

Managing talent in the global market place presents unique challenges due to cultural difference

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Naren Balasubramaniam, co-founder & advisor, Global Crosswalk Inc (GCI), a US based global talent management company talks about the importance of talent management in the current business scenario.

1. What's the importance of talent management in the current global business scenario?

Talent management can be seen as a business strategy to attract, develop and retain the right talent to meet the current and future needs of the organisation. Unlike a domestic corporation, managing talent in a global business tends to be more tightly integrated with the organisation's strategic plans. The staffing plans/approach (i.e. use of expatriate employees, and/ or local nationals) and talent development needs closely align with the stage of globalization of any corporation/ maturity of the global location and skills levels needed for each stage.

Managing talent in the global market place presents unique challenges due to cultural differences: culture affects the way people lead others, lead their lives, perceive each other and participate in team environments. Recent studies have shown that 1/3 of initiatives involving global teams fail to produce expected results, and that 35 per cent of expatriate employees prematurely return to their home countries without completing their assignments, primarily due to the cultural shock and differences. This literally means that we are leaving money on the table.

Developing culturally calibrated HR programs (i.e. performance management, reward and recognition programs, learning and competency models) and creating a culturally sensitive work environment that respects and engages cultural diversity has emerged as the important aspect of managing talent in a global business environment.

2. What's the importance of talent management for emerging economies like India?

The global marketplace is going through a phase of economic uncertainty, risks of protectionism and nationalistic sentiments and may appear to slow down the pace of globalisation trends we have witnessed in the past 6 years. However, we are in an era of irreversibility in the level and nature of integration of global markets and delivery systems. Development of global talent should continue to be a key area of focus for emerging economies like India.

In recent years, we see outsourced/globally integrated jobs transition from what used to be predominantly commoditised services to value added/ customer facing business services. The nature and content of global talent management programs have to transcend mere soft skills, business etiquette training programs. It should focus on developing a global mindset and competencies that develop cross cultural business savvy, understanding differences in cultural value systems and beliefs that impact work processes, process orientation, and

ability to leverage value of multi cultural teams. As the cost advantage of outsourcing business models continue to shrink, emerging economies need to invest in developing value advantage in their workforce.

3. What, in your opinion, has fostered this mindset amongst business leaders?

There are distinct differences in how human interactions occur in different cultures i.e. orientation to self, fellow workers, customers, concept of time and deadlines. As more customer facing/ value added business services emerge, the ability to establish trust and lasting relationships beyond the barriers of contradicting cultural value systems and beliefs will define success or failure for business leaders in **emerging economies**. In a customer centric global eco system, business leaders have come to wrestle with this reality as customers assess the degree of success with global engagements and their satisfaction. Business leaders see economic consequences of failed relationships and are quite concerned with their organisations lack of talent management strategy to develop global competencies.

4. What role does your organisation play to promote talent management?

GCI's core strengths are in the area of developing global competencies for organisations and leaders. We are seeing emerging trends among India based global corporations to develop corporate diversity strategies and programs to address needs and challenges of a multi cultural global workforce. GCI's team of experts brings proven expertise in developing and implementing corporate diversity strategies and programs.

As part of our expatriate management process, we assist organisations with expatriate talent assessment services that help organisations identify the right talent for the right job at the right place, and repatriation programs that assist organisations retain their talented repatriate employees.

We also assist organisations that are contemplating global expansion with **M & A** related HR services that include cross cultural strategies and due diligence services. In addition, we provide niche talent management solutions for the IT/ **BPO industry** in developing buyer side and provider side capabilities such as accent neutralization, cross cultural training and language services.