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Culture Trumps CEO Charisma for Delivering Value in a Volatile World

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The Success Formula identifies evidence-led culture as essential to strategy implementation

CHICAGO, May 12, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- A two-year research collaboration between [Heidrick & Struggles](#) (NASDAQ: HSII), the premier provider of [executive search](#), [leadership consulting](#) and [culture shaping](#) worldwide, and a leading business author explores how senior executives around the world can improve value delivery in an era of unprecedented volatility and change.

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The Success Formula: How Smart Leaders Deliver Outstanding Value (Bloomsbury Publishing) reveals that the most successful organizations are not those led by charismatic and visionary leaders, but by leaders who create a culture of delivering outstanding value.

Andrew Kakabadse, Professor of Governance and Leadership at Henley Business School in the UK and the author of 43 business and leadership books, embarked on a global study with consultants at Heidrick & Struggles to examine the link between leadership and sustainable business value. Together, they interviewed more than 100 chairmen, board directors, chief executives and senior executives in the public, private and third sectors in 14 countries.

"In today's VUCA world – that is to say, volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous – a business leader needs to build a culture that is driven to create value, and to transform personal vision into the organization's purpose," said Steve Mullinjer, Regional Leader, Asia Pacific, Heidrick & Struggles and co-leader of *The Success Formula* research project. "Our research clearly shows the importance of culture and purpose in an organization that successfully delivers the leader's strategy."

Kakabadse shows that smart leaders who sustain success over a long period drive strategy in an 'evidence-led' approach instead of a 'strategy-led' one.

"Even in the age of Big Data, many important decisions are still based on prejudices, preconceptions, entrenched beliefs, outdated worldviews, and even ego," Kakabadse said. "In contrast, smart leaders create an evidence-led culture in the organization that generates sustainable value."

According to *The Success Formula*, three qualities are essential for value-delivery leaders:

Not just diversity, but diversity of thinking

Increasing the diversity of a leadership team in terms of gender, ethnicity and other demographic factors undoubtedly leads to more creative and broad-minded thinking. High-performing organizations, however, recognize that these benefits will not stick unless the organization creates a process around diversity of thinking to instill a culture that welcomes wide-ranging experiences, viewpoints and interests.

Leadership through alignment and engagement

The effective implementation of a strategy requires top-down engagement and alignment, as well as bottom-up feedback within the organization to test and modify the strategy. During this process, leaders need to facilitate engagement so that people are willing to voluntarily invest their efforts to position the organization to achieve its strategic objectives.

Evidence-led action

Effective leaders critically examine evidence and interrogate the issues through quality data. They recognize the importance of contextual (soft) evidence as well as intellectual (hard) evidence, and seek to test any strategy before it goes live. They make a habit of debating the evidence with their teams to challenge their thinking.

About Heidrick & Struggles

Heidrick & Struggles (Nasdaq: HSII) serves the executive talent and leadership needs of the world's top organizations as the premier provider of leadership consulting, culture shaping and senior-level executive search services. Heidrick & Struggles pioneered the profession of executive search more than 60 years ago. Today, the firm serves as a trusted advisor, providing integrated leadership solutions and helping its clients change the world, one leadership team at a time. www.heidrick.com

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