

Page Executive

SECRETS OF
LEADERSHIP
A series of
articles from
Page Executive
on Leadership

Seven secrets of leadership



Insights into what makes a great global leader

Page Executive specialises in the recruitment of business leaders with the skills and experience to steer organisations to greater success. We engage daily with employers and professionals on assignments that often strategically define the future of an organisation. During May 2013, our global teams interviewed over forty business leaders across Asia Pacific and Australia, Europe and the Americas for their views on leadership.

Specifically, we posed open-ended questions on the following topics:

- Traits of global leaders
- Advice on becoming a global leader
- How to manage expectations from an increasingly diverse workforce
- How leadership is changing in the 21st century
- The place for emotional leadership versus performance management

The result of this work is a series of short articles on the topic of leadership that we are pleased to share with you. These articles encapsulate the opinions of the global leaders we interviewed, who generously shared their views on what constitutes success in a global leader, as well as offering advice to the next generation of leaders.

We enjoyed conducting this exercise and hope you will enjoy reading the outcome.

The Page Executive team

Page Executive

Secret #1: Maintain, adapt and share your vision



The business environment of today is undoubtedly highly complex, not least because of the impact of technology and globalisation on business as a whole and on the individual workplace.

Today's leaders face multiple levels of change: business trends come and go more rapidly, while economic conditions continually fluctuate. In this context, organisations must focus on both their short-term and long-term goals simultaneously and be prepared to adapt their strategies accordingly.

Great leaders anticipate the future

To deliver on their business objectives, a new type of leadership is needed: 21st century leaders must be able to read the signs and adapt quickly to changing business environments, all the while contending with difficult trading conditions. This multi-focus vision must be complemented by an ability to embrace the diversity arising from the globalisation of markets, as well as the diversity inherent within their own workforce.

While today's leaders must combine a clear strategic vision with the identification of future trends, they also must be ready to meet opportunities and risks by setting a combination of long and short-term goals.

To succeed, leaders must constantly anticipate fresh changes and have the flexibility to be reactive – and even proactive – to market conditions, should the original long-term plan need realignment. As the hockey player Wayne Gretzky put it: “A good hockey player plays where the puck is. A great hockey player is where the puck will be.”

Communicating the vision

In such a context, engagement of the workforce is a key component of success – yet it might be the most difficult thing to achieve. While leaders must be able to conceptualise short and long-term changes, their biggest challenge is probably to ensure that their teams are ready to fully engage with the vision.

Leaders must reduce complexity for the group and ensure they have a master plan, which they communicate and make meaningful to all the key players. Making others feel part of a bigger plan leads to stronger emotional engagement, greater mental focus on achieving the mission and heightened team stability.

Our clients say...

“Global leaders have to be able to take a leap forward and stand in the future, create a vision from what they see there, and bring an entire organisation along with them in wanting to go there.”

Country director of a world's leading premium drinks business, Benelux

Secret #2: Today's great leader is a great talent manager



Leaders select and build the best teams to achieve their business goals. They have to keep motivating, engaging, supporting and taking accountability for their teams. We all know the importance of good management and managers in employee engagement and retention. In this regard, leaders must complement, and in some cases even take on, the work of the HR department and enforce their own employer branding (or 'team branding').

Leading from the front

Leaders, as managers, have the key to staff motivation and engagement. No one is better placed to improve the working atmosphere and create a community in which people can develop a sense of belonging. Leaders also make individual roles meaningful, interesting and challenging so that people learn and develop. They need to set the right example in handling change with grace, managing the talent in their direct teams, and be an outstanding developer of people, in order to keep their employees motivated and engaged.

A channel for change

To succeed in these tasks, leaders should be able to implement change via their people. This will require being culturally savvy. Leaders will want to learn about other cultures and use this insight to create the right local conditions in which people can succeed.

The capacity to embrace and manage the diversity of a conglomerate of individuals is rapidly becoming an essential leadership trait, especially when leading a global workforce and virtual teams.

No leader should forget that people decide to join an organisation, and decide to leave their manager.

Our clients say...

"Great leaders are those who walk side by side with their people."

CEO of an international service, trading and distribution company, Brazil

Secret #3: International agility – today’s must have attribute



In a global market it is critical for leaders to have an international background and to show proven intercultural awareness and skills. It’s essential that they can demonstrate that they have lived and worked abroad, even better if this was in a non-protected environment, where they were autonomous and had to succeed or fail by their own efforts.

Seeing through the world’s eyes

A leader’s personal cultural background is no longer the only lens through which they can view the world. An international outlook brings a broader understanding of foreign markets and cultures – how people live, buy, sell, communicate, interact and reach a decision in these cultures.

This awareness increases a manager’s international effectiveness as a leader of people and the business.

Develop cross-cultural understanding

To succeed in global leadership, leaders must constantly refresh their cultural fitness to intermediate between cultures. The leader of the future is culturally intelligent and knows how to adapt when negotiating, influencing, inspiring or even just listening to others.

In addition, they should embrace and build teams that encompass the diversity that drives greater innovation, and have a sound knowledge and understanding of global markets.

Our clients say...

“Live and work abroad. Learn how to act as a bridge between cultures.”

Chief HR officer, Financial services, Germany

Secret #4: Unlock performance with emotional intelligence



It is *people* who are becoming essential to higher performance, not just technology or capital.

So, leaders should not only lead by example, but manage performance by focusing on employee satisfaction. Motivated employees will deliver a stronger brand experience for the customer and in doing so build higher customer loyalty. They generate more ideas for process improvement. They achieve faster, better quality execution. They energise their leaders.

Leadership is not shifting completely away from performance management, but rather emotional intelligence is becoming an imperative skill for leaders to stand out. Increasingly, success will mean putting people first when making critical business decisions. Successful leaders have the knack of involving others, listening to them and building mutual respect.

An equal focus on people and objectives

Do individuals deliver superior, average or poor performance? Leaders are instrumental in their teams' motivation and should therefore place equal importance on their people and their objectives.

As Ed Catmull of Pixar said: "If you give a good idea to a mediocre team, they'll screw it up; but if you give a mediocre idea to a great team, they will either fix it or throw it away and come up with something that works."

Leadership 2.0

This trend is reflected globally as we see a more collaborative, participative and social leadership style emerging, which is being termed 'Leadership 2.0'. Where once a 'great' leader was someone who instilled fear in the workforce, today it is fine for a leader to want to be liked and for people want to like their leader.

Our clients say...

"Keeping a healthy balance between people and results is fundamental, because they complement each other."

Managing Director, Banking sector, Mexico

Secret #5: Look cross-functionally and focus on performance



Leaders today demonstrate their value by delivering on short-term objectives. The ability to deliver swiftly on revenue and cost-saving goals is an expectation, rather than a desired trait.

A climate of insecurity

The speed with which economic cycles and a company's own strategy change means that the leadership position can never be taken for granted.

On top of the expected ROI, companies are also looking for leaders who deliver consistently and who contribute to the total performance of the company. Leaders are no longer expected to be just experts in their fields, but rather masters at understanding the company's global context.

Having a cross-functional understanding of performance will increasingly differentiate average leaders from outstanding ones. In the process of becoming multitasking global leaders, contributing to their company's overall performance enhances managers' chances of securing their positions.

Adapt to survive and thrive

To rise to these expectations, leaders must be flexible and be constantly at the ready to analyse and adapt to any situation. They need to invest continually in their own development in order to support their teams in reaching the highest levels of performance, in the face of both successes and failures. They need to maintain an unswerving focus on sustaining the prosperity of their business against the backdrop of a continuously changing world.

Our clients say...

"Great global leaders are able to drive critical changes and elevate total performance to the next level, with proven track records in achieving company goals and delivering tangible results"

Senior Executive from a world leading Fortune 500 retailer, Hong Kong & China

Secret #6: It's the era of the digital leader



Communication strategies are now decided at board level, demonstrating the growing importance of strategic and tactical communication in a world where everything is transparent.

From monologue to dialogue

Moreover the nature of communication has changed: from one-way, where the company informs its public, to holding an interactive conversation. Companies have to optimise their use of technological advances to communicate efficiently both internally and externally.

The scandals and crises that regularly hit the headlines provide an impetus, if one were needed, for leaders and companies to reengineer their communication strategy to support greater transparency and establish a channel for market and employee feedback.

The voice of the industry

This situation is fuelling investment in social media. Today's leader does not hesitate to share company news via social media platforms. PageGroup's CEO Steve Ingham regularly posts on Twitter, for example. Leaders are capitalising on technology and digital media to expand their outreach to target audiences, raise their profile as an industry voice worth listening to, and even influence their stock price in a more direct manner.

This expansion in the utilisation and availability of technology has far-reaching consequences, one of which is that we are seeing the demise of privacy. With leaders being openly evaluated and judged on their actions, they must become skilled at communicating in an authentic manner. They must foster greater transparency and interaction with their own teams in order to motivate and engage them towards a common goal (that of improving performance).

Our clients say...

"Technology has changed everything, you can no longer hide. It means that transparency is everything and it is only the beginning."

VP human resources EMEA, entertainment sector, France

Secret #7: Influence through interaction



Leaders seek to influence others. To achieve this, they must serve as a reference point and guide within specific teams, the wider organisation and the world at large. The primary followers should be the leader's team. Leaders can encourage good 'followership' by empowering their people and collaborating with them on new ideas in what might be termed a co-leadership process.

Leadership through collaboration

For this process to be successful, leaders need to demonstrate their emotional intelligence. They must show their understanding of multicultural environments and interact effectively with people of different cultural backgrounds.

A participative style will enable leaders to harness brainpower internally and externally to devise the best solutions and gain buy-in to them. Leaders need to gain and maintain influence in a world which is at the same time more complex, transparent and interconnected.

The incremental power of networks

Leaders must now co-create and grow their networks in order to build a strong group of followers, who may well include other leaders. To maintain this network, they should engage in it, share ideas, and always look to identify new opportunities. An effective network will always be greater than the sum of its parts. Social media platforms offer great potential for forming these leadership groups. Leaders should also seek face-to-face contacts to build stronger networks outside their immediate circle.

Our clients say...

"A global leader should be able to demonstrate the attributes of an explorer, with a gift for empowering their followers wherever they are based in the global economy."

Human resource director, device company, Asia

About Page Executive:

Page Executive specialises in the recruitment of business leaders with the skills and experience to steer organisations to greater success. Leveraging contacts built up over 35 years and tapping into the resources of the entire PageGroup network, Page Executive aims to provide a faster and more reliable approach to executive recruitment.

For more information, please visit www.pageexecutive.com



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