

As businesses expand, they need their employees to work beyond borders. Developing leaders with a global mindset is critical for an organisation's long-term success

By Priya de Langen

# Creating global talent



**A**s organisations expand beyond their shores, they need employees who will be able to work in international locations.

However, overseas postings open up new challenges such as a foreign work culture and established business practices. Preparing employees for this shift becomes critical in ensuring a successful placement. Graduate programmes, development courses, and secondment assignments can help employees improve their transferrable skills, grooming them for leadership roles at a global level.

### Laying the pipeline

Global employers say that it is critical for them to lay a talent pipeline in order to cater to the talent demand that they have. In order to do so, they make sure that they give ample opportunities for employees to develop and grow in their skills and roles.

“Being an international bank, it is important for us to build a diverse pipeline of local and global talent,” says Caroline Bagshaw, Head of HR, Singapore and Southeast Asia, Standard Chartered Bank.

The organisation has numerous offices around the globe and in Singapore, the bank has its operational and strategic hubs of the global Consumer Banking and Wholesale Banking businesses, including the global headquarters of Private Banking. As such, in Singapore alone, Standard Chartered employs over 7,000 people of 55 different nationalities.

Bagshaw says that with the organisation’s diverse footprint, it gives the bank the advantage to train and develop different people for its global talent pool. Grooming talent within the company starts with developing young employees. Standard Chartered has an International Graduate Programme to help “build a sustainable pipeline of talent globally.”

Annually, the bank hires 30 graduates into this programme in Singapore and it offers them the opportunity to take on different roles within a 12-18 month period with the option of an international move upon completion of the final year. “Our approach means that this junior talent pipeline develops a global perspective from their early career,” explains Bagshaw.

Similarly, for international shipping organisation, Maersk, building talent is a priority and HR makes sure that its hires are a right fit



**“In our company, in order to really move up, you need to have experience abroad. It broadens your perspective of how you see things and it is part of grooming leaders in a global company”**

Jan Holm, Managing Director, A.P. Moller Singapore

from the start. “We start out setting high standards for the people we hire and we have a good idea of which people would fit into our organization. For that, we have stringent tests through personal profiling and logical indicators,” explains Jan Holm, Managing Director, A.P. Moller Singapore.

The organisation offers various programmes to develop its employees so that it can retain its best talent. There is the two-year Maersk Line Graduate Programme (MLGP), which is targeted to post-graduates who have worked between two to five years. Employees under this programme are rotated among different functions and given international exposure and projects to develop and groom them for future management roles.

Also, the Maersk International Technology & Science (MITAS) programme is targeted at young, talented engineers and geoscientists. This is a two-year international course and 30 candidates are hired annually for it. Employees in this programme will be offered positions in the energy and offshore fields in Maersk Oil, Maersk Drilling or Maersk FPSO in several locations around the globe.

Holm explains that the company has an annual people session strategy to map out critical positions, such as an operations manager, in the organisation and do an assessment to find out if there are right talent for the positions. “There is a structured process in place to make sure that we have the right movement of talent.”

### Grooming the management team

Laying a talent pipeline also means that organisations need to choose and groom leaders who will be able to fit their roles and are able to work on a global scale if they are in large organisations, say experts.

Cassandra Cheng, Head of Learning and Talent Development, OCBC Bank, says that “each year, a group of high-potential employees are identified for leadership development.” This group of employees

## Managing priorities

As much as leadership skills are necessary, experts are saying that leaders need to manage their priorities and time in order to be successful in their roles.

Angeline Teo, MD and principal consultant of d'Oz International and PEPWorldwide Asia, says that leaders could benefit from additional skills such as how to manage themselves and be in control of situations. "As leaders move up the ladder and into a global role, they could feel like there isn't sufficient time to accomplish their work. One area to look at is how they could stay in control of their workload and time, to be more efficient," she advises.

Teo says that d'Oz International and PEPWorldwide (Asia) helps coach leaders and one of the leadership programmes, the Personal Efficiency Programme (PEP) leaders how to do more in less time, stay in control of workload, manage their time effectively and be more productive at managing information and teams.

She says that personal efficiency has to do with personal development. "If you have the ability to efficiently manage yourself, your time, your workload and your family, you will definitely be a happier person. This will also 'rub off' onto your team and this will help to create a culture within the organisation."

will attend a two-week residential programme – OCBC Executive Development Programme (EDP), to better their leadership and strategic management skills. The course includes classroom learning and project work revolving around OCBC business strategy. In addition, they are sent for Advanced Management training course offered by overseas business schools.

Employees also undergo mentorship programme with the senior managers.

"We believe that the sharing of knowledge and experience will contribute positively to these employees' personal and career growth within the bank," says Cheng.

Standard Chartered also keeps an eye on its leadership pipeline by identifying its high-potential pool. Bagshaw explains that "membership of senior high potential pools is confirmed through a calibration exercise, facilitated by HR, where business managers challenge each other on the talent pool proposals, while ensuring consistency and fairness."

Employers say that one of the ways of to groom potential leaders or leaders in their roles is to give them exposure is through secondment opportunities. Bagshaw says Standard Chartered gives opportunity for talent from Singapore take on leadership roles in the region and globally. She points out an example of an employee who took over the CEO position in China. Currently, the

bank has around 200 Singaporean staff based overseas. "We find that it is a very effective way to develop leaders for the Bank, as people will grow significantly through these experiences," she says.

Similarly in OCBC Bank, Cheng notes that potential leaders are given secondment assignments in the organisation's various offices around the region as well as to other group entities (GE, Bank of Singapore, Lion Global Investors, OCBC NISP and OCBC Securities) to gain regional exposure.

Holm says that Maersk tries not to label employees as high potentials per se as there is a "danger" in that. He says that assessing employees on an annual basis would be the best to find if talented employees maintain their good performance.

As such, Maersk has a process for leadership development and pipeline. He says that an employee starts out as an individual contributor and as the person moves on to lead others, he or she would have to take management courses to move into a leadership position. "We just throw people into challenges or jobs and see if they can swim. Of course, they get a lot of support in order to do that," he adds candidly.

Holm says that opportunities to work in global offices help prepare employees, especially leaders. "In our company, in order to really move up, you need to have experience abroad. It broadens your perspective of how you see things and it is part of grooming leaders in a global company."

### Working with a global perspective

Experts say that creating a global talent pipeline is critical for large organisations but also equally important, is the ability for employees to be able to handle cross-cultural situations, especially if the person is a leader.

The study *Boundary Spanning Leadership: Mission Critical Perspectives from the Executive Suite*, revealed that boundary spanning work capabilities are critical across all levels of leadership. When asked about the importance of working across boundaries at different levels of an organisation, 97% of leaders cited it as important at the senior executive level, 91% at the middle management level, and 43% at the entry level.

This boundary spanning work capability is something that employers say that they want not only in their leaders but also in all employees.

**94%**

of employers who were interviewed around the globe stated that they have a gap in talent

Cheng of OCBC says: “Today’s business landscape is a global one that demands for employees who are equipped with cross-cultural knowledge and skills in order to strategise, transact and win in the market place.” As a result, there is a need for managers to have a global perspective, she adds.

Bagshaw explains that 70% of employees’ development comes from learning-on-the job and international assignment are great opportunities to dive deeper into the business, learn about a new market or take on a more stretching-role. “They also allow our employees to share best practice, gain different perspectives and experience working with, or managing, colleagues from different cultures,” she says.

“We are a global company and have all types of nationalities. So, if you can’t act or work in a

global environment, it would be difficult for you,” says Holm. He recalls that when he was working in Copenhagen, he had to deal with 15 different nationalities in the office.

However, employers say that sometimes management lack the skills to fit an overseas role and this is a big issue. Holm explains that leaders working in overseas positions could face cross-cultural differences, especially if they are unable to communicate properly to their teams.

Bagshaw says successful managers are those who are able to adapt in terms of how they communicate and engage with people. Also, managers who are responsible for teams in different locations and from different cultures “require an inclusive leadership style which is gained from understanding and respecting those cultures,” she concludes. [hrm](#)



**NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY**  
Centre for Continuing Education



**70%**  
course fee funding

**WSQ Precision Engineering (PE) Graduate Diploma in Design and Processes**

The WSQ PE Graduate Diploma in Design and Processes is a joint programme by NTU Centre for Continuing Education and WDA. The objective of the course is to provide basic knowledge, techniques and skills in precision engineering design and processes that are used in the PE related manufacturing industry.

**50%**  
course fee funding

**WDA Integrated Circuit Professional Upgrading Series (IC-PLUS)**

WDA IC-PLUS encompass a series of Integrated Circuit Professional Development Programmes aimed to enable Professionals, Managerial and Executives (PMEs) in acquiring the latest IC technology knowledge, trends and tools to enhance and deepen their existing capabilities.

**50%**  
course fee funding



WDA Singapore workforce development agency



WSQ SINGAPORE WORKFORCE SKILLS QUALIFICATIONS



e2i Skills for Life  
Employment and Equity Institute



**Course Calendar**  
January to June 2012  
Scan code to download  
Also available for download on our website.

For enquiries call 6790 4212 or email [cce@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:cce@ntu.edu.sg)

[www.ntu.edu.sg/cce](http://www.ntu.edu.sg/cce)