

Servant-Leadership and Meaningful Work Symposium

Monday, 21 September 2015, 12.45-17.00 p.m.
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Room HG 06-A33

Now, more than ever, a leader's capacity to both direct an organisation and its people, while at the same time work in their service, is being recognized as a vital capacity for creating a sustainable organisation. Servant-leadership is a leadership principle embedded in a way of life, which has been recognized and expounded upon in all parts of the world throughout history, and across all cultures and communities. The recent economic crisis again reminds us of its importance as an antidote to the selfish and bonus-oriented behaviours we have witnessed and the economic/societal consequences we have seen.

The symposium *Servant-Leadership and Meaningful Work* is the 12th in an annual symposium series embedded in the Master course *Careers and Organizations*. The symposium is a meeting place for students and professionals to strengthen the link between theory and business practice. This event goes beyond the cognitive approach to explore our inner strengths and vulnerabilities within people and organisations. The workplace is changing rapidly under the pressures of globalization, new technologies, and the economic recession. Subsequently, leaders are challenged with the reality of short-term contracts and less face-to-face meetings. These flexible (nomadic) working conditions hinder people in building trusted long-term working communities in which they can invest. At the same time many employees have a calling and aspire interesting and valuable work. In this changing organizational context, where do employees find meaning in their working life? How are they served by their leaders to develop their talents? Servant-Leadership is expressed in both handling the anonymity and flexibility of the 21st century (online) workplace and at the same time creating a responsible corporate culture where employees experience meaningfulness at the workplace. For companies this implies matching individual and organisational needs while serving employees through all seasons of professional life.

We are delighted this symposium brings together cutting-edge thinkers and practitioners across disciplines, leveraging the global human needs to learn, serve and lead in their unique way. Or like Prof. Charles Hampden-Turner argues in his latest book *Nine Visions of Capitalism* (2015): "There *are* companies, not many but some, whose employees are engaged, who repay their employers generosity in spades, who have made their workplace meaningful, memorable, innovative and exciting. Why not celebrate these? Why not have them teach us?" Servant-Leaders nurture organizational practices to promote such work. The symposium will include case studies, keynote presentations, workshops and a plenary debate to shed light on the gentle art of serving and leading, and how leaders can acknowledge and develop meaningfulness at work. In dialogue with the audience, we aim to explore leadership dilemmas that arise in different organizational contexts, responding to the engagement of employees in search of sense making and meaningful work.

We invite you to learn more about SERVUS and look forward to meeting you at this special event.

On behalf of the organising team,

prof. dr. Fons Trompenaars & dr. Sylvia van de Bunt-Kokhuis
Chairpersons of symposium and SERVUS co-directors

Programme

- 12.45 Registration-desk in gathering space, outside the Symposium Hall
- 13.00 Opening by **Prof. dr. Vinod Subramaniam**, Rector Magnificus, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
- 13.10 Introduction – Contextualizing the symposium theme: by **Prof. dr. Fons Trompenaars** and **dr. Sylvia van de Bunt**
- 13.40 The true meaning of meaningful work; a cross cultural career perspective, by **Prof. dr. David Weir**, former Director Suffolk Business School, UK and Visiting Professor Edge Hill University UK.
<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/events/2014/10/14/professional-lecture-david-weir/>
- 14.15 Transfer to workshop rooms
- 14.20 Servant-Leadership and Meaningful Work will be highlighted from different perspectives by the following dedicated workshop leaders:
- WORKSHOP I: Organizational case study: improvisation for innovation among jazz musicians, by **dr. Floor van den Born**, Assistant Professor of Strategy FEWEB
 - WORKSHOP II: *Calling is Calling: interdisciplinary insights on its meaning and outcomes*, by **Evgenia Lysova MSc.**, PhD candidate FEWEB
 - WORKSHOP III: *Meaningful organizational and personal development; how professionals recognize their intuitions*, by **Mariette Kaandorp MSc.**, PhD Candidate FEWEB
 - WORKSHOP IV: *Women in top management positions in search of meaning*, by Founding Director LOF **Jolanda Holwerda MSc.**, and **Jip Veelenturf**, LOF Assistant, www.lofonline.nl.
- The Workshops include areas of research and organizational practice such as Servant-Leadership and nurturing people at work, and sense making pathways to career success.
- 15.20 Refreshments in the gathering space, outside Symposium Hall
- 15.50 *Towards a more meaningful and optimal human functioning in today's organizations*, by **Prof. dr. Dirk van Dierendonck**, Rotterdam School of Management
- 16.20 Panel discussion with workshop leaders, delegates and MSc students: *Meeting of minds and hearts. How to build great places to work and meaningful organizations?*
- 16.45 *Reflections* by **Prof. Charles Hampden-Turner** and future perspective for research and practitioners.
- 17.00 Closure