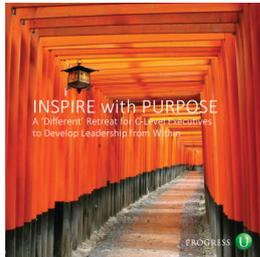


What it takes to become an INSPIRING Senior Executive

By Charlie Lang, Managing Partner and CXO Coach of Progress-U Asia



Tom, the Senior VP Sales & Marketing - APAC of a Europe-based construction engineering company, was a successful executive. In the past three years that he was stationed in Hong Kong to oversee the Asia-Pacific sales and marketing organization, Tom has led the organization to significant growth.

While he was satisfied with his overall success, he felt that the achieved growth came at a high personal price. Over the past two years, his country heads in India, Malaysia, and Korea resigned, which meant that he had to travel very extensively to keep the business going, and to find suitable replacements in these locations. Other than this, he still had to look after the other subsidiaries in China, Indonesia, Australia and Japan. To top it all, Japan required a lot of attention as the president of this subsidiary joined only a few weeks after Tom moved to Hong Kong. It took him a lot of effort to align this gentleman with the corporate culture and methodologies of his company.

In a review session with his global CEO Sandra and the global Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) Janet, they discussed how Tom could refine his leadership style, considering feedback from a few country heads in Asia. The general feedback was that Tom's highly task-oriented leadership style made them feel somewhat uninspired, as they often perceived it as condescending. They also felt that Tom was too controlling and occasionally micromanaging. Based on the exit interviews with the three country heads who left during Tom's tenure, it can be said that their leaving had to do with Tom's leadership style.

When Sandra and Janet suggested that Tom might benefit from executive coaching, Tom became a bit defensive and wondered if this is really a good use of his time, considering that he was already working very long hours and travelling a lot. Nevertheless, he requested Janet to look for some kind of fast-track development program that would help him become a more inspirational leader without taking too much of his already limited time.

Janet agreed that such a program might be a good idea and could help Tom to be open to further executive coaching, if it could just first enable him to improve his self-awareness. She searched the market in Asia and came across [Progress-U's 'INSPIRE WITH PURPOSE – Leadership from Within' program](#) targeted at C-level executives. She particularly appreciated the overall design of the program as it contained pre and post-activities including a couple of hours of 1:1 follow-up coaching and a follow-up group coaching session. She also felt that Tom would greatly benefit from being in a

learning environment together with other senior executives from different organizations.

During the two-and-a-half day workshop, Tom worked through the following aspects of inspirational leadership:

- ① **Level of Self-Esteem** - Through the use of Harrison Assessments, Tom realized that he was generally self-critical but would flip into defensiveness when under pressure.
- ① **Authentic Leadership** – Through work on his values and “deep intent”, Tom got a better sense of his own purpose and personal core values and how he could connect them with his leadership style.
- ① **Emotional Intelligence** – Tom realized that his high degree of task orientedness and lack of emotional engagement with his senior direct reports contributed to being perceived as “uninspiring”.
- ① **Executive Presence** – Through the workshop and peer feedback he recognized that this was one of his strengths that he could leverage more when interacting with his stakeholders.
- ① **Mindful Courage** – While Tom was perceived as an optimistic risk taker, some of his direct reports felt that he would sometimes go too far. They also felt “not listened to” when they had concerns on initiatives Tom strongly believed in.
- ① **Charisma** – During this part of the workshop, Tom reviewed the interplay of fierceness, gentleness and playfulness. He realized that he underused the last two even though he recognized that he had these aspects as part of his “self” as well.
- ① **Versatility & Judgment** – Tom recognized that he could develop a higher degree of versatility in his leadership approach, leveraging his overall good judgment of different situations.

At the end of the workshop, Tom concluded with a very concrete action plan on how he would start implementing his new insights. He also decided to focus on working on his emotional intelligence as well as developing a healthier self-esteem. In the weeks following the workshop, he made good progress in both areas and decided to hire an executive coach to further work on the other aspects.

According to Sandra and Janet, the program, including the subsequent executive coaching, helped Tom to transform into a more inspiring leader, as evidenced by feedback from his direct reports and by their own observations in meetings and calls with Tom.

Eventually, within about six to eight months after Tom started with the program, his team became more stable and autonomous which allowed Tom to slow down in terms of travel, providing the necessary bandwidth to become more strategic in his

role. Besides, his family very much appreciated that Tom could spend more time with them in Hong Kong.

Want to know more about how you could become a more inspiring leader? Consider [Progress-U's 'INSPIRE WITH PURPOSE' program.](#)