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How to lead a great global team

5 things we learned at this month's Leaders roundtable August 2018



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Working across global barriers can be a challenge – whether that manifests as a difference in language, time zones or process. During the August roundtable, we asked global marketing leaders for their experiences and advice.

Here are some of the key things we discussed:

1 Avoid being HQ-centric

It's necessary for global teams to operate under a central view and follow global brand protocol, yet it's also important to execute your global strategy at a local level, which means adapting to suit regional needs. There's no point thrusting your views onto a culture that won't value them.

In addition, those in head office are likely to have more business insight, as they are closer to the executive team. This can lead to an imbalance of power – whether real or imagined.

Global leaders must ensure everyone feels heard.

2 Communicate well and often

Global teams must apply extra attention to how often, and how well, they communicate. While it may seem archaic, some attendees found success with internal print and email newsletters – their teams enjoyed seeing themselves and others featured in them.

One marketer's CEO contributes to their online newsletter every week; this creates active discussion, particularly as the CEO replies to staff concerns and questions. Even if it's helping out with a guest blog, a strong voice from the figurehead can help pull people together.

One way to engage people is to associate your message with something fun or altruistic, suggested one attendee. If you link it to a charity or cause, people are more likely to contribute and feel the company has a positive message.

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3 Building the right team

One of the hardest parts of managing a global team is building an engaged community and understanding how everyone plays a part within it. One marketer suggested having a 'bridge person' in each territory; they can help communicate across teams and build a picture of how everyone is working. One marketer employed a former air steward and found them to be more effective at communicating than anyone hired for their marketing knowledge.

Some leaders use personality tests such as Myers Briggs and Crystal Knows. These tools allow you to communicate well with your team, and assess where skills maybe lacking.

Having uncovered the skills shortages in your team it may be time to make changes. Not moving fast enough to change bad hires can drag other employees down. "Get rid of people who aren't working to strengthen the rest of the team," one suggested. "If you re-emphasise to the team why you got rid of someone, it can actually boost morale. It's not because they weren't likeable, it's because you have a clear vision, which they didn't fit into."

4 See the value in face-to-face meetings

While things like Skype, Webex and interactive whiteboards are great tools to use between meetings, nothing improves collaboration like face-to-face interaction.

It's essential to have a reason to connect everyone across the globe on an annual basis and many marketers use their training budget to bring their team together in one physical space.

Sending people on foreign secondments– whether it's for one month or six – will help them learn about a new culture and a different part of the business.

Understanding these cultural obstacles is imperative. For example, your colleagues in Europe might be happy for you to leave the evening's social events early, yet those in Japan would take it as an insult.

5 Know what it takes to be a global leader

"Most leaders are extrovert, flexible, and adept at handling a difficult scenario," said one marketer. But the implications of operating at a global level mean it's also about effective time management.

Ensuring you have enough time for your team is a great way to show you empathise with them. One leader suggested keeping a spreadsheet and logging spent time with colleagues to ensure each has enough. "I log their children's and partner's names so they know I care."

Another suggested joining meeting calls early and using that time to have a personal chat. The same goes for one-on-one visits. "At dinner with them, make sure you talk about anything but work."

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About

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The B2B Leaders programme is a network of the most senior marketing figures at prestigious B2B brands.

Members benefit from a unique and invaluable opportunity to regularly network and collaborate with senior-level peers, sharing insights and discussing strategic challenges at events every month.

Membership is by invitation only, and includes:

- Your B2B Leaders Forum ticket, the only B2B marketing leaders event of its kind.
- Regular roundtables focusing on key marketing leadership topics.
- Monthly roundtable findings reports.
- Annual *B2B Leaders Report*, with key research data and insights.
- Monthly Premium content reports.
- A subscription to *B2B Marketing* magazine.

The B2B Leaders programme counts senior marketing names from Deloitte, Oracle, Atos, Dell, HSBC, KPMG and Adobe among its members, all sharing ideas on topics ranging from team development to board interaction.

To register your interest in the programme call +44 (0)20 7014 4920 or email adam.harper@b2bmarketing.net.



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