

***Servant-Leadership and Meaningful Work***  
**Symposium**

Friday, 14 October 2016, 13.15-17.30 p.m.  
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 meaning in work and life. Research shows that meaningful work supports employees job performance (Rodell, 2013) and customer satisfaction (Raub and Blunschi, 2014). However, creating an environment in which employees experience meaningfulness is not an easy thing to do nowadays. The current workplace is changing rapidly under the pressures of globalization, new technologies, and the economic uncertainty. 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 and their intrinsic drive in their working life? How can leaders foster their talent growth? Servant-leadership is expressed in handling the anonymity and disruption of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (online) workplace. They help create a corporate social responsible culture where employees perceive their work as meaningful. For companies this implies matching individual and organisational needs while serving employees and society at large.

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 Dr Elefheria Egel (2016, Academy of Management) argues: "Polls have found that American managers and leaders want a deeper sense of meaning and fulfillment on the job –even more than they want money or time off. People are struggling with not only finding meaning in their work but also the role they can play in making their organizations meaningful." Servant-Leaders nurture organizational practices to promote such work. This 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 look forward to meeting you at this special event.

On behalf of the organising team,

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

## Programme

- 13.15 Registration-desk in gathering space, outside the Symposium Hall
- 13.30 Opening by **Prof. dr. Gerda van Dijk**, Director Zijlstra Center for Public Control & Governance, VU Amsterdam
- 13.45 Introduction - Contextualizing the symposium theme: by **Prof. dr. Fons Trompenaars** and **dr. Sylvia van de Bunt**
- 14.10 *Stewardship to create a safe and meaningful workplace*, by **Prof. dr. Paresh Wankhade**, Professor of Leadership and Management, Edge Hill Business School UK  
<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/business/pareshwankhade/>
- 14.30 Transfer to workshop rooms
- 14.40 Servant-Leadership and Meaningful Work will be highlighted from different perspectives by the following dedicated workshop leaders:
- WORKSHOP I, **Room HG-OH 36**: *Servant-Leadership in EU institutions: a case study*, by **Sebastian Prieto Tovar MSc**, former HR manager Nike, since August Recruiter Uber, Amsterdam
  - WORKSHOP II, **Room HG-OH 53**: *Leading yourself: Sensemaking through job crafting*, by **Judith Plomp Msc**, PhD researcher FEWEB
  - WORKSHOP III, **Room HG-1A 36**: *The Wayfinder Kit: (re)defining your meaning of success*. by **Marien Baerveldt**, Teacher-Coach at Liberal Arts and Sciences and Young Innovators, University of Utrecht, and Soulful Community Builder at Open Masters and Alt\*Div.
  - WORKSHOP IV, **Room 1A-32**: *Leadership and Social Change*, by **Jeroen den Uyl**, Partner Twynstra Gudde
- The Workshops include areas of research and organizational practice such as SL and nurturing people at work, and sense making pathways to career success.
- 15.40 Refreshments in the gathering space, outside Symposium Hall. With Speakers Corner empowered by young social enterprises such as **Creating Water Foundation** (t.b.c.), **Alpaca d'Oro** (t.b.c.), **Green Office VU**, **The Ohm Collection**, **Live Intuitive**, and **Giving Back** where delegates can walk by and engage in a fruitful conversation.
- 16.10 Panel discussion with speakers and delegates: *Meeting of minds and hearts. How to build great places to work and meaningful organizations?*
- 16.50 *Civic engagement in Los Angeles; towards a more meaningful learning experience*, by **Dr Douglas Barrera**, Associate Director Center for Community Learning, UCLA, Los Angeles, Skype dialogue,  
[www.uei.ucla.edu/civicminor.htm](http://www.uei.ucla.edu/civicminor.htm)
- 17.05 *Reflections* by **Fons Trompenaars** on future perspective for research and practitioners.
- 17.15 Closure and farewell