

UCT designs skills injection for busy executives

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The UCT Graduate School of Business (GSB) runs a course this May that aims to give experienced managers and executives the equivalent of a skills shot in the arm.

The course provides the perfect opportunity for those with busy schedules to gain access to the latest techniques for success in a highly-competitive global economy as well as a guide to international trends.

According to Professor Neil Duffy, director of the course and one of South Africa's top Information and Knowledge Management experts, the programme is tailored specifically to enable those executives bogged down in the day to day challenges of leading a business to lift their heads out of the hum-drum for a breath of fresh air.

"Many South African executives focus on the short-term and have little opportunity to think long-term - this course gives them a chance to discover long-term thinking to gain a competitive advantage," said Duffy, who is based as Emeritus Professor of Information and Knowledge Management at Wits Business School.

According to Duffy, a key motivation for designing the landmark programme, called New Millennium Management and running from 22 - 24 May, is the fact that today's generation of managers, more than any generation in the past, faces a sea of change and complexity. The question he posed was: Are South African business leaders really ready to deal with this?

"There are a number of trends that lend credence to the view that managerial life is tougher than before and getting tougher," said Duffy.

"These include factors such as the destruction of the environment, changing world demographics, terrorism, increasing globalisation, increasing mobility of capital and labour, the emergence of new economic powers like China and India, the impact of technology, global unemployment and the growth of multinational organisations," he said.

He also pointed out that global competitiveness is no longer a choice but a prerequisite for individual, corporate and national survival and prosperity.

"Business in South Africa needs to learn to tackle these emerging global challenges so that they can attempt to shape the future rather than be merely buffeted by it," he said.

The three day course will take credible long term global forecasts, examine their implications for South African managers and help them develop broad corporate strategies to address them.

According to Elaine Rumboll, Director of Executive Education at the UCT GSB, the course is the perfect programme for those who have completed a business school qualification such as an MBA and would like to return to that stimulating learning environment.

Duffy added that a benefit is that the course is conducted in workshop mode. "In this sense the outputs will be an input to the strategic planning processes of the participants. This practical, tailored approach is unique," he said.

There are a few basic elements that South African managers can get right to improve the shape their organisations are in for the turbulence of today and the future, he concluded.

"There are four parts to improving your position: Firstly, benefit from tracking long range global forecasts and using them as inputs to the strategic planning process. Secondly, use these forecasts to complement your own future forecasts and scenario planning. Thirdly, translate long-term forecasts into South African terms but don't lose the global context in the process. And fourthly, take a far more global view in the process of planning your futures or you will find yourselves facing difficult situations that could have been anticipated."

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