

Liderando en positivo

Interview

Manuel Teruel

January 2012

www.liderandoenpositivo.com



“The biggest mistake that you can make is to think that it is possible to emerge from crises”

Manuel Teruel, Chairman of the Spanish Higher Council of Chambers of Commerce

Manuel Teruel, Chairman of the Spanish Higher Council of Chambers of Commerce, is convinced that crises involve a violent, swift change that throw the market out of kilter, giving rise to a new environment to which we must adapt. With extensive experience in corporate management, he is a firm supporter of the development of small- and medium-sized companies (SMEs) and of entrepreneurs, because he considers that they play an important role in Spain's recovery, “if they could create one or two jobs, unemployment in Spain would fall to European levels”.



How are the Chambers of Commerce currently contributing to the development of SMEs and entrepreneurs and to increasing competitiveness?

The Chambers of Commerce are more necessary now than ever before. When discussing who will drive Spain's emergence from the crisis, it will undoubtedly be the SMEs, since they are the first that create jobs. Large companies are still lacking the conditions which allow them to invest and, what is more, they are starting to relocate on a gradual basis.

Spanish businessmen, who live in the same city as workers, will be the first to be firmly committed to employment. There are 1,400,000 companies with fewer than ten employees, that will be the first to create employment. This is where the Chambers will play an important role because these companies know about processes, but have no technology or management training, they are not internationalised, nor do they have the appropriate size, and here is where the Chambers provide services in order to help the SMEs launch themselves abroad, help them acquire a culture of management, size, technology, etc. These services are essential to ensure that small enterprises grow a little. If each of these companies could create one or two jobs, unemployment in Spain would actually fall to European levels.

In relation to leadership, what is the most important thing that you have learned during your career about the qualities of a leader?

What I value most is the feeling a leader has when he sees that others follow him, when he sees that others trust him. A leader is someone who is capable of coordinating a team and of feeling feedback that his employees trust him and support him in any type of project without hesitation. This sensation has an effect of wellbeing, an extremely important placebo, which is one of the reasons that motivates a leader to continue pushing and dragging people along with him.

Given your experience in foreign trade, do you consider that internationalisation is one of the keys for the recovery of the economy?

Yes, I do. A company is only competitive when it can be compared with companies in other countries. The world is global. The world has changed. Information and communication technologies have changed uses and customs. Companies without a market share abroad do not know whether or not they are competitive because they are managing a captive market. The way out of the crisis is through the global market. There are countries that are experiencing much stronger growth than Europe. Therefore, the possibility of growth in those countries is greater and the way to remain competitive is to measure yourself in those markets which are much more competitive than ours.

In this respect, what personal and professional skills should an executive develop in order to pave the way to recovery?

I think that an executive should have three very clear values. First, have certain values. Secondly, his attitude towards a global world, a complicated world in which he is going to have to adapt continuously and, thirdly,

What I value most about leadership is the feeling a leader has when he sees that others follow him, when he sees that others trust him”

the spirit of sacrifice. These times require an additional effort because otherwise, we will not emerge from this situation. I think that behind the financial crisis lies a crisis of values, the recovery of which is essential.

What role does training play in “building” the best leaders? To what extent and, especially, in relation to which matters should the executives of large corporations be trained?

In a global world such as this, training is slightly different to the traditional concept of training because now it is available on the Internet, which allows us to have a lot more information and knowledge.

Training is needed to develop skills. Executives must be capable of accessing the Internet, knowledge sources, know where to look, sense the future, etc., because training is already available on the Internet. Therefore, it is vital now for training to be carried out. Such training should prepare and help an individual to adapt more appropriately to the new environment, predict the future and train himself in order to be at the top of his game in the new world.

“A company is only competitive when it can be compared with companies from other countries”

What are the most common errors made by executives when addressing a situation like the present one? What lessons can we learn from this crisis?

The biggest mistake that you can make is to think that it is possible to emerge from crises. You cannot emerge from crises. People adapt to a new situation. A crisis is a swift violent change that throws players and people out of kilter. It is not like a power cut caused by a blown fuse that is changed and then the light comes back on again. Emerging from the crisis means adapting to that new environment. An executive must think globally and adjust his strategy accordingly. He must have the skill to predict events, identify strategies and swiftly adapt to the new situation.

If you could create the best executive and business leader, which three qualities could never be left out?

Without any doubt, the first one would be honour. An executive who does not transmit honour will never be a sound executive. The second would be the ability to communicate with the environment and the ability to adapt to new times, i.e. flexibility towards events and excellent communication skills. He must be a good at communicating. The third would be training, which I am listing in third place because I think that values and the ability to adapt and communicate are most important (especially at the moment).

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