

STRONG LINE-UP ...
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Assign **best people** for Globalisation initiatives

This is the fifth in a series of excerpts from the newly published book by Atul Vashistha, 'Globalisation Wisdom: The Seven Secrets of Great Globalisers'



BY ATUL VASHISTHA

GLOBALISATION IS NOT about a single action, or even a group of actions. Globalisation, when successful, is about an attitude. Yet even when the CEO of a company embraces Globalisation as a new attitude, it will fail unless their partners – the people who work for them – embrace the attitude as well. But getting others on board is not a job the CEO can do alone; they must recruit the best people to help.

That's what the fifth secret is about: recruiting the best people to help roll out (and guide) Globalisation initiatives throughout the company. With the best people at the helm, the Globalisation initiatives can find strong support at all levels of the organisation.

Wim Elfrink, Chief Globalisation Officer of Cisco says that assigning the best people was a key success factor for the company. "Assigning the best people is a

key differentiator between what we did differently from companies that traditionally approach the management of outsourcing.

"We had to have the right people empowered as decision-makers on both sides of the house. We insisted on having people who could make the decision in the actual negotiation process. And that was huge in us being able to accelerate the timeline and deliver value. I don't think that you can afford to do anything else in this process."

Assigning the best people to their Globalisation initiative just makes sense for successful Globalisers. "Our philosophy is – you put your best people on the project and it's successful. You take your second- or third-level people and put them on the initiative, and you're going to get a second- or third-rate result. Globalisation deserves the organisation's best people. It's a top-priority project within the company," said Ron

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–Vince Lombardi, American football legend



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Kifer, CIO at Applied Materials.

As football great Vince Lombardi said, “Individual commitment to a group effort is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilisation work.” The fifth secret of successful Globalisers is about generating that individual commitment to the group effort.

Strong participation from the organisation’s C-level executives is important for its role-modeling effects and to help generate buy-in within the organisation’s lower levels.

In addition, attention and recognition by senior management make it easier to lure the best talent to lead Globalisation initiatives. And developing the practice of strategic learning will allow the organisation to take advantage of the myriad of opportunities our increasingly interconnected world offers.

This secret reminds me of the adage, “You get what you pay for.” If the organisation doesn’t put its best people in charge of services Globalisation – if it sends in the B-team, for example, it will see second-rate results.

Cream of the crop

The best people are not necessarily those who know the most about IT, if the organisation is globalising IT, for example. Instead, they’re the people who are agile, understand change and are globally savvy. All too often, companies trade the sometimes challenging task of finding the best people in favour of the most easily accessible people, even when those people are not right for the job. In many of those cases, the initiative does not reach its full potential.

When former GE CEO Jack Welch was globalising the company in the 1980s, his best people were those who knew how to adapt to, and even embraced, change. He defined the best people not as the best

performers, but as the best fit for a globalised, cross-cultural environment.

Consider a common example of what can happen when an organisation doesn’t assign the best people: The company decides to globalise its IT processes, so it assigns the IT managers to lead the initiative.

Those IT managers are extremely well-versed in IT processes and have a lot of knowledge about the company’s IT system, but are overall more reserved, introverted types. They shy away from high-profile leadership roles and generally dislike change.

The organisation thinks that the IT managers can guide the initiative because they know IT, in spite of their shortcomings as globally savvy leaders. Yet the initiative falls short.

Why? While the IT managers played an important role in the organisation’s IT department, they were not often the best people to lead a Globalisation initiative. They lacked most of the important “global people” characteristics. The “global people” stars are resilient, embrace change, have a global mindset and an affinity for different cultures, are performance-oriented, take initiative, are admired by others within the company and build consensus.

Take another example of an organisation that assigns a number of leaders from different departments within the organisation. These people have a record of embracing, and even spearheading, change. They seek out high-profile roles and enjoy leading others; they’re admired and have proven their ability to build consensus among employees.

Despite the fact that most of these people know little about the day-to-day details of the organisa-



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tion's IT processes, the organisation assigns them to head the initiative. The initiative succeeds.

Why? The organisation assigned as leaders those people who had demonstrated the ability to be good leaders and possessed many of the "global people" characteristics. When they needed to understand the details of IT processes, they sought out the IT managers, who were able to do what they did best.

Indeed, being one of the company's "best people" is not necessarily about knowing things, Elfrink explains that it's more about the right business relationships. "It's not about knowing the scope of definition of the activities from the start; that's all detail to be added. Instead, we looked for people who understood proper contextual relationship that we were going to establish with these service providers – people who understood the business relationship and could make obligations to that business relationship."

At Cisco, Elfrink looks for people who have "a never-ending desire to be challenged and to win".

He adds: "I think that it's a special A-type personality who absolutely enjoys driving these big changes. I always say that at the end of the day, the best people want to leave their mark. Their mark is the big change – the big results that they deliver. I think you'll find



that consistent with people who are good at Globalisation – they really do enjoy it." □

Atul Vashistha is Chairman of Neo Advisory (formerly neoIT), a leading management consultancy since 1999, focused on independent, objective and actionable advice to enterprises that seek to transform their organisations by capitalising on services globalisation. His latest venture is BestOutsourcing-Jobs.com, an online job portal focused on outsourcing careers. He can be reached at atul@vashistha.com

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