

# Leadership Talking Points

## NEWSLETTER



## The Real Job of a Learning Institution: Unleashing Leaders

At FranklinCovey we believe that every single human being has leadership potential and that every single human being should become a leader. So we believe in teaching leadership to everyone, not just to a handful of the elite.

Many of our learning partners feel the same way. For example, Stenden University in the Netherlands explicitly labels itself a “Leadership University,” combining leadership with scholarship and career preparation. Leadership skills are explicitly taught and are considered just as important as academic and job skills. Its thousands of students in the Netherlands, South Africa, Thailand, and China, learn that leaders are people “who act according to universal principles, take responsibility, value differences in people, synergize, and develop themselves.”

Dr. Robert Veenstra, chairman of the board, says, “I want a leadership-focused university. Leadership is, for me, the way to bring out the best in people.” This is the true work of the university, he says: “to unleash the leader in each person.”

With the help of FranklinCovey Benelux, Dr. Veenstra pioneered the use of the 7 Habits® as the basis for the university's "Value Driven Leadership" program. More than 700 students participated in the first program with a 75 percent excellent rating. Many students over the years report that the program has helped them change their perspectives and become successful.

A Nigerian student, Emeka Ihumezie, says the program helped him think more productively. "I couldn't get that job because I am black! The system doesn't welcome me.' These were my paradigms. The way I saw the world. I never took the initiative to explore my alternatives. I kept exerting more than 80 percent of my energy and resources to complaints. After attending the Value Driven Leadership workshops based on the 7 Habits...I began to see the world differently. Racism, discrimination, segregation to me became clearer. I termed them my circle of concerns. I cannot change them by myself. It is also irresponsible of me focusing all my energy and resources on blaming my situation on them and not taking responsibility for my choice of actions. I started to take responsibility for my actions and the outcomes of my actions."

Philip Stibbe, a Dutch student, praised the program for giving him enthusiasm for the future and structure to his life during a period of hardship. Sun Aijun from China says the program helped him discover the importance of win-win for all parties. Daniel Spijker, another Dutch student, says, "It has changed my way of thinking...I have learned not to judge people."<sup>1</sup>

Stenden puts the 7 Habits' leadership philosophy into practice. On each campus, students who are learning service professions, like food preparation, hotel management, and health care, provide services at the same time to the surrounding communities. There is no boundary between classwork and service projects. The university operates a bakery in a poor suburb in South Africa, not only to teach baking to students but to provide products and jobs for the townspeople.

Students adopt small local businesses and teach them accounting, marketing, and other business skills, and the owners hire the students to work in their stores. Business owners learn new skills, and the students solidify their leadership capabilities. A young woman named Joyce had tried to hire herself out to do sewing but didn't know how to attract customers. The

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<sup>1</sup> *CHN's Passion: Annual Educational Report*, CHN University, ed., K. Van der Hoek, R. Veenstra, 2006, pp. 52-54, 139

students taught her budgeting and basic marketing, transforming her little business. Simphiwe Hlangane had a woodworking shop but knew little about business. He was so kindhearted that he charged only what the customer offered to pay and even gave away his services. Stenden students taught him accounting, marketing, and business acumen.

Stenden is also a sponsor of Enactus, a service-learning program involving 42,000 students across 40 emerging countries, building computer centers, pioneering new technologies to help poor communities, and running schools for farm children.

Stenden not only teaches leadership but also asks students to practice it outside classroom walls. These students will go on to lead businesses, schools, governments, and, most important, their own families with a solid grounding in the unshakable principles that make leaders effective.

### Questions to Ponder

Why does Stenden University see leadership training as integral to academic training? Why do they see every student as a potential leader? Does your organization view everyone as a potential leader? Why or why not? What could you do to create more leaders in your organization? What are the consequences for organizations that don't produce leaders?