

Interview with keynote speaker, Dr. Ric Roi

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Dr. Roi's keynote topic "**Have You Re-Tooled Your Organisation**"? will be delivered on Thursday 13 August at the ACTE Asia-Pacific Education Conference which will be held at The Ritz-Carlton Millenia Singapore (12-13 August 2009). Recently he spoke to ACTE's Asia-Pacific Regional Director, Kenneth Phua.

KP: In your opinion, is the current spate of global woes likely to trigger demand for a new style of corporate leadership and what could this leadership style look like?

RR: The emerging corporate leadership style, demonstrated by durable companies during these difficult times, is global mindset. Global mindset is not defined as the ability to work cross-culturally. That is an outdated definition. Global mindset means that a leader has the capacity to think and lead through the increased complexity introduced in a company as it goes global. In our experience, when a company transitions from being a domestic firm, or exporter, to becoming a truly global firm they rarely think about the new mindset and skillset their leaders need to succeed. Business complexity and cultural complexity goes up exponentially when you transition from a domestic to a global role. Lenovo is a good example of a newly global company struggling with how to create a model of global business leadership to match their global business growth model. So we have watched this excellent company go through two rounds of resetting their senior leadership team, in the last four years, as they try to sort this out. In meantime burning up valuable time while HP continues to expand in their markets. Global mindset will be the differentiating leadership capability in companies of the future.

KP: Does Asia-Pacific have an inherent advantage in producing the calibre of talent needed for the future and how would you describe these qualities?

RR: In general yes, but it depends on which Asia-Pacific country we are talking about. For the major economies here, Singapore, is in my experience, is the country with the strongest presence of global mindset among business leaders and is a great training ground for emerging global executives. This is the result of years of exposure from having western company regional headquarters based there, common english language use, and the natural exposure you get from working with people from all over the world. In my view, China has strongest advantage moving forward, with Japan and Korea having the hardest time to develop global mindset among their business leaders. Chinese companies are

expanding at a dizzying pace, and a growing group of Chinese companies preparing to move from global exporter status to becoming truly global companies. Chinese managers are highly adaptable, open to change and pick up new management practices quickly. There is also a stronger commitment to learning English than you see in Japanese or Korean companies. A firm can grow and prosper for years, as an global exporting company with limited english skills among the managers, but you cannot become a globally integrated firm.

KP: Is the rate of change in the various environments outpacing established change management strategies and what can companies do about it?

RR: Yes. The speed and complexity of business and market change has outpaced our management practices for dealing with it. We need a new model of change management, better to call it agility. For the past 15 years or so companies have implemented change management approaches into their management and project management practices. Change management is a systematic way to implement business and organizational change that has been promoted by the business schools and consulting firms to help executives implement multi-year strategic projects. This model was developed for programmed change, but we live in a time of constant change and uncertainty, so this change management model should be retired. It's a fine model for implementing a new IT system, but it should not serve as the company's guiding philosophy for managing change and uncertainty. Companies need a new paradigm for leading their firms through this new world of constant change. The new model is personal and corporate agility.

KP: What are some of the significant changes in workforce demographics for Asia-Pacific markets and what do they mean for organizational talent management?

RR: At the company and employee level there are several key structural shifts taking place in the world of work. The first is a power shift from employer to the individual employee. The professional talent shortage, combined with job expectations of the younger generation workforce, will put the advantage with the employees rather than the employer. Next, businesses are demonstrating an increasing sophistication about how to manage their talent. Company leaders have higher expectations around return on their talent investments and how the workforce delivers business value in tangible or measurable ways. Finally we are witnessing rapid technological developments such as continuous mobile connectivity, user-generated content, social networking, etc. We are only beginning to understand the impact of these technologies and how to channel them to improve our workforce and company performance.

KP: There is a constant tussle for commercial resources such as energy, land and key commodities. Is there a similar battle for talent and what exactly is on the top of the list?

RR: At the macro level, most workforce studies predict a continuing global war for talent as predicted by McKinsey & Company some ten years ago. This trend is masked by the current economic down cycle as companies are shrinking payrolls not increasing headcount at this time. But specifically we can expect a continued shortage of professional and managerial talent when the economy recovers. That is it will be increasingly difficult for companies to find the right professional talent, for the right jobs at the right locations. Worker mobility, or moving workers across borders, has increased rapidly in past ten years. This mobility factor may help a somewhat, but overall we expect the shortage of professional talent to continue in the foreseeable future. Manpower, our parent company, recently published a whitepaper on global workforce mobility trends. In this report we predict the largest gap or shortage will occur in middle management jobs and professional jobs. We expect an oversupply of lower-skilled workers. In senior or executive level jobs we expect to experience a modest shortage of qualified candidate to fill those jobs in the future.

KP: Thank you for your time.

RR: My pleasure.