

UCT aims to develop strategy leaders in SA

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The UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) has taken the unusual step of marrying two disciplines - coaching and strategy - in order to aid in solving a problem common in the world of business: the gap between strategy and implementation.

The marriage has spawned a brand new programme called Strategic Leadership Coaching launching this May that borrows the best from both disciplines to help executives improve their strategic leadership capacity so that brilliant strategic plans are translated into real business improvement and don't end up on the dust heap.

According to Janine Everson, Academic Director at the Centre for Coaching at the UCT GSB and the facilitator for the course, many executives agree that while strategic planning is often given an organisation's full attention - normally with input from expensive consultants - when it comes to the implementation of such strategies, something goes wrong, leaving the organisation unchanged or, worse, halfway through a process.

"But great leadership is about implementing change as well as developing the strategies to adapt to change," she said. "You can't have one without the other."

The course will expose senior executives responsible for strategic implementation to focussed one-on-one coaching aimed at developing their own personal leadership competencies and an approach to leadership which will help them become effective catalysts and drivers of change.

"This is not a course about coaching or how to coach," said Everson. "It's a course about strategic leadership, underpinned by one-on-one coaching support as the core in helping leaders to build their capacity to envisage, mobilise and drive organisations towards strategic change objectives."

According to Everson, not all leaders are naturally equipped to deal with the incredible challenges that their role will throw at them.

"Leadership comes in many forms, many guises and many styles," she explained. "For some, leadership is a lifetime calling or a way of being, for others it is situational and circumstantial, and for others still it is an unfolding, emerging and inexplicable process that shapes them. Whatever the genesis - calling, timing or evolution - what is expected of leaders is the same: they need to be able to drive strategic change in their organisations and motivate others to join them. This course wants to help them achieve this.

"Many people believe that where leadership is concerned, either you have it or you don't. But this is short-sighted. The human capacity for learning and development is enormous - it just takes the right key to unlock this potential and coaching can be the key," she said.

For those who are sceptical of coaching, Craig O' Flaherty, Director of the Centre for Coaching, added that "the process is not about behaviour modification or a form of advanced manipulation. Neither is it positive-thinking cheerleading. It is just a reliable methodology that develops long-term performance excellence."

Everson said that through a process of experiential learning and the exposure to one-on-one coaching, course delegates will hone their leadership skills, becoming better able to foresee challenges, manage uncertainty in a constructive way and unlock the potential inherent in themselves and their colleagues.

She cautioned that, "although this is not a coaching course as such, delegates do need to be open to the experience of coaching, which is often a very intense process. Self-development is the keystone of this approach and the ability to grow and assimilate what is learnt will rest on the delegate's willingness to embark upon their own inner journey."

For more information on the course which runs from 29 May - 2 June contact Shireen Brown at the UCT GSB on (021) 406 1370 or email . You can also visit <http://www.gsb.uct.ac.za/strategicleadership>.

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