Deloitte's global CEO talks leadership and more

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What does it take to run the world’s largest professional services network?



Deloitte global CEO Barry Salzberg fielded a wide range of questions from students as the 2014 R. W. Freeman Distinguished Lecturer.

For Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu CEO Barry Salzberg, who delivered the 2014 R. W. Freeman Distinguished Lecture on Tuesday (Nov. 4), the key is understanding how to lead by influence instead of line authority.

“When I was U.S. CEO, I had line authority over the entire U.S. firm,” Salzberg told a packed audience in the Lavin-Bernick Center’s Qater Ballroom. “Today, I have influence authority over 200,000 people at 47 member firms spanning the globe. How you get things done in that organization is very different than how you get

things done when you have line authority."

Each of Deloitte's member firms operates independently, Salzberg said, with its own CEO and partnership agreement, so when Salzberg had an issue with the company's member firm in Turkey, he flew to Istanbul to meet with the firm's leadership team in person and convince them to agree to what needed to be done.

"If I were in the U.S. and we wanted the New Orleans office to do something, they did it. Period. End of story," Salzberg said. "So it's the influence rather than the line authority that's really different with a global organization."

For his Freeman School talk, Salzberg eschewed the traditional lecture format and instead opened the floor to questions almost immediately. With nearly 300 students in attendance, those questions ran the gamut from definitions of leadership to the state of the professional services industry to how quickly a recruit can expect to advance at Deloitte.



Students asked Salzberg questions about everything from the state of the professional services industry to how quickly recruits can expect to advance at Deloitte.

The timeliest question of the evening, however, came from Freeman School senior Jake Fuerst, who told Salzberg he was interviewing with Deloitte next week and asked the executive for any advice he might have.

"The best piece of advice is to say that you know Barry," Salzberg quipped before encouraging Fuerst to learn as much as he could about Deloitte prior to the

interview.

“Know enough about us that you can dialog and demonstrate to your recruiter that clearly Deloitee is where you want to be,” Salzberg said, “even if you’re thinking about five other places.”

The R. W. Freeman Distinguished Lecture Series was established by the Freeman family in 1985 to honor Richard W. Freeman Sr. (BBA ’34), former president and chairman of the Louisiana Coca-Cola Bottling Co. and former chairman of Delta Air Lines. Freeman served on the Board of Tulane for 13 years and was a major benefactor of the university and the business school. In 1984, he was instrumental in raising funds to rename the school in honor of his father, A. B. Freeman. He received the business school’s Outstanding Alumnus Award in 1958 and Tulane University’s Distinguished Alumnus of the Year Award in 1975. Richard Freeman Sr.’s grandson West Freeman and his wife, Aimee Adatto Freeman (MBA ’95), were in attendance at the lecture.