

Global Asian Leader From Asia, For the World

GAL 2.0*



Partner:



*Part-2 of the *Global Asian Leader: From Local Star to Global CXO* study published in January 2018.



FOREWORD

We are delighted to present the *Global Asian Leader: From Asia, For the World* research study. The study is an extension of CCL's initial Global Asian Leader research published in 2018 and a culmination of eight months of data collection and analysis. In addition to the comprehensive perspective on the latest mindsets, skills and experiences leaders must possess to excel in global roles, the research delves into the impact of the pandemic and other mega-trends that impact the Asian leadership pipeline. In this report we also further explore specific practices and the latest company initiatives that global organizations can embrace to make a step change in their pipeline of global-ready leaders from Asia.

As this report reminds us, Asian leaders possess the capabilities and building blocks to propel themselves into senior regional and/or global roles, as well as unique strengths that can be incorporated in defining what 'good' global leadership needs to look like in future.

The research brings to life some of the latest attributes that can set Asian leaders up for success in multi-country roles, including: fine tuning strategic thinking and technical skills, learning to lead in a new work environment, navigating polarising mindsets and dilemmas in decision making.

There has never been a more important time to invest in Global Asian Leadership to better equip organizations in overcoming the massive regional and global challenges we face. We need to see both Western and Eastern

multi-national and global organizations lead the way when it comes to diverse leadership that is representative of the revenue, of the employees, and of the communities that they serve. This is important progress towards more equitable practices and outcomes, and a better world.

With the launch of this report, we take another leap in furthering the Asian leadership development agenda. The findings will also be instrumental in further enhancing the Global Asian Leader programmatic interventions and leadership journeys.

Both CCL and Swiss Re would like to thank the senior business and HR leaders who participated and helped shape the key findings.

We hope you find *Global Asian Leader: From Asia, For the World* study useful and timely as you prepare for a stronger pipeline of leaders from Asia for the world!

Elisa Mallis

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The Study in 12 Conclusions

1 ASIA CONTINUES TO BE THE CENTER OF THE WORLD.

Despite the pandemic that stalled global economies for almost 2 years, Asia continues to cement its place as the “center of the world.” The region is growing at a more rapid pace compared to the rest of the world, offers the largest market, is a potential catchment area for talent, and is a hotbed for innovation and entrepreneurship.

2 GLOBAL ASIAN LEADER (GAL) DEVELOPMENT REMAINS A CHALLENGE.

Global organizations need Asian talent to not only run and grow businesses in the region but to also inform the headquarters how to win in Asia. Asian leaders display several attributes such as empathy, agility, and strong work ethic, necessary to do well in a leadership role. Despite the business need for Asian leaders, and Asian talent displaying several unique leadership attributes, data suggests that, in the top 200 organizations (by revenue), leaders of Asian ethnicity (and/or nationality) represent only about 4% of the executive teams in US-headquartered companies and 3% in Europe-headquartered firms.

3 NON-NATIVE CEOs ENHANCE EFFICACY OF THE DIVERSITY & INCLUSION AGENDA.

The percentage of Asian leaders in executive leadership teams almost doubles in organizations that have a non-native CEO compared to organizations that have a native CEO. While the overall percentage of Asian leaders in executive teams in the top 500 organizations (by revenue) is 4.1%, it is 3.2% in organizations with native CEOs and 6.5% in organizations with a non-native CEOs.

4 ENABLERS AND BLOCKERS IMPACT ACCESS AND SUCCESS OF GALS.

Asian leaders need better “access” to global roles and need to be set up for “success” as they transition from local to regional or global assignments. Further, some enablers – experiences, attributes, situations – lubricate Asian leaders’ access to global career paths. In contrast, some situations, experiences, or manager/senior leadership mindsets make leaders’ access to global roles harder or set them up for failure.

5 COGNITIVE BIASES ACT AS SILENT GAL DEVELOPMENT “KILLERS.”

Plenty of biases are at play that create blockers for Asian talent to access and succeed in regional or global roles. These biases could have several sources: lack of proximity of Asian leaders to global managers making hiring decisions, conforming to popular beliefs of the peer group about what Asian talent can and cannot do, attributing Asian leader capabilities to some superficial traits, to name a few.

6 INABILITY TO SPAN CULTURAL BOUNDARIES SETS ASIAN LEADERS UP FOR FAILURE.

Cultural hardwiring of Asian leaders emerges as a key blocker in their ability to access and succeed in global roles. Managers of Asian leaders, and Asian talent themselves, must appreciate the mindset jump needed to undo the impact of years of cultural influence during formative years at home, at school, and during early professional life. Cultural boundary spanning is especially hard for leaders who have never left their home shores.

7**GLOBAL LEADERSHIP MINDSETS, CAPABILITIES, EXPERIENCES SET ASIAN TALENT UP FOR SUCCESS.**

The “secret recipe” of accessing and succeeding in global roles often lies in the leader cultivating the “right” combination of traits, thinking, and experiences, resulting in necessary actions to work toward a global career goal. The research identifies five critical attributes that a leader must demonstrate to be successful in global roles – courage, curiosity, trust, strategic thinking, and influence. Asian leaders in regional or global roles have considerable room to run in all of these five capabilities. Multi-cultural, -country, -function, -business roles often lead to increased ‘comfort with discomfort.’ Even unpleasant experiences serve as great “teachers” in shaping leaders’ ability to deal with adversity and complexity.

8**DEVELOPMENT APPROACH MUST BE CUSTOMIZED FOR LEADER BACKGROUND.**

There is no one-size-fits-all approach for developing global Asian leaders because development needs are deeply aligned with experiences leaders have had in their careers, especially exposure to multiple cultures and complex multi-stakeholder environments. There are 5 flavors of global Asian leaders – local-local, Asian-returnee, regional-champion, global nomad, local-expat. Using the same development approach for all five types of leaders will result in non-optimal returns on leadership development investment.

9**ORGANIZATIONS MUST SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATE POLARITIES TO SUCCEED IN GAL DEVELOPMENT.**

Organizations must navigate several dilemmas or polarities on their quest to develop a robust global Asian leader pipeline. These polarities are related to the objective of developing Asian talent, talent philosophy, job location, and even the diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. Organizations or global/regional HR must make these choices and most of these are “and” decisions rather than “either/or” decisions. For instance, should the organization develop Asian leaders for Asia or Asian leaders for the global pipeline, or should the organization move Asian leaders out of Asia or bring global roles to Asia.

10**ORGANIZATIONS MUST EMBRACE 5 LINES OF ACTION.**

Organizations must embrace five action areas to strengthen the GAL pipeline – reflect on the Asia agenda, business, and leadership strategy; evaluate leadership inventory in Asia; enable Asian leaders to better access regional/global roles; set talent up for success by helping them build the “right” global leadership attributes; and make the GAL development process repeatable.

11**GAL DEVELOPMENT IS A COLLECTIVE PROCESS.**

It takes several stakeholders to build a strong pipeline of global Asian leaders. The global executive leaders (sponsors) must set clear accountability around talent development in Asia, the global HR must partner with the leadership team to implement a diversity agenda, regional MDs must play local sponsors for Asian talent, regional HR must be “myth-busters” around what Asian leaders can and cannot do, managers of Asian talent need to create stretch opportunities to push Asian talent out of their comfort zone, and finally Asian leaders themselves must aspire to get into global roles.

12**RECENT GLOBAL TRANSFORMATIONS HAVE DEEPLY IMPACTED GAL DEVELOPMENT.**

The world has witnessed a paradigm shift in the past few years. While the pandemic transformed how people work, several changes in country-level leadership transformed people’s views about nationalism. More recently, several conflicts and conflict-like situations across the globe have transformed the geo-political world order. All these global transformations impact the prospects of global Asian leaders, directly or indirectly.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Global Asian Leader: From Asia, For the World (GAL 2.0) research is an extension of the *Global Asian Leader: From Local Star to Global CXO* (GAL 1.0) study that the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) published in 2018. The research was conducted to revisit the following objectives, in addition to evaluating the impact of the pandemic and other megatrends on the development of global-ready Asian leaders.

Study Objectives

- a Key reasons that stall growth of Asian leaders
- b Development areas or critical gaps
- c Critical must-have mindsets, attributes, experiences to prepare for global roles
- d Actions Asian leaders must take to succeed in global roles
- e Initiatives global organizations must initiate to build a stronger pipeline of global-ready leaders from Asia

Research Approach

The CCL research team revisited the data of GAL 1.0 research (collected in 2017) and refreshed the hypothesis around the development of global Asian talent. The team then interviewed senior regional/global leaders across large Asian/global organizations to identify key hindrances Asian leaders may face in their global career path, impacts of global mega-shifts on Asian leader development, and must-have attributes and mindsets. Interviewees were a mix of leaders of Asian origin in regional/global roles, and “western” leaders with considerable exposure to Asia.

The research team built upon the GAL 1.0 practices/initiatives inventory for global leadership pipeline development. It also documented advice from senior executives for Asian leaders and other stakeholders in regional/global organizations.

For the purpose of GAL 1.0 and GAL 2.0 studies, the research team used the following definition of “global leadership”: *Global leadership is the process of influencing individuals, groups, and organizations representing diverse cultural/political/institutional systems to contribute towards the achievement of the global organization’s goals.* A ‘global leader’ is defined as a leader whose responsibilities cut across multiple countries. A “global Asian leader” is a *leader of Asian origin with global responsibilities.*

Sample Set

- In total, for GAL 2.0 study, the CCL research team interviewed 75 regional or global leaders (between February and June 2022) from across 50 companies. These were a mix of in-person and phone interviews. These interviews built on the data from 119 interviews conducted in 2017 for GAL 1.0 research.
- The interviewees belonged to a mix of industries such as financial services, banks, commodity trading, fast-moving consumer goods, technology, retail, infrastructure, and professional services organizations.
- 75% of leaders held business roles, the balance 25% were senior HR executives.
- Interviewees held titles such as regional president, MD, regional head, CHRO, director, senior manager, VP, and COO.
- 70% of interviewees were of Asian origin. The balance were mainly Europeans and Americans.
- 25% of organizations were headquartered in Asia. The balance 76% were multinationals based out of the United States, Europe or Australia.

The Need to Revisit *Global Asian Leader* Research

The world has undergone a paradigm shift in the past 3-5 years. On the one hand, the pandemic has changed the dynamics of work, travel, and social interactions, on the other hand, the political front has experienced mega-shifts. These shifts, along with ever-evolving technology, have changed how global organizations conduct business, their plans to expand operations, their talent development strategy, and their expectations from leaders. These changes, and more, have all impacted the growth trajectory of Asian leaders into global roles. Although technology has enabled work-from-anywhere model, restricted travel means limited real-time exposure to a global working environment. While renewed focus on diversity and inclusion (D&I) could result in more diversity in leader nationality in global organizations, increased nationalistic and racist sentiments could cap Asian leaders’ aspiration to leave home shores for regional or global roles. Amid all these changes, the reality is that Asia has the largest population of world youth, has a burgeoning middle class, and is/will be the biggest market in the future. This revisit of the *Global Asian Leader* research aims to study how organizations with regional aspirations continue to pursue their global Asian leader development agenda despite constantly shifting contexts.

Section I

INTRODUCTION

“ Asia is important for us in the longer term; it will be the fulcrum of growth. ”

Why Global Asian Leader?

THE RISE OF ASIA

Despite the pandemic that stalled the global economy for almost 2 years, Asia continues to cement its place as the “center of the world.” Looking back, the past 2 decades have witnessed an unprecedented shift of global economic growth from West to East. This has been driven by multiple socio-economic factors, 2 in particular. One, sluggish economic outlook in Europe and North America, which shows no sign of abating, therefore the need for global organizations to “look East” to sustain growth. Two, sustained economic growth in Asia, especially over the last decade, which has increased the purchasing power of Asian countries, which in turn has spiraled consumption of goods, products, and services, making Asia a critical, yet relatively untapped market for global enterprises.

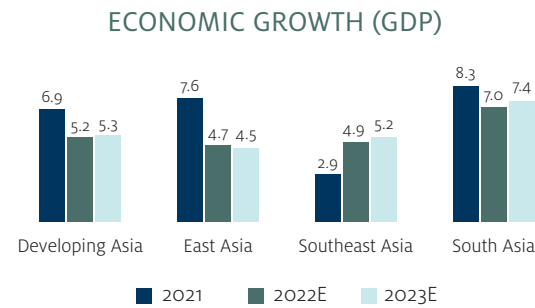
The region is growing at a more rapid pace compared to the rest of the world, offers the largest market, is a potential catchment area for talent, and is a hotbed for innovation and entrepreneurship.

According to the Asian Development Bank, while uncertainties due to the conflict in Europe, a pandemic that refuses to die down, and tightening by the United States Federal Reserve pose risks to global economic scenario, developing-Asia’s economies are projected to grow 5.2% in 2022 and 5.3% in 2023, mainly owing to a rapid recovery in domestic demand and continued focus on exports.*

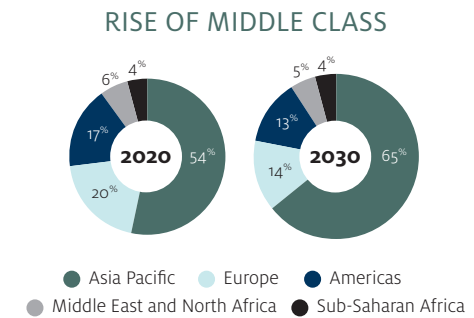
According to the bank, East Asia is on course for expansions of 4.7% and 4.5%, respectively in 2022 and 2023. Southeast Asia is expected to hit 4.9% growth in 2022 and 5.2% the year after. In South Asia, economies are forecast to grow 7.0% and 7.4% over the same period. The bank expects several subregions, including South Asia and East Asia, to return to pre-pandemic economic growth rates. Data pegs Asia’s share in the world GDP at 40% in 2030.

*Source: <https://www.adb.org/news/developing-asia-economies-set-grow-5-2-year-amid-global-uncertainty>

The Rise, and Rise of Asia



Source: ADB, 2022. *Developing Asia Economies Set to Grow 5.2% This Year Amid Global Uncertainty* | Asian Development Bank (adb.org)



Middle class = household with incomes between \$11-\$110 per person/day (PPP) in 2011

The percentage numbers in the pie-charts may not add up to 100% due to rounding off.

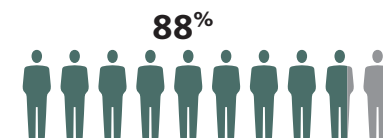
Source: Brookings Institution, 2020. *The rise of Asia's middle class* | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)

ASIA'S SHARE IN WORLD GDP IN 2030



Source: *Asia to Stay World's Fastest-Growing Region Through 2030*, The Diplomat, 2017.

ASIA'S SHARE IN THE NEXT BILLION ENTRANTS INTO THE MIDDLE CLASS



Source: Brookings Institution, 2017. *The unprecedented expansion of the global middle class*

“The Asia region for us is clearly a growth region for the future with tremendous opportunity; to enable growth, you need to have the right people, the right culture, the right leadership.”

The Rise, and Rise of Asia

Demographic Advantage

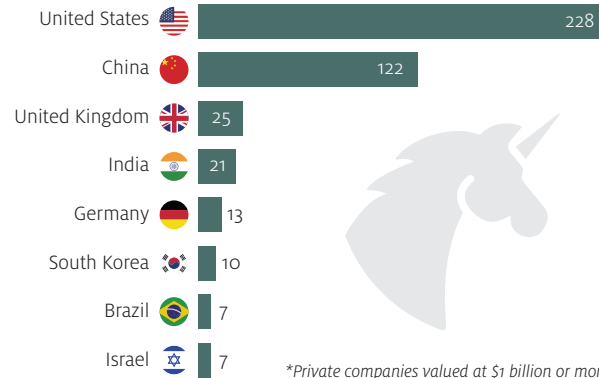
WORLD YOUTH (AGED 15-24)
LIVING IN ASIA AND PACIFIC



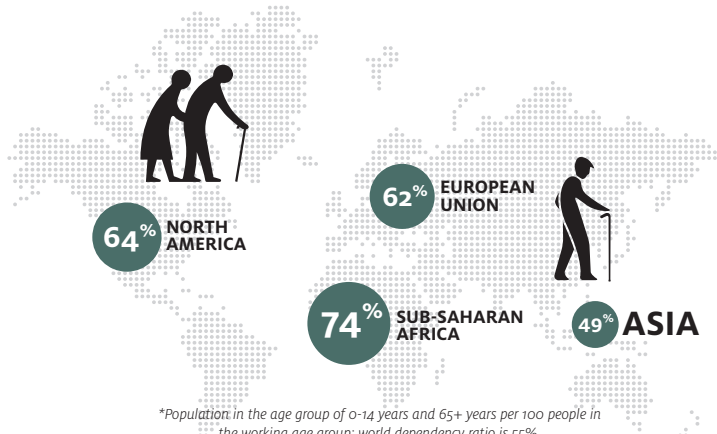
Source: https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDP_RPCH@WEO/OEMDC/WEOWORLD/AS/DA/CIS/EU/ADVEC/MAE

Innovation Advantage

COUNTRIES WITH
MOST UNICORNS* (2020)



DEPENDENCY RATIO*



*Population in the age group of 0-14 years and 65+ years per 100 people in the working age group; world dependency ratio is 55%.

Source: Asia Pacific Human Development Report, UNDP.

BEST STARTUP ECOSYSTEM IN ASIA (2021)



Source: SEASIA, 2021. [Top 20 Cities in Asia Pacific with Best Startup Ecosystem 2021](#) | [Seasia.co](#)

Why Global Asian Leader?... Cont'd.

THE RISE OF ASIA

Asia also offers an unmatched market size. The region has been the driver of middle-class growth since the turn of the century, and this trend is likely to continue in the future. The continent is now home to the world's largest consumer market, both in terms of people and spending. By 2030, 65% of the global middle-class population will be based in Asia. The region will also account for 88% of the next one billion entrants into the middle class. Substantial growth in middle-class population will in turn drive local demand of products and goods and hectic intra-Asia trade activity. Asia, therefore, offers a huge scope for market expansion for organizations with regional and/or global aspirations.

Countries in Asia and the Pacific benefit from a higher percentage share of global world youth and a favorable ratio of workforce participants to dependents. Under the "right" economic and social conditions, this leads to economic growth – often termed as the "demographic dividend." Data suggests that 3 in 5 world youth are based in the region, which makes Asia attractive from a talent-catchment-area standpoint. Although the dependency ratio in Asia is quite favorable in the short term, economists indicate that the region will need to be mindful of aging populations. This is because as a population grows older, there will be fewer workers and, over time, a shrinking workforce and aging population can mean a rise in healthcare costs and pension expenditure, in turn putting pressure on government budgets and translating into slower growth.

Asia has also seen hectic activity on the startup front. Various cities such as Bangalore, Shanghai, Bangkok, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, and Singapore have witnessed the emergence of several successful tech startups, even unicorns. Examples include Gojek in Indonesia, Flipkart and BharatPe in India, and Grab and Shopee in Singapore. The emergence of such innovative organizations has driven increased pan-Asia activity in the startup space.

“Asia is a growth area; nowhere have I seen the kind of opportunity, growth, and job market competition that I see in Asia.”

Why Global Asian Leader?

KEY PRIORITIES OF THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP TEAMS

As executive teams in global organizations draw up their global strategy, they often focus on Asia as a critical geography. Key decisions about how important the region is to the organization, how to win in the region, or how to serve Asian customers better, have direct talent, and leadership implications.

To drive business in Asia, organizations must have a compelling leadership development strategy. Asian leaders have an advantage while leading in Asia since they have a better understanding of social and cultural norms, as well as ways of transacting business. Organizations with global aspirations must also have Asian leaders at the headquarters informing the executive team how to win in Asia. Organizations must manage the polarity of having an Asian leadership pipeline that can fulfill Asian leader demand to lead Asia and be a part of global succession pool.

Organizations that have a strong pool of clients or customers in the region may have another business reason to develop local leaders to connect better with clients. This is often a key driver as organizations curate plans to replace their expatriate [often non-Asian] managers with local talent.

As global organizations come under a lot of internal and external pressures from employees, investors, and other stakeholders to curate comprehensive D&I strategies, there is merit in looking beyond just “gender” and “color” as potential diversity drivers. Encouraging diversity in leader nationality, though still not a mainstream agenda in the majority of D&I plans, is slowly but surely gaining traction.

Global organizations have many reasons to develop a pipeline of Asian leaders.

Why Focus on Asian Leadership Development?



DRIVE BUSINESS GROWTH IN ASIA

Global organizations need leaders to drive businesses in Asia to exploit thriving market opportunities.

POPULATE TALENT PIPELINE

Global organizations need to tap talent in Asia to populate their global succession pipelines since the region has a tremendous demographic dividend.

CURATE INCLUSIVE CULTURE

Global organizations must drive an inclusive culture and embrace diversity in multiple areas, including leadership ethnicity/nationality.

SERVE CUSTOMERS BETTER

Global organizations must map their leadership with client base diversity, therefore strengthening the Asian leadership pipeline to serve clients effectively in Asia.

CREATE COMPELLING GLOBAL STRATEGY

Global organizations need leaders who can inform the headquarters how to win in Asia (especially organizations not headquartered in Asia).

“ If we are developing leaders in Asia, should they feed the local leadership pipelines or should they be a part of the global succession pools? The answer may depend on the organization strategy and volume of leaders available, but I guess the first preference will be to groom Asian talent for leadership positions within the region. ”

Key Strengths Asian Leaders Bring to the Table

VUCA-FRIENDLY

"Asians grow up in a disorganized economy – always dealing with problems, minor to major. We tend to be cool and calm. So our ability to deal with 'noise' is much better."

EMBRACE DIVERSITY

"Asia is very diverse; there is no one Asia – one country is very different from the other – Singapore, Philippines, Japan, Vietnam – they are all different. Diversity comes together beautifully at the workplace."

HUMBLE

"Generally higher level of humility allows us to keep ourselves open-minded and be patient listeners."

FEEL

THINK

EMPATHETIC

"I think for Asians, their emotional quotient is very dominant. When there is a collective decision-making process, Asians will have a more human point of view in their decisions."

STRONG WORK ETHIC

"Asian leaders have strong work ethics, and can generally work longer hours. It is societal; that's how people are brought up – to work hard for the company."

AGILE

"Thanks to the many moving pieces in Asia, leaders are better attuned to taking quick calls and adjusting with the constantly changing context."

ACT



TAKING THE BEST FROM THE EAST

Global leadership must expand their vision beyond the "Western lens," and embrace the best of East and West when it comes to leadership competencies.

Inherent Strengths that Asian Leaders Demonstrate

Humility: Being discreet about personal importance and accomplishments

Agility: Taking quick calls and aligning actions with the constantly-changing context



Leveraging the Strengths to Solve Present Day Challenges

Humility Across Differences: Remaining open-minded, and patiently listening with empathy and equal attention to a diverse set of stakeholders across all levels and walks of life

Agility for Transformation: Demonstrating agility in transforming organizations to make them future-ready

Why Global Asian Leader?

INHERENT STRENGTHS

Talent in Asia brings several strengths to the table; 6 particularly stand out. These are linked to the environment in which leaders in Asia grow up and their cultural beliefs and values.

Since most leaders in Asia grow up in an environment that is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) on multiple fronts – political, economic, social – they are generally more adept at dealing with uncertainties. Also, since leaders see so much diversity even within the same country (e.g., South India is very different culturally from North India, South China is very different from North China, Jawa and Sumatra islands in Indonesia are very different, etc.) around race, religious beliefs, physical appearance, food habits, dressing-up norms, etc., leaders are generally at ease with diversity around them. Besides, Asian leaders' responsibility tends to span more countries, often working with 10 or more different nationalities and cultures, thereby training leaders for a more inclusive leadership style.

Asian leaders often also grow up with 2 attributes that are very dear in current times – empathy and humility. Most religious beliefs in the region (even Confucian ways of thinking) promote the value of being humble. Leaders often grow up in low middle-class economic environment, so they are more empathetic toward the lesser privileged segments of the society.

The work environment, especially in more traditional organizations, does promote the value of working hard (often translated into the number of hours employees put in at work), so it is not unusual for leaders to work extra hours, or late evenings, or over the weekends. Further, thanks to the VUCA environment and uncertainties leaders operate in, they are usually quick to make decisions (sometimes also bordering on being reckless) and adjust to new/unfamiliar environments with comparative ease. According to the interviewees, Indian and Filipino leaders particularly stand out in this regard, as they are quite comfortable leaving home shores and generally adjust well in unfamiliar environments.

“Asian leaders are at an advantage in the new world since critical capabilities such as empathy, multi-dimensional sensemaking, and humility come more naturally to leaders in Asia because of the context they operate in, as compared to a stereotypical western leader.”

Current Reality

ASIANS IN GLOBAL TEAMS

Despite a slew of favorable attributes Asian leaders bring to the table and a strong business case to groom talent in Asia, data suggests a very limited representation of ethnic Asian talent in global C-suite roles. Secondary research suggests that in top 200 organizations, leaders of Asian ethnicity (and/or nationality) represent only about 4% of the executive teams in US-headquartered companies and 3% in Europe-headquartered firms. This data climbs marginally for the top 500 firms.

As compared to 2017, Asian representation in executive teams has fallen marginally, possibly due to the tight work visa norms or the growing sentiment of nationalism that may translate into having more local leaders at the helm in organizations headquartered in North America or Europe.

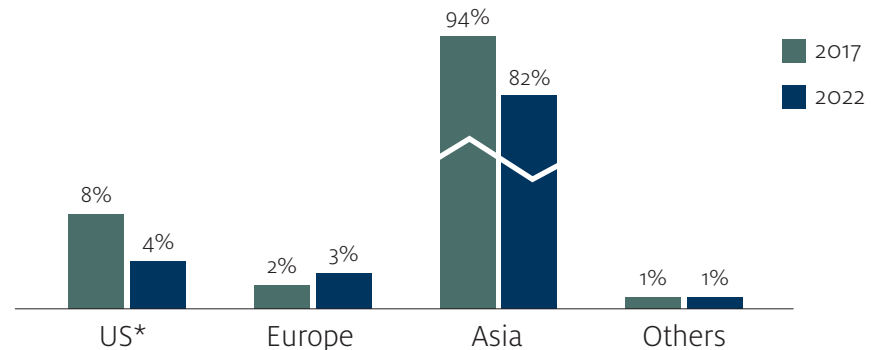
The Global Asian Leader research refers to this phenomenon as Asian leaders hitting a “bamboo ceiling” at some stage in their career, often as they are at the cusp of graduating from country roles to regional/global positions.

The only country that tends to buck this trend is India. There are several CEOs of Indian origin (ethnicity and/or nationality) in global boardrooms. Sunder Pichai of Google, Satya Nadella of Microsoft, Lina Nair of Chanel, Shantanu Narayen of Adobe, and Arvind Krishna of IBM, are a few examples. Some interviewees, however, questioned the level of influence ethnicity had on these leaders’ career journeys since the majority of them left home shores (in India) several decades ago, often immediately after their undergraduate studies, having spent almost their entire professional life in Europe or the Americas.

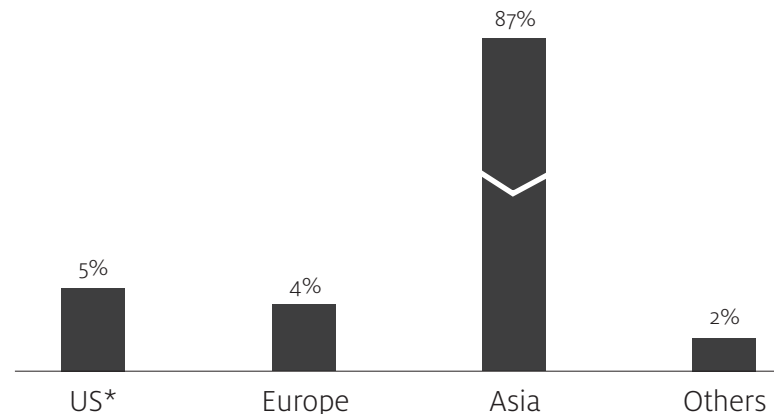
Dominance of home nationality in C-suite roles plays out no differently in Asian companies. Non-Asians comprise a limited percentage of leadership teams in Asian-headquartered companies in the top 200 (and the top 500) pool. They have majority Asian leaders, with again, very little diversity at the top.

Why Focus on Asian Leadership Development?

ASIANS IN ELTS OF TOP 200 COMPANIES



ASIANS IN ELTS OF TOP 500 COMPANIES



Notes:

The dataset includes only top 200 and 500 (by revenue) organizations.

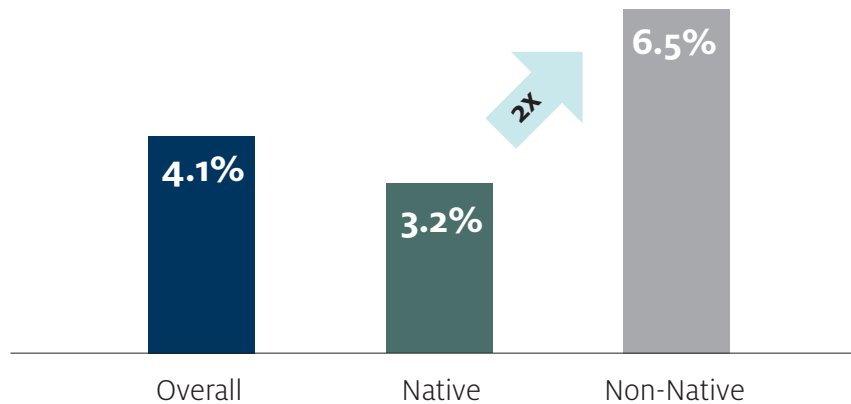
The length of the bars indicates the % of Asians in ELTs of the organizations.

Data was compiled from Annual Reports/Company Websites; ELTs - Executive Leadership Teams

*Also includes some organizations headquartered in Canada.

“Despite our best efforts, the reality is we don’t even have enough Asian leaders to fuel our growth in Asia, leave aside grooming Asian leaders for global roles.”

Impact of CEO Nationality on Diversity (% Asians in ELTs) at the Top



Notes:
 The dataset includes only top 500 (by revenue) organizations with headquarters outside of Asia.
 Overall: Companies headquartered outside of Asia in the top 500 list (338).
 Native: Companies where the CEO belongs to the country in which the company is headquartered (239).
 Non-Native: Companies where the CEO's nationality is different from the company headquarter(99).
 The length of the bars indicates the % of Asians in ELTs of the organizations.
 Data was compiled from Annual Reports/Company Websites; ELTS - Executive Leadership Teams.

“ Diversity breeds diversity. After our recent leadership change [an Asian leader becoming the CEO], we suddenly see a renewed effort on the D&I front. ”

Current Reality

IMPACT OF DIVERSITY AT THE TOP

What happens in organizations that have a non-native leader at the top? “Non-native” essentially indicates that the leader nationality (or ethnicity) and the organization headquarter country are different.

As the graphic on the left suggests, the percentage of Asian leaders in executive leadership teams almost doubles in organizations that have a non-native CEO as compared to organizations that have a native leader. While the overall representation of Asian leaders in executive teams in top 500 organizations is 4.1%, it is 3.2% in organizations with a native CEO and 6.5% in organizations with a non-native CEO.

This can be attributed to non-native leaders significantly driving up the D&I initiatives in the organization, especially at the leadership team level. Or, the culture of the organization promotes diversity, which perhaps leads to the appointment of a non-native CEO in the first place. Mid- to senior-level talent in such organizations may also see diverse leaders as role models, thereby creating a wider pool of leaders aspiring to get into global roles.

This trend of non-native leaders driving diversity at the top can be especially seen in technology- or IT-based organizations, also possibly due to Asia often being viewed as a catchment region for talent with technology, engineering, and related skills.

So, does this mean that D&I initiatives are best driven from the top? Interviewee leaders concurred that having a non-native CEO or diverse executive team is often the most impactful driver of diversity in enterprises.

“ Asian leaders are better ready for bigger global roles than we give them a chance for; we just need to give them a chance. ”



Section II

THE BAMBOO CEILING

Bamboo Ceiling

FRAMING THE GAL CHALLENGE

To be able to make it to the C-suite in a global organization, Asian leaders need to get the “right” breaks at appropriate stages in their careers, and then they need to be prepared well enough to be successful in those roles. In a way, Asian leaders need better “access” to global roles and need to be set up for “success” as they transition into such roles.

Further, some experiences, attributes, situations could enhance Asian leaders’ access to global career paths. These “enablers” could be a supportive manager, a global secondment program, leadership team having a global mindset, etc. Some enablers also help leaders set themselves up for success, including, demonstrating global leadership attributes, doing a global rotation, or attending global leadership development programs.

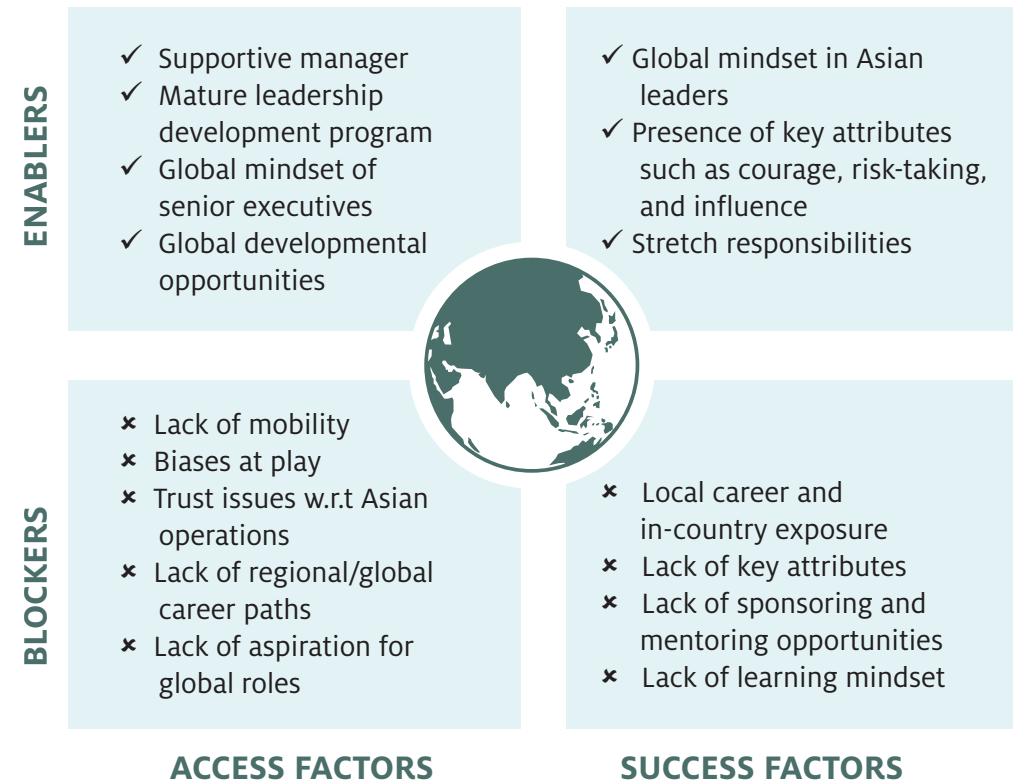
In contrast, some situations, experiences, or manager/senior leadership mindsets may make leaders’ access to global roles harder or set them up for failure. These “blockers” may be the lack of leader mobility or lack of global aspirations of the employer organization. Blockers that could set leaders up for failure include lack of cross-cultural experiences, or absence of a learning mindset.

As Asian leaders reflect on their own career journeys or as they consider developing their direct reports into regional/global career paths, they may adopt a more solutions-oriented approach. This is especially true if they view the situation in terms of blockers and enablers that may be reducing or enhancing (respectively) Asian leaders’ opportunities to step into global roles or preparing them to succeed once they transition into such roles.

The Global Asian Leader research adopts this blocker-enabler/access-success factor model to unpack the bamboo ceiling phenomenon and evaluate Asian leader development challenges.

“ *Top leadership is heavily white-male; gender and race/ethnicity is the focus of the D&I agenda. Diversity in leadership styles is still a far cry.* ”

Examples of Global Asian Leader Success Enablers and Blockers



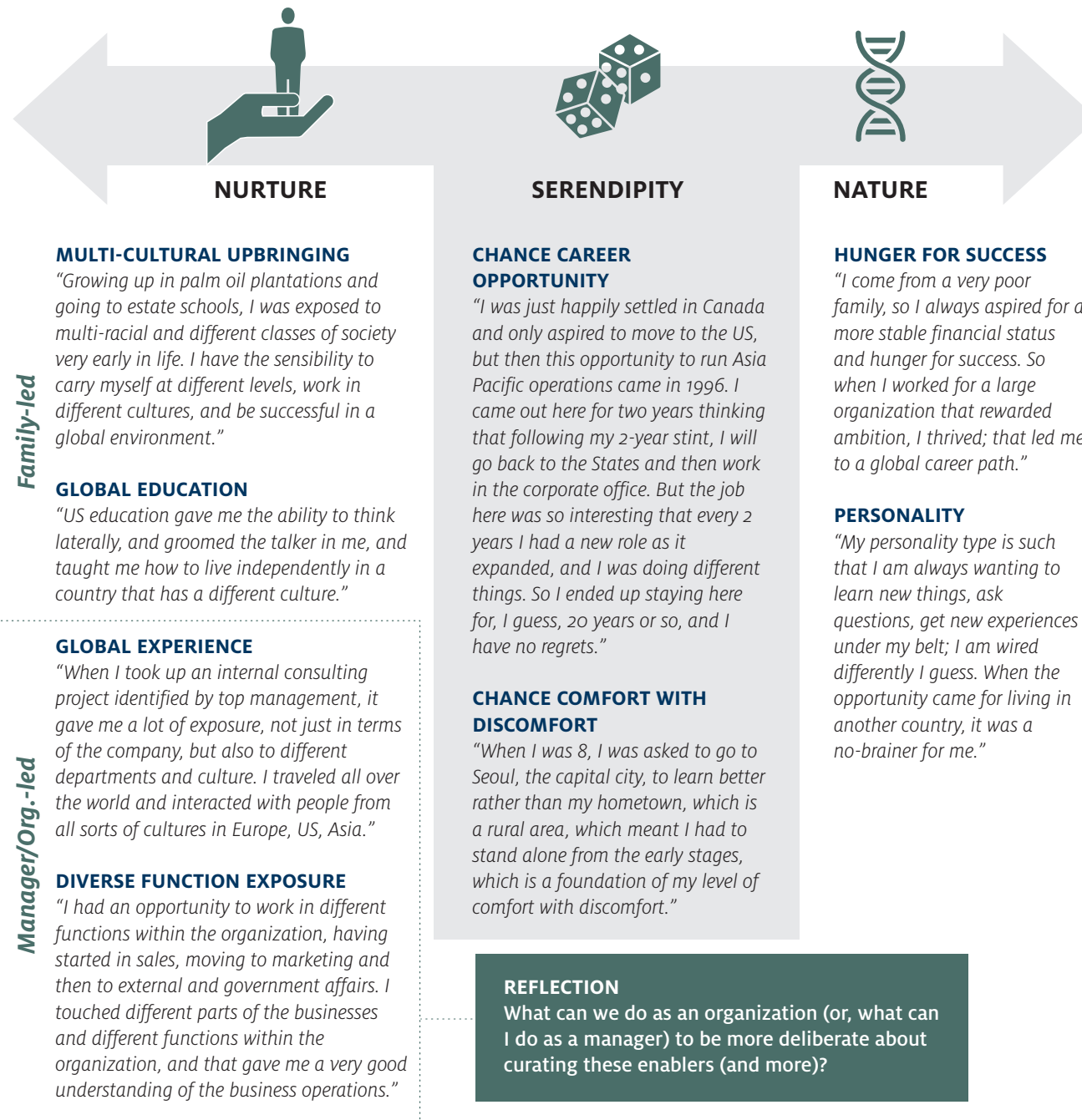
Enablers: Factors that support and encourage Asian leaders to step into regional/global roles in the foreseeable future

Blockers: Obstacles and barriers that are getting in the way of Asian leaders' progress into regional/global roles

Access Factors: Regional, organizational, and individual factors that affect Asian leaders’ access to global roles within an organization

Success Factors: Ability of an organization’s Asian leaders to demonstrate critical attributes to succeed in global roles

Key Global Leadership Enablers



NURTURE

MULTI-CULTURAL UPBRINGING

"Growing up in palm oil plantations and going to estate schools, I was exposed to multi-racial and different classes of society very early in life. I have the sensibility to carry myself at different levels, work in different cultures, and be successful in a global environment."

GLOBAL EDUCATION

"US education gave me the ability to think laterally, and groomed the talker in me, and taught me how to live independently in a country that has a different culture."

GLOBAL EXPERIENCE

"When I took up an internal consulting project identified by top management, it gave me a lot of exposure, not just in terms of the company, but also to different departments and culture. I traveled all over the world and interacted with people from all sorts of cultures in Europe, US, Asia."

DIVERSE FUNCTION EXPOSURE

"I had an opportunity to work in different functions within the organization, having started in sales, moving to marketing and then to external and government affairs. I touched different parts of the businesses and different functions within the organization, and that gave me a very good understanding of the business operations."

SERENDIPITY

CHANCE CAREER OPPORTUNITY

"I was just happily settled in Canada and only aspired to move to the US, but then this opportunity to run Asia Pacific operations came in 1996. I came out here for two years thinking that following my 2-year stint, I will go back to the States and then work in the corporate office. But the job here was so interesting that every 2 years I had a new role as it expanded, and I was doing different things. So I ended up staying here for, I guess, 20 years or so, and I have no regrets."

CHANCE COMFORT WITH DISCOMFORT

"When I was 8, I was asked to go to Seoul, the capital city, to learn better rather than my hometown, which is a rural area, which meant I had to stand alone from the early stages, which is a foundation of my level of comfort with discomfort."

REFLECTION

What can we do as an organization (or, what can I do as a manager) to be more deliberate about curating these enablers (and more)?

NATURE

HUNGER FOR SUCCESS

"I come from a very poor family, so I always aspired for a more stable financial status and hunger for success. So when I worked for a large organization that rewarded ambition, I thrived; that led me to a global career path."

PERSONALITY

"My personality type is such that I am always wanting to learn new things, ask questions, get new experiences under my belt; I am wired differently I guess. When the opportunity came for living in another country, it was a no-brainer for me."

Bamboo Ceiling

ASIAN LEADER ENABLERS

The majority of the interviewees attributed their successful career run in a regional or global role to the actions of their family or organization or manager who gave them the right career-shaping opportunities (nurture), to their own personality (nature), or to chance opportunities they got that perhaps played out favorably for them to shape them into who they are (serendipity).

One leader shared that she was born to an army officer in India, so she moved around the country, and then she migrated to Canada with her family when she was 15 years old. Being a daughter of an army officer with an intra-country transferable job, and then as a daughter of an immigrant in a foreign land, prepared her for a multi-cultural environment. She added that she was just lucky to get these experiences in her formative years. Another leader shared that it was a family tradition in his family to expatriate to a foreign land, so he was brought up in a way that he considered moving overseas to be a very normal thing to do. Yet another leader expressed her gratitude to the organization and her leader who created opportunities for her to get multi-functional experiences early in her career. Her career moves from marketing, to sales, to government affairs, prepared her for a general management role later in her professional journey.

While chance opportunities and personality are hard to emulate and curate, organizations and managers must be on the lookout for nurturing opportunities. Interviewees concurred that global Asian leader development cannot be left to chance. Organizations must curate the right opportunities, skill-building programs, and interventions to be deliberate in opening doors for Asian leaders to global roles and setting them up for success.

ASIAN LEADER BLOCKERS

Although enablers can mainly be attributed to nature or nurture elements, most interviewees attributed the “blockers” to obstacles created due to the country environment in which the leader grows up and operates, or the organization culture, policies, leadership, or individual skill and will issues.

Country blockers could include the lack of talent competitiveness of the nation, or its inability to produce large volumes of managerial talent. Talent competitiveness depends on the education and adult learning infrastructure, general work environment, and socio-economic status, national culture, and general cost of hiring market-ready talent, among other drivers.

Company blockers center around the maturity of the organization to operate in Asia, size of local and global operations, brand strength, and talent attractiveness of the entity. Company challenges could also center around more nuanced elements such as the culture of the organization particularly around D&I, biases mainly around Asian leadership traits and capabilities, and trust (or lack of it) between the headquarters and the Asian operations.

Individual blockers could be the lack of global leadership skills, lack of aspiration for global roles, or absence of a global mindset in Asian talent. Absence of key must-have attributes for success such as courage, strategic thinking, communication, etc., can set leaders up for failure in global roles. Asian leaders also may not aspire for global roles due to family issues, home country attractiveness, or repatriation challenges, and this may block the development of a global leadership pipeline. Asian leaders may not have a global mindset to operate in a multi-cultural environment or navigate dilemmas that may arise in global assignments.

The reasons above may block Asian leaders’ access to global roles or assignments, and/or set them up for failure even if they make it to global roles.

Key Blockers Leaders Face in Their Global Career Pursuit



HQ Country Challenges:

Challenges due to nationalism, racism, or time zone in the country where the company is headquartered

Source Country Challenges:

Challenges due to talent competitiveness, cost of talent, national culture, language or [attractiveness of] local opportunities in the leaders’ home country

“ Doing global roles from Asia is particularly challenging from a time zone perspective. ”



Lack of Operational Maturity:

Operations in Asia do not enable the development of local leaders to take on cross-geography roles

Lenses and Biases: *Inherent biases that leaders in headquarters [outside of Asia] may have against Asian talent*

Trust Issues: *Lack of trust between headquarters [outside of Asia] and Asian operations*

Talent Management Gaps: *Inability of the organization to attract and develop the right quality and quantity of talent in Asia*

Lack of Alignment: *Lack of intent/alignment/ability of the leadership team at the headquarters [outside of Asia] to develop talent in Asia*

“ Since most senior executives sit in the US-HQ or Europe, most decisions are driven from there. ”



Skills Issues: *Lack of must-have attributes that leaders must display to succeed in multi-cultural, multi-geography roles*

Will Issues: *Lack of aspiration to take on regional/global roles due to issues such as mobility and time zone*

Mindset Issues: *Lack of global mindset or inability to deal with career and professional dilemmas that a regional/global role may present*

“ Often, communication style is not direct, and that impacts effectiveness in a global role. ”

Biases that Stall Asian Leader Growth

“Organizations which operate in global contexts traditionally have the leadership positions going to talent, which is developed closer to their home base due to the trust equity they have with global stakeholders at the headquarters.”

PROXIMITY BIAS

Oversized influence and advancement opportunities to those physically close to the leader

“As an HR leader in the region, my job often is to try and break the conformity bias when Asian leaders are being interviewed by a group of leaders in our headquarters in Germany; I often call out contrarian views about the talent in Asia.”

CONFORMITY BIAS

Take cues from the actions of others rather than exercising own judgment

“When I go to a different part of my region and we are discussing hiring, I can sense that the manager is hiring somebody he or she is comfortable with due to their background, religion, and other demographics.”

AFFINITY BIAS

Favoring others who are just like us

“Our largest business unit would rarely look outside the unit for key appointments; I suspect the MD may not even know of exceptional talent outside the group.”

INSIDER BIAS

Favoring people viewed as “in-group”

“During early career I was often tagged as a high performer, but not a high potential, since I think my management style was grounded in cultural background, until I got a great manager who asked for more evidence around these judgements from the stakeholders, and it was only then that my global career took off.”

OVERCONFIDENCE BIAS

Disproportionate subjective confidence in our judgments, rather than an objective assessment

“There is a trap that western companies may fall into, especially in non-English speaking countries such as Japan and China, where English proficiency is almost seen equal to leadership capability.”

ATTRIBUTION BIAS

Explain own actions in terms of circumstances, and attribute actions of others to character flaws

“Let’s be honest, if you’re ‘white,’ and you fail, you get another person who’s white; nobody will judge a leader by his race or color. But if you have anyone who is non-white, especially someone from the emerging markets like Asia, in a global role, it is very easy to say you know what that person failed as he comes from Asia.”

CONFIRMATION BIAS

Interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms one’s pre-existing beliefs



Bamboo Ceiling

BIASES AT PLAY

Biases generally indicate unintentional yet deeply ingrained associations that may be present in our behavior. Leaders may pick these biases up from colleagues, family, teachers, media, or even books. There are plenty of cognitive biases at play that create blockers for Asian executives to access and succeed in regional or global roles. These biases could have several sources: the lack of proximity of Asian leaders to global managers making hiring decisions, the popular beliefs of peer groups about the abilities of Asian talent, and the attribution of superficial traits to Asian leaders instead of recognition of their capabilities.

No matter how much leaders try to be objective, unconscious biases influence a vast majority of decisions. Science attributes this to the fact that human brains can consciously process only a very small fragment of decisions, while a huge majority of decisions are taken through associations and mental “short-cuts.” If such biases aren’t called out and acted upon, organizations and leaders might let these biases influence their decisions in a way that holds them and their colleagues back (Asian leaders in this case).

Although it may be nearly impossible to completely eradicate such biases, objective and deliberate actions can reduce the chances of such biases adversely impacting leaders’ judgment and decision-making. The actions mainly center around making leaders aware of such biases, and how these biases may impact decision-making. Using data and evidence while making decisions also ensures that the adverse impact of cognitive biases is marginalized. Finally, organizations must take definite actions to make the D&I agenda central to any hiring or succession decisions, especially for global roles.

Bamboo Ceiling

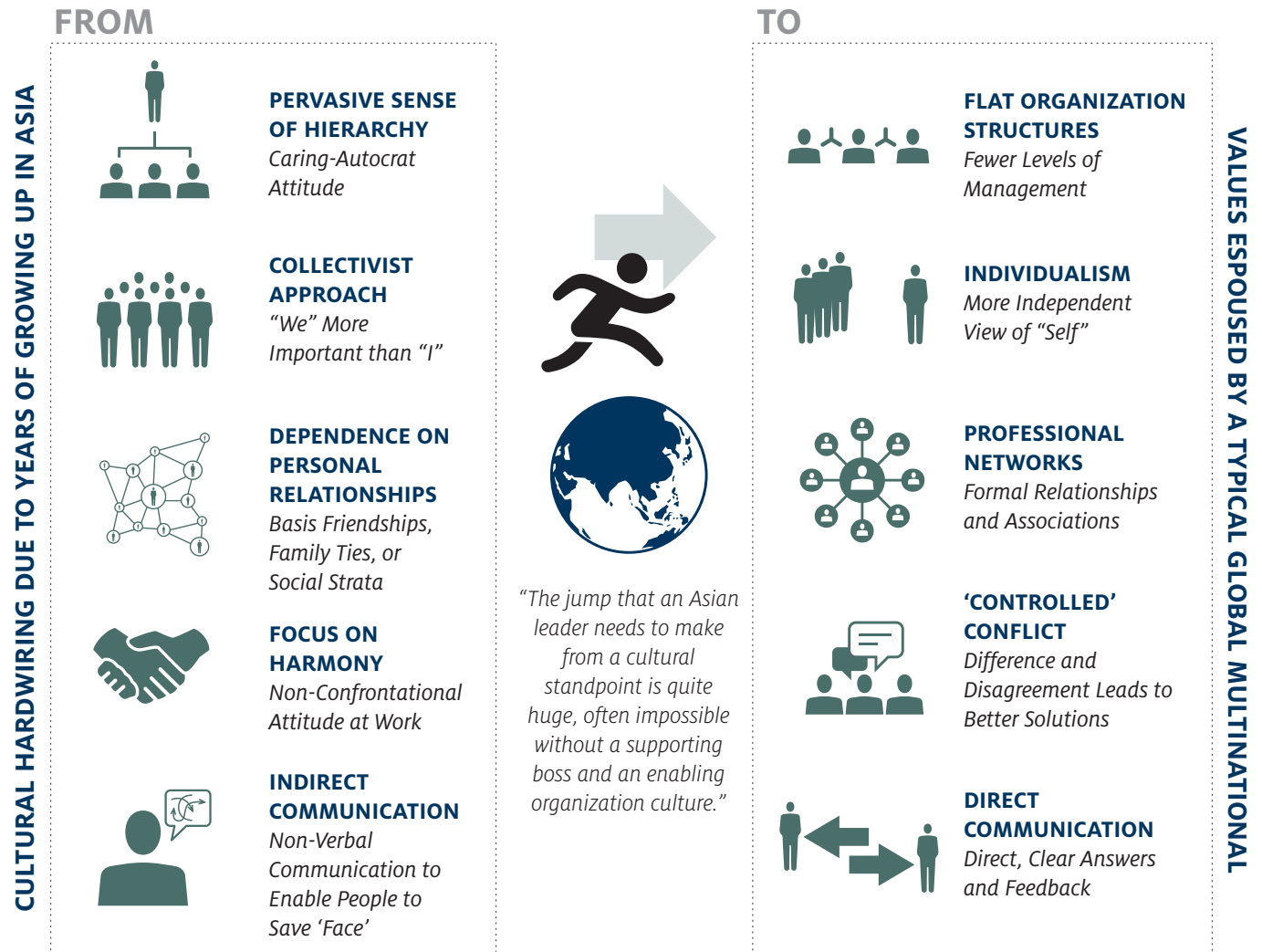
SPANNING CULTURAL BOUNDARIES

Apart from cognitive biases, cultural hardwiring of Asian leaders may emerge as a key blocker in their ability to access global roles and succeed in them. Managers of Asian leaders, and Asian talent themselves, must appreciate the mindset “jump” they need to make to undo the impact of years of cultural influence during formative years at home, school, and during early professional life. This is especially true for leaders who have never left their home shores.

High value attached to hierarchy, collectivism, harmony, and personal relationships is central to a stereotypical Asian executive. The values espoused in a stereotypical global organization may be very different from Asian leaders’ personal values, hence the need to prepare and plan for the transition, from a local role in a home country, mainly working with local clients, to a global role in another country with multi-cultural teams, colleagues, and clients.

The transition will require regional HR and managers of Asian leaders to collectively work toward helping Asian talent span cultural boundaries indicated in the graphic on the right. Interviewees unequivocally articulated that the inability to do so will most certainly set Asian leaders up for failure in regional or global roles.

Cultural Hardwiring Realignment



“To set yourself up for a global C-suite position, see what you can do within the region, but in a different country. Even better if you can land a global role in the region. It is also a soft landing before a global role in Europe or US.”

Bamboo Ceiling

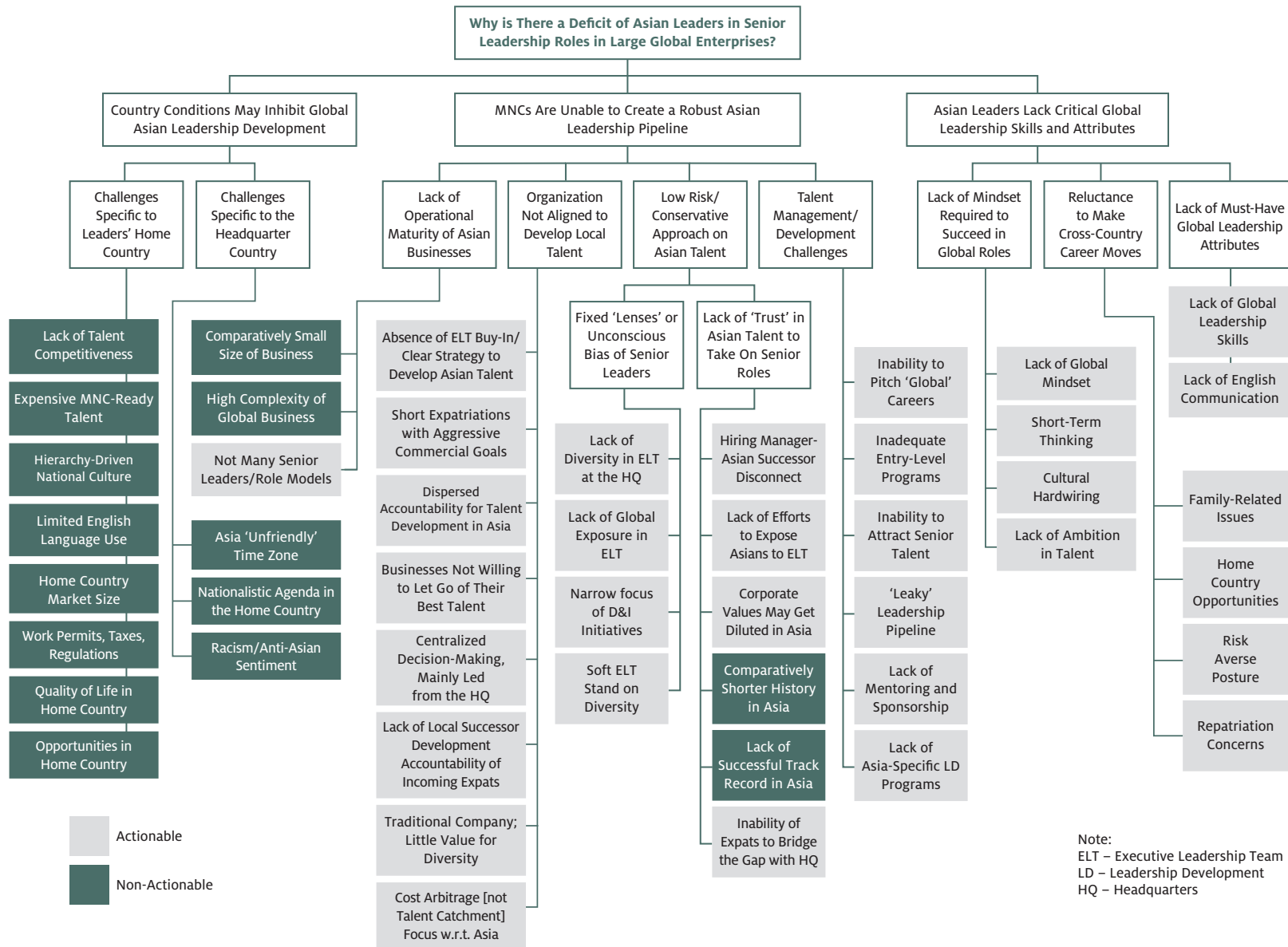
ROOT CAUSES AND KEY CHALLENGES

“ If you are running a region that is less than 10% [of the global revenue], you just wouldn’t have the scale to be able to take on a global role directly. ”

There are a plethora of reasons that could create obstacles in Asian leaders’ career progression into regional or global roles. The adjoining graphic lists key challenges articulated by the interviewees. Any combination of these challenges could stall career paths of Asian leaders in global organizations or Asian organizations with regional/global aspirations.

Organizations, therefore, need to examine the root causes of the reasons carefully because even similar organizations, in the same industry, headquartered in the same country, could have very different reasons resulting in a “bamboo ceiling” for their Asian talent.

While country-level stalls are hard to solve for, since the necessary actions are macro-level and therefore go far beyond the influence of the organization, company- and individual-level stalls can be navigated if the global leadership team is invested in developing a robust and diverse leadership pipeline. However, several key stakeholders in Asia and headquarters, such as managers of Asian leaders, regional and global HR, regional MD/leadership teams, global sponsors at the board or executive team level, need to align to solve for the global Asian leader challenge.



“ I think for someone to be in global roles they must be able to represent views from both, central standpoint as well as from each of the regions. I think it needs a lot of agility in mindset. Ability to switch perspectives is critical in global roles to represent the center and the franchise. ”



Section III

PREPARING FOR SUCCESS



Global Asian Leader Must-Haves

MINDSET

Develop growth mindset and ability to deal with dilemmas

“Global leaders need to have an open and learning mindset if interested in working with diverse stakeholders and groups. Need to wear multiple, often contrasting hats.”

CAPABILITIES

Demonstrate must-have global leadership attributes

“There are certain hard and soft skills such as negotiation, understanding of geopolitics, communication, courage, that are must-have in any multi-geography, multi-cultural role.”

EXPERIENCES

Seek experiences to develop comfort with discomfort

“I think stretch responsibilities and non-obvious career moves become very important to develop the right temperament to embrace complexity and uncertainty of regional roles.”

ACTIONS

Take proactive action to access and succeed in global roles

“I want to be the game changer, the one creating the job description as opposed to a job description being given to me, want to create my own career path; that’s what I see missing in some Asian leaders I work with.”

Preparing for Success

CAPABILITIES, MINDSETS, EXPERIENCES, ACTIONS

How do Asian leaders set themselves up for success in a regional or global role? Interviewees suggested that the “secret recipe” often lies in the leader cultivating the ‘right’ combination of global leadership attributes, mindsets, experiences, resulting in necessary actions to work toward their global career goal.

Asian leaders must inculcate a mindset centering around self-awareness, learning agility, and global awareness. Then they must work toward fine-tuning some attributes such as courage, trust, and communication to achieve success in a global enterprise. Along the way, Asian leaders must get multi-country, multi-cultural, multi-function, and multi-industry experiences under their belt to be able to appreciate challenges faced by different departments, industries, and functions, and to be comfortable with the discomfort of leaving home shores and working in a global environment. Finally, the global mindset, leadership attributes, and global experience must culminate into some deliberate actions around communicating their aspirations, developing the right networks, and seeking to develop appropriate skills, and “paying forward” once they step into regional/global roles.

While Asian leaders must be motivated and willing to embrace mindset changes and opt for newer experiences, they need immense support along their career journey, especially from their managers (in being nominated for global development programs, rotations, projects, experiences), regional leadership team (in exposing them to global hiring managers), and regional HR (in helping curate rotation, mentoring, coaching programs).

Interviewees also highlighted that, in addition to the four elements highlighted in the graphic, the leader must be “hungry” for a regional/global role.

Mindsets

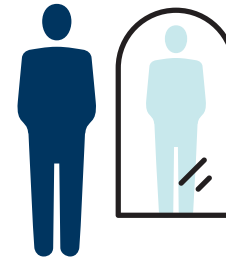
THINK LIKE A GLOBAL LEADER

The mindset alignment with a global career journey starts with understanding one's own identity – who am I and what do I aspire to be? Interviewees highlighted that it is important that leaders become more aware of their social identity, which are labels that people use to categorize or identify themselves and/or others as members of specific groups. In the global leadership context, this may include ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality.

Certain social identities may become more prominent in global leadership situations and contexts. For example, if a leader is an Indian living in Bangalore or New Delhi, he/she may not often think about his/her national identity. However, if the same leader was living in Shanghai, being an Indian may seem like a huge part of the leader's identity because it will likely impact how others see the leader and how the leader interprets his/her experiences. One leader shared her experience of reflecting on self-identity, "I grew up between Taiwan and Canada, so I consider myself Taiwanese-Canadian or Canadian-Taiwanese; while both are a part of my identity, the two cultures are very different." "So, who exactly am I? I don't think I fit into the box of a stereotype Chinese or a typical Canadian; perhaps I am a global citizen," she added. Understanding self-identity usually helps leaders appear more authentic to their teams and other stakeholders.

Leaders must also reflect how they navigate career dilemmas; in-seat regional and global leaders shared that cross-geography assignments usually involve some sacrifices that leaders need to make, be it time available for the family, professional stature, behavioral choices, etc. Leaders, therefore, must develop a polarity mindset, or a mindset to look at the same situation from multiple points of view and almost never getting into a problem resolution with a mentality of "here is how I see it" or "this is what we should do." Leaders who are able to deal astutely with personal career polarities may see better success in global, complex leadership roles. One of the career dilemmas several interviewees had to deal with early on in their global career journey was thinking long-term and short-term at the same time.

What is my self-view?



- Am I an Asian leader in a global role?
- Am I a global citizen who happens to be Asian?
- Am I aware of my cultural identity, yet have a global citizen mindset?
- Do I come across as authentic in a global role?

BE COMFORTABLE WITH WHO YOU ARE

"I learned early in my career that I need to be comfortable with who I am, be comfortable with my cultural background, my nationality, to come across as authentic; I do not need to behave like someone else to conform."

How do I view dilemmas?

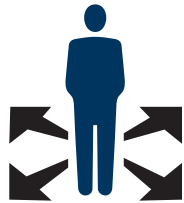


- Should I focus on a comfortable life or a rewarding career?
- Should I be close to family or close to clients?
- Should I be a "big fish in a small pond" or a "small fish in a big pond?"
- Should I be assertive or ensure harmony?

HAVE A POLARITY MINDSET

"I think my comfort with dilemma-type situations, and ability to see both sides of the problem, has helped me transition from in-country to a regional role. When I speak with the leadership team at the headquarter they expect me to not only share country challenges, but also regional and global implications of those challenges."

How comfortable am I with discomfort?



- What can I learn from challenges?
- Am I constantly learning new skills?
- Am I comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty?

HAVE A GROWTH MINDSET

"I was definitely in a space of having a growth mindset when I arrived [overseas for a regional role], very open to new experiences, and embracing them all with open arms. That made a huge difference in my success during the transition period, since I was willing to learn new cultures, experience new cuisines, make new friends."

Do I have a global mindset?



- Am I sensitive to cross-cultural nuances?
- Can I appreciate cross-geography impact of my decisions?
- Do I understand the global strategy of my organization?

THINK LIKE A GLOBAL CITIZEN

"It is OK to be yourself and keep your culture/national identity, be aware of your own culture, where you come from, but also realize that things that made you successful in your own culture may not work the same way in a cross-cultural environment. Key is to get rid of 'self-centered' culture preference, be open-minded, build a global citizen mindset."

Mindsets... Cont'd.

THINK LIKE A GLOBAL LEADER

Asian leaders must also work on inculcating an increased learning agile or growth mindset, which may appear as a constant hunger to learn, even from challenging situations. Interviewees shared that being "comfortable with discomfort" and taking lessons away even from unpleasant experiences differentiate successful leaders from average ones. Several interviewees shared that, when they were exposed to different unfamiliar situations during the course of their regional or global career paths, they were able to appreciate different perspectives coming from diverse stakeholders, which made them more suited for solving complex challenges.

Finally, Asian leaders must embrace a global mindset, or be able to appreciate different cultures and to make decisions wearing multi-stakeholders "hats." A global mindset is a leader's ability to appreciate and decode behaviors in multi-cultural environments, or an ability to connect with people from different cultures intellectually and emotionally. A global mindset also may encourage leaders to understand and appreciate their organization's global agenda, strategy, and aspirations.

Mindset shifts must precede skill development, as having the right mindset makes leaders more open to embracing new experiences that may help them build must-have global leadership attributes such as courage and influence.

Must-Have Traits

FIVE + ONE CHALLENGES

Global Asian Leader research identifies 5 critical traits and capabilities that an Asian leader must demonstrate to be successful in global roles.

Courage to find comfort in discomfort, lean forward and take on unfamiliar challenges, have tough dialogues with stakeholders, push back even when someone higher up in the hierarchy wants the leader to take an action that he/she is not comfortable with, lead difficult conversations, speak their mind, create and defend business cases, share points of view with a senior executive team, make friends across cultures, appear vulnerable.

Curiosity to experience new situations, experiment with new skills, learn new languages, embrace new cultures, explore new ways of doing things, be open-minded to try new cuisines or make new friends or live in different parts of the world.

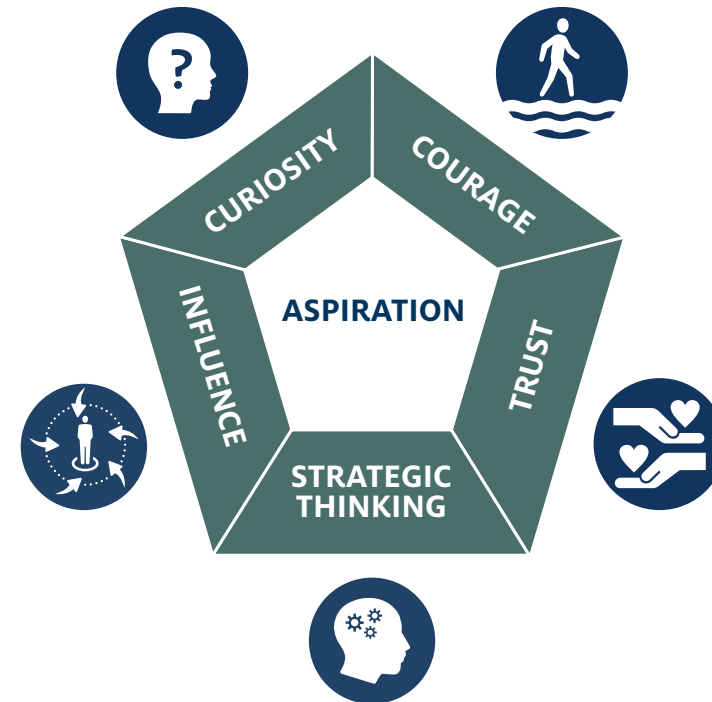
Trust (trusting people and being trustworthy) to be able to build relationships across different cultures, get work done across offices/operations/businesses, develop meaningful networks in a complex environment, be non-judgmental.

Ability to *influence* decisions via compelling communication, managing the “political” landscape in the enterprise, negotiating skills.

And finally, *strategic thinking*, or thinking global or wearing a global “hat” while making decision, thinking long-term, looking at situations with a CEO lens, understanding micro and macro shifts in business and economy, displaying astute commercial acumen, and being able to resolve resource conflicts.

Research also highlighted a hygiene element – *aspiration* to embrace a global career. Being a global leader often requires travel, working across time zones, rotations, uncertainty, etc; therefore, Asian leaders must be willing to make such sacrifices as they picture themselves in global roles. In-seat global leaders shared that, unless an Asian leader aspires for a global career, pushing him/her to take on a global role may prove counter-productive; it will cause too much discomfort to the leader, the family, and the company, eventually leading to under-performance or even failure.

5 Key Global Leadership Traits



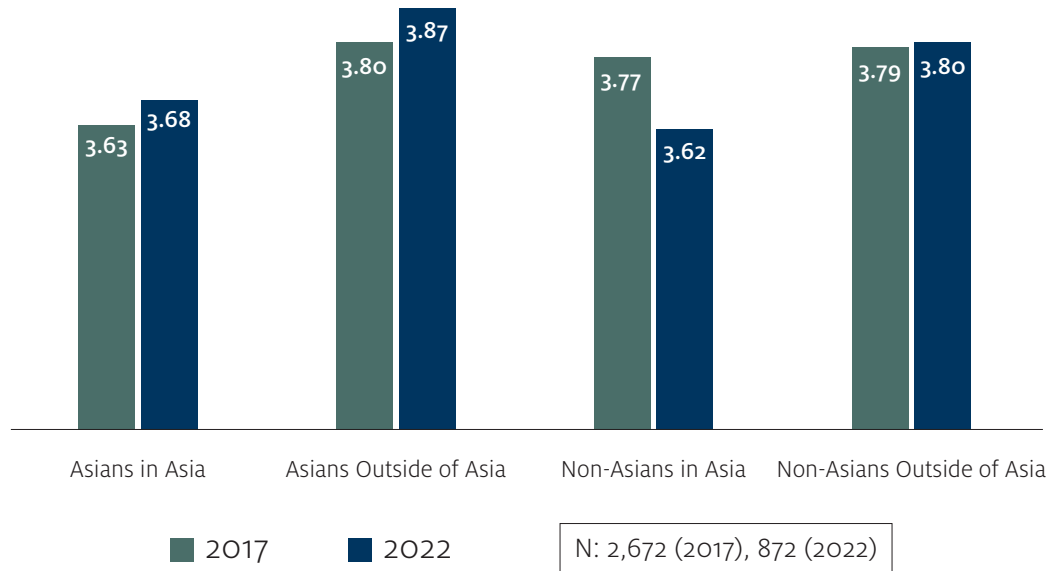
“ There are certain hard and soft skills such as negotiation, understanding of geopolitics, communication, courage, that are must-have in any multi-geography, multi-cultural role. ”



COURAGE

Overcoming the fear of facing unknown or unfamiliar situations and having the ability to express one's opinions freely

How Do Global Leaders Compare on Courage?



KEY ELEMENTS

- ✓ Handles mistakes or setbacks with poise and grace
- ✓ Is effective at managing conflict
- ✓ Is entrepreneurial; seizes new opportunities
- ✓ Is willing to go against the grain
- ✓ Provides prompt feedback, both positive and negative
- ✓ Tolerates ambiguity or uncertainty well
- ✓ Will persevere in the face of obstacles or criticism when the leaders believe what they are doing is right



QUICK TIPS

- ★ Believe in yourself
- ★ Push back
- ★ Take risks
- ★ Be "hungry"



Must-Have Traits COURAGE

Since global leaders need to navigate complex external environments and internal organization structures, they must demonstrate courage to handle mistakes, deal with conflict, provide honest feedback, embrace criticism, take chances and express their opinions without fear or hesitation, overcome the hesitation to challenge managers and senior stakeholders, speak up, have uncomfortable conversations, and engage in debates and arguments.

Asian expatriate leaders within Asia (e.g., an Indian leader working in Indonesia) lag other expat categories in the "courage" dimension, even though over the past 5 years, the attribute has witnessed a lift for Asian expatriates.

Experienced leaders have a few tips for young Asian talent. One, Asian leaders need to have conviction and self-belief. Two, local leaders need to learn how to push back and be persistent in their asks, be it for seeking more budgets, for getting approvals, or to say "no" to unreasonable requests. Three, Asians may need to take some risks on their careers, in their projects, on the choices they make. And four, be realistic but hungry for more and better projects, better roles, more lucrative postings.

“ Sometimes you need to have the courage to do what you have never done before, but also have confidence that you will be able to do it. ”

Must-Have Traits

CURIOSITY

Curiosity breeds Asian leaders' ability to be "comfortable with discomfort."

Global leaders need to be curious about new experiences and change (and better still, learning from it), adapting to new cultures, adopting new approaches to tackle challenges, or just appreciating different perspectives of solving problems.

Asian expatriate leaders within Asia lag other expat categories (Asians outside Asia, non-Asians in Asia, non-Asians outside of Asia) in the "curiosity" dimension. While, in general, global leaders today are more curious as compared to 5 years ago, there is quite some room for improvement on this attribute.

Asian leaders can take a few actions to get better on the curiosity attribute. One, they can put in the effort to understand macro-economic trends that impact their geography, community, industry, or function. Two, leaders must ask questions. Three, be genuinely interested in other people, their culture, their background, their experiences. Four, rather than learning new functional and technical skills, leaders should learn how to learn more efficiently.

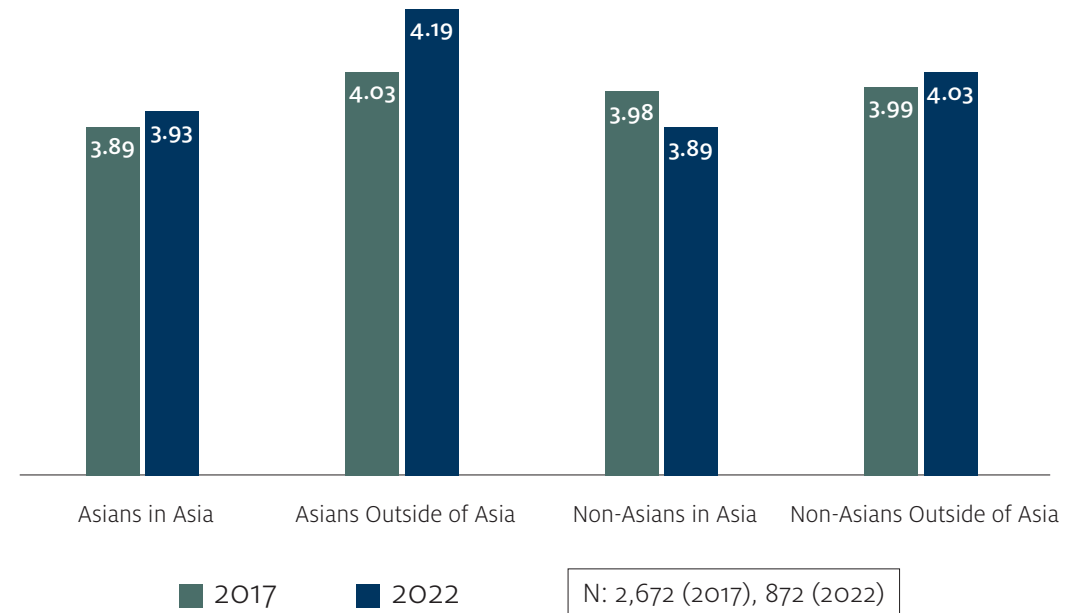
“ Ask questions, and be open-minded. Soak it up as much as you can. Talk and connect with people within and outside of the company to genuinely try and understand who they are and what drives them. ”



CURIOSITY

Hunger to learn something new, seek different experiences, ask questions, and genuinely wanting to know more about different people and cultures

How Do Global Leaders Compare on Curiosity?



KEY ELEMENTS

- ✓ Accepts change as positive
- ✓ Can adapt to meet cultural expectations
- ✓ Learns a new skill quickly
- ✓ Seeks experiences that will change their perspective
- ✓ Seeks out new and diverse work experiences
- ✓ Tries new approaches



QUICK TIPS

- ★ Understand the environment
- ★ Ask questions
- ★ Be honestly curious
- ★ Be an agile learner

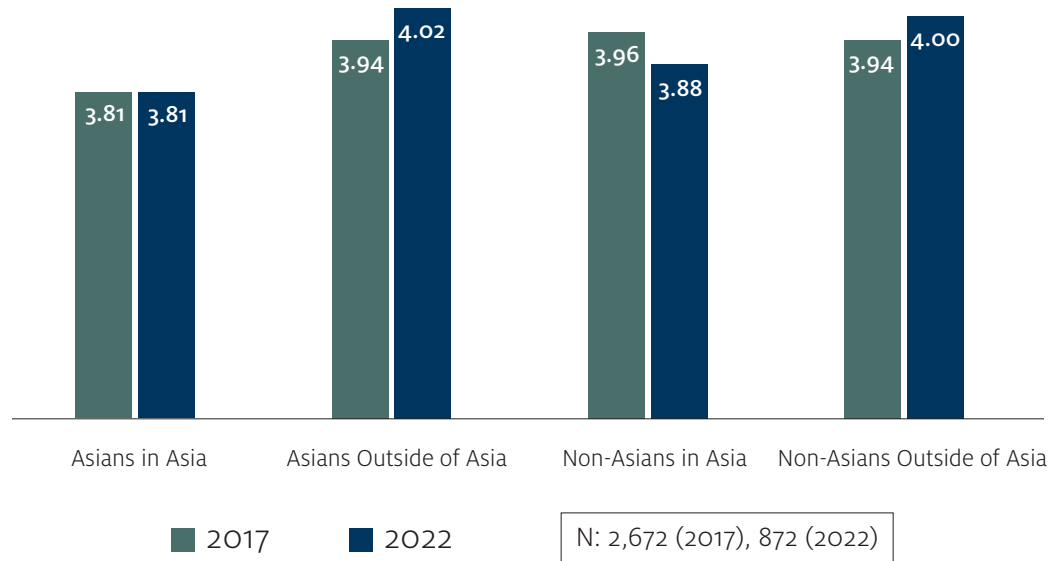




TRUST

To establish and develop deep credibility of one's authenticity and capability within and outside of the global enterprise

How Do Global Leaders Compare on Trust?



KEY ELEMENTS

- ✓ Can evaluate the work of others in a culturally neutral way
- ✓ Can motivate multicultural teams effectively
- ✓ Effectively creates alliances throughout the organization
- ✓ Encourages direct and open discussions about important issues
- ✓ Establishes strong collaborative relationships
- ✓ Has solid working relationships with higher management
- ✓ Involves others before developing a plan of action
- ✓ Possesses extensive network of contacts necessary to do the job
- ✓ When working with peers from other functions or units, gains their cooperation and support



QUICK TIPS



- ★ Hold on to your values and beliefs
- ★ Do not judge
- ★ Maintain Asian strength of humility
- ★ Invest in building relationships

Must-Have Traits

TRUST

Trust often underlines the strength of the relationship leaders can build within the organization. Interviewees shared that lack of trust between the headquarters and Asian operations, or between the global executive team and Asian leadership, is often the number one reason causing the “bamboo ceiling” phenomenon. Global leaders must have a strong “trust account” within the organization – being trustworthy as well as trusting of others – to be able to nurture honest and authentic relationships and networks within and outside of the organization.

Trust often centers around three elements – capability, character, and communication. Trust of capability is the trust others invest as a result of their confidence in a leader’s competence to meet organizational or business goals/targets. Trust of character is about the ability to keep promises. Trust of communication enables leaders, teams, colleagues, and clients to achieve clarity about where they stand with each other regarding shared commitments.

What can Asian leaders do to be more trusting and trustworthy? One, while Asian leaders need to get out of their home country, they must hold on to their beliefs and values, and not color themselves in the color of the host country. Two, leaders should try to rid themselves of unconscious biases. Three, they should embrace humility. And four, build authentic relationships.

“ We in Asia tend to judge people too much and often have a measure of being good, bad, successful, not successful. Being judgemental kills trust. ”

Must-Have Traits

INFLUENCE

Successful global leaders are able to rally teams and get work done in a matrixed, multi-country organization structure. Influencing skills often include the ability to inspire information sharing, negotiating, promoting an idea, communicating effectively, networking across geographies, having the political savvy to manage a complex organizational maze, and collaborating across boundaries.

Asian expatriate leaders within Asia generally lag other expat categories (Asians outside Asia, non-Asians in Asia, non-Asians outside of Asia) in the “influence” dimension, even though the data shows a lift in influencing capability in the past 5 years.

Asian leaders must focus on a few areas. One, while communication may not be a development area in itself for Asian leaders, they need to get better at “lead communication,” the skill to lead, direct, and navigate a multi-stakeholder meeting. Two, practice self-advocacy. Interviewees emphasized that it is an acceptable practice to “project” one’s work. Three, Asians must learn to partner and collaborate across geographies, businesses, teams, and functions.

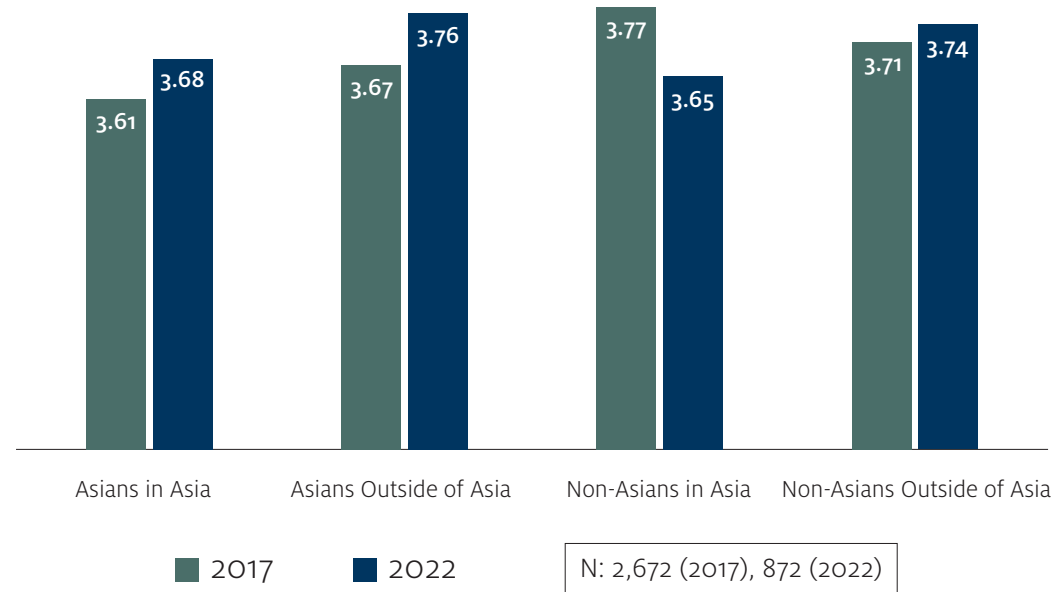
“ To collaborate effectively and influence your way in a multi-geography company, you need to know which strings to pull and when. ”



INFLUENCE

Power and ability to personally affect key stakeholders’ actions, decisions, and opinions in a matrixed, multi-geography environment

How Do Global Leaders Compare on Influence?



KEY ELEMENTS

- ✓ Can inspire information sharing among individuals who do not know/see each other and who may represent different cultures.
- ✓ Clearly articulates even the most complex concepts
- ✓ Expresses ideas fluently and eloquently
- ✓ Has an astute sense of “politics”
- ✓ Influences others without using formal authority
- ✓ Is good at promoting an idea or vision; persuading
- ✓ Negotiates adeptly with individuals and groups over roles and resources
- ✓ Tailors communication based on other’s needs, motivations, and agendas
- ✓ When working with a group over whom he/she has no control, gets things done by finding common ground



QUICK TIPS

- ★ Focus on lead communication
- ★ Practice self-advocacy
- ★ Collaborate effectively

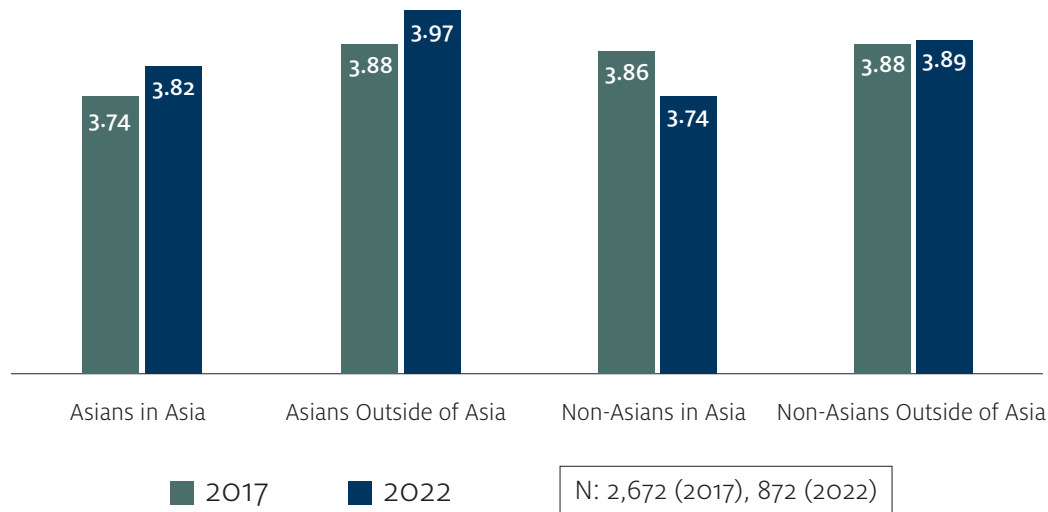




STRATEGIC THINKING

Ability to understand organization's long-term strategy and formulate effective plans in line with the organization's business objectives within the local/regional/global economic context

How Do Asian Leaders Compare on Strategic Thinking?



KEY ELEMENTS

- ✓ Balances what will pay off in the short run with what will provide long-term improvements
- ✓ Knows how the various parts of the organization fit together
- ✓ Recognizes that every decision has conflicting interests and constituencies
- ✓ Sees underlying concepts and patterns in complex situations
- ✓ Understands higher management values, how higher management operates, and how they see things
- ✓ Understands the perspectives of different functional areas in the organization



QUICK TIPS

- ★ Think long-term
- ★ Think global
- ★ Think like a CEO



Must-Have Traits

STRATEGIC THINKING

Global leaders need to think along multiple dimensions, not only thinking about their function, business, or region, but also simultaneously evaluating implications of their decisions on other parts of the business or other geographies. Asian leaders need to step away from the “how” of doing things and think more about “why” (why we need to undertake) and “what” (what is the wider business impact) of key initiatives to get a better understanding of the enterprise strategy.

Incumbent leaders explain strategic thinking as a combination of being able to analyze the market, thinking about the risk profile of the company, sensing disruptors and market knowledge, and being able to “read” the market, playing visionaries.

Asian expatriate leaders within Asia have sizeable room to run on the strategic thinking front. So what can leaders do to get better at strategic thinking. Three tips: One, think long-term, by de-focusing on the execution aspect and having a longer term vision for the enterprise. Two, think beyond the immediate region. Three, Asian leaders must be comfortable wearing the “CEO hat.”

“ We need to see beyond our work desks, and have a long-term view on where the organization is going, and what is the connect between what I do and the enterprise strategy. ”

Experiences

4 MUST-HAVE EXPERIENCES

Research suggests that some experiences are invaluable or must-have to prepare talent for global roles. Multi-cultural, -country, -function, -business roles often lead to increased “comfort with discomfort.” Even unpleasant experiences serve as great “teachers” in shaping leaders’ ability to deal with adversity and complexity.

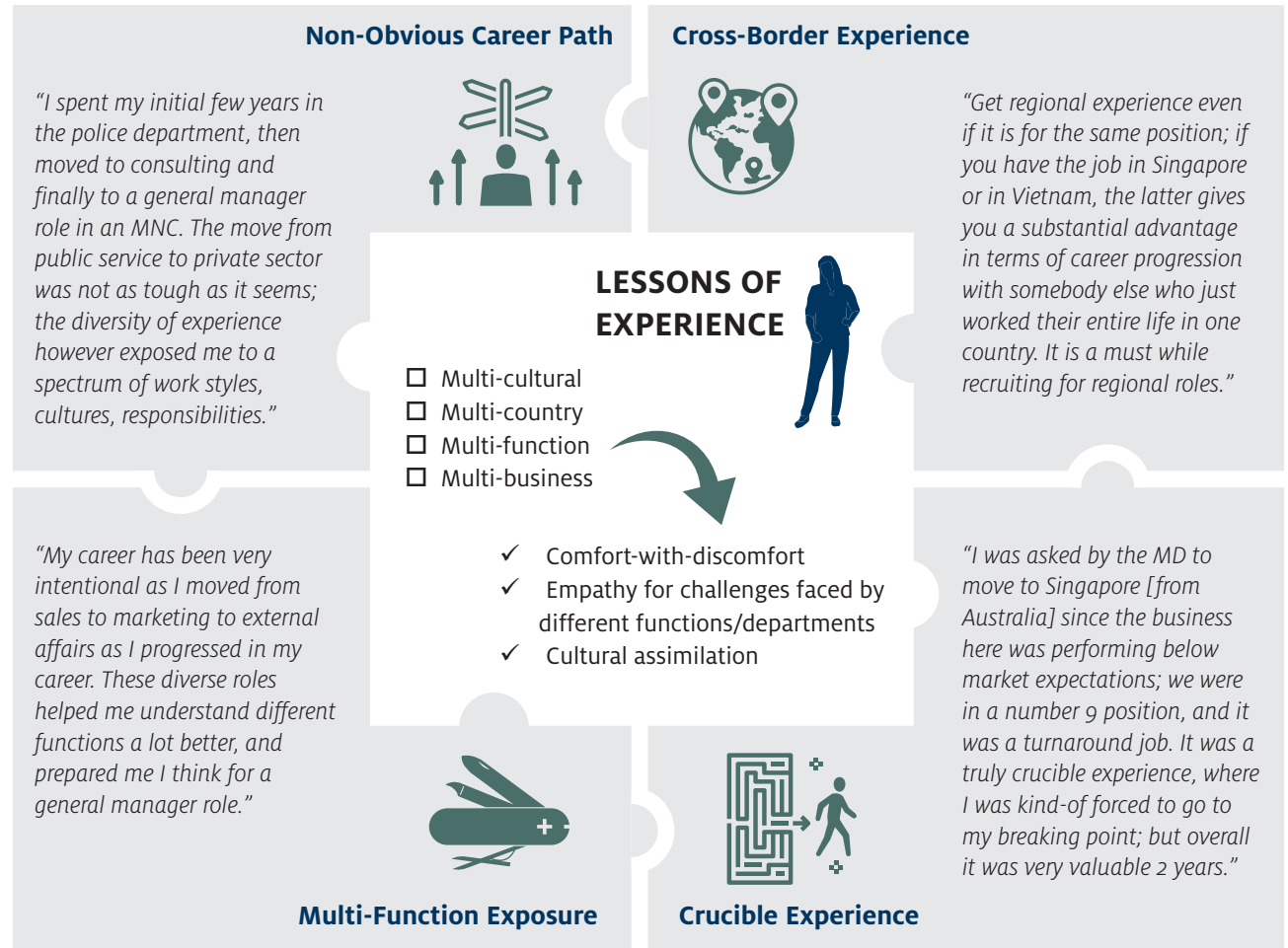
Interviewee regional/global leaders highlighted 4 must-have experiences. Global rotations or cross-border assignments can be unsettling for leaders but prepare them well for unexpected situations and enhance their ability to deal with people from different cultures. One leader shared why long-term rotations are more beneficial than short visits to another office. She said: “Seeing them [colleagues in other offices] walking around the office is different from interacting, discussing, ironing out differences, communicating on personal and professional matters, and participating in their customs.”

Multi-function exposure gives leaders a better understanding of challenges faced by different parts of the organization. One leader, who had moved across different roles, shared how that helped her get a very good understanding of what other businesses are all about, and different aspects of their operations.

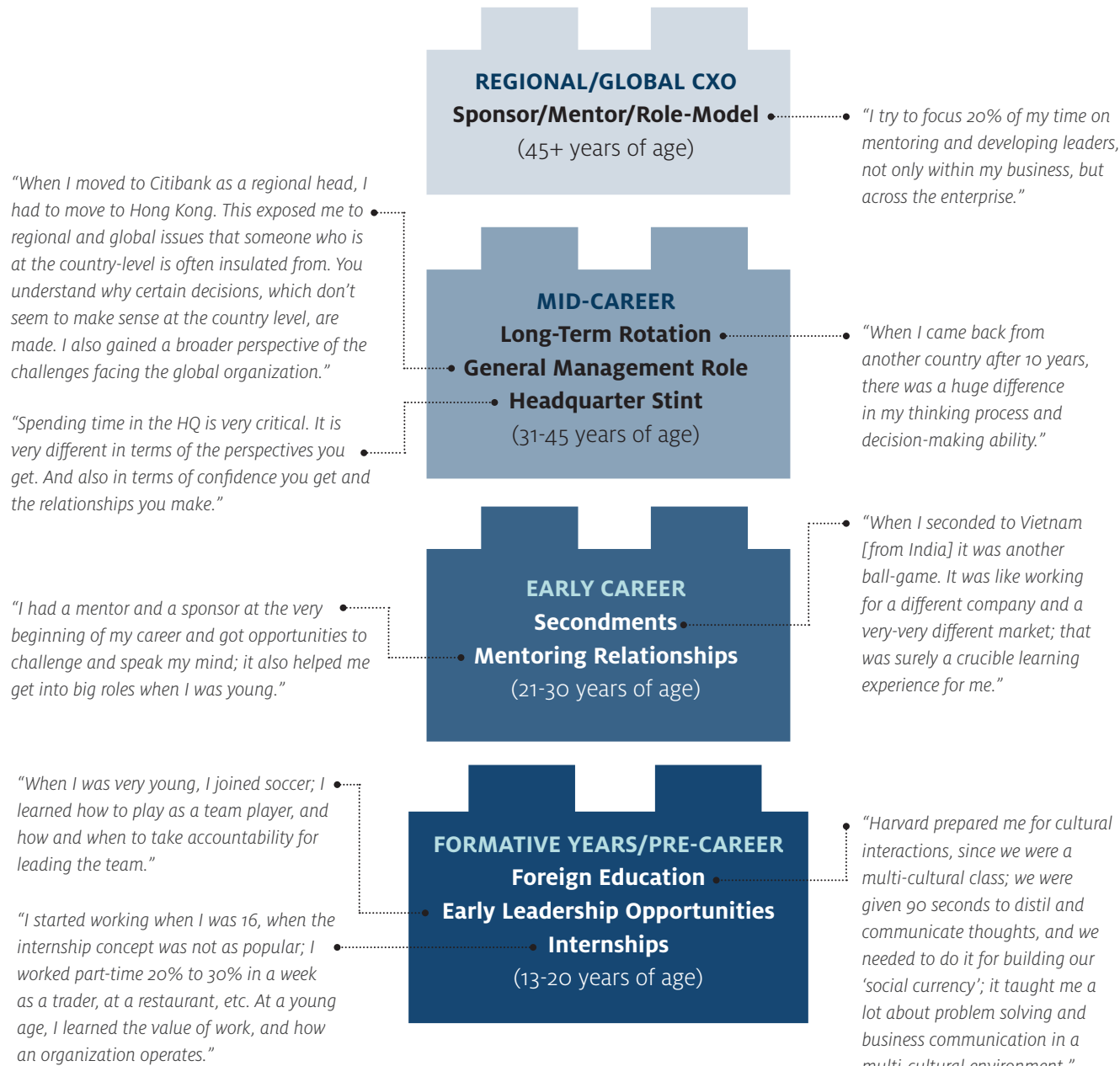
Crucible or stretch assignments are critical in global leader development as they prepare them for unexpected circumstances and enable them to deal with complex challenges that often spring up in cross-border roles.

Finally, non-obvious jobs or career roles make leaders more learning agile and make them comfortable with discomfort.

Four Experiences That Prepare Leaders for Global Roles



Building Blocks of a Global Career



Experiences

TYPICAL GAL JOURNEY

Global leader careers often highlight several common experiences or elements. Several leaders we interviewed spent their formative years outside of their home country, either because their parents had transferable jobs, or leaders themselves being sent to a residential school away from home.

A few leaders also shared early leadership opportunities – leading a school sports team, an extended school project, or some community initiatives. They also had early internships and work experiences – serving tables, flipping burgers, doing paid duty in libraries, etc.

During early careers, several interviewee leaders got opportunities for secondments outside of their home country – these were rotations as a part of the graduate/trainee induction programs or early offshore projects. They also talked very passionately about early mentoring by their managers or senior colleagues.

3 things stood out in mid-career experiences. One, the leaders did a long-term rotation outside of their home country. Two, a lot of the global leaders stepped into GM roles in their mid-thirties to late-thirties. And three, most leaders did a stint in the headquarters that helped them network, build credibility in the system, and lead critical engagements.

Several in-seat regional or senior global leaders also highlighted that as a way of “paying-forward” they routinely take on mentoring or sponsoring opportunities with younger talent that has global aspirations. Also, they are aware that they must role model key attributes of a successful global leader to inspire younger talent in their organizations.



Experiences

5 GAL TYPES

There is no one-size-fits-all approach for developing global Asian leaders because development needs are deeply aligned with the experience leaders have had in their careers, especially exposure to multiple cultures and complex multi-stakeholder environments. Development needs are also influenced by ethnicity, nationality, and educational background of leaders.

A “Local-Local” leader is someone who has never left his/her home shores. The “Asian Returnee” is a leader of Asian origin who is educated and has mainly worked outside of the region (often until mid-career.) Having spent considerable time outside of Asia, the leader has rich exposure to different cultures. “Regional Champion” is a leader of Asian origin with multi-country and perhaps a multi-company work experience, but mainly within Asia. A “Global Nomad” is an Asian leader who has diverse multi-country experiences within and outside of Asia, often with the same organization. Since the leader has moved around locations in the same enterprise, he/she has strong ties, networks, relationships, credibility, and trust with key stakeholders. Finally, a local expat is a leader who was born outside Asia but spent a majority of his or her formative years and/or professional career in Asia, so much so that his/her mannerisms, values, and beliefs closely resemble those of Asian leaders.

5 Types of Global Leaders

	LOCAL-LOCAL	ASIAN RETURNEE	REGIONAL CHAMPION	GLOBAL NOMAD	LOCAL EXPAT
Representative Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Born in Malaysia Educated in Malaysia Worked in Malaysia for his entire career 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Born in China Educated in the US Worked in the US Returned to China during mid-career; with same or different MNCs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Born in Indonesia Educated in Singapore Worked in 3-5 Asian countries with multiple MNCs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Born in India Educated in US/India Worked in several countries in 2-3 regions (and HQ) in the same MNC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Born in Germany Educated in Europe Moved to Thailand early in the career and stayed there; worked with different MNCs
Exposure to Different Cultures					
Strength of Relationships in HQ					
Embedded in Enterprise Strategy					
REPRESENTATIVE POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AREAS					
Cultural Assimilation	✓		✓		
Global Strategy	✓	✓	✓		✓
Global Leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: Completeness of dark-colored circle indicates representative level of experience in each area.



Rich/High



Moderate



Low

“ I wish I could say that there is a one-size-fits-all approach to solving the Asian leadership development challenge, but there isn't. ”

5-STEP ACTION PLAN



STEP I. SELF-REFLECTION

“A lot of decisions in my career were based on taking my family along. If I had followed a different path, perhaps I won’t be in the Philippines. I chose a role in Netherlands mainly because my family wanted to go back there. If I were really looking purely at ambition and how high I can go in the group globally, I would have chosen maybe a job in Oman because it was immediately a promotion, whereas the Netherlands role was just a lateral transfer.”



STEP II. BE YOUR OWN AGENT

“I had a leader on my team in Singapore who quit her job, and when I asked she said she had another opportunity which was regional; it surprised me because she had never ever expressed her desire to get into a regional role. I wish she had shared with me her aspirations before she started looking out. Asian leaders must have the confidence of leaning forward and asking for global/regional roles if they aspire towards that.”



STEP III. PREP FOR GLOBAL ROLE

“I think that a person’s career can benefit a lot from networking, and many of us don’t highlight it enough and do it well enough. Networking is about getting your name out there in the industry, getting your name out there within the organization, learning from people, finding new mentors. It is a must-do if you have aspirations to take up a regional/global role.”

! While a global job is rewarding, it is also a tough role with frequent transfers, long work hours, spouse’s career taking a hit, kids changing schools every few years, etc.

! Once leaders are clear that they want to drive their careers toward regional or global roles, they must clearly and confidently articulate their aspirations to their managers and HR.

! Asian leaders need to prepare for global roles by polishing must-have attributes and engaging in activities that will enhance their chances of “accessing” global opportunities.

- ?** ✓ What attracts me towards a global career?
- ✓ Am I willing to work long hours, across geographies and time zones?
- ✓ Does my life stage allow me to transfer overseas?
- ✓ Is my spouse/family supportive of the decision?
- ✓ Do I see myself as a global leader?

- ⚙** ✓ Be confident; be bold!
- ✓ Discuss your career aspirations with your manager during quarterly annual reviews
- ✓ Articulate why you want to step into a regional/global role

- ⚙** ✓ Learn about different cultures
- ✓ Make yourself “visible” in regional/global forums
- ✓ Volunteer for cross-geography projects/initiatives
- ✓ Develop understanding of the organization’s global strategy
- ✓ Get a “lay of the land”
- ✓ Network, network, network!

5-STEP ACTION PLAN



STEP IV. EMBRACE GLOBAL MINDSET



“Setting up yourself for success in a global role starts with a global mindset, which is absolutely crucial in a global multi-national setting. Leaders must take a global rather than country-specific view of business and people and be able to apply this perspective even in a local setting, taking account of culture.”



Asian leaders must become aware of their biases, understand global priorities, embrace different cultures, and make local decisions wearing a global lens.



- ✓ Recognize your own cultural values and biases
- ✓ Get to know your personality traits, especially curiosity, courage, trust, etc
- ✓ Learn about the workplace and business expectations of relevant countries and markets
- ✓ Find a mentor and/or a sponsor



STEP V. PAY FORWARD



“Now that I am in a position of influence, I must give young talent a lot of exposure to senior management through mentoring programs. I am also training my teams to apply an Eastern lens, rather than Western lens to situations. I try and expose my peers to cognitive biases, e.g., the guy who makes the best presentation may not be the most talented, ability to inspire BOD cannot be correlated to inspiring teams, and English language fluency does not equal leadership skills.”



Leaders must do their part to enhance the volume of global-ready Asian leaders in their organizations by mentoring, sponsoring, and being role models to aspiring young leaders.



- ✓ Sponsor and mentor young leaders
- ✓ Attempt to highlight cognitive biases to colleagues and the leadership teams
- ✓ Partner with HR to create talent strategies to strengthen the Asian leader pipeline

While global jobs are rewarding, they do involve a lot of hardships to navigate time zones and keep up with frequent travel and other personal disruptions. Therefore, Asian leaders who aspire for global roles must start with self-reflection, honestly evaluating their personal situation and suitability to take up global assignments.

Then they must back their intent to chase their global career dream by expressing it clearly to their manager. In a way, Asian leaders need to “play their own agent,” boldly and courageously sharing their career aspirations. One leader commented, “Sometimes we must reassure ourselves that, hey, I’ve worked hard, I’ve come up the ranks, I’ve learned a lot, and I’m just as good as anyone else anywhere in the organization.”

Leaders must then prepare for their global role by working on their global leadership capability gap areas, understanding the organization’s global strategy, subtly building their image, and actively networking. Leaders simultaneously also must work on their mindset, opening it up to learn new things and embrace different cultures.

Finally, when Asian leaders step into regional or global roles, they must pay-forward by mentoring and sponsoring the next-generation talent in their organization. They must also role model for younger talent to ignite their aspirations for a global career path.

“ It is all about giving Asian leaders an opportunity to prove themselves in a global setting. Each time I have taken a risk on Asian talent, I have been pleasantly surprised. ”

Section IV

CURATING A PIPELINE



Pipeline Strengthening

INSIDE-OUT REFLECTION

The leadership team must reflect upon a few questions before going down the route of investing resources in building the global Asian leadership pipeline. Dialogue around these themes will help the HR team/Asia talent development team create a more targeted Asia people strategy.

Before going down the route of curating a plan for developing Asian talent, the organization must reflect, discuss, and debate its Asia strategy. How important is Asia to the organization basis the current and future market potential for the organization's products and services? Also, how much is Asia contributing currently, and what do the next few years look like? This will decide the intensity of the effort, or if the organization needs to buy talent from outside to ramp up the leadership pipeline quickly.

Subsequently, a good space to analyze is the skills inventory in Asia. What skills are needed? What are the key gaps? And, are there enough leaders in Asia with the desired skills? These questions will inform the key skills to be built and the volume of leaders required to not only serve Asia but also to populate the global leader pipeline.

Finally, the leadership team, especially if they face challenges in building the Asia leader pipeline, must reflect on the D&I agenda of the enterprise. In the longer term, the strength of the D&I agenda, and how embracing the organization is of that, will decide not only diversity of gender, color, race, but also the diversity of leader nationality/ethnicity.

The 5 success factors highlighted in the graphic will create a collective self-awareness in the organization to set it up for success in developing a robust global Asian leadership pipeline.

5 Success Factors That Must Align with Asia Talent Strategy



STRATEGY QUOTIENT

How important is Asia for the future of the organization?

"Asia is important for us in the long-term. It will be the fulcrum of growth."



BUSINESS QUOTIENT

How much is Asia contributing to the top line?

"If you are running a region that is less than 10% [of business], you just won't have the scale and breadth to be able to take on a global role directly from a region that is tiny."



CAPABILITY QUOTIENT

Does Asian talent have the right skills?

"We have a lot of great people, they do a great job, but they cannot tell people what they have done, and making their presence felt. There is room to run on communication, influencing, story-telling."



LEADERSHIP QUOTIENT

Are there enough leaders to lead Asia, and be a part of the global leadership pipeline?

"We need Asian leaders to run businesses in Aisa; we think of exporting them only if we have more volume than the number of leaders we need in Asia."

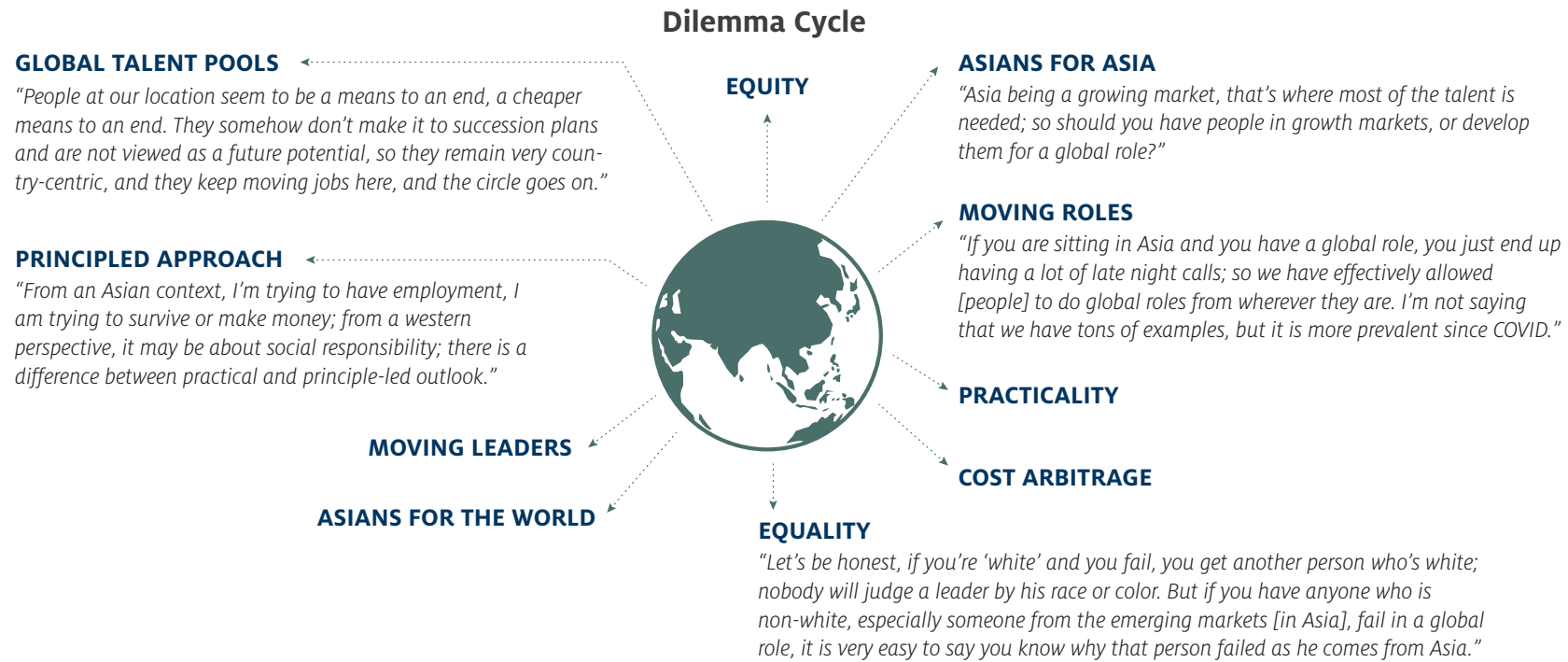


DIVERSITY QUOTIENT

Do we have a diversity agenda around nationalities and leadership styles?

"Top leadership is heavily white-male dominated; gender and race/ethnicity is the key focus of D&I agenda. Diversity in leadership styles is still a far cry."

DEALING WITH BUSINESS POLARITIES



Organizations must navigate several dilemmas or polarities in their quest to developing a robust global Asian leader pipeline. These polarities are related to the objective of developing Asian talent, talent philosophy, job location, and even the diversity-equity-inclusion agenda. These are choices that organizations or global/regional HR must make, and most of these are "and" decisions rather than "either/or" decisions.

One big dilemma that most interviewees highlighted is the choice between developing Asian leaders for Asia or leveraging the demographic dividend in Asia to develop and export Asian talent. This choice attains significance since Asian leaders are needed to drive growth in Asia, which is the future market for most global organizations.

While recent disruptions due to the pandemic have been a great catalyst for virtual working or remote working, and at least in theory, global leaders could operate from

anywhere, there is still a big dilemma about whether organizations should move global roles to Asia, rather than relocating Asian leaders (and their family) overseas.

There is also an element of principled growth versus survival. In several developing markets, the rules of doing business are different. Governance is not as robust, and regulators and institutions are not as demanding; therefore sometimes principles and values may get compromised in the race to build market share.

Finally, a lot of interviewees brought to fore the difference between equity and equality as organizations build a global Asian leader pipeline. While equality demands that an individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities, equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and, therefore, different resource and opportunity allocation for reaching equal outcomes. This debate, especially in the backdrop of D&I and meritocracy, becomes an important polarity for organizations to navigate.

5 STEP ASIAN LEADER DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY



STEP I. REFLECT

The big question we need to reflect on is why solve for the global Asian leaders challenge. One way of looking at the challenge is why try to do something which is not natural? Should I let my best leaders stay in Asia or should I prepare them to take on global roles? We need clarity on some of these 'why' questions before we talk about the 'how.'

! Align on the role, and importance of Asia in global strategy.

- ?** ✓ How important is Asia in the global strategy?
- ✓ How much is Asia contributing to the top line?
- ✓ Do we have a compelling D&I agenda?
- ✓ Is there a "will" in the global leadership team to drive the Asian leader development agenda?



STEP II. TAKE STOCK

"Every year we look for certain gender or minority groups having lower performance than others. We then figure out if this is because they're under-performing? If so, how can we provide better support for certain minority groups? Or, is there actually a bias at play that leadership in the organization are not aware of? We also track the number of 'global-ready' leaders in various businesses in Asia."

! Take stock of leader inventory in the region, and evaluate key capabilities and leadership gaps of talent in Asia.

- ?** ✓ How many "global ready" leaders are there in Asia?
- ✓ What are the strengths and key capability gaps in leaders?
- ✓ How big must the leadership pipeline be to fill existing and future regional roles?



STEP III. ENABLE ACCESS

"Our diversity and inclusion team works closely with HR to make sure leaders of different nationalities have an equal opportunity to take on regional and global roles. Managers sometimes need to step in and act as 'translators' for global hiring managers to help the global hiring team see beyond superficial cultural difference while staffing regional or global roles."

! Remove challenges that Asian leaders may face, such as inherent biases, trust issues, in being considered for regional/global roles.

- ✘** ✓ Create awareness about biases stalling growth of Asian leaders
- ✓ Expose global leadership to Asian high potential talent
- ✓ Bust myths about what Asian talent can and cannot do
- ✓ Inspire Asian talent to aspire for regional/global roles

5 STEP ASIAN LEADER DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY



STEP IV. ENABLE SUCCESS



STEP V. SUSTAIN



“We need to set Asian leaders up for success; one of my colleagues who made a jump to a global role did not automatically get there. I worked with her for almost two years, connecting her with people across the enterprise, asking her to participate in global projects, connecting her with key stakeholders. Even when she got the global offer, I got her a global mentor to help her transition.”



“We have an ecosystem approach; just doing a set of leadership development programs is not enough. We need to get global mentors and coaches for Asian talent, nominate them for programs, encourage them to do action-learning projects, etc. To ensure we have a pipeline of Asian leaders in regional roles, we cannot just do a one-time intervention and leave it to chance. It is a marathon, and someone needs to constantly think about it.”



Help Asian talent develop global leadership capabilities through development programs, rotations, coaching interventions, mentoring, to set them up for success in global roles.



Ensure an ecosystem of initiatives around development so that there is a constant pipeline of regional/global-ready leaders in Asia.



- ✓ Help Asian talent develop global leadership attributes through programs, projects, coaching
- ✓ Implement long-term and short-term overseas rotations for Asian leaders
- ✓ Enable sponsoring and mentoring relationships between global leaders and Asian talent



- ✓ Encourage board level or executive team level sponsorship for Asian leader development
- ✓ Set up “Asian Talent Councils” to ensure constant attention to Asian leader development
- ✓ Track KPIs to evaluate progress on global Asian leader development

There are 5 action areas most interviewees alluded to as they shared what organizations must do to strengthen the global Asian leadership pipeline.

The leadership teams must first reflect on the Asia agenda and strategy for global organizations. How important is it? What is the leadership strategy? Then they must take stock of the leadership inventory they have currently, and skill gaps they must plug in the future.

The organizations then must take active steps to enable Asian leaders to access regional/global roles. This may involve role modeling by regional/global leaders, inspiring Asian talent, exposing Asian talent to global hiring managers, etc. This needs to be followed by setting Asian talent up for success by helping them build the right capabilities to succeed in global roles. This could be through leadership development programs, overseas rotations, or mentoring and coaching interventions.

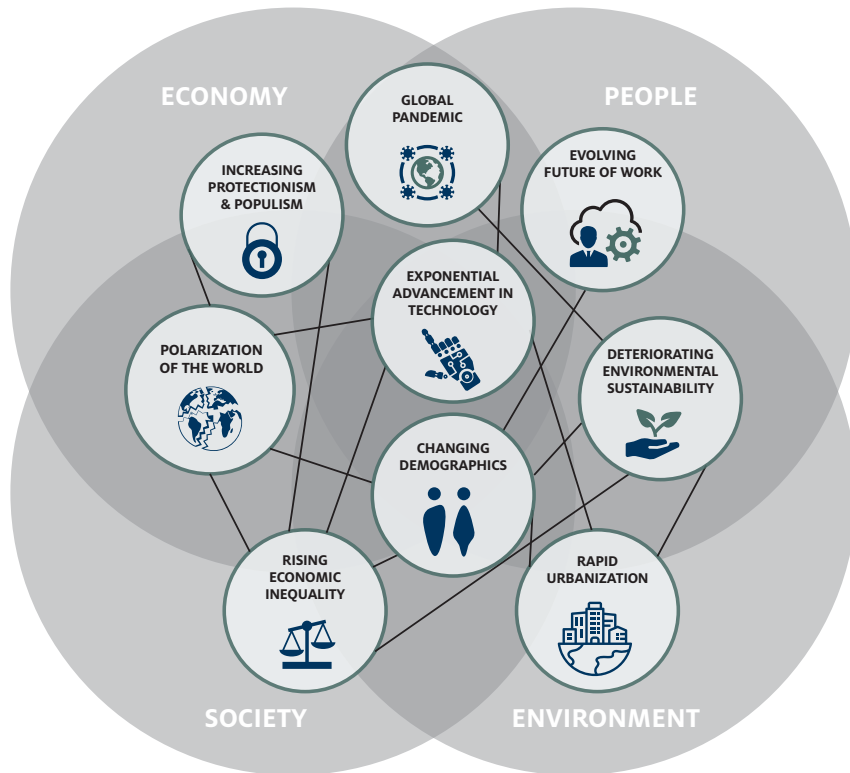
Once the organization “cracks the code” on developing a global-ready Asian leader, they must make the process repeatable, and create processes and systems around that. Allocating budgets for Asian leader development programs and developmental rotations, and setting up committees and councils to constantly evaluate the Asian leader pipeline health, are some tactics regional/global leaders highlighted.

One piece of advice interviewee leaders had for the organizations is to start solving for the global Asian leadership pipeline challenge at the very top by finding a sponsor for the program at the global executive team or even at the board level. That will ensure adequate attention to the initiatives put in place by global/regional HR.

ORGANIZATION PRACTICES



Aligning Megatrends with Organizational Strategy



IMPLICATIONS

- Economy
- Business
- Consumers
- Talent



IMPACT ON ORGANIZATION STRATEGY

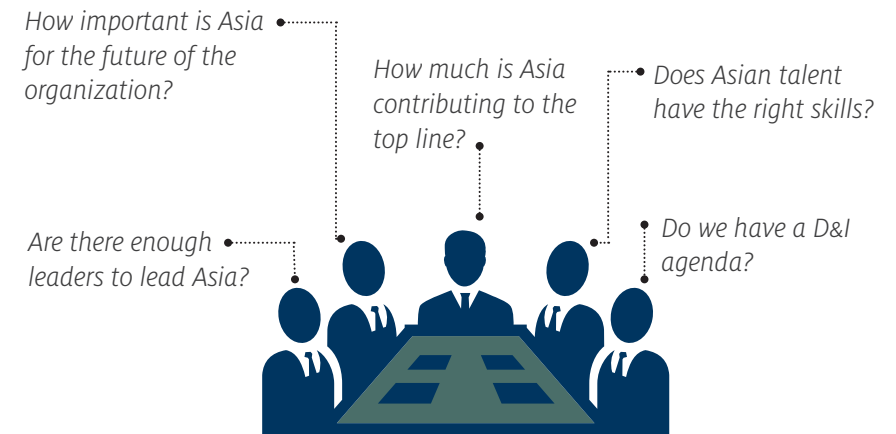
As a part of its annual strategy (business and talent strategy) process, the leadership team at a global conglomerate looks at various megatrends at play and how they may impact the organization’s business and talent prospects.

The kick-off of the planning process is a one-day session with a senior external consultant who helps the organization understand

intersections between various megatrends and how they may play out globally (and in Asia) vis-à-vis economy, business, consumers, and talent.

The one-day megatrend scanning exercise informs the business strategy and subsequent talent strategy discussions at the global leadership team level.

Reflecting on Asia’s Business and Talent Strategy



The global financial services company, which is currently implementing its Asia People Strategy, started the planning and design of its strategy by digging deeper into the business case, philosophy, and need of developing a strong Asia leadership pipeline. In a 3-day exercise involving

regional HR, regional leadership, global HR and a global sponsor (for developing Asia talent), the group reflected on many areas intersecting with Asia and talent in the organization. The exercise informed and shaped the Asia people strategy in the organization.

ORGANIZATION PRACTICES



Deep-Diving on Asia’s Leadership Strategy

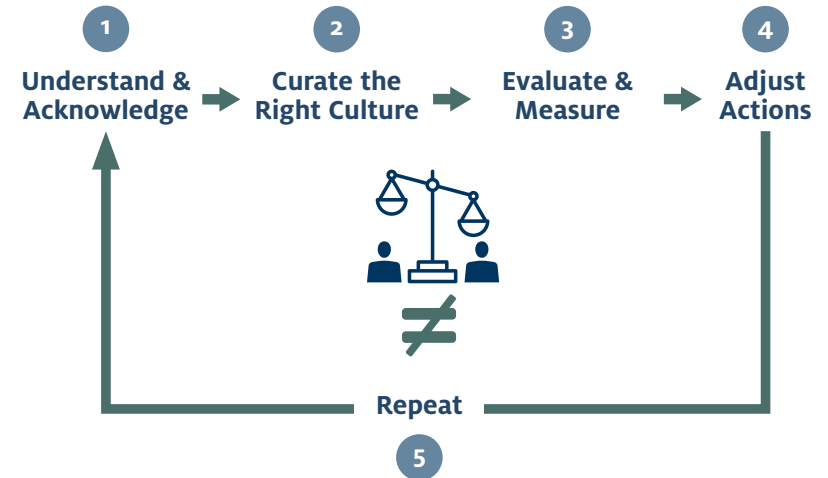


An Asia-headquartered IT company decided to expand its definition of leadership strategy by looking at “speed of development” in addition to the quality and quantity of leaders. Creating a typical leadership strategy comprises identification of “quality,” demographics, and skills portfolio of individual leaders and collective teams, and the “quantity” of leaders needed across the organization.

Thanks to the recent disruptive changes due to the pandemic, and the subsequent business demand for agility, the organization also decided to measure the speed of the development process. Due to high volatility, businesses are seeking short-term results, and this sentiment is driving business units in the IT company to push the leadership development function to develop leaders at a much faster pace.

Source: CCL Research, 2022.

Using the Culture Lever to Drive Leadership Development



When an internal HR business leadership team identified that Asian leaders were unable to rise in the organization primarily due to internal biases, the traditional European engineering firm decided to evaluate their organization’s culture.

First, the team drew attention to the fact that some biases were at play, especially in the recruitment, selection, and succession of talent. They curated a campaign to raise awareness about such biases, especially educating current and future global hiring managers.

The team then created a task group to look at D&I practices and document processes that need to be put in place; such practices were subsequently reviewed by a diverse set of employees across geographies. The team initiated an exercise to enhance D&I elements in the organization’s culture globally.

The ensuing changes were measured 6 months after implementation through a global employee culture survey. The survey insights helped global and regional HR tweak the culture further.

ORGANIZATION PRACTICES



Evaluating “Flavors” of Leaders in Asia

LOCAL-LOCAL

Example:

- Born, raised and educated in China
- He only ever worked in China but may have travelled outside the country for vacation
- Speaks fluent Mandarin and maybe a local dialect

BOOMERANG

Example:

- Born and raised in Korea
- Went to school in the US, worked in New York for 5 years
- Has returned to Korea
- Speaks fluent Korean and English

MIGRATORY

Example:

- Born, raised and educated in Singapore
- Speaks fluent Mandarin and English
- Moves to a job in Mainland China working with Chinese clients

2nd GEN (Some affinity)

Example:

- Born in Australia to Cantonese parents
- Learned Cantonese from the family and went to visit Hong Kong frequently as a child
- Has some familiarity with Hong Kong culture

2nd GEN (No affinity)

Example:

- Born in the US
- Ethnically Asian
- No Asian language experience or cultural affinity

LOCALIZED EXPAT

Example:

- Born in the UK
- Moved to Japan, perhaps studied there
- May speak fluent Japanese

GLOBAL NOMAD

Example:

- Has worked in several locations
- Has become culturally agile
- No local language skills

NEW ARRIVAL

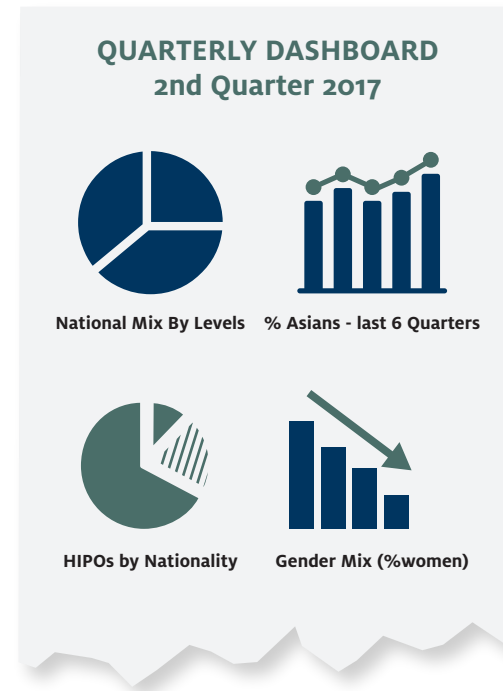
Example:

- Born in Germany
- Moved to Hong Kong last year
- No Asian language skills

Recognizing that “Asian” is a broad term that goes beyond ethnicity and citizenship, a global investment firm started to delve deeper into the definition of “Asian.” They developed a grid that took into account cultural experiences, work experiences, ethnicity, and language skills. They interviewed Asian leaders to seek inputs to questions such as “How would you define Asian?,” “Where would you place yourself?,” “What particular strengths does your group

bring to the organization?” and “What challenges does your group face?” The result was the development of a “Cultural Spectrum” which categorized employees in Asia into 8 segments. The company uses the framework to inform its people processes in Asia. With this tool, the firm is not only able to better understand its Asian talent, but also get a sense of how they are doing in terms of hiring, attrition, and promotions.

Measuring Talent KPIs for Asia



- ✓ The initiative is led by the global D&I team, sponsored by a senior executive in the Executive Leadership Team (ELT).
- ✓ The dashboard is published every quarter.
- ✓ It is a one-page summary of nationality, gender mix in the leadership pipeline, and the high-potentials community.
- ✓ The dashboard also reaches the global ELT.

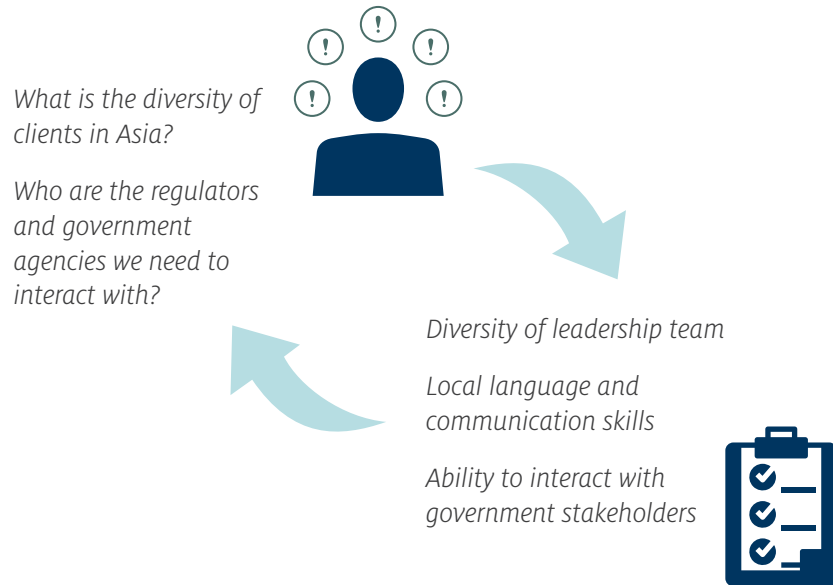
To coerce various business functions to create a more diverse succession pipeline, the regional HR team in a financial institution partnered with the D&I team in Asia-Pacific to publish a quarterly update on what the talent pool in each business looks like. The data reported included the Asian

pipeline, nationality by business unit, and gender split in high-potential pool. The rather unconventional “name and shame” approach made businesses sensitive to the level of diversity in various groups and nudged them to act on improving the diversity balance.

ORGANIZATION PRACTICES



Matching External and Internal Stakeholders



An HR leader (who had recently joined) at a technology company that had been in Asia for a few years realized that the APAC leadership team comprised young American men mostly in their 30s, with limited experience of running businesses especially in Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia, which were sizeable markets for the company.

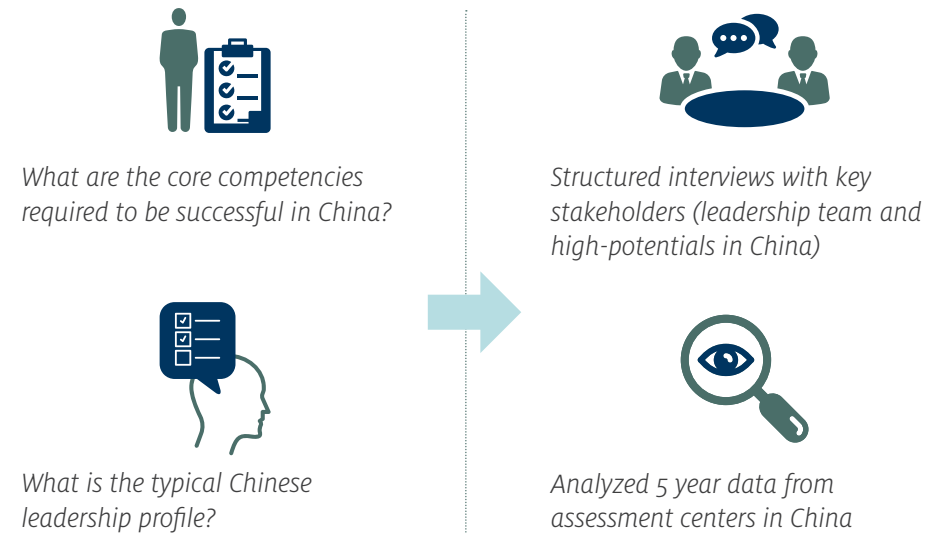
Since the organization needed to work a lot with regulators and local

governments, not having local talent in the leadership teams was identified as a big risk. They needed people who could go and speak to governments and regulators on the organization's behalf and who also understood how to transact business effectively in Asia.

The regional leadership, along with HR, spent 6-9 months replacing "western" leaders at the helm with local leaders.

Source: CCL Research, 2022.

Using Data to Drive Talent Decisions in Asia



An FMCG company realized that, with ambitious growth targets in China, it needed to ensure a strong pipeline of local talent to drive and grow business. It began by trying to understand core competencies required to be a successful leader in China. Through structured interviews with key stakeholders, including the leadership team and high potential Chinese talent, the company examined key business and leadership challenges in China in order to answer

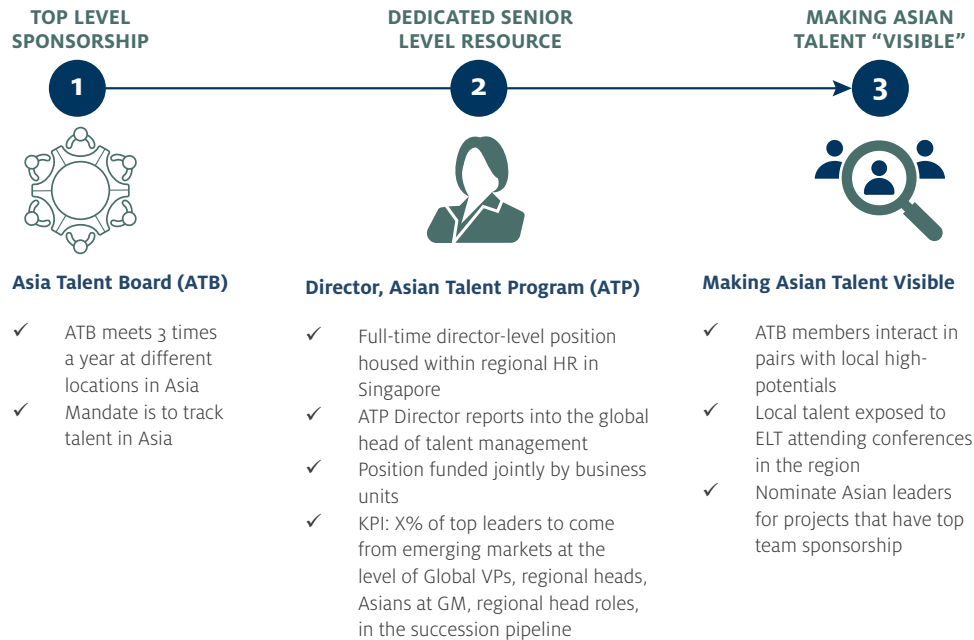
the important question: "What are the few critical success factors to be a competent functional leader in our organization in China?" At the same time, it sought to better understand the profile of its Chinese talent by leveraging 5 years of data from its assessment centers in China.

With both sets of information, the company was able to identify key gaps and target specific areas for development.

ORGANIZATION PRACTICES



Dedicated Asian Talent Program

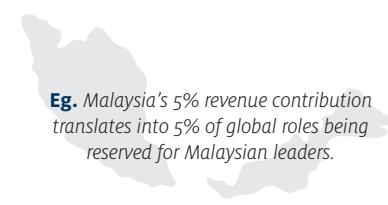


Realizing that Asian leader pipeline development required dedicated focus, a pharmaceutical company started several very focused and critical initiatives. The organization set up "Asian Talent Program" headed by a director-level executive based out of its APAC headquarters. The position was sponsored by the global head of talent management in the global headquarters and was jointly funded by businesses.

The Asian Talent Board (ATB) was set up to review the status of Asian talent periodically. The group, comprising regional and global HR and business heads, meets thrice a year in different locations, always within Asia.

On the back of ATB meetings, senior leaders also meet up with next-generation high-potential talent in host countries.

Hardwiring Diversity of Nationalities in Global Roles



In a bid to be seen as a truly global organization, a European Oil and Gas engineering company came up with a structure of allocation of talent (in the global pool) representing each country in direct proportion to the size of business in that country.

For example, if Malaysia contributed 5% to the global revenue, the global talent pool would comprise 5% talent from Malaysia.

Owing to a very structured and unambiguous approach, the organization achieved a very diverse executive team.

ORGANIZATION PRACTICES



Making Competencies More Asia-Friendly



Capabilities the C-3 Leader Must Demonstrate to Get Her Bosses' Job in Three Years

A global technology firm having challenges with Asians being able to “access” global roles realized that using the same lens for Asian and American leaders may not be efficient. The regional HR team partnered with global HR to tweak leadership capability identification competencies for Asian executives.

The firm made a shift in recognizing what potential looks like in Asia by looking at

different (but closely related) competencies for Asian executives. For instance, in Asia, they replaced “mental horsepower” with “curiosity,” “drive” with “determination,” and “influence” with “fostering engagement.”

The company reportedly lowered mid- to senior-leader turnover in top-talent as a result of moving to the new competency model.

Tweaking Hiring Criteria for Staffing Senior Regional Roles in Asia



KEY REASONS

- Doing business with local clients
- Negotiating with local suppliers
- Working with local regulators
- Liaisoning with governments
- Developing local talents

In an effort to reduce the impact of the “bamboo ceiling” for Asian leaders, a global organization changed its criteria for leadership recruitment/selection from competency-heavy to experience-focused.

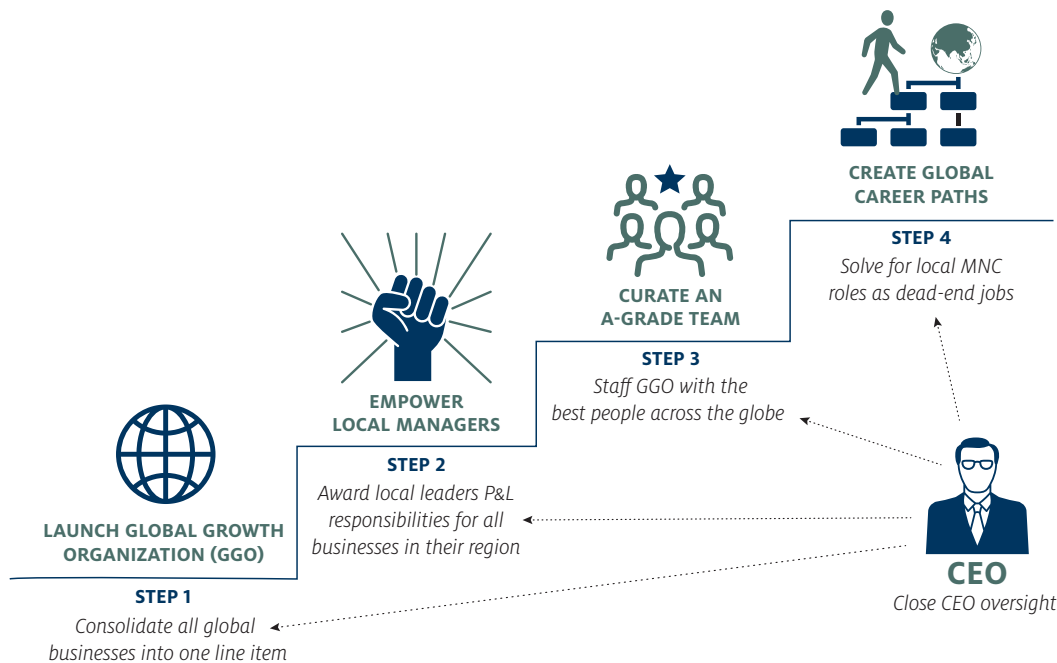
The interviewee HR leader believed that, by defining competencies (especially with a western lens), a bias was being introduced in the system, which was holding back Asian talent.

Valuing results over competencies, business and HR agreed on a “slightly” tweaked selection formula while evaluating leaders outside of the headquarters.

ORGANIZATION PRACTICES



Allocating More “Weight” to Asian Operations to Drive Leadership Development



To give Asian operations a “voice,” and to ensure headquarters do not “call the shots” on all decisions, and to elevate status of regional operations beyond just being “sales offices,” a global conglomerate decided to embrace a multi-pronged approach.

It made some structural adjustments to give local managers P&L responsibility for all the company’s businesses in their country or region and to have all the businesses’ personnel report to both the country and the business leaders. The CEO appointed one of the most respected

global leaders in the headquarters to lead what they called the Global Growth Organization (GGO), which included all Asia businesses. The global CEO made the GGO jointly responsible with the global businesses for increasing their sales outside the United States, but its priority was high-potential markets. Understanding that roles at the local organizations may be “dead-end” jobs, the smartest managers in the region were groomed for global roles.

The global CEO personally routinely reviewed the plans for and progress in growth markets.

Enabling Leaders to Lead Remotely



With incremental travel restrictions and long-term visa issues owing to the pandemic, a global chemicals company structured what they called “virtual-pats” (virtual-expatriates) or “digital nomads.” It could be a leader sitting in Singapore looking after a team in Indonesia, or a leader in the UK managing digital operations in APAC.

While the organization looked at taxation issues and compensation benchmarks on a case-by-case basis, it put in place several such roles, currently within Asia.

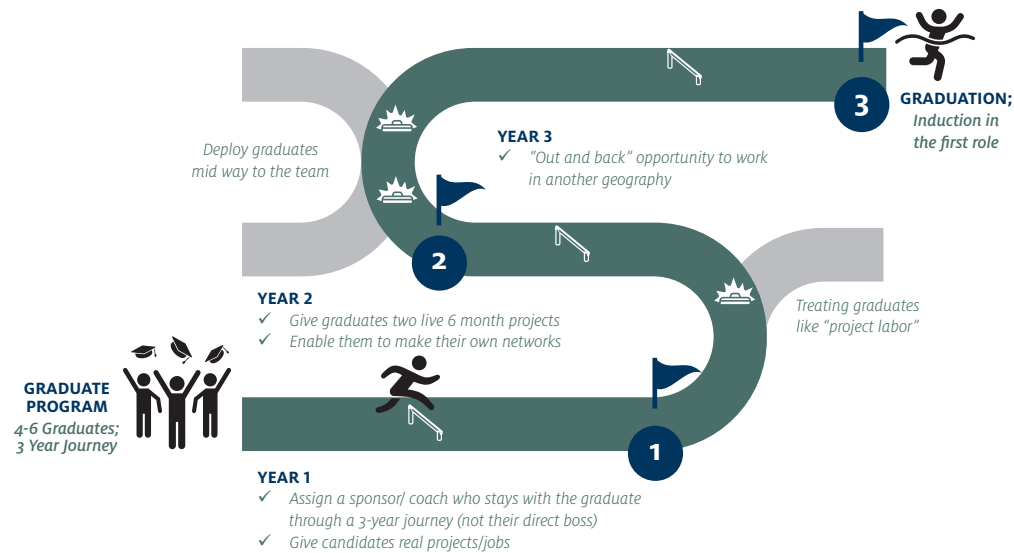
The organization believes that, while such a structure may be only possible for internal, non-client facing roles, at least in the short term, it will help ease the dire need to resolve visa and relocation issues.

Pipeline Strengthening

ORGANIZATION PRACTICES



Structured Onboarding for Driving the Global Leadership Pipeline



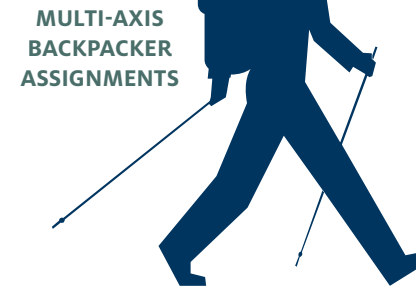
An Australian multinational set up a graduate program in its Asia operations to develop a pipeline of Asian talent. The program started on a small scale by hiring 4 to 6 candidates from local graduate schools in the region and putting them on a 3-year journey.

Each graduate had a sponsor or an advocate, someone who was a senior leader but not their direct boss. In year-one, they were given "real" jobs; year-2 involved two 6-month projects to help them build their networks within

the organization; and year-3 entailed two "out and back" opportunities for the graduates to experience two other geographies.

The program sponsors ensured they guarded the graduate pool against 3 critical risks – being treated like "project labor," lack of interest by mentors and sponsors, and people "stealing" them mid-way during the program.

Curating Multi-Axis Global Rotations



- ✓ Selected candidates are sent on delegations to Europe
- ✓ Most rotations are to a different business in a different country, but within the same function
- ✓ Short term 9-12 month rotations; some Asian colleagues are not mobile for a 4-5 year relocation
- ✓ Most assignments are projects-based, e.g., An individual from an R&D Center in India goes to the R&D Center in Germany for a 9-month project to work on a research initiative in a different product line

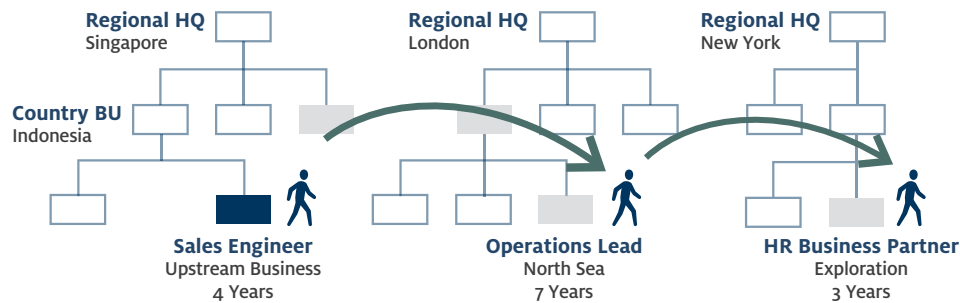
A global chemicals company adopts a program to encourage Asian talent to take delegations into Europe – short term, up to one year long (since a lot of Asian leaders were not open to 4- or 5-year assignments). These were structured for the early career phase to enable Asian talent to see different cultures and experience different parts of the organization.

Business nominates talent for such assignments to regional HR. HR then loops in 2 to 3 senior leaders to interact with and evaluate nominees over a 6-month period. Selected talent then attends local training programs and gets exposed to various businesses and key accounts. The 6-month evaluation culminates into multi-axis 9 to 12-month-long "backpacker tours."

ORGANIZATION PRACTICES



Enabling Non-Obvious Career Paths for Global Capability Development



A global oil and gas company deploys non-obvious career paths as a leadership development tool. The company believes that non-obvious career paths help leaders deal with disruption and prepare for change in a controlled environment.

To make such programs a success, business and HR work very closely to identify roles, appropriate talent, and

then set leaders up for success through a robust support system. The support system not only includes courses, classroom sessions, etc., but also very active mentoring to nurture learning agility, aspirations to do well, etc.

The company philosophy is that, if a leader is stuck in one function, irrespective of current performance, the leader is “not” successful.

Structuring Multi-Level Development of Asian Leaders



Aspiring for a holistic approach in talent development, a global technology products company, adopted a structured multi-phase approach. They started with the vision, and used that reflection to develop the talent development agenda. For each level of the pyramid, the HR teams conceptualized, designed, and deployed 6-month leadership development journeys.

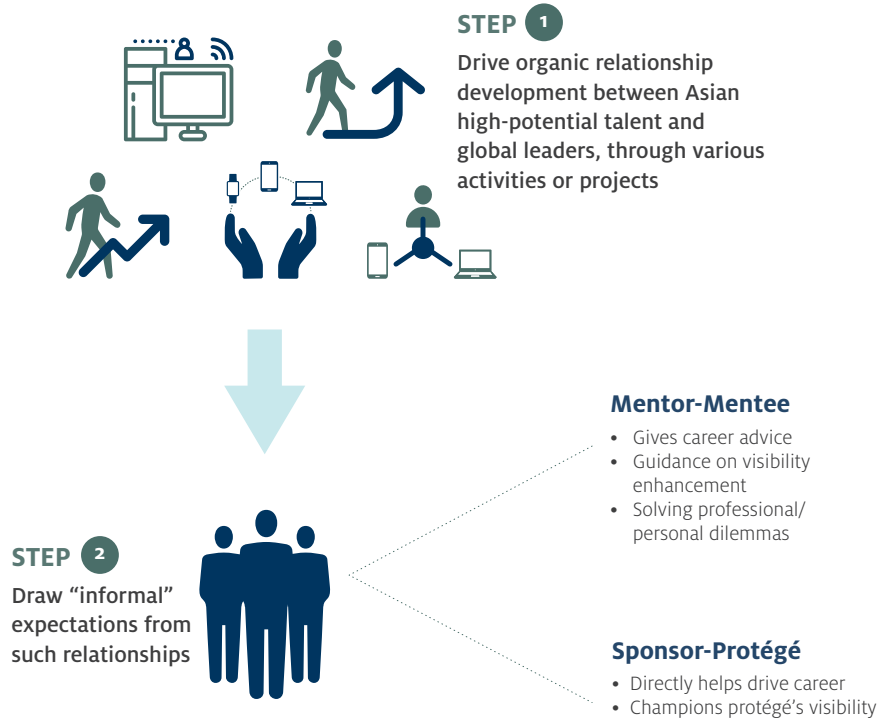
The company deployed a consulting firm to conduct internal interviews (of not only the concerned level but one level higher as well) to understand critical capabilities and key gaps. They identified risk-taking, innovation, agility, ambition, and self- and team-growth as key capabilities. In addition to putting together development programs, there was a special emphasis on curating the necessary experiences for talent.

Finally, the HR team also put a robust process in place to measure talent on the 5 capabilities, 6 months after the talent graduated from the program.

ORGANIZATION PRACTICES



Implementing Mentoring and Sponsorship Programs



An Asia-headquartered organization extensively used mentoring and sponsorship tools to develop talent to take on regional roles.

The HR team ran a campaign to educate talent in the organization on mentoring, sponsorship, and the differences between the two. The HR team organized several social initiatives to try to create organic mentoring relationships.

It subsequently also crafted some broad guidelines to get the most out of mentoring relationships, roles of mentors and mentees, and some good practices to be followed.

Source: CCL Research, 2022.

Structuring “Shadow Councils” for Exposing Asian Talent to Global Decision-Making



A global automobile company has set up a practice of curating “shadow councils” of young Asian leaders to expose them to senior-level strategic thinking.

The council, comprising high-potential talent in Asia, shadows the global executive team and contributes to key projects, policies, etc., being discussed.

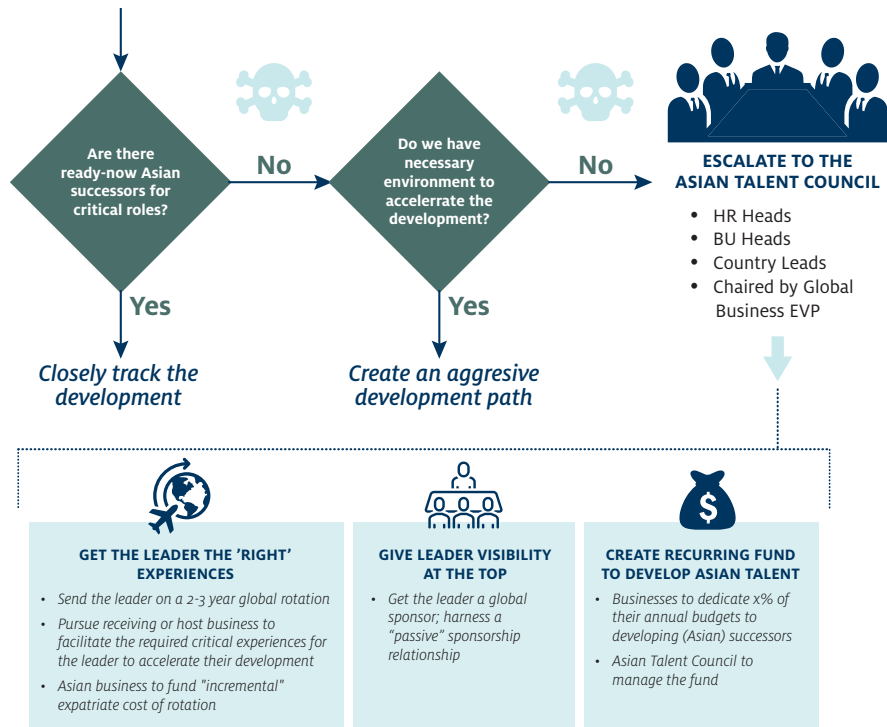
They take part in the dialogue, share their views, and execute small projects for the executive team.

The “shadow exercise” happens once a quarter. The council separately also meets once during the quarter to discuss areas that they would like to know more about when they next meet the executive council.

ORGANIZATION PRACTICES



Revising Asian Leader Development on a Bi-Annual Basis



A global energy company set up an “Asian Talent Council” to track and accelerate the development of Asian leaders. The council meets a few times a year and looks at the succession pipeline in “critical” roles. If there is lack of a robust succession pipeline in any particular function, role, or business, the council subscribes specific interventions to fix the situation and then tracks progress

on key issues. Initiatives led by the council include sending leaders for 2- to 3-year rotations to accelerate their development and to build their exposure to certain technical roles, ensuring visibility to high-potentials with the executive leadership team at the headquarters. The council also looks to develop a recurring fund to facilitate developmental rotations of Asian leaders.

Driving an Ecosystem of Asian Leader Development

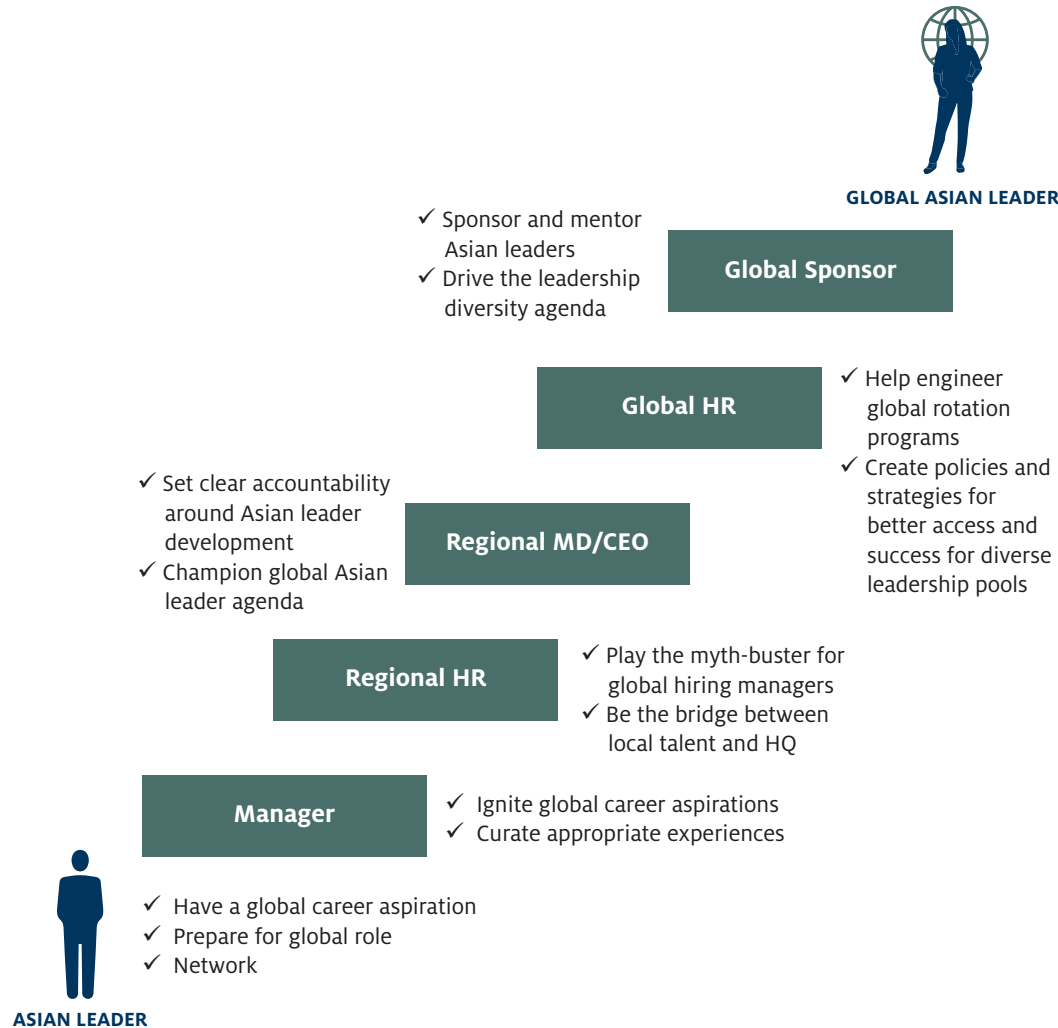


A global pharmaceutical company, in its attempt to make the global Asian leadership development process sustainable, integrates the programmatic intervention (a multi-module program) with an internal coaching initiative and stretch assignments running in parallel with the modules. The organization is

rolling the workshops out pan Asia with mid- to senior-level leaders.

The pharma company also refreshed their internal dialogue about curating a suitable culture that promotes D&I, and also makes people aware of potential inherent biases at play.

Developing Global-Ready Asian Leaders



“ I benefitted from formal and informal mentoring programs in the company. Mentors gave me a lot of feedback. I also guess the biggest change for me has always been the times when I worked with a coach. ”

Pipeline Strengthening

ROLE OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

It takes several stakeholders to build a strong pipeline of global Asian leaders. Interviewees cautioned that key initiatives to break the “bamboo ceiling” have to be headquarter-sponsored. They added that, if organizations try to solve for the global Asian leader challenge in Asia (only) through local initiatives, it may be a very long journey.

6 different stakeholder groups need to work in tandem. Global executive leaders must be executive sponsors of the Asian leadership agenda, set clear accountability around talent development in Asia, drive the diversity agenda, and even personally mentor Asian talent.

Global HR must partner with the leadership team to implement the diversity agenda, while also tag-teaming with regional HR to structure developmental rotations.

Regional MDs must be local sponsors for Asian talent, liaising with the headquarters to ensure a constant spotlight on Asian leadership development. The local MD must also ensure that local leadership development stays top-of-the-mind for global leadership teams.

HR has a critical role to play in facilitating the development of local leaders. The regional HR function needs to work with the regional president and global HR to ensure that the Asian leadership development agenda is top-of-the-mind for the enterprise. Regional HR must play a myth-buster role to dispel myths around what Asian leaders can and cannot do. They must also actively “market” Asian talent aggressively for global roles, almost playing the match-maker to help Asian talent access global roles.

The managers of Asian talent must create stretch opportunities to push Asian talent out of their comfort zone, helping them overcome cultural constraints. The managers also play a key role in igniting aspiration in Asian leaders to pursue global career paths.

Finally, Asian leaders themselves must aspire to get into global roles, verbalize their aspiration(s) to their managers, and work toward overcoming global leadership gaps, if any.

“ Covid has helped make the world smaller for Asian leaders; they can work with more global partners, more often. Virtual environment also in a way promotes an inclusive culture; there are more people joining meetings, and more exposure to global partners, stakeholders, customers overseas. ”

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white collared shirt and a dark blazer, is seated at a desk in a professional office environment. She is looking intently at a laptop screen. In the background, other people are working at desks, some using laptops. The entire image has a teal color overlay.

Section V

LEADERSHIP IN THE NEXT NORMAL

KEY TRANSFORMATIONS

The world has witnessed a paradigm shift in the past few years. While the pandemic transformed how people work, several changes in country-level leadership transformed people views about nationalism. More recently, several conflicts and conflict-like situations have transformed the geopolitical world order. These global transformations impact the prospects of global Asian leaders, directly or indirectly.

The last decade has seen a sporadic rise of political leaders with nationalistic agendas that they and their political parties espouse to different degrees. In extreme cases, such agendas have transformed into “my people first,” rejection of globalization, emphasis on certain ethnic groups or communities, and inciting racist feelings against immigrants with a heightened rhetoric. Such sentiments in several cases have resulted in more rigid control of national borders, protectionist measures, and other blatant preference for the “local” over the “foreign.” Projecting this on a global talent backdrop, such a context has led to more instances of racist attacks on Asians, escalation of cognitive biases while taking talent decisions, and therefore fewer global roles being staffed by non-locals, Asians, or otherwise.

The increasing conflicts in Europe and Asia, and very differing, sometimes opposing points of view of political leaders, have resulted in a multi-polar world, with countries preferring to join formal or informal “blocks” or groupings. While global companies understand that, in a multipolar world, revenues will be distributed more than ever beyond traditional markets, yet the top management remains concentrated at headquarters, where executives may lack understanding and line of sight into new markets or regions. Such multi-polarity in the world may also influence where companies “decide” to expand their footprint. This can limit global opportunities for Asian leaders and, worse still, negatively influence the global D&I agenda.



INCREASING NATIONALISM

‘Our People First’

TREND:
Increasing instances of preference for the well-being of citizens of one’s own nation over and above the well-being of citizens of other nations.

- IMPACT:**
- Fewer senior leadership global opportunities for Asian leaders in headquarters of “western” MNCs
 - Increased cognitive biases
 - Increasing incidents of racism

“There’s a great advantage for locals in being in the head office, and they don’t particularly want to share nice plum top-jobs with non-locals; in my own career, it worked against me, otherwise I could have become the global head of banking.”



MULTI-POLAR WORLD

‘You versus Me’

TREND:
Power being distributed among several significant nations/group of nations, concentrating wealth and/or military capabilities, and ability to block political arrangements threatening their interests.

- IMPACT:**
- Marginalized D&I agendas
 - Skewed geographical opportunities for regional/global roles

“The world is regressing to pre-1945 levels of tribalism, and that is going to be increasingly reflected in the way multinationals are going to be organized. So unfortunately we may see a negative needle movement on D&I as compared to what we’ve seen historically.”



NEW HYBRID WORLD

‘Work from Anywhere’

TREND:
Shift towards a flexible working model where employees work partly in the physical workplace, and partly remotely.

- IMPACT:**
- Reduced talent mobility
 - Better inclusion through online access
 - More potential opportunities for relocating global roles to Asia
 - More potential virtual-pat roles (wherein a leader manages another geography remotely)

“Working virtually, we can be more inclusive, have more people join the meetings, more exposure to global partners and stakeholders, have more global roles based in Singapore, and get closer to customers overseas.”



DEI CENTRALITY 'Push for the Mainstream'

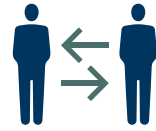
TREND:

More companies are rethinking, updating and revamping their D&I initiatives and strategies.

IMPACT:

- More organizations “talking” about diversity of nationalities
- Better inclusion initiatives to bring under-represented groups into the mainstream.

“Everybody should get an opportunity, for example, to apply for a certain role, and if we already know that some communities have been held back because of systemic barriers to apply for such roles or to be successful in those roles, then things need to be corrected so that those barriers are removed.”



INTERDEPENDENT WORLD 'My Success Depends on Your Success'

TREND:

Scale of latest global challenges make it impossible for one country or region to find or execute impactful solutions alone. There is a growing realization that if one population/demographic/part of the world is left behind, that will impact the global “equilibrium.”

IMPACT:

- Greater understanding and investment in D&I agenda
- Growing investment and risk-taking in defining new economic, organizational and societal models of success

“The pandemic has underlined the fact that we all need each other if the world has to progress. Development in pockets is not sustainable in the long-term.”

New Realities... Cont'd.

KEY TRANSFORMATIONS

The last few years have demonstrated that virtual/hybrid working arrangements can be as effective, if not more, than the traditional work-from-office model. Thanks to the pandemic, even more conservative organizations have embraced new ways of doing work. In a hybrid work environment, there are both advantages and disadvantages for the development of global-ready leaders. Some organizations describe the advantages of having virtual expatriates or “virtual-pats” take on regional assignments without moving to another country. While this seems to be more applicable for non-client-facing roles, it has increased the pool of talent available for regional roles. Working in a hybrid environment also allows organizations to provide more leaders with exposure to regional and global responsibilities through cross-country and cross-cultural projects and assignments. On the flip side, leaders are also concerned that, as it becomes easier to take on these regional roles based anywhere in the world, global roles may move even outside Asia.

In theory, hybrid working should translate into more global roles in Asia; however organizations still have varying degree of skepticism around remote working, especially for leadership roles. Owing to budget constraints, heightened awareness about carbon footprint, and very efficient collaboration technology platforms, the need for talent mobility has shrunk. So, the organic multi-culture, multi-geography exposure Asian talent had pre-pandemic has reduced, severely impacting global-readiness of Asian leaders. Few organizations have also tried to move roles to Asia, rather than Asian leaders to overseas roles, but with varying degree of success; time zone differences and cultural barriers primarily act as stalls.

Racism seems to be on the rise across some parts of the world. Corporate awareness on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) seems to be higher than ever before, but it is still marred with misconceptions and biases. For instance, some interviewees shared that, in Asia, there is a bias that the D&I agenda somehow undermines the spirit of meritocracy. “Just because you are looking to improve the diversity of your team, it does not mean that you are lowering the bar on meritocracy,” explained one leader. Most interviewees agreed that companies need to create more diverse management teams that are able to understand the opportunities and the challenges the business faces in its current and future markets. Bringing DEI into the mainstream bears well for Asian leaders as the number of opportunities for leaders to step into regional or global roles may increase.

“ We are a very traditional organization, deep rooted in our rich history; to be successful in the future, that traditional culture must co-exist with agile, future-embracing, innovation culture. ”

Section VI

THE WAY FORWARD



The Way Forward

DEVELOPMENT JIGSAW

With Asia fast becoming the world’s driving force, organizations must have Asian leaders who can take on vital roles in their global strategy. These global Asian leaders need to effectively direct local and regional businesses, and to contribute and execute toward the joint global growth plans. Leaders aspiring for global roles must build the “right inventory” of mindset, skills, and experiences, resulting in actions that improve the access of Asian leaders to global roles and their chances of success once they are in regional/global roles.

The 6 key stakeholders – leaders themselves, their managers, regional MD/leadership team, regional HR, global HR, and the global sponsor – play a key role in helping leaders build appropriate experiences. Asian leaders, for instance, must improve their levels of self-awareness, they must receive compelling mentoring by their managers.

While talent themselves need to identify their key gap areas across the 5 global leadership capabilities – courage, curiosity, trust, influence, and strategic thinking – HR must help them close the gaps by putting them through the most appropriate leadership development interventions.

Asian leaders must also seek boundary spanning experience to become “comfortable with discomfort.” To curate valuable experiences, managers of Asian leaders must work with regional HR, regional, and global leadership teams.

Interviewee regional and global leaders emphasized that Asian leaders themselves need to take ownership and lead their careers on the global leadership path. They must be their own “agents,” make themselves visible, seek appropriate experiences, and understand organization’s global strategy.

Facilitating the Global Asian Leader Development Journey



“ It’s really people’s own responsibility to take advantage of that [opportunities] rather than sit there and wait for someone to come and tap you on the shoulder. So, we emphasize that people are responsible for driving their own career, obviously with their line manager, but taking personal responsibility. ”

LEARNINGS



Global Asian Leader (GAL) development remains a big challenge for organizations with regional/global aspirations.



The challenge comprises “enablers” and “blockers” that impact Asian leader’s access to and success in global roles.



To succeed in global roles, Asian leaders must develop key attributes and mindsets, get global experience, and initiate appropriate actions.



Organizations with structured, multi-stakeholder-driven approach get higher returns on their Asian leader development investment.



Recent global megatrends such as virtual/hybrid working, rising nationalism, have adversely impacted GAL development initiatives.

ACTIONS

- ❑ Global sponsors at the executive team level need to drive the Asian leadership development agenda.
- ❑ Organizations with global aspirations must build “diversity in leadership nationality” in their D&I agenda.
- ❑ Organizations must identify the root causes of “bamboo ceiling.”
- ❑ Regional leadership team and HR must enable Asian leaders to “access” global succession pipelines.
- ❑ Leaders with global career aspirations must work on 5 key attributes – courage, curiosity, trust, influence, and strategic thinking.
- ❑ Leaders must build a global mindset, and get global experiences under their belt.
- ❑ Six stakeholders – Asian leaders, their managers, regional HR, regional leadership team, global HR and global executive sponsor(s) – must jointly work to develop a stronger pipeline of Asian talent.
- ❑ In current times of increased nationalism and polarization of the world, organizations must passionately pursue their D&I agenda to create a diverse leadership pipeline.

The Way Forward

KEY TAKEAWAYS & LEARNINGS

5 key learnings emerge from the *Global Asian Leader: From Asia, For the World* research study:

The global Asian leader pipeline health has only deteriorated in the last 5 years.

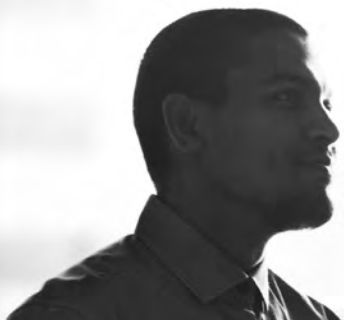
There are some factors that block “access” of Asian leaders to global roles and set them up for failure even if they were to make it to a global assignment. Organizations must identify and solve for these “blockers.”

There is a critical combination of mindsets-skills-experiences that can help leaders access global roles and excel at those.

Multiple stakeholders must help Asian leaders achieve success in global roles. This includes the leader himself, his/her manager, HR and even the key sponsor(s) in the global executive team or board.

Recent megatrends such as the pandemic, rising levels of nationalism, racism and polarization, and changing nature of work directly or indirectly influence the Asian leader development initiatives in global organizations.

“ **We must overcome our internal resistance and invest in building a global leadership pipeline; despite our individual opinions, the reality is that majority of the world youth is in developing Asia.** ”



CCL's GAL PROGRAM

Transforming ideas into actions, Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) has developed a program to help organizations prepare their Asian leaders for global roles. The Global Asian Leader (GAL) program helps leaders understand their leadership impact and increases their ability to lead strategically across functions of the enterprise and around the globe. As a result of participating, leaders will:

- ✓ Draw on deep self-awareness to leverage leadership and boost personal resilience
- ✓ Cultivate and develop greater leadership curiosity, to seek new perspectives and experiences, thereby expanding the leadership mindset and skillset critical for the success of global Asian leaders
- ✓ Receive personal leadership lessons from the experience of successful incumbent global Asian leaders

HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Strategic business simulation
- ✓ Large-group discussions and activities
- ✓ Personalized feedback from peers
- ✓ Small-group coaching
- ✓ Individual coaching session framework

www.ccl.org/gal

Delivered via Face-to-Face or Live Online formats:



CURIOSITY

Why should I seek new experiences and perspectives to broaden my horizons?



COURAGE

How can I approach difficult situations with courage and strength?



TRUST

How can I show up as a more credible leader?



What can I learn from incumbent Global Asian Leaders?



STRATEGIC THINKING

What can I do differently in order to think strategically in the face of complexity?



INFLUENCE

Why do I need to influence and build the right networks?



ASPIRATION

What's next for me in my global leadership journey?

To learn more about this topic or the Center for Creative Leadership's programs and products, please contact our Singapore office +65 6854 6000 or email ccl.apac@ccl.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Sunil Puri is Asia Head of Research and Product Development at the Center for Creative Leadership. He is a seasoned leadership and human capital researcher and thought leader with more than 20 years of experience across large global organizations. Sunil has authored several research studies, including *BOLD 3.0: Future Fluent Board Leadership in Asia*, *Imagining Asia 2030: Future Fluent Asian Leader*, *Architecting Future Fluent Culture: Critical Role of Human Resources (Asia Study)*, *Developing Global Asian Leaders: From Local Stars to Global CXOs*, *CHRO 3.0: Preparing to Lead the Future HR Function in Asia*, *HR Leadership Stall Points*, and *Developing Next Generation Indian Business Leaders: The Keys to Success*. In 2015, he co-edited a book titled *Human Capital Insights: Inspiring Practices from Asia*, for Asia. Sunil is an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, India, and the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad, India.

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