

Anna Nagurney

Visiting Professor of Operations Management
School of Business, Economics and Law
University of Gothenburg, Sweden
and
John F. Smith Memorial Professor
Isenberg School of Management
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts, USA
Graduate Commencement Speech

Master's Degree Recipients – School of Business, Economics and Law
(Handelshogskolan)
University of Gothenburg
Assembly Hall at Vasaparken
June 12, 2013

On Great Leadership

Good afternoon and a very warm welcome to everyone!

Dear representatives of the Richard C. Malmsten Memorial Foundation, including its Chairman, Dr. Johan Malmsten, the Head of the Graduate School, Dr. Maureen McKelvey, the Directors of Studies, Dr. Ann Veiderpass and Dr. Oskar Broberg, the Master's Degree Program Coordinators, faculty, staff, distinguished guests, family members and friends, and, most importantly, the Master's degree recipients, it is my great honor and privilege to be speaking to you today on this truly special occasion.

Thank you for this opportunity.

I come to the School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg, Handelshogskolan, from the Isenberg School of Management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in the United States of America. I am the John F. Smith Memorial Professor of Operations Management and the Director of the Virtual Center for Supernetworks there. I have worked in industry in high tech consulting and have also held appointments at MIT, Harvard University, and Brown University, which is from where I received my 4 college degrees, including the Master's and the PhD. I have been a Fulbrighter in Austria and in Italy.

This is my fifth stay in Gothenburg as a Visiting Professor of Operations Management at the School of Business, Economics and Law through its unique Visiting Professor Programme. I am affiliated with the Section on Industrial and Financial Management & Logistics in the Department of Business Administration. Your outstanding school has become my second home.

When I look at the Master's degrees that you are receiving today in such wonderful specialties as: Management, Logistics and Transport Management, Marketing and Consumption, Knowledge-based Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Industrial Management, International Business and Trade, Finance, Economics, Accounting, it is clear that you have obtained a brilliant education that has prepared you well as global citizens and leaders in your chosen professions!

Today, I would like to speak to you on what makes a great leader because our world needs great leaders and, with your experiences, knowledge, education, and training, as well as your personal character, you can evoke positive change.

***A Great Leader Innovates and Creates.* Sweden is a leader in innovation from high tech companies such as Skype and Spotify to manufacturing companies such as Volvo and Scania. Examples of other innovative Swedish companies include: Lundin Petroleum in energy, Nordea Bank in financial services, Electrolux in home furnishings, SKF in technology and knowledge engineering, Stena in shipping and recycling, AstraZeneca in pharmaceuticals, TeliaSonera in telecommunications and, of course, H&M in fast fashion.**

A Great Leader takes risks and meets challenges head-on. A Great Leader imagines not only the world as it is but as the world can be. Never lose your sense of wonder about the world, whether about the beauty of the natural environment, the imagining and design of new products, or the ideas that you and your teams generate together. Follow your dreams, work with others, and your dreams will become a reality. A Great Leader supports others so that they innovate and create, too.

Innovate and Create.

A Great Leader Does the Right Thing. Doing the right thing often takes courage and it is especially important to do the right thing even when no one is looking. It entails the practice of Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Sustainability. Consider the entire supply chain network of the company or organization that you are working for. Understand the impacts of your actions and choices on your employees, your consumers/customers, your suppliers, distributors, freight providers, neighbors, competitors, and the environment. The choices and decisions that you make have not only local impact but global ones. The choices and decisions that you make affect both your generation and future ones. Remember that doing good and doing the right thing is good for business.

Do the Right Thing.

A Great Leader Makes Opportunities for Others. As you take the journey through various jobs and job titles, do create opportunities for others – whether for staff members, colleagues, or even your bosses. By helping others you will establish synergies for your organization and will expand your networks and relationships. Strong professional and personal relationships will help you in business and in life. We can achieve so much more by working together than by doing anything alone.

Make Opportunities for Others.

A Great Leader Recognizes the Achievements of Others. When someone in your organization achieves, everyone benefits. Send a congratulations note; meet people face to face to congratulate and to thank them and celebrate as we are doing today. One very special activity that I enjoy so much here at your great school is that our group in Business Administration, on Thursdays, gets together to make announcements with a flika. We have special cakes when someone publishes a journal article or book. Good news deserves celebrations and, besides, it is fun, and who does not like cake?

Recognize the Achievements of Others.

Support Diversity. By diversity, I mean not only fair and equitable representation by gender, race, social status, and even age, but also the diversity of ideas. Alan L. Leshner, the Chief Executive Officer of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), wrote an excellent commentary a while back in *The Chronicle of*

Higher Education, entitled: ["We Need to Reward Those Who Nurture a Diversity of Ideas in Science."](#)

In his commentary, he argued that, by increasing the diversity of the scientific human-resource pool, *we will inevitably enhance the diversity of scientific ideas, since, by definition, innovation requires the ability to think in new and transformative ways.* Moreover, *many of the best new ideas come from new participants in science and engineering enterprises, from those who have been less influenced by traditional scientific paradigms, thinking, and theories than those who have always been a part of the established community.* This applies also to business and not just to science.

Support Diversity.

Great Leaders Remember Where They Came From. Today, we are gathered in this beautiful building to recognize the Master's degree recipients, who, through their dedication, hard work and efforts, and diligence are receiving their earned diplomas. Some have traveled a short distance in Sweden to attend classes and complete the Master's degree. Others have traversed hundreds and even thousands of miles. They have left their native countries, criss-crossed continents and oceans in order to pursue their dream. In our midst today are Master's diploma recipients from Sweden, Romania, Brazil, Germany, China, Norway, Switzerland, Belarus, Iraq, Iceland, Vietnam, Thailand, Greece, England, and even the USA.

You all have faced individual and unique challenges and have succeeded. Your values, cultural experiences, and global perspectives will enrich the companies and organizations that you will be part of.

Remember Where You Have Come From.

Great Leaders Are Resilient. Resiliency is defined as an ability to recover from or adjust from a disruption or change (and it applies to people, organizations, as well as to critical infrastructure networks from our transportation and logistical networks to electric power and energy networks and even the Internet as well as to ecological systems). With the number of disasters in the world growing, from tornadoes to earthquakes and floods, as well as the number of people affected by disasters, resiliency is more important than ever. Part of being resilient is being prepared and being able to adapt well. Without change, there is no growth. Dr. Elinor Ostrom, the

first female to receive the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences, which she did in 2009, is a role model for resiliency in thought, breaking boundaries across disciplines, and bringing different communities together. She recognized the importance of systems, notably, socio-ecological ones, and their complexity. She passed away exactly one year ago today at age 78. She was still doing research as she lay dying from cancer in the hospital.

***Great Leaders Communicate.* To inspire others, you have to communicate well. Leaders, through their words and actions, can change the direction of organizations and nations. It is important to be transparent, to share information with your stakeholders, including, employees, and to be inclusive. Those who marginalize others and discriminate will never succeed in the long-term. As Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric (GE), who is a University of Massachusetts Amherst alumnus, has said: "Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others."**

Communicate.

***Great Leaders Keep Their Integrity.* Ultimately, it is your reputation that matters and that of your organizations. Ingvar Kamprad, the founder of Ikea, said: "To do business with a clear conscience is an attitude that pays. We have to find more time for ourselves and to regain respect for the environment in which we live." And from former US President Dwight Eisenhower: "The supreme quality of leadership is integrity."**

Keep Your Integrity – I know that you will.

And, on this very special graduation day, I salute all the Master's degree recipients and acknowledge their faculty, friends, family members, and supporters, who have helped them on their journeys to reach this big goal.

Congratulations, one and all!

Tack sa mycket och skal!