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Develop Untapped Leadership Potential in the Dark

To combat the global financial tsunami, some corporations have laid off staff. Cutting costs is one of the ways to deal with such crises. But gearing up staff to deal with the poor economic situation is another more positive way.

According to Dr Ka-kui Tse, Honorary Chairperson of DiD HK Ltd and an experienced HR professional, the leadership potential of staff remains to be explored in situations they have not experienced before. "Facing unfamiliar and unexpected situations, people have to use new abilities to handle and solve problems."

The Dialogue in the Dark (DiD) Executive Workshop is designed to enable participants to discover untapped leadership potential. It aims at challenging the participants to become innovative and imaginative in crises and unfamiliar situations such as the global credit crunch. Tse says, "Staff may reflect on their leadership and communication styles, and may realize that they have leadership potential not yet used to the full."



Dr Ka-kui Tse
Honorary Chairperson,
DiD HK Ltd



Gaining a New Perspective

In the DiD workshops, participants have to experience total darkness for two hours. To be guided by blind facilitators, they will then gain a new perspective on basic leadership skills such as communication, listening, building trust, aligning goals, giving instructions and feedback, and handling crises.

In total darkness, it is difficult to know if the other participants understand what you have said. Without body language, handouts and PowerPoint presentation, how can you convey your messages effectively and how can you know if the others will act according to your instructions? This workshop challenges participants to reflect on their traditional communication styles. Dr Tse comments that management training programmes available on the market are usually skills-based, but DiD helps participants reflect on their leadership and management styles.

Worldwide Application

Though the DiD workshop was originated in Germany, its application is not limited to Europe. Dr Tse comments that it can be applied in other cultures. Since 2006, the DiD workshop has become a regular feature of the World Economic Forum and leaders of international organizations were exposed to this unconventional approach to leadership development. Dr Tse says that senior executives from large corporations, including SAP, Allianz, Philips, Nokia, Airbus, and SGS, have already attended the workshops and found them practical. In Hong Kong, the first series of 20 executive workshops will be held in January 2009. Organizations having signed up to attend the workshops include Asia Insurance, Asia Financial Holding, British Council, China State Construction Eng. Co. Ltd, Civil Service Bureau, Jebsen & Co. Ltd, Merrill Lynch, Thomson Reuters, and Yew Chung International School.

The essence of the DiD workshop is "Sight is what we see with our eyes; insight is what we gain without seeing." It is hoped that through experiencing the dark, participants gain insights for their personal as well as career development.

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