

RSOG Seminar

The Next Level: 5 Essential Leadership Skills for the Future

with

John R. Ryan & Christopher Dewar

When : 8 April 2015
Where : Razak School of Government
Speakers : John R. Ryan & Christopher Dewar

About The Seminar

In the dynamic Asian economy, leaders have unprecedented opportunities to drive growth in their organizations. They also face serious challenges, ranging from currency volatility and big data analytics to labor relations and talent pipelines that require greater diversity. What skills do executives and managers need to lead successfully in this environment? John R. Ryan and Christopher Dewar of the Center of Creative Leadership (CCL), discuss insights from the book *Leaders Make the Future* in exploring five skills that every leader in the region needs to know in order to thrive now and in the future. Drawing extensively on CCL research and collaboration with clients throughout Asia-Pacific, they share how organizations can take leadership to new levels and sustain that success with a new way of looking at the roles of a leader in the talent management ecosystem.

Summary

According to The Conference Board CEO Challenge 2014: ASEAN Edition report, ASEAN are experiencing currency volatility, wage inflation, customer behavioural change, and slow economic growth. These factors served the needs for leaders to change their mind set and skills in order to adapt to an ever changing environment, to stay proactive and efficient. Hence, John Ryan and his colleagues at the Center for Creative Leadership have identified five leadership skills for the future; talent, learning agility, accountability, judgment, and legacy.

Talent management is among the most important factors for leaders to consider. Leaders must be able to identify potential talent both within and outside of their organization. It is crucial that leaders do not jump into stereotyping a talent based on their appearance, background, race, or any other determinants, as talent is unique to each individual. Ideally, leaders must engage with their teams to assemble a diverse cognitive thinking group that will greatly contribute to the growth of the institution.

Learning agility is the ability of a leader to learn and adapt to the new surroundings. Ryan suggested that learning agility is the dichotomy of fixed mind-set and growth mind-set. Those with fixed mind-set are more conformist of the status quo, and often hold themselves against their potential. The ideal mind-set to have is the growth mind-set, where they tends to challenge the status quo, take on new opportunity, stay calm in crisis, and the ability to adapt easily to adversity, and not only be able to accept but also reflect on the feedbacks they have received.

Accountability is the sense of responsibility an individual assumes in his or her contribution and performance in an organization. The term, 'renter', is used to refer to individuals with no feeling of obligation to self-improve or to improve the organization. On the other hand the term, 'owner' refers to those that has the deire to achieve high results and contribute to the growth of the organization. An organization performs best when there are more owners than renters.

As a leader, good **judgment** is vital. Ryan emphasised the three judgement imperatives for leaders especially in tackling an uncertain future. First is judgment of people – the ability to identify talent with a strong sense of integrity, high performance ability and with the desire to take-on responsibility. Secondly, strategy judgment – seeking different perspectives and options in spearheading positive startegic change in the organization. For this, humility and engagement with colleagues and teams are essential for leaders to have an an all-encompassing perspective. Lastly, leaders should possess crisis judgment – the ability to maintain composure in crisis and the take time to analyse the situation before reacting. In this case, the process for judgment is preparation→decision→execution.

The **legacy** of leaders is valued more highly than financial gain. Ryan gave 4 methods to cultivate one's legacy. First, seek feedback from friends and family. Second, reflect on those feedback as well as what one has done for one's organization. Third, be humble as each day brings different challenges and experiences. And lastly, be persistant in the pursuit of dreams.

Creating a Talent Culture

According to Christopher Dewar, "Talent Sustainability is an organization's ability to continuously attract, develop, and retain people with the capabilities and commitment needed for current and future organizational success. Talent Management is the work of designing and implementing the strategies, culture, systems, and processes needed for talent sustainability." Organizations need to invest in creating talent culture as part

of their strategic investment for organization improvement. Most likely, leaders have to adopt oneself as “chief talent officer” performing function such as;

- Talent overseers: provides oversight on the organization and the decisions of senior leaders.
- Talent orchestrators: orchestrates the organization’s efforts by aligning resources, and demonstrating commitment and engagement through their own behaviors.
- Talent accelerators: provide systems, processes, and coaching in order to accelerate the development of organizational talent, reducing the “readiness-to-lead” cycle time
- Talent influencers: influencing the development of talent, through close working relationships with people in the organization.

Leaders need to identify the talent required in their organisation and conduct recruitment accordingly. Rewards and recognition need to be given to those who demonstrate high performance even if their potential is low. Motivation and specific actions should be directed to those with low performance whether they are low potentials or high potentials. While high achievers (high performance and high potential) should be given new opportunity and greater challenges for their personal growth. Talent too need to know their potential to move up the ladder. Thus, it is crucial to have a talent conversations for the mutual understanding and commitment of each member of the organization towards personal and organisational growth.

Issues raised

- For most companies, leadership strategy is not standardized across departments.

- The younger generation prefer mentoring practices for their personal growth instead of training, but many managers are not keen on mentoring.
- For the public servant, the career path are not clear. As a result, many aspiring leaders become demotivated to pursue their dreams.
- The environment defines the culture. Leaders should be optimistic, yet humble in their new posting and always seeks advice from experienced staff.
- The concept of talent management and sustainability is idealistic, but it is not realistic due to constrain in the work culture and the environment the organization is handling. For example, a larger and older organization would be harder to change their working culture due to bureaucracy certain protocols they have to abide to. In addition, the implementation of such policy could be poor since most companies are just starting to experiment with it.

About the Speaker

John R. Ryan is the President and CEO of CCL. Before joining CCL in 2007, he served as Chancellor of the State University of New York and Superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy. A former Navy pilot and retired Vice Admiral, Ryan commanded squadrons, wings and forces in Asia, Europe and the Middle East during a 35-year career in the military.

Christopher Dewar is a seasoned organization development and talent management leader with more than twenty-five years' experience helping individuals and organizations improve their leadership effectiveness and team performance. In his career, Chris has worked in internal OD and Human Resources roles as well as an external consultant. As a Faculty Director as well as a Senior Faculty member at the Center for Creative Leadership, Chris is responsible for CCL's faculty selection and quality of delivery. In addition to delivering the Center's open enrolment programs including the Leadership At The Peak (for C-suites) and Leading for Organizational Impact (for leaders leading functions), he works with clients to design and deliver programs for senior leaders in Leadership and Talent Management.

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