

## **Inner Governance at the Heart of Effective Leadership**

### **A report on the first European training programme on “The Heart of Effective Leadership”**

**19-21 September 2014 at Caux, Switzerland**



“It gives me hope that this holistic approach could become a significant influence in Europe”, wrote one participant from the 21 business leaders, consultants and Initiatives of Change (IofC) members from Switzerland, the UK, France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic, Russia, Kuwait, Burundi and Mexico who gathered at scenic Caux, Switzerland, for three days to explore what lies at the heart of inspiring leadership.

The faculty team of six included Peter Vickers, Chairman and Managing Director of Vickers Oils in the UK, and Vivek Asrani, Managing Director of Kaymo Stapling Company in India, who both manage their family owned industrial companies, as well as Dr. Amit Mukherjee, a senior hospital and company administrator from India, Dr. John Carlisle, a business consultant and management professor from the UK, Rhea D’Souza, Director of Paradigms unlimited, a leadership development organization from India, and finally, Bhavesh Patel, a senior IofC training facilitator based in Moldova. Each of them, sharing their own personal and business experiences, invited participants to explore the role of inner governance in their lives as a source of effective leadership in the face of ethical challenges.

The audience was captivated by the opening keynote of the programme, Dr. Feena May, Head of Learning and Development at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) from Geneva, who highlighted five key elements for effective leadership©:

- ▲ Presence
- ▲ Relations
- ▲ Sense
- ▲ Action
- ▲ Service

The results of Dr. May's research genuinely match the five essential shifts that the Heart of Effective Leadership (HEL) training aims for:

### **I) Shifting from Competency to Character**

*"I cannot lead where I am not"*

Starting with the fundamental yet at times neglected idea of presence, Dr. Feena May explained the importance of fully living in the present. According to her, presence also strengthens character which is the essence of a good leader.

Several personal stories shared by the faculty also brought forth the crucial role of a leader's character/values and indicated that those are more important for leadership than skills and competencies. It is character that enables leaders to have courage of their convictions and to see them manifest into reality.



*Mrs. Hanan Al-Refae from Kuwait, one of the few female team leaders in the oil sector of her country*

## II) Shifting from Blame to Responsibility

*“What is not authentic will not be effective”*

The faculty shared their testimonies of deep personal change, exposing their own vulnerabilities. Their honesty led to a shift from a position of blame to responsibility. No matter their previous mistakes or encountered challenges, each moment was seen as a new opportunity to adapt and correct their choices and actions.

According to Vivek Asrani, only when we listen to others can we build authentic relationships and provide empowering leadership. Connecting with others and sharing our individuality is a lifetime process that undeniably has its place in the professional sphere. Professor John Carlisle advanced that “the more authentic our relationships, the more successful the collaboration will be, leading to more profitable business in the end”.



## III) Shifting from Human to Spiritual Guidance

*“Change. But start slowly because direction is more important than speed.”*

Our relations with others are strongly influenced by our needs, wishes and expectations. Yet when we do not listen to ourselves, our tendency may be to stifle them. Can we be good listeners if we cannot listen to ourselves? Leaders are those who have a clear vision to offer; first of all for themselves, then for others.

“Change. But start slowly because direction is more important than speed” is the first line from a poem of the Brazilian novelist and journalist Clarice Lispector. Her words found an echo in Rhea De Souza's story. She led silent morning walks as a means to finding one's inner guidance and source of direction and purpose, all essential to effective leadership. During the day, the faculty regularly offered reflective and silent times, which became known as “quiet hunches” among the participants.

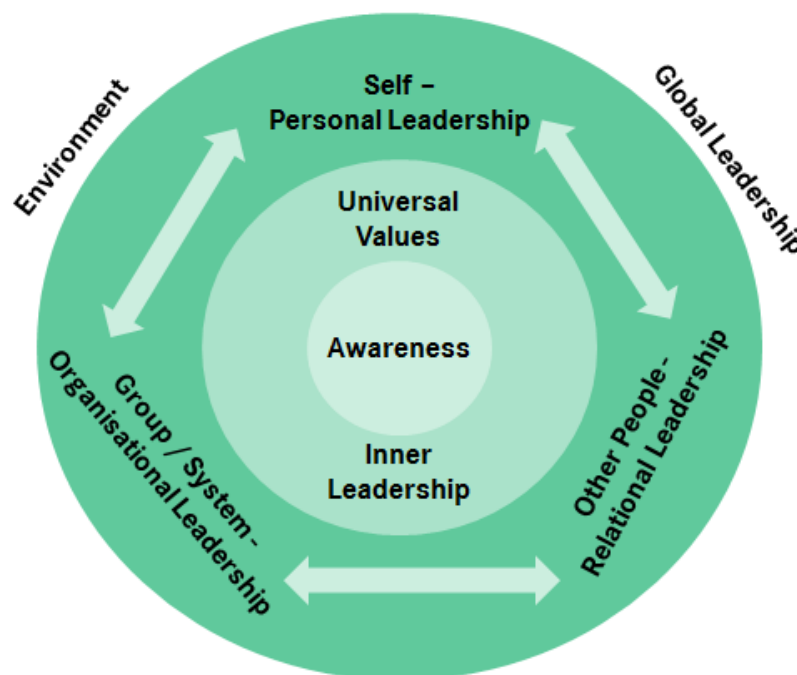
#### IV) Shifting from Commanding to Serving

*“Translating inner transformation into outer manifestation”*

The stories of the faculty underpinned the importance of applying ethics with integrity in every decision-making process for being an effective leader. “There is a price to being ethical; but there is a greater price to being unethical” advocated Vivek Asrani, speaking from his own business experiences.

A film based on the case study of another Indian company, Transasia Bio-Medicals, made a similar point. Transasia Bio-Medicals is a very successful medical diagnostics company that cares for its customers, the employees, the wider community and the country. Its founder Suresh Vazirani was following his inner inspiration to bring change and challenge the commonly held perception that in business one cannot be ethical and successful at once.

Sharing his personal story, Dr. Amit Mukherjee, a former administrator of TATA Tinsplate Company illustrated how inner transformation can translate into outer manifestation and organisational transformation. Drawing examples from his own business challenges, Vivek Asrani outlined how being ethical forced him to explore creative potential.



Model of the foundations of the Heart of Effective Leadership

#### IV) Shifting from Head to Heart

*“Fruits depend on the Roots. Take care of the roots, the fruits will take care of themselves.”*  
Vivek Asrani

Dr. Feena May believes that having a higher goal leads people to be extremely powerful in a gentle way. According to her, managing is a career; leadership is a calling - a call that arises from the heart. It requires a major shift from leading from the head to leading from the heart. According to the faculty from India, such a shift, which grows from one's inner governance, is at the heart of effective leadership.



How well the Heart of Effective Leadership programme succeeded in conveying this message can be judged from what several of the participants have stated following the programme:

“I learnt about strengthening my inner self and that good leadership requires trust and integrity. Everything you do should have a purpose - a greater good.”

“Altogether the programme added up to an extremely powerful picture of the possibility of a different world going forward. A re-envisioning of the truth that the personal really does matter, really does have an impact, and actually can affect the nation.”

“I will not to let fear hold me back from decisions with potentially far reaching consequences.”

*by Cristina Vizir*