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Leadership guru

Through her company, Integrated Focus Inc., Valerie Pelan is helping prepare the next generation of business leaders.

**TWO MINUTES WITH,
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TWO MINUTES WITH Valerie Pelan Integrated Focus Inc.

Through Integrated Focus Inc., an executive and leadership coaching company, Valerie Pelan, founder and president of the company, is preparing the next generation of leaders. As a former executive herself for AT&T — where she worked for 17 years — and Electronic Data Systems — where she worked for seven years — Pelan learned firsthand what it takes to be a good leader. She passes that knowledge on to business owners and high-potential executives of mid-sized companies who require direction to be more effective leaders. In her role as executive coach, Pelan has seen the many trends of leadership. Valerie Pelan was interviewed by staff writer Shashana Pearson-Hormillosa.

Q. Why do you think there has been an increased demand for this type of training?

A. The business environment has gotten very complex and fast-paced. It's also global and diverse. There was a time when (leadership) was hierarchal. Now, the world is changing, it's complex and there are complex organizational priorities. Employers are also using the training to help in employee retention.

Q. What leadership trends are you currently seeing?

A. There used to be a command-and-control leadership style, which now only works in tough situations or a crisis. Now there are all sorts of skills required. Leaders not only have to get results through social intelligence and emotional intelligence, but they have to have a flexible leadership style that pertains to each situation. There's more demand put on leaders than before and the bottom-line pressures are just as strong as ever.

Q. What is the most important element to being a great leader?

A. Influence and trust. You have to trust the leader. They have to exhibit integrity. They have to influence the outcome.

Q. What tips do you give leaders to help them lead employees through this type of economic climate?

A. When they are leading their teams and people want knowledge, I tell them to be straight up. They might not have all the answers, but (tell them) the information that they do know. It's about connecting the heart and leadership together.