

MA Leadership

Global Leadership Development

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1 Global leadership today

The only certainty in the global leadership environment is uncertainty and the ever growing challenges facing the world are making business more complicated than ever.

Preparing your leaders for this change is fundamental to not only surviving the global business environment, but thriving in it (Anderson & Ackerman-Anderson 2010).



“Leadership development has a unique opportunity right now to become a powerful catalyst—equipping leaders to help their people and organizations leverage emerging technologies to drive innovation and performance.”

Bias

Communication
styles

Cultural
differences

Conflict handling

Differing attitudes
towards authority

Trust

Motivating

Uncertainty

International policy

Empathy, curiosity, resilience and adaptability are all qualities which are widely agreed as necessary for domestic leaders (Frankiewicz, 2026). It is also widely agreed that investing in leaders and their development is a must for a resilient and future-proof company (Smith & Cockburn, 2020).

When introducing the additional challenges and complexities of global leadership, it is therefore safe to assume that leadership development is more important than ever.



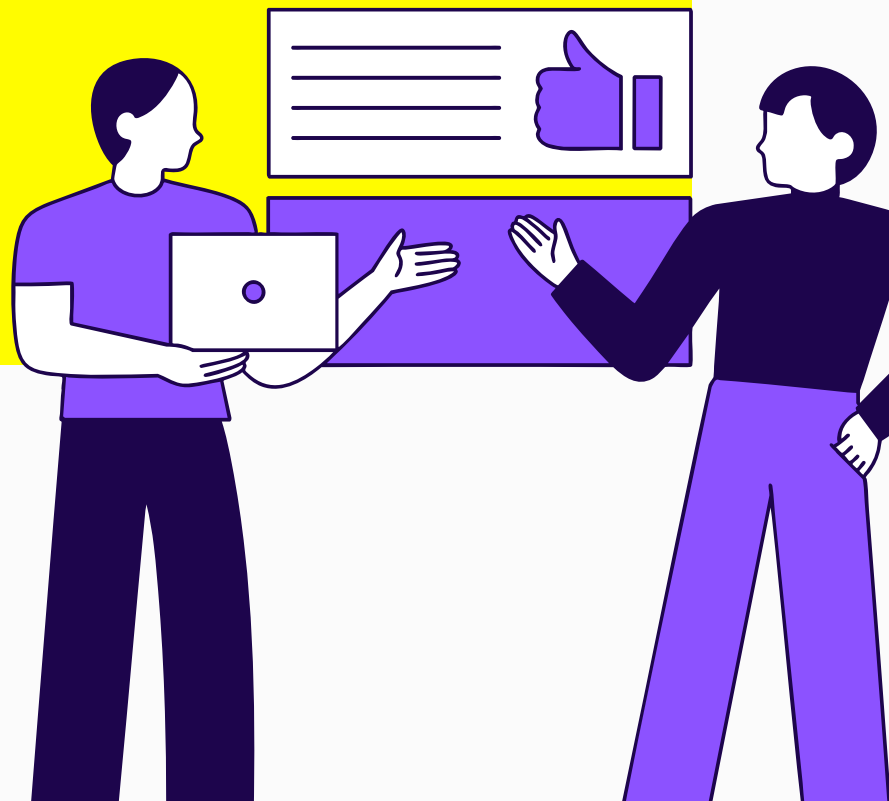
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Global leadership and your business

Your business

Primark started its journey in 1969 with a simple but important mission: to supply affordable fashion that was made to last (Primark, no date). Your message and ethos is one that has resonated with many across the world and you have successfully become an international fashion brand in 19 countries across 3 continents.

We want to support you to take this mission even further.



Your global journey continues

We believe in your goal of working to nurture a culture to be proud of and believe that investing in your leaders can make this dream your everyday reality.

How we can support your future growth

You're already well on your way to your current goal of having stores across 21 countries by the end of 2026 (Primark, 2026). So the question is, how can we help?

As the business expands into more regions, countries and cultures, it can be increasingly difficult to hold onto those core values (Zander et al., 2016). Our global leadership development programme seeks to invest in your leaders to directly support your core values.

Dynamic

Together

Caring

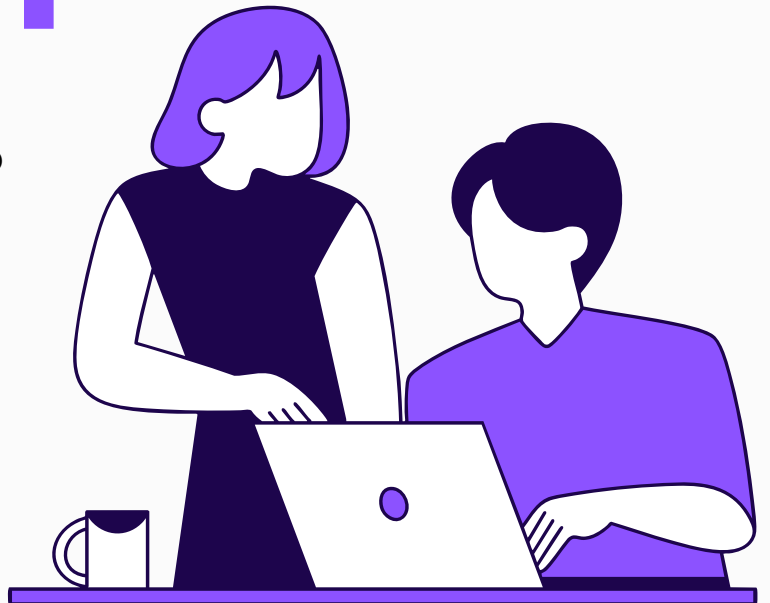


Why you need global leadership development

To appreciate the need for global leadership development, we first need to understand the differences between domestic and global leadership.

Good everyday, domestic leadership is often equated to a list of key competencies, most notably: emotional intelligence, cognitive intelligence and social

intelligence (Danuta et al., 2019). While these competencies are also true of global leaders, the additional complexities create a need for additional competencies and traits.



Key competencies for global leaders

Cultural intelligence

Often cited as one of the most important competencies, cultural intelligence (CQ) not only supports a leader's ability to manage a culturally diverse organisation but also drives innovation and competitiveness in global markets (Sharma & Makhija, 2021).

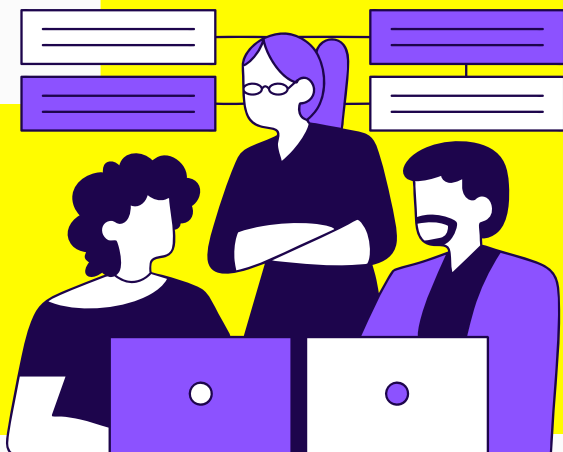
Daimler (2025) argues that it is equally important to understand the cultural differences in a group as it is to find common ground. They emphasise that leaders should not ignore differences, but build trust through common challenges and learn from each other.

CQ is not an inherent trait, and must be learned, often through experiencing diverse cultures (Michailova & Ott, 2018). **Providing leaders with the opportunity to develop this skill is essential for success in global markets.**

Global mindset

Levy et al. (2007) define global mindset as *"a highly complex cognitive structure characterized by an openness to and articulation of multiple cultural and strategic realities on both global and local levels, and the cognitive ability to mediate and integrate across this multiplicity."*

Simply put, global mindset is an openness to other cultures, ways of thinking, and ideas – and the willingness to act on that openness.



Research by Cseh et al. (2013) suggests that leaders with a global mindset are continuous learners and that enabling this development is a determining factor in their viability when navigating complex global challenges.

Key competencies for global leaders (continued)

Adaptability

In the past few months, the world has seen change in political leaders, trade markets, tariffs, global attitudes and a multitude of other changes.

When asked about the challenges facing their businesses today, senior leaders reported the following:



Navigating and adapting to the ever changing world is important for any leader, but is essential for a global leader. It's no longer enough to be resilient, and with the constant shifting of goals, the rise of AI and daily disruption, successful global leaders must be adaptable (Ross & Schneider, 2026).

Developing a strong level of adaptability will not help leaders avoid surprises, but it will change how they react to those surprises (Harvard Business Publishing, 2020).

Emotional intelligence and knowing oneself

Defined by Goleman (2020) as consisting of 4 domains and 12 competencies, emotional intelligence (EQ) determines how leaders interact with themselves, knows themselves and manage relationships with others.

In a global context, being aware of our own strengths and weaknesses is vital for managing how we interact with others. Additionally, being aware of our affect and impact on others can make or break relationships.

All competencies can and should be developed by global leaders.

Global locations and regional offices

Operating across 19 countries is an incredible achievement, but can also bring significant unseen challenges.



Primark currently operates in 19 countries, with goals to grow even further (Primark, 2026). Across these countries there are 8 recorded regional offices, leaving 11 countries being overseen from abroad.

Having regional offices oversee multiple locations is an excellent strategy but also comes with its own challenges. When managing operations from another country it can create a culture gap, where staff in those countries feel disconnected from the organisation (Reus & Lamont, 2009). Ensuring that leaders know how to manage this multicultural environment is essential for success and future growth.

↑ CAJA

PROBADORES



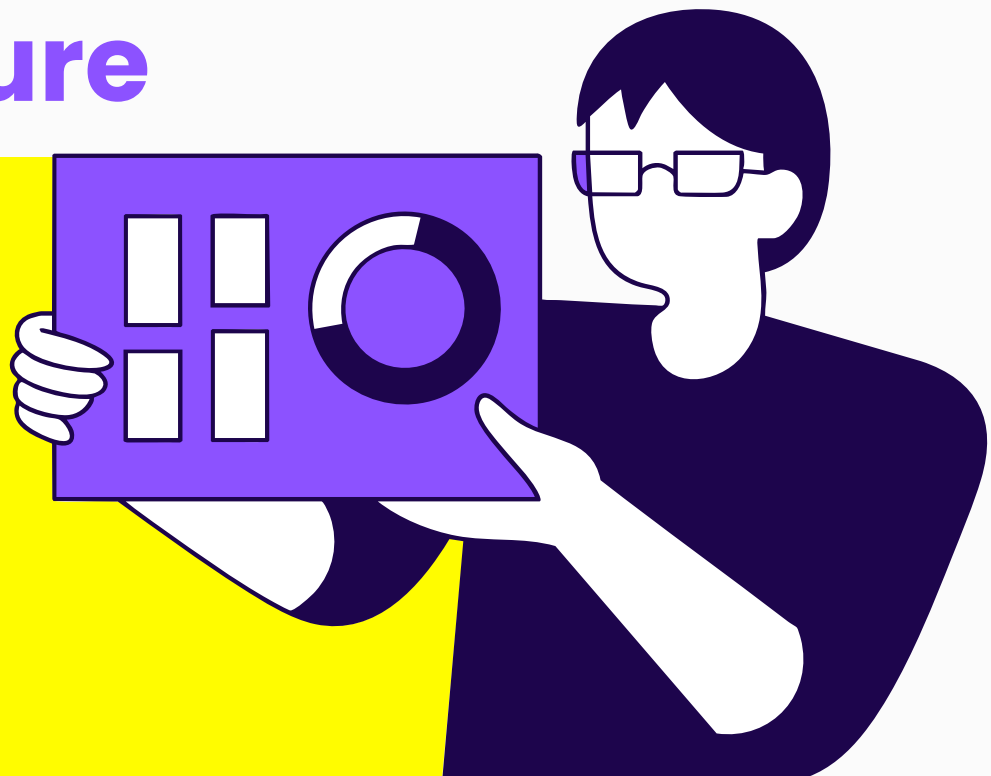
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Our development programme and you

Now we know the key competencies of a global leader and how global leadership development can nurture these qualities, why is this programme the right one for you?

The global leadership development programme focuses on three main aspects of your business:

- **People**
- **Market**
- **Future**



PEOPLE

We truly believe that people are the most important part of any business and ensuring that your people are receiving proper and effective leadership is vital to your success.

Utilising a meaning-based leadership theory developed by van Knippenberg (2020), organisations must first define their purpose. Primark has already defined its values and purpose (Primark, no date) but now needs to ensure that staff across the business are aligned with this purpose.

Once your core purpose has been defined, it is then important to identify how leaders and their teams can support the goal. What do they need to change to align with this goal? (Foster, 2024)



Cultural intelligence (CQ)

CQ is primarily developed through experience, friendships and generally working with people from other cultures (Teixeria & Zanela Klein, 2024). The challenge is replicating the experiential learning for people from different countries and cultures, when they don't work in the same location.

To address this, we propose using reciprocal mentoring. This learning style works by pairing staff with their counterparts in other countries and having them work together as both mentor and mentee, taking in turns to teach each other (Desai et al., 2018). This methods allows leaders to learn from one another, learn about one another's culture, their differences, similarities and develop their own CQ.

Unconscious bias

It is common to believe that what you have been taught is the correct way of doing things, but what happens when multiple cultures with different 'correct ways' come together?

Unconscious bias is inevitable in cross-cultural leadership and can lead to confirmation bias; seeking information and ideas that align with your thought process, barriers for marginalised groups and unfair decision making (Oxford Management Centre, no date). Developing leaders to recognise and address their biases creates a more positive and successful environment.

Conflict management

Staff working in multi-cultural environments may observe an increase in conflict among colleagues. Guo (2025) states that managing these conflicts requires a high level of CQ. Conflict resolution models such as Thomas-Kilmann (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974) are aimed towards domestic leadership, a hybrid and bespoke model would need to be adopted to address the more complex cultural differences.

Individualistic and collective cultures will require different conflict management (Vollmer & Wolf, 2015) and the development programme will provide learning on the varying styles and needs.

Finding your leadership style

The nature of global leadership means that a one size fits all leadership style will not work. Leaders must be adaptable and know when to use different styles (Yukl, 2008). The development programme will cover several leadership styles which may be suitable to Primark.

Servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1998)

- + Better team collaboration
- Can lead to slow decision making

Transformational leadership (Burns, 1978)

- + Empowers teams to make decisions
- Can lose sight of short-term goals

Collaborative Leadership (Kanter, 1994)

- + Increased employee buy-in
- Can create conflict from differing ideas

Good leaders will need to know which style is most suitable during a given scenario and be able to switch appropriately. Each style has its benefits and negatives, switching between many styles is most effective.

MARKET

The second focus of the development programme is 'Market'. That is preparing leaders for the challenges that come with entering new global markets.

Behavioural changes for reaching goals

When setting short-term goals it is important that they are achievable and align with the business' bigger picture. Where people, and leaders often fail is confusing setting goals and achieving them, forgetting that a fundamental behavioural change is often needed to achieve those goals (Wachendorfer, 2025).

What works here, might not work there

As part of their development, leaders will need to consider not only what their goals are, but how they are going to achieve these goals. Primark for example, is reaching into new and more distant markets where culture, behaviour and values will differ from its founding Ireland location. Primark must consider its new markets and adjust its approach accordingly.

In 2006, the American homeware store Home Depot launched into the Chinese market, opening 12 stores. Only 6 years later, all 12 stores had closed their doors (Home Depot, 2012). So, what went wrong? Home Depot opened in China with their DIY attitude which was very popular among American consumers, often seen as a cheaper alternative to professional work. Home Depot had not considered that cultural norms in the US differed greatly in China, where professional labour was often considered as very affordable and DIY was seen as a sign of poverty (Brown, 2012).

As Primark ventures further into international markets, it must first consider it's international customer.

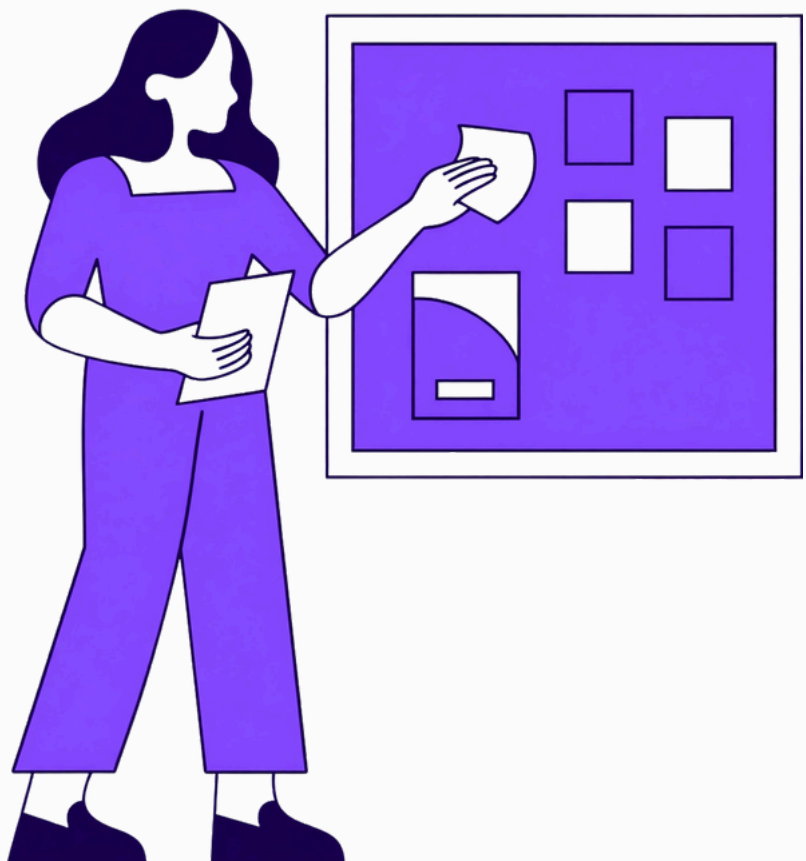


Strategic planning for new markets

- 48% of leaders spend less than 1 day a month discussing their strategy.
- 48% of organisations fail to achieve at least half of their strategic targets.

Bridges Consultancy, 2020

As part of the development programme, leaders will be provided with strategic planning training to support new market success. Finding the right strategy for your business is crucial for creating achievable and measurable goals which feed into the behavioural changes needed to survive and thrive in new international markets.



FUTURE

Ensuring your leaders' development has a meaningful impact on your business' future comes down to a few points:

- Monitoring success
- Feedback loops
- Continuous learning

Good leadership development plans evolve and change with your business needs. Development is not a one-time task to be forgotten and if done properly, will create a culture of learning within an organisation (Ahsan, 2025).



According to DDI (2025) 78% of HR leaders believe that behavioural changes are the most valuable but many find the changes difficult to track.

Using the popular Kirkpatrick model (Kirkpatrick, 1979) allows organisations to look beyond the surface level development feedback of 'did they enjoy the learning' and monitor 4 outcome areas.

1. **Reaction** – did the participants enjoy and engage with the training
2. **Learning** – what knowledge did participants gain from the training, did they gain the intended knowledge
3. **Behaviour** – was the learning effective in changing participants behaviour in their day to day work
4. **Results** – has the learning benefitted the wider organisation and its outcomes

Some have criticised Kirkpatrick's model for being too linear or putting too much emphasis on learner's reaction (Kruse, 2023). However, the model is still considered to be suitable for most business needs. This style of model is appropriate for Primark's needs as much of the emphasis is on behavioural changes, therefore learner's reactions and learner's attitudes are fundamental measurements of success.

To truly monitor the success of the development programme leader attitudes, understanding and behaviours will be measured before, during and after development.

Obtaining feedback

Obtaining feedback is crucial for any development plan, not only from leaders but also their teams. To support the business' future development and learning culture, feedback loops must be closed and feedback actioned.

The development of the programme would be ongoing to address staff feedback and to best suit the needs of the organisation. It can take time to see the effectiveness of the programme through an increase in staff retention and efficiency but feedback from the staff regarding the programme can be immediate (Foster, 2024).

Costs and returns



Due to the complexity of the development programme, cohorts of 25–30 people would be recommended at any time.

Cost details	Estimated cost	Source
Cohort development cost	~\$25,000 (USD)	Based on mid costs from The Metiss Group (2025) & Blue Carrot (2026)

Potential return on investment

25%

Increase in learning

28%

Increase in leadership behaviours

8%

Increase in staff outcomes

25%

Increase in organisation outcomes

Lacerenza, et al. (2017)

6 References

Please see additional page for references.