

# Leading into the Future

By Prof Sattar Bawany

There's been months of uncertainty and change, and leadership in 2009 is going to look very different from 2008. To make sure you get the most out of your people in the months to come, it's not a case of disregarding all your existing talent management experience and practices in favour of a completely new way of leading. Most leaders have the skills to deal with this brave new world; it's just a case of learning how to put them into practice in a new context.

So as we move into 2009, let's take a look at the top ten lessons to take with us from 2008.



## 1 Handle redundancies well

Unfortunately, job losses are becoming something of a fact of life. But they needn't spell disaster for all involved if they are handled well. If employees are helped to exit the organisation into new jobs or careers, you are not only rewarding the time they have given to you, but you are also ensuring that they leave feeling positive about your brand and importantly maintaining their relationship as consumer.

## 3 And don't forget your HR people

This is likely to be the most challenging time that your HR team has faced. Many of them will not have worked through a time of economic turmoil and might need training, support and mentoring, especially if they are working on restructuring projects and bearing bad news.

## 2 Don't forget the ones left behind

Helping people out of your organisation is important, but their colleagues left behind need a lot of attention too. They will be feeling all sorts of emotions – guilt, panic, even bereavement – which will sap their willingness to put in the extra effort to help the organisation through tough times. You will have to pull out all your engagement stops to keep them on your side through difficult times into the future.

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## 4 Have a vision

Change has to go somewhere and to have a reason for your team to buy into it and come with you. Amongst all the upheaval, focus on the vision of the new organisation at the end of the transition.



## 5 Create a coaching environment

Leaders who coach their teams through change, rather than issuing diktats, encourage employees to take control of their workload and targets. This helps create advocates of change who feel that they have a say in the direction of the organisation, particularly important when they might be feeling out of control of their future.

## 6 Don't forget yourself

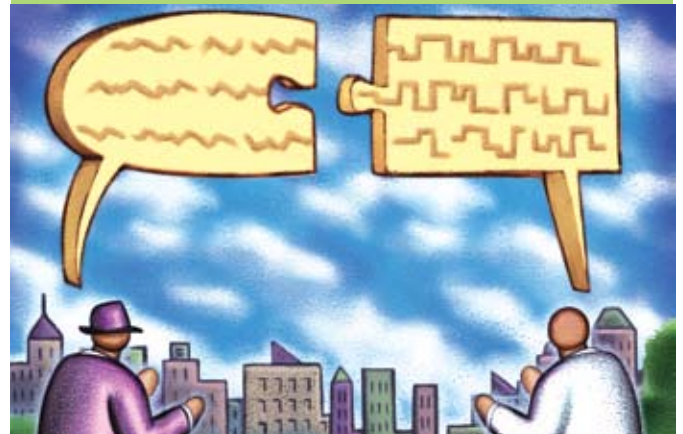
You might be concentrating on the future of your organisation, but it's sensible to take some time to focus on your own future too. According to DBM recent research, three-quarters of new jobs for senior executives come through networking, as opposed to 60 per cent for more junior workers, so in these uncertain times it's worth keeping your networks strong.

## 7 Be strategic

Rather than focusing on your leaders being generic, all-things-to-all-men figures of authority, examine exactly how you need them to behave so that they are aligned with the strategy of your organisation. Do you need your leaders specifically to be innovative or delegating, for example? Once you have identified the behaviours that your organisation values, then you can set about developing those in your leaders. This is a cost-saving measure resulting in more targeted development spends.

## 8 Engage

Now, not only is it important to keep the workforce engaged so that they will feel responsible for the future of the organisation, but we also have a demanding, fickle and hugely talented Generation Y coming into the workforce. Research shows that they want to work for organisations that show that they care for them. At times like these, their flexibility, innovative attitude to ways of working and technological know-how are critical skills for the future.



## 9 Be a team player

In difficult times we need strong leadership, but that comes from a strong team, not from a single autocratic leader. It takes more than one person to be able to cope with the complexity of today's business, the impacts of international markets, increasing regulatory demand and the speed of change.

## 10 Find opportunity in change

This could be an ideal time for you to earn your stripes. If you are able to keep your head through all the change, this could be the most exciting and significant career development opportunity you have had.



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