

Go global, get lean...

...and more thoughts from the 'growth guru' who brought J.D. Rockefeller's habits to business leaders

BY DEBORAH PENTA

If you're in management and haven't read *Mastering the Rockefeller Habits* by Verne Harnish, I suggest you pick up a copy. I've enjoyed Tom Peter's take on management for many years and when he was quoted saying that "Verne is THE guru of fast-growing companies," it piqued my interest. I read Harnish's book in 2006.

Among his many impressive accolades, Verne has been coined the "growth guru" columnist for *Fortune* and he continues to bring senior-level managers the fundamentals that can produce greater productivity and higher profitability by integrating the disciplined approach of oil industry tycoon John D. Rockefeller.

The habits that Verne shares in his book can be mastered by founders of entrepreneurial companies and management at all levels in organizations of all sizes. He was recognized as one of the "Top 10 Minds in Small Business" by *Fortune* Small Business in 2002, is the founder of the internationally recognized Young Entrepreneurs Organization (YEO) and Gazelles Inc., and has gained the favor of many top growth leaders worldwide.

Verne spoke at a conference we invited him to and shared his expertise with an audience of business experts from around the world. His ideas were insightful and invaluable. By applying one or more of his principals, executives would have the opportunity to create greater results within their organizations.

On August 6th of this year, I had a conversation with Verne about leadership and what advice he would give organizational managers seeking to achieve greatness as a leader—by way of getting him to share his wisdom with readers of this column. Not surprisingly, he offered great insights that each one of us can apply to our management practices.

"Businesses are facing the single largest opportunity they've ever experienced on the planet as over one billion people will be added to the world's middle-class population in the next several years—people that have discretionary income to spend," he said. "This is huge—it's the largest piece of the pie we've ever seen."

Harnish is currently evangelizing two key points to leaders worldwide. "Go global, and get lean." As the middle-class population increases, we'll see an emergence of people with discretionary income all over the world. Harnish encourages businesses

of all sizes to determine how they can become more global to capitalize on these opportunities. "The challenge for American business leaders is great, because so many think local and not global," he said. Business leaders to think about how they can market globally, he said.



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His next suggestion is for leaders to get lean. This does not mean layoffs or downsizing, but rather doing more with what you have. "Leaders have to enthusiastically embrace Toyota's lean principals and increase capacity. The massive challenge is people and getting your employees to produce more high-quality work."

Harnish urges business leaders to make their existing teams more productive so they can do more—increase productivity and quality, and do it all with the same number of employees.

In discussing leadership principles with Verne, I asked him what he believes separates good leaders from great leaders. He believes great leaders have an unbelievable thirst for learning and a bias for taking action. "Do it now, make it happen—learn quick and act quick.

"The best leaders seek out additional learning and coaching and they are highly disciplined," Harnish said. He endorses Bill Gates' concept of taking "think weeks" for CEOs and high-level leaders. "The challenge for leaders is staying relevant," he said. He believes leaders must develop a process of rapid learning and rapid action.

"Leaders have got to get global and get lean. Do what you need to keep you and your business relevant so that we can keep our country relevant. When I wrote *Mastering the Rockefeller Habits*, the theme of discipline that runs through the book is essential. Disciplined leaders are the ones that win big!, he said.

We'd like to know your thoughts. Please email me at dpenta@femaleleaders.org.

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