

Global Leadership

By

David Whitfield, Ed.D.
Integral Leadership, Inc.
Olympia, Washington

Exigencies for global leaders are high and still rising as pointed out by the authors of *Global Explorers*. “The supply of global leaders is short because global leaders can’t be developed overnight and because they haven’t been developed in the past” (Black, Morrison, & Gregersen, 1999, p.7). These authors further point up that because of the pace and nature of globalization, the demand for competent global leaders is a challenge for global organizations. Global leaders need to possess certain competencies and be able to lead a variety of specialists to be effective.

The purpose of this paper is to articulate four competencies and four types of specialists (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2003) necessary for global leadership effectiveness. Leader effectiveness is possible in a global entity through leaders’ ability to deal with cultural, political, and

international systems, plus the astute use of technology. Additionally, before leaders are posted in a multinational setting, they need a thorough understanding of culture, meaning *cultural competency*. After more than 20 years working and living in Europe, this writer can attest to the absolute necessity and demand for cultural competency and diversity among global leaders.

However, before addressing the core components of this paper, I would like to offer a definition of global leadership. Whereas there are 356 recorded definitions of leadership (Wren, 1998), global leadership lacks a meaningful and substantive definition. For the purpose of this paper, global leadership is a process leading to curiosity, discovery, accountability, and trust (Whitfield & Mattson, 2003). That coupled with being able to unleash human potential and leverage the richness that lies in cultural diversity (Rosinski, 2003, pp. 7-8) would make a more incisive definition.

To be able to facilitate unleashing human potential and to leverage the richness in cultural diversity, leaders need to be culturally competent: understanding their own culture and that of others; recognizing culture's role, and have an acute appreciation for the culture-strategy dichotomy, meaning that culture is such a strong variable in any setting, especially in a global one, that it must be respected; if it is not respected, the leader and the organization will pay a heavy price, especially regarding policy implementation and

strategy execution. As the saying goes, “culture will eat strategy’s lunch.”

To develop cultural competency, leaders need to know themselves, others, the relevant issues, and have an appreciation for working with others; this requires a sense of emotional intelligence and an appreciation for diverse others. A global leader’s education and degrees matter very little, if she or he is oblivious to knowledge of self, others, the issues, and skills for working with others.

Regarding knowing self, leaders need an acute sense of emotional intelligence and diversity. Cherbosque, Gardenswartz, and Rowe (1991) take an expanded view of emotional intelligence amplifying relevance in today’s diverse work world, especially in a global setting. It “involves the ability to feel, understand, articulate, manage and apply power of emotions to interactions across lines of difference” (p. 1). According to Cherbosque, Gardenswartz, and Rowe, to get at knowing the self, requires *affirmative introspection*, meaning-

A critical first step in developing the ability to deal with differences, an awareness of yourself that enables you to understand your reactions to others. This involves being comfortable with who you are and understanding your values, passions, preferences and world view. It also entails acknowledging the biases and assumptions you have that influence your attitudes. Knowing yourself helps you predict

your own behavior and know why you feel and react in a particular way. This insight is fundamental to managing your emotional reactions and behavior. (Cherbosque, Gardenswartz, and Rowe, p. 3)

And to help leaders answer a series of simple questions such as: who am I? To get clarity on this first question, consider the fact that in many (if not most) instances, we hire people for *what* they are, e.g., engineer, accountant, programmer, and we fire them for *who* they are e.g., self-centered, egocentric, unmotivated, etc.). Second, how do I want to be? This does not mean the “er” words: prettier, blonder, smarter, but rather, how do I want to behave. For example, do leaders want to be more approachable, understanding, collegial, collaborative, and authentic? How do I make that happen? This question is about what actions they will take to change their behavior to lead from within. What behaviors would followers observe if leaders were to make these personal and radical changes? The foregoing questions mean that leaders in general, but global leaders in particular need to know more about who they are to facilitate leading from within.

To facilitate leading from within, leaders should know their triggers. Specifically, triggers such as tone of voice of the speaker, word choice, rate of speech, and accents may often cause leader’s emotions to rise. Other triggers such as one’s work history, her or his

qualifications, work ethic, educational background, height, size, etc., too, can cause emotional responses.

Knowing and working with the issues concerns getting to know different cultural groups, how they receive, process, and internalize information. The tenets of diversity can facilitate this process. Diversity goes beyond race, gender, and sexual orientation. It includes thinking patterns, speech patterns, and spatial orientations, etc. This is further engendered by the concepts of proiversity (Graham, 1997). Whereas diversity looks at differences, proiversity includes commonalities. Proiversity asks questions such as: what do we bring to the corporate table? What skills, work ethics, motivations, etc., do we have in common?

To further prepare and aid global leaders to be more effective is knowing and working with the issues, Cherbosque, Gardenswartz, and Rowe (1991) strongly suggest making ambiguity an ally; being your own change master, and getting in charge of self-talk—*self governance*. These authors continue:

Destructive and ineffective behaviors sometimes occur when powerful feelings triggered by differences are evoked. It is at times like these that the energy of emotions needs to be managed and channeled in a constructive direction. The skill of maintaining a positive attitude and self-control in the face of upsetting emotions is what Self-Governance is about. This

aspect of Emotional Intelligence involves dealing with the ambiguity that is part of a diverse environment and remaining flexible and adaptable in the face of change. It also involves taking charge of the mental self-talk that goes on when you encounter challenging differences. (1991, p. 3)

Knowing others, global leaders need to understand the meaning of intention and impact. The impact of an action or behavior is a function of that action. Thus, when we say we didn't intend to say it or do it, that doesn't not mitigate the impact; nor does it take away the pain. Whereas knowing the meaning of intent and impact in a global setting, *intercultural literacy* (Cherbosque, Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1991) is a must.

Intercultural literacy involves understanding others' cultural rules, norms, and values, while also being able to empathize with them and metaphorically walk in their shoes. In addition, it encompasses resisting the temptation to judge other cultures as inferior by acknowledging the advantages and disadvantages of all cultural norms, yours included. This deeper level of enlightenment helps you to understand others and get a handle on your own feelings about their behavior. (1991, p.3)

The final piece regarding cultural competency is the ability to work with diverse others. Working effectively with others requires "serving as a cultural interpreter; communicating effectively and resolving

conflict in diverse settings; and structuring synergistic and compelling environment” (p.3). These ideas are subsumed under Social Architecting, specifically,

Working effectively with others across the range of human differences requires that you consciously and intentionally manage your behavior in order to build productive relationships. This last arena of Emotional Intelligence and Diversity, Social Architecting, encompasses being able to serve as a cultural interpreter by helping others understand the different cultural rules and perspectives involved in situations. It also necessitates being able to resolve conflicts in ways that are mutually satisfying to all parties. Building inclusive, synergistic environments that elicit the commitment and creativity of all is at the heart of Social Architecting. (1991, P. 3)

The more leaders understand themselves, their motives, motivations, etc., the better equipped they will be in leading in a global world, especially a world where the political elements are at work.

Political competency means understanding the interplay of policy goals and power goals; political systems are critical to leader effectiveness in a global workplace. It also requires an understanding of the geographical and economic implications of political actions. This may require an understanding of different governmental structures and decision-making processes across borders. Simply being an

international business person spells neither political competency nor international competency.

International competency concerns seeing the world as a diverse, heterogeneous community, composed of different, fiscal, social, political, economic, and communication systems. Knowledge of these influences and their relationship to each other helps sharpen awareness of competing value systems and of the many principles by which individuals, organization, and nations function, develop, and survive. To facilitate survival, we believe that international competency requires access to international curriculum and faculty, as well as international students, all working in a collaborative effort. An expedient way of becoming competent in seeing the world as a heterogeneous community, composed of the above mentioned factors, is the use of information technology.

Global leaders' effective use of *information technology* is important and relevant to global systems and to the relationships of cultural, political, and international understanding. When communication is mediated by technology, the cultural competencies required for cross-cultural communications change. However, Kostner (2001) warns us about the use of technology and the importance of communication. "Even though people use technology, the focus must be on communication, collaboration and trust" (Kostner, 2001, p.46). We believe that global leaders who are proficient in informational

technology have an edge over those who do not, especially when they are keen on collaboration and trust.

To provide an intermediate précis, we feel that leaders' knowledge in cultural competency, political competency, international competency, and the astute use of informational technology will lay a solid foundation for leader effectiveness in global operations. This foundation is further strengthened by global leaders being able to not only synergize those competencies but also they must manage efforts of, and capitalize on skills of the four specialists as suggested by Bartlett and Ghoshal (2003): the business manager, the country manager, the functional manager, and the corporate manager.

Synergizing the skills and efforts of the four specialists calls for a higher order thinking (Stagich, 2001, p. 4). Though we are moving toward this higher order of thinking, communicating, and sharing, according to Stagich, "competitive standards and models still have a strong hold on our societies and organizations because we have not learned how to collaborate successfully and facilitate the synergy to develop a higher standard for thinking, communicating and sharing" (p.4).

Leaders in general and global leaders in particular must be able to effectively synergize the activities of all four specialists, starting with the *business manager* whose roles include strategist, architect, and coordinator (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2003). As architect, the business

managers configure assets and resources worldwide; coordinates transactions across borders; links capabilities across barriers. As coordinator, she or he coordinates product portfolio, market positions, and competitive situations; coordinates and integrates dispersed operations; and avoids fragmenting segments to maintain consumer loyalty, distribution leverage, and competitive flexibility (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2003, p. 102).

The *country manager* is the second specialist global leaders must be able to work with effectively. The global manager's roles include that of sensor, builder, and contributor. Here, the global leader must be attuned to the political aspects of being global since the country manager plays a pivotal role not only in "meeting local customer needs but satisfying the host government's requirement and defending the corporation's market positions against local and external competitors (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2003, p.104). Here is an example where Stagich's synergy notion is essential because the "need for flexibility often puts the country manager in conflict with the global business manager" (p. 104). The authors provide a lucid example of the opportunity to synergize the country manager's roles in global marketing strategies. Unilever is a prime example of doing business across different borders, applying the different competencies mentioned above, starting with Unilever in Germany.

“Germany created the campaign for Snuggle (a fabric softener); Finland developed Timotei (an herbal shampoo); and South Africa launched Impulse (a body perfume)” (p.105). Thus, the country manager’s pivotal roles in these different countries as sensor and interpreter of local opportunities and threats, plus the builder of local resources and capabilities, and the contributor to and an active participant in global strategy were essential. This is also an example of the country manager, as sensor, must be good at gathering and sifting information, interpreting the implications, and predicting a range of feasible outcomes (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2003, p. 105).

Scanner, cross-pollinator, and champion are roles of the third specialist, the *functional manager*. She or he scans for learning opportunities and specialized information, plus uses learning to create and spread innovations; cross-pollinates leading-edge knowledge and best practices, and champions innovations with transnational applications. As scanner, she or he detects trends and moves knowledge across boundaries, transforming piecemeal information into strategic intelligence (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 2003, p. 107). This specialist has to be able to form multinational technical teams, break down walls to be able to exchange information, build informal communication networks, and transform piecemeal information into strategic intelligence (p. 107).

Finally, the *corporate manager* whose role is that of leader, talent scout, and developer, must be able to identify and develop talented business managers, country managers, and functional managers (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 2003, p. 108). Not only that but she or he must balance the negotiations among the three. According to the co-chairman of Unilever, Floris Maljers, it is not the issues of unreliable or inadequate capital; rather the biggest constraint in most globalization efforts is the short supply of transnational managers who are able to implement cross-borders strategies. The corporate manager is the one to alleviate this shortage, by fishing in the worldwide pool of executives.

In conclusion, we can see why global leaders can't be developed overnight as stated at the beginning of this piece; that to be effective, they must be knowledgeable and competent culturally, politically, internationally, and technologically. Global leaders must intersperse the foregoing competencies with the roles, skills, and talents of the business manager, country manager, functional manager, and the corporate manager. To be effective, all of these key parties, along with their associates and staff, must support, internalize, and practice where appropriate, emotional intelligence and diversity, plus: a) Affirmative Introspection; b) Self-Governance; c) Intercultural Literacy; and finally, d) Social Architecting.

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