

IRC EMEA Regional Meeting: Building Leaders in a Digital, Disruptive Age

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IRC Global Executive Search Partners recently held its EMEA Regional Meeting themed “Leadership Transformation: Strategies in a Disruptive, Uncertain & Digital World”. A diverse group of over 35 IRC EMEA Regional Leaders from 24 countries, and external guests of different industry backgrounds gathered in Amsterdam to explore the demands on corporate leaders in an increasingly digital world.

Across all sectors of the economy, the pace of change is unprecedented. Innovations in digital technology is affecting all business processes and placing great pressure on the leaders of organisations as they steer their businesses through turbulent waters. One of the keys to becoming future-proof may be ensuring diversity at all levels of the organisation, developing a new generation of leaders and creating a culture that thrives on curiosity.

Riza Kadilar, keynote speaker and President of the European Mentoring & Coaching Council (EMCC), pointed out that the digital disruption has already happened. The examples are all around us. Kadilar noted: “The world’s largest taxi company (Uber) owns no taxis; the largest accommodation provider (AirBnB) own no real estate; the world’s most valuable retailer (Alibaba) has no inventory and the most popular media owner (Facebook) creates no content.”

In simultaneous round-table sessions, IRC partners and external guests discussed different aspects of leadership transformation. Most agreed that disruption is the new normal. As Fernando Galante (IRC Spain) remarked: “Decision-making



processes are shorter than ever before. At the same, the quality of decisions is improving, thanks to big data.”

Building an agile organisation sits high on the agenda of companies in the EMEA region, but it comes with many challenges. “Agility also means a break-down of the hierarchy,” said Tracy Dawson (IRC South Africa). “If you retain an old-school, hierarchical management structure, agile initiatives will fail. At the end of the day, there’s a middle-aged man in an office somewhere who wants to approve everything.”

The need for greater diversity was a recurring theme during the three days of the Regional Meeting. Boardroom coach Talitha Muusse, born in 1991 and the youngest participant of the meeting, stressed that “diversity on a board can help to challenge assumptions”. Another participant of a round-table session put it more bluntly: “You don’t want to end up with a group of people who look and think alike.”

To great acclaim of the other participants, Wim van Melick, Director Growing Talent at Ogilvy & Mather, summed up the position that many companies find themselves in: “You must be smarter and faster than the competition. That means attracting young talent. Innovation and diversity are not ‘nice-to-have’, they are a necessity.”

However, in the midst of all these internal changes and disruptive market forces, business should cherish their core values and identities. Digitisation changes business, but it is an evolutionary process rather than a revolution. Successful companies stay focused on what they do best and stay true to their heritage.



About IRC Global Executive Search Partners

IRC Global Executive Search Partners is a global professional alliance of executive search firms, united in their commitment to support clients in sourcing and retaining key leadership talent. Our partners are as culturally and geographically diverse as our clients. Located in 80+ cities on six continents, IRC has the footprint and agility needed to serve multinationals and SMEs with dedication and a personal touch.

IRC has a track record of more than 30,000 completed assignments for 3,000+ clients in almost every conceivable industry segment and function. Ranked as the world's largest executive search alliance in terms of global reach, IRC Global Executive Search Partners is an alliance that embodies the best of both worlds – Globally Connected and Locally Committed.

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