

Chapter 16

Global Citizenship: Technology and the 21st Century Manager

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the reality of the modern workplace: the demand for global citizens well-exceeds the supply, and while a manager in the 21st century must increasingly be a global citizen manager, this goal is seldom attained. The skills can be learned, but training has not been broadly implemented in schools or businesses, and typically considered the purview solely of study abroad programs or foreign assignments. The chapter presents some key tools on the technology roadmap for use in educating global citizens and training the 21st century manager.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization in the 21st century is ubiquitous. In business, a firm's success is increasingly a function of how well it operates in a globalized environment, and markedly, its effectiveness in navigating through the cultural diversity among its internal and external constituents. It follows that global citizenship skills are desirable attributes for workers to possess, and a critical competency

for managers (Zhao, 2010). A disproportionately modest number of professionals, however, have these skills developed to a level commensurate with the requirements that support a vision of enterprise competitiveness in a globalizing marketplace. Universities to date have not given adequate priority to broadening and intensifying global skill acquisition in their curricula, and companies only vaguely assess, nurture and recruit using these skills as criteria. Business is left a

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victim of globalization having evolved at a speed and breadth beyond those of school programs and personnel policies.

Signs and symptoms of this handicap abound: under-leveraging the potential residing in human resource diversity – often even alienating sub-cultures within the organization; improper messaging in foreign markets; futile reliance on “International Departments” to deal with the “overseas world” – as if global were a separate discipline or market segment rather than *the* market; dispatching under-prepared personnel on foreign assignments - which has a high cost and high risk of ending in waste; seeking to standardize objectives, strategies and practices across regions - which is, in many cases, not possible and often counterproductive and a cause of conflict; missing market cues, and generally struggling with the nuances of cross-border and cross-cultural exchange.

Companies expecting their staff to simply adapt and work their way through the cultural implications of globalization are often blind to the unfeasibility of their posture. Even well-intended initiatives such as crash courses in culture or language training are, in fact, naïve reflexes in context. Learning enough of a new language to be effective can take years and cultural training after the selection of a global project team member, or after the nomination of a global functional head, even after the designation of a new Board member, is akin to setting out to teach the sport to a first draft pick (Lane, Maznevski, Dietz, & DiStefano, 2012).

Global citizenship skills, in particular cultural intelligence, are assets few firms have to date prioritized – or even measured- yet their influence on success or failure is ever increasing (Zhao, 2010).

As this realization works its way into board-rooms a new paradigm emerges in human resource assessment, recruitment and training. Leaders acknowledging the value which global citizens have in the organization move to develop and attract these talents. Universities see greater demand for graduates with global skills. Researchers focus on the dimensions of what constitutes cultural skills

and awareness and propel the further conceptualization and study of cultural intelligence.

In this evolving landscape, the role played by higher education institutions becomes paramount. As global skills and attributes can be developed, and as cultural intelligence has dimensions which can be specifically targeted and enhanced, schools have the potential to adapt their curricula to endow graduates with these competencies (Zhao, 2010), thereby rendering them better prepared to succeed.

While universities have mostly promoted study and living abroad programs as the framework for global skills acquisition, this approach cannot be universally applied. In business, the practice of adding expatriate assignments to a career with the intent of rendering someone globally competent is also applicable in very limited scope. Study abroad programs and international assignments in fact have uncertain effectiveness, and their true value addition is rarely measured. Nonetheless, they are considered unique among options for immersion in a different cultural setting, where learning and practice can be experienced firsthand.

We propose, rather, that adapting existing and evolving information, communication and simulation technologies for the acquisition of global citizenship skills has the potential to generate higher quality results, allow for better measurement of progress, and be applied more broadly and at lower cost than physical immersion through temporary relocation. Furthermore, as we shall see, technology tools offer the opportunity to target specific dimensions of global skills, such as the various individual dimensions of cultural intelligence, which enables tailoring and focusing training programs based on individual needs and context-specific demands.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Globalization is not a new phenomenon. It has been a reality developing from ancient times, to a greater or lesser extent across regions, and evolving through higher and lower periods of

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