



Raising the Bar: Achieving Best-in-Class Leadership Standards to Deliver on India's Promise

As Asia's profile has risen, so too has its influence on the evolution of global business practices. In fact, a recent survey of over 300 global C-level executives that my colleagues at Korn/Ferry International and I conducted in late 2006 together with the Economist Intelligence Unit indicated that the region is seen as even more important than the United States and Western Europe. Within Asia, perhaps predictably, "Greater China," wields the most influence, with 89% of respondents seeing it as "very important" in terms of shaping global business practices. Interestingly, India ranked second, with 73% of the vote – which is far bigger than Japan's 39% and ASEAN's 37%. However, when asked which country would reach global standards in the next three to five years, over half of respondents said they believe India has a better chance of doing so than China.

In my view, competing with China is not the real issue, however, India's ability to achieve "best in class" business standards and proactively invest TODAY in the development of tomorrow's leaders will be critical to truly "raising the bar" in terms not only of how the country is perceived as a whole externally, but also in terms of how it delivers on its true potential for its citizens internally as it continues to "go global."

Central to this is a need for business leaders to focus on their long-term strategic vision. Rather than being reactive to the "hype," the ability to look holistically at the local, regional and even global implications of a company's growth targets and plans will ensure a considered approach that helps build a solid foundation on which sustainable business models can be created.

Perhaps even more essential is a focus on empowering employees to take the initiative and act independently. The best leaders today are realizing that relinquishing control and encouraging younger managers to take on more responsibilities is one way to develop a pipeline of future executives who can operate in a truly international environment.

By adopting both of these traditionally "Western" leadership practices, Indian executives will help foster a truly "fused" model that already is emerging worldwide. At the same time, they will help to instill the confidence not only that the country can "raise the bar" but that it also will reach over it easily in the years to come.



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