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Moving Leadership Education to a Global Level

By F. Frank Ghannadian, Ph.D., Dean, Sykes College of Business

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Graduate business programs, executive education and leadership training programs have come a long way in the past 50 years. The growth of graduate and undergraduate business programs around the globe has been expanding at an astonishing rate with business schools growing to more than 15,000 worldwide. There is no doubt business schools have made a positive impact on economic growth and on business practices leading ultimately to improved efficiency and increased benefits to society. Executive education and training programs as extensions or proxies for MBA degrees have also expanded during the past five decades. However, discussions with many corporate executives and HR directors give an impression that traditional leadership programs no longer sufficiently prepare executives for the challenges of a global environment. Numerous surveys administered by consulting and educational firms have indicated that prospective employees need better skills and capabilities to succeed in their jobs.

What has changed in the past decade that prompts us to question executive leadership programs and where they are aiming? We must remember that in today's business world leadership is not limited to individuals with titles of manager or director—almost all individuals in an organization big or small need leadership training. For businesses to survive in today's uncertain, complex and ever-changing technological world, a new series of leadership skills are necessary for all in the organization. Almost all employees are bound to make decisions of importance that may impact corporate strategy and the culture of the firm. Furthermore, in today's rapidly changing technological work environment, employees have laptops and mobile devices that make them virtually connected globally with no confinements to their geographical compounds.

Why is there a need for global leadership development?

Technology has changed the world, and leadership training cannot be isolated from its impact. We cannot deny that the nature of today's technological world has had an impact on global business practices, and many examples and cases exist that illustrate how not every successful manager has transitioned to this new environment of becoming a global leader. Successful strategies in leading a national corporation may not translate well in a global setting. It is possible this could be due to the fact that the rules of engagement may not work in another country or setting due to multiple complexities existing there.

How can global context be added to leadership development?

Given that most companies either have a global footprint or production facilities overseas, it is imperative that corporations identify, prepare and maintain highly skilled employees who are attuned to the needs of the global community. With the growth of technology and increasing globally interconnected business environments, there will be increases in demand for better and broader education and more culturally literate leaders in the world.

Moving Leadership Education to a Global Level

What may be lacking in leadership development, beyond the simple rules of leadership, are the issues of tackling the global environment in a meaningful way. Usually due to lack of expertise or academic preparation, a thin coverage is given to managers and students of leadership. To improve leadership development in today's ever-changing business environment, the following areas of expertise should be explored:

1) **Projecting the Impact of Cultural Differences**
    What works in one country due to a variety of reasons may not work in another. This is no surprise to anyone who has seen multinational corporations operate globally where the product is changed or reformed to the local setting. However, global leaders need to work with multiple cultural groups simultaneously and successfully. This is one of the prime deficiencies in leadership training in my opinion, and there is no simple solution.

2) **Breaking the Communication Gap**
    Many leadership seminars and classes emphasize the importance of leadership and the quality of leadership skills needed to complete tasks, but they fail to prepare the leader to communicate at a distance or across a barrier that is much deeper than language skills. To overcome this deficiency, leaders must fully understand and be sensitive to any geographic, religious and cultural differences that are present. This task requires a lot of experience and training, but it is essential to global business success.

3) **Managing the External Environment**
    It would be a big mistake to ignore the environment in which the business operates. Not understanding the environmental issues in regards to legal, historical and economic factors can have a negative impact on the firm. This can also impact the leader who is in charge of a group of individuals from various socio-economic backgrounds. It is paramount

to the success of the leader that he or she understand the complexities of the environment they are working in and the backgrounds of the people on their team.

4) **Dealing with Diversity**
    It goes without saying that leaders must possess certain skills and traits such as integrity, good communication skills, transparency and open-mindedness. They must also be a good team player. However, diversity skills are also necessary to be a successful global leader. Diversity skills go beyond language and it is pertinent that leaders understand ethnicity and cultural differences as well.
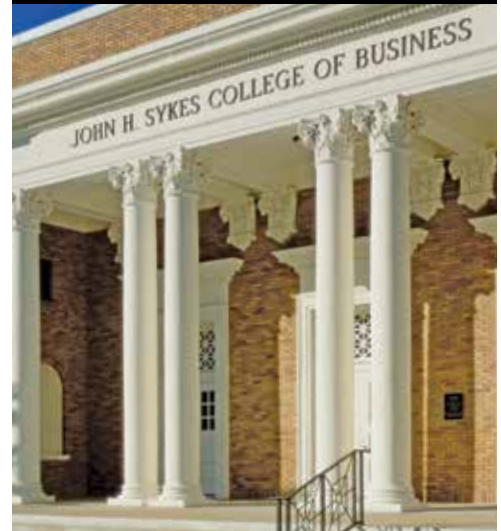
The role of business schools in promoting global leadership values

Leadership education remains one of the top priorities of major Fortune 1000 companies around the world. Furthermore, digitization has created a difficult paradigm to deal with. To overcome this difficulty and to create great leaders of tomorrow through education, there are multiple players in the field of leadership training that corporations can turn to. The main players in the field of leadership training today are not limited to business schools, but include an array of management consultancy groups such as BCG and McKinsey, digital startups like Coursera and Udacity and many human resource advisory companies.

Leadership programs in business schools include Harvard University and the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, to name a few, as well as our own Sykes College of Business, which includes the TECO Energy Center for Leadership. Business schools by virtue of their nature have a large group of intellectual and pedagogical capital because of the faculty who can be frontrunners in closing the gap of teaching global leadership to students, communities and corporations who need to develop global talent. While I have advocated evolutionary changes rather than revolutionary ones, I believe this is more attuned to an academic environment. The future development of leaders and leadership development programs require a revolutionary change to accommodate the need that exists

today in society for global leadership. Customized programs and individualized learning and coaching must incorporate the deficiencies of traditional programs until global leadership education becomes more institutionalized.

SAVE THE DATE

TECO ENERGY CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP UPCOMING EVENTS

Leadership Speaker Series
Feb. 5, 2020 | 4:30 – 5:30 p.m.
For more information, visit:
www.ut.edu/cfl/speakerseries

2020 Leadership Summit
Feb. 12, 2020 | 7:15 a.m. – 12 p.m.
For more information, visit:
www.ut.edu/cfl/leadershipsummit

What's the "Right" Leadership Brand for you?

Pete Broding, Head of Managed Services and Solutions, Modis and Rod Buchen, CEO and Senior Executive Coach, The Buchen Group, LLC

Pete Broding

Rod Buchen

Think of the first words or phrases that come to mind when leading brands such as Apple, Amazon, or Google are mentioned. More than likely the themes of "high tech," "innovative," or "cool products" come to mind. Now do the same exercise with some of your favorite leaders—those first words or phrases you think of are their "leadership brand," or the value they offer as a leader to shape, influence and create results. Whether developed on purpose or not, all leaders—people, managers and individual contributors alike—have a leadership brand. In other words, it's their reputation…what they are known for!

But is there a "right" or "wrong" brand? That depends. There simply is no specific leadership brand that fits every situation or leader. Consider this scenario: *Taylor was known for being an effective command and control project implementation leader because the team was always facing challenging customers with tight timelines. Taylor's style was exactly what the team needed to successfully focus and deliver expected results on time and on budget. But when Taylor took on a role to lead a research and design team, that command and control style hindered all forms of creativity. The team failed and Taylor's reputation as a leader was negatively impacted.*

Defining the most effective leadership brand is a process of matching the individual traits of the leader with the team they are leading and the current environment they are operating in. A "right" leadership brand is considered essential to achieving intended goals and objectives. Conversely, a "wrong" leadership brand collides with a team's mission, resulting in a negative impact towards achieving goals and even the leader's reputation. It's interesting in Taylor's story how the same leadership approach—a command and control style—could result in both a "right" and "wrong" brand identity.

The key is authenticity. Your leadership brand should come across as natural as well as in alignment with your team and environment. Think of this story: *Everyone at the office liked Mike as an easy-going, sometimes aloof, but genuinely positive teammate—especially in times of stress. However, when he was promoted to team supervisor, Mike felt he should establish a more assertive leadership brand. He looked to emulate others and knew of another manager known for producing results despite his extremely direct and often brash manner. Mike decided to copy this style—after all, if it worked for the other seasoned manager it would work for Mike. Sure enough, within the first two weeks his team's productivity plummeted—Mike came across as "fake," and the team just wasn't responding.*

How can anyone approach forming an effective leadership brand? Let's look at three key elements and how you can approach them:

1) **Takeaway - Know Yourself:** Write down three words or short phrases that best describe you as a leader. Then have members of your team, your peers and a manager/mentor do the same. As you review the responses you'll see how you are viewed by others compared to how you see yourself. These describe your leadership brand. In the previous example, Mike didn't utilize the leadership brand he already possessed which had been effective in his organization…instead he did a complete change that didn't fit his personality. The question is: what could he have done to use his current strengths and operating style more effectively? How could you?

2) **Takeaway - Know Your Team:** Many people are satisfied with their own view of the world and never understand that others may see the world differently. Effective leaders not only have confidence in what they see and think, but also take the time to look at things from the perspective of their team members and key stakeholders. They take into consideration how others might view a given situation and factor in the impact any of their decisions and approaches may have on those involved. As Stephen Covey wrote in **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People**, "*Seek first to understand, then to be understood.*" Here are some ways you, as their leader, can learn more about the people you work with:

- Ask members of your team to tell you in their own words what they think the company's or department's purpose is? Why do you do what you do?
- What is their understanding of your top priorities…and theirs?
- On a scale of 1 – 10, how satisfied are they with their current work environment?
- What are their ideas to make things better? Note: If you are an aspiring leader, make sure you are prepared to respond to these questions with confidence.

3) **Takeaway - Know Your Environment:** No effective leader operates in a silo. Effective leaders learn about key stakeholders' priorities and expectations. They study current industry trends and best practices. They are able to explain the difference between their organization and the competition. They build strong relationships with their customers and suppliers.

Let's consider this example: *Kris had a reputation for being organized, an effective communicator and was promoted to program manager for an important merger. The CEOs indicated strong collaboration across both companies was critical to success. Her initial action steps were to personally meet with*

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key people at both companies to better understand their expectations, learn from them about the competition, key customers, valued suppliers, and any obstacles to success she might encounter.

From what she now understood about the environment, she decided to apply her leadership brand by establishing clear, measureable goals and confirming that everyone understood the objectives. She set *the tone at a team kickoff meeting where she empowered cross-company teams to create a shared mission statement, formed joint committees for several key areas of the merger and had everyone agree to regular status meetings and reporting cadences. As a result, employees from both companies became fully engaged in the process. Throughout the program, Kris ensured teams were solving problems together and everyone knew exactly where the program stood because of the regular communications.*

By knowing herself, her team, and her environment, Kris was able to apply the "right" leadership traits needed for success. She was able to build an effective leadership brand as a great collaborator and communicator—a brand that aligned the company's goals with what she wanted to be known for.

It's up to you to determine the leader you truly want to be. Use the above takeaways to be a continuous learner. Learn about your company, industry best practices, what your customers expect, etc. Constantly seek feedback from teammates, peers, managers, and mentors. See if the key words and phrases that describe your reputation (what you are known for) are shifting. Reflect on what you learn. Commit to make needed adjustments. And as you grow as a leader you'll create the "right leadership brand for you!"

The Power of a Growth Mindset

By Gene Lunger, Executive Vice President of Retail Operations (Ashley HomeStore) for the global manufacturer, Ashley Furniture Industries

On Feb. 4, I had the pleasure of delivering a speech, "The Power of a Growth Mindset," to a room filled with students, faculty, administrators, and members of the business community, as part of the TECO Energy Center for Leadership Speaker Series.

Ashley Furniture Industries is the product of very humble beginnings, a compelling vision and hard work. Our founder and chairman – Ron Wanek – grew up very poor on a sharecropper's farm in the Midwest. His family didn't have running water until after his 10th birthday. Today, along with Ron's son, Todd Wanek (AFIs Chief Executive) and Todd's son, Cameron Wanek (SVP Supply Chain and Analytics) we have three generations of Americans driving a growth-focused private organization into the future.

Ashley's business model is simple, but not easy. We are an end-to-end supply chain organization. We design, manufacture, distribute, wholesale and retail through our own branded stores—the No. 1 selling furniture brand in the world. This puts us in great control of our overall supply chain but adds complexity through the balancing act required to make all aspects of this equation effective and healthy. In pursuit of this balance, we have earned our place as the No. 1 furniture manufacturer in the world by huge margins, and the No. 1 home furnishings retailer in North America through the growth of our private store brand—Ashley HomeStore.

Ashley's overall business strategy can be best summarized with an explanation of our vision and mission. The following simplistic statements come from a focus on continuous improvement and the fundamental thinking of Edward Deming:

Vision – *to be the best furniture company*

Mission:
- Improve Quality
- Reduce Costs
- Do More Business
- Make a Profit
- Stay in Business

Gene Lunger

For many that see these statements for the first time, they seem almost too simplistic. The best business concepts usually are. The vision is aspirational, and it is an unachievable target, as no matter what we achieve, there is always more.

The Power of a Growth Mindset

We know that, and we never rest on past success. When you are No. 1 in an industry, you are a target for many great and evolving competitors. This drives us to work harder on innovating and disrupting ourselves. Equate this to the retail apocalypse that formerly great organizations find themselves in today. The great brands of our past are disappearing. Thousands of stores and many organizations have been disappearing each year since the Great Recession. Technology may be driving innovation, but a willingness to disrupt ourselves before someone else does serves to differentiate the future winners from the disappearing brands of our past.

Our mission is short statements — on purpose. It is easy to remember, and a powerful moral and strategic compass for decision-making and action. **Improve Quality** and **Reduce Costs** serve as the foundation of continuous improvement. Focus in both areas creates value for the customer.

Companies are nothing more or less than creators of never-ending value for their customer base. Lose that focus, and you lose everything. **Do More Business** is growth. Without growth, there is only death to look forward to. An organization must constantly reinvent itself to stay in a lead—not follower—position. With the speed that the world moves today, there is no neutral. Neutral turns into reverse as the world passes you by. The next line in the mission statement is to **Make a Profit.** Profit is critical to fuel reinvestment in the organization. To grow at 10 percent per year as a multi-billion-dollar organization requires constant resource planning and investment in future growth. That is a strategic imperative. The last bullet – **Stay in Business** – seems to be taken for granted for way too many companies. The dozens of manufacturers and retailers we have watched expire over the last 50 years may not have appreciated the value of making survival a fundamental part of their operational strategy.

We anticipate and prepare for recessions and economic slowdowns. "In times of peace prepare for war, in times of war prepare for peace." This famous quote from Sun-Tzu's *The Art of War* is foundational thinking for any modern business that wants to navigate an uncertain future.

These business concepts translate into the mindsets of our leadership teams. Ashley isn't necessarily successful because of what we think, but specifically because of HOW we think. The contradictions of a growth mindset and a fixed mindset are critical factors for every player on the team. As a business leader (or a University of Tampa student, faculty member, or administrator) if you want things to become better, YOU must become better. The humility and hunger of focusing on being a lifelong learner cannot be underestimated. Complacency leads to personal stagnation and low self-awareness. In the same way the Ashley organization focuses on reinventing itself, we must all do that as well or suffer the consequences of personally losing relevance and forward momentum.

In conclusion, we do what we do for the communities that we live in and serve. We help people make their homes more beautiful, more comfortable and more personal. We contribute to many charities, support the world's green initiatives and give back tens of millions of dollars to solve the world's greatest medical challenges. Through our U.S.-based manufacturing, we create thousands of jobs and create value in every state we operate in. We are proud of our U.S. roots, and equally as proud of our global footprint with Ashley HomeStore in 50+ countries. We are the retailer in your backyard that you may not have understood before. Now, you have been given an inside view. We want to help you make your home personal, stylish and comfortable. We are your furniture store. Ashley HomeStore – this is home.

Gene Lunger speaks to UT students, faculty and members of the community at the spring 2019 Leadership Speaker Series.

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