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Thinking Global: Today's Organizational Challenges

Summary: It really doesn't matter whether your company turns over \$5m or \$5b, the challenge remains the same; Think Global, or become subsumed by the challenges the new Global Economy is already bringing. This Thought Leadership gives some solid guidelines of how an organization must consider its Strategic Planning Process

To survive today's Global Economy is necessary to understand:

- *Global Customers.* The internet revolution, and sites such as eBay means that even one man businesses can have customers they never meet in countries they have never been to.
- *Global Competitors.* Business and competitive intelligence helps to keep a handle on competition and is essential to every company. Electronic supply chaining has enabled sourcing to come from countries that may not be considered. Could Vietnam or Bangladesh be a threat to China's growth? Where is your next big competitive threat coming from?
- *Global Workforce.* Even the small organization may third party, outsource or even in-source to the point of greatest competence, efficiency and low cost. For instance many small US accounting firms are outsourcing back office to India.
- *Global Manufacturing Operations.* Many organizations now are sourcing supply around the globe. A California pump manufacturer sources plastic parts to China, rubber parts to South America and machine tooling to India, all to be designed and assembled in the US.
- *Global Supply Chains.* Supply chains need to be more global, not necessarily more complex. A Mexican spices firm might be sourcing some of their growing and supply for chilies in China, but the relationship would be just the same as with a grower in another part of Mexico.
- *Global Marketing.* It is likely that in the last ten years another 500 million consumers of some type of international product or service will have entered the global marketplace. Organizations need to know where there is potential to sell their products and services and how best to go to market in each arena.
- *Global R & D.* Competitive edge comes from finding better more effective and efficient ways of satisfying end customers' needs and wants. Innovation most frequently happens in tiny steps. An example of this is personal music, which in twenty years moved from the portable radio to the portable tape player, to the portable compact disk to the iPod. Often the stimulus for this innovation comes from the most surprising places, the

Jungles of Brazil, the Mining towns of Peru, the office blocks of Hyderabad. Even the smallest organization needs to tap into the worldwide network of global ideas and talent.



- *Global Virtual Teams.* With global marketing, global R & D and global supply chains become virtual teams. This might comprise of outsourcing, in-sourcing, agents, partnerships, alliances or full time salesman in far flung outposts. To survive and thrive, organizations have to know how to best build these teams.
- *Global Audiences.* All marketing is global today. If a part of your promotion mix is a website, or emarketing, or chat rooming, or blogging, then your audience is in London, and Istanbul, Kiev and Beijing, Houston and Delhi.

What does this mean?

Every organization, big or small, for profit or not-for-profit, must embark upon a Strategic Global Audit. Organizations can't haphazardly just 'Go Global;' they must develop a strategy that works just for them. Key elements of the audit will be:

- *What are your major customers doing?* How global are they thinking and acting? How much extra business can you gain profitably by following them around their world?
- *What are your major global competitors doing?* Organizations must be even more concerned with the ones they don't know that are not in their own backyard, and those that could be talking right now to your biggest customers two thousand miles away. They should also be concerned about what could be the areas of their major competitive advantage that they will have to defend next.
- *Have we got a Global Skill set?* Does an organization really know what their employees know, or their major suppliers know, or their major networks know? If organizations don't know, how can they leverage?
- *What Global R&D have we at our disposal?* By understanding the many dependent and interdependent networks that surround an organization, it might be discovered that informal R & D has already taken place.
- *Have we got Global Leaders?* However informally, an organization has in place a talent management system. Now, that system must prepare its employees for different Global Markets, Global Workforces and Global Supply Chains. So what are employees' different preferences and existing areas of expertise?

Only once all this is known, and a strategy is developed as a result of this knowledge, can an organization say it is competitive in a Global marketplace?

The fact is, many organizations are already running out of time.

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