

Where the destination is sustainability, leadership is a journey



It's a fact: Leadership is the primary driver of organisational performance and the only sustainable competitive advantage that organisations can rely on. It comes as no surprise then, that the USB invests so much time and effort in developing its leadership initiatives.

“... a wonderful merging of academic education, pragmatic business training and exceptional personal advancement in leadership”

“A WORLD OF GOODS and a world of good: that which results when business is conducted with integrity, vision, accountability and stewardship.” This is one of the maxims of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. It also summarises the objective underpinning the USB's revised and more personalised approach to teaching leadership.

The methodology – which is based on the premise that, because leaders are grown and not born, the competencies of sustainable leadership can be developed over time – seeks to take students on a journey of personal leadership development. It utilises the entire MBA period to ensure that each student significantly enhances his or her authentic leadership capabilities.

The Sustainable Leadership process, which is the result of extensive research undertaken chiefly by the school's Centre for Leadership Studies, aims to develop leaders who will make a conscious, demonstrable and sustainable difference in their organisations. It involves a newly integrated leadership development curriculum, based on a team-teaching approach.

“The fact that leadership development is entrenched at every level of the MBA programme is unique to the USB and positions the approach as an international benchmark,” comments leadership expert and senior lecturer extraordinaire, Christo Nel, who was among the masterminds behind the new process. “The result is a wonderful merging of academic education, pragmatic business training and exceptional personal advancement in leadership – specifically for the present time.”

The process is implemented in four phases, which cover the entire MBA. In the initial phase, students undergo a 360° leadership assessment and complete a personality questionnaire to assess their existing leadership styles and behaviour. This is followed by a one-on-one feedback session with the USB's career officer. A personal development plan is charted and students are divided into small groups to form leadership councils, where special adult-learning processes evolve. The class programme, which spans all four phases of the process, begins with people management.

Underscoring the personalised approach, students are required to maintain a multi-segment personal journal throughout their studies. Here students reflect on their

personal life and influences on their authentic leadership style.

In the second-phase class programme, students are provided with theoretical and practice-based input, including further leadership assessments. The first one-on-one leadership development dialogue with a faculty member is initiated at this time.

By the time the students enter the third phase, the foundations have been laid and the integration of leadership competencies is in progress. Leadership councils have become powerful sources of learning and coaching skills, and environments conducive to productive conversations. A second one-on-one leadership development dialogue provides further opportunity to take stock and to discuss personal progress.

During the fourth phase students complete their individual and group assignments with regard to their leadership development journey, as well as certain elective courses designed to enhance sustainable leadership.

“Many people do not think of themselves as leaders because they picture a leader as a charismatic, visionary person,” says Prof Wim Gevers, USB's associate director: academic. “Of course, the converse is true: MBA graduates are looked up to not only as managers, but also as leaders. The revamped leadership programme does not focus on making charismatic, visionary leaders of every MBA participant, but rather on the personal development of the individual so that he or she can effectively take on the leadership role that business expects from MBA graduates.



From left:
Christo Nel, senior lecturer extraordinaire, USB
Prof Wim Gevers, associate director: academic, USB
Thian Combrinck, executive director: partnership programmes, USB-ED

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“Self-knowledge forms a critical role in a person’s ability to lead effectively. The redesigned course will develop MBA participants with a greater self-understanding of how they operate, how they learn and how they get the most out of the people that they work with.”

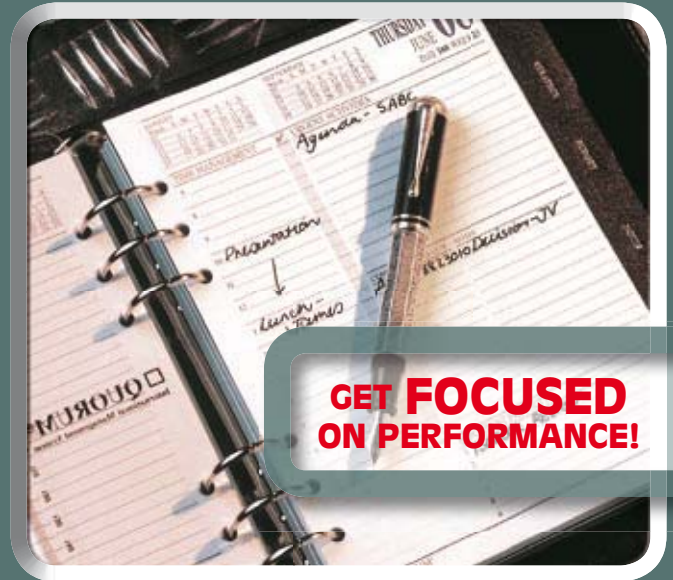
Thian Combrinck, executive director of partnership programmes for USB Executive Development Ltd (USB-ED), believes that the new curriculum will play “a critical role, alongside business, in developing the leaders necessary to ensure that business creates economic and societal progress in a globally responsible and sustainable way.” USB-ED is responsible for non-degree executive development programmes for all levels of leaders and managers. □

Under construction: USB-ED leadership framework

USB Executive Development Ltd (USB-ED) is presently working on a leadership framework which will be in alignment with that utilised in the USB’s MBA Sustainable Leadership initiative, says **Dr Basil Leonard**, academic head of the company.

“We will include a systems thinking approach that incorporates the seven systems aspects of organisations (based on the work of Elisabeth Dostal), the levels of work (based on the work of Elliott Jacques), and the Leadership Pipeline (based on the work of Drotter, Noel and Charan),” he says.

The objective, he adds, is to create a flexible framework that will facilitate the incorporation of other relevant thinking on leadership, without sacrificing any foundation philosophy.



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