

# Leaders needed at all levels

**Willingness to change must be promoted**

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Businesses looking to achieve growth and survive the crisis should promote more leadership among staff at all levels of the organisation, said executive coach Jean-Francois Cousin.

Leadership is required in team members to help the company thrive during future challenges.

"Leaders need to encourage their staff to think deeper and further. It may sound simple, but it is a big challenge as much of the focus is still put on the management process," Mr Cousin told participants at a recent event organised by the Australian-Thai, Franco-Thai and Netherlands-Thai Chambers of Commerce.

Middle management should also be encouraged to act more like entrepreneurs, he added.

Mr Cousin is a certified coach accredited by the International Coach Federation and is the managing director of 1-2-Win Executive Coaching.

"You need to create a comfortable environment for team members to discuss different viewpoints regardless of seniority," Mr Cousin said. "It's an opportunity for every company to accelerate growth."

Leaders should stretch employees' capabilities continuously to keep them willing to change.

Furthermore, in encouraging staff to think deeper, leaders must facilitate listening and help them articulate their ideas.

Mr Cousin said generating leadership at all staff levels is critical because it empowers lower-level managers whose tasks are important to the company and rewards the courage to disagree with top management.

"Leaders should give team members opportunities to lead experiments without punishing those who fail," Mr Cousin said. "People should only get punished for not trying."

Nurturing productive conflicts and encouraging everyone to generate solutions contributes to quality decision-making by the team, as it cannot always be done by one person.

Engaging people in healthy conflicts is quite difficult in Thailand as people

fear losing face or embarrassing others, said Mr Cousin.

"The risks of avoiding confrontation are more severe in the long term," he said. "Healthy conflicts create more value for the company as people put the company's interest above their own comfort."

Mr Cousin said Thais are rich with creativity but short of motivation. Creativity could be strengthened with support from top management.

He added Thai leaders care for their subordinates' well-being, but they need to utilise adaptive leadership techniques to yield more trust among co-workers.

"Executives need to build trust through open conversation that allows people to share their values," said Mr Cousin.

In addition, the corporate environment should value diversity by having women significantly represented on an executive committee.

A McKinsey study in 2009 showed that companies with three or more women in top management did significantly better than companies with no women in top management on all performance criteria, particularly leadership and motivation.



Cousin: "Healthy conflicts" can create value