

One • on • One

with **Dr. David Dotlich of Mercer Delta Executive Learning Center**

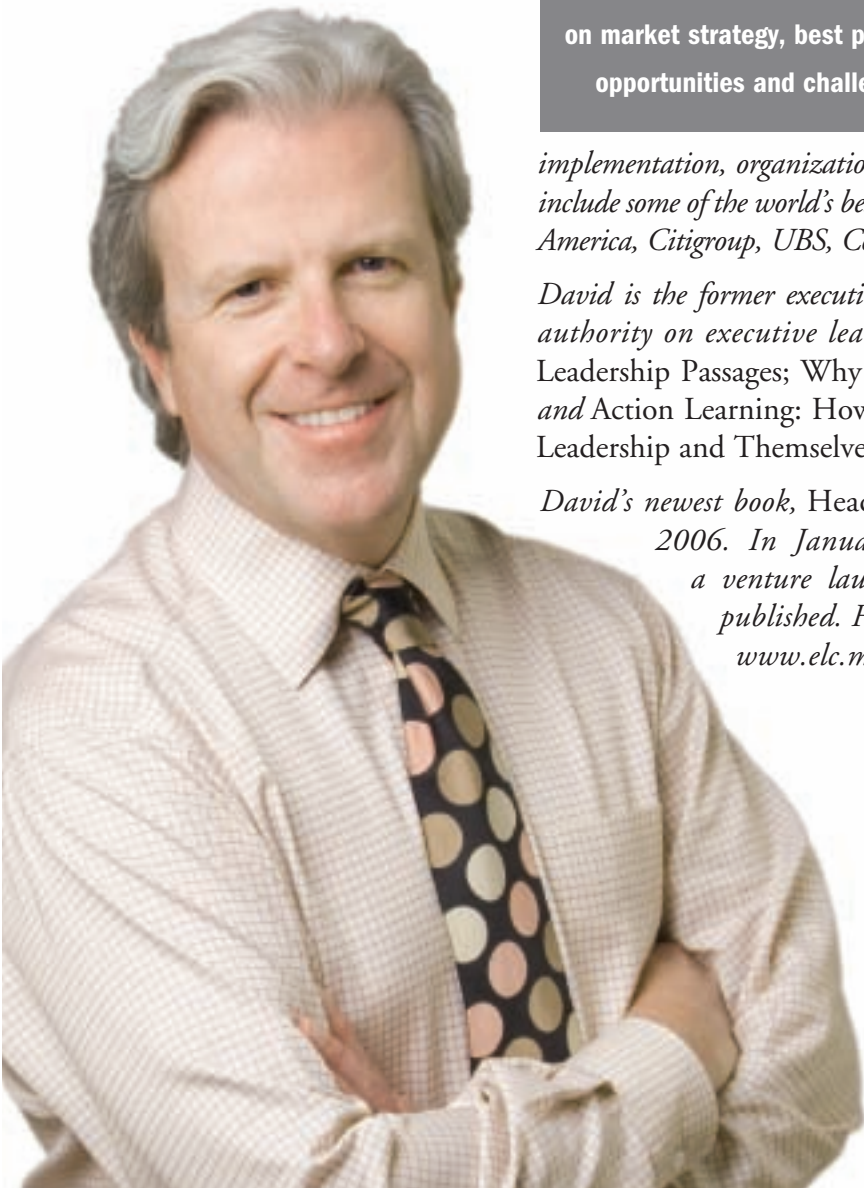
Broderick's "One-on-One" series features interviews with leaders at top professional services firms around the world. Discussions focus on market strategy, best practices, opportunities and challenges.

David Dotlich is President of Mercer Delta Executive Learning Center (ELC) and a partner and member of the Global Leadership Team of Mercer Delta Consulting. As the leading global provider of corporate transformation through executive learning, Mercer Delta ELC has enjoyed explosive growth under David's guidance. Active on five continents, the firm specializes in applied executive learning, strategic

implementation, organizational transformation, and leadership development. Its clients include some of the world's best-known companies, including Johnson & Johnson, Bank of America, Citigroup, UBS, Colgate, Merrill Lynch, Coca-Cola, and Dell.

David is the former executive vice president of Honeywell and Groupe Bull and an authority on executive learning and leadership. He has co-authored five books: Leadership Passages; Why CEOs Fail; Unnatural Leadership; Action Coaching, and Action Learning: How the World's Best Companies Are Re-Creating Their Leadership and Themselves.

David's newest book, Head, Heart, and Guts is slated for publication in Spring 2006. In January, Mercer Delta ELC's Global Leadership Index, a venture launched in partnership with The Economist, will be published. For more information on Mercer Delta ELC, please visit www.elc.mercerdelta.com.



Broderick

“Consulting is really all about energy, ideas, and relationships. The fuel that drives great consulting firms is passion, energy, and excitement about what’s possible.”

an interview with **Dr. David Dotlich** *of* **Mercer Delta Executive Learning Center**

What does brand mean to Mercer Delta ELC?

In the service industry, brand embodies the values of what we do as well as who we are. We want the Mercer Delta ELC brand to convey that we gather the best ideas and research, and then combine them with organizational learning to help our clients win. There’s a lot of clutter and noise around consulting brands. We find that our brand opens the door or starts the conversation, but in the end, clients buy the relationship. Who we are when we show up, what we do, and what their friends or colleagues tell them about us impact the decision to buy more than brand.

What are the biggest branding challenges you face?

How do you invest in building a brand appropriately? Where do you find the right venues? What is the right level of investment? We don’t advertise or spend a lot of money on conferences; we’ve found that doesn’t work well enough. Broderick has given us a lot of good ideas that we’ve implemented around brand, including a Global Leadership Index. We’re taking indirect steps to build our brand by investing in bringing our ideas to clients about what’s happening in their industry or in other companies around learning.

“Clients want us to bring them metaphorical gifts; data and knowledge are the gifts we bring.”

How do you continually communicate brand value?

Subtly. We try never to talk about ourselves too directly. We have very sophisticated buyers. They want to know that we’re good, who we’re working with, our track record, and that we’re confident we can deliver. They don’t want to hear a big pitch on how wonderful we are. We always try to bring the client something that they’re interested in or talk about their needs and how we can respond, rather than about our capabilities and how much they will benefit.

How do you build strong, deep client relationships?

One thing we teach in our senior executive programs is how leaders use the skills of emotional intelligence. Understanding what’s really motivating a client—that’s the starting point. A lot of times, the presenting motivation is not the real motivation. Understanding management style is key. If a client is an introvert, we don’t invite them to a function where they’re going to be uncomfortable. If they have a high need for control, we let them have it.

I’m co-authoring a new leadership book called *Head, Heart, and Guts*. Much of the client relationship work that people engage in is cognitive. It’s analyzing and thinking and using data. But the heart and guts are also really important in client relationships. The heart, meaning, do you really care? And then guts, meaning, do you have the guts to really tell the truth? Do you take risks in the relationship that will deepen it? Almost every time I take a risk with a client, it pays off and takes the relationship to a deeper level.

Empathy is key in deepening relationships. Empathy means being an honest broker. If you can help a client by referring them somewhere else, then you have to be willing to do it. Clients really respect that. Often that’s hard to do. It takes great courage.

Do you have any formal systems for managing client relationships?

We’re investing in client databases and in managing our relationships systematically. We’re in the first year of our Global Leadership Index, which will provide information on how major companies view leadership development and leadership competencies in the future. We hope this will give us an entree into talking with new clients or with current clients in a deeper way. Clients want us to bring them metaphorical gifts; data and knowledge are the gifts we bring.



Sharing information is big for us. Every Saturday about 25 people—partners, principals, and even associates—call in for an hour. We check in about what’s happened the previous week, what the competition is doing, where we are with our clients. Talking weekly keeps it alive; this feeling of thinking about clients. It’s helping each other in real time. We’ve found this works better than any database.

“In any firm, there are always some people who see business development as somehow beneath them, because they’re serious consultants. I think they should be fired.”

Can you talk about your marketing and research development?

We try to link our services and solutions with our marketing approaches. For example, we run a Human Resource Leadership Consortium in which senior HR teams from six non-competitor companies learn together in a two-week action learning program. This program, which we conduct twice a year, also serves as an ongoing marketing activity because it gives us the opportunity to go to our clients and talk about their participation.

We also combine our intellectual property with marketing. We write books and articles and send them out free. We don’t try to control our intellectual property. We give a lot of it away and then integrate it in a way that makes our offering unique. In a world in which transparency, file sharing, and instant exchanges of data and client feedback are growing, marketing methods need to adapt to new realities.

Do you see marketing and business development as interconnected?

We think of marketing as positioning the company in the marketplace, conveying who we are and what we do. We think of business development in a more targeted, specific way: finding clients, opening doors, deepening current client relationships, finding new ways to grow the business.

Who manages the marketing and business development functions?

People who have a knack for it. Their job is to find opportunities, open doors, and build the brand. But the partners are the ones who do the business development and the selling. We evaluate, pay, and reward people on that basis. We create a culture that says this is important. The people who live and work in client relationships are the ones who know what clients need and where they’re

going next. In any firm, there are always some people who see business development as somehow beneath them, because they’re serious consultants. I think they should be fired.

What are the keys to global growth and profitability?

Early on, we decided that the business management side would be equal to the consulting side. Consultants have to be responsible for the firm’s P & L. People on the business side have to understand what consultants do. There’s no wall between these two. I look for people who see the growth and success of the firm as their responsibility. Our metrics are financial, especially top-line growth, client satisfaction, and how well we develop our intellectual property and ideas. All these have to be integrated. Then, I think you have to make it fun. Consulting can be so challenging. If it isn’t fun, people don’t stay engaged.

As an expert in leadership development, do you feel that professional services firms face special challenges in this area?

It really is a unique challenge. As a leader in a consulting firm, you are inspiring and engaging people whose entire expertise is within them. Consulting can be a very lonely profession sometimes,

continued from inside

with little community outside of clients. I have found that good consultants want independence and yet they want the dependency of being part of a team or community. You have to understand that this is the nature of consulting and professional services. In managing knowledge workers or service people, we have to acknowledge our humanness. Humanity is a big part of what we offer. Dependency, independence, dealing with the whole human being, all this is key.

I think consultants sometimes make the mistake of saying, "I will treat my own company the same way I treat my clients." Trying to improve your organization as you would a client, without taking responsibility for yourself as a member of that organization, that is a consultant's dilemma. In other words, projecting onto the firm all those issues you don't want to deal with in yourself. I do that!

What advice can you share on managing change?

It's all about paradox: dealing with the importance of both buy-in and forward motion. Spend too much time getting

"Trying to improve your organization as you would a client, without taking responsibility for yourself as a member of that organization, that is a consultant's dilemma."

buy-in and you can't move forward. If you move forward without buy-in, then nothing works. Leadership is recognizing both of these and then figuring out where the right choice point is: When to say, "We've got to spend more time on getting buy-in" and when to say, "If we don't do this, we're not going to survive."

Are there a couple of issues that are really on the top of your agenda?

Growth, obviously. How do we keep growing in a world that's increasingly global, where we see ideas and competitors everywhere? We spend a lot of time on growth and innovation. We are planning a lot around China, which we believe is going to be the next major issue for the remainder of our business

lives. And on thinking about values. Institutional trust is at an all time low. How do we build and maintain trust in a world that increasingly looks like you can't trust anybody? I think people are hungering for trusting relationships.

In a professional services environment, what makes a great leader?

Knowing where you want to go and enrolling others is critical. But effective leadership comes from the capacity to be an authentic human being—to be honest about who you are and your limitations, and connecting with others. It's also really respecting the energy that runs through a company and learning how to harness that energy, as opposed to focusing too much on control and governance.

Consulting is really all about energy, ideas, and relationships. The fuel that drives great consulting firms is passion, energy, and excitement about what's possible. [1on1](#)

ABOUT BRODERICK

Broderick works exclusively with professional services firms to develop and implement market strategies that build brand awareness and generate business. Our clients include some of the world's leading professional services firms. For more information, please visit our website at www.broderickco.com.

Broderick & Company
100 Tiburon Boulevard
Mill Valley, CA 94941
Tel: 415-944-8107
Fax: 415-388-0667

Broderick