

DEFINITENESS OF PURPOSE: THE CORNERSTONE OF A SUCCESSFUL LEADER

Speech delivered by Ms Cristal Peterson, Marketing & Communication Manager on behalf of Dr David Abdulai at the Top 500 launch breakfast at the Sandton Convention Centre on 1st August 2008.

Distinguished guest, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for inviting the business school to this very auspicious event.

My name is Cristal Peterson, Head of Marketing & Communication, at the Unisa Graduate school of Business Leadership, normally known as the SBL.

The SBL is one of the biggest business schools in the Southern hemisphere, few schools can boast of graduating over 400 Masters students in one graduation. These graduates contribute on a daily basis to the South African economy and we here at the SBL are very proud to contribute to the leadership development of our country.

I would like to begin this speech on behalf of Dr David Abdulai, Executive Director and CEO, by stating that the major challenge in our world today, be it in business or political organisations or in the helming of nation states, is the need for effective leadership. But what is effective leadership? It is the willingness of leadership to rise up to the challenge of leadership. To do that a leader must know where they are going and to be able to make the road that leads there. It is also about the ability of the leader to see with their eyes closed. To be able to do that, a leader must develop a “Definiteness of Purpose.”

Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish-born American industrialist, businessman and philanthropist who gave most of his wealth away to good causes in his talk about “Definiteness of Purpose” said, “study any person who is known to be a permanent success and you will find that he has a definite major goal; he has a plan for the attainment of this goal; he devotes the major portion of his thoughts and efforts to the attainment of this purpose.” Carnegie continues, “everyone wishes for the better things in life, such as money, a good position, fame, and recognition; but most people never go far beyond the ‘wishing’ stage.”

Sadly, what we find with leadership of today is the constant engagement in wishful thinking. The wish for the success of the organisations we lead without the accompanied hard work. Today’s leadership want the sweet without sweating and indeed most them want to go to heaven without dying.

Ladies and gentlemen, that is impossible.

To achieve anything of substance, we must keep our watchword the “Definiteness of Purpose.” According to Bruce Barton, the American publicist and magazine editor, “nothing splendid has ever been achieved except by those who dared believe that something inside

them was superior to circumstance.” Let us then resolve in our daily deliberations, actions and deeds to pursue the leadership of our organisations, businesses and nation states with a “Definiteness of Purpose.”

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to share with you some of the wisdom of some of the great minds that have walked this earth long before we got here. May we in our actions and deeds strive to leave it a better place than how we met it. I am sure that with a “Definiteness of Purpose,” in all that we do, we can.

Thank you!

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