

GLOBAL BUSINESS LEADERS

Paolo Fanti interviews Anne Battersby and Helen Stenbom, trainers and coaches



On 30 January 2024 the webinar "Global Business Leaders" was held for

managers associated with Federmanager Bologna-Ferrara-Ravenna, which saw the start of the activities of the Manager Evolution Commission with the presence and greetings of the President Massimo Melega.

We report here some of the most significant points of an interactive meeting, held entirely in English, which provided ideas and insights on how to deal with change and give a very useful perspective on organisational dynamics.

Anne and Helen First of all, I would like to start from a book you have published with a meaningful title "Discovery Prism": what perspective and what vision does this tool offer? If we start from the premise that effective leadership includes engaging the head and the heart, then the Discovery Prism gives organisations a framework and a methodology to do this. It's about connecting the dots between important business tenets to create alignment across stakeholders which lifts en-

gagement and performance. The book shows how to connect the dots in a simple way to magnify the positive energy in your business making all the difference to how an organisation navigates the complex, fast-paced challenges of the 21st century.

The Discovery Prism is a question-based framework that comprises six lenses, each representing a key business theme. The three circular lenses ask the questions: Where are we heading and when will we get there? (vision); why do we exist and how do we behave towards each other? (bigger purpose and core values); whom do we serve and what is our business? (stakeholders and mission).

By overlapping the three circular lenses, a further three lenses are

formed: legacy, promises and strategy. Together all colours overlap to form the white light of the prism at the centre.

The energy an organisation invests in answering all the key questions contributes to something that is much greater than the sum of its parts.

Typically, organisations will address some business themes (most often the circular lenses vision, purpose, and strategy), but they forget about the overlaps, or pay key areas only surface attention.

We believe that by working to explore all the lenses through dialogue, in a collaborative way, an energy will be released that has positive contagion. This is the gift of the prism at the centre of the Discovery Prism and the reward for engaging in the discovery work.

The more all members of an organisation are included in the process, the more they buy into the outcomes and are motivated and engaged making a direction connection to overall performance and outcomes.

It is common knowledge that there are organisations that work and others that do not. There are effective leaders and others that are disas-



trous. Million-pound question: why?

There is so much research to show the kind of leadership that positively impacts the culture of organisations. The Gallup organisation talks about why people follow leaders who are trustworthy, who care about stakeholders, who provide stability and give hope. Goleman talks about positive styles of leadership which are visionary and empowering. At GBL we define positive leaders as those who create leaders of their followers. Why? Because to do that you have to be free of ego and motivated by the good of the whole. Often companies promote people with the opposite characteristics like “command and control” leaders who care mostly about themselves and who have one driving force – to gain personal reward and power. These leaders may achieve certain results in the short term through fear or a surface charisma, but this is not sustainable. Where there is no healthy systemic perspective, an organism will destroy itself, in the same way as cancer cells work in the body. The question then becomes, why do we promote leaders with these characteristics?

So, in your opinion what are the main characteristics of 21st century leaders? And how to train these skills?

In “The Prism”, chapter 8 of our book, we talk about the desired characteristics of 21st century leaders. Just as the Discovery Prism framework promotes a holistic perspective of all aspects of an organisation, we talk about the personal qualities of an integral leader as someone who operates close to their full human potential.

They demonstrate congruence of thought, word, and action. They are values-led, people of integrity who inspire trust and have nothing to defend so can explore with an open perspective. The potential for blind spots is reduced because they are open to feedback and connected to the realities around them as a platform to create what could be. They care deeply about their followers as human “beings”, not just human “doings”.

The most recent studies during and post the Covid-19 pandemic confirm the need for leaders to shift focus from performance to people, from control to adaptability and from hierarchy to working together. Where leadership reflects the values of “humane”, “vulnerable”, “authentic” and “humble”, organisations can be places where people thrive. Organisations with these kinds of leaders are open, connected to their environment and the society they live in, nurturing innovation for a sustainable future.

How do we train these skills?

Frameworks exist to show us criteria and methodology for making decisions, for delegating, for coaching others, but we know that the qualities we talk about are not just trained by following an online course or reading a book. The ideal is to have known a model who has demonstrated these qualities- a parent, a teacher, a manager, or mentor. When we see someone creating positive outcomes where conflict could have resulted or creating trust with a variety of stakeholders or multiplying the capacity of the team through inspiration and vision, we are inspired by living examples.

If not, external help is also at hand. GBL offers both 1 to 1 coaching development and facilitated courses for groups in organisations. Both help raise awareness of where you are now in terms of the impact you have on yourself and others and where you want to be. We help raise awareness, identify the shift that needs to happen, the blocks that get in the way as well as the strengths and resources that will help along the journey. This holistic and systemic approach creates the possibility of real change, not to be someone different, but to be more of the potential leader you can be.

In summary

You can see who someone is by the way in which they do things. Similarly, how a leader leads will show who he or she is. The Discovery Prism framework helps an organisation discover the reality of what it is, the impact it is really having internally and externally and what it needs to do to be true to its purpose. The insights and clarity resulting from the exploration will lead to a more aligned organisation that connects the dots impacting its leadership and culture, its brand, its strategy and the legacy it leaves.

