# Tips for nurturing global leadership talent

**This article recommends how to nurture global leadership in three talent functions: hiring and promotion; development; and socialization.**



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Brexit: hard or soft? The uncertain future relationship with the European Union that Britain is officially leaving in 2019 is prompting numerous companies to set up new bases abroad, with plans to relocate staff to alternative locations across the continent, including to Amsterdam, Dublin, Frankfurt, Luxembourg, Paris and Vienna. Banking, financial services, airlines and telecoms have been making the most plans, estimating that anywhere from a few hundred to thousands of jobs could be moved elsewhere, starting with senior management teams.

A large-scale relocation of talent would mark a shift from the traditional pattern of periodically expatriating individual employees for temporary assignments in subsidiaries abroad. Chris Debner, a strategic global mobility adviser, has noted in a Santa Fe Relocation Services report that, "Over the next decade, the concept of one-way permanent transfers of employees, rather than ... three- to five-year secondments, is likely to become more popular. The trend that companies are likely to relocate groups in the wake of the Brexit ... require(s) extensive change management that needs strategic planning and consideration of the associated risks and challenges."

One of the big challenges is that, even though international assignments have become much more formalized and structured over the past two decades, multinationals continue to have an ethnocentric mindset about them, with headquarters still wanting to call all the shots. And while training helps, there is little indication that what's been done so far has been effective at raising managers' cultural proficiency for leading in a global context. According to one study, participants were likely to come away from cultural awareness training with more cultural stereotypes, which raises questions about how cultural knowledge is being conveyed.

Although Brexit pushes such questions to the fore, the issue of accessing and managing talent to feed growing mobility needs is by no means limited to British companies but affects many businesses across various sectors and geographies. Industry surveys suggest that cross-border work is increasing — despite anti-globalization rhetoric to the contrary — and multinationals are struggling not only to prepare their employees for global leadership responsibilities but to fill the number of international assignments available.

This article is based on my research on global work, talent retention and cross-cultural management. I start by looking at the changing context in which executives operate today before discussing the implications of these changes for global leadership. Then, I make a series of practical recommendations for nurturing global leadership competencies.

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