



Excellence, Innovation and Enlightened Leadership

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By attending the 2017 Dubai Global Convention on Business Excellence and Innovation business, professional and public leaders are demonstrating their concern for excellence and innovation within the organisations for which they are responsible, in how these organisations operate and in the services and benefits they provide to those they serve and who are dependent upon them. But what do excellence and innovation mean in relation to the exercise of leadership, what leaders do and how they see their roles in a world replete with both challenges and opportunities?

From a business perspective, excellence and innovation need to be affordable and relevant to the aspirations and requirements of customers and clients. Whereas a creative artist with a wealthy patron might be indulged and allowed the time, resources and space to seek perfection, most business leaders have to juggle contending interests in the light of available resources and time. By striving for excellence they may be able to raise the bar. Innovation might change the rules of a game and allow step change improvements. However, choices usually have to be made and balances achieved.

Changing Leadership Context

The context in which leadership is exercised is changing. There is uncertainty, unpredictability and disruptive change to confront. New patterns of work, forms of organisation and business models abound. There are requirements for greater diversity, sustainability and more bespoke responses. There are pressures for co-creation and collaboration. The number of possibilities to explore and options to evaluate challenge our traditional management, governance and leadership practices.

How should the current generation of leaders react to these developments and concerns for fairness and inclusion? What advice should those who wrestle with the above challenges give to aspiring leaders, those who are setting out to have a beneficial impact by being able to influence events, whether through moral authority, better understanding or either position or representative power?

Some of the requirements for effective and enlightened leadership derive from the changing environment and the circumstances in which it is needed. Where opportunities are legion, there is a multiplicity of requirements and alternative business models may be viable, does a sole leader and a single strategy make sense? Might collective leadership and a portfolio of complementary and in some cases contending strategies be preferable to a vain search for a single

strategy that can suit a variety of situations? Some people are more flexible and tolerant of such diversity than others.

Changing Leadership Expectations

Do we need to change our assumptions of what leaders do, and our expectations of what they can achieve? In particular, have expectations of the role of CEOs become unrealistic? Could aspects of it be shared? Should we expect more of other board members? Is a concentration of power unhealthy and dangerous? Should we look for ways of dispersing power and involving a wider range of interests in corporate decision making? Do decision making processes need to change?

One stereotyped view of leaders suggests they spend most of their time taking decisions, issuing orders and enforcing conformity. While it may persist in folklore, in practice are today's leaders increasingly engaged in activities such as releasing potential, setting the tone, encouraging diversity of thought and supporting entrepreneurship, collaboration and partnership? A single-minded focus upon achieving organisational targets might once have been necessary to demonstrate leadership potential. Contemporary leaders need to recognise that relationships have to be mutually beneficial if they are to last. Engagement, empathy, accommodation and partnering are increasingly required.

There may well have been a time when activities such as coping, cutting costs and restructuring might have persuaded others that a person was "the right stuff" and a "safe pair of hands". Today, does securing and retaining trust depend more upon openness, flexibility and balancing wider interests? Restructuring what exists to make it more viable may not even be a requirement when the way forward is to adopt a different business model. Aspiration needs to move on from survival to activities such as reinvention and reconnecting in order to create a better tomorrow.

Importance of Balance and Flexibility

Windows of opportunity are shortening. Responses to developments and moves in the marketplace are speeding up. Balance and flexibility are increasingly important. One needs to achieve a balance between the interests of different stakeholders and, for example, between the short-term and the long-term, between action and reaction, and between thinking and doing. One should avoid being out at one or more of the extremes. This can require a different set of

Institute Of Directors EVENTS CALENDER

2017 - 2018

Dubai Global Convention - 2017
27th World Congress on Leadership for
**BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AND
INNOVATION**

Also presentation of Golden Peacock Awards for
Quality, Training, Business Excellence &
Innovative Product/Service
18th - 20th April 2017
Dubai (UAE)

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19th World Congress on
ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT

Also presentation of Golden Peacock Awards for
Environment Management, Occupational Health
& Safety and Eco-Innovation
7th - 8th July 2017
Hyderabad (India)

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DIRECTORS' CONCLAVE

4th August 2017
New Delhi (India)

3

17th London Global Convention on

**CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND
SUSTAINABILITY & GLOBAL BUSINESS MEET**

Also presentation of Golden Peacock Awards for Corporate
Governance, Sustainability (both National & Global)
25 - 27 October 2017, London (UK)

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2nd Global Convention on

CORPORATE ETHICS & RISK MANAGEMENT

Also presentation of Golden Peacock Awards for
Risk Management & Corporate Ethics
14 - 15 December 2017, Singapore

5

12th International Conference on

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Also presentation of Golden Peacock Awards for
Corporate Social Responsibility (both National & Global)
& HR Excellence

16 - 17 February 2018, Bengaluru

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National Convention on

**CORPORATE GOVERNANCE &
SUSTAINABILITY**

Also presentation of Golden Peacock Awards
for Innovation Management

16th March 2018, Mumbai

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*Subject to change

skills from those needed to cut through opposition and ignore different views and some interests in order to maximise certain outcomes.

Flexibility includes knowing when to change direction, pull out, start again or try something new. What may once have been seen as a sign of weakness or “giving up” can now be perceived as a strength. In this sense, is business leadership becoming more like political leadership and what Lord Butler once called “the art of the possible”? How does one strike a balance between flexibility and persistence? Are those persisting simply stubborn, or are they trying something new and having another go rather than give up? Are those putting the case for change “cutting and running” or rationalising a failure to achieve original objectives, or are they advocating a different approach.

Persistence can be consistent with flexibility. One should avoid pouring good money after bad. However, where the outcomes sought justify it, one should keep going and search for new ways around obstacles. Tomorrow is another day. Too many people give up when hindsight shows they were tantalizingly close to achieving their goals. In target driven organisations, one also needs to ensure that people do not lazily deliver the bare minimum to achieve targets when and where with innovation and other developments they could with greater application have achieved far more.

Assessing and Handling Followers

The quality of those who follow leaders can be more important than their number. Mature leaders recognise that while many people will claim to have contributed to a successful outcome, similar numbers seek to avoid association with failure. Leaders should avoid fair weather friends. Are followers just happy to join for the ride when the going is good? Will they depart, or otherwise fall by the wayside, as obstacles arise? Will they leave you on your own when it becomes tough and the future is uncertain?

Far more people usually draw from a well than are willing to contribute to it. One needs to be realistic and distinguish between courtiers and contributors, allies and opponents, and workers and parasites. First appearances can be deceptive, so it helps to judge on the basis of outputs achieved. Not everyone responds to trust and opportunity. One needs to treat people as they are rather than as how one would like them to be. Not expecting too much can be important.

Leadership can go to the heads of those who fail to distinguish between themselves and the job titles they hold and the positions they occupy. Both may turn out to be temporary roles. The actions of others can be insidious. Those who have the power of patronage and/or who can give rewards to others can attract sycophants, crawlers, bootlickers and toads. Leaders sometimes find it difficult to obtain independent, objective and honest advice. Identifying people who can think for themselves and who are willing to challenge can be difficult, when so many individuals instinctively agree or feign agreement with those whom they feel can benefit them.

Areas to Avoid

Leaders should seek to avoid conflicts of interest and relationships, commitments and obligations that might limit their own objectivity

and independence. Any conflicts of interest that do arise should be declared. Directors should not vote on a matter if they are conflicted.

Secure leaders seek out people who can add value by exercising independent thought and sound judgement. Those who mouth corporate slogans or repeat ones own views like an echo in a cave add little value. A degree of diversity within an inner group of informed and independent minded people can be healthy, but there needs to be enough shared understanding to hold an organisation together where this is justified and required.

One should not attempt the impossible, however alluring the vision might be and however lengthy the applause at the end of one's speeches. We are on the cusp of robotic, AI, automation, driverless vehicle and other revolutions with the potential to decimate many existing areas of employment. Promising people jobs and employment opportunities might win short-term plaudits, but could lead to longer-term disappointment and disillusionment. Rather than struggle to resist the inevitable, leaders could encourage the search for alternatives, whether self-employment through entrepreneurship, or getting people to think more in terms of fulfilling activities such as sports or the creative arts and involvement in the barter or sharing economies.

Keen leaders are sometimes over ambitious. They attempt too much. They advance on too many fronts, without trusting others and letting go. To succeed in business one does not need to drive people to be excellent at everything. This can lead to burn out and overperformance in areas that are not important for customers or users. A more sustainable approach could be to focus on being noticeably better than the competition in the areas that influence purchase and consumption decisions.

Overcoming Limitations

Effective leaders understand their limitations, without being constrained by them. They instinctively know when they need to listen and take advice. Listening is most productive when one is receptive and open to new ideas. Closed minds limit leadership. Curiosity is an important requirement. Why do so many people expect leaders to provide answers? Ensuring that questions are asked which enable relevant and useful answers to be found is often more important. In the case of large and complex organisations, it may be necessary to initiate consultations and start big conversations.

Some people draw back from even considering leadership aspirations when they feel or discover they lack what it takes to succeed at a particular activity or in a certain occupation. Entrepreneurs among them might look for a business partner or another game to play. They might even invent a market, role or activity at which they could succeed. Some create opportunities by looking for others who might also wish to play a different game, or who could participate if the rules were different. Among groups with disabilities there is much potential which could be unleashed.

Leaders should be aware of their strengths and play to them. One can always address any deficiencies by collaborating with people who have compatible motivations and possess complementary strengths. People do not need to be good at everything to become a director or to

advance to other leadership positions. Many individuals do not secure a directorship because they may be quite good at many things, without in any way standing out in an area that needs to be strengthened on a particular board.

Fairness and Trust

A reputation for fairness can be important for building trust and the exercise of leadership. Fairness and trust can make the difference between the grudging acceptance of the mercenary and the enthusiastic commitment of the convert. Just as other people might seek a fair return for their contributions, so leaders should ensure their own remuneration is fair in relation to the value they add and does not become an issue and a source of distraction.

Allegations of greed and unjustifiable increases in executive salaries has led to a breakdown of trust in some business leaders who are perceived as primarily motivated by their own selfish interests. In surveys that I have undertaken of desirable qualities that are sought in directors integrity usually emerges as a top requirement. It usually ranks ahead of other factors such as education, qualifications and experience. Fairness, even-handedness and moderation - and the avoidance of favouritism, nepotism and excess - are often a consequence of integrity.

Leaders should try to put themselves in the position of those they lead and other stakeholders. They should think about how they come across and the messages their actions convey. Some directors devote so much effort to maximising their own material rewards that this become a distraction, both for them and others in an organisation who imitate their behaviour. When an entrepreneur, or a whole organisation, becomes obsessed with internal activity to increase profit, achieving this goal can become as remote as finding the end of a rainbow. Focusing instead upon external customers and how to cost-effectively satisfy their aspirations and requirements may be a surer route to financial success.

Using Opportunities and Time Wisely

Leaders should avoid regrets, such as those that can come in later life from the realisation that opportunities have been missed. Sometimes one may be tempted to think that influence, "good times" and a strong market position will last for ever. Like advantage and

good health they may be fleeting. Whether an unexpected innovation by a competitor, or a single cell starting to divide uncontrollably, situations can quickly change. Hence, leaders should use any and all opportunities they have to make a difference while they are still able to do so.

Leaders should use their time and the time of those for whom they are responsible wisely, and hopefully in ways that enable those involved to feel that they are engaged in something that is worthwhile. Ideally, one should not waste ones own time nor that of others on activities that are not distinctive or giving people new options and choices. It helps if one can turn an organisation into a cause. This is particularly important for younger people, and those who have a choice and who want to feel that what they are doing is beneficial and that their own contribution is making a difference.

For some self-aware leaders a useful exercise might be to consider what their obituary would be about if they passed away. What would others write about them? How would others perceive them? What would their legacy be? While they may have occupied many positions, what difference did they make? Those who are willing to reassess how they exercise leadership could also consider the obituaries they would like to have written about them and then think about what needs to change. What do they need to do differently for this new obituary to become a reality.

Many leaders know within themselves whether and to what extent they have served organisations or exploited them. They know whether they have looked after the interests of stakeholders or short changed them. They know whether or not they have taken full advantage of the opportunities they have had to make a difference. The lucky ones are those who at the end of their life have few regrets. These individuals are much more likely to be the leaders who were balanced and who acted fairly. The causes they advocated, supported and championed, the ventures they started and the organisations they had the privilege to lead may well continue to do good long after they have

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quotes

Quality

"Juran provided the most precise and applicable definition of quality. He defined two universal sequences of action steps, one for achieving breakthrough, one for achieving control. He articulated the Pareto Principle, which holds a small percentage of factors in any situation will yield a large percentage of the effect. And Juran argued - forcefully and tirelessly- that supportive structure and management commitment are essential to achieve quality. Juran's ideas, methods, and teachings have earned him respect bordering on reverence from the quality community."