



Distinctions of Filling Your *Global* Leadership Pipeline By Carolyn Feuille, President

Catching up with Globalization

Globalization is catching up to leadership, but leadership hasn't yet caught up with globalization.

Global companies today can only maintain competitive advantage if they have leaders who have the *cultural* intelligence to lead operations, work with clients, suppliers and their culturally diverse employees across sites around the world. One of the toughest challenges for managers today is to enable their diverse, globally dispersed teams to communicate and develop relationships in order to collaborate, while tapping into their motivation to excel. Yet, many managers aren't up to the challenge simply because they haven't the essential "soft-skills" to tune in to cultural differences and switch their leadership style to accommodate such differences.

In short, effective global managers are in greater demand but in short supply. According to a study by Mercer Delta in 2006, 223 senior executives representing large firms in seventeen industries in forty-four countries reported leadership shortages to handle future global business risks that threaten corporate performance. Other research indicates a serious lack of the global mindset and skill set that make managers effective in doing business across borders. I have personally trained mid-level expatriate managers from Europe who on arrival in the U.S. had never worked with people from Asia but shortly were going to be responsible for a supply team from Japan or an engineering team with employees from Latin America, Iran, and India. Their employers were not providing any global leadership training nor were they given any online tools to become more sensitive to the impact of culture on business practices, on behavior or on how to lead people in other countries. At the same time, these Europeans were learning how adapt to and be effective in a very different work environment in the U.S.

Global organizations which are developing strategies to hire, develop and retain effective global managers, must identify required competencies that these managers must currently have or develop. First, it's important they distinguish five aspects of leading globally that are quite distinct from the skill set to lead on one's home turf, or domestically.

Five Distinctions of Leading Globally

Leading globally means. first of all, an ability to operate in a more complex context than leading domestically. This applies to business strategy coordination and integration, integrating different business practices, and working closely with people who may not share one's values, language and priorities.

Secondly, global leaders must also have a *global mindset* – to think with an international perspective, stay open to new experiences, to not rely heavily on what worked domestically in the past, and to balance corporate and various national perspectives.

They must be able to navigate cultural realities which may not correspond well with what they're accustomed to. These include variations in the concept of time which impacts expectations for deadlines of deliverables, meeting start and end times, etc. Another example is dealing with the concept of decision-making, such as by consensus, top-down, or bottom up from direct reports and teams to their leaders.

Fourth, they must be able to make connections and develop relationships as a way of doing business and getting results. The Anglo-Saxon concept of having a task-oriented style vs. a relationship-oriented style is almost a moot point – business is conducted on the basis of relationships in nearly every country around the world, period.

A fifth distinction of being effective in leading across borders is the ability to adjust leadership style to the cultural context. For example, expecting Thai employees to take initiative won't likely happen, given their hierarchical society and lack of such a practice. So, the manager has to learn how to get performance from these employees by making them feel comfortable and safe, and teach them how to bring up problems, yet not cause anyone to lose face. What it really comes down to is adjusting expectations and willingness to find "third-way" solutions - not my way nor your way, but a new, creative or blended way of administering strategy across borders.