



What Tomorrow's Leaders Need to Be Today

Ten years ago organisations were still trying to recover from the Global Financial Crisis. Today, there are still individuals who are feeling the outcomes of the recession that followed, such as graduates who went on the job market in 2009 and 2010 who still earn less than those who started work before 2008. However, in the last few years we have created a world more complex and disruptive since the Industrial Revolution. I say 'we' because we are all responsible for this. The world isn't out there, external to us, but something we create every day. Yet many feel helpless, disengaged or at least, are struggling to keep up. This includes many business leaders in the C-Suite, leaders at the top of the public sector, in fact, leaders across society. How is this resolved? I always remember the wonderful Bob Garratt who worked worldwide developing directors saying that when leading through change: "The learning has to be equal to or greater than the change." There has never been a stronger case for learning to keep up with the time we are in.

What are the demands for leaders today? In a global study of Directors by Accenture from across sectors it was found:

- 85% say disruptive impact of new technologies has increased
- 74% say disruptive impact of constantly shifting customer demands has increased
- 72% say disruptive impact of new market entrants has increased and,
- 62% say investors are among their most disruptive stakeholders followed by employees.

Yet we cannot put this disruption down to just technology or even politics. Society as a whole is going through constant change. All this is creating division amongst employees, customers and leaders. These divisions cut across party politics, age, gender, role and sector. Today's business leaders need to understand this. As well as those who feel left behind, disengaged or angry are a group of individuals who have a different mindset that enables them to be open to new thinking; who use technology and social media in a positive way to be heard and influence companies; and, who demand that our leaders today include them in shaping the future. Above all else they want leaders who are different from many of today's leaders in business. This group of people are intelligent, highly skilled, high earning with spending power and likely to be on the fast track to leadership. They want to only work for companies who have a clear purpose that goes beyond financial goals and as customers buy products that benefit society not just shareholders.

These men and women include Baby Boomers and Generation X as well as Millennials. What defines them is their thinking and mindset not the old demographics of age, geography or politics. They are growing in number as both employees and customers. Above all, they expect different things from

leaders. There is no doubt that we are on the cusp of a huge seismic shift that will experience a last ditch thrust from the 'we know best' leaders before things transform.

In such times of transformation, what were great strengths often become great weaknesses and we see this across business and politics. Most of today's business leaders graduated from Business Schools with many gaining an MBA with a focus on critical reasoning, decision making and driven by results. They operated in a competitive environment that enabled them to succeed that worked very well in the past. Today, these alone are not enough. In addition, nearly a third of directors say skills such as empathy, self-awareness, studying the external environment and intuition are their weakest. Leaders in the C-Suite report that their understanding of new technology and advising their teams on new technology is also a weakness. What this implies is an inability to see beyond the current and past models of thinking. For UK Limited this has to be addressed.

In a recent study, only 8% of C-Suite directors can do both - hard skills such as analysis and critical reasoning with 'softer' skills including empathy, synthesizing diverse viewpoints and hold multiple perspectives – skills and capabilities vital in today's world of complexity, unpredictable disruption and continuous change. Past experience no longer carries weight. In the same study, 82% said they intended to develop these capabilities especially as the evidence shows that in doing so companies produce stronger, sustainable growth and profitability. This is the work of The Leaders Institute, to enable leaders to rigorously acquire and expand their thinking, understanding, capabilities and perspectives. However, this is not about training or business school courses, but new approaches including reverse mentoring and cognitive and consciousness development.

Today's CEOs and C-Suite directors are confronted with an incredible rise in complexity and a growing number of individuals who expect leaders to behave and do things differently. This is not a generation issue but a rise in individuals who are challenging them as employees and customers. In other words, complexity and disruption is coming from society, governments, alternative business models, greater globalisation, new technology, new risks and opportunities and continuous shifts in economic conditions. In such times the board is essential to success and continuous learning is vital in making a group of capable individuals a truly successful board. A strong educational programme that addresses their specific weaknesses will enable boards to have a major competitive advantage for their organisation. The Leaders' Institute has developed such a programme that we are running in different countries to ensure boards have the thinking, understanding and capabilities for tomorrow's world today. As the late Dr Martin Luther King said: "... Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable; it requires the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals."

For more information please email info@welead.org.uk

and ask for a meeting with Hilarie Owen.

