

As The World Turns... Who's Managing It?

www.shaughnessyhowell.com

The way in which managers obtain results, win the respect of their colleagues and manage their employees varies greatly among individuals, companies, countries and cultures. Effective managers know they need both functional and people skills to be successful. Effective global managers must go one step further. They must demonstrate the same competencies, but in a distinctive way. They have to adapt their styles to employees, colleagues and business partners who may be separated not only by time and distance, but also by cultural, social and language differences. This is no easy task for such managers, and it doesn't come naturally to most. Let's look at what's expected of you as a global manager, and how the organization can ensure you are well prepared to lead in a global marketplace.

"Global managers need to discard traditional models and views, and begin to think from a global paradigm."

Understand both sides.

Global managers need to understand how people differ and how they are similar. There also has to be a deep sensitivity to the cultural differences in terms of how people think, work, eat and interact in a foreign workplace. Be prepared to adapt your style to your new surroundings. At the same time, you need to be aware of how all people want to be treated the same way. It is how the treatment is played out that differs.

Let go of the "headquarters" mindset.

Acknowledge the differences among cultures, and realize things aren't always done abroad the way they are done 'back home'. Not only is the language different,

but the values and symbols may differ too. As an effective global manager, you must be flexible and responsive to your surroundings.

Learn another language.

Not only does this allow you to build relationships quicker, but learning a new language might teach you something about the native culture and give you a viewpoint of the world that is beyond your own. The ability to see an issue through the eyes of another is critical to success. As a global manager, you want to be able to empathize with your customer or business partner's culture. This adds to your credibility and eases the development of relationships.

Keep development at the forefront.

The successful global manager continues to invest in his/her own functional, interpersonal and cross-cultural skills. Personal growth and career development should remain a priority as you make your way into new markets. In the same way, be sure to maintain your own national and cultural identity.

Organizations need to do their part in supporting their global managers.

First, they need to select global managers based on their openness to accept differences, their willingness to form new relationships, their ability to navigate through stressful and ambiguous waters, their ability to balance both hard and soft skills, and their enthusiasm for being organizational pioneers in new cultures. This is a tall order to fill, but cutting edge organizations recognize the importance of these traits in their global managers.

Second, organizations need to ensure their managers have a basic understanding of the new culture they'll be heading into. They need to understand how work is done and how interactions take place and the



implications for their own behaviour. They will need the proper interpersonal skills that suit the culture, as well as an idea of how to obtain the results they need in a way that is acceptable to their hosts. It is up to the organization to provide the required training and preparation, and to support its global managers abroad.

Finally, organizations would do well to integrate their managers slowly into the new culture, rather than send them in headfirst. Allowing managers to first work on an overseas project via a virtual team permits them to learn how to work with their foreign partners and gives them time to hone the skills they'll need when they're in front of them.

Success in a global market is attainable, as many organizations have shown. The challenge for both the organization and its global managers, however, will be to change how they think about the business model. They need to discard traditional models and views, and begin to think from a global paradigm. By broadening their perspectives, they open the doors to new relationships and prosperous interactions.

Links:

<http://www.ceoforum.com.au/article-detail.cfm?cid=6162>