

Transcription - Karan Rhodes Part 3

Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. We're concluding our discussion with Karen Ferrell-Rhodes today, looking at what qualities we might identify in potential future leaders as well as the results of the survey that she was part of, where they looked at thousands and thousands of leaders and came up with seven qualities across all industries that are useful for high performing leaders.

The other question I had while we were talking was about the qualifications about the study. We had a guest earlier this year who was introducing what he called the Fast Track MBA. So it was going to be that essentially cutting it back to 12 months because the period of time that it is regardless of where you're studying it was just too long, too expensive and not really giving people the skills that they needed in today's workforce. Do you see that that might be a trend, that formal qualifications, that the time it takes to get them would be shortened, would be more focused because the other thing he talked about was that, in his particular industry, MBA general courses only gave it six weeks for a particular topic and what they were finding in the industry was they needed, they felt that they needed people with that formal qualification still, but they wanted more of a focus on their particular needs in that industry. So have you seen that as a requirement as a trend?

Of shortening the education time? Yeah. I have from the corporate side of the house and a lot of my network and clients are larger size and enterprise level firms. We do do some medium size. So I kind of have a little bit of a slant towards that and they are looking for shorter programs but high quality programs and it's largely due to the reduction in tenure. If they're going to invest in tuition reimbursement programs or things like that, they want to be able to leverage these new skills their staff get. I do see that.

From the higher education side of the house though, I know they're trying to keep things status quo. They're struggling with that requirement and meeting those demands. They're trying to push some of the shorter programs to continue in education offerings from the corporate side of the house. They really want the renowned programs from some, you know, your prestigious universities. So it's an interesting tension that's going on right now, but I think it's going to take some time to resolve that, but it is there definitely.

Do you think it's a generational change? So we're not going to see it for the next 10, 15, 20 years?

It's going to be market driven, honestly. There's going to be resistance to it from inside, but it gets there. Historically they are slow to change and adapt, but I think it's going to be market driven.

It's interesting you said that because we had a guest a long time ago now who was a marketing director for a higher education institution here and she said at the time that her biggest struggle was getting internal support for what she wanted to do. That was at a time where she was moving towards encouraging them to have more online study and what happened was external situations that said, you're going to have to do it that way.

And for my experience on the higher education side they have meetings to have meetings to have meetings to discuss changes. It just takes so long, but to your, to your guest point, market conditions do many times drive the need for change. And that is exactly what happened during the pandemic.

It's probably straying a little bit off the point. It does democratise it more and make it available to more people. If it's shorter periods of time, if it's obviously going to be less financial strain on them to get it done because this fellow we talked about was talking about the extraordinary cost of it and how you spend the next 10 years of your working life repaying what it's cost you to get this qualification. Are we seeing then an opportunity for more people to pursue that extra qualification that they might not have the access to otherwise?

Absolutely. And I also think that it opens doors across the globe, especially in some of the countries that are prime to be major players in the future, some countries in Africa. There's quite a few in Europe, you know, everywhere. It opens up to your point of a lot of doors for them to get that credentialing that will help them in their career and then it will affect general race, general wealth for them and their families because they got those doors opened to them.

And that's exciting.

It's exciting to think that education in any sense can be spread so much further than the elitist areas that these may be.

Exactly, exactly.

Right, next question, are our potential leaders different to those of 10 years ago? This is assuming you knew leaders 10 years ago.

The question is interesting because it says our potential leaders might be different to those of 10 years ago. So it's not the people who are in leadership roles now. Someone who is looking at their own staff and saying, am I looking at different qualities? I would say yes, you will be because of the reduced barriers of doing business globally, more and more, sort of doing that. So that increases the diversity of perspectives that leaders are dealing with. So they need that additional patience, understanding, respectfulness, all of that, those good qualities for that. I also think that this whole five generations in the workforce is still here to stay for a bit. The oldest segment in the workforce is largely still there. But yes, in the newer generations, in Z, they are in the workforce now. So there will still be that dynamic. And then in addition to that, Kim, and this is very currently established now, but in the very near future is going to be even more complex.

A leader can find themselves having on their team employees within their company, gig workers, like contractors, vendors, and they'll need to factor in things like AI on how that impacts work. As well as like a bunch of collaborating across all of that. So the leaders of today and tomorrow are going to have to be more effective of pulling together all of the entities involved in helping to get the work done and coordinating that and managing that to a successful conclusion.

And it's sometimes it's hard enough to manage one person when you're having to manage all those different dynamics. So I'm reporting to you in some areas to get the work done in an expeditious manner or get tasks done in an expeditious manner. It's going to take a different kind of leader that has those skillsets that are going to be able to do that. And that's what I'm going to see on the horizon.

When you said that, I thought, how do you manage someone who doesn't report to you? Because I know it's across my whole career, I've had that. And I found that the biggest challenge.

It is. And especially I'll say for the States, because there are laws, federal laws about treating vendors and contractors the same as you do employees. You can get highly fined and all other consequences. So it's hard. And that's why I think that the core skill sets of managers are going to have to adapt because they're going to have to be able to be clear and direct, what type of work needs to be done by your gig workers and your contractors and vendors. And then merge that into those that you're giving physical direction to your employees and figuring out how that all is going to flow nicely. And what to do when things don't flow nicely and you have the course correct and pivot, how do you get everybody all involved? Because to your point, it's really challenging to direct the work of those who don't directly report to you.

And it's perfect timing because the last two podcasts, we've talked about the difference between leadership and being a leader and being a manager. And so there are obvious differences. But when we're talking to you, we're talking about developing your leadership qualities, not necessarily about how you manage today.

True, but you've got to create an established vision or a north star that all of the entities, as a leader, you have to do that so that all of the entities know how their work is contributing to the ultimate goal. And as a leader, you'll need to make sure that you're keeping everyone on track. They have the same talking points. They know the same metrics. They are working together as well as they can as an extended team. That's what the leader is going to be required to execute. And right underneath them, the managers are going to have to deal with the day-to-day tasks, right? They take the direction from the leader and then make sure that their teams are turning out what that beat is.

So they're going to be skill sets, these skill sets for managers as well as these skill sets for leaders. Challenging time.

Now we can talk as long as we like, but I would like to go on to the book. So "Lead At The Top Of Your Game" is the book.

Yes.

How did it come about? Why did you have to write this? Why did you have to get it out of your head?

It was bothering me, Kim. I had to get it out into the world. Well, the short answer is when I

was at Microsoft, I helped to lead the global high potential leadership program there, which was the top 3% of leaders in the company at the time at all career stages. So there were about 4,200 individuals in the program. And this was before it was common to have terms like key talent and high potential and all that out there. We were trying to figure it out at Microsoft just like all other companies were trying to figure out as well. But one of the fortunate things was I was able to be part of numerous think tanks and work with entities like the center of creative leadership and groups like that, where we doubled down on trying to understand some of the key competencies and skill sets of high performing leaders. That's where I got a lot of my initial information and perspective from.

But going back to my point about what we found the missing link, was how to help leaders actually implement in their day to day role. That was the missing piece. That's been about six years ago. We commissioned a research study and surveyed and interviewed over 10,000 high performing leaders in organizations trying to understand what they did differently than 95% of the population did. What were the actions, the tactics that they used to get to that level. So we took a little bit of a different spin when we were looking at that. And so long story short, there were hundreds that we discovered. But there were seven that were uniform across all industries and across all career stages and that were deemed critical to their success. So we decided to focus on the top seven because we thought, boy, we were able to teach that around the world, the probability of leaders being more effective will really rise. And so those were the seven.

The first was high performing leaders led with intellectual horsepower. And intellectual horsepower is all about using your areas of expertise to look for trends and peak around corners to see what's on the horizon. So if you're able to bring that knowledge to the table, to your organization, that advanced foresight, they really appreciate it, that was key to your success.

The second was leading with courageous agility. And that's all about having the courage and fortitude to stand up for what you believe in and do what's right, even if the features aren't clear. So really having the confidence to speak to what needs to be done and try to convince others to join you in this effort of having that courageous agility was very key.

The third was leading with strategic decision making, which is just what it sounds like. It's making good decisions yourself or leading good decision making processes with your team. That was a critical component.

The fourth was leading with entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship was all about building the organization by identifying new opportunities to improve upon processes, products or services. So it's within your entity that you're working in, how to bring innovation and improvements to the table.

The fifth key tactic was leading with a driver for results. And that's all about being tenacious to get to the end result of what you're trying to do. Even if you have to pivot along the way.

The sixth tactic was leading with executive presence. And the way we define it is making very clear either oral or written presentations of your perspective in order to influence others to follow your lead. So having that grit and that charisma and the data and the facts to

encourage them or compel them to join you on your leadership journey.

And then the seventh is leading with stakeholder savvy, which is kind of the stir tactic to have an emotional intelligence. But it's all about assessing the inter- interpersonal dynamics that play with all your stakeholders that you're involved with and operating effectively with all the different types of perspectives and people that you deal with.

So those seven leadership tactics, we call them tactics because they're important. They're all equally important, but you'll use different tactics based on what is important at the time. If you're presenting to your board of directors, you're going to pull that tactic of leading with executive presence. And then there's other times when some of the other tactics are more impactful.

Out of those seven was, is there any that surprised you? That kind that floated to the top? What did you expect the day with the things that resonated most?

I wasn't surprised by most of them because I had witnessed them around the world. In the C suite, they valued all of them, but they really valued leading with courageous agility because at that level, you're having to go toe to toe with your peers on what priorities or direction the company, individual should take. And there are a lot of people with a lot of different perspectives. But those who were able to lead with courageous agility were ones that really were able to shine in their place of work.

Well, I think that that's a really good place to finish our discussion today. We have covered a broad range of things that both our listeners and we wanted to talk about. We will put all of the details of how people can contact you and how they can get the book and all of those other things onto the page on the website. But for now, thank you for your time. I know that we will be revisiting the topic, so we will be talking to you again because we didn't get onto emotional intelligence and that's a whole podcast on its own.

There's about three podcasts, but yes, definitely would love to come back and chat with you about that as well.

So for now, let us finish on that note. Thank you Karen for your time this morning. I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.