



We Refuse to Participate in the Recession!

Top executives discuss how leaders can not only survive, but thrive in challenging times

By: Mohamad Kasti and John Lankford

“The ultimate measure of a person is not where they stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but where they stand in times of challenge and controversy.” -Martin Luther King

The current economic crisis has brought forth the need for serious change. There is no better time than now to think innovatively and act collaboratively. True organizational and leadership transformation is impossible to achieve without a true shift in the leadership paradigm where we collectively:

- Develop new leadership beliefs and practices to implement our business strategy.
- Create an authentic, interdependent, collaborative culture in the Tampa Bay area.
- Shift our focus to accepting and managing ambiguity, rather than controlling and reducing it.
- Continue to develop leaders and a transformative leadership culture in the Tampa Bay area.

This insight and a commitment to the local community brought together three major organizations to create a world-class leadership resource for the Tampa Bay community. The Innisbrook Leadership Institute (ILI), which is a collaborative effort of Innisbrook Resort and Golf Club, the University of South Florida's Center for Transformation and Innovation (USF's CTI), and ActionCOACH, with the support of the 2,800-member strong St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce, promotes a mission to galvanize the local business community.

More than 70 executives from the Tampa Bay area gathered for a CEO Roundtable Forum hosted by the ILI at Innisbrook Resort and Golf Club on June 12, 2009. Leaders represented various industries including advertising, banking, communications, economic development, education, energy, finance, healthcare, hospitality, insurance, law, real estate development, and research, to name a few.

The theme of the CEO Roundtable Forum was: *Transformational leadership accelerates success, reduces cost, and enables organizations to thrive in tough times.*

Innovation and Collaboration at its Best

Under the auspices of the ILI, USF's CTI and ActionCOACH assist organizations maximize performance, optimize growth, and meet the demands of today's challenging economic environment. Operating from the Innisbrook Resort and Golf Club's 900-acre campus, the ILI offers an exciting new series of customized leadership development programs catering to the strategic needs of respective

organizations, regardless of their size. An award-winning team from USF's CTI and ActionCOACH assist organizations in identifying a theme, creating an agenda based on the organization's unique goals, arranging speakers, facilitating the event, and scheduling post-meeting follow-up. The role of the ILI team is to develop content and deliver dynamic leadership training programs, while the Innisbrook Resort and Golf Club's conference liaisons arrange for meeting space and accommodations.

Innisbrook Resort and Golf Club Owner and CEO of Salamander Hospitality, Sheila C. Johnson, is a firm believer in collaborative training and development. She said, "We refuse to participate in the recession! Organizations must continue to learn, collaborate, and develop leaders, or run the risk of being left behind in the marketplace."

Along with Johnson, CEO Roundtable Forum speakers included USF President Judy Genshaft and St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce Board Chairman and Chairman of Tech Data Steve Raymund. "From experience, I understand that transformational leadership accelerates success, reduces cost, and enables organizations to thrive in tough times," said Raymund.

Raymund's comments were echoed by Genshaft, "The latest financial and economic challenges have brought forth the need for serious change, true organizational and leadership transformation," she said. "The bottom line is that our community is depending on all of us to lead them to an economy based on innovation, knowledge, and creativity. We need to be competitive. We need to be efficient. We need to continue to invest in our leaders to be the drivers of the new economy."

The theme of the discussions at the Forum was centered on the current economic crisis and the reaction of organizations towards it. Regardless of the industry, all organizations face common challenges, encounter leadership issues, and realize the importance of investing in their leaders. Similar sentiments were echoed by executive leaders engaged in dialog with Forum facilitators using an audience response system to gather insights. Their responses were summarized under:

- Top Business Challenges
- Top Leadership Skills
- Investment in developing leaders

Executive Leaders' Responses

I. **Top Business Challenges:** *What are the top three challenges facing your leadership team in the next twelve to eighteen months?*

The top challenges identified below are listed in order of critical importance. (Refer also to Fig. 1.)

- A. Enhancing and increasing revenue (21%)
- B. Adapting to changing conditions of the economy, maintaining flexibility in a business model (16%)
- C. Recruiting and retaining great team members (14%)
- D. Maintaining a high level quality with fewer resources (13%)
- E. Leading the workforce through change, while staying focused on the company's mission (11%)
- F. Maintaining and increasing employee morale and satisfaction (9%).

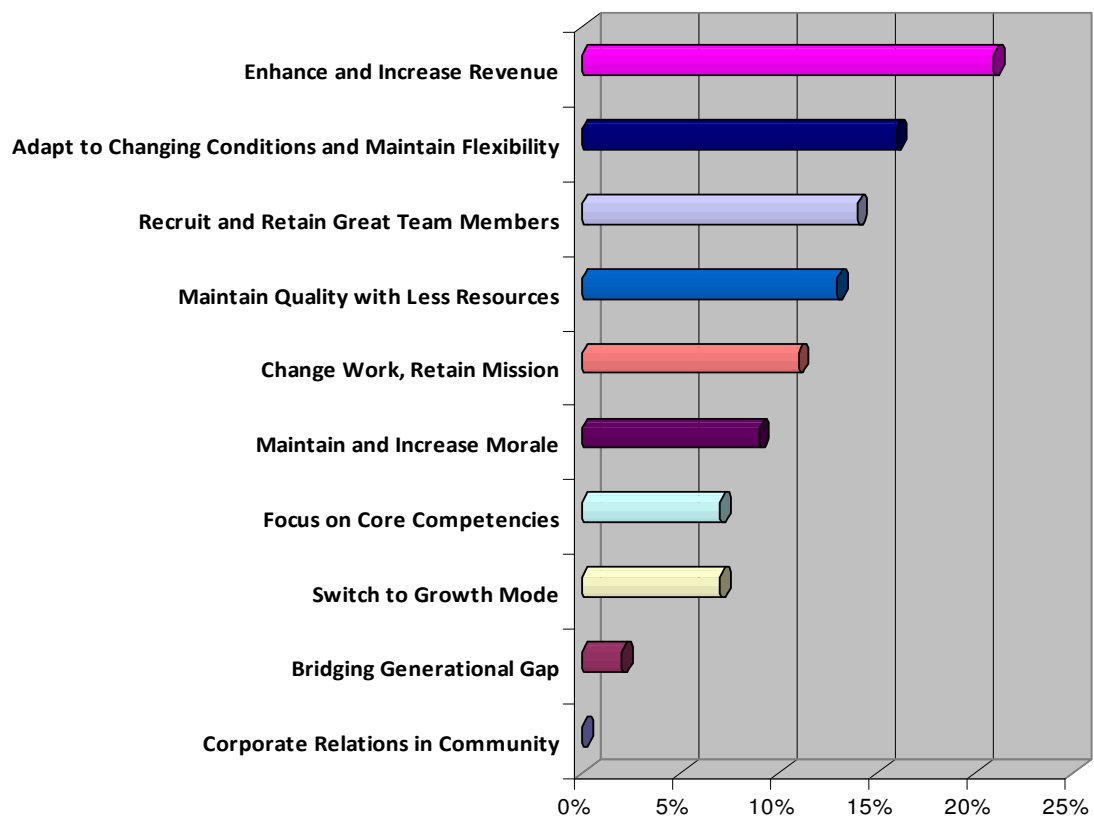


Figure 1: Executive ranking of top challenges

II. Top Leadership Skills: *What are the top leadership skills needed to lead us effectively out of the current crisis?*

The top leadership skills needed to lead us effectively out of the current crisis are listed in order of critical importance. (Refer also to Fig. 2.)

- A. Strategic thinking (19%)
- B. Effective communication (16%)
- C. Leading change (15%)
- D. Creativity and innovation (15%)
- E. Building effective teams and aligning human capital to organizational priorities (13%)
- F. Accountability, which must be enhanced to execute business plans (8%)

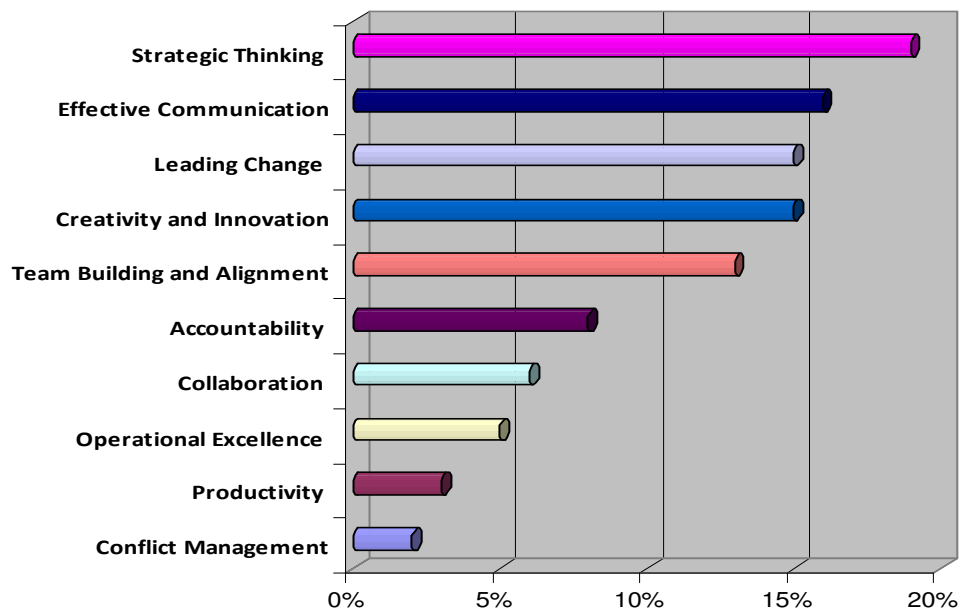


Figure 2: Executive ranking of top leadership skills

III. Investment in developing leaders: *Do you agree that even in tough times, developing our leaders is a must for organizations?*

The executive leaders strongly agreed there is a need to invest in their leaders, now more than ever. (Refer also to Fig. 3.)

- A. Strongly agree (95%)
- B. Agree (4%)
- C. Neutral (2%)

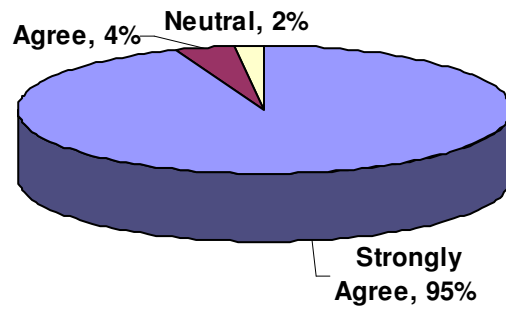


Figure 3: Investing in leaders, more crucial than ever

Next Steps:

The ILI has created a Leadership Development Program (LDP) for members of the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce. The six-month program is designed to equip leaders with the necessary skills and tool sets to not only survive, but thrive in challenging times.

The proposed LDP curriculum (Appendix I) provides a balanced approach to strategy, leadership development, and process improvement, all of which serve as a solid foundation for building on and complementing the previous learning and level of experience of the participants, specifically addressing the topics that were identified by the audience response at the Forum. Note: 35 leaders registered for the program.

What's in it for You?

Whether hosted at Innisbrook Resort and Golf Club or your organization, the ILI's team can assist you with:

- Assessments and Simulations
- Collaboration and Teamwork
- Creating and Sustaining High Performance Teams
- Customer Service
- Effective Communication and Coaching
- Employee Satisfaction and Morale
- Event and Retreat Coordination
- Executive Challenge Course
- Executive Coaching
- Leading Change and Managing Ambiguity
- Productivity and Capacity Optimization
- Quality and Process Improvement
- Sales Training and development
- Strategic Planning and Measurement
- Succession Planning
- Systems Thinking and Effective Problem Solving and Project Management
- Talent Identification and Selection
- Team Building and alignment
- Transformational Leadership

In addition to the intrinsic benefits of leadership development, research (Source: "First break All the Rules" by Marcus Buckingham) indicates that organizations with a culture of engagement can expect up to:

- 44% higher employee retention
- 56% higher customer loyalty
- 50% better safety records
- 50% higher productivity
- 33% more profitability

Einstein said: "Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them." He was referring to a paradigm; we cannot create solutions for today's problems if we use the same thinking and tools that generated them. We need a shift in paradigm. However, a shift of paradigm is not linear or incremental; it is *dynamic*.

Conclusion

Even in these challenging economic times, an investment in our leaders continues to be a priority. The ILI is committed to guide participants through leadership development in a way that transforms leadership at all levels within the organization and creates a strong pool for succession planning. To achieve this transformation, the CEO Forum successfully captured insights on the challenges facing organizations in the next 12-18 months, as well as the top leadership skills and ten actions (Appendix II) necessary to lead effectively out of the current crisis.

About Innisbrook

Situated on 900 wooded acres of rolling hills and 70 acres of lakes in the St. Petersburg/Clearwater area on Florida's Gulf Coast, Innisbrook is located just 25 minutes from Tampa International Airport. Recently renovated by Owner and Management Company Salamander Hospitality, Innisbrook features 72 holes of championship golf, 608 spacious guest suites and rooms, four restaurants and three bars, the Innisbrook Golf Institute, 11 tennis courts, the new full-service Indaba Spa with 12 treatment rooms and fitness center, six heated swimming pool complexes, a nature preserve, and three conference halls with 65,000 square feet of meeting space. Innisbrook is a member of the Preferred Hotels & Resorts and Preferred Golf programs. For additional information call (727) 942-2000 or visit www.innisbrookgolfresort.com.

About the University of South Florida

The University of South Florida is one of the nation's top 63 public research universities and one of 39 community-engaged, four-year public universities as designated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. USF was awarded more than \$360 million in research contracts and grants in FY 2007/2008. The university offers 219 degree programs at the undergraduate, graduate, specialist and doctoral levels, including the doctor of medicine. The university has a \$1.8 billion annual budget, an annual economic impact of \$3.2 billion, and serves more than 46,000 students on campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota-Manatee, and Lakeland. USF is a member of the Big East Athletic Conference. For more information visit www.usf.edu.

About the USF Center for Transformation and Innovation (CTI)

The Center for Transformation and Innovation (CTI) is an entrepreneurial, not-for-profit center founded in 2005 by the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida. CTI is staffed with a team of experienced professionals who have received training from the best-in-class industry leaders. CTI accelerates the success of its client-partners by providing leadership, strategy, and process improvement services. It integrates local talent and resources with a global network of experts to provide organizations with the most innovative, cost effective solutions, while helping organizations explore new opportunities, manage and sustain growth, maximize productivity, and transform leaders and their culture. CTI offers comprehensive, practical, actionable, and simple solutions to organizations aimed at both the operational and cultural levels. CTI serves small, mid, and large scale businesses in various markets such as academia, energy, government, healthcare, manufacturing, and service organizations. In addition to USF, some of our client-partners include: BayCare Health Systems, Columbia University, Creighton University, Florida Department of Health, Florida Hospital, Healthy Together, Home Depot Supply, Palm Healthcare, TECO Energy, Inc., and University Community Hospital. CTI has and continues to successfully help leaders and organizations improve their revenue, productivity, and organizational culture, thereby increasing their competitive advantage. For more information, visit www.CTI-USF.com

About ActionCOACH

Ranked by Entrepreneur Magazine as the #1 Business Services Franchise in the World six years in a row, ActionCOACH has more than 1,000 offices in 26 countries. Relying on proven tactics and existing strategies to maximize individual potential, ActionCOACH uses a combination of business and executive coaching to create a multifaceted framework for improving efficiency and profit. By fusing powerful marketing, business and team building strategies ActionCOACH clients have had dramatic improvements in revenue and profitability. Business coaching and executive coaching is an organic process that involves using proven techniques combined with personal commitment and accountability for business owners and executives to address their current and future situations. The ActionCOACH Pinellas team is comprised of an award winning group of coaches with extensive experience as corporate executives and entrepreneurs and a proven track record of results for clients. To learn more, go to www.actioncoachpinellas.com.

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Appendix I

Leading and Thriving in Challenging Times Leadership Development Program (LDP) *(powered by the Innisbrook Leadership Institute)*

Program Objectives

At the end of the program, participants will be better equipped to:

- Initiate change with self awareness, accountability, collaboration, and trust.
- Create a unique framework for learning how to think and design a strategy for initiating change and transformation in your organization.
- Explore ways of improving the efficiency of resources to support market contraction and future growth.
- Become a more effective communicator and coach, proficient in handling communication breakdowns

Target Audience

Directors, Partners, Small Business Owners, Regional Managers, and Leadership St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce Graduates

Proposed Curriculum

Module One: Leadership in a New Economy

- Understand the changing role of the leader in today's environment.
- Establish accountability, team work, and collaboration.
- Engage the work force.
- Apply the appropriate leadership styles as the situation demands.
- Determine when to lead from the front versus the back.

Module Two: Rethinking Your Business Strategy

- Understand the business life cycle.
- Identify challenges, opportunities, and a vision for the future.
- Apply innovation and breakthrough thinking.
- Help teams innovate, think creatively, and take appropriate risks.
- Engage teams to anticipate and solve problems, and place team goals above individual interests.

Module Three: The Art of Communication in Challenging Times

- Assess your personal communication style.
- Influence and enlist others to see new possibilities.
- Provide effective coaching and feedback that drives performance.
- Manage conflict effectively.

Module Four: The Art of Leading Change and Transformation

- Manage ambiguity and help others deal with it more effectively.
- Develop an effective change strategy map.
- Communicate realistic optimism, empower others, and help others keep perspective.
- Assess organizational agility and flexibility.
- Focus and align the team.

Module Five: Productivity- Do More With Less

- Introduce systems thinking and effective process improvement
- See value and waste through a new set of lenses
- Lean and Improve your processes
- Manage capacity and resource management

Module Six: Follow-Up Session

- 90 days post graduation
- Follow-up on commitment and action plans

Appendix II

10 Actions to Lead and Thrive in Challenging Times

Strategy

1. *Context/Content- Big Picture.* Every crisis, challenge, setback, hardship, or downturn plays out in a larger context. What's the bigger picture here? Help others understand what's happening in the environment is part of a cycle and how it is affecting your business. Educate others about the broader context.
2. *Crystal Clear Line of Sight:* Identify and align the whole team on top 3-5 priorities by asking the hard questions: is the customer willing to pay for this priority? If not, move it to the NOT TO DO List.
3. *Unleash the Team Creativity and Innovation:* this is the time to be creative and innovative by exploiting emerging new opportunities or in reducing cost. What are some innovative solutions that you can explore?
4. *Focus and Protect Your Core Business and Customers:* What are the core services that define your mission? Are your customer's delighted with these core services?

Leadership

5. *Embrace and Communicate the Opportunity:* Transformational leaders view challenge as opportunity and not as threat. Change always opens up all kinds of new and exciting possibilities for the future.
6. *Step Up: Know When To Lead From Front or From Behind.* Nelson Mandela said: "It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front especially when you celebrate victory when nice things occur. You take the front line when there is danger. Then people will appreciate your leadership".
7. *TRUST and Engage Others.* A lot of people are affected by change; it's not just you and your group. Having supportive, trusting, and stable relationships are crucial conditions for overcoming adversity.
8. *Optimize Yourself:* Sharpen the saw by taking care of your health under stress. You set the tone and the mood for the rest of the team.

Process

9. *Optimize Your Systems:* Do more with less by leaning and taking waste out of your systems. Any activity that the customer is not willing to pay for is a waste.
10. *Optimize Capacity:* Have a strategy for the additional capacity you may have in your production and delivery processes.