

## **'Asian leaders lacking human touch will be left behind'**

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**By Chan Quan Min**

Asian leaders who lack human touch could alienate talent and hinder business growth, a survey of 3,500 senior and emerging leaders by The Iclif Leadership & Governance Centre found.

Results of the survey of "what's ideal" in a leader and "what's missing" in their current leader across 18 Asia-Pacific nations were presented during the Asian Leadership Index conference in Kuala Lumpur this morning.

The key finding was that Asian leaders who lack human touch could find themselves left behind in the Asian Century.

"Asian professionals need two things from their leaders. One, a vision they can believe in. Two, a relationship built on mutual respect that really works for both the leaders and those led.

"The one-way, top-down relationship is a fallacy," said Iclif head of research Kate Sweetman.

Research findings also revealed Asian professionals "reported frustrations that their current leaders do not create constructive mutual relationships with them," she added.

The Asian Leadership Index 2014 concluded Asian leaders need to be more communicative, visionary, emotionally aware, empowering and willing to develop/coach others from the 70% of respondents who named those five attributes as the most important leadership gaps to be closed.

"The report is unique as it does not specifically define the attributes the need most improvement but it also identifies the specific behaviours current leaders must provide," Sweetman commented.

Specifically, Malaysian respondents ranked 'communicative' as the weakest link in their leaders. Singapore, Myanmar and Vietnam chose 'emotionally aware'; China, 'develop others'; while Korea, Japan and Thailand ranked 'visionary' as what is missing in their current leaders.

"From the finding, we note that there is a huge relationship gap between leaders and followers.

"Left unaddressed, the lack of connection with employees will greatly hamper the ability of Asian leaders to fully leverage and retain the talent they have, and will stunt the development of talent they could be nurturing," said Sweetman.

"Any relationship is a mutual responsibility. But leaders must accept the onus of creating the conditions for a relationship to flourish. Many professionals want and need a real relationship with leaders who are taking them forward to a better future," she added.

Zeti Akhtar Aziz, the chairman of Iclif and governor of Bank Negara in her opening speech said she hoped the report could contribute to an understanding of "what do business leaders in Asia need to do to get more energy and commitment from their most important followers.

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