn demand a high degree of co-operation between people who do not always get on: companies and NGOs, designers and emerging-world governments. However, the exciting thing about the emerging world at the moment is a prevailing belief that

even the toughest problems can be solved. And a similar can-do moment, in the late 1940s, offers a striking historical precedent for the application of mass-production techniques to housing: as American servicemen flooded home after the second world war to start families, Levitt & Sons built Levittowns at the rate of 30 houses a day by mass-producing the components in factories, delivering them on lorries and using teams of specialists to assemble them. Some emerging-world governments are beginning to realise that providing security of tenure is the only way to deal with the problem of ever-proliferating slums. And big companies that face stagnant markets in the West are increasingly fascinated by the "fortune at the bottom of the pyramid". Bill Gross of Idealab reckons the market for cheap houses could be worth at least \$424 billion. But in reality it is worth far more than that: preventing the Earth from becoming what Mike Davis, a particularly gloomy follower of Marx and Engels, has termed a "planet of slums".

A Zambian National Productivity Movement? The Challenge of Steering and Rowing

By Bernard Chishala

The productivity movement in Zambia has been in the doldrums since 2009. The challenge of adopting an appropriate institutional framework has been worsened by lack of institutional support from a critical mass of stakeholders. National productivity organizations (NPOs) are intended to expedite the rise of a productive culture in a country. The Government's hope is that an autonomous national productivity organization (NPO) can drive the productivity movement at a progressive pace. Productivity is understood in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of a product or a service process, as a state of mind and a concern with progress.

In Zambia, the 1990s economic reform saw the change in economic policy from commandist to liberal. The appointment of a National Steering Committee on Productivity chaired by John Musukuma,

Chief of the Press Association, with Professor Muyunda Mwanalushi and other eminent persons from employers' bodies, workers organizations, chambers of commerce and industry, academia, the ILO, UNIDO and government Ministries, was a prudent decision. The establishment of the Zambia National Productivity Centre (ZNPC) was conceived with a belief that an autonomous institutional mechanism, run on a tripartite basis, would promote and foster the development of a productive culture.

The management of such a centre required a dynamic, self motivated and systems focused body of managers. The theoretical perspectives of strategy underpinned the administration of the Centre. However, the new institution got stuck in internal politics, and it was abandoned when political changes were made in 2008 after the demise of its President. In 2009 the temporary staffing was removed and the centre's funding went to the Department of Productivity in the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry discontinued paying rentals to Zambia State Insurance Corporation and the centre effectively ceased to exist.

The points for learning have been extensive. Public institutions fail due to lack of change friendly systems. The bureaucracy is not designed for strategic management. The advocates of decentralization have long argued that the function of government is to steer or to provide policy. Simply said, government provides direction, mobilizes resources and fills gaps created by market failure. The government has several options to choose from when creating mechanisms to implement its programmes. Government can facilitate the growth of a vibrant private sector that will provide various services. It may commercialize some of its services within the public sector, or it may create agencies, regulatory authorities and commissions to undertake various services.

The way out of this productivity policy steering-rowing dichotomy was for government to provide leadership on the issue of productivity by making policy pronouncements, accompanied by directives to create this mechanism within the current 2012 budget. The Ministry could

then initiate a memorandum for cabinet to endorse, prior to legislation. Furthermore, government should make available one of its several idle infrastructures in the country, and finally appoint a board for the organization. The new board should then appoint a key person to initiate the assembling of a management team.

Government should continue to oversee the management of the institution through the board, but its future growth should be a responsibility of the Tripartite Labour Council.

Author: **Bernard Chishala, Chief Productivity and Quality Officer and former CEO ZNPC**

Why 'Decent Jobs' become 'No Jobs' for the unemployed

By Eustace Davie

The word 'decent' has such kindly connotations. Of course everyone wants workers to have decent wages, working conditions, hours of work and contractual arrangements with employers.

Dictionary definitions include 'respectable, good enough, tolerable, proper, modest and moderate'. However, words have different meanings for different people. For instance, 19th century novelist Thomas Peacock wrote that, 'Respectable means rich, and decent means poor. I should die if I heard my family called decent.'

When applied to jobs, 'decent' has a variety of meanings, depending on who does the interpreting. A highly qualified university graduate would reject physical labour. The standards for 'decent jobs' set by labour unions are based on wages, working conditions and other minimum criteria they have negotiated for their members with employers and have had written into the country's laws and regulations: anything less is not regarded as 'decent'.

A desperate person, especially one who has been unemployed for a long time, will have an entirely different perspective of decent work. Money to buy food for the family is likely to be a first objective, then clothing, shelter and so on, along the scale of their

priorities. As long as the job is tolerable, desperate people are prepared to accept any job that enables them to make progress in obtaining as many of their priority items as possible.

Understandably, labour union leaders are determined to set the highest standards they can achieve for their members when defining what constitutes a 'decent' job. Around bargaining tables they hammer out the details: minimum wages, working conditions, hours of work, overtime pay, leave periods and a great deal more, mainly with large employers, who generally prefer to negotiate with unions rather than with individual workers. Workers have every right to establish unions, appoint representatives, and have them enter into agreements on their behalf. No right-thinking person can have any objections to such activities.

Problems arise, however, when the arrangements between large labour unions and large employers spill over and affect non-parties to these agreements. Obviously it is in the interests of union members that the same conditions should apply to everyone in their particular industry to avoid the possibility of non-party firms out-competing their own employers and jeopardising their jobs. Parties to such agreements overcome the difficulty of potential competition by persuading governments to make these agreements applicable to everyone in their industry, whether or not they participated in the negotiations.

Unsuspecting small employers find themselves subject to terms and conditions to which they have not agreed and which in extreme cases can force them to close down their operations. In such cases, employees who believed that they had 'decent jobs' find themselves with no jobs at all. Small employers should have the right to refuse to have such agreements foisted on them, especially if they can obtain the support of their employees to reject the agreements.

Don't blame labour unions and employers for the negative consequences. They may be morally culpable for bringing pressure to bear but the legal responsibility lies with

government. Parties to such agreements may lobby for them to be extended to non-parties, but governments can and should refuse to comply with such requests. If they don't, they must take full responsibility for jobs lost in the non-party firms.

The current labour laws and regulations have raised a veritable 'brick wall' between potential employers and the unemployed. Potential employers are not prepared to wade through and bear the costs of all the compliance requirements in respect of someone with no skills, no track record, and most probably a badly eroded 'will-to-work' approach caused by long-term unemployment. They are certainly not prepared to face the prospect of having to appear before a labour court for failure to follow some prescribed procedure. Instead they are being forced to hang out 'No Jobs' signs.

The most tragic consequence of the current labour dispensation is that unemployed people cannot apply their conception of what constitutes a 'decent job' to one that others do not consider to be 'decent'. They cannot do that because employers face prosecution if they employ them on the basis of the applicant's conception of 'decent' terms.

For several years, our Foundation has been lobbying for all parties to consider allowing people who have been unemployed for six months or more (to prevent firing and re-hiring) to make agreements (that are exempt from the labour laws) with employers on mutually acceptable terms. The booklet 'Jobs for the Jobless: Special Exemption Certificates for the Unemployed' sets out how the situation could be totally controlled if Special Exemption (SPEX) Certificates are issued to the long-term unemployed, valid for a period of two years, allowing the holders to enter into such agreements with employers on condition that the agreements are in writing. The purpose is not to dis-empower the jobless but to empower them - to give them full contractual rights for a limited period over their own employment.

Contracts between SPEX certificate holders and employers are unlikely to affect the job security or to have other negative

consequences for members of labour unions, as they would remain fully protected. The only change that would need to be made to the labour laws is the creation of the SPEX certificate for job seekers. With two years of on-the-job training and experience, former certificate holders would be ready to join the regular work force and be fully subject to the labour laws.

Small firms and individuals are the most likely potential employers of SPEX certificate holders; many only marginally better off financially than their employees. Stripped of compliance costs these employers will probably pay wages to certificate holders that reasonable people would consider to be a 'decent' wage, given the circumstances.

We are talking about 'decent jobs': an income, the promise of a future, the chance to feed and clothe a family. A 'decent job' that may not be everybody's conception of the term but what a particular unemployed person would consider to be 'decent'. A job that a jobless person thinks is 'decent' is surely better than no job at all.

Author: ***Eustace Davie is a director of the Free Market Foundation and author of 'Jobs for the Jobless': Special Exemption Certificates for the Unemployed.***

Citizens Charters

No further progress - yet. ZIPPA remains confident that this excellent idea, which can do so much to improve civil service performance (with concurrent service to the people) , and to prevent corruption, has a great future in Zambia.

July Journal 2012

The July Journal will be on 'A Performing Civil Service'. Readers are challenged to contribute their views and suggestions. Email your article to The Editor, ZIPPA Journal , zippamail@gmail.com . There will be a prize for the best contribution.

Disclaimer

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