

A new leadership agenda

Involvement and ethical behavior are missed most

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A crisis in Leadership

I would like to present a new agenda for leaders to fill the gap with the new expectations people have towards leadership. In this year's Edelman Trust Barometer (Edelman, 2013) it is sharply and painfully revealed that worldwide trust in leaders has sunk to the lowest rating ever and a new and different focus is needed to restore this lack of trust; there is a leadership crisis going on.

A few summarized outcomes from this international research, held amongst 31.000 respondents from 26 countries:

- Leaders are not credible as spokespersons. Experts and Peers are at the top of the list of credible spokespersons, regular employees, representatives of NGO's and business analysts follow. At the bottom of the list are leaders and representatives of government
- Lack of credibility of leaders. On a credibility rating leaders from 18 of the 26 countries score under 50%. Government Leaders and business leaders get, at the majority of the participating countries, a low rating.
- Too little ethical and moral behavior. Only 20% believe that business leaders and government leaders act ethical and morally.
- Fraction in trust in institutes versus trust in leadership. The difference between the levels of trust in government and business at large and the belief that leaders from government and business shall speak the truth is substantial. Leaders are structurally less trusted compared to the sectors themselves.

Very clear results, there is a job to be done to restore the level of trust.

New trust

The last five years a major change in values has taken place. To gain trust before 2008 it was sufficient to show good company results, have an excellent CEO and have a high scores in yearly industry rankings. Nowadays these are no more than basic data, at the bottom of the list when it comes to gaining trust.

Treating your employees well, putting customers above short term profits and be transparent in what you do, are the new basics to gain trust. Different values to navigate and a new agenda for companies and leaders to work on.

A new leadership agenda

The most important items on the agenda for new leadership.

A. Organize involvement

1. Put the customer before profits. Profit is a short term focus, sustainable customer relations make a long term profitability.
2. Listen to the needs of customers and ask feedback. Customers are active independent decision makers. This new reality asks for a new approach in customer relations.
3. Treat your employees well. Employees are important spokespersons for your company and with the upcoming possibilities on social media employees have a large impact. Bad employer ship is less accepted and will come out more quickly.
4. Communicate frequent and honest about the state of affairs. After all the frauds, scandals, misleads and failures in governance that have come out the last years, the message is clear that covering up is no longer a desirable and feasible practice.

B. Act ethical and with integrity

1. Use ethical working practices. The basis of credible leadership is acting with integrity. You are judged by your actions, not your intentions.
2. Take responsibility in dealing with issues and crises. Look for vulnerable situations instead of walking away or covering up.
3. Manage your work in an open and transparent way. Within as well as outside the company transparency is the new norm.

New leaders; get to work!

Literature consulted

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