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Bruxelles, le 20 mars 2002.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Annie Van Den Dijcke'.

Annie Van Den Dijcke
Sous-Directeur



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Growing Together A Strategy for Digital Unity

By Nadine N. Mouali
15 January 2000

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Greetings Mrs. Fiorina,

My name is Nadine Mouali and I live and work in Belgium. As a web site visitor to your HP homepage I would like to say that I really appreciate the possibility you are offering to people to write to you about ideas or suggestions that may help the consumer and your business. Well, I have an idea for new emerging markets that will help the consumer and your business grow together.

HP is a supplier to KPN-Orange, a mobile operator in Belgium where I work as a planning expert in the IT System Applications department. Recently, a colleague told me that HP Consulting in Belgium was looking to hire IT people. I remembered my fascination for an "e-services" presentation I'd seen last April, and of course I know HP from the printers, faxes and computers. I had very little knowledge about HP to apply for a job. I still needed to get a good feel for the company before I submitting my job application, which is why I consulted the Internet and browsed on the HP career web site.

I was very pleased to see that your company has offices in Casablanca, Morocco. That really fits a dream I have always had. Between 1993 and 1996, I conducted research and lectured on Intercultural Business Communication for Arab Countries to MBA students of the United Business Institute in Brussels (an overseas division of Mercer University in Atlanta). I was hoping that this would lead into a job in which I could work with those countries.

That is why I proceeded with sending my application letter to HP Belgium for a project management position end of October last year. I mentioned in my application letter that I would someday be interested in working in Casablanca, but I didn't elaborate my motivation any further. The reason why I am ultimately targeting Casablanca is that I really see more possibilities for making a successful business of HP in that area of the world. I am offering my potential as an IT professional, but also my potential to create new markets in North Africa and the Middle East.

1. High level overview of IT in North Africa and the Middle East

1.1. Lack of IT skills

X The human skill shortage in IT is a burning issue all over the world. In developing regions like Africa and the Middle East it is even bigger. In those areas specialists need to be trained to develop and support the future market requirements for IT and telecom. Many industries in those regions are still operating without computers because of a lack of technology literate people and IT professionals.

If this tremendous need for IT training remains unanswered, the developing regions may get excluded from participating fully in the new globally networked economy and information society. Another risk is that they would never be able to cope with



the future global demands in information technology and telecommunication. It will certainly not help decrease the existing communication gap between developed and developing countries which is compromising economic growth and the quality of life in the vast majority of developing countries, most likely also in the world at large.

1.2. Local governments invest in wireless broadband projects

Field studies of developing countries have indicated that so far only banks, airports, travel agencies, Western multinationals, certain newspapers, radio and TV stations, universities, and a few privileged families have been computerized and are connected to private networks and to the Internet. The local governments have the desire to raise the connectivity rate. They understand that the creation of wider networks and more Internet access points will lead to an optimal exploitation the public telecom networks, and will ultimately also create more revenue to the country.

With this understanding, with the ambition to transform their societies and simply to become players in the New Economy, some developing countries have started replacing traditional telecom infrastructure with wireless broadband communication technology to assure better coverage for their large land masses and thus overcome geographical limitations. In addition, with the procurement of new telecom infrastructures, they expect to generate very important financial income by awarding telecom licenses to (foreign) global operators. Therefore, their focus at this time is on privatizing and liberalizing the telecom sector to allow the award of licenses. They are busy drafting telecommunications competition policies and regulations for the expected growing number of operators. They are carefully selecting network constructors and global operators, and in many cases they are still building reliable electrical power plants to support the future networks.

Soon, they will have the equipment. But who is going to deliver the services? Who will provide the content that their people can relate to? Is there enough human skill capable of creating advanced developments in computers, software and multimedia?

1.3. Human skill is left out of the scope

Regardless of these investments, the governments of North Africa and the Middle East seem to overlook the human skill side of this slow transformation process. What they seem not to realize is that the slowness is resulting primarily from a lack of IT competencies. With all the respect they have for IT, they are reluctant to invest in something that they don't completely understand. Consequently, they have not yet started any aggressive education campaigns to encourage the youth and the educated unemployed to study IT (and telecom). The major reason underlying this is a lack of understanding IT, as it is a very new phenomenon, and a lack of appropriate strategies to tackle the issue. That is why, for example, they don't subsidize their local industries to make IT part of their business strategy.

In my view, the contradiction of wanting an information society on the one hand and not investing in IT education on the other hand stems from failing to see the link in the loop. Therefore, there is no parallel convergence between the technical developments (hard) and human development (soft). It is in this unanswered and urgent question of human skill where I see many opportunities for HP.

2. What can be done about this?

I suggest that a corporation like HP Invent should involve itself in the development of IT human resources and the creation of users should they want to exploit the potentials in the future markets. It may be that my idea is not so special. If it is not, then please consider my re-invention of this idea. My idea is targeting a particular market segment:

Women should massively be encouraged to participate in the information society, whether as users or IT professionals. Usually they are completely left out of the picture in any social innovation process. Male dominance in the IT industry is beginning to be accepted as a rule of the traditional power games. But IT is still young and innocent. Together, we can shape the course of history and prevent IT from growing into a myth for billions of women around the world, and especially in Muslim countries where they represent billions of potential consumers. For many a woman, power is a myth. Well, let's use the power of myth to achieve our goal.

2.1. *Morocco, an example for Africa and the Middle East:*

According to figures of the Moroccan national planning office, 60 % of its population is female, of which 50 % is under 45 years old. In addition, the number of women with college degrees is proportionally larger than the number of graduate males.

Things are changing for women in Morocco. The current political climate has never been so favorable for women's issues as it is at this time. King Mohammed VI is counting on his female subjects to help in building the national economy. To allow this to happen, he made it his first priority to improve the social condition of Moroccan women and young girls so they can get prepared for profitable economic activities. Another high priority the king has is to invest in wireless data communication and IT. He has already convinced the French mobile operator Vivendi Universal to acquire 35% of Maroc Telecom's capital in order to construct a voice and data network. Vivendi Universal is planning to expand its network towards the other countries in the same region, using Morocco as a starting point.

The concept of my idea is designed on both royal priorities: Training women to become IT specialists will perfectly fit the social and economic development programs that are currently led by King Mohammed VI. In addition, my concept is well adjusted to the principle of separation based on gender, as that is a specific reality in most Muslim nations. It is also the path that offers the least resistance for including women in the development and implementation of the information society and networked economy.

2.2. *The small difference that makes a big difference*

What are the advantages of working with women?

a) *Humanizing technology*

Women are important drivers of innovation, and they provide a human aspect to technology, which will help overcome the alienating effect of technology on most people. Men tend to create an atmosphere of mystery around anything technical, and they behave like "nerd-techies" to jealously protect their knowledge, and discourage others. Only with the help of women, the entire population of a country will become included in the Internet society.

b) *The subtle key towards competition*

Supporting women is the best way to create competition for men. The expected competition that results from educating women in technology will accelerate, for example:

- the consumption of home computers, software, peripherals and multimedia devices;
- the creativity in web services and content;

This competition will generate great benefits for the IT industry, as it will

- increase the number of access points needed to consult data banks of their own country and of the world, whether they be those of commerce, knowledge, culture or entertainment;
- increase the need for legacy systems, servers, routers and middleware solutions;
- speed up the implementation of the information society and electronic business that benefits all.

c) *Preparing the next generation*

The future of any nation is undeniably as much in the hands of women as men. In Arab societies the upbringing of children is absolutely entirely in the hands of the women. This means that young children will get accustomed to the picture of "Mom at the computer". When mothers use the computer, it will be seen as normal. The computer will be seen

- as a part of the household furniture, just like television is at this time in most developing countries;
- as natural to handle as a pen; and, finally,
- as a symbol of education,

Therefore:

- the mothers, naturally wanting the best for their children, will encourage their children to use the computer more; and ideally,
- the youth will grow up never knowing that technology was (supposed to be) a male affair.

Growing up in Europe has certainly helped me a lot. However, being an immigrant in Europe (and thus being different) has sometimes also worked as a set back. Then again, it's thanks to the new technologies that I managed to have a career. While in Europe, I have accumulated the knowledge, know-how and best practices with which I am prepared to fulfill the job of a role model for Arab women, Muslim women, and even for minorities in Europe.

I have no intention of keeping the secrets of my success to myself. My kind of leadership does not allow itself to be ego-driven. On the contrary, I would generously provide people with some enlightened female leadership, teaching them that all is in the mind and accommodated by one's attitudes, whether it is poverty, health or wealth. All I used to have was a vision on which I have been focusing and an inner guidance that I have been following. The latter was easy for me to do as I had chosen to live alone, undisturbed by any other voice that would try to influence my choices. I would simply make my experiences available to the transformation that the developing world is waiting for. But, I have paid a price for freedom. Perhaps, I could spare some women from paying a similar price for their independence.

3. What Is In It for HP Invent?

I hope it is clear that for developing countries there is initially a lot of growth possible in the field of education and training before reaping the benefits of a larger consumer market. Therefore, business models for developing countries should be socio-economic models. The purely economic models are not at all profitable in any developing country at this point in time. In addition, high taxes are claimed for consumer goods that are perceived as not allowing any room for social improvements in the country (like video cameras, TV's, cars, mobile phones etc.), and, unfortunately, computers, modems, printers too.

3.1. Three key growth factors for emerging markets

First, the perception of the computer and related technologies should be changed in the minds of the governments. It is the responsibility of the IT companies to change that perception if they want to be successful in those areas. As explained in detail above, the local governments are not knowledgeable enough, however, to do that for your company.

Second, big corporations should assume social responsibility in developing countries. Thus, it will be useful to develop business models in parallel with education models. In this way, the consumer and your business will be *growing together*. It will give your company a noble touch, and it will give the information technology a very much-appreciated human touch. I suggest that you should make education part of your global strategy. That is a very solid growth factor for developing areas.

Third, creative communication is another (secret) growth factor. I suggest giving it a female touch, as women naturally communicate much better than men. In addition, in the areas where I am specialized in (the Arab world), strong emotions like jealousy are associated with the woman, which in turn could be the key to driving competition. Focusing on women is the best way to attract the initial attention, to guarantee transfer

to the younger generations, and to trigger strong competition, which will automatically be the driver behind creating new (consumer) markets, and thus more business for your company.

3.2. HP Invent accelerates the world change process

Through the IT education programs, entire populations will get trained in your products. This is how HP will have an impact on the world in terms of technology, networked economy and social direction. In this way you will achieve what your letter says on the Internet: "We want to make the total customer experience so engaging and rewarding that you not only buy from us again and again, but also enthusiastically recommend us to others."

By now, you will understand that in developing countries it does not make much sense at this moment to make publicity campaigns on the radio, television and in the cinema for people to buy computers and printers. But, if you make publicity campaigns for a "Women in Technology Development Program" bearing the signature of HP, people will understand you not only want them to buy from you, but that you want to train them in using your products. HP will be recognized as leader in changing the way we work, play, heal, study, buy and go about our daily lives.

3.3. Cascade Effect

Morocco is an excellent starting point and this country could itself be a role model for the other Arab countries, the African countries, and also for other Muslim countries around the world. In time, when an IT development program for women is successfully established, your Moroccan HP subsidiary could start exporting the development program itself. It will be able to outsource IT consultants to help the developments in the other Arabic speaking countries of North Africa and the Middle East, each time using HP products as an agreed standard throughout the Arab world. Can you imagine your export figures for HP products and your global revenues?

Throughout the Arab world HP will attract positive attention in a much more effective way than any other company in the world can do. No other high tech multi-nationals will be able to reproduce your distinct success because:

- they may not have this particular insight;
- they are often prejudiced against developing countries;
- they do not particularly believe in women (least of all the Muslim women);
- they don't have an approachable global CEO like yourself, and because of that,
- they will never know about my ideas and my competencies.

Morocco will have a multitude of success stories of women that found interesting employment in IT, or who had the possibility to create an e-business, and who saved themselves and their families from social and economic fragility. Your products will be associated with all these success stories. It only takes someone to devote herself to this type of project.

4. My promise to you

If you would like this idea to come to its fullest expression for HP Invent, then the best person would be someone like myself. As I am the owner of the idea, I have all the faculties, talents, and love for the activity. That is why I believe I am in the best position to energize the project, and bring it to full realization together with HP Invent, in favor of a digital unity of the world.

While my job application, for a position as Project Manager within the newly set up consulting division of HP Invent Belgium, was a spontaneous initiative, my motivation and my ideas were not improvised. I have always had this dream, but now, I have cultivated and documented it for your e-inclusion program. I have been preparing for it for so long, and here I am to say that I am ready. This is my promise to you.

I thank you and I thank the Internet.

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