

INTERNATIONAL INSIGHT AND BEST PRACTICE

59

Generation next

Leadership in a globally interconnected world

60

It's not rocket science

NASA's struggles to turn top performers into stand-out leaders

64

South Africa

A business environment in desperate need of transformation

The next generation of leaders has an overwhelming number of options to choose from in the global business world. The CEMS students I teach – many of whom will become future international leaders – sometimes ask my advice on how to best navigate so many opportunities. My response to them is that they are lucky to have so many options, and they no longer have to think in a linear way. To help them focus, however, I encourage them to think clearly about their values and life purpose. So which areas will this next generation of leaders need to focus on in a globally interconnected world?

1 Diversity While gender will remain crucial, the cross-cultural element will also become increasingly important, since technological progress means that different cultures – while retaining their individual identities – have started to meld together. Then there is the generational element. How do you successfully lead teams made up of several generations? Most important for me, however, is diversity in thinking. Typically, extroverts talk a lot, so people think they have all the ideas. Yet introverts often also have fantastic ideas, but managers do not always pull these out of them. As hard as organisations work to nurture cross-cultural teams and bridge the gender gap, if they do not acknowledge different ways of thinking, they won't bring out the best in their people.

2 Coaching style In a globally interconnected world, intuition and the psychological aspects of leadership – softer skills – are increasingly relevant. True leaders are asking how they can get the

Generation next

What will be expected of leaders in a globally interconnected world?

By

Sunita Malhotra



very best from everyone. Future leadership will also become increasingly virtual, thanks to flexible working practices. Human nature will never change, however, which means leaders will need to work hard at building authentic relationships in a remote environment. They will also need to be highly intuitive, because they will have fewer social cues to pull from. They must be willing to dig more deeply to understand individuals, so they can appreciate what they bring to the table.

3 Managing ambiguity Leaders must find their entrepreneurial spirit in order to manage ambiguity. Since the rapid pace of technological change has brought a large amount of unpredictability into traditional markets, leaders won't easily be able to draw from the past in order to know what to do in the future. Instead, they will be expected to make use of new technologies in ways that can't even be anticipated or understood today. For these leaders, solutions won't come in a neat box. They will need to innovate and find creative solutions that aren't obvious.

4 Purpose-driven leadership More and more, we are teaching leadership to the next generation in a way that encourages them to be more purpose-driven. The logic for this is, as a leader, if I recognise my own life mission, it will enable me to be agile, creative and open to other people's maps of the world.

Personally, I believe that thanks to the combination of focus, purpose and values, the next generation has the potential and power to positively transform the globally interconnected business world. ■

Sunita Malhotra is a professor at several universities, including Université Catholique de Louvain, where she teaches the CEMS master's in international management