

Going Global? Go All the Way

On a recent trip to the Pudong District in Shanghai, I walked down the sidewalks eyeing signs from Citigroup, AT&T, and Morgan Stanley, and I was struck by the sheer normalcy of their presence in a market that once was closed to Western business. I realized that, unlike business students ten years ago, our students today are more likely to land their first jobs in Shanghai or Dubai than in New York or London. Those billboards are just one indication of how global the business world has become.

But as business schools, are we adapting our programs aggressively enough to reflect these changes in the industry? I don't think so. Many schools are introducing a course or study focus in globalization, announcing a partnership, or adding a student exchange. But to a large extent, business school administrators and faculty are reluctant to make globalization a fundamental part of their programs.

That hesitation, to some extent, is understandable. Global programs require a significant commitment of financial and human resources. Schools must have faculty willing to travel and teach abroad. They are under great pressure to allocate just the right resources, make just the right curricular changes, and form just the right partnerships. Under such pressure, schools often adopt a "little-bit-at-a-time" mentality in the belief that small steps are better than no steps at all.

Such a mentality may have worked a few years ago, but not today. Adopting globalization on

a piecemeal basis is not enough to keep up with the needs of global business. Business schools need to integrate globalization throughout their curricula to immerse students in the global economy and prepare them for survival and success.

At Syracuse University's Whitman School of Management in upstate New York, for example, one-third of our MBA students now work during the summer as interns in cities such as Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, Cyprus, Shanghai, and Tokyo. This year, a company in Cyprus even asked us if one of our students could stay in her internship through the fall semester, while continuing her MBA program long distance. We were happy to accommodate the request, and we hope for—and even expect—more like it.

Even so, as we discussed the redesign of our own MBA program, Whitman faculty and administrators realized that we, too, could go further in our attention to globalization. From the cases used, to the speakers invited, to the topics discussed, to the travel experiences offered, to the students accepted, we decided that we needed to reevaluate our programs and integrate all, not just a few, of the following initiatives to view every aspect of our programs through a global perspective:

Make every course global. We decided that we first must ensure all of our courses incorporate a global viewpoint. Whether our students are studying entrepreneurship, marketing, or accounting, they should know how that topic relates to the world at large. They should know that the New York Stock Exchange is branching out overseas, seeking to list foreign companies to capture new markets; that the Bank of New

York recently reported that the trading and investment value of shares of foreign companies surpassed \$1 trillion in 2005; and that, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, nine out of every ten dollars raised through new company listings was done in London or Luxembourg instead of New York.

Students should know there are six times as many consumers in India, China, and Malaysia as there are in the United States. They need to know that, with this inevitable change in purchasing power, corporations will rely on them to understand those markets and know what it takes to sell to those customers. But students will only come to this understanding if we present these realities to them in every course they take.

Invite guest speakers with globalization in mind. Our students must have face-to-face interactions with executives who know business on a global scale. It is much different merely to read about offshoring and outsourcing, for example, than it is to speak to an executive from, say, JPMorgan, a company that has announced plans to have 30 percent of its global workforce in India by the end of 2007. What are the implications of this trend? What is the cultural impact of taking a customer service phone call in India from a consumer in the United States? Students must be given the opportunity to learn answers to these questions from a person, not a textbook.

Use technology to bring the world to the classroom. We know that executives cannot always make a personal visit to our campuses to speak to our students. We need to maximize our use of video conferencing to bring executives into the classroom from all

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over the world, to give our students a personal tour of a new Volvo plant in Shanghai or a new bank in Taipei.

Offer a wide selection of global experiences—in non-English-speaking countries. We need to send students not just to England or Australia, but to Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, where they can immerse themselves in cultures different from their own. At Whitman, for example, we plan to take more students abroad in study groups. We recently took our executive and full-time MBAs for a weeklong tour of China, where they were given an insider's look at Chinese companies and the Shanghai Stock Exchange.

Gather a diverse student body.

Attention to admissions is crucial when it comes to giving our students global experiences from the moment they step onto campus. To this end, Whitman strives to admit a student body comprising approximately 50 percent non-U.S. citizens, from countries such as India, China, Taiwan, Colombia, Ukraine, Korea, Thailand, Germany, Kazakhstan, and Holland.

Seek out new opportunities to offer global exposure. We don't need to stay within the boundaries of a course or exchange program to infuse globalization into our programs. We can look for other ways to make it a part of our campus culture. For example, not only do we integrate international content into most of our courses, but we also require all Whitman MBA students to read



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Travels of a T-Shirt in a Global Economy by Pietra Rivoli. Reading the book as a cohort gives our students yet another opportunity to explore their own roles in globalization.


Put international partnerships in perspective. Many business schools are seeking out partnerships with their international peers. Indeed, for smaller schools, partnerships may seem to be the only way to include a global component. But such partnerships alone do not make a business school a “global” business school. Such partnerships are only one piece of a larger global strategy and outlook.

Don't stop “thinking global” at graduation. As we redesign our MBA program at Whitman, we are also looking at what we can do to support

our students' global development after graduation. As a university, we believe we also should help the companies who hire our students with any visa arrangements or problems. We also should continue to be a source of information and support for our U.S. students who work overseas or for our international students who stay to work in the U.S.

I'm sure that most business schools are doing one, or some, of these initiatives. But how many are doing them all? Integration of comprehensive, across-the-board global initiatives should be the norm at all business schools, especially if we want to make sure our current MBA students are the future leaders and drivers of this global economy.

Fifty or even 20 years ago, it was unimaginable that Harvard would extend its reach beyond Cambridge, Massachusetts, to offer programs in Beijing and Hong Kong, or that Wharton would look beyond Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to set up campuses in Tokyo and Singapore. But today, both scenarios are realities, as many markets open themselves to Western business education, just as they did to Western business.

Globalization must be part of a business school's mindset, not just its course catalog. Like business itself, business schools must be global, in mind and in deed. 

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