

Global Leadership Development

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Table of Contents:

Global Leadership Development (GLD): Distance3

GLD 2: Defining Leadership across Cultures4

GLD 3: Creating a Global Bench5

GLD 4: Training and Coaching Methods6

GLD 5: Budgets and Workforces8

GLD 6: Obtaining Buy-In in a Global Environment9

GLD 7: Managing the Program11

Global Leadership Development (GLD): Distance

Leadership development, like traditional training and development, faces traditional challenges such as distance, culture, diversity, design and delivery methods, along with budgets and workforces. We are going to take a look at the challenges you may face when implementing a global leadership development program, starting with one of the most obvious challenges: distance. If you are a local organization, you probably won't deal with distance. But consider those organizations that have members spread out over a wide geography, and even across international borders. Developing their leadership program may be a little more difficult, starting with the distance that separates them.

Any leadership development program is going to require regular meetings and training, not to mention networking and coaching. So what can you do to truly train leaders 'at a distance'? We will discuss the development and design of global leadership development training in an upcoming section. But before you get to that point, you must think about how you'll bring that group together. In today's environment, training can be delivered in many different ways, including online and via web conference. The first challenge is creating a program that lends itself to a distance format. If your organization is spread out in different countries or geographic areas, think about the budget strain that may occur if you try to bring your leadership pool together on a regular basis. Also consider the differences in time-the

pool in the U.S. may be at work when the pool in Europe or the Middle East is heading home for the day. One way to bridge distance is to offer your informational training online and then have the pool meet to discuss via a web conference. Blogs and discussion boards are also helpful to groups who are separated by distance or time.

Along those same lines, consider how you'll bring the pool together for meetings, networking, and coaching. Coaching is probably the easiest distance challenge: coaches can be chosen based on their proximity to the pool, making one-on-one, face-to-face sessions possible. Even networking meetings can be scheduled to occur between group members who are in the same geographic areas. But to make the program truly global, you must figure out a way to mix the entire pool at various points during the program. Web conferencing is a good way to do this. If the pool is small enough, the discussion can occur via webcam. If not, a web conference with interactive features will work. The idea here is to be prepared for the distance challenge before you even start the program.

Distance can also create a gap in culture. This is most obvious between groups in different countries. Obviously the way the organization does business in the U.S. is going to be different than the way it operates in Asia or the Middle East. Your program has to bridge this cultural difference, in both education and network. When you develop your program, be sure to include pieces that explain the difference between the business and organizational cultures. Even if leaders don't move across the cultures, each person in the pool will

benefit from knowing how the rest of the organization functions.

Also related to cultural distance is distance in coaching. You may be able to provide coaches in the same geographic areas, but does this make your program truly global? For example, after the leadership pool progresses, you may want to assign a coach in Japan to a high-potential leader in the U.S. How can you bring the two together without paying for the airfare and accommodation that would come with that meeting? Again, phone, web conference, and webcam can be just as effective. In a day and age when even preliminary job interviews are being held over the phone or via webcam, certainly a coaching session can occur this way, as well.

A global leadership development program will require your skill and thought in several areas. Distance is only the first, but most obvious challenge. Before you embark on the program, analyze the distance between the members of your organization on the high level. This way, you'll be prepared to move forward with your program ready for the challenge of distance. Next, we will discuss another aspect of distance: the concept of leadership across cultures.

GLD 2: Defining Leadership across Cultures

We've discussed distance in relation to a global leadership development program, but let's take the discussion a little deeper. When training for leadership across cultures, it's necessary to be mindful of the fact that the concept and definitions of leadership may be different across cultures. And before we proceed, let's define a "culture". In the sense of training and development, a culture is the attitudes,

experience, and work styles of any like group of people. For example, your organization may be located only in one geographical location but may have various cultures in existence. That's why a discussion of global leadership development can apply to any organization, regardless of geographic factors.

Along these lines, be aware that there are differences in cultures not only within one geographic location but also in varied geographic locations—even within the same country. For example, work styles and attitudes are different in South Florida than they are in the Mid-Southern states, and so on. Of course, world cultures may be completely different, even if everyone works for the same organization. All of these factors will contribute to the definition of leadership and therefore into the definition of your leadership development program.

The first step in defining leadership within the organization is to go to the very top, such as the executive team or the training department's executive sponsor. These groups typically can create a profile of a leader within your organization. What traits, attitudes, and education create that profile? If a person wants to be a part of the succession plan, how can he or she create a self-development plan to get there? Does the organization believe that leadership can appear at all levels, and in all forms, such as high-professional and high-potential leaders? Once this general profile is created, you can move on to the definition of leadership across the cultures that exist in your organization.

The next step in the definition of leadership is to take the overall leadership profile and

“test” it on the leaders of other parts of the organization. If you haven’t defined the “other parts” of the organization, do that first. For example, is the organization divided into business units that spread across geography, or is each geographical location a division unto itself, with its own business units? Once you have that frame to work with, you can go to existing leaders and ask them how the overall organization’s definition of leadership fits in with their culture. Those leaders may want to add characteristics that accurately reflect their culture, however, try not to subtract any characteristics that already exist. If the profile that you’ve already created doesn’t mesh well with other leaders’ definitions, then you may have more than a training issue at hand.

Another way to get a good view of leadership around your organization is to do some assessment and research yourself. For example, if your organization has operations in Asia, it’s probably a good idea to do some general research on business attitudes in the particular country or countries you’re working with. If you already have contacts in the business units across the organization, use those contacts to discover what attitudes currently exist in the business units. Once you have your profiles pulled together, you’ll be able to figure out the basis for the definition of leadership at your organization. In addition, you’ll have a leadership definition that will work across the cultures that exist, even if you have to add to that leadership profile.

As you are creating your organization’s definition of leadership, remember that you are starting a global program that should have a long-term reach. Try not to begin building the leadership development

program until you have solidified your organization’s definitions of leadership across cultures. Obviously the definition of leadership will change as the organization changes priorities and goals. With that in mind, ensure that each leadership definition creates a profile of a person who can help the organization meet its overall mission. Once you have these definitions, you have overcome one of the major challenges to global leadership development.

GLD 3: Creating a Global Bench

After dealing with the challenges of distance and culture, the next challenge for global leadership development is how to create a leadership bench or pool that is truly global in scope. When you took the time to define leadership across the cultures that exist within your organization, you may have also begun to see potential succession patterns developing. We will discuss making leaders mobile later, but we will confine this discussion to the overall creation of a global bench.

The first step is to create the pool or bench. From the definitions you’ve collected, you should be able to create profiles of existing leaders within the organization. Plus, existing leaders may be able to begin choosing those professionals who can fit the leadership definition after going through the development program. These people can begin to fill the leadership pool or bench. Obviously getting them through the program you will create is going to be the first, and biggest, step to preparation. But how are you going to plan for succession across a diverse workforce?

There are many ways to create a bench and plan for succession if your organization is geographically diverse. First, consider the feasibility of creating leaders within a country or region-and to have them “earmarked” for those countries or regions. If this isn’t quite where the organization wants to go, consider creating the leadership bench that will prepare for succession across all cultures within the organization. This may mean that part of the development program will be temporary rotations into the person’s area of expertise or interest, as long as that rotation is outside of his or her normal region or culture.

When you analyze the populations that exist within the organization, the next step is to figure out if any patterns exist. For example, is there a high concentration of high-potential leaders in any one area? Or, on the other hand, is there a high concentration of high-professional leaders in any one area? How can you prepare these groups for the mobility of a global bench? Is part of the leadership program at your organization the acceptance of the fact that a leadership position could take a person anywhere in the organization’s entire system?

With these factors in play, you should also consider how you’ll give the leadership pool a “local” feel even though it’s not a local group. For example, you may determine that actual cultural, business, and even language training may be necessary before a particular candidate can take a position in the leadership bench. With this type of training, in addition to the development program, a potential leader can take on “local” characteristics.

Another issue that comes along with the global leadership bench is the idea of how to label your leadership benches or pools. We are all familiar with high professional and high potential leaders, but do those labels “translate” to other cultures? Plus, if you’ve chosen to go business unit by business unit, do you truly want to label your leaders or do you just want to place them as people who will eventually take over management, executive, or other leadership roles within the organization?

Another challenge related to the leadership bench is how to coach from a global perspective, which we have touched on and will touch on again. Coaching or mentoring are very important aspects of a leadership development program. But these aspects can be made more difficult by the challenges of a global organization. Are you going to create a coaching network within the geographic locations, or are you going to use technology to extend coaching to all corners of your organization?

The challenge with creating a global leadership bench is making leaders mobile-or at least preparing them for mobility. If leaders are aware of the mobility requirement, you may be able to weed out those who are truly not interested in succession. On the other hand, and this goes back to labeling your benches, you may find that high professional leaders who are content staying where they are can be great contributors to the organization and its succession plan.

The next challenge in global leadership development is the creation of training and coaching, as well as the methods of design and delivery.

GLD 4: Training and Coaching Methods

Now that you've determined how to build your global leadership bench, you must make the determination of which coaching and training methods you'll use-and begin the process of developing the program. As with any program, there are a wide variety of options available in terms of development and delivery. Since your leadership development program is to be truly global in scope, your choice of training and coaching methods could be a 'make or break' for the program and its participants.

First, consider all of the options available. For leadership development, the possibilities may be endless. In person, classroom training is always a good option. Informational pieces can be delivered via the classroom, independent study, or even as online learning interventions. Networking for leaders can also occur in person, but also via web conference, blogs, or moderated discussion boards. The coaching and mentoring aspects of a leadership development program are often best in person, but what's to stop you from testing out the effectiveness of a web cam if the members of the program are geographically diverse?

If the options are overwhelming, think about your organization first. Are the potential members of the leadership program geographically diverse or are they in the same location? Again, a global program does not have to be a program that exists in multiple regions or countries; a global leadership program will prepare the organization's leaders for whatever challenges come their way. If your leaders are close in proximity, consider traditional training and coaching methods, that is,

classroom training and seminars along with face-to-face coaching and networking opportunities. If the cost is effective, this is always a good methodology.

What if your organization's leaders are spread out over diverse geography? Also, keep in mind that in today's economic climate travel and classroom training may not be a possibility, even for organizations whose leaders are close in physical distance. If this is the case for your leadership program, consider the alternatives to traditional approaches. Informational pieces or case studies can always be delivered online or via email. But when it comes time to 'sit down' together and discuss the information, what are effective methodologies? Web conferences are good ways to accomplish a personal meeting with geographically diverse populations. If your program has various learning modules, consider placing those in an online format first. For example, if there is a section on Emotional Intelligence, create an online program that provides information, examples, and case studies. Then, bring the participants together to discuss the course via web conference. To continue the leadership network, consider using blogs or monitored discussion boards. These methods are effective in keeping a discussion going or in introducing new topics.

When it comes to coaching potential leaders, we've discussed the possibility of placing mentors and coaches in close proximity to the members of the leadership group. But if this is not feasible, or may not be in keeping with your organizations leadership goal, you may want to consider using alternative methods for coaching, as well. For example, web cam coaching

sessions can occur from desk to desk very easily, as can web conference sessions. Coaches and participants can keep track of each other via email or text, as well.

When you are looking at potential training and coaching methods for a global leadership development program, the first thing to consider is the feasibility of your methods. The second thing is to consider what learning methods may work better for your global audiences. As we have discussed, cultures vary from business unit to business unit and from region to region. As cultures vary, so do learning methods and styles. Take some time to determine what types of learning interventions have worked for each population you are trying to reach-and see how those methods can be used in your leadership development program.

A final consideration is the overall goal of your leadership program. What are you trying to accomplish? Are you truly going for leadership development and succession planning, or are you starting with the introduction of leadership concepts at all levels and building a more comprehensive plan as you go along? The answers to these questions may help you determine your training and coaching methods, as well. For example, if you are simply introducing the concept of leadership, local instructor led courses and online interventions may serve the purpose until the full program is up and running.

Next, we will look at the challenges of workforces and budgets.

GLD 5: Budgets and Workforces

One of the biggest challenges to any training program is budget. In today's environment, training budgets have been slashed and it may be difficult to obtain further funding. And in those budget cuts, sometimes only the most essential of training programs can continue to be offered. So the challenge for a global leadership program may be obtaining a budget, much less obtaining more money to complete the program. One of the first considerations in the area of budget is simply whether or not the budget can support a global scale leadership development program. If the answer is questionable, you may have to work hard to obtain buy in, which we will discuss in the future.

To begin looking at your budget possibilities, you probably will want to determine how you will create your leadership bench, as well as how you will train and coach those individuals. If you have made this determination, consider creating a matrix of training and coaching methods, as well as network and group meeting costs. Tailor your matrix to your optimal situation and then work your way down the list, eliminating the areas that prove to be too costly. When you take the time to complete this exercise, you'll know exactly what to ask for-and how to explain the costs of the program.

Sometimes you may be able to be creative when working with a budget and training methodologies. For example, if you had your heart set on having in person meetings between the members of the leadership program, but the cost of travel is too high, think about how you can substitute another

methodology. In the case of travel or in-person meetings, consider substituting web conferencing. Determine the cost and then see how well the new methodology fits into your program. In today's environment, don't shut your organization out of a beneficial program simply because it doesn't quite fit the way you envisioned it. If you absolutely need to ask for more money, you'll need to make the determination of how the desired leadership program meets organizational needs-and helps the organization to achieve its goals. We'll talk about this when we discuss the challenge of obtaining buy-in for your program.

Facing a workforce with a new or improved program, especially a leadership development program, is a challenge that is often related to budgets. In some cases, you may have to take the program that the budget allows, although it may not be exactly what you wanted, and 'sell' it to the audience. As with any program, the best way to do this is to concentrate on the benefits that can be obtained from being involved with the program. But since this is a global program, your approach may have to be different for each organization, business unit, or region. You've already analyzed what learning methodologies 'speak' to certain audiences. Plus, you've investigated the cultures of each of your audiences. With this knowledge, you'll be able to deal with the workforce in a way that is appropriate to them.

Obviously, if the concept of leadership development is new to the audience, you may have to take special care in the delivery of your message. For example, some audiences may feel that they are doing just fine without the leadership program. Or

they may see the program as too exclusive or even as an interruption to their everyday jobs. Again, the best way to deal with this challenge is to explain the program in terms of benefits that are appropriate to the audience.

In some ways, the prospect of the challenge posed by budgets and audiences may be enough to convince you to put your program on hold. Try not to let this challenge disturb you to that point. In today's environment, leadership at all levels is a necessity, just like new hire orientation or regulatory training. If you feel like this challenge may be too much to overcome, sit down and analyze the situation. Understand that after a leadership program is underway, the organization will benefit from succession planning, retention, and interest in furthering careers instead of looking for the next best position. And most likely, these benefits will occur in all regions and at all levels.

Next, we will take a look at obtaining buy in for a global leadership development program.

GLD 6: Obtaining Buy-In in a Global Environment

All of your best plans for the creation of a global leadership development program may be meaningless if you do not obtain the buy in of key individuals or groups. Any organizational development program needs this buy in and approval, but a truly global program is probably going to require more work on your part; after all, your key individuals and groups are probably just as diverse as your program itself. Let's look at the best process to use when looking for buy in from those key groups.

First, it is absolutely necessary to define the individuals and groups from whom you need to obtain buy in or approval. Before we move on, let's look at the difference between buy in and approval. You'll need to obtain buy in from any individual or group who can push your global leadership development program forward. This could include line managers, key organizational leaders, executives, and even various work groups. The concept of buy in also includes approval, but try not to forget the people who need to approve the program before it can move forward. Divide the key people and groups within your organization and determine which ones should "buy in" and which ones should "approve". Tailor your presentation to each group, keeping in mind the cultural differences you may encounter within the organization and its regions. Most likely, you'll come up with an executive group, a stakeholder group, managers and front line supervisors, and key business leaders throughout your system. And each group will require you to "sell" the global leadership program from a different perspective.

Many times, the executive group is more about the cost and benefits of a program. Of course, they want to have a general idea of the scope of the program, but overall they want to know how the program will impact the organization's bottom line. And obviously they want to know how you'll do this in a cost effective way. When you analyzed your budget and potential expenses, you created a matrix of methods, expenses, and overall program needs, as well as the cost of each category. Use this as a tool to present to the executive group. For each piece, know what the organization stands to receive, what benefits are going to come from each piece, and at what cost.

Also be aware of how each piece of your program impacts the overall goals and mission of the organization-and of each region or geographic group the program will touch. As with any training program, a cost-benefits approach will get the attention of a group of executives, especially those that may control the flow of cash. If you're asking for a budget for a global leadership development program for the first time, start with the most ideal program components and work from there.

For the purpose of our discussion, we will group managers, line supervisors, and key regional business leaders together as "stakeholders". Each person in these groups has a stake in the program, from the cost in time and employee presence to the expected final benefits. Stakeholders may be a more difficult sell than your executive group. Some stakeholders may see a global leadership development program as a threat to their efficiency or even to their own control over the groups they manage. This may be caused by fear over what will happen if some of their employees devote time to the program, or even fear that the individual stakeholder may not get into the program. If your leadership development program includes a succession plan, these stakeholders may see the program as an "organized robbery" of their best and brightest employees.

Your reaction to these objections should be twofold. First, find a way to meet the individual objection with facts, costs, and expected benefits. Of course, one of the best ways to handle objections is to send out a gentle reminder that the purpose of the program is to further the overall mission of the organization, and that everyone involved stands to benefit from a

global impact. Second, your response to objections should take into account the regional and cultural differences you've already uncovered in your research. No response to an objection should be "canned" or across the board in the case of a global leadership development program.

But once you obtain the buy in and approval of your key groups, you can put those groups to work for the program. Have them "plug" the program to anyone who may be a potential candidate, using the same benefits you used with the stakeholder groups. With buy in from important groups, you'll see that potential leaders go through the program with much more ease, and possibly quicker. Your key stakeholders will realize the value of taking employees off of the line in order to attend training, coaching, and networking sessions. And those stakeholders will start to see the value of the program as the participants develop their leadership work styles.

The final challenge you may face when implementing a global leadership development program is the challenge of managing the program-and keeping it moving forward.

GLD 7: Managing the Program

You've planned, analyzed, obtained buy in, and even wrestled with a budget for your global leadership development program. But before you move forward with implementation, you need to determine how the program will be managed effectively. As you have moved through the challenges to global leadership development, you've probably realized that with each challenge comes a separate program component. Each component will need to be managed, and managed closely

in the first stages of the implementation of the program. Let's look at this challenge from the process standpoint and discuss some best practices for managing the global leadership development program.

First, take a good look at all of the components for your program. At the high level you'll probably have separate components for training, coaching, succession planning, and operations. Is there a person or group who will naturally manage each one of these components already? If not, decide how each component will be managed. For example, training and coaching most naturally fall to the training organization. Will you outsource the training function or keep it within your organization? What about succession planning? Do you have a talent manager within the training or organizational development functions, or is the talent manager part of human resources? Or are you the de facto talent manager because of your sponsorship and management of the leadership development program? Operational components, such as scheduling and travel, are also a factor. Do you have an admin staff that can handle the added responsibility?

Second, consider the geography you've created with the global leadership development program. For example, did you divide the entire organization into geographic groups for purposes of the program? Does each of these geographical groups have the manpower to manage each component? Does each group already have a training or organizational development staff that will take on the new responsibility of managing the leadership development program?

If there is no structure already in place for managing a global leadership development program, consider the big step of bringing it all under your training or organizational development function. This will give you a great “bird’s eye” view of the program, its implementation, and its progress. Plus, if component managers report to you, you’ll have the ability to be closer to the program. With this structure, you can report succession planning and the positioning of the leadership bench to your human resources department, as well. This way, you’re creating a dual relationship between your group and the human resources group. This relationship will work for the benefit of each group.

One of the other factors to consider is the tracking of the training component. Will the leadership development program be a part of the organization’s learning management system? Will you input groups and career paths into the LMS or will that be tracked by the organization’s HRIS system? Either way, be sure to investigate whether those systems can be adapted to track a leadership program or not. Most likely, if these systems are already in operation, they can be utilized to track a global leadership development program just as easily as any other program.

Regardless of how you decide to manage the program, you should take the time to visit, inspect, and observe the program in action. This may mean taking on some additional travel and time, but it will give you a good idea of how things are going. If travel is not an option, be sure to meet with the managers of the geographic locations on a frequent basis in order to track progress. Along with this, it is very necessary to evaluate the program from various levels. For example, participants should complete a level one evaluation for each component, that is, after each training program, coaching session, or networking event. Participants and managers should also be evaluated down the road to at least give you higher levels of evaluation. If you do not measure behavioral change for a global leadership development program, you won’t have much to report back to your executives and stakeholders. After some time, you should even attempt to look at the return on investment for the program, as well. Even if you’ve moved only one high potential leader into a new position, you should be able to report the costs and benefits of that move.

As you move through each challenge to global leadership development, you should get a clearer picture of how the program will function within your organization.

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