

What can today's CEOs learn from tomorrow's leaders?

PwC, in collaboration with AIESEC, has published a new report that contrasts current and next generation leaders' views on growth, education, technology and business responsibilities.



© bowie15 – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

The research compares the results from PwC's Annual Global CEO Survey with the views of Young AIESEC leaders and examines where they agree and disagree, what the implications are for companies looking to attract the best young talent and what today's CEOs can learn from those who will most likely succeed them. The respondents were all under the age of 30, came from over 100 countries, and were broadly balanced between male and female.

The top global figures next generation leaders considered to have had the greatest impact on the world in the past 50 years were Nelson Mandela, Steve Jobs, Barak Obama, Bill Gates and Elon Musk. They also named Justin Trudeau, Malala Yousafzai, Martin Luther King Jr and Muhammad Yunus in the top 10.

Tomorrow's leaders are optimists, realists

One of the most eye-catching findings from the AIESEC results is the degree of confidence these young leaders have. For instance, 60% believe economic growth will improve over the next 12 months, compared to only 27% of CEOs. This might be the optimism of youth, but could also reflect a more profound insight into trends such as the digital revolution, where the younger generation sees opportunity, and the previous ones cost and risk.

Barry Vorster, PwC leader of people & organisation, says, “Although tomorrow’s leaders are optimistic about the future they are also realists. They look for opportunity, but are not naïve about risk. They care about wider social and environmental issues, and understand how stakeholder expectations are changing. While pay and incentives are important, they want to work for companies that have similar values to their own and place a lot of emphasis on the nature of their work.”

Ana Saldarriaga, president of AIESEC International 2015-2016, comments, “AIESEC leaders – and generally young people today – are very purpose-driven. This is further underlined through the findings of the global YouthSpeak Survey. Featuring more than 200 000 responses to date, the survey outlines the three motivations of youth globally: family, purpose in life and love. Both a strong sense of purpose and value are something youth requires in a workplace and looks for in their employers. I believe more businesses are beginning to understand this and are taking bold steps in putting their purpose into practice.”

Concern over threats

While they are more optimistic than CEOs in many respects, AIESEC respondents also believe that organisations should be more concerned about some of the threats they face than CEOs typically are.

- 86% of AIESEC respondents say companies should be worried about cybercrime, while only 61% of CEOs are concerned about this
- 85% see a threat in shifts in consumer behavior, as against 60% of CEOs
- 83% cite a lack of public trust in business, compared to 55% of CEOs

There is also a clear difference in how the two groups perceive risk. Reflecting the struggle many business leaders face in shifting from a short-term to long-term outlook, CEOs ranked their top three concerns as over-regulation, geopolitical uncertainty and exchange rate volatility. By contrast, AIESEC respondents took a more long-term view, believing CEOs should be more concerned about longer-term issues of social instability, climate change and environmental damage, and unemployment.

Young leaders challenge CEOs to put their business purpose into practice

The survey finds that both generations are agreeing that business success in the 21st century will be defined by more than just financial profit. However, AIESEC respondents believe businesses today are still mainly focused on shareholder value, despite CEOs progress and future aspirations to connect more strongly with wider stakeholders.

Underlining this, there are interesting differences too, in how the two prioritise stakeholder groups. Both agree that customers and clients have the biggest influence on corporate strategy and that governments and regulators are important. However the media are seen as much more significant by AIESEC leaders (74%) compared to CEOs (25%), and there is a similar pattern with local communities (52% versus 27%), the public (50% versus 30%), and NGOs (40% versus 9%).

This suggests the young leaders have a much broader perception of what communicating to a wider stakeholder audience means in 2016. In particular, how technology has made communicating and connecting with stakeholders possible instantaneously, the challenges that presents to how companies are viewed and how organisations need to adapt as a result.

Education will make or break tomorrow's leaders

Alongside the questions included in the CEO Survey, AIESEC respondents were also asked about their views of what

defines leadership, how to nurture it and how it is changing.

These young leaders are clearly believers in nurture not nature: 64% said the education system is the single most important factor in shaping and preparing young people for leadership roles in the future. Despite this, 70% believe the education system in their own country is failing to equip students fully with the skills they need to survive and thrive in the digital age.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>