

Developing Global Leaders

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As we know the world is getting smaller. As new technologies in social media, transportation, and telecommunications bring us all closer together, it's more critical than ever for organizations to recruit, develop, and retain multicultural/global leaders who can skillfully navigate both the opportunities and challenges of a more connected world. Some of the visible areas of how our work places are becoming globalized and the increased importance to have culturally competent leaders are in the areas of communications, approaches to time management, managerial style/s, organizational culture, and so much more. Some of these differences can cause problems, including misunderstandings, interpersonal tensions, and poor/weak performance as well as many more complex problems/issues.

There are several ways for organizations to develop global leaders, some of which are typically not thought of by many organizations. A common way involves deep immersion within different cultures to understand their values and specific context. This immersion unlocks insight into how to best reach customers, inspire employees, and drive organization performance in geographic areas outside of ones comfort area/home land. It is felt that only through knowing other cultures deeply can a manager effectively connect the dots between them and highlight meaningful differences between cultures that impact business practices and strategy. Many organizations will attempt to recruit what they consider to be already fully developed global leaders. These individuals then have to work at becoming part of the organizational workplace and familiarize themselves with the culture of their multinational company, which is a much more complex stage to maneuver through.

A more interesting idea is for workplaces to examine their own employees who are/might be multicultural in different ways. First, they may find managers and/or employees that are global/multicultural in some intrinsic way; they may be of mixed-race, mixed ethnically, have lived in more than one country as an expat, studied abroad, or immigrated, have been raised with another dominant culture at home, and/or are in a multi or intercultural relationship. A second option is that of looking to/at those managers and employees that may be mono-cultural, but are experiencing globalism/multiculturalism through their work/business based upon who they are doing business with (internationally). With this option employees are being exposed to diverse cultural influences and values, and they find themselves having to navigate a wider variety of views, experiences, and opinions...the issue is that they develop a realization that they need to be much more attuned to interpersonal relationships and interactions and make much greater efforts to foster inclusive organizational cultures.

In all cases the global workplace has huge implications for management and leadership and not only in terms of the challenges. By developing global leaders organizations will discover numerous advantages that are indispensable for global organizations today and in the future.

Multicultural organizational capabilities are becoming as significant a source of competitive advantage as other core elements of business strategy. Though multicultural leadership is mostly associated with the multinational corporations, given the inherent cross-cultural challenges of multinational corporations face in expanding outside their home boundaries/countries meaning that the principles that apply to multinational corporations can and do apply to the national country. Given how culturally diverse so many countries are taking a deliberate approach to sourcing and developing talent across socioeconomic class, religion, academic field, and other backgrounds could be highly productive in driving product and service innovation. One should also note the battle that is occurring to talented people across borders suggests that national companies will need to do more to attract and retain the most promising talent for their operations let alone prepare for eventual expansion abroad with all the global capabilities that such a strategy would require. In order to develop and build global and transnational talent leadership needs to structure programs within their companies that expose promising talent to new geographic areas and cultures. Given the individual challenges of moving to another part of the world programs need to utilize new technologies and models that allow more flexibility in cross-cultural collaboration.

Leadership needs to take action to contribute to the process in the following ways;

- 1- Focus on recruiting efforts to bring diverse, global candidates into the organization. This would require that leadership make adjustments when recruiting and selecting their workforce to consider how and/or whom they communicate with, diversify their recruiting sources, and even adjust criteria when hiring to reward global experiences.
- 2- Make global/multicultural experiences an explicit part of career path development and performance appraisals cuing younger managers of the importance of global skill building.
- 3- Be sure to build global elements into management training programs by making adjustments to existing curricula or developing new materials.
- 4- Introduce planned/structured mobility programs that bring rising managers to different cultures and geographic areas on both short-term projects and med-ranged projects. This will increase the probability that global leadership development is embedded throughout an organization's talent management process.
- 5- Integrate global insights into business decisions and strategy. After all, the above recommendations mean very little if managers do not actively harness the insights that only global leaders can bring to the table.

Moving forward as we move further into the global age, the capacity of organizations to build global leaders and/or transnational leaders will be a critical competitive advantage. The good news is today the work world is teeming with people that are diverse in so many ways – people who have learned to excel in business because of rather than in spite of their cultural dimensions.

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