

What constitutes good global leadership?

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As our world leaders congregate for the G-20 Summit this week, I've been giving a lot of thought to what it takes to be a successful global leader—or not. In the many years that I have been conducting global leadership trainings, I've had the opportunity to work with mid-level management to C-suite leaders. Some of the leaders in my workshops have been incredibly savvy and culturally agile, easily flexing their leadership styles to meet cultural expectations and individual needs. Others feel like deer caught in headlights, unsure of how to navigate the complexity of leading culturally-diverse and geographically-dispersed teams.

World leaders take note—adopting a “my way or the highway” approach will always fail. Pushing others to get your desired outcome without seeking to understand and respect different cultural perspectives is not only a display of poor diplomacy, it will likely incur more enemies than allies. Effective global leadership, whether in the political or business arena, requires key skills such as active listening, alternative perspective-taking and cultural dexterity. It also necessitates the ability to engage across hierarchical levels by displaying flexibility and style switching to garner trust and respect. [Click here](#) for tips I often provide global leaders in my workshops to help them thrive whether they are leading teams in Bangalore, Beijing, Brussels, Bogota or Boston.

1. Take the time to connect with your team members one-on-one prior to the start of a project. If a face-to-face meeting isn't viable, use Skype or another video platform so you can see each other. This is critical, particularly for high context communicators who may favor body language and facial expressions over words.
2. Establish some key points in your initial discussion, both to understand what their expectations are of you as a leader as well as to share your preferred leadership style to minimize surprises and misperceptions.
3. Demonstrate a genuine interest in getting to know your team members' cultures and local practices in their home office. This provides you with insight into how they may approach hierarchy, risk, decision-making, receptivity to change, initiative, etc. Look for ways to integrate some of the various local practices into your team's culture so each team member will feel a sense of belonging.
4. Check in regularly, particularly if you are leading remotely, to check on progress, offer support and cultivate a deeper relationship. This will demonstrate that you are available and care about the individual and bolster trust. It will also open communication channels so you team member will feel comfortable approaching you if there is a specific challenge.

5. Make a point of knowing local work days and hours, holidays and vacation schedules and discuss how to ensure that work flow continues when key team members are out of the office. Remember that not every culture designates a “go to” person to cover when someone is absent. Be clear about expectations that team members delegate another team member to step in when necessary to help out.
6. Apply the Platinum Rule which states “do one to others as they would do unto themselves”. This allows you to explore the best ways to engage, motivate, and reward them based on their wishes, not your own.
7. Understand when and how to show recognition for their accomplishments. Beware of how face issues may impede your best intentions of highlighting one individual’s performance in a group setting (particularly in a collective culture) and how taking credit for a subordinate’s idea without giving her due credit can damage your credibility and trust.
8. Establish your authority as a leader by providing clear instructions, vision, and decisiveness. Keep in mind that a hands-off, consultative approach to leadership favored in the U.S. may be perceived as weak and lacking in authority in more hierarchical cultures.
9. Be inclusive of outliers. Often when the majority of a team is co-located in one culture, less dominant voices are ignored. Remember that success requires that all team members feel heard and valued in order to feel committed to the project and to contribute their best.
10. Ask don’t tell. Seek to unify different perspectives rather than give orders. Remember that synergy comes from each individual providing his opinion, ideas, expertise, and knowledge no matter what the hierarchical order. Actively probing for different viewpoints and integrating them will communicate to team members that they are critical to the team’s success.