

Susan Mann

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Susan Mann, Director of Learning & Development at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

‘Temos o dever de lutar por um mundo melhor’

‘We have the duty to fight for a better world.’

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A norte-americana assumiu como missão ajudar
a formar líderes mais empáticos e corajosos

The American embraced the mission of developing more empathic and brave leaders.

By **TERESA COSTA** (in Portuguese)

At the first sight, she has the looks of a 50s movie character. This executive brought the secrets of the leadership of the future in her luggage. Susan Mann is in Portugal for two lectures and to teach Nova SBE’s Master students during their career modules. «The world needs all of us and all of us have talents to share», Susan told the students, while challenging the audience to think about their assets. «Those who use their assets on a daily basis are six times happier in their job».

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation director, having her husband with her took the chance to travel across the country, from Douro to Sages, passing by Nazaré, where she saw a wave very similar to the one Garret McNamara surfed.

During her abode in Portugal, Susan accepted the invitation to share her experience in the foundation build by the Microsoft’s creator to **VISÃO**. The Foundation was created 14 years ago, in Seattle, Bill Gates hometown. «We feel there is a huge need of creating authentic, empathic and brave leaders».

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s nature is philanthropic. What can we learn from philanthropy?

The social responsibility... That everyone has the right and the duty to fight for the change, for a better world. By pursuing these goals persistently, we are actors of change. We want to be

the flame, the ignition... and let this also be a source of inspiration for others to go after their objectives. That inspiration comes from good leaders, who are authentic, who motivate their teams, complimenting their successes and understanding their mistakes, always helping to improve their performance. One thing many people ignore is that it's possible to develop that skills. Then is when I arrive on the scene, in order to show that you don't need a title to be a leader and to take your team further.

You talked about optimism and impatient optimists, in the image of Bill and Melinda. Are optimists the best workers?

An optimist always believes that that everything can be solved, but the impatient is the one who doesn't leave it in the hands of the fate. The impatient is the one committed to ensure a happy ending as fast as possible. These are the best – they never give up or stand waiting for someone to solve a problem for them.

What does it take to be a good leader?

I would say knowledge and heart. A bad boss is the main reason for people to quit a job. Numbers say that 70% of workers are not committed when having bad leaders and that a bad manager might lead to a loss of productivity in the order of 50%.

You claim that vulnerability can be a value. Under what circumstances?

Not always, of course. The example I give is a personal one: my team made a mistake and my boss, who knows me well, calmed me down by saying «Next time everything it is going to be fine». It should be a value for ourselves, above all. We must know that we're not perfect or infalible. And when someone knows you well – our strengths and weaknesses – it is possible to show that. The most important is to be aware of our condition, that we are people beyond workers.

Is there a lack of female leaders?

There is, such as there is a lack of diversity in all kinds of organizations. The more diverse the organization is, the more balanced and efficient it'll become.

The crisis we're going through is also a leadership crisis? There are no more charismatic people?

People always like the idea of having someone else to inspire them, of following others. However, searching for it is often an excuse to do nothing and, in fact, we are all responsible for creating a better world. The famous Gandhi's quote is present as it has never been before: «Be the change you want to see in the world».