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Career

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There is an unprecedented demand for uplifting leadership skills, writes

Gaenor Vaida

Leading the way to prosperity

REACHING the pinnacle of one's career, whether as a line manager, head of department or company director, always requires the same ability - leadership.

Magnus Karlberg, a partner and coach at executive development and business coaching firm Change Partners, says leadership is about "self-knowledge, responsibility, respect for and development of others."

Karlberg says that, particularly in the context of black economic empowerment, there may be a misperception among youngsters that leadership is about making easy money and having the right connections.

"True leaders often work their way up through the ranks and become role models that people can relate to and emulate - they should be an inspiration to others."

Karlberg believes leaders need to have respect for and understanding of individuals and cultures while at the same time being "firm and steadfast in their convictions, consistent and always set a good example.

"Good leaders take their time to task if performance is not up to the required standard and employees should realise they don't have to face the consequences if they do meet their responsibilities."

The People Business, which offers people development and leadership training, has developed Ladder of Leadership Competencies.

This is a tool to help organisations effectively train up staff in the relevant skills as they are promoted.

The People Business MD Jill Hamlyn says: "Leadership is one of the scarcest resources available today and the focus on uplifting leadership skills within companies is growing exponentially."

She says the model combines the necessary "functional managerial abilities and leadership skills" with personal improvements for the individual.

Hamlyn explains that leadership involves three key aspects:

- Creating a vision and strategic direction for the organisation;
 - Communicating this to employees and customers; and
 - Inspiring and motivating people to achieve this vision.
- Although "the objectives are simple to define", people still have to learn a new set of skills in order to achieve these objectives and to be able to lead employees.
- The model consists of over 60 "leadership behavioural competencies" which are split among six levels of work.
- Each level is defined by a person's position in an organisation and the relevant skills necessary to handle the responsibilities that are tied to the position.

The model is personalised to fit an organisation and ensure the same cultural norms are applied at all levels, and that the model incorporates the organisation's vision and objectives.

Hamlyn explains that "competencies" are more than just being able to do a task, "but

LEADERS OF THE PACK: Pick 'n Pay's Sean Summers and African Rainbow Minerals Patrice Motsepe and Sasol's Pieter Cox are, according to one model, Level Six leaders, who will develop long-term visions for their companies. Over the years, each has been voted by their peers as Business Times Top 100 Business Leader of the Year.

also the possession of knowledge and understanding, and the ability to transfer skills and knowledge in new situations."

People in Level One, for example, mostly carry out specific tasks.

Necessary skills are practical judgement, reliability and actively taking responsibility for the position.

A promotion to Level Two now requires working successfully in a team environment and developing the skills to supervise.

The leadership skills now required are becoming more self-aware; in control of personal behaviour; the basic managerial skills such as organising, planning and delegating tasks; and performance management.

A leader at Level Six needs to have significant personal and company networking to be able to ensure the organisation has long-term viability.

A leader at Level Seven, for example Bill Gates, is focused on redefining the industry. He or she will have an impact on business globally.