

The first international worldly leadership summit

The Leadership Trust has now established itself as the centre of excellence and hub for an important leadership initiative and network that will have a major impact on leadership for our post-millennial world. Almost a hundred top thinkers from all corners of the world met on 22-23 September to share critical leadership wisdoms from their societies, and then to focus on how these wisdoms can be combined and developed to address the major problems facing business, society and the planet today.

Why Worldly Leadership?

The term 'worldly' is derived from Gosling and Mintzberg's famous Harvard Business Review article 'The Five Minds of a Manager'. The worldly mindset is about seeing and understanding from close up the many different worlds within worlds that make up our globe and taking action.

In the boom years of the eighties and nineties it was possible for the west to continue its economic growth and prosperity without too much concern for the problems being faced by the developing world. This was generally felt to be the domain of governments or NGOs, but remained largely disconnected from concerns of business leaders who saw their primary responsibility as being to their shareholders. Since the turn of the new millennium, however, it is increasingly clear that responsibility for the future of our planet and indeed of humanity as a whole lies with us all, and that together we must find new ways to lead the world through this crisis. All sectors of society will need to be involved, and we know now that business will have an important role to play in finding solutions to these crises. A new form of business leadership will be necessary.

Focusing on top leaders alone and ignoring the leadership potential that lies at all levels within organisations and societies is far too narrow a definition of leadership to address these challenges. We need to understand more deeply the collective and shared nature of a leadership process that will be capable of meeting the needs of our interconnected world. Finding or rediscovering leadership

wisdoms from corners of the globe that may not hitherto have found a voice, or that have become lost from view, and in particular drawing from indigenous or ancient cultures is one way to do this, and an ambitious but vital element of Worldly Leadership research.

The story so far

2009 has been an important year for Worldly Leadership. Our academic Symposium in May co-hosted with the University of West of England saw sixty senior leadership scholars meet over two days to share research insights into leadership theory and practice beyond the western world. This meeting convinced us that building a hub for this dispersed research community to continue their studies into Worldly Leadership was not only important, but also that it had never been done before. For the first time, we had opened up the possibility for scholars to share and compare their dispersed leadership ideas.

The Summit

Together with partners from the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI) and Ashridge Business School who shared our convictions, we invited leaders from across the globe to represent business, education, governmental and non-governmental organisations at an intensive two-day leadership think-tank: the first international Worldly Leadership Summit. The global leadership challenges of our times would be examined, each workshop and session offering a different leadership lens from across the globe. Our objective was that the combined discussions of the participants would produce new ideas, thinking, and energy, leading to individual and collective action planning within the spheres of influence of the participants.

Indigenous leadership wisdoms

The Summit was opened by indigenous leaders from around the world. Nick Lunch from Insightshare had produced a powerful video in which indigenous leaders spoke of the immediate and pressing problems facing



Emmanuel Mankura

them as a result of careless economic development that had blindly overlooked the finite nature of the world's resources. These leaders urged the Summit participants to rethink about the type of leadership that is now required for this world. Emmanuel Mankura, a leader from a Maasai community in Kenya, then spoke with conviction about developing leadership responsibility at an early age. The Maasai people who in recent years have faced a severe drought that has killed much their livestock, nevertheless still place their most valuable asset in the care of their children from an early age. The acceptance of such life or death responsibility by a child, often starting with the care of a young goat, means that the checks and controls adopted by western organisations to instil accountability become redundant. Maasai people favour responsibility over accountability, and it works for them.

Synthesising western knowledge and eastern wisdom

Dr Jagdish Parikh drew on Indian wisdoms to reflect on leadership as a mental state, and argued for the importance of honesty as a fundamental quality of leadership. For Jagdish, 'feel how' is an element of leadership that is as important as 'know how' and 'do how'. Jagdish argued that the west's obsession with knowledge and knowing often means that we overlook 'being' and 'doing'.

Truth, goodness and beauty

Professor Jonathan Gosling raised the question of leadership purpose. Focusing on truth, goodness and beauty, a triad that for centuries has been examined by philosophers from both western and eastern traditions, and can be traced back to Plato in the 4th Century B.C. Jonathan asked why in modern organisations and society we spend so much time reflecting on the leadership process and so little time on the goals of leadership. These three essential qualities are too often ignored in our quest for economic growth, yet philosophers have long seen them as a fundamental part of what connects people and organizations.

Business leadership is a vital part of the global solution

The business sector was represented by Richard Harvey, until recently CEO of Aviva plc, and who has since spent considerable time working as ambassador for Concern Universal in Africa, and Ian Hudson, President, EMEA, Dupont, both acknowledged the crucial leadership role of business and commerce for a more sustainable world. They sought to persuade the Summit not to dismiss the role of business, but argued that both SMEs and corporations need to change their mindsets to play a crucial role in leading sustainable growth.

Outcomes and resolutions

Many individual and collective resolutions were made at the Summit. All have one thing in common, a sense of urgency to progress Worldly Leadership for collective action.

We are proud that the Worldly Leadership movement started here at The Leadership Trust in Ross-on-Wye and is now gathering its own momentum.

The 2010 Worldly Leadership Summit will take place at The Leadership Trust on 6th – 7th September. All leaders are welcome, and we particularly welcome business leaders to participate.

To reserve your place please contact Linda Keirby-Smith on + 44 (0) 1989 760705.

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This article was first published in the Autumn 2009 edition of *LT Focus*