

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

TEAM BLENDING CRUCIAL FOR CEOs IN NEW ERA

Atchara Juicharern, managing director of AcComm & Image International, a human-resource consulting firm, outlined some key challenges and competencies that chief executives need to obtain in this era of accelerated changes, in an exclusive interview with *The Nation's* **Pichaya Changsorn**. Here is an edited excerpt.

What's hot now?

Currently, there are many drivers that have expedited leaders to change their competencies. For instance, 90 per cent of my customers last year asked that in whatever courses we were conducting for them, could we add something about managing the generation gap? SCG-Dow Group is one client that specifically asked us to hold a training programme on how to manage the Generation Y workforce.

So Gen Y management has emerged as a new hot HR issue?

The trend for now and the next two or three years will be concerned with the blending of teams from different ages, mindsets and nationalities. The degree of workforce diversity will not subside, and this trend is unstoppable. Since the context has changed, leaders need to have a different working method from what they had before. It is the duty of leaders to adjust to the new circumstances, not the other way around.

About 50 per cent of the jobs we are doing for our clients now concern team blending – whatever it is called, team engagement, team synergy, or others.

What are the new competencies that a CEO needs to obtain for succeed in team engagement?

A collaborative mindset. Quite often, a CEO will be very excited about his or her new or innovative project. But to have it implemented and delivered successfully to the customers, he has to make sure there is no misalignment along the way. His staff, for instance, must not perceive his innovative projects as fussy or feeling they are burdening with more workload.

As Dr Marshall Goldsmith [an American author on management issues] has said, "What got you here won't get you there." Leaders must realise that what has made them successful in the past will not necessarily bode well for their staff at present. For example, the new generation of workers very much wants feedback from them.

How difficult is it to change a CEO's mindset?

There are still many CEOs of small and medium-sized companies who don't see the difference between managers and leaders. Many times, they have succeeded because of their managerial skills. They are able to organise and get

the process right. However, leadership is more about people issues. We can't move people around like we move a chair or the budget. A CEO needs to have skills to communicate and persuade effectively.

Why has team engagement become a new challenge for CEOs?

Because CEOs now have come under growing pressure to have the ability to "stretch" their organisations to do new [things] and innovate.

A collaborative mindset means CEOs understand the psychology of humans. For instance, human minds have transitions. This wall can't be broken down overnight. CEOs must take time and become role models.

How do they blend a team together without at the same time destroying team creativity and innovation?

Collaboration doesn't mean everyone becomes silent at a meeting and just follows everyone else. Collaboration means team members help extend one another's ideas.

CEOs must facilitate an environment in which everyone continues to be assertive. They must prohibit an environment where



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when someone speaks up at a meeting, he or she will risk being cut off.

What are the biggest challenges or the new competencies that Thai CEOs must have in this era?

First, CEOs need to have stronger leadership. This is because they have come under new expectations to drive changes and steer new strategies. Second, CEOs must have learning agility to cope with internal and external changes driven by technologies and global trade regimes. They must not stick to their past successes. Third, global thinking. CEOs must see linkages and connections on a global, not just domestic or regional, dimension.

Fourth, building alliances and partnerships. CEOs must strive to avoid creating new enemies, while creating more allies. In the present era, things have become more interconnected. Sometimes, competitors can become customers. Or if they are affected, we can also be hit. Last, CEOs must dare to delegate. Dr Goldsmith has said "sharing leadership" is very important, because executives usually tend to keep their decisions to themselves.