



## ARTICLE

# GLOBAL LEADERS: A NEW BREED. CAN YOU SPOT THEM?

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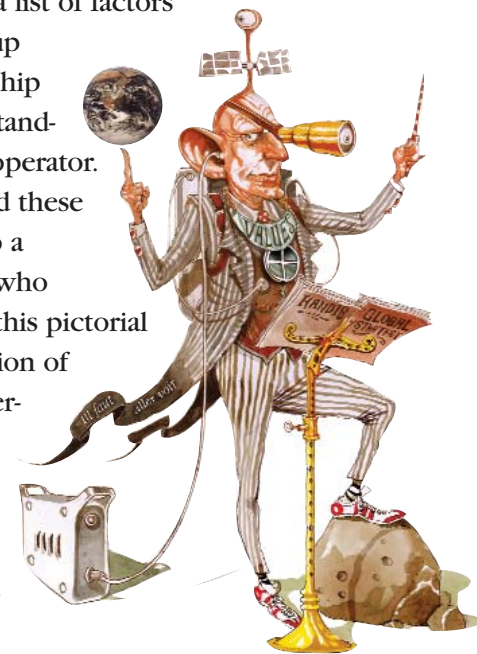
Your ability to serve your global clients flawlessly is not only critical for your survival, but also for your growth. Many of our client organizations face a challenge in doing this, especially as global initiatives reach across more and more countries and cultures. To execute your global growth strategy, you need highly effective leaders who can operate on much bigger scales than ever before. But we know that such leaders are hard to find. At DDI, we've responded to this need by undertaking research on global leadership. We set out to understand just what a global leader actually looks like. What sort of experiences does he or she bring to the table, what sort of competencies and capabilities do they have, and what personal styles do they possess that makes them effective on a global stage?

Answers came by examining research (from our own internal sources as well as external), evaluating our experience working worldwide and that of our clients, and by speaking directly with a diverse sample of senior leaders who operate globally.

Conversations with globally-focused senior leaders were most enlightening. They confirmed our suspicion that there is, in fact, a significant difference between a good leader and a good global leader. They also told us that the qualities necessary for success are a mix of hard-wired "global DNA" and meaningful experiences collected throughout a lifetime.

We synthesized what we learned, and created a profile of a successful global leader that helps our clients find, develop and retain the best executives to operate globally. We're not talking about a good candidate for an ex-pat assignment here, our research very specifically looked for a leader who could successfully hop across countries, economies, and cultures to drive wide-reaching, globally successful initiatives.

The result: a list of factors that make up the "leadership DNA" of a stand-out global operator. We supplied these concepts to a cartoonist, who developed this pictorial representation of global leadership DNA elements, which we call "The Conductor."



The five factors listed below are global leadership differentiators—pivotal elements that spell success. Detailed briefly here are the competencies, experiences and personality factors that back up these essential qualities.

### **Intellectual Grunt**

*Represented by the Conductor's hard drive and spinning globe.*

Operating as a leader at the executive level is complex in any country. Operating a global organization with multiple regions, economies, political, social and cultural factors, as well as understanding how factors interplay and foster a strategy, becomes enormously complex. Large degrees of ambiguity are also present when so much information needs to be crunched and computed, therefore capacity to deal with complexity and ambiguity is key.

### **Contextual Chameleon**

*Represented by the global strategy score on the music stand and the spinning globe.*

It's not enough to simply understand global complexities and recognize ambiguity. Effective global leaders must also adapt to new, different, and unfamiliar roles and environments. This is, of course, important in any leadership role, but it's crucial when working across multiple geographies. Leaders should understand their own personal styles as well as how they need to change in order to be effective. Our Conductor has the term "Handig" on his score. "Handig" is a Dutch term that refers to the characteristics of Dutch leaders who, through their roles as trading mediators between nations, gained a reputation as extremely adaptable, flexible and skilled.

For this reason, Dutch leaders are often seen as perfect candidates for expatriate assignments.

### **People "Black Belt"**

*Represented by large ears, radar, and an extra eye on the lookout.*

Black belts represent the highest level of mastery in martial arts or Six Sigma. For a global leader, mastery of emotional intelligence is essential, as is the ability to understand how to engage, motivate, and inspire individuals within various cultures and adjust your style accordingly. Engaging and motivating in France is a different process than what's needed to get the same result in China. So, our Conductor has large ears for his ability to stop and listen. Once he hears and sees the difference, he understands how to adjust his approach to get the desired result.

### **Global Explorer**

*Represented by the backpack, and French text on the Conductor's coat tails.*

One of the senior executives we talked to, an American who runs a multinational division in China, told us that he can classify visiting executives into two groups. The first kind arrives, goes directly to the most Westernized hotel available, visits the office and leaves. Quite possibly a good leader, but a good global leader falls into the other category. He or she has a passion to understand the native culture. How do things work in this country? These leaders want to know how decisions are made, and how the unique local environment impacts individuals at work or changes the business landscape. Global explorers are passionate

about understanding. If you want to spot someone like this, look for high levels of inquisitiveness and low levels of arrogance. He or she must not think “my way is the only right way,” or that the home country’s way is the best answer. The quote on the tails was taken from the back of Jacques Cousteau’s research vessel and means “We must go and find out for ourselves.” Global explorers are curious information seekers by nature.

### **Unbridled Energy**

*Represented by running shoes.*

Another common theme we uncovered was the need for boundless energy. Imagine this: You’ve just flown across the world, been traveling for 26-30 hours. You land in a foreign country, and you’re expected to walk into a branch office in just a few hours. When you walk through that door, you are the sole and most powerful representation of the strategy and values of your organization. You have to be able to turn up the energy. When you’re operating in a global environment, business happens 24/7. It seems simple but global leaders must be able to maintain a consistent, positive demeanor in a fast-paced, always-on environment.

### **ADDITIONAL DNA FOR GLOBAL LEADERS**

Our Conductor has a few more items that represent his propensity to lead globally. He or she needs to be a Visionary, with entrepreneurial flare and the ability to leverage the organization’s capabilities in emerging market places. Global leaders need to be a Company Poster Child, so our Conductor displays his organization’s values on the plate around his neck. Just below that plate is a window to what’s inside, illustrating the need for global leaders to be humble, confident (though not arrogant), and open to both change and feedback.

Global leaders are a breed unto themselves. Part inherent nature, part life experience, they have the magic mix of skills to create competitive advantage for the companies they serve. The characteristics we’ve detailed here are easy to spot once you know what to look for. In fact, DDI can evaluate and assess global leader candidates, and help foster their development once identified. Find out more about our assessment capabilities for executives of all kinds at [DDIworld.com](http://DDIworld.com).

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