

# 'A leader's role is to raise the performance of his people'

*Tony Cockerill, an expert in team and organisational development, is well known for his leadership skills. His research interests are international differences in industrial structure and performance; competition policy; macro-economic policy; and the educational process of management development.*

*At the London Business School, he has conducted research on the characteristics that distinguish outstanding leaders, teams and organisations from the rest in dynamic and competitive environments.*

*In 1996, he co-founded the Centre for High Performance Development, which specialises in leadership and team development. He has been also an economic advisor to the House of Commons select committees on nationalised industries and trade and industry between 1976-1985.*

*Cockerill, who was in India for a series of lectures on 'High Performance Leadership: Rapid development and deployment across organisations', spoke to Fe's Prachi Raturi Misra. Excerpts:*

## What differentiates a leader from followers?

A leader is someone who has overall responsibility for the performance of others. A leader's role is to raise the performance of the people s/he leads far beyond the level they would have achieved on their own. Our research has focused on what makes high performing leaders and, in turn, high performing organisations. In particular, leaders have very distinctive personality and motivational preferences that differentiate them from others.

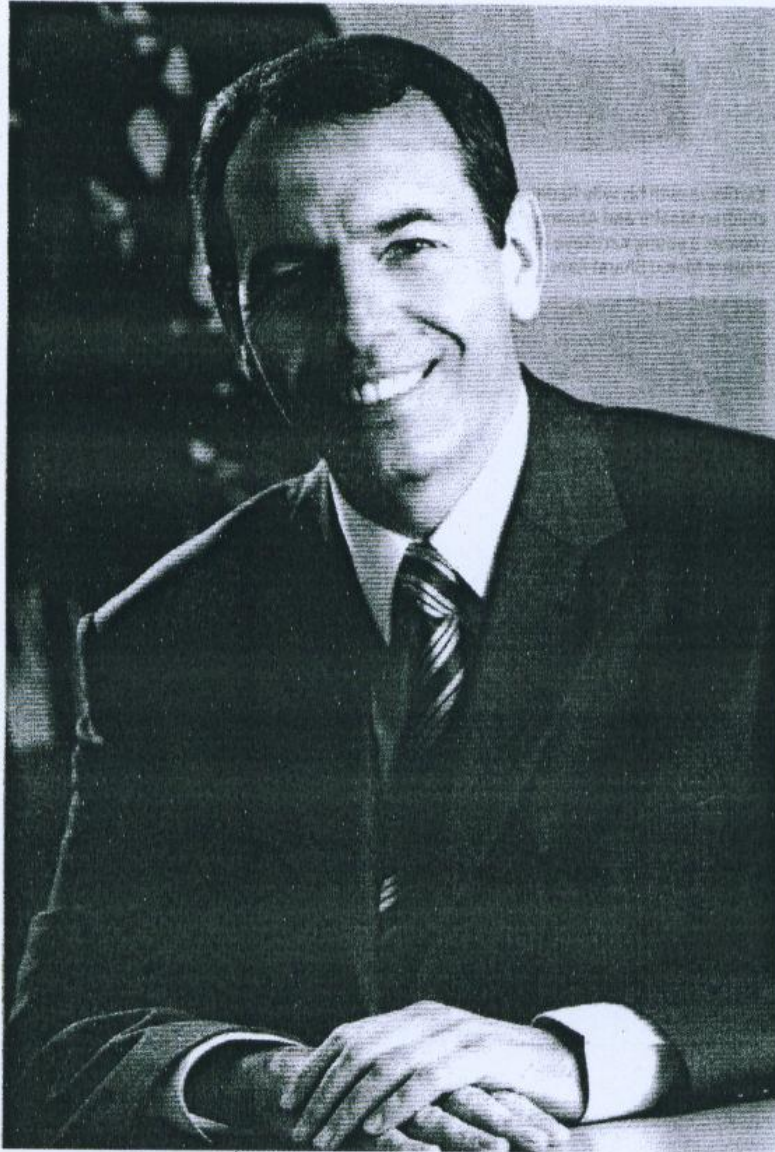
## Can you elaborate please?

Our research has identified 12 leadership behaviours that are the difference between average and high performing organisations. The working world today is complex and dynamic. To perform effectively in that kind of environment, a management team needs to have strengths in all 12 leadership behaviours. We call them High Performance Behaviours (HPBs).

Unfortunately, our research shows that many leaders at the global level are not well developed in some of the behaviours crucial to today's business environment. These include empathy, teamwork, influence, customer focus, continuous improvement and conceptual flexibility. Based on our extensive work till date, India reflects the global picture where these HPBs are generally underdeveloped in leaders.

## What is the quality of professionals in India?

We are impressed with the quality of professionals in India. When it comes to leaders, India shares some of the issues that face companies around the world, namely a shortage



of good leaders and a general shortage of strengths in the behaviours that are most needed to create and sustain modern high performing organisations. The continued rapid growth of the Indian economy means the shortage of leaders is more intense in India than in other countries like the UK and the USA.

## How much does team spirit contribute to a company's growth?

Teamwork is crucial for an organisation's success and yet teams too often fail to deliver on the promise. Today it is essential for teams to come together both within departments, cross-functions and even across

countries to achieve common goals. No single leader will have strengths in all 12 HPBs. So, it is essential that the make-up of a team is diverse so that all the team members can claim strengths in all 12 behaviours.

## What are some of the lessons that you have learnt through the research at the Centre for High Performance Development?

The research we've conducted at the centre and the experience of our work with thousands of leaders around the world has given us a profound understanding of what makes leaders and businesses successful. Knowing what makes a high performing leader enables us to assess and then develop

leaders from all round the world to achieve more personally and for their organisations. We get a huge amount of satisfaction from seeing the impact of our work.

## How can leadership skills be imparted to employees at all level?

Developing people is one of the 12 High Performance Behaviours, which define high performing leaders. Great leaders coach and mentor their people to raise their level of performance. The HPBs are relevant to all levels of leaders, from first time manager to global CEOs, and there is much a leader can do to encourage use of the behaviours to achieve a higher level of performance. The first step in this is self-awareness. Understanding where your strengths and weaknesses lie and how great leaders behave is crucial to a leader's development.

## Do businesses today invest sufficiently in developing leadership skills across the board?

There is certainly more recognition of the importance of leaders to businesses. Another recent research report from Harvard confirmed this. We know that leaders have never had more impact on the success of their organisation.

Given this fact, it would be natural to think that businesses are also investing significantly in the development of leadership skills in their business. Unfortunately this isn't always the case. There are many businesses that do invest in leadership skills but I certainly wouldn't say this is across the board yet.

There is also a deeper challenge here and that's what kind of leadership development takes place. Too often, businesses think they are developing leaders by running a few generic leadership training courses, but behavioural change and development requires tailored interventions. Bespoke courses combined with coaching and on-the-job learning are crucial to see real business benefits and behavioural change.

## Do you think one can emulate leadership qualities from seniors at the shop floor level?

The 12 High Performance Behaviours that we have already talked about are relevant to leaders at all levels of a business. Good leaders coach and mentor others and this can have a huge impact on the performance at the shop floor level.

## Can you name Indian corporates that have shown exceptional leadership skills?

There are some of the clients that we have worked with so far. Some names that come to mind immediately include TCS, GSK, RPG, Oberoi and Airtel. There may be more that we do not know of.