

Questions to ...

ARG poses the following questions for business leaders and corporate decision-makers to consider in the context of the current global financial upheaval,

ARGs purpose is to heighten awareness around essential *soft issues* like the management of valued talent, upgrading your best people and to encourage reflection on talented human capital as a means of managing risk. This will ultimately ensuring that your business emerges as not only a survivor among competitors but a better business with better people who want to continue to work for you.

With ARGs support, your business will gain beneficial outcomes, such as enabling better decision-making, ensuring cohesive teaming and overall, providing a capability to survive in challenging times. These hard outcomes protect shareholder value. Consider these questions to see if you have areas for improvement and whether the options **ARG** offers just might re-invent your current business situation.

By way of scene-setting our questions to you, here is an extract from businesswoman named "Katherine the Great" and "Superwoman" by the British Press, as she tells Davos world leaders to invest in people ~ Davos 2009 IdeasLab - Katherine Garrett-Cox

"The human dynamic in any organisation defines it. Culture is not created by technology, PowerPoint presentations or numbers on a spreadsheet. It is our people that create the long-lasting and sustainable threads that will continue to be woven throughout our organisational histories. Periods such as these will be defined by the leadership that is displayed. In essence, when the going gets tough, the fundamental difference between the right sort of leadership and the wrong sort will be exacerbated.

It will be a courageous leader who continues to focus on the investment in human capital during the coming months. Of all leadership traits, courage is one of the most vital, it differentiates leaders from followers. It will be ever more important to make the right decisions. In order for companies to gain true competitive advantage, they will need to attract, retain and develop the right people. Regardless of role or title, we owe it to all our people to enable them to maximise their performance potential.

It will take a courageous leader in these troubled and uncertain times, to take the long-term view and continue to develop their people. It is perhaps too easy to focus on the short-term and for many, this is exactly what they will be doing. However, it is precisely at moments such as this that leaders should be seeking to fulfil the potential of the people who they lead."

75% of executives surveyed for the Global Leadership Forecast 2008 | 2009 identified improving or leveraging leadership talent as a top business priority. Source - DDI

So, our questions are ...

To the Board

- Making better decisions that count, sometimes needs an outside perspective to correct perceptions. Consultants 'tell' you, however mentors guide you to self actualisation with new habits that last. Have you thought of innovating board interaction using a peer mentor director as an enabler of strategic insight?
- When was the last time you opened up your board process to challenge? Are there aspects of your own decision-making processes that you feel you may need an experienced head to take a look at?
- As a director, do you believe that the CEO and leadership team has board support and real observable interest in their on-going development to best deal with the current hard economic conditions? Have you considered what is the potential of your key executives to cope in these circumstances?
- Have you assessed the impacts of talent failure as a part of your risk management strategy for the company's best and critical assets? Not all senior executives have experienced the current challenges in their careers. Would attachment of a *sage head* add-value to reduce risk for you as a director?

Did you know that McKinsey have identified among the Top 10 mistakes made by boards are to focus too much on top-line growth without underpinning the human soft-skills support of management needed to deliver targets, and; complacency around ignoring stress, change and lack of experiential knowledge around challenges that have not been encountered before.

To the CEO

- None of us know everything, nor how to solve everything or how to approach challenges without a previous frame of reference. Have you considered using an occasional *second-head with relevant experience* to expand your insight for challenges you face as the leader? This might be a business-mentor or an executive coach. The situation will indicate which is best choice. Another vital element a professional mentor or coach can provide is techniques to build and maintain trust, both with the Board, ExCo and employees.
- How might a respected peer mentor exchange assist dealing with the loneliness, isolation and high level of responsibility with the burden your position brings? Consider value of an independent, objective and completely trustworthy sounding board that has no 'vested interest' to whom you can download, expand options, sharpen decision-making and increase strategic planning capability.
- As the leader do you seek alternative opinions that challenge biased views confirm your thinking, or engage independent arms-length business experience at peer or better level? If not! Why not? Sports and entertainment stars use such expertise every day, so why not business?

- Do you have board endorsed support for you and your top-team to access experiential thinking as a way of building resilience, insight and underpinning the leading talent in the business? If not, why not?

Did you know that 39% of executives become dissatisfied because of a lack of corporate driven or endorsed personal development – either through a lack of structured support or encouragement for self-initiated engagement within an environment that applauds striving to be better. Also, 70% of the leading Fortune class CEO's use business-mentors to assist them stimulate and formulate ideas, techniques and new approaches to challenges. Source – Fortune 500

To the ExCo

- Do you foster an environment of executive development where you are an active participant and promote within the ExCo group as well as throughout the organisation? If key team members depart because your company does not offer support and encouragement through structured L&D, can you justify this to the CEO, the board or shareholders in terms of a good risk management practice?
- The cost of replacing an executive is now recognised as a multiple of between 5 and 7 times the cash component of salary. A good risk strategy would heavily favour supporting that executive with whatever is needed to underwrite their value and recognise their worth to the business at an almost insignificant cost. Too often businesses are unable to recognise the actual cost of loss, just accepting it as someone departs and often, when a much cheaper retention alternative is available. One is a cost, the other an investment. What is your perspective when using the company's money?

Did you know that 75% of companies confirm the need for a new level of collaboration from within their organisational teams and without from key suppliers and providers to remain competitively relevant and survive these hard times. Also, less than 20% of ExCo leaders in business have an independent, external mentor of peer status or better whose business background can challenge their towards better thinking and greater focus on issues that count. Source – Clutterbuck Assoc.

To L&D

- What plans are you putting in place for senior management to retain your best talent in order to hold the best minds in the business together; to risk manage threats to shareholder value; to develop emerging talent that secures the organisation's future by using these hard economic times to build and foster resilience among your leaders? Have you thought to attach proven business-experienced coach and mentor talent to your best assets and to work with them to get through this challenging period.
- Is now the time to look at engaging internal sources of talent Development and to recognise what; know-how' is inside the business and ask them to play a part in improving performance. Have you considered a structured internal mentoring program supported by trained experienced business-mentors, or to

use the *peer-to-peer* experience of *best-with-best* to team across the organisation.

- Do you have a fear that coach and mentor services may not deliver expected results? We can structure a deliverable program, assemble the talent, assist you set KPIs and run it for you. We train for in-house skills transfer and sit alongside you to deliver on the investment.

Did you know that the need to improve leadership development and to drive growth is recognised by 80% of organisations but less than 20% have a plan that supports leadership development using peer-to-peer leadership engagement. Also, recent surveys confirm that up to 56% of employees expect not to be retained in 2009. Some of your best will simply walk out of the door unless you give them good reasons to stay – most often that isn't money! Source – H&S Inter.

To the Top Talent and Emerging Talent Pool

- You probably took your current role because of a future opportunity however who is driving your life-long need for challenge, development and a chance to prove yourself with real meaning and purpose?
- Is your employer a partner in your career path planning through skilling and opportunities to prove your talent and capacity?
- Does your organisation see your development as an obligation to you both to make sure you are the best you can be and to use your talent and dedication to drive improved performance across your area of responsibility. If not!, why not?
- As talent worth investing in does being trained as a business-mentor appeal? Is there opportunity to share your experience, demonstrate great leadership and increase your ability to influence and make a difference, if you had the formal skills? Would this add to your feeling of value to and by the organisation and increase your job satisfaction?

Did you know that in 2004, the Top10 jobs in most demand to be filled by star talent in 2010, didn't even exist. They were created by shifts in demographics, specialisation, new opportunities and insight into future needs by corporations and individuals. Are you and your organisation stuck in the 'here and now' or looking over the horizon at 'what might be'? Also, the difference between being a 'star' performer or an average performer is the 70% of your ability to engage using high emotional intelligence, coupled with the 20% of your relationship building ability and not the 10% technical skill that you have. Source – ASTD

Something Further to Think About
(Text adaptation of the Award Winning 2008 Canne Short Film Festival entry)

One day, there was a blind man sitting in a plaza with a can by his feet and a sign that read: 'I am blind, please have some compassion.'

A man walked by and stopped to observe. He saw that the blind man had only a few coins in his can. The man dropped in more coins and, asked for permission to change the wording of the sign. He took the sign and rewrote it.

The sign was returned to the blind man and the passer-by walked away. That afternoon the same man was returning to the spot where the blind man sat and noticed that the can was full of notes and coins. The blind man recognized the other's footsteps and asked if it was the same person who had rewritten his sign and wanted to know what had been written on it.

The man responded: "Nothing that was not true. I just wrote the message a little differently." There was a gentle smile and the man went on his way.

The new sign read: "**Today is a beautiful day but I cannot see it**".

Sometimes we need to change our thinking. If we always do what we've always done, we'll always get what we've always got. So ask yourself, 'How can I be challenged to change my thinking so that I see things differently?'

Who are ARG?

ARG is a national organisation of superior executive business-mentors and executive coach talent. We are also building a solid international presence to assist client organisations extend our support to ex-pats.

The experience of our talent pool covers some of the most prestigious boards and corporate icon brands, down through a vertical slice of industry specialisation, role experience and task challenges that is unique.

Often we are the *shadows* behind the successful performance of recognisable names for both people and brands. We seek no recognition other than your success. In these unusually trying times, a trained **ARG** business-mentor or executive coach can be the best sounding-board that a board, director, leader or top team executive can have in order to focus on getting through and breaking out.

Clients with foresight, realize that the talent from **ARG** is part of a suite of risk management initiatives, developmental services and challenging insight opportunities which focus resources, stabilise uncertainty and lift individual and business performance.

ARG is an investment in your future success!

Michael Donovan
CEO ~ Mentoring
ARG

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