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Leading in positive

Interview with José Crehueras

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“If I had to highlight one thing about my leadership, it would not be my great knowledge and achievements, but the people around me, what I have learned from them and what I have delegated to these teams”



José Crehueras | Chairman of Atresmedia

José Crehueras chairs the largest Communications and Media Group in Spain with more than 2,000 professionals working under his command. For the chairman of Atresmedia, it is precisely these people who build the business and, following that line of thought, he highlights from his leadership the work of his teams instead of his own achievements and knowledge. The chairman advises young professionals not to cling on to set principles, but to constantly rethink everything, emphasising one of the great virtues that he believes leaders should have: the ability to adapt.

Since you began leading large teams, how do you feel that the leader's figure has evolved? What qualities do leaders need now that they did not need a few years ago?

Nowadays things change very quickly, society is evolving at a tremendous speed and in every business you need to continually innovate and be able to adapt. In that sense, the fundamental quality is knowing how to evolve at the same time as society and the business, i.e., knowing how to adapt.

If you could draw up a profile of the ideal leader, which three qualities would you choose?

Effort, credibility (that includes transparency and quality) and the capacity to make decisions. The ability to make decisions is very important in a time of great and rapid change. You do not have much time to decide things because it may be that by the time you have made a decision, it is too late. You should not rush into things, but you should not delay either.

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What are your leadership principles and which do you consider are fundamental to positive leadership?

My leadership style has been based on people, listening a great deal to management teams, knowing how to delegate all responsibility to everyone in their area, transparency and a code of ethics. If I had to highlight one thing about my leadership, it would not be my great knowledge and achievements, but the people around me, what I have learned from them and what I have delegated to these teams. I have undoubtedly been lucky to always have teams of great professionals and great people close to me.

Is there a leader you especially admire? Could you explain why?

Without a doubt, the leader I admire is José Manuel Lara Hernández, founder of the Planeta Group. I had the honour and satisfaction of working with him for almost 15 years; he was an exceptional man and admirable for his natural wisdom, entrepreneurship, human touch and strategic business vision.

In an economic climate like that of today, what message would you send out to a young person who had just finished his or her studies and was about to enter the labour market?

I would tell them that business is done by people and that they need to be very aware of changes in society. The reality is that nothing is permanent, everything is changing and the digital revolution will be something inherent to their life. I would also advise them to listen a great deal and be very alert to everything that happens outside of their day to day activities because it will become fundamental. Finally I would encourage them to be very willing to change, not to have set principles

for things and to constantly rethink everything. There are many rules that are set, mainly in relation to codes of ethical conduct, but in everything else you must have the ability to adapt to the new times.

How does someone prepare for being the leader of a business?

I do not think there is any specific preparation to be the leader of a company. Evidently you must have knowledge and skills, but really you prepare yourself during your day to day activities and demonstrating commitment. You must also have a bit of luck and opportunity, but above all commitment and wanting to do it.

Within the sphere of activity of a leader, how do you maintain a team's trust in the organisation in an environment of cutbacks such as that suffered as a result of the recent crisis?

With transparency and accountability. We now live in times when we must speak clearly and say things as they are, without beating around the bush. If you have to take drastic measures in an organisation, you must explain well why, be transparent and guided by a very clear code of ethics so that others can understand your decisions, even if they do not agree with them.

Innovation has become one of the great levers of growth, but how can you innovate in the field of leadership and people management?

I do not believe that you can innovate. Everything has been said when it comes to people management in particular. What we must do is persevere and not think that in a digital age like the one we live in that people have taken on a secondary role. If we persevere with the idea that people are the most important part of the business we will already be innovating.

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