February 8, 2016 • An Advertising Supplement to the San Fernando Valley Business Journal

Executive Education

For Today’s Professional, Adaptability is Crucial

By STEPHEN HARPER

N early 50 years ago, in the 1967 movie “The Graduate,” Dustin Hoffman received a now famous, one-word recommendation for his future career, “plastics.” At the time, and whether or not he was ever going to take it, that probably wasn’t bad advice. But things just aren’t that simple anymore. Today, the best advice may come mid-career, not at the beginning. And if that advice came in just one word, it might be, Adapt.

As the business world becomes increasingly complex — through burgeoning technologies, adaptive methodologies, and cultural shifts — opportunity becomes more of a moving target. Charting a course for a long and successful career as a business professional requires more than expertise in existing fields and practices. It requires the ability to adapt and the preparation to lead.

This is the thought process behind the new MBA for Experienced Professionals from California Lutheran University’s School of Management. Starting in the Fall of 2016, the MBA for Experienced Professionals will deliver an 18 month program to a group consisting entirely of working professionals with at least 5-7 years of relevant professional experience. The program is designed for people who have already achieved some success in their careers, and want to identify and ultimately achieve their next big goal.

The idea is to focus experienced professionals toward bringing their peak potential to their career path,” explained School of Management Dean, Gerhard Apfelthaler. “Beyond the functional skills that you might expect from any business school program, our students also learn how to lead through change.”

By limiting enrollment to early or mid-career professionals, the program seeks to capitalize on experience for the mutual benefit of each student. A cohort model means students will start and complete the program with the same group. Sharing similar abilities, life experience, and motivations will create a focused classroom environment and rich opportunities for lasting professional relationships.

The curriculum of the new degree will be interdisciplinary, experience-driven, and organized around five key areas — leading operations, managing process, leading strategy, leading people, and professional advancement. Each key area will feature relevant course topics including: innovation and organizational entrepreneurship, global economics for executives, strategic decision making for high performance, organizational design, and leadership and change management.

“By learning how to create and stimulate ideas, how to communicate them, how to function as individuals and in groups, they learn how to get things done,” Apfelthaler continued. “Adding to that solid knowledge, we equip them with a proper set of ethics, values, and global outlook.”

The MBA for Experienced Professionals program prepares students for leadership positions in public and private organizations or in new ventures by focusing on what matters most. From personal development (especially communication, teamwork, and interpersonal skills), to developing and applying analytical abilities, to the strategic leadership expertise needed to influence the direction of organizations, students will develop an excellent portfolio of business knowledge and competencies.

Students can expect to put what they learn into practice as they learn it. The program will include coursework on issues faced in their professional environment as part of their coursework. This will make the studies immediately relevant and impactful to each student’s current job. With a strong emphasis on teamwork, participation, and communication, the MBA for Experienced Professionals features a world-class faculty, small class sizes, professional skills workshops, and personalized assessments and coaching sessions throughout. Students can expect to receive something Cal Lutheran is well known for, personal attention, every step of the way.

Designed with the busy lifestyles of working professionals in mind, the MBA for Experienced Professionals features 15 courses, 3 units each, delivered in a hybrid model (8 on-campus courses, 7 online courses). The on-campus courses will be offered in a compressed weekend format. The inaugural Fall 2016 program begins in October, delivered over 18 months; starting 2017 there will be a Spring entry point as well.

Career building is a continuing process. In a modern business landscape that offers unprecedented opportunity for those who can adapt to the world’s evolving needs, this is perhaps more true now than ever before.

Learn more at Callutheran.edu/EP.
Learning to Lead: Top 20 Leadership Tools You Can Use

By BARTON GOLDSMITH, PH.D.

These are my Top 20 best practices that I have seen used by the most successful leaders. Some of these are already in your toolkit, others you may have forgotten. Keep this list handy as a reminder of time-tested solutions that will make you and your team shine.

1. Use the power of the pen. Recognition is the number one motivator. A simple thank you note is more important than money to most people. Break out the fancy pen you got for your birthday and say thanks to the people who helped to get you there.

2. Understand the importance of emotions. Feelings are a part of daily life and daily business. When people get hurt feelings they become poor performers, so make sure you deal with these issues sooner rather than later.

3. Great leaders have one thing in common - passion! If you’re not turned on about what you’re doing your team won’t be either, so show them that you’re excited and watch them get fired up.

4. Communication is the most important thing in any business relationship. If you don’t use effective business communication skills you’re leaving money on the table and not getting the most out of your people. Don’t be afraid to take a brush-up course and listen to hints from those who are in the positions you want.

5. Do a company evaluation at least once a year. Ask your team members to respond in writing to important questions like, “What do we need to change?” and “What do we need to keep doing more of?” This is your most powerful tool for a fifty-thousand-foot view of your business.

6. Create a company mentoring program. Every person in and entering your company should have a mentor. A mentor’s job is to help a new or junior staff member feel welcomed as well as to answer any questions. Having a mentor builds confidence and creates motivation to go above and beyond.

7. Make sure your teams are balanced with both Innovators and Implementers. If everyone on a team is an Innovator, nothing will get done. Similarly, a team of only Implementers will create nothing new. To make sure you have a balanced team, utilize the free test (called the g3i) on the web site www.BartonGoldsmith.com.

8. Remember that customer service rocks. The two most profitable customer service tips I have used are: first, a full return/refund policy, which eliminates risk on the part of your client and encourages them to “step up to the plate.” (By the way, I have never had to give a refund because I always give my clients more than they expected.) Second, never say “NO” to clients. This policy creates the opportunity for you and your client to find other ways to do business together, rather than you telling them you can’t or don’t provide a particular service or product.

9. Achieve goals by getting team member buy-in. If your people have input into your goals they will put more energy into helping you achieve them. Ask them what they think and you’ll get their dedication in return.

10. Implement a “knowledge lunch.” Keep your team up to date by having a lunch meeting once a week where you discuss your business. You can even bring in vendors and financial advisors (who will buy the pizza) to help keep your team connected and current.

11. Deal appropriately with fear in the workplace. When team members are in fear for their livelihood (and in these times perhaps fear of their lives,) they do not perform at their highest level. Providing a forum to safely talk about these fears will go a long way toward helping achieve superior performance.

12. Don’t just be a manager, be an evangelist. You need to believe in what you and your company are doing and to share the power of that belief with your team members. A good leader can’t become great if they don’t inspire faith in their company.

13. Pursue failure. Failure is not an ending it is a stepping stone to the right answer. Stop beating yourself up for mistakes and see them as an opportunity to begin again with additional information, knowledge and experience.

14. Remember that the fish stinks from the head down. That means everything that you are responsible for everything that goes right, and anything that goes wrong. Remembering that leadership is the most important component of your business, and that the buck stops with you will help you keep your “fish” fresh.

15. Having fun increases productivity and profit. In companies where people have fun, the productivity and the profit are higher. The American Psychological Association has published surveys about this, and it’s a fact. Take the example of Southwest Airlines - do you know that “a sense of humor” is on their job application?!

16. Beware of invalidation. The number one motivation killer is making a team member feel “less than”. If you mistakenly say the wrong thing to someone, apologize immediately. You’ll look like a responsible leader rather than an insensitive bully.

17. Learn to maintain your composure under pressure. Thomas Jefferson said, “Nothing gives one person so much

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advantage over another as to remain cool and unruffled under all circumstances.5

18. Join a Mastermind group. To keep your skills sharp and get answers to difficult questions get into a group of non-competing peers. The greatest minds in business have used Mastermind groups to help them excel in their chosen fields.

19. Learn to ask powerful questions.

The right question at the right time can eliminate major problems or help a team member find the best answer available.

20. Learn to deal with difficult people.

There are specific techniques to deal with different types of people. Learn how to tell avoidance from arrogance and denial from insecurity. For a list of these types and some hints for handling them, send an e-mail to Barton@BartonGoldsmith.com with the words “Difficult People” in the subject line.

Dr. Barton Goldsmith is a keynote speaker, business consultant and nationally syndicated author. He may be contacted through his web site BartonGoldsmith.com or at (818) 679-9996.

Education and Accountability in the Workplace

Organizations coping with smaller staffs and fewer resources need greater personal accountability from their employees, but it’s often difficult to achieve. The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) is offering tips on how to foster this valuable workplace skill in its 50th practical and easy-to-read leadership development guidebook — part of its long-running series of educational guidebooks and tools for the workplace.

The recently published “Accountability: Taking Ownership of Your Responsibility” is the newest in the Center’s series of Ideas Into Action Guidebooks, which offer practicing managers information on topics including coaching, active listening and managing conflict. CCL published its first Ideas Into Action guidebook in 1998, and the series has been distributed globally.

Henry Browning, a senior faculty member at CCL and the lead author, said the newest edition can help practicing managers “see how to turn the biggest obstacle to accountability — fear in the workplace — into trust.”

“Trust is built slowly, and when it is lost, it takes a long time to rebuild,” Browning said. “The best advice is to build it consistently over time. As we note in the guidebook, when there is fear, people tend to hide, hold back and do only what is expected.”

The accountability guidebook clearly and concisely explores why employees often don’t take ownership of their decisions, play the blame game or are crippled by fear of punishment. It offers ways for organizations to develop a culture of accountability — a willingness to face the consequences that come with success or failure — that begins with top management and spreads to all levels of managers and employees. The guidebook, based on five years of study with major companies around the world, also features an accountability scorecard that can help managers figure out the problems in their organizations.

Browning and his co-authors outline five major strategies for creating an environment that encourages accountability:

• Offer support to employees from senior leadership, direct supervisors and their work teams. Create an environment that encourages accountability — a culture that tolerates mistakes and individual differences.

• Give employees freedom to accomplish a goal or task, promoting ownership in the process or results.

• Provide access to all information needed to make decisions.

• Offer some control over resources.

• Be clear about to whom an employee is accountable and for what outcomes.

Ultimately, according to the guidebook, “A culture of accountability is one that provides a free flow of information, works to secure viable resources, keeps fear to a minimum, rewards risk-taking and treats mistakes as learning opportunities and not career-ending events.”

The Center for Creative Leadership is a global provider of executive education that accelerates strategy and business results by unlocking the leadership potential of individuals and organizations. Founded in 1970 as a nonprofit educational institution focused exclusively on leadership education and research, CCL helps clients worldwide cultivate creative leadership — the capacity to achieve more than imagined by thinking and acting beyond boundaries — through an array of programs, products and other services.

CCL is headquartered in Greensboro, N.C., with campuses in Colorado Springs, San Diego, Brussels, Moscow, Singapore, Pune, India and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Its work is supported by 500 faculty members and staff.

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CSUN’s Nazarian MBA Takes Business Professionals to the Next Level

The Master of Business Administration (MBA) Program at California State University, Northridge’s David Nazarian College of Business and Economics is putting a substantial gift from local entrepreneur David Nazarian to excellent use. The accredited (AACSB) and nationally ranked MBA program (GCBA) offers a new entrepreneurship concentration—expanded data analytics curriculum and renewed focus on career education and professional development for its MBA students and alumni.

Entrepreneurship

The modern entrepreneur is an innovative leader with a bias toward action and the ability to remain persistent in the face of adversity. The new concentration in entrepreneurship develop these attributes by equipping students with the interdisciplinary knowledge and distinct skills necessary to plan, launch and grow successful new ventures. The concentration includes a broad set of courses that provide targeted classroom training and experiential, hands-on learning that immerses students in the four pillars of successful entrepreneurship—personal integrity, the idea, team and execution, and serendipity. Students conduct challenging consulting projects for local small-businesses and entrepreneurs, leveraging new technologies that spark innovation, and apply structure and experimentation to the project-planning process. Students employ a variety of resources, including on-campus pitch competitions such as “The Bullring: Shark Tank Meets Makers” and cross-campus events, to develop their ideas. Students interact and learn from successful entrepreneurs through speaker events and conferences.

The entrepreneurship concentration gives students a skill set that includes real-life experimentation, a team-based approach and a penchant for innovation.

Data Analytics

We are awash in data as never before and at an ever-increasing rate. In fact, 90 percent of the data in the world has been generated in the past two years. Technology has exponentially increased the amount of data available, making analytics a vital tool for business strategy.

The challenge for companies is to have managers trained to analyze all of this data. From the point of view of business managers trained to analyze all of this data, managers need to be able to apply structure and experiment in data metrics to address this need. The marketing metrics course uses practical applications and focuses on developing actionable insights for business managers. It provides a broad overview of key analytic strategies, concepts, issues, challenges and tools to interpret, review and critique current marketing strategies. Topics in this hands-on, active-learning class are organized around a quantitative assessment of the basic graduate marketing curriculum.

The data mining and predictive analytics course covers an extensive collection of tools that help uncover insights buried in business data. It covers concepts and methods in data mining and analytics applicable to business settings that lead to better managerial decision making. The course goes through the data-mining process, including data preparation, partitioning, model building, validation and selection. The class is interactive, using a combination of lectures, teamwork, case studies and software in a computer lab environment.

Career Services

Substantial improvements are being implemented in career guidance, placement, mentoring, networking programs and events, and targeted corporate partnerships for MBA students. Rigorous new programs in career counseling and marketplace preparation help graduate students hone professional life skills that complement and augment the Nazarian College’s historic track record of distinguished, cutting-edge pedagogy in business disciplines.

The goal is to ensure that students and alumni have more and better opportunities to advance beyond their mid-career level. There is a particular emphasis on technology, industry trends and careers of the future.

The college’s Career Education and Professional Development team works with individual students and alumni to explore, develop and communicate a personal, professional brand; learn about relevant and emerging opportunities; and use the full array of resources at their disposal. CSUN’s Master of Science in Accountancy and Master of Science in Taxation students receive specialized attention through the Ernst & Young Center for Careers.

Local companies send their rising stars to the Nazarian College MBA program, and these firms look to CSUN as their “source of choice” for human capital and talent.

CSUN’s Nazarian College offers three master’s degrees—the Master of Business Administration (MBA), the Master of Science in Accountancy (MSA), and the Master of Science in Taxation (MST). The college also hosts a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) offered by its partner school Grenoble Ecole de Management in southeast France. In addition to its graduate degrees, Nazarian College offers a pre-MBA Graduate Certificate in Business Administration (GCBA). These evening and Saturday programs are designed for working professionals.