Global Agenda

Annual Meeting of the New Champions 2017
Achieving Inclusive Growth in the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Dalian, People’s Republic of China 27-29 June
As the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) fuses the physical, digital, and biological worlds, complexity will drive change that makes team leadership a non-negotiable skill for 4IR leaders. Teams will become the central organizational reality, and will function to animate organizations. Leadership and teams of the 4IR are characterized as: Flat, non-hierarchical teams; multifunctional, specialized teams of leaders; teams at distributed, multi-organization workplaces; and teams as follower networks. One should not underestimate how the revolution impacts the worldview of leaders. It touches fundamental questions, from the principles that move the world to common views on ethics.

1. Systems thinking. The 4IR ushers the logic of the complex. That is, “dominated by dynamics that are often beyond control.” (Probst, Bassi, 2014:3) The “dynamic interplay can lead to unexpected consequences” begging the question of where opportunity and threat lie. Leaders of the 4IR will be system thinkers able to connect the dots and interpret vast, complex and unpredictable systems.

2. Pragmatic ethics. Leaders must lack naïveté about deceit, malfeasance and illegality, and protect their organizations in a world increasingly tolerant of unethical behaviour – especially behaviour conveyed by digital and informational means. They must be comfortable in the grey areas opened by technology that are ethnically ambiguous, while at the same time uphold integrity.

3. Narratives out of the paradox. Minds are not designed to deal with contradiction and paradox; leaders of the 4IR will cut through paradox, contradiction and confusion, taking decisive actions where others would be paralysed. Their action will be structured by the unique narratives.

Key Skills

4IR leaders possess a repertoire of key skills at which they will excel:

- **Powerful emotions.** Leaders will have strong emotions and clear subjective visions that will inspire followers. The best leaders will bridge the difficult virtual and cultural divides that will define the workplace.

- **Global intelligence.** Cultural intelligence enables leaders to develop behaviours adaptive to different social contexts and be effective across cultures. Customers, supply chains and IP will be sourced across the globe. Leaders will therefore need to understand foreign cultures, systems of thought and philosophies.

- **Creative storytellers.** As master storytellers, these leaders will craft visions and narratives that will turn into their organizations’ future.

- **Coward-conscious.** Leaders must be adept at recognizing and discouraging cowardice in the face of ambiguity, volatility and the consequences of risk. Leaders will need to “creatively destroy” both the inconsequential work of others and their own; that is, that they display no cowardice when critically dealing with their own interests.

The context of the 4IR will have an impact on the personal qualities of leaders:

- **Authentic.** Technology and speed will cause privacy to diminish, and it will be nearly impossible to manage for leaders who lack authenticity. Integrity will be a powerful signal and bring about a loyal following.

- **Agile.** The speed inherent to 4IR will place a greater demand on agility and inspired change management. By necessity, leaders will intelligently improvise and take quick action while disregarding processes and routines as they swiftly size opportunity.

As a 4IR leader, you will be subject to quantitatively sophisticated leader evaluation and selection methodologies. In the Fourth Industrial Revolution, incompetence will hurt organizations more than ever; bad leaders will not be able to hide behind general economic or industry growth. Boards will be placed into positions of greater accountability as will the leaders who run companies, non-profits and government.

As a 4IR leader, you will be disruptive rather than be disrupted and generate shareholder value while positively contributing to the most sweeping change in society since the emergence of the First Industrial Revolution nearly two centuries ago.