

What Not to Do When Developing Global Leaders

The current hit-or-miss approach to global leadership development is much too costly and inefficient. **BY NEAL GOODMAN, PH.D.**



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Organizations today struggle to identify both current and future global leaders. Equally significant, they are failing to help these global leaders to acquire and leverage the competencies necessary to succeed in the face of greater globalization. Failure to develop global leadership is easier—and more common—than you might think. This is how many companies do it:

Ignore the research. Most research on global leadership identifies competencies such as having a global business mindset; creativity, innovation, and vision; cultural intelligence (CQ); and collaborative leadership, teambuilding, and partnering as key factors for success. Most global leadership development programs fail primarily due to the lack of a systematic internal process to create astute, flexible, and visionary leaders who can hold multiple perspectives simultaneously. To ensure failure, do not develop a coherent training and development process that promotes the attainment of these competencies.

Do not develop a customized core curriculum for global leadership. Settle on a generic course or two in the corporate university rather than developing a customized curriculum that is directly applicable to the needs of global leadership competencies. Alternatively, outsource your global leadership curriculum to a university where there will be little or no customization to your organization's needs and culture.

Keep them home. One of the best ways to guarantee failure of senior global leaders is to keep them from experiencing immersion in a new culture. International travel is no substitute for an international assignment. Even when there is an international assignment, there is usually no coordinated training and development plan to develop the skills needed to become a future leader of the organization. As a result, some people return from an international assignment with few of the competencies mentioned above.

If you must send them overseas, do not measure progress. Many organizations do include an international assignment as a prerequisite for global leadership positions but then do not measure

whether these people have gained core global leadership competencies as a result of their assignments. Often, those on assignments are “out of sight, out of mind,” and the significant new information and styles of doing business they are learning are not being captured or measured.

Disregard the need for a global focus in executive coaching. While executive coaching has become the norm in many organizations, there are few executive coaches who have the competency and experience to provide guidance to achieve the qualities of a global leader. By not establishing an effective global executive coaching program that will target the specific issues associated with global work, companies will be sure to leave out the key ingredient of the global leadership recipe. Much of this is focused on the hidden cultural dimensions that are not “seen” by either the executive or the coach if they have not been trained in the field of intercultural interactions.

Fail to leverage the potential of leading global project teams. Similar to the international assignment, if leadership of global project teams is focused purely on functional tasks without a deliberate effort to teach global leadership skills, there is little chance that some of the most important lessons will be appreciated and utilized. If such skill building was integrated into the leaders' development plans, there would be a greater cohort of potential global leaders in the organization.

THE MORAL OF THIS STORY

If organizations wish to succeed in the global marketplace, they will need to do a better job at training and developing their global leaders. The current hit-or-miss approach is much too costly and inefficient. Creative approaches to build the competence of global leaders must be developed and integrated across the organization. **R**

If you have any case studies or examples of best practices in training and developing global leaders—or *ensuring the failure of global leadership*—I would be happy to receive them and share them with the other readers of this column. Please send them to me at ngoodman@global-dynamics.com.