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From The Times

November 7, 2007

Business on the brain

Indian-born management guru tops The Thinkers 50 poll of the most influential living business people

Des Dearlove and Stuart Crainer

The most influential living management guru in the world is C. K. Prahalad, according to The Thinkers 50 biennial poll of business thinkers. Prahalad is the first Indian-born thinker to claim the title.

Best known for his work with Gary Hamel on resource-based strategy, which gave rise to the term "core competences", Prahalad has since turned his attention to the world's poor. In The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid (2004), he argues that capitalism can be the engine to eradicate poverty.

In second place is another man who wants to change the world: Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft. Once vilified by IT purists, Gates's stature as a technology pioneer is enhanced by his philanthropic work. Third place goes to the former head of the Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, whose book, The Age of Turbulence, has struck a chord with businesspeople around the world.

Michael Porter, who topped the list in 2005 and is best known for his work on competitive positioning, sees his own competitive advantage eroded as he tumbles to fourth.

BACKGROUND

The top 50 thinkers
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Elsewhere, strategists are on the rise, capturing ten of the top 50 slots and accounting for four of the top ten. Cruising up the rankings are the Insead-based Korean, W. Chan Kim and the American Renée Mauborgne, whose best-selling book, Blue Ocean Strategy, created a swell of support that lifts their boat nine places to sixth.

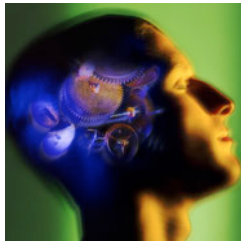
If 2007 is the year of the strategists it also sees the rise of the Indian thinkers. Although the list is still dominated by North Americans (37 of the 50), including the former US Vice-President-turned-green-warrior Al

Gore, there are several Indian-born management gurus. Aside from Prahalad there is Ram Charan (22), a CEO coach; Vijay Govindarajan, of Tuck Business School (23); and Harvard's Rakesh Khurana (45). As yet, no Chinese guru has emerged, but Kim and the Japanese globalisation guru Kenichi Ohmae remain in the top flight.

Many established gurus remain influential. The octogenarian Warren Bennis, the duke of leadership, moves up three places to 24 and is joined by John Kotter, the doyen of change, who makes an overdue appearance at 30.

Business gurdum remains a man's world, with only three women in the top 50, down from four last time. Mauborgne, of Insead, is the highest placed at six. She is followed by Lynda Gratton, of London Business School (LBS), whose new book, Hot Spots, ignited her move, up 15 places to 19. Harvard's Rosabeth Moss Kanter drops from 19 to 28.

On the rise are several champions of self-improvement, with the executive coach Marshall Goldsmith making his first appearance at 34 and Marcus Buckingham in at 38. Stephen Covey continues to show the habit of an effective guru, up three places at 15 and Daniel Goleman's emotional intelligence takes him to 37. New to this year's rankings are Kotter; Thomas Friedman; super-coach Goldsmith; Buckingham;



"The fear now is of complacency, that government will sigh with relief and forget how close it came" Libby Purves

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book will surely put him on to the list.

The Thinkers 50 poll, run by Suntop Media, received more than 3,500 votes from visitors to Times Online and thinkers50.com.

HAVE YOUR SAY

To lan,

B'cos he got away scott free that's why. To think if he was still in as Chairman he'd be still weaving his magic and you would be none the wiser. The man's charm is governed by a inverse to the square of his proximity to the halls of power. Most thinkers are as such - that's part of their allure.

Peter Petrelli, Leeds, UK

Another list! I am the world's greatest thinker! Big deal!!! Thinkers never do...it's the people that make things happen, the farmer that grows the food that goes on my table--those are the greatest people. Not some fool who points his finger. The fool has not done much!

Humphrey Dickesn, Havana, Cuba

As Chairman of the Federal Reserve Greenspan presided over the stock market bubble, the dotcom bubble and was on watch when the Fed allowed the sub-prime lending debacle to begin. How can one possibly claim that he is one of the most highly rated thinkers?

Ian, Frederick , USA MD

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