The world of education and global competitiveness

Competitiveness is not only about organizational structures or comparative advantage; it’s essentially about people,” said Robert Spich, faculty director of the UCLA Anderson School of Management CIBER, in opening the first full day of the CIBER conference.

“The characteristics of the people working in the organization, the development of their global mindsets, are key to success in a dynamic world,” said Spich, outlining a set of interrelated individual attributes and their relationship to competitiveness.

Adaptiveness

The ability to be put in different environments and situations and still be able to function relatively well. “This includes the handling of disappointment. Things don’t always work the way you want but you learn from your mistakes and move on,” said Spich.

Openness

Being receptive to new kinds of information with which to understand the world and to respond appropriately is vital to adaptation.

Flexibility

The willingness to change your course of action when new kinds of information open new options and you need to learn new practices.

Creativity

The ability to constantly create, constantly innovate and invent. “The invention of the computer chip in the early 80s made us think we had a permanent leading technology. Less than three years later that technology went international and out of our hands. Creativity is not a one at- a-time process; it requires the ability to remain constantly inventive if not always one step ahead of competitors.”

Curiosity

This is central to creativity, invention, and adaptation. “People who are not curious about the world are not good candidates for global leadership.”

Tolerance

The ability to handle different points of view and unpopular ideas is an increasingly important characteristic of the global mindset. “There is value in having the constant ‘gentle push’ of opposing ideas. Differences keep us from getting lazy in our thinking. Tolerance, in its best sense, is learning to develop ‘mental callouses’ that toughen your thinking!” said Spich.

Cooperation

The balancing arm to competition and a fundamental quality of a healthy competitive organization in which individuals are part of virtual global teams. Discipline in thinking. As organizations increasingly get involved in moving beyond their zones of comfort and into the global arena, “we see that simplistic theories to explain things are not easy to come by; new layers of complexity are constantly being added. The challenge is to develop a global mindset and learn how to make sense of a world that is complex and dynamic and full of ambiguity.

Caring/smart emotions

“The ability to maintain our humanity and not be numbed by a juggernaut of globalization starts with smart emotions. You cannot care “carelessly,” taking everything equally seriously as No. 1 on your list. This wastes your ability to empathize and maintain perspective. Smart caring means you need to pick and choose well the issues you choose to confront. It begins with anticipating the effect of your decisions on the people and the world at large.

“In the world of education we begin to see that competitiveness is really driven by the attributes of people and their ability to learn about learning. Education plays a
critical role in enabling this learning and defining the characteristics that will help our students thrive as they go forward.

“Our role as educators is to expand awareness, impart knowledge and challenge attitudes in students so they can successfully function in a global environment,” said Spich.

“The regional CIBER conferences offer opportunities to share classroom experiences and help shape our business programs to prepare our young people for the future.” •