

Change the way you lead

In organisations today, leadership is not in the hands of a few at the top

WHAT is unique about leadership is that it is fluid and needs to be applied to situations and people. There may be overall guiding principles but the application is individual and dependent on what needs to be dealt with.

Leadership of the future, in a knowledge-driven world, is going to require more of leaders than it has in the past where leadership was only confined to the few at the top of the organisation.

Achieving a balance

Knowledge workers seek inspirational leadership and find this for themselves either within an organisation or outside it.

With social networking on the rise, many also find their role models direct from the source, meaning that if someone looked up Richard Branson, they could choose to follow him on twitter and even send him messages.

Depending on the type of leader a person connects with, the leader might also choose to follow their follower, meaning that Richard Branson might follow this individual if he was impressed by him.

This makes it a unique proposition for the future of the workplace. While someone may report to you physically and may not play an important leadership role in your organisation, he could be very well-connected in the bigger world.

A person could also have a wide variety of interests and people to learn from or be just in touch with via social media. Someone who admires Richard Branson could also have a connection with Yoko Ono, Robin Sharma and social entrepreneur groups such as the Social Edge.

So the question is: How do managers lead this very well-connected, opinionated group of people?

The hardest job of any leader is being able to navigate through conflicting views and agendas to come to a decision that suits the greater majority while still considering the minority who may have an important point.

But the bigger challenge lies in being able to balance internal agenda with external



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market needs and making sure that everyone values this as the core foundation.

The dilemmas

Fortune magazine published the following points as the nine dilemmas that leaders faced in 1996. These days, it is not about a choice between two positions — the leader has to do both:

- Broad-based leadership and high-visibility leaders;
- Independence and interdependence;
- Long-term and short-term;
- Creativity and discipline;
- Trust and change;
- Bureaucracy busting and economies of scale;
- People and productivity;
- Leadership and capability; and
- Revenue growth and cost containment.

Most leadership models of the past came from the military, and strong leadership was required as there was only one leader or a few leaders at the top.

Today, leadership must exist at all levels

of the organisation and these leaders must partner closely with industry/market leaders and global leaders who are shaping the future of business.

A good leader will find a way to tap into the abundant energy that exists within his organisation and outside it.

The following quote by Richard Beckhard, a pioneer in the field of organisational development, sums up what leaders of the future need to be:

"Truly effective leaders in the years ahead will have personas determined by strong values and belief in the capacity of individuals to grow. They will have an image of the society in which they would like their organisations and themselves to live.

"They will be visionary, they will believe strongly that they can and should be shaping the future, and they will act on those beliefs through their personal behaviour." - Source: ST/ANN

■ **ARTICLE** by Lalita Nithiyanandan, VP-Asia Pacific, Kelly Outsourcing and Consulting Group.