

THE HINDU Business Line

Ram Charan's 5-point something for Great Lake's students

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'The most influential consultant' Ram Charan at Great Lakes Institute of Management

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Fortune magazine called him the “most influential consultant alive”, a reputation the globe trotting management guru earned by advising top-notch business leaders around the world with his unique perspective.

So, when Ram Charan, a prolific author as well, entered the tiered hall to kick off the Great Lakes Institute of Management's global thought leader series as part of its ten-year celebrations, the B-schoolers greeted him with hearty applause and thumping of desks.

Well over 70 years old, Ram Charan had all the 20-somethings hanging on to his words of distilled wisdom. As Prof Bala V. Balachandran, Founder and Dean, Great Lakes, said in his introduction, Ram Charan and he joined the Kellogg School of Management together in 1973, long before most in the audience were born.

Pacing the breadth of the hall, Charan said he would tell the students a few points which he observed by working with many top leaders around the world; none of them with an MBA, he added for good measure!

Ask the right questions: The higher you go, he said, the more the premium on asking the right questions.

And, “ask those questions without showing you're the most brilliant person around; don't wear your degree on your sleeve,” he exhorted the students.

And, no questions should be more than 15 words. The questions most top leaders put to their teams are deceptively simple, but penetrating.

Listening well: Unfortunately, he said, listening is in short supply. Hearing is not listening.

'Listening with patience and tolerance to some one else's viewpoint is important and also helps you crystallise your ideas.

Seek out viewpoints: Actively search out viewpoints of different people, Ram Charan told the MBA aspirants. You don't know everything, so go out of your way to seek out more than one viewpoint when there's a problem.

Zoom in on the problem: Working with billionaires around the world, Charan said that one thing had become clear to him. When there's a problem, these successful people had the ability to zoom in or identify that one problem which presented a road block and then worked towards clearing it with whatever resources they had.

Reading people well: “If you've got to lead, you have to lead people first and businesses later,” he said. Successful leaders have the ability to read people well with an intuitive sense.

They can identify the right people to crack a problem or handle an issue.

Ram Charan's short talk was followed by a lively question and answer session moderated by Prof. Bala Balachandran.

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