

“The Leader’s Changing Role in the 21st Century.”

At the cusp of the 21st century the role of a corporate or organizational leader is changing based upon the challenges that have resulted from revolutionary advances in the learning sciences, workplace technology and generational differences and the international/global nature of the resources that report to them and that they manage through their leadership teams. . Of course, many of the competencies of excellent leadership remain the same such as courage, honesty, inspirational speech, creativity, problem solving and strategic thinking. However, science, technology and changing demographics in the workforce will all contribute to ways in which a Leader’s role in the 21st century most apply those key leadership competencies.

Technology

The advent of Web 2.0 technologies and the extraordinary growth of interactive social media are creating opportunities to communicate and collaborate within and across organizational Sales training, research and development, marketing, organizational design and communication ancomponents and lines of business in ways a 21st century leader will need to know how to leverage to obtain rapid results and mine data that can be used to better understand their people’s thinking, and be leverage to solve problems from the bottom up not just mandate from the top down. Applications like JIVE and Yammer provide secure and rapid movement of reaction data right to the top and leadership needs to know how to harness this new phenomenon of crowd sourcing and product development within their own company. E-learning, both synchronous as VILT or asynchronous as self paced modules, can be used to increase speed to proficiency and reduce training expense. However, neither outcome will be possible without leadership’s vision, support and

involvement. The integration of data derived from talent and people management systems combined with activity and reaction data pulled from learning and content management systems will provide an unprecedented level of business intelligence and trend analytics that can be used to make better budgeting and staffing decisions, but only if leadership understands the potential value, and leads forward in a direction that makes the integration an organizational priority. Assessment and evaluation data has never been as plentiful, the ability to track and record workplace behaviors never so automated, tools and frameworks for measuring performance never so available. All of this data can be pulled, transformed, aggregated, analyzed and reported in scorecards or dashboards that refresh themselves on an ongoing basis, but here's the rub. Leadership has to clearly articulate the strategy it wishes to implement and clearly define or validate the tactics that are going to be used to meet the strategy. So, one of the key needs of leadership in the 21st century won't be how to use technology but WHY to use it. The ability to clearly articulate one's business strategy and the work with HR and Performance Consultants & Instructional Designers to define measurement strategy and performance outcomes will be a key leadership competency expected of leaders in the 21st century.

Learning Sciences

The art and science of instructional design emerged from a military industrial mindset that sought to systematize instruction in all subject areas and at all levels of learning. The ADDIE Model is a good example of a one size fits all framework generated by this school of scholarship. Cognitive science which focused less on behavior and more on the nature of thought and the mind, spawned anchored instruction and goal-based scenarios in the 90s. This led to the proliferation of story and problem-based learning, immersive learning environments (social, conversation, client simulations, application simulation through virtual reality)

and the notion of constructivism or social cognition. In the last decade we have seen the impact of neuro linguistic science on the corporate workplace with the expanded use of blended solutions and the realization that due to the “forgetting curve” reinforcement and performance support are almost more important than the formal classroom or training experience. Learning leaders need to be aware of the research, so they can help their executive sponsors understand that the old way of be extended, enhanced and supplemented using new approaches gleaned from learning sciences. The leader of the 21st century will need to keep an open mind and stay in touch with the latest research and development. They need to maintain a flexible and agile “hand on the wheel” and not allow their anchor and confirmation biases prevent them from moving in new directions.

International and Generational Differences Impact on the Workforce

An effective leader in the 21st century will need to be able to lead a complex and global team composed of a heterogeneous workforce. Rather than making assumptions about how workers should behave, leaders in the 21st century will need to stay apace of the generational and cultural differences within their workforce. To attain greater loyalty, engagement and productivity from their employees, leaders will need to take the time to understand individual and organizational differences due to generational and cultural backgrounds and respond to them with new ways of developing and retaining talent. Leadership will need to know lead changes within their organization and know how to rapidly adopt and adapt policies that recognize and honor differences across generation lines. Because of the huge number of baby boomers set to retire, 21st century leaders will need to know how to develop a pipeline of leaders who can take over when the baby boomers retire. A organizational leader in

the 21st century will need to stay one step ahead of the technology curve and be unafraid to invest and re-invest in technologies that can enhance the quality and efficiency of their workforce. They will need to think strategically and ensure that multiple frames and perspectives are represented on their executive teams and senior managers and learning leaders. Finally, leaders of the 21st century will need to be forward looking, sensitive about the generational and cultural differences in their work force and balance both the art and science of leading forward in complicated and constantly changing times. After all is said and then she will need to be adept at change management, inspirational communication and leadership, and unafraid to hire smart people and enable them through excellent training, technology tools and opportunities for recognition. Many of the old ways are still important and meaningful. Leaders in the future will need every competence a great leader had before the technology explosion occurred, but will also need to bring to the table proactive thinking about which technology will provide the best ROI and ROE while accommodating for their changing workforce, their priorities and expectations

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