

# Succession Planning for Global Leadership Roles

Even among companies that have invested in developing strategic and comprehensive succession plans, few are actually carefully considering the important of ensuring the right criteria in identifying candidates for international and global roles.



Most of the time traditional succession planning criteria is used to identify candidates for these roles. The criteria often includes technical skills and competencies, general leadership competencies – such as the ability to make decision and deal with ambiguity, actual performance in the market or location where they have been operating, and proven track record and perspective of those working with and for them. However, there are still too many stories of leaders who seem to fit all the criteria then failing when they get into their international assignment or global role.



## So what is missing in the succession planning process for these roles that would ensure a much higher rate of success?

- As a first step, most companies do not have clarity on the number of 'global roles' that they will need to fill in 2, 5 or 10 years. As multi-national companies become truly global and more emerging market companies become international the number of global managers and leaders will increase dramatically. Businesses must have a Strategic Human Capital Plan that includes a forecast of the number and type of global roles that will be needed in the short and long term.
- One very common and intuitive way that companies prepare future global leaders is to put them on a rotation of international assignments. Once the 'right' candidates have been selected this can surely be a very effective method for their development. A few things that can be done to ensure success include: ample opportunity to further develop their understanding of the market they will be going to well in advance, buddy or mentoring programs to enable them to more easily form strong and trusted relationships in new environments, and performance metrics that ensure they are developing local leaders rather than focusing only on operational results. Programs to ensure that family can adjust successfully in each transition – such as spouse transition and career coaching programs, are also important in ensuring success.
- For many junior managers or specific roles in the business, investing in global rotation of international assignments is not feasible. Businesses need to be more creative in having other ways for future leaders to develop their global leadership capabilities that do not require extensive travel. Some of these can include managing virtual teams, working on global projects while being based in one location, forming global learning networks within the organisation and executive and receiving



In an increasingly inter-connected world the research and study of what makes a successful global leader continues. The companies that can take that understanding and translate it into a pragmatic strategy to ensure they select the 'right people' for global roles and develop those people in the 'right ways' will have a significant competitive advantage. networks within the organisation and executive and receiving inter-cultural coaching.

**References:**

Bowen, David, Javidan, Mansoor, Teagarden, Mary (2010). Making it Overseas. Harvard Business Review, April, 2010

*Future articles in the MDS Newsletter will continue to examine some of the other characteristics of successful global leaders – so please stay tuned!*

Any comments or questions on this topic are welcomed – please send to [elisa@mdsbeijing.com](mailto:elisa@mdsbeijing.com)

At MDS we help organisations develop their people by delivering outstanding leadership and sales programmes that boost business performance. *Elisa Mallis* is the Head of Executive Coaching for MDS in Mainland China. She has designed and delivered numerous coaching programmes for managers and senior leaders across the United States, Europe and the Asia Pacific Region. Previously she worked as a Management Consultant at Accenture for 10 years and has a Master of Education in Counseling Psychology and Master of Arts in Organisational Psychology, both from Columbia University.