

Fostering change on a global scale

Elizabeth Filippouli, CEO and founder of Global Thinkers, discusses how the advisory business is helping develop leaders across the world.

Please tell us about the work you do at Global Thinkers

Global Thinkers is a London-based firm of international strategic advisors specialising in leadership development and boosting organisational performance applying our trademarked VALORE method.

We measure employee disengagement and we reposition the entire company under a shared values system that maximises engagement, performance and profit making. We are now expanding in the Arab region, opening an office in Dubai.

Global Thinkers Forum (GTF) is our non-profit think tank, a platform to discuss governance, society, entrepreneurship, business and to promote collaboration and new partnerships. The inaugural GTF 2012 Amman took place under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah, who participated in person and the King Abdullah Fund for Development.

This year we had our annual Awards Gala in Dubai, 'Arab Women as Changemakers' in the presence of leading Arab women such as HE Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi, HRH Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan, HE Raja Al Gurg, Dr Shaikha Al Maskari, HE Noura Al Kaabi.

We convene thinkers, leaders, social innovators, educators, and entrepreneurs, and we also invite younger people to attend, learn and bring fresh thinking to the table!

How do you help companies embrace change?

I believe that change does not happen overnight. It should not happen overnight. This is a wrong approach as the tremors that may be created can obstruct the company's progress and development. Change needs a multilateral strategy and has to be gradual, targeted and focused, taking into account all internal and external stakeholder and a range of dynamics which range from organisational to cultural to social to psychological.

The first reaction towards change is most of the times negative - people are resistant to the unknown. Most of us hate to leave



our comfort zones, we resist giving up tried recipes or conditions which are familiar, part of a known routine.

But like it or not, transformation is part of the evolution and they will sooner or later disrupt the ordinary, the norm in favour of the new. Good leaders need to be able to understand the signs of upcoming change, and help society not only adapt but benefit from it.

Does the internal culture of a company play a role in the overall performance?

Culture is critical because it is the only way to achieve internal cohesion and goal alignment. So that everyone in the company, from their own role and department, are engaged in the same mission.

Today, employees, customers and citizens expect companies to be good corporate citizens of the world. VALORE stands for 'Values-based Leadership for Organisational Excellence' - this is exactly what we train our clients to do. And they see great results, unbelievable cultural transformation.

What are the best tools for better governance?

Leadership in the Information Age requires cross-boundary, inter-agency collaboration

with networking as a core strategy. Leaders must leverage human and other resources.

Networking and collaboration challenge the traditional power and role of the hierarchy. Leadership is less about managing established practices, and more about managing transformation of practices, developing new expertise or integrating new combinations of expertise.

What key messages do you have for women and young people?

If you don't at least actively encourage the participation of women in the social engine, you lose out on 50 percent of a nation's intellectual and human capacity; simple as that.

There is no dearth of capable, qualified and highly committed women with a strong investment in social and other progress. My message to Women and young people is 'fear not'. Allow yourself the opportunity to develop your dreams into a vision. Allow your vision to guide you and open new pathways in life. Embrace the future, create it.

Why have you selected Dubai as a Global Thinkers regional office?

There is incredible dynamism in Dubai and the Emirates is a bustling country that embraces change, innovation, business and operates under an international mindset.

Also there is also a very strong 'Family Business' culture in the GCC and we work a lot with values-based leadership in family-owned companies. Sometimes it works and some companies are world class examples. At other times the founding member of the company (and the family) fails to create a succession plan that will ensure the sustainability and viability of the company under the new, younger generation. We help by tackling such challenges and developing values-based systems that facilitate generational transition.

We help them not only embrace but take advantage of this change, while respecting cultural and family issues. Those who are interested to find out more can email us on info@globalthinkers.com.