



CONFEDERACIÓN
ESPAÑOLA DE
**DIRECTIVOS
Y EJECUTIVOS**

Con la colaboración de:

Deloitte.

Liderando en positivo

Interview

Antonio Llardén

April 2011

www.liderandoenpositivo.com



Technological support:

Laviniainteractiva

“Tomorrow’s leaders have to be open to change, know how to listen and make decisions”

Antonio Llardén, Chairman of Enagás

Antonio Llardén, Chairman of Enagás and Dean of the Colegio de Ingenieros Industriales de Cataluña, boasts an extensive professional career in the energy industry. His previous experience at the Gas Natural Group and at the Spanish gas association Sedigas is testament to his career in this highly globalised and internationalised industry. Llardén highlights the importance of people as the basis of the organisation and promotes a new executive style that is open to change.



Career in a globalised industry

After your extensive experience at the Gas Natural Group and Sedigas, what do you think are the distinct features of the energy industry?

We probably share certain aspects with other industries in the business world, but if there is something in particular that characterises the energy industry, it is the fact that companies must be 100% right in technical terms. You cannot allow failures because, although the probability of something going wrong is very low, the risk it entails is extremely high. Also, it is an industry that, due to its very nature, is completely global.

Over all these years, what have been the main challenges that you have faced?

Everyone that has worked in energy over the last twenty years has experienced three milestones that have revolutionised the sector. The first was the internationalisation process of companies. Second was the liberalisation in the European Union, which broke with a series of almost ancestral customs from a business standpoint and, lastly, the process of financial globalisation that has been widespread throughout the world.

What is the most difficult situation that you have had to face in your professional career?

Being responsible for a large part of the process of internationalisation. It is complicated to radically change role. Every company has learned a lot by doing this and although we handle the situation better today, it is still difficult to handle offices, activities and assets in different countries. Above all because behind all this are people, a fact that continues to instil in me a considerable sense of respect.

And the situation you are most satisfied with as leader and executive?

When you get to the end of the year and you have accomplished what you set out to do, which is the case of the company that I currently preside over. It gives me great satisfaction to see that it works and in our case in particular, we have even grown our workforce over the last four years, despite the crisis. I am sometimes asked what particularly concerns me and I always tell them I have three concerns: paying the wages every month, repaying the bank loans every month and, in our case, since we are a listed company, giving an appropriate dividend to our investors at the end of the year.

A crisis...of values?

What in your opinion is the root of the crisis?

It is evidently a crisis of financial origin which, in some countries like Spain, has had a bearing on internal problems. The result of all this has led us to a crisis that perhaps we have not faced before. Also, the value scale has changed over the last 20 years. It is probably a confusing mix of not just strictly economic or financial problems, but also a matter of values, which leads us to a problem of leadership in a general sense: of countries, of societies and companies, of the EU, etc.

“The liberalisation has introduced new rules to play by: there is greater competition, which means you have to be more flexible and more aware of commercial matters”

Leadership in the face of change

What do you believe the abilities of leaders are or should be?

Living in a more globalised financial world requires mastering languages that was not common twenty years ago. Moreover, the liberalisation has introduced new rules to play by: there is greater competition, which means you have to be more flexible and more aware of commercial matters. People have to be much more open to change.

Do you think the concept of leadership has changed in recent years?

When I finished my studies the example of leadership was the image of a dictatorial chairman. This has changed radically given that we have to be in contact with stake holders and also because work teams have become more complex with the internationalisation of companies. This requires leadership and cross-working that thirty years ago did not exist because everything was very uniform.

What does being an executive mean for you?

At the end of the day, the greatest difference between someone who prepares a report and an executive is that the latter makes decisions. If you do not make decisions, then you are something else, a good assistant. To make good decisions, you have to know how to listen, both before and after the decision.

In the case of Spain, how do you rate the abilities of our leaders?

At the moment we have executives with an undeniable ability to act and to manage. It is no coincidence that we have some of the most prestigious business schools in the world. All the executives, irrespective of their original degree, have expanded their executive skills. Spanish executives have a high overall vision, are capable of being flexible, are able to adapt, can empathise and know how to work with very different teams.

“Work teams have become more complex with the internationalisation of companies. This requires leadership and cross-working that thirty years ago did not exist”

What advice would you give leaders of the future?

Obviously, that they should work on a good basic training. Also, that they should be constantly on the lookout to widen their interests, not just in the area in which they are specialists. Furthermore, they have to be prepared to work in teams without diminishing their initiative. Tomorrow’s leaders have to be open to change and, also, they have to know how to do two things which seem easy but are really not: listen and make decisions.

Contact

CONFEDERACIÓN ESPAÑOLA DE DIRECTIVOS Y EJECUTIVOS - CEDE

World Trade Center

Moll de Barcelona, s/n Edificio Sur 3ª planta

08039 Barcelona (Spain)

Tel. +34 93 508 83 20

Fax. +34 93 508 83 21

Correo electrónico: info@directivoscede.com