

## Seidman details the value of 'how' in business realm

### FES speaker leads L.A.-based consulting firm



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SYRACUSE - Dov Seidman believes companies today must compete on values - "how" they do things, he said.

That's easier said than done, he noted.

"It's often inconvenient to get your hows right. It's often dangerous," Seidman said. "It's often unpopular. It often may seem unprofitable."

Seidman spoke Feb. 10 at Onondaga Community College as part of the Famous Entrepreneurs Series (FES), an annual lecture series aimed at inspiring more entrepreneurship and growth in the region.

Seidman is the founder, chairman, and CEO of LRN, a Los Angeles-based consulting firm that focuses on ethics, compliance management, and education. He's also the author of the 2007 book "HOW: Why HOW We Do Anything Means Everything in Business (and in Life)."

It's not merely enough for businesses today to have a great product. Or to have the best processes for delivering those products, Seidman said. Today, those elements don't let a company win; they simply let it stay in business.

Consumers and employees both are looking for relationships and connections with a company that goes beyond just a product. Values, Seidman said, can drive performance and provide differentiation in a crowded marketplace.

"It's the new frontier of competition," he said.

Of course, it's a hard path to navigate.

For example, if a company says it's going to achieve excellence in how it makes its product, it has time to get there. Processes can be refined and employees trained over a period of months or even years.

But if a business says it has integrity, and it doesn't, its leaders are immediately hypocrites, Seidman said.

One of the elements driving the prevalence of corporate values is the level of connectivity in the world today, he added. Companies no longer get to write their own story.

A negative experience with a business or even a single company employee can show up in minutes on a blog, Facebook, or in a viral e-mail. In that environment, reputation has significant value, Seidman said.

Unfortunately, there's no step-by-step process for competing on values and reputation.

"I don't have seven habits of highly effective ethical leaders," Seidman said. "How can't be reduced to how to."

But there is no doubt that ethical leaders are needed now. Uncertainty is rampant today given the state of the economy and the only thing that can help fill the gap that uncertainty creates is trust, Seidman said.

Leaders need to approach "how," he added, as a way of doing things, looking at their businesses, and looking at the world. It's important not to think about what a company can or can't do, but what it should or shouldn't do, he said.

He added that leaders shouldn't doubt what can happen if they get "how" wrong. The business world is littered with individuals and companies that have been seriously hurt by problems with their reputation and values.

"Icons of business. Icons of government. Icons of the public life are letting us down," Seidman said. "The reason we need ethical leaders is only ethical leaders can fill the certainty gap."

Seidman founded LRN in 1994. The privately held company operates in more than 120 countries, with offices in New York, London, and Mumbai, in addition to its Los Angeles headquarters. LRN says it has over 400 clients, including eBay, Dow Chemical Company, News Corporation, DuPont, Johnson & Johnson, the Walt Disney Company, and Raytheon.