

# Excerpt from Leading the Global Workforce (Jossey Bass Business & Management, December 2005)

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Linkage, Inc. supports research and organizational change related to global leadership and workforce management. In 2004, Linkage completed a study of the world's best practice organizations. In order of frequency, these were the companies' top five concerns:

1. Recruiting and developing global leaders
2. Global organizational learning
3. Cross-cultural communication
4. "Offshoring" or outsourcing line functions
5. Managing global careers and transitions

The Leading The Global Workforce book provides direction for addressing these concerns as well as others in HR development on a global level. In this excerpt of Leading the Global Workforce, organizations (sharing a strong financial history, a sense of corporate responsibility, and a commitment to an inclusive global society) name the factors that contributed most to their success.

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## KEY ASPECTS OF SUCCESS

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When asked to name the factors that contributed most to success, contributors most often pointed to three, in order of frequency:

- 1. Support and participation of senior management.**
- 2. Connecting development and the initiative with the strategic plan**
- 3. Integration with other divisional processes, practices, and systems**

Survey respondents emphasized the importance of senior management support in developing global leaders and balancing global and local perspectives. When asked to identify the top critical success factors, all of the organizations identified "support and participation of senior management." The goal of achieving results on a global scale enabled the developers of these leadership initiatives to make a strong business case for what they proposed should be done.

The survey results also indicate that cross-cultural communication is essential for every aspect of building a global workforce leadership initiative, including developing global leaders, coaching and mentoring global programs, and managing performance. As David C. Thomas and Kerr Inkson have noted "cross-cultural people skills are important because managing people effectively is key to organizational effectiveness, and the people in organizations are increasingly multicultural."

Following are other key components of success, with examples drawn from the cases.

## Developing Global Leaders

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Developing leadership, whether at the global or local level, was a key component of each organization's global workforce management initiative. Leaders face the challenge of transporting workforce principles used at home to overseas markets. Developing quality global leadership is instrumental for organizations to achieve continued success and global growth.

- ◆ McDonald's introduced 3 initiatives for developing leadership talent: (1) the re-design of the performance development system for all staff positions; (2) a talent review process for all officer level positions; and (3) the *Leaders at the McDonald's Program* (LAMP)
- ◆ Dow Chemicals designed a reward and recognition program to identify the best practices in leadership development. The goal of this program was to increase employee recognition in a global environment and to reach all talent-leaders regardless of rank or position.
- ◆ Wyeth designed two programs that support a talent management system: its Global Leadership Program targeted thirty-six high potential leaders at the Vice President Level. Its Executive Leadership Programs were conducted in the U.S., Europe and Asia for participants at the Director level and above.
- ◆ Pfizer Inc.'s global leadership development program, *Advance Transition*, consisted of three stages including on-ramp preparation, a residential program, and on-the-job application. This program supports "leaders leading leaders" who are in the process of making a transition to a new company role.

## Culture Change

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These best practice organizations recognized the need to align their corporate culture with global strategy in mind. The global workforce initiatives of these organizations had to consider cultural differences and cross-cultural communication as an advantage for the growth of the organization. In many of these cases, innovative strategies were used to shift perceptions of the company.

- ◆ Volvo 3P provides a Global Learning Roadmap to encourage collaborative learning and a mutually supportive culture across three formerly competing brands of trucks. To do so, it developed open dialogue, cross functional learning, and multicultural learning groups.
- ◆ Pfizer Inc.'s Advance Transition Program expanded from the U.S. perspective from which it began, allowing local multicultural adaptation of leader transition support, while carefully maintaining consistency of overall course objectives.
- ◆ Operating in more than 180 countries, UNICEF's staff career development program included tools translated into the United Nations' five official languages.
- ◆ Motorola University's initiative for Workplace Learning and Performance training accepted the challenge of transferring soft-skills technology from U.S. culture to China. This process required several steps of fostering cultural exchange including awareness-building and a certificate program at two Chinese Universities.

## Global vs. Local Perspectives

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In order to sustain success in global workforce management, global efforts must be balanced with local perspectives.

- ◆ The Colgate-Palmolive Company implemented a two-phase training initiative to develop the skills necessary to fulfill its company values and principles. Phase 1 was called "Valuing Colgate People", Phase 2, "Managing with Respect". Both aimed a global strategy through local implementation.
- ◆ Tower Automotives established a global technical center while also keeping regional centers to connect to differing regional design needs. Maintaining strong local presence is necessary to successfully gain market share.
- ◆ The Volvo 3P Group faced the challenge of managing HR areas on a global level and at the same time abiding by local laws, regulations and procedures. Volvo 3P's Global Learning Roadmap program aimed to distinguish HR areas that would remain under local rules from those that could be applied globally.
- ◆ Pfizer Inc. and Wyeth also emphasized the importance of global implementation while respecting the diversity at the local levels.

## Support from All Levels of the Organization

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Achieving success requires full support throughout the organization. While senior management's support is undoubtedly necessary, middle and lower management and employees have to believe in the program's potential to succeed. Global leadership development programs must be leveraged to create an environment that infuses every level of the organization.

- ◆ During a time of external economic turmoil, Verizon Dominicana achieved greater financial success and credibility through a strategy of sharing its vision through all levels of its employees. Verizon program engaged every employee in shifting the company from a system of silos to a cohesive, team organization focused on the customer.
- ◆ Pfizer's Advance Technology Program requires the collaboration of pharmaceutical, manufacturing, and research functions—each contributing to the successful rollout in the company's regions.
- ◆ UNICEF's P<sup>2</sup>D program was built to meet the needs of staff and managers related to increasing both individual and management accountability for career development. Staff members at all levels of UNICEF participate in and support this program.

## Outsourcing

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Outsourcing is now in the mainstream for companies facing global competition. According to a study by Forrester Research, 3.3 million U.S. jobs "will be performed abroad" by 2015." Several of the case studies consider the growth opportunities of outsourcing.

- ◆ The Boppy Company implemented a program to use outsourcing effectively for increasing the growth of the organization, maintaining the company's innovative focus, reducing costs of goods, and maintaining social responsibility.
- ◆ Intercontinental Hotels Group studied outsourcing HR transaction processing as a means of reducing costs.
- ◆ Tower Automotive's initiative stressed the innovation needed to make outsourcing effective. Tower chose India as the location of a new remote center for technical services that would both reduce costs and give the company a stronger competitive edge in supplying new products to market.

For more information on how to successfully manage and sustain the global workforce, order your copy of *Leading The Global Workforce* (Jossey-Bass, December 2005) on line at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

# Linkage

Linkage is a global organizational development company that specializes in leadership development. We provide clients around the globe with integrated solutions that include strategic consulting services, customized leadership development and training experiences, tailored assessment services, and benchmark research. Linkage's mission is to connect high-performing leaders and organizations to the futures they want to create.

With a relentless commitment to learning, Linkage also offers conferences, institutes, summits, open-enrollment workshops, and distance learning programs on leading-edge topics in leadership, management, human resources, and organizational development. More than 200,000 leaders and managers have attended Linkage programs since 1988.

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