



Building Trust in a Global Team

The leadership skills of senior executives are being tested when it comes to creating cohesion and direction in regional or global teams. **Criticaleye** reports on how to get it right

According to a poll taken at Criticaleye's Asia Leadership Retreat, some of the biggest challenges when leading a global or regional team are: communicating and collaborating effectively, managing multiple reporting lines, finding a solution to a lack of empowerment from HQ, and the 'always on', 24-7 nature of leadership for executives.

Michael Crompton, General Manager for Asia at Criticaleye, comments: "When leading an internationally dispersed team, you need a combination of great people and organisational skills. You must make time for face-to-face discussion, where you are listening to feedback and letting teams develop ideas about the markets they know, rather than doing all the talking and being directive.

"Perhaps the hardest part lies in creating a sense of everybody striving towards a common goal, while understanding that each market will have a different way of getting the job done."

We asked a range of experts for advice on the best ways to lead a global team. >



James Hallatt

Senior Vice President Oral Health Category, GSK

Over-Communicate

When it comes to trying to manage separate teams in different time zones, the best piece of advice that I can offer is to double the level of communication and over-connect. If you don't, you will be in the business of herding cats and your team will start to become dysfunctional.

My teams will be on the phone to each other all the time, but this is not enough. Face-to-face discussion will always be required to get a better understanding of what is happening on the ground. For example, a senior group from my team will visit our twelve international areas of operation once a year. This will be a three-day summit during which we will sit down and try to get to the bottom of problems.

It is also important to make sure you do not turn your global headquarters into an ivory tower. Don't cut yourself off from the realities that your employees are facing on the ground in different countries. At our HQ we have people from over thirty different countries working for us, and we get all the leads from our twelve different international areas to join us in the UK twice a year.

Making your global HQ as multicultural and diverse as possible will allow you to better understand how to manage your team members who are based abroad.

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Mark Whitby

NED, TotalMobile

Streamline Decision-Making

There is always going to be a sense of tension between local and global teams. Healthy debate around the scale that a corporate office is going to bring to a project, and how it can be tailored to different regions and functions, is to be expected. It is the job of the regional lead to be a translator, someone who explains back to the corporate HQ what the priorities are and what resources are required to achieve them, and then to relate the response back to local leaders.

For example, we dealt with a perceived lack of empowerment locally by devolving accountability to the appropriate level within the organisation, and then reminding people that this comes with accountability. Understanding how to apply this, and then streamlining

the decision-making process to allow people to get things signed off easily, is key – if you do it incorrectly, it will cause you serious problems.

This should not come at the cost of building alignment around principles and goals though – creating a united global team is key to ensuring that it functions well in the long term.

You can test alignment by having straight conversations and by observing how team members operate in leadership meetings; how they operate with their own teams; and how they get feedback from them. You simply cannot afford to allow one leader to fall backwards or be reluctant when it comes to uniting on a decision.



Devyani Vaishampayan

Founder, HR TECH Partnership

Immerse Yourself in Culture

As the leader in a global team, you need to take some time to understand the different business cultures in the countries that your team members are operating in.

Depending on the nations involved, there are often going to be different attitudes towards issues like work/life balance that you will need to be aware of. There may also be differences in people's approaches towards respect for authority too, and this will influence a team member's ability to speak up and challenge during meetings.

Cultural issues are often overlooked. The HRD has a role to play here in bringing these problems to the attention of leaders as they are ideally placed to do this being, more often than not, part of the executive team. However, the culture discussion is not one that should be managed separately; it should be an inherent part of the overall business strategy.

If your business strategy involves different global markets, then you need to be thinking about what level of

innovation each market will individually require from a local team and the level of competition that they will face. This should then inform your thinking on the kind of people that need to be recruited to successfully face these challenges.

TOP FIVE CHALLENGES OF LEADING A REGIONAL TEAM:

- Communication & collaboration
- Managing multiple reporting lines
- Lack of empowerment from HQ
- The 24-7 nature of leadership
- Establishing common goals

Source: Criticaleye Asia Leadership Retreat Research 2018



Simon Constance

Partner, People Advisory Services, EY

Create a Narrative

Your team members need to feel that they believe in and respect the people they are working with in order to feel fully invested in a project. This will also help to deal with one of the main problems that global teams face: creating trust.

When doing this, it is important to never underestimate the power of the personal connection. You may only get to meet someone once a year but, as a leader, if you can make a connection to their personal life, their hobbies and interests, you can keep an inter-personal relationship alive for much longer than you think.

What good global team leaders excel at is producing a compelling narrative that binds everyone together. It is important to set out where the team is going and how, by working together, they can meet its objectives. In order to do this, you need to create an environment where people are willing to get into the conversation and debate issues without fear.

This can only happen by allowing the team to have the space and time to form and shape their own ideas. When you are trying to work over different continents and platforms, this is a really good way of not only developing levels of cooperation and communication, but trust too.

Criticaleye's next Asia Leadership Retreat will be held on 4th to 5th April 2019 in Singapore. For more information, [click here](#)