



GLOBALISATION OF BUSINESS AND THE CHALLENGE OF ALIGNED TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

The challenges of developing a global business and then operating successfully on that global scale brings training and development issues to the fore - both strategic and tactical. Jeremy Francis, MD of global training provider Rhema Group, highlights the key issues and the solutions global players are using to address them.

Whether voluntarily or driven by market forces, organisations are increasingly globalising. Understandably their focus is on issues of shape, size, structure and location. Also of prime importance are product and service standardisation allied to clear branding and a seamless customer service experience, creating a global IT platform, and a common corporate culture. But this huge organisational effort can overlook important training and development (T&D) challenges and unless these are addressed, the global aspiration is a vision without substance.

What provides that people-related substance?

Best in Class (BIC) organisations recognise that consistent use of common job titles and descriptions is crucial, with common terminologies for internal structures, job roles and corporate culture. T&D plans must support the improvement and development of individuals. That demands optimal, common performance management and talent development systems which will operate globally.

BIC global operators incorporate at least three different measures of future and current success:

1. Attainment of personal objectives (linked to corporate objectives)
2. Observed behaviour using a job-specific competency framework
3. Evidence of commitment to the corporate culture and values.

BIC organisations mandate core T&D programmes and learning and development resources and then use them to:

- embed new protocols, policies and procedures (e.g. for project management)
- achieve culture change via leadership and change management programmes
- equip people with essential knowledge (including products/services)

Cross regional/multi-functional workshops encourage team working and cross-cultural understanding. The BICs truly seek to grow a learning organisation, sensitive to different

individual and cultural learning styles. Having provided a wide variety of L&D resources, they use a learning management system to monitor and measure varying levels of knowledge and skill assiduously, as well as individuals' confidence to use these. Powerful total capability management systems exist which can be deployed quickly to give both a global and granular view of a range of key data relating to recruitment, T&D, HR planning, appraisal of performance, competency and talent management, and succession/career planning.

The message is clear: BIC global organisations must achieve a complete picture of the people they have, the people they need, where they have them/want them, and how they should be developed and deployed for optimum operational impact. Only customisable software will deliver this.

Such organisations have strong centralised global HRD functions giving T&D policy direction, whilst acting as internal consultants and facilitators to country/region or line-of-business specific local HRD representatives with local flexibility in delivery. The vital combination - consistency of content plus sensitivity to local culture and languages - is often provided by a global or regional training provider with local representation.

Excellent strategy is vital, but must be allied to intelligent tactics; the day-to-day on-the-spot response to shorter term, ongoing, drivers of change within the business – i.e. what is actually happening. In BIC global organisations the HR director stays close to the business, predicting and contributing to the response to economic, political, technological and cultural change drivers.

Working regularly with such organisations, Rhema Group observes that BICs know that it is absolutely essential to use consistent and cost-effective blended solutions embracing instructor-led training, coaching, e-learning, m-learning (via mobile phones), technology (webinars) and online L&D resources. Experience has defined the irreducible necessities:

- a 'clearing house' of local, tactical T&D responses, via a central hub/portal communities of best practice on an intranet
- a common IT platform to monitor/measure effectiveness, using external as well as internal data
- speed of deployment.

A highly compressed case study of an organisation addressing the key issues outlined above is a global leasing specialist. This organisation has deliberately formed an ongoing working (and demanding) relationship with us as international T&D partner. It has given thought, time, effort and resources to providing a wide variety of L&D resources which blend training solutions in a wholly tailored manner. And it mandates and encourages managers and staff to use these across the globe. That is half the equation.

“balance of standardised global training programmes delivered with a local cultural emphasis”

Alongside this, the organisation has invested in a Global Performance Management System (GPMS), used to measure the achievement of personal objectives and observed behaviour relating to the employees' job and corporate values. Using their Best Commercial Practice (BCP) intranet, the company tracks effectively the use of processes and skills imparted in their global training programmes - such as their Key Customer Management programme.

A talent management/capability management system offers complete transparency as they plan for the future worldwide deployment of people. Using global/regional training providers, this BIC achieves the balance of standardised global training programmes delivered with a local cultural emphasis.

A final observation: global organisations differ from international or multi-national organisations in

three main respects when it comes to T&D. Firstly, they understand the need for a global/local approach within consistent culture, protocols and processes; secondly, they use technology to achieve transparency across the whole business; and thirdly, they balance standardised with customised solutions for cost effectiveness.

In short, they act like the most sophisticated nationals but in a global environment. Why? Because to succeed, they must.



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