

Strategic Partnerships Newsletter Summer 2007-08

The 30th Annual Conference on Management and Executive Development was recently held in Phoenix. I attended and presented a session based on some of the findings from my PhD research on the topic of The Strategic Management of University-Corporate Education Partnerships. Below are two findings from the research exploring the growth of university-corporate education partnerships.

Key Influences on the Growth of University-Corporate Education Partnerships:

- Ageing Western populations are leading to increasing shortages of skilled workers and global competition for skilled people.
- The 'Knowledge Economy' is creating greater demand for new knowledge, new products and new services.
- Globalisation and increasing competition in virtually all industries.
- Corporations seeking to up-skill employees to help them cope with modern business demands and to handle the increasing complexity of their jobs.
- Internal succession planning – developing people from within as future leaders in their organisation.
- Corporations investing in education rather than seeing it as an expense.
- Corporations usually have internal resources for operational training but few have the depth of resources for corporate education, including the depth and breadth of lecturer expertise, libraries and the ability to confer formal degrees on the successful completion of a corporate education program.

The Primary Reasons for Establishing a University-Corporate Education Partnership

The following presents the percentage of responses from the global respondents to the quantitative research to the question: why establish a university-corporate education partnership?

- 22% To provide a recognised university qualification.
- 18% To add strength and credibility to in-house education programs.
- 18% To expand the range of subjects for employees to study, not just internal topics and thinking.
- 16% To obtain university objectivity to challenge the traditional thinking within the organisation.
- 12% To integrate university research with the delivery of corporate education programs.
- 11% To enhance the value of in-house corporate education programs through an association with a University.

Over the next 12 months I will write and publish more findings based on my research in future UniSA Strategic Partnerships newsletters. However, if you would like more information about the research or findings please contact me by email: Lindsay.ryan@unisa.edu.au

Lindsay Ryan - Director, UniSA Strategic Partnerships

Leadership – Who Would You Willingly Follow?

Another topic of discussion at the 30th Annual Conference on Management and Executive Development was Leadership. Barry Posner, Dean and Professor of Leadership at Santa Clara University described leadership as a relationship. As such, he raised the question *What do you look for and admire in a leader, someone whose direction you would willingly follow?*

Before reading this entire article, you might like to consider those attributes you would select from the list Barry tested in his research of 5,600 respondents on the type of person people would willingly follow:

- Ambitious
- Broad-minded
- Caring
- Competent
- Cooperative
- Courageous
- Dependable
- Determined
- Fair-minded
- Forward-looking
- Honest
- Imaginative
- Independent
- Inspiring
- Intelligent
- Loyal
- Mature
- Self-controlled
- Straightforward
- Supportive

Having picked those attributes you look for in a leader, you can compare your expectations with those from his research. The Top 4 attributes people look for in somebody they would willingly follow are:

1. 89% Honest
2. 71% Forward-looking
3. 69% Inspiring
4. 68% Competent

Interestingly, during his session at the Conference Barry asked all the delegates to quickly select from the list of attributes above and the results were very similar to his broader research.

It would appear that honesty is one attribute most expected in a leader. As Barry stated, if people don't believe in the messenger, they won't believe the message.

Barry also found character as another important factor in leadership. In particular, the need for leaders to act as role models for the people who follow them. This is vitally important in the context of learning and professional development. In this industrial age, referred to as the 'knowledge economy', new knowledge continues to develop and evolve which means knowledge has a use-by date and the challenge for leaders is to continually invest in their own knowledge and skills development as well as the people who follow them.

Knowledge and skills are regarded as an asset of leaders, however, "left untended, knowledge and skill, like all assets, depreciate in value...and surprisingly very quickly." David Meister

Economic AND Environmentally Sustainable Business

There is growing discussion on what is sustainable business and what are the issues that are driving change in this area. The environmental movement has achieved significant awareness on the issue of climate change globally and there is increasing concern about the sustainability of current business practices. This change in awareness is enhanced with a more educated and wealthy population that is more prepared to make downshifting and sea change choices.

This is complimented by an increasing concern by the broader community there needs to be more community environmental responsibility generally. The recent Federal Election saw climate change as a significant issue, which is a first for Australia. In England there is a timetable for carbon neutral housing, and in Germany all electrical appliances are required to be returned to the manufacturers for recycling after their useful life.

These trends will require new policies and technologies to deal with future issues of community concern and environmental degradation. In a macro sense, there is a very real threat to world stability based on sustainable environmental practices. Not only are there predictions about rising sea levels and extreme climatic conditions, there are emerging issues of water and food shortages due to changing rainfall patterns, impacts on climate and biological systems.

These issues impact on what a business will do in the future, how it will behave, and what strategies it will use to adapt and survive in the future. Increasingly, sustainable business and employment practices will need to be part of a corporate culture to attract and retain staff. Lean Thinking will be the new way of operating a business and will be ingrained as part of the culture of business to reduce waste and improve environmental impact. Ideally, business should be adopting lean thinking now before it becomes the norm or even mandatory.

If you would like to learn more about the principles of lean thinking and various tools for implementing lean practices, UniSA Strategic Partnerships has a number of lean programs running in 2008, including the 10-Day Principles of Lean Thinking certificate program for lean champions. As well, there are other two-day programs exploring environmental issues, emerging technologies, challenges and processes to adapt business and organisational culture to suit a new world view.

For more information on these programs please contact Robert Lloyd at:
Robert.lloyd@unisa.edu.au

FROM THE JOURNALS

Robert, C, and Yan, W (2007) The Case for Developing New Research on Humor and Culture in Organizations: Toward a Higher Grade of Manure, *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, Volume 26, pages 205-267

This research challenges the traditional view that fun and fooling around at work is not good for team performance. According to Robert and Yan, humor, especially joking around about things associated with the job, has a positive impact and can actually improve morale and job performance. They find that occasional humor among work colleagues enhances creativity, department cohesiveness and overall performance. Their research involved analysing several hundred literature sources to examine theories of humor and integrating literature from diverse disciplines that explore the subject of humor.

Chris Robert, an Assistant Professor of Management at Missouri-Columbia University, finds that humor has a significant impact in an organisation and, in particular, humor is not incompatible with the goals of a workplace. In fact, Robert and Yan argue that humor is more than just clowning around and having fun. Humor has meaningful impact on cohesiveness in the workplace and the quality of communication among workers. "The ability to appreciate humor, the ability to laugh and make other people laugh actually has physiological effects on the body that cause people to become more bonded."

The researchers find that incongruity is the most effective form of humor, that is, when you take two things and connect them in an unexpected way.

However the researchers caution on the use of humor across different cultures due to the difficulty of knowing what is and isn't funny. In these circumstances, they suggest the actual work itself provides common expectations that can provide opportunities for humor in regard to customers, clients, co-workers, yourself, suppliers and even the building in which you work. Another source of humor in the workplace is general human experiences, such as the funny things that children say that almost anyone can share. Where humor can get people into trouble is on subjects such as religion, ethnicity or other values.

So for a little humor: What type of dance do you do on a trampoline? (Hip-Hop)

OR...A young executive was leaving the office late one evening when he found the CEO standing in front of a shredder with a piece of paper in his hand.

"Listen," said the CEO, "this is a very sensitive and important document here, and my secretary has gone for the night. Can you make this thing work?"

"Certainly," said the young executive. He turned the machine on, inserted the paper, and pressed the start button.

"Excellent, excellent!" said the CEO as his paper disappeared inside the machine. "I just need one copy."

New Suite of Executive Education Programs for 2008

UniSA Strategic Partnerships has been reviewing its short courses and executive education programs and developed a new suite of programs for 2008. The majority of our short courses are now of two-days duration and can be integrated into our six-module Executive Development program to complement the three core courses of the program. In turn, the Executive Development program provides a pathway for continuing studies by providing credit towards selected courses in some of the post-graduate management programs.

The new suite of Executive Education programs include such modules as:

- The Strategic Role of Lean
- Environmentally Sustainable Business
- Creative Thinking and Innovation
- Managing Corporate Risk
- Working With and In Government
- Strategic Scenario Planning
- Innovation and Corporate Entrepreneurship.

These modules are in addition to the other in-demand modules such as:

- Business and Contract Law
- Fundamentals of Accounting
- Project Management
- Marketing Fundamentals
- Implementing the Balanced Scorecard
- Knowledge Management
- Managing Transformations and Change

For more information on the new suite of Executive Education programs for 2008 and the schedule please follow the link below:

<http://www.unisa.edu.au/strategic/exec-education/default.asp>