

Leading questions

In the dynamic flow of globalisation new markets require models of leadership but surprisingly, as **IDRH's** Patrick Raivoson and Annie Sarthe Innocenti explain, the classic western model can be easily reused by regional leaders looking to conquer international markets.

A newly born Middle East telecoms company, developing its mobile network in emerging markets, and especially in Africa, wants to conquer the world from its home base. What are the chances for its success?

In the first instance, the company has to become a genuine regional leader. And the chances are that, if it succeeds in this first step, it will be in a good position to achieve its ultimate goal, because in a world becoming more and more global, the new frontier of corporate leadership has somehow begun to shift from west to east, and from north to south.

It is more difficult for a corporation to stay a leader than to become a leader. In the era of globalisation, a major risk is that expansion brings with it increased bureaucracy, which can more or less slowly kill the leadership skills of a company. When looking to develop a company, the key lessons in leadership do not come from corporate literature, but from the behaviour of emerging leaders. These behaviours can be divided into three areas.

Open minds

First, don't hesitate to borrow from the western model. Do not customise your leadership to the local culture because, in essence, leadership cannot be 'tailored': it must come from the top down. A leadership programme is not a matter of content, it is a matter of implementation. Universality is the major driver of a leadership programme: company executives are eager to follow the same leadership programme as their top executives, even if it does not seem to fit with the local culture in the first place. Emulation will do the rest.

Quick thinking

Secondly, leadership is about passion and speed, not about books and processes. Speed is essential to success. To become a genuine leader, you must always stay ahead of the competition, which means permanently generating a feeling of urgency. The speed in the deployment of a leadership programme (more than its mere content) has its own meaning: it conveys a passion for progress. By developing as a leader, progress comes quickly for you as a decisive mindset will gain the company precious market share.

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Science lesson

Thirdly, with every business model there comes a leadership model. Just as there is a science to business, there is a science to leadership. To return to our example, if you are to compete in the telecoms business in Africa, you must develop new business models. In many respects, developing a



telecoms business in Africa is like doing micro finance: you sell cheap hardware and have your client pay by the second.

But, in doing so, you address a huge base of potential clients, and you generate business in a virtuous circle, because the communication tool itself fosters other small businesses which, in turn, feed back into the core of the telecoms business. Likewise, the great revolution in corporate leadership may turn out to be very similar to the disruptive model of micro finance: do not try to sell a tool that is too sophisticated, but let people derive their own benefit from it, and emulate it for themselves. After all, this is one of the basics of leadership.

It seems that, after all, the western world could still have to learn from those who try to emulate us. ■

Further information

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