

"Maintain a perpetual state of readiness for what comes next"

NIKHIL RAVAL, MD INDIA AND **TONY O'DRISCOLL**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ASIA, DUKE CORPORATE EDUCATION SHARE THEIR INSIGHTS ON AND STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING FUTURE-READY LEADERS

How would you define the leader of today?



Nikhil Raval:

Today, leaders characterise their context as a "new-normal" of constant disequilibrium, where the challenges they face are less

predictable and the knowledge bases they draw from are less reliable. Leaders feel like they are navigating permanent whitewater where the volume, variety and velocity of issues and information are creating ongoing tensions and tradeoffs that must be addressed in real time.

To successfully navigate this permanent whitewater, leaders have recognised the need to develop higher order "sense-abilities" that enable them to perceive complex situations without falling prey to the blindness of bias, make sense of these unfamiliar situations by leveraging systemic and integrative thinking and choreograph and catalyse action in a desired direction by wielding influence as opposed to position power. In order to develop these higher-order sense-abilities, leaders must have the courage to let go of what they know, the confidence to step-up to what they don't and the conviction to hold-on as they navigate the whitewater of perpetual change. Courage, confidence and conviction are the foundational attributes required by a leader today to navigate this new normal of constant disequilibrium.

What are the key leadership challenges and trends globally and in Asia/India?

Managers of large MNCs in the west are struggling with what we call "dual economy growth syndrome". In many instances, in their own geographies (for example, Europe), growth is stagnated and the focus is more on cost efficiencies and operational excellence, whereas the same companies with a presence in the East (for example, India/China) are facing 7-8% growth. Here the focus is on innovation, globalisation and strategy execution. Leaders have to mature emotionally faster. Due to the skewed proportion of the talent pool in the marketplace, leaders in Asia are expected to grow much faster. This means, leaders are required to cultivate a greater sense of self

awareness. This requires being aware of their own strengths and weakness and their leadership style. It also means leading a diverse set of teams across different cultures, and often virtually (global leadership). Leaders have to learn skills in a fast growth environment. This means running efficiently in the short term and also investing for the long term.

Given the recognised and urgent need for more capable leaders to drive growth and prosperity, what shifts are you observing in how organisations are building their leadership capability and capacity?



Tony O'Driscoll:

Leadership development today must place much more emphasis on what I call the "X-Factor". To date, much of our focus and energy has been

allocated to the content of leadership development. Moving forward, our focus must shift from content to context. Context is where the work of leadership is exercised each and every day. The more connected and complex the business situation, the more we need to develop a leader's ability to learn in real time within that specific context. The age-old adage that "experience is the greatest teacher" comes to mind here. The most advanced organisations are recognising the need to complement and augment content-driven competency based development approaches with context driven experiential development approaches. We are seeing companies sending managers to "market places" for the places they wish to invest and grow. Understanding how to leverage experience to drive changes in mind-set within a leadership team is at least as important as building individual competence around a new leadership tool of framework at the individual level. Today's leading edge organisations think deeply about building both, individual leadership competence and institutional leadership capability and they are architect leadership development systems that integrate classroom, coaching and work experience in a much more purposeful and powerful way.

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