

The “Essential” Characteristics of Global Leadership

Dynamics of Global Leadership

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### **The “Essential” Characteristics of Global Leadership**

To be a global leader is to be one that has a unique set of skills that allows the person to navigate an array of unusually challenges and opportunities. In examining global leaders and leadership, it is critical to be mindful that although many of the characteristics and behaviors that reside within the domestic leader are also present with the global leader, these characteristics and behaviors as well as those unique to the global leader must be highly amplified in order for the global leader to have a presence. Another interesting aspect is that where at one time any discussion of global leadership would be one exclusive to state leadership and key religious figures now finds the leaders of industry also present in the same context. Black Et Al. (2014) brings to light and interesting aspect about leadership and speaks to the age old debate as to whether leaders are born or made. To these ends, it would appear and Black alludes to a conclusion that the best leaders are born in that the most successful leaders have inherently born characteristics just waiting to be developed and harnessed. The researchers establish leaders as those who are born with these traits, behaviors, and characteristics then made. Black ET AL. (2014) examples the athlete or musician that has the skills to excel to mastery in their given specialization then, through knowledge acquisition, coaching, practice, and reaching into the core of their souls reach a level of mastery that few can equal.

It is in this context that leaders, especially global leaders mature and succeed. What is also important to note, is that what Black and other authors in this report will discuss, is that there are inherent traits, talents, abilities, and behaviors that are the “essence of global leadership.” In evaluating the work of Black ET AL. (2014), the researchers claim that there the body of these unique aspects of the global leader are grounded in a number of core themes. For

example, the researcher underscores the leader's ability to intuitive. This is a critical skill because at the most basic of terms is the gift or power of the leader to have a level of intuition that is reliable enough to guide the decision making process, read people, take a global visualization of a given situation in order to make quick decisions, and understand the potential the products, services, and at a political level dialogs will yield. In examining the essence of global leadership, one is quick to realize that although Black and his colleagues were able to capture these essences in one book, in reality, to fully understand this area of leadership, it best to examine only two in order to get the full breadth of what the researchers are communicating. Therefore, this report will examine two unique aspects within the essence of global leadership those being that global leaders inquisitive and are curiosity killers.

### **Global leaders inquisitive**

True global leaders asks themselves questions and ask others the how, what, when, why and how. It is through the acquisition of knowledge and understanding that true decision making can take place. Through the process of inquiry, global leaders understand if what they are looking at is a short-term gain or will what they are looking at have a long term return. It is important to understand, that there is nothing wrong with a short-term gain, one need only look at the return that the pet rock, Teddy Ruskin, and other flash in the pan products have returned in profits. The same holds true for relationships. It is common for a company looking to be acquired to seat a leader that can put an organization into a profitable position, thus making it valuable to the market, sell the company, then leave after the acquisition is complete. The second example supports Black ET AL. (2014) notion that global leadership can either suck the life out of the leader or create vigor meaning, that those who seek to be world leaders either look at the glass has half empty or half full. In the example of the company positioning itself for sale, in the

example of the company positioning itself for sale, to the current membership they may see the system as on a collision course with failure while in contrast, the leader that sees that the company can be repositions, looking to the system as yet an another opportunity to not only “fix it,” but is energized at the possibilities.

From another perspective, global leader’s people are always on the move seeking, inquiring, feeling the market, and identifying opportunities. True curiosity is an energizer that gives the global leader the reason he or she must get up in the morning and once back in bed at night addition awake-time so that the person can accomplish and learn more the next date. Black ET AL. (2014) suggests that in contrast is the leader with low level of curiosity. This is the person who maybe was once curios and a go getter however; now looks to the hunt with complacency the researchers state, “...you can feel and see if their faces and hear in their voices the energy drain as they recount all of the differences and complexities that they had to navigate over...” (p. 79). There is also another aspect that should be considered when comparing these two global leaders that being “presence” meaning that global leadership is not only how one global leader interfaces with another but also how the leader is perceived by his or her system’s membership.

One aspect to remember, and underscored by Black ET AL. (2014), is that do business on the world market is highly complex and requires the enterprise to understand a plethora of unique aspects that range from monetary exchanges through the uniqueness of the array of cultures that reside on the world market. Therefore, when the leader is complacent, showing signs of wear, and no longer radiates from the special spark inherent to the charismatic leader, the followers question if they are on the right team with the result being the same level of complacency that their leader is emanating. It is in this context, that global leaders must not use

the ability to inquire as a tool but rather inquisitiveness must be a “mindset” and it could also be suggested a way of life. In speaking to the mindset, the researchers establish that in interfacing with the global leaders, that many of these people do not remember being inquisitive leaving Black ET AL. (2014) to conclude that the ability to inquire is a natural or born trait or was developed early in life because the parents were curious. In this spirit, those who seek to know and understand and seek to satisfy their curiosity.

### **Curiosity killed the cat**

As the saying goes, “Curiosity killed the cat – but satisfaction brought him back,” Black ET AL. (2014) defines this as the global leader being a “curiosity killer” (p. 88). The researchers establish that those who seek to inquire want their questions answer so that rational decisions, choices, and understanding of whom and what they are dealing with can be satisfied. Some argue that strong leaders operate in the shadows in that as visible as they are, many leaders are introverts because it is within the soles of their thoughts, plans, and visions that the leader can gain mastery in what they want to learn, answer, and apply (Prichard, 2018). In fact, what the author suggests aligns with Black ET AL. (2014) in that, the leader is seen as a source of strength, knowledge, and mastery and before the leader uses his or her voice; the person wants to communicate from a place of strength.

It comes down to the correlation between inquiry and satisfying the curiosity with understanding. For example, Black ET AL. (2014) discusses the Gillette Guard razor and the company’s quest to understand how it could serve the needs of not only the domestic market but also the international market. The company’s R & D team realized that using fewer parts, had a shaving lubrication process, but was also be able to export to countries like India at an affordable price thus making the product affordable. In addition, the larger issue, and one that was critical to

enter the Indian market was the lubrication strip spoke directly to the health needs of the Indian consumer in that the product could travel this culture's skin that inherently had more bumps without causing cuts. Therefore, in this instance, in developing a product that was reasonable in price, while at the same time reducing discomfort due to razor cuts, Gillette's curiosity in needing to know what the product had to have to be successful in this market was satisfied with the result being the product has the line share of disposable razor space in the Indian market.

In contrast, there is the opposite of curiosity, which has the potential of setting an array of ramifications for those who simply don't want to know more about a sector of their industry than what is needed to support the supply chain and/or potential clients. Black ET AL. (2014) talks about this when describing a series of lectures they delivered supporting doing business in China. The researchers were surprised to learn that although there are many viable opportunities in this sector of the world, there were global leaders that had no desire to do business in Asia. What was learned was that the group Black and team were interfacing with had little to no experience traveling abroad thus had little idea of the many opportunities that existed. In sum, there was now curiosity even about the geographical region that has a reputation of being mysterious. Furthermore, the group was closed minded to a point that they were in a sector of the world that was known for exotic foods (ate western every night), the culture, and at no time would step out of their comfort zone. In speaking to the reasons why curiosity is often absent from many leader's mindset, the author states, "...although leaders might say they treasure inquisitive minds, in fact most stifle curiosity, fearing it will increase risk and inefficiency" (p. 1). In other words, the possibility of loss trumps the opportunity, and also speaks to the fear of the unknown. Gino (2018) affirms that when the leadership is polarized, it becomes the culture of the enterprise and in a survey conducted by Gino on a study population of 3000 employees that only about

24% reported feeling curious in their jobs on a regular basis, and about 70% said they face barriers to asking more questions at work” (p. 1). This data begs to ask the question, “If a company in today’s market is not asking questions internally, how can these future leaders bring their respective enterprises forward when the future on many companies will be predicated on doing business globally?”

### **Conclusion**

The report sought to examine two unique qualities of the global leader. The first is that the most successful global leaders are those with a desire to inquire. The second, is that business decisions can only be made once a high level of due diligence is conducted thus satisfying the leader’s curiosity. What was also learned, was that although the doing business on the world market represents a high level of potential success, many leaders fear the risks associated from expanding its current position. In fact, Black ET Al (2014) establishes that the polarization is so apparent, that these leaders will not even venture to a point of basic understanding of other countries, the people, culture, or opportunities. Furthermore, Mendenhall ET AL. (2018) suggests that part of the fear may also be based on the fear that some leaders experience thinking that they have to submit to more learning and competency development. In this instance, the fear may be based upon the feeling that the leader would appear ignorant to those he or she will be interacting with in the new markets. There is no doubt, that all should fear the unknown however; through inquiry, curiosity, the need to break free of their current paradigms, knowing that the next generation of business opportunity is global, and other drivers true global leadership cannot occur without taking a chance, asking questions, and then moving on what has been learned.

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