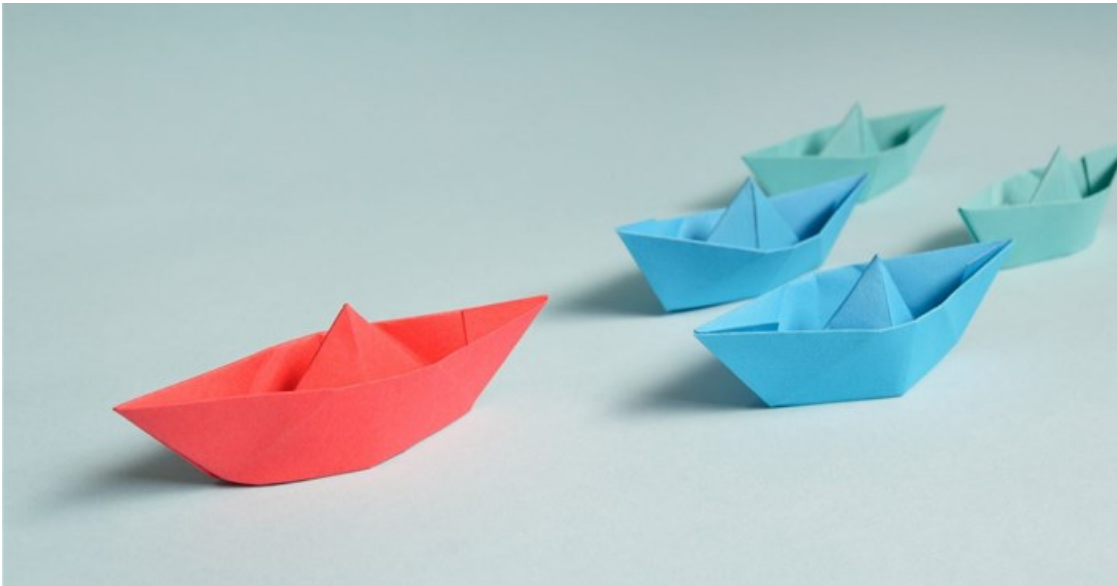


Four ways companies can develop tomorrow's leaders

By [Magesvaran Suranjan](#)

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I have been incredibly fortunate, having had multiple, diverse assignments and responsibilities during my 25-year career. From beginning my career as a cost analyst in the US, to leading a beauty business in China, having a global sales role, handling business planning for an entire company, leading marketing for billion-dollar brands across Asia Pacific; today, I get to serve our consumers across 105 countries in Asia Pacific Middle East & Africa. These remarkable opportunities are why I believe firmly that I have two degrees; one at university, and the other I got at P&G.



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Strong leaders have mentored and coached me throughout my career, which has been a special blessing. But I also recognise that the business world is changing, and the job market today is very different from what it was thirty years back. We are in the age of the gig economy, where technology is disrupting the workplace and workforce. We are also faced with the twin issues of millions of young people entering the job market in my region (Asia Pacific, the Middle East and Africa), and education systems which must pivot to produce leaders who are ready for the fourth industrial revolution.

Travelling throughout the region, what is most striking is the talent and energy of this region's youth. What I also see is an opportunity for the private sector to come together, to help develop the region's talent, and specifically to build the next generation of entrepreneurs and shapers.

I believe that today's business leaders should pay back our good fortune. Take P&G as an example; we are described as an engine that makes leaders, and we have helped develop many CEOs. What we have done recently is open our internal training programs, to help develop the next generation of leaders externally. We have begun this with our distributor partners from across Asia, the Middle East and Africa with our one of a kind 'CEO of the Future' program.

What we have done is unusual, but I believe that it is more important than ever for business executives and firms to take up this cause and build a legacy of future CEOs who will, in turn, create wealth and shape the future.

Here are the four reasons why this cause should matter to every business leader today.

1. Practice makes perfect

There is a mismatch between graduate skills and the needs of the job market. Companies can fill a gap, to promote practical, on-the-job learning through internships that offer young people and future leaders an opportunity to tackle real business problems. Is there anything more inspiring than giving them a chance to be part of a successful business, and working alongside business leaders who see their potential? It will provide them with the fundamental lessons they need to become successful business leaders.

2. Culture is key

Leadership does not exist in a vacuum. Character and values are the prerequisites of any successful executive. When we hire, we look beyond experience and skills to a person's beliefs. We want them to have the ability to be able to both do the right thing, look longer-term and see a business opportunity where others see nothing. With the younger generation, I meet many people who want to have a social impact as well as make a profit. By helping to forge their characters and showing them how much the notion of integrity and doing the right thing matters in business, they will become entrepreneurs who champion social causes for value creation.

3. Reverse learning

One reason why I believe in building the capabilities of those who are about to enter the workforce is the opportunity to see the world through their eyes. Many of you will have heard about reverse mentoring, where senior executives are given an education by their younger peers on subjects like technology, social media and current trends. There is many business leaders have to learn from youth if we hope to remain relevant.

4. Confidence to call your shot

In a world that is changing at such a dramatic pace – and will change even faster for the coming generation – future leaders will not always know what is around the corner. Many of our successes at P&G have been because we called our shot and put a stake in the ground. Future CEOs will need to learn this skill and navigate an uncertain tomorrow if they hope to be in the driving seat of the future.

I have been fortunate enough to have had a diverse, fun and successful career, helped in part by people who have role modelled leadership. Today's business leaders must do the same, and pay it back, to create the CEOs of tomorrow.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Procter & Gamble, president, Asia Pacific, Middle East, and Africa.