

UCT gives leaders the tools to drive organisational change

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The UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) will launch a new course this August to guide leaders in how to effectively steer organisational change.

According to James Gardener, Director of the course, the skills for leading organisational change have become absolutely vital if today's businesses are to survive and flourish.

"The phrases frequently heard from business leaders today are 'Information overload', 'technology half-life', 'talent shortages', 'private equity' and 'China and India'. The 21st century for leaders has become synonymous with complexity and uncertainty, so much so that it is quite clear that all leadership is now change leadership," said Gardener.

The innovative UCT GSB course, called Organisational Change Leadership - Leveraging Complexity in the 21st Century, is designed to directly address the challenges leaders today are facing in transforming their organisations to stay competitive and prosper.

Aimed at CEOs, managing directors and functional heads responsible for transformation and change, the two-day course will be an interactive learning experience that will draw on a diverse team of facilitators.

One of these facilitators will be Christophe Gillet, the former Director of Business Innovation for Sony Business Europe and now a director of international consultancy Pentacle.

Gillet, who will espouse lessons on the course from the Sony Europe turnaround story, said that for leaders today "doing what we've always done" does not mean, "getting what we've always got".

"Organisations cannot operate efficiently anymore on the same basis as before in terms of hierarchy, management, decision-making, and teamwork. In today's complex and uncertain business environment, the consequences are that people often do not feel engaged, emotion often overcomes logic, traditional planning doesn't work anymore, budgeting processes are made obsolete, risk management becomes the main factor of success, and rigid strategies do not make sense," said Gillet.

Gardener said that course would begin a process of personal transformation for leaders. "Know yourself remains the first commandment of any successful leadership programme - handling change starts with an individual and personal challenge to think differently, to avoid assumptions, to keep one's mind open to provoking stimuli," he said.

He added that going hand in hand with this personal transformation are the skills of handling, understanding, listening to and motivating people successfully – these are just as fundamental to the management of change in organisations.

Gardener has two decades of experience in leading organisational change initiatives globally. He was the lead facilitator for Shell's global HIV/AIDS programme roll out across South America, Asia, Russia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East and is today a guest lecturer on Rotterdam Erasmus International MBA programme, organisational development consultant to International Criminal Court in The Hague, and leadership development consultant to Honeywell, Europe.

He believes business school initiatives, such as at the UCT GSB, are a great opportunity for leaders start an essential process.

“Frequently business school programmes are the only dedicated time that corporate leaders take to stop and reflect on the impact and effectiveness of their leadership behaviours. Doing so in the company of others who are not normally competitors, customers, colleagues or business partners, is an invaluable exercise.”

The UCT GSB Executive Education unit has a global top ten rating in 2005 and 2006 from the Economist Intelligence Unit, and was this May listed by the International University Consortium for Executive Education (UNICON) – the leading global body for the advancement of executive education – as one of six leading business school innovators.

The UCT GSB course runs from 27 - 28 August. Contact (021) 406 1268 or visit www.gsb.uct.ac.za/change.

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