

OPINION

JEFF ROSENSWEIG

UPS CEO David Abney receives global innovation award from Goizueta Business School

David Abney, CEO and chairman of United Parcel Service, recently received the Goizueta Business School Global Innovation Award. Abney was a keynote presenter at the inaugural annual conference of the John E. Robson Program for Business, Public Policy, and Government. The Robson Program is a feature of the Goizueta Business School of Emory University. Its mission is to analyze relevant issues at the nexus of business and public policy. A key feature is to bring students together with business and civic leaders, so that they can gain perspective from each other.

The theme of the 2018 annual conference was privacy, security, and public policy. Speakers included Frank Blake, the Chairman of Delta Air Lines and highly-respected recent CEO of The Home Depot; and Admiral James Stavridis, former supreme allied commander of NATO. Blake shared useful advice on how he successfully dealt with the data breach at Home Depot. His quick and transparent efforts have been widely applauded. A former deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Energy, Blake portrayed aspects of leadership in the private sector in contrast to the public sector. He showed how public sector leadership is more difficult, because you answer to many different constituencies and do not have one clear metric -- the profits and market value of a firm.

A nationally-recognized expert on privacy and security, Adam Ghetti, the founder and chief technology officer of Atlanta-based Ionic Security, spoke about privacy issues related to Facebook and its business model. Adam brought clarity and insight to a subject that is extremely relevant. The topic can be highly technical, but Ghetti enabled the audience to understand it and its implications. Ghetti, who was recognized a few years ago by Forbes as a "30 under 30 leader in technology," was especially inspiring to the many students in the audience. He is an example of the burgeoning of Atlanta as a tech hub and Ionic has private and public sector clients across the nation.

Other speakers included Vladimir "Lado" Gurgendze. An MBA graduate of



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Goizueta Business School, he went on to success in banking, and now as a serial entrepreneur in technology business. Interestingly, he has been on the ground floor of some of Europe's leading fintech businesses, fintech being a key industry in Georgia's growing global reputation in technology industries. Gurgendze also was the Prime Minister of The Republic of Georgia. Frank Blake and Gurgendze embodied the excellence of the late John Robson himself. Robson was the CEO of a major global firm and also became the deputy secretary of the U.S. Treasury Department.

Jose Cisneros, treasurer of San Francisco, was a senior executive in the banking industry. He shared ideas on traits needed to succeed in public sector leadership versus private sector leadership. Cisneros pioneered the "Bank on San Francisco" model that has increased financial inclusion. This has helped the "non-banked" who were often exploited by, for example, payday lenders. This model is so successful that it is now being adapted in 75 cities, including the recently established "Bank on Atlanta."

David Abney began working for UPS as a part-time package loader while earning his degree at Delta State University. David and his wife Sherry, both strong supporters of educational access, sponsor the University's annual symposium on global business. Abney speaks each year in the symposium, explaining to diverse students the innovations that are making business more global in scope.

Abney became President of UPS International in 2002, leading its global expansion, with acquisitions in China among other nations and regions. He discussed opening the China market: he would fly 10 round-trips a year to China.

Given the non-elitist culture of UPS, he would fly commercial! This served as a fine model to the students of the dedication to excellence, and the need to establish trusting relationships, needed to succeed globally.

A highlight of the talk was Abney's portrayals of innovations UPS has been undertaking to enhance global sustainability. Such innovations, combined with his leadership in finding innovative and principled ways to expand into international markets, were cited during the presentation of the award. In his acceptance speech, Abney explained why no one will succeed "doing business in the future the way they have been doing it." He portrayed the accelerating forces that will transform business.

The Global Innovation Award is only presented when someone has made profound achievements. Thus, this is the only sixth time the Award has been given in its 15 year history. Previous recipients include Ted Turner and Gerald Grinstein. Grinstein, CEO of Delta Air Lines at the time, led the merger with Northwest which created what was then the world's largest airline and one with a more global route structure.

Betty Liu, the renowned author and Bloomberg TV anchor, stated: "I enjoyed interviewing David on stage at the Robson Program Conference and helping present him the Award whereby he was recognized globally as an innovative leader. He's been a strong and leading advocate for global business and trade."

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