



PSYCHOLOGY OF A SUCCESSFUL LEADER

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International corporate leaders look to South Africa for models of excellence.

April 2000 saw the meeting in Cape Town of a select group of business leaders from around the world discussing key issues in the leadership of international corporates. The Integrative Leadership Forum chose South Africa as the most appropriate venue to address the issue of commercial success and social responsibility. The themes emerging during the conference reflected those currently being debated in corporate boardrooms and political arenas around the globe; leadership personality, the management of difference and the exercise of good authority.

Noting in the April edition of *Leadership* that South African leaders reportedly rate these "soft" factors as unimportant, I am reminded that master practitioners of any art form are often least qualified to comment on their own achievements, and would like to suggest that the business leaders in South Africa and Namibia are no exception to this rule. The outstanding social achievements of South Africa could not have been realised without a very special kind of leadership, the very leadership that makes unstoppable commercial success.

Successful leaders are integrated people. In essence, they have integrity, and this is manifest in their decision making, management of people and resources, and exercise of good authority through empowerment and social responsibility. While it is acknowledged that these qualities are difficult to identify and develop, many global corporates invest heavily in precisely this endeavour. For example, financial service institutions ranging from Morgan Stanley Dean Witter to the Royal



Bank of Scotland, and pharmaceuticals such as AstraZeneca, GlaxoSmithKline and Pfizers, to name but a few, all employ external specialists qualified in psychology and business to help develop their senior management talent.

Peter Bateson, an international leadership coach, argues that there are clearly identifiable stages of personality development, which constitute the basic building blocks for leadership development. The first is the integration phase, during which individuals learn to recognise and deal with their own fears of persecution and aggressive impulses. Successful negotiation of this phase promotes the ability to deal with complexity uncertainty and difference. Failure to develop at this phase will result in polarised thinking, blaming and scapegoating and the creation of a world of heroes and villains. The logical conclusion for organisations with such leadership is disintegration.

South African business leaders are no strangers to dealing with complexity, uncertainty and difference, and to managing their own fear and aggression. Professor Paul Lucas, from the Graduate School of Business feels that there is an increasing demand for people management skills from commercial enterprises whose futures depend upon building partnerships, and that there is no shortage of talent. Speaking at the Cape Town Integrative Leadership Forum, South African Attorney, Brenda Stern, shared her positive view of the future, explaining the importance of emotionally mature leadership and the empowerment of women in the workforce. Local artist Tyrone Appollis adapted the Bob Marley song to describe how leaders had embraced the challenge of new technology. “Have no fear of technology – none of them can stop the time.”

The second stage of personal development is the consolidation of good authority, without which, leaders are unable to deal with matters of conflict, power, and ethics. Jermyn Brookes, Executive Director of Transparency International and ex Global Managing Partner of PWC argued at Cape Town that “ Profit making enterprises and non governmental organisations alike must be observably trustworthy in all matters of corporate governance and management – and this includes the social



responsibility aspects of the balance sheet. Sustainable businesses need ethical leaders”. This point was perhaps most strongly grounded by John Heinrich, Marketing Executive of SANTA, who described the serious challenges posed to economic development by health risks to the population. Commenting on the conference theme of good authority, Rudolf Ferscha, Chief Executive Officer of Eurex, and board member of Deutsche Boerse, said “ Team working is essential for any global organisation operating across national boundaries. Businesses will depend increasingly upon the partnerships they can build, and the empowerment of their people” These leadership responsibilities are often learned in the family, says Alfred Legner, founder of ILF and an Executive Director of DZ, the German international cooperative bank.

I should add at this point that the conference discussion on role models for leadership centred not , as one might expect on the likes of Bill Gates, Richard Branson and Warren Buffet, but more on Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King - on individuals who had transformed their circumstances and those of others for the better.

It is heartening, if not inspirational to observe these qualities in large measure in many business leaders in South Africa. Chief Executive Officer of Cape Union Mart, SA, Philip Krawitz has spent many years building a successful business based on these principles, and a tour of his operation immediately reveals his personal commitment to the community. His investment in care and staff development and training has enabled him to appoint his most senior managers from individuals who joined his organisation at shop floor level and his business has enjoyed the unique combination of stability and growth required for in a vibrant economy. Likewise, Dr. Eric Hirsch, Head of International Banking for ABSA Bank attributed the success of his operation in Johannesburg to excellent team work across a range of strongly diverse world views.

South Africa , in many ways, offers much of the rest of the world a model for the future. Many of its business leaders offer examples of excellence in leadership personality through the management of



difference and the exercise of good authority. These qualities are felt by many of the leading global corporates to be among the critical success factors for sustainable business.

The question is, can South Africa celebrate its strengths and deploy its considerable resources to achieve the necessary 5 to 8% growth in GDP advocated by Kevin Wakeford? With the current leadership talent available, there should be no problem.