

# Leadership in the 21st century

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## In your view, what will make an organisation world class in the future?

Being a world-class organisation is about performance and making sure that people are fulfilled and happy. A key issue is whether or not senior people are participating in the process and being living examples of the principles they set out to extol. The boardroom really needs to understand that its members are role models for everyone else.

## What or who defines an organisation's culture?

I would say that the biggest influence comes from the top management. But it is very important to get the process embodied throughout the organisation. If you just work with middle and senior managers but neglect people lower down in the spectrum, it will not work. For instance, I once worked with a large consultancy at a time when the consultants – the people on

the front line – were getting a lot of special training and attention because the top management wanted them to perform well. But the problem was that the head office staff, who were doing the analytical work of what was brought in by the consultants, felt neglected. I suggested that they gave the same training to head office staff, which made a huge difference as suddenly they felt that their contributions were as necessary as those of the consultants.

## Do you think that the image an organisation has on the outside affects how its staff see it?

I think it is vital that organisations look at what they can do to improve their reputation without pretending to be something they are not. For most staff, it is vital to be pleased and proud to be working for that organisation. If staff don't feel proud, the organisation will not be able to hold on to its best people.

## Is leadership only for senior managers or can everyone learn something from it?

The principles of leadership go all the way through. What we are seeing in society as a whole now is less hierarchy and more



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democracy, i.e. flatter organisations. This means that more people at different levels have responsibility. As soon as someone has responsibility, no matter how small, they become a decision-maker and that is a leadership role. This can be a big responsibility and should not be neglected.

## What makes a good leader?

The key is authentic relationship-building. To achieve this, you need firstly to have clean, honourable and considerate values that come from within yourself. Next, vision is very important. You have to consider future generations, for instance, in energy use. The final key factor is agility, i.e. your ability to change what you're doing. If circumstances change then you have to as well.

## What impact do you think the financial and economic crisis has had on organisational cultures?

Unfortunately, many organisations have been going backwards as a result of the crisis and are becoming more controlling now that they feel that it is a dangerous time. Other organisations are taking risks and starting to do things differently. This takes courage and can lead to better things if it is done right.