



Cultivating a global mindset within MBA studies

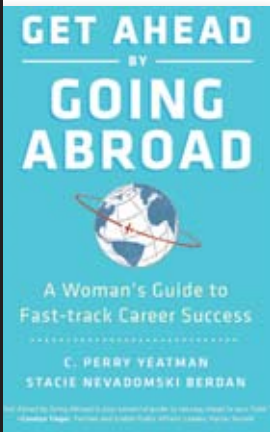
BY STACIE NEVADOMSKI BERDAN

THE PAST 10 YEARS have affected companies that have, or expect to have, global operations. They became convinced their future success depended on a steady stream of new talent with a diverse mix of skills, perspectives and experiences. Today's managerial talent needs a global mindset.





THE GLOBAL MINDSET



I conducted for my book, *Get Ahead By Going Abroad: A Woman's Guide to Fast-Track Career Success* (HarperCollins 2007), I surveyed more than 200 professional women who had worked overseas. These successful globetrotters identified five traits they considered critical in cross-cultural business situations: adaptability; skill at building teams and relationships; communication skills; patience and persistence; and open-minded curiosity.

Meanwhile, ninety-five percent of the survey's respondents said that going abroad is not for everyone. Given the complexity of the international terrain, not every American fares well abroad.

Quantifying the global mindset

Mansour Javidan is dean of research at Thunderbird School of Management. Thunderbird is a likely place to find an expert on global mindset. It's the first graduate school to specialize in international management and global business.

Javidan agrees that all are not equal on the international playing field. In fact, his research quantifies the skill sets that help a global manager be more effective and therefore more successful. Working with a team of eight Thunderbird professors and several distinguished scholars at other campuses, Javidan developed the Global Mindset Inventory (GMI), based on interviews with 200 executives and a survey of 1,000 more.

GMI is intriguing stuff. It uses scientific methodology to measure three sets of

attributes on a scale of 1-5 individually—intellectual, social and psychological capital—and then collectively for a total score.

But what makes one person's global mindset better than another's? Some wonder if it can even be taught.

• Intellectual capital measures knowledge of global industry and competitors along with global business savvy, cognitive complexity and cosmopolitan outlook.

• Social capital involves building trusting relationships and is measured by intercultural empathy, interpersonal impact and diplomacy.

• Psychological capital reflects and measures one's passion for diversity, quest for adventure and self-assurance.

According to Javidan, GMI can help companies determine which professionals are most likely to succeed in expatriate assignments. By identifying strengths and weaknesses, it also provides developmental guidance.

"GMI can help identify potential traps and conflicts for an employee and alert him and the company to potential downfalls," Javidan says. "This can lower the professional risk in situations where

technical talent is a must, but the global mindset score is low."

Can such skills be taught?

To answer that question, Thunderbird has been testing its students for the past year and a half. Students are tested two weeks prior to start of classes, then again 6-8 weeks before graduation. Comparing results so far, evidence points to measurable improvement in both intellectual and social capital. There is, however, no real impact on psychological capital.

Javidan has a few thoughts as to why this is so. "One possible explanation is that the average score is already high, a 4.1 out of 5. High psychological capital exists already within Thunderbird students. In fact, at Thunderbird, we have always implicitly tried to improve intellectual and social capital, not psychological."

It is thought that some 71 percent of today's MBA programs are going global. Some incorporate an international component that involves study abroad or international case studies into the curriculum. However, a complete curricular overhaul may be necessary.

The MBA Roundtable is an association of fifty business schools working together to improve management curricula in MBA programs. Their 2008 annual conference was held at George Washington University in November. According to Carleen Kerttula, executive director of the MBA Roundtable, 90 percent of its members said that cultivating a global mindset is a strategic priority.

"Our members know they need it, and their Executive MBA programs seem to be the most innovative. They are forming international partnerships, infusing curriculum with international cases and faculty and giving classroom time to visiting business leaders," Kerttula said. "Full-time MBA programs are starting to adopt this model and it's a great start."

For business schools interested in cultivating the global mindset, the MBA Roundtable offers a few key pointers:

1. Clarify your global mindset objectives, and be able to measure curricula success as required by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB).

2. Apply similar curricula changes to executive, full-time and part-time MBA programs.

3. Identify opportunities that satisfy global business needs, such as international partnerships, cross-



international partnerships, cross-

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continental programs and a global core curriculum.

- 4. Understand operational challenges and network with peers who can help.
- 5. Listen to business leaders' recommendations.

"U.S. schools lag behind others in Europe and Asia," said Kerttula. "Schools can begin to make changes right away by integrating foreign students as teaching instruments within the classroom."

U.S. Ambassador Curtis Chin, currently serving as the executive director of the Asian Development Bank, agrees. A graduate of Yale's School of Management and author of a leading book in Japan on U.S. management schools, he has spent years working in Asia for multinational companies. "Learning from other students, particularly international classmates, ranks as one of the most important aspects of the MBA program," he says.

However, both Javidan and Kerttula agree that it can take years to make the necessary changes, because transformation occurs much more slowly than starting from scratch. They believe business schools must find a way to short-cut the process. Recruiting

businesses want global mindsets now.

Perry Yeatman is an executive at Kraft Foods. He says Kraft is actively looking for talent that understands foreign markets and consumer behaviors, as well as those who can succeed in cross-cultural teams. "We cannot afford to be mindlessly global or hopelessly local. We must capitalize on the potential for top-line growth in keymarkets around the world."



The same is true for engineering giant DuPont, which books 65 percent of its sales outside the United States. "Because our industry is global, it's not possible to have a U.S. career anymore," says Diane Gulyas, group vice president of DuPont Performance Materials. "If you want to move ahead, you must be passionate about business beyond U.S. borders."

The American dilemma

But the vast majority of business leaders I've spoken with express increasing dissatisfaction with American students who *don't* think beyond their own borders—who don't have global mindset.

Jon Steel is planning director for WPP, which provides marketing and strategy

services for multinational clients in more than 100 countries. WPP demands international perspective. "It would be almost impossible for someone to rise to a leadership position in WPP without international experience," Steel says. "Students who are limited by their own national boundaries today are like the handloom weavers in an era of industrialization: they may still have a role to play, but it will be in an ever-shrinking one."

Universities are in for a very challenging decade as they attempt to re-engineer their MBA programs during severe economic turbulence. Some schools will no doubt limit innovation. Out of fear or uncertainty, others will maintain the status quo. The innovators will understand they have no choice. They'll learn to operate with fewer resources, tapping creative partnerships to drive the global mindset. It all depends on leadership. ■



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