qualities that worked in the past won’t carry you into the future

By MINDA ZETLIN

Do you have the personal qualities you need to be an effective leader in the coming decades? Even if you’ve been successful so far, the answer may be no. The aggressive personality and hard-driving skill set that got so many leaders to the top in past years won’t keep working in the future.

The following skills will be handy. . .

1 COURAGE

Being courageous is “a winning skill to master,” Brügmann says. Make no mistake, courage isn’t the absence of fear but the ability to act in spite of fear—a skill that can be learned. “Real change happens outside of our comfort zone,” says Brügmann. So, when you feel fear, rather than give in to it, move strategically forward in the desired direction, she advises. “Practise strengthening that courage muscle.”

2 RADICAL RESPONSIBILITY

“Stop the blame game,” Brügmann advises. Sound easy? “Commit to a week without complaining, and you’ll realise how difficult this is. We are surrounded by complaining and blaming mindsets,” she says. You can change that dynamic for yourself and your company. “Taking radical responsibility in every situation, and taking action towards the world you envision, will drive a proactive mindset of conscious business.”

3 HEALTHY ANGER

“Anger has a bad reputation in our society and culture. The truth is, anger holds an incredible amount of power when it comes to accessing passion and creating and manifesting a vision,” says Brügmann. In today’s world of growing discontent with greed-driven businesses, Brügmann expects a lot more expressions of healthy anger in the coming years. For leaders, “learning to stay present with anger—which denotes something is not okay with you—and then creating an action plan to remedy the problem and establish better working efforts will be a key future skill,” she says.

“Healthy anger is needed for you to know what works and doesn’t work in the present moment, and that’s a skill visionary leaders need to possess.”

4 EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

“Leaders of tomorrow, and preferably already today, need deep emotional awareness and radical empathy skills to behave in a manner that goes beyond self-interests,” Brügmann says. Emotional intelligence reportedly accounts for 58% of performance in all types of jobs, and 83% of those with high self-awareness are top performers. “It’s hard to deny that this is a key skill for success,” she says.

5 SENSUOUSNESS

No, they do not teach this in MBA programmes. But Brügmann argues, “We have been driven by cultural, capitalistic, and materialistic forces for a very long time, to the point that we have lost touch with our true nature as human beings.” She says that you can be your true self by moving away from rational-only decision making. “Moving into a state where we experience the world through our senses not only allows for healthy emotional connectedness, but it also means better decisions will be made.”

6 SELF-CARE

Many of us neglect the care of our physical selves, especially when leading a business or a team. That’s a big mistake. “Taking good care of your health is a foundational skill in building sustainable leadership,” Brügmann says. She recommends eating a life-enhancing diet, and prioritising regular exercise, “no matter how crazy your schedule may seem.” Think you just don’t have time? Take inspiration from some of the world’s most successful leaders.

“Richard Branson stays in shape with kitesurfing,” she notes. Stella McCartney (daughter of a former Beatle and a well-known fashion designer) says thinking how that person might see the world from a place of curiosity rather than feeling victimised. “First, look inward—how did you cause this situation to happen?” she says. “Then look outward and get curious about other person’s reaction and think about how that person might see the world from a playful attitude.” If you can do this, creative solutions will appear in a playful space that is otherwise not a playful space that is otherwise not

7 DETERMINATION

Being committed to a larger vision helps you handle the hard times and avoid being thrown off by temporary ups and downs, Brügmann says. “Be a goal digger! Recommit to your goal often—daily is preferred—and consistently consider how committed you are to reaching this vision.” The more committed you are, the likelier your vision will come true.

8 VULNERABILITY

In her inspiring TED Talk, researcher Brené Brown describes how people who fully embrace vulnerability believe that quality is what makes themselves and others beautiful. “Allowing your team to see you as a whole and imperfect person, as well as a role model, will inspire the kind of atmosphere where team thrive, and creativity and innovation flourish,” Brügmann says.

9 RISK TOLERANCE

Failure is an opportunity to learn and grow, Brügmann says. “Allowing for room to fail is the same as allowing for room to succeed. This seedling space requires creativity, play, trial and error, and thus imperfections.” Ironically, while accepting failure and risk-taking are in vogue throughout the business world and especially, the start-up world, younger entrepreneurs are more financially fragile and risk-averse than ever, Brügmann notes. Perhaps this is because so many are now saddled with huge college debt. Whatever the cause, she says, “leaders who not only understand how to work with the strengths of the millennial cohort, but also support strengthening their weaknesses, will be in demand.”

10 PLAYFUL CURiosity

“Seek out potential opportunities and get curious,” Brügmann advises. When conflict arises, approach it from a place of curiosity rather than feeling victimised. “First, look inward—how did you cause this situation to happen?” she says. “Then look outward and get curious about the other person’s reaction and think about how that person might see the world from a playful attitude.” If you can do this, creative solutions will appear in a playful space that is otherwise not available.”

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