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Embrace having a world view and always staying positive

During my travels, I am frequently asked "what qualities are you looking for in tomorrow's rising leaders?"

More than ever, we are looking for future leaders who possess a world view. We need people who can move seamlessly across borders and across cultures and who feel as comfortable working in Addis Ababa as they do in Atlanta.

We want people who naturally like to be close to the point of impact — in our case, inside the four walls of our customers, where consumers invite our products into their lives 1.7 billion times every day.

Also, we make a point to find rising leaders who want to be stretched, who relish the challenge of working outside their comfort zone and who are not afraid to take risks and make mistakes. Doers sometimes make mistakes. We want doers because they make things happen with their positive attitude and talents. We also want our professionals to understand the importance of leading with their character. In our business, consumers are judging us as much on the content of our character as the content and quality of our products and services.

If you look at our senior management team today, you will see that we have leaders from Mexico, the UK, Australia, Liberia, Turkey, France, Ireland and the U.S., among other nations. The extraordinary diversity of ideas and

beliefs is undeniably one of the most important competitive advantages we have as a business system.

I sense more and more international businesses will begin to resemble us in this regard in the coming years. We feel strongly the next generation of leadership will need to recognize and harness the power of diversity.



VIEWPOINT
Muhtar Kent

As the CEO, my job is to create a climate of success for our people and inspire them to achieve the vision we have created for our business. That's really the essence of leadership. At the end of the day, it all comes down to execution; vision without execution is simply daydreaming.

In the years ahead, we will see the most profound economic shift in history. A billion people around the world will enter the middle class in the next 10 years, and 60 percent of this new wealth will come from emerging nations.

From our vantage point, we see a world with more people, with more wealth, with more demand for choice, leading highly mobile, on-the-go, urban lifestyles that are conducive to greater demand for fast moving goods. These factors present more positives than negatives in my opinion.

For the record, I am an unabashed optimist, and I work for a company that is unabashedly optimistic. We learned this trait from America itself.

For the last 125 years, Coca-Cola has grown up right beside America. We have reinvented and renewed ourselves

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countless times, just like this great nation and this great city we call home.

Today we are living in a world of tremendous paradox. A world of seemingly insurmountable challenges, but also one of breathtaking opportunities. History has shown us, time and again, that world-class organizations that proactively manage turbulence exit the tunnel in much better shape than when they entered. I believe for every headwind we confront there is an equally powerful tailwind to be ridden. Success is finding it.

We learned this early on at Coca-Cola through the actions of one of our great leaders, Robert Woodruff. Mr. Woodruff took one of the most defining, chaotic and frightening moments of the 20th century — World War II — and positioned our business for unprecedented international growth. Mr. Woodruff's vision of providing a Coke for a nickel to every U.S. soldier — no matter where they were stationed — led to the development of

64 bottling plants behind the front lines in Europe and throughout Asia. What started as a "Coke for every soldier" turned into a global footprint that remains to this day a critical advantage for our system.

At the end, it is really about leadership. It's about looking hard into the mirror — looking hard at our current reality — and having the courage to confront our challenges head on while never losing our faith in the future. It is about making the tough decisions and choices. It is about taking the necessary and needed risks. And it's about understanding that increasingly, a company will be judged on what it stands for and the positive impact it creates in the world as much as the very products it makes.

Speaking of leadership, on May 6, I will take part in a one-day leadership event that is sponsored by Chick-fil-A, a company that symbolizes for our city the magnetism of entrepreneurial spirit and leading with character and optimism. The Chick-fil-A Leadercast on May 6 at the Georgia World Congress Center will be an event that celebrates the fact that every leader has a unique voice and that these voices make a difference no matter the degree of amplification.

I am looking forward to the Chick-fil-A Leadercast. It has become one of the most important leadership events in our nation and is another reminder that the leadership journey requires us all to pause and be students of leadership as we respect the dynamic global environment around us.

Kent is chairman and CEO of The Coca-Cola Co.