

Nurturing Global Leaders: Using Competency Based Assessment Techniques To Develop Employees

To achieve success in the global marketplace organisations need to operate effectively across borders and manage positive cross-cultural relationships. Selecting and developing individuals that are able to manage themselves and their relationships with others from different cultures is imperative. Organisations therefore need to be able to identify the skills and traits necessary for their employees to manage in culturally diverse environments and develop an individual's global competencies. Nurturing global leaders has become a strategic priority for many global organisations that see the development of global competencies amongst their workforce as a key to sustainable competitive advantage.

This article discusses the importance of identifying and developing individual employee's global competencies as part of a wider global leadership programme. In particular we look at the use of psychometric assessment techniques to diagnose an individual's global competencies and more specifically the personal competencies that collectively determine the global effectiveness of an individual. We outline the three key areas that are assessed; Perception Management; Relationship Management and Self-Management. We also outline the development opportunities that such assessment provides, and consider the experiential and reflective learning that is commonly used to develop global leadership competencies. In addition we look at the wider use of such assessment tools in the selection of individuals for expatriate assignments and for the wider selection of new employees by organisations wishing to recruit individuals with existing global competencies.

What makes a Global Leader?

Firstly it is worth considering what we mean by a 'global leader' and how one is made. Academics have identified a number of personality and behavioural traits that contribute towards global leadership. Furthermore, research in this field has identified that intercultural experiences in both early and later life contribute to a better

appreciation of working with others from different cultural backgrounds. Children born into families with bi-lingual parents or from different countries for example, are exposed to different languages and cultures from an early age. A good example of the influence of such early inter-cultural experiences is the Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer of Nissan Motor Co. Ltd, Carlos Ghosn*, who was born in Brazil but moved with his Lebanese parents to Lebanon and later studied in France. His language capabilities were strengthened from these experiences as he is fluent in French, Arabic, English, Portuguese and more recently Japanese. Many experts hold him up as an example of what competencies a global leader should possess and much interest surrounds his diverse cultural experiences in early life.

Undoubtedly such early international experiences have enhanced the capacity for cultural understanding, but the question remains are global leaders born or nurtured?

Our current work in this field and our experience with a number of organisations has identified that whilst not everyone shares the same opportunities for global exposure at an early age, global competencies can be developed.

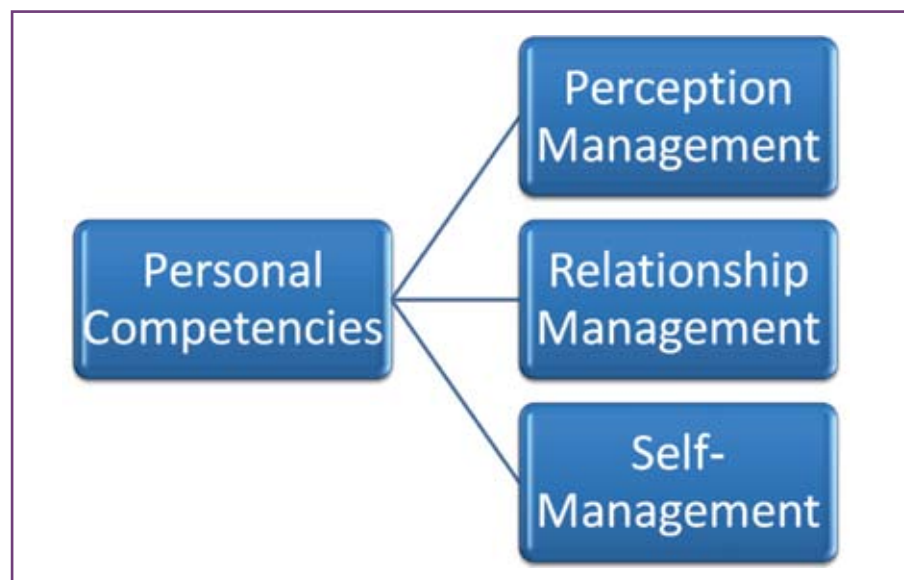
Identifying Global Competencies

Before any development can occur however,

we need to have a thorough understanding of individual's current global competencies. One way to assist an organisation to identify current global competencies of their employees is the use of a psychometric assessment tool such as the Global Competence Inventory (GCI). As experts qualified to use this tool we recommend that organisations use such an assessment as part of their global leadership development programme to identify existing strengths and areas for individual development. Our work both in the UK and the Middle East uses the assessment tool to gain a greater understanding of individual employees' existing global competencies and to highlight specific developmental needs. Not only does the assessment enable diagnostic assessment, it also provides valuable metrics to assist organisations in the evaluation of programmes and informs the design of future programmes.

Measuring Global Competencies

The GCI measures an individual's personal competencies in 3 domains: Perception Management, Relationship Management and Self-Management. Collectively these domains enable an organisation to predict how an individual is likely to perform their work in a different culture or within a culturally diverse team environment.



Taking each domain in turn provides a more detailed understanding of the tool itself and enables us to consider what specific qualities enable an individual to work effectively in diverse cultural settings. The first domain evaluates Perception Management and identifies how employees perceive the world around them. More importantly this recognises their attitude and behaviour towards working with people from different cultures. In particular the tool measures 5 dimensions:

- Non-judgmentalness - not rushing to judge others or situations
- Inquisitiveness - desire to explore new situations
- Tolerance of ambiguity - how we manage uncertainty
- Cosmopolitanism - interest in global issues
- Interest flexibility - embracing new interests.

The next domain Relationship Management assesses an employee's ability to interact and manage interpersonal relationships in a cross-cultural context. Specifically this domain measures how well an individual is interested in forming and developing relationships with others from different cultural backgrounds. The dimensions include:

- Relationship interest - awareness and interest in people from other cultures
- Interpersonal engagement - desire to engage with people from different cultures
- Emotional sensitivity - ability to empathise with other people
- Self-awareness - understanding your own values
- Social flexibility - adapting behaviour to fit in.

The final domain explores Self-Management which explores how you adapt to your global work environment whilst also maintaining a clear sense of self-identity.

- Optimism - positive outlook
- Self-confidence – belief in your own ability
- Self-identity - your ability to uphold your own beliefs and values
- Emotional Resilience - how you deal with setbacks
- Non-stress tendency - your ability to remain calm when facing stressful situations
- Stress Management - your coping mechanism to deal with stress.

The information generated from the assessment provides a full report of an individual's global competencies highlighting their current strengths and opportunities for further development. In particular the assessment provides the



basis to implement individualised career planning for the global workforce.

University of Portsmouth Female Leadership Programmes

We are currently using the tools in the UK and a number of Middle East countries to develop female global leaders of the future in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) fields, providing opportunities to address the current lack of women in these professions. As well as utilising the GCI assessment, workshops are run for employees to provide additional support to develop global competencies. This is facilitated with one-to-one coaching sessions to bridge the gap between current and future performance. The individual feedback and one-to-one coaching is a valuable part of the assessment process as it provides an opportunity for individuals to explore their areas of strength and identify any areas that could be developed further. These individual sessions then enable the organisation to evaluate the collective developmental needs of their employees and devise a programme for Global Leadership Development.

Developing Global Leaders

The life cycle diagram above highlights the overall process we use to develop effective global leadership programmes. In the first instance current competencies are identified utilising an assessment. It is important as with any development programme to provide the necessary supporting activities that form the overall HR strategy. Therefore we assess on-going support provided to the individual. These will include a range of approaches such as

executive coaching, mentoring and action learning, facilitated by a range of experiential and reflective practice. As with any employee, engagement activities it is essential to review and evaluate the outcomes for the individual.

Expatriate Assignment Selection

In addition to the global development programmes being undertaken, one area that global organisations are increasingly using such assessments is in the selection of expatriates. It is particularly important to identify employees that exhibit knowledge and empathy of other cultures, as well as managing inter-cultural communications if they are to succeed as an expat. It is essential to understand in advance of any assignment how well the expatriate is likely to adjust to a new culture and develop meaningful business relationships. Expatriation remains a key strategy in the internationalisation of operations. Developing business in overseas territories to expand current markets as well as transfer knowledge to overseas staff relies upon successful international assignments. Whilst the use of expensive long term expatriation has seen a decline, mainly due to cost, the use of expatriates overall shows no signs of reducing. Therefore, when a costly expatriation is considered, it is essential to ensure the individual is the best possible candidate for the assignment both technically as well as culturally.

Selection

As well as for expatriate selection, we are also now increasingly seeing such global competency assessment tools used by many global organisations as part of their wider resourcing strategy and used as part

of their selection process for new employees. This reflects the growing significance being attributed to the development of a global workforce and the value attributed to hiring individuals that already have the qualities to perform in the workplace in environments outside their own cultures.

Summary

Global organisations are placing increasing emphasis on the development of global management skills and effective intercultural behaviour amongst employees. The ability to recruit, select and develop employees to operate effectively in increasingly diverse and challenging global environments is a focus for many organisations. Many organisations are using psychometric assessment tools to assist them in the identification of global competencies of individual employees. Those that are successful in identifying the qualities that are necessary amongst employees and are able to develop the personal competencies to manage in and amongst different cultures will gain competitive advantage in the global marketplace. It seems that nurturing global leaders is no longer a 'nice to' but a pre-requisite for global success.

**<http://edition.cnn.com/2008/BUSINESS/06/11/ghosn.profile/#cnnSTCText>*



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Sarah is currently working with early career female scientists in the UK and Middle East to develop global leadership competencies using a psychometric instrument that enables organisations to assess effective HR policies and practices for the selection, development, training and reintegration of globally mobile personnel.

Sarah's research seeks to highlight the barriers to women working within the Sciences and develop strategies for the individual and organisation to enhance career development opportunities.

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