

ROOTED &
GLOBAL
CONSULTANCY

The Uniqlo way forward



Presented by
Hayley Jones

Table of Contents

3 - Why now?

4 - Leading Across Cultures: The Competencies That Matter

5 - Inside the Programme

6 - Making It Stick: Rollout Across the Organisation

7 - Programme Timeline

8 - Investment & Return

9 - Financial Projections

10 - Practical Guidance for New Managers

11 - Contact



Why now?



Uniqlo's growth has never just been about opening stores. It's been about carrying something meaningful into every new place you arrive: a way of thinking, a way of treating people, a spirit that's unmistakably yours. As you push toward Tadashi Yanai's ¥10 trillion sales ambition, with global expansion at its very core, you're asking more people, in more cultures, than ever before to understand, live, and carry that spirit forward.

Much of what makes Uniqlo feel like Uniqlo has grown from Yanai's own presence being built through what leadership theory calls referent power: influence that flows from personal relationship, trust, and example (French & Raven, 1959), rather than legitimate power, which lives in roles and systems, and travels with the organisation regardless of who holds them. That's such a great foundation that's worth protecting for the long term, because referent power, by its nature, doesn't scale or transfer easily. Even inside Fast Retailing, there's an honest acknowledgement of this: those close to the business have said openly that another Yanai simply cannot be found. We don't see that as a problem to solve by finding a replacement instead we see it as an invitation to build something that doesn't depend on any one person at all.

As you grow, it's worth asking what kind of global organisation you're becoming. Bartlett and Ghoshal (1990) call this becoming transnational - where local teams get real freedom to lead in their own way, while everyone still shares one global identity. That balance is exactly what growing global positively actually looks like.

You're already doing this in practise: in Greater China, Japanese managers are being deliberately paired alongside expanding local talent, sharing store management principles built over decades. In Europe, four of your seven COOs are now from Europe itself. A formal programme could help this keep happening and grow even stronger over time. Leaders who can genuinely connect across cultural lines are up to 70% more effective in international roles (World Economic Forum, 2025), but that connection doesn't develop automatically. It has to be nurtured, deliberately and with care. We'd love to help you find ways to hold onto what makes Uniqlo feel like Uniqlo and not by writing it down and hoping it sticks, but by helping the next generation of leaders genuinely feel it, understand it, and carry it forward in their own way.

You're doing this alongside strong, ambitious competition and with Uniqlo now closing in on H&M, and Inditex already firmly in your sights. The businesses that stand apart in a race like this are the ones whose people feel truly connected to what they represent.

This is where we come in.

Leading Across Cultures: The competencies that matter

As more of your leaders step into roles that span cultures, something becomes clear: knowing about a culture and truly knowing how to be within it are very different things. Most leaders start by seeing the world through their own culture known as ethnocentrism.

The ones who thrive internationally move past that, toward polycentrism: genuinely valuing other cultures on their own terms, not just comparing them to home (Perlmutter, 1969). It's not about losing what makes Uniqlo distinct - it's about making space for other cultures to shape it too.

Real cross-cultural leadership means being able to see beneath the surface - beyond the customs and etiquette that are easy to look up - into the values and unspoken assumptions that shape how people feel, trust, and connect (Schein, 2010). Reaching that deeper layer takes real emotional intelligence: the empathy to understand what someone is truly experiencing, and the social skill to build trust that isn't rushed (Goleman, 1998).

None of this works, though, without safety. Sinek (2014) argues that people only bring their honest selves, their real feedback, and their willingness to take risks when they trust they're operating inside a genuine "Circle of Safety", an environment where a leader's role is to protect their people, not just direct them. Without that trust, feedback dries up and culture becomes something performed rather than truly shared.

In practice, this means your leaders need the humility to listen first, and the consistency to make that listening feel safe over time. Not top-down directives, but genuine conversations with the people living and working in each market every day. Your local and frontline teams often see things head office simply can't - the small, human moments where your values either land warmly or create friction.

A leadership programme built around Cultural Intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003) and emotional intelligence together does more than build individual skill. It helps ensure that what makes Uniqlo feel like Uniqlo travels intact into every market you grow into, carried by people who genuinely feel safe enough to share it honestly.

INSIDE THE PROGRAMME

We've built this programme around the belief that leadership development should feel like a genuine journey, not a checklist. By using three tiers, each meeting your leaders where they are.

Foundation (*new and emerging managers*): Building self-awareness, empathy, and the confidence to adapt communication style across high and low context cultures (Hall, 1976) grounded in Goleman's (1998) emotional intelligence framework and Earley & Ang's (2003) model of cultural intelligence.

Development (*regional leaders*): Applied, real-world practice, case-based learning and cultural mentoring pairs that bring Japanese and local leaders together to genuinely learn from one another, alongside deeper exploration of Hofstede's cultural dimensions as they show up in your key markets.

Mastery (*senior global leaders*): Leading multicultural teams with confidence, thinking ahead about succession, and becoming stewards of "the Uniqlo Way" equipping senior leaders to help this spirit live on, rather than resting on any one individual to carry it.

We know from research into multicultural organisations that leadership development works best when it reflects the culture it's trying to build - flexible, relationship-centred, and responsive to context rather than rigidly standardised (Baporikar, 2021). That's why delivery blends in-person immersion, digital learning for accessibility across time zones, and mentoring relationships that keep growing long after formal sessions end.



Rooted & Global Consultancy



MAKING IT STICK; ROLL OUT ACROSS THE ORGANISATION

A programme is only as strong as its reach, and reach, for us, means genuine connection, not just distribution.

We'll begin with regional leadership hubs, one per major market, so global programme content can be thoughtfully adapted to local context rather than applied as a single template. This reflects something Hofstede's (2001) work makes clear: leadership practices that feel right in one culture can land quite differently in another. You're already proving this works: in Mainland China, reflecting real feedback from store managers and customers into individual store sales plans has genuinely improved product decisions since 2025.

That's the kind of Circle of Safety we want to build into every market, properly and consistently.

From there, we'll follow a "train-the-trainer" model where senior leaders who've completed the Mastery tier mentor those in Development, and so on down. This creates a genuine flow of knowledge in both directions, not a one-way broadcast outward from Japan. Your frontline and local teams are often best placed to notice where global values and local realities create friction, and their voice will directly shape how the programme grows and changes over time.

A shared digital learning platform keeps everyone connected across time zones. Quarterly regional showcases give leaders space to share what's working and what isn't. We imagine these showcases becoming something leaders genuinely look forward to: a moment to be proud of what they've built locally, and to borrow ideas that are working well elsewhere. Success here won't look identical in every market - a rollout that respects local rhythm and pace is a rollout that actually lasts.

This blend of structure and genuine listening is what protects the spirit of Uniqlo as you continue to grow.

Programme Timeline

Months 1–3: Foundation tier pilot in two flagship markets

Months 4–9: Foundation tier scaled globally; Development tier pilot begins

Months 10–15: Development tier scaled; Mastery tier launched

Months 16–18: Full integration, first cohort in post, review and iterate based on regional feedback



INVESTMENT AND RETURNS (COSTS)

We've structured this investment to grow alongside you. Starting small, proving impact, then scaling with confidence, rather than asking for a leap of faith upfront.

Costs cover programme design and content development, training regional facilitators, building the digital learning platform, and coordinating mentoring relationships across markets.

Where possible, we've weighted investment toward the early stages with content design, platform build, and initial facilitator training, because getting the foundations right the first time reduces cost and disruption later.

Ongoing costs are intentionally leaner, reflecting a programme designed to become increasingly self-sustaining as your own leaders step into mentoring roles rather than relying on external delivery indefinitely.

Category	Year 1 cost	Ongoing annual cost
Programme design and content development	£150,000	£40,000
Digital Learning Platform	£70,000	£35,000
Regional facilitator Training	£150,000	£45,000
Mentoring programme coordination	£50,000	£50,000

(figures shown in GBP for clarity; would be adapted to local currency in a live proposal)

FINAL PROJECTIONS

We believe the real return on this investment shows up in people; in retention, confidence, and continuity as much as in numbers.

Leaders with high cultural intelligence are up to 70% more effective in international roles (World Economic Forum, 2025). Even modest improvements in cross-cultural leadership translate into fewer costly missteps, stronger local performance, and less reliance on expensive expatriate placements, a well-documented cost pressure in global HR (CIPD, 2023).

There's a quieter return too, one that ties back to where we started: a stronger pipeline of future leaders. Every leader who moves through Foundation, Development, and Mastery becomes someone genuinely capable of carrying "the Uniqlo Way" forward, reducing your reliance on any single individual, however exceptional, to hold the vision together. That's not just a talent outcome. It's protection for the business itself, through whatever leadership transitions the future holds.

Perhaps most importantly, this programme protects something money can't easily measure: Uniqlo's spirit, carried safely through every change in leadership, now and in the future. That's not something we can put a price on, but for a business built on trust, it might be the most valuable thing we can offer.

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR NEW MANAGERS

For new managers stepping into cross-cultural leadership, five habits make the real difference:

Listen before you lead. Spend your first weeks genuinely learning from frontline staff before introducing change.

Look beneath the surface. What you observe isn't always what drives it (Schein, 2010) Stay curious about the “why.”

Adapt how you communicate. High-context cultures value what's implied; low-context cultures value what's said outright (Hall, 1976). Know which you're in.

Honour relationship and respect where they matter most. In many East Asian business cultures, for example, guanxi (trusted relationship networks) and face (dignity and social standing) shape decisions as much as logic does. Small gestures of respect go a long way.

Build two-way relationships, not one-way training. You're there to learn as much as to lead. Genuine humility builds trust that authority alone can't.

None of this requires perfection. It simply asks new managers to lead the way Uniqlo has always grown best, with curiosity, humility, and genuine care for the people carrying the spirit of the business forward, wherever in the world they are.

For enquiries, contact us.

hayley.jones@uwtsd.ac.uk
Rooted&Globalconsultancy.com
01554 771772



References

di Norcia, V., Bartlett, C.A. and Ghoshal, S. (1991) "Managing across Borders: The Transnational Solution," *The Academy of Management review*, 16(1), p. 225. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/258620>. (Accessed: 02 July 2026)

Baporikar, N. (2021) 'International Human Resource Management Strategies for Multicultural Organizations', in Perez-Urbe, R.I., Largacha-Martinez, C. and Ocampo-Guzman, D. (eds.) *Handbook of Research on International Business and Models for Global Purpose-Driven Companies*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global, pp. 166-187.

CIPD (2023) *Good Work Index*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Earley, P.C., Ang, S. and Bhagat, R.S. (2006) "Cultural intelligence: individual interactions across cultures," *The Academy of Management review*, pp. 489–493.

Fast Retailing Co., Ltd. (2026) *UNIQLO Business Strategy*. Available at: <https://www.fastretailing.com/eng/group/strategy/tactics.html> (Accessed: 02 July 2026).

French, J.R.P. and Raven, B. (1959) 'The bases of social power', in Cartwright, D. (ed.) *Studies in Social Power*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research.

Goleman, D. (1998) *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.

Hall, E.T. (1976) *Beyond Culture*. New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday.

Hofstede, G. (2001) *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations*. 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Straits Times (2026) 'Uniqlo's plan to dominate global fashion', Available at: <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/uniqlos-plan-to-dominate-global-fashion> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

Japan Times (2026) 'Fast Retailing raises profit outlook on robust global demand and Japan sales', 9 April. Available at: <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/business/2026/04/09/companies/fast-retailing-outlook-rise/> (Accessed: 10 July 2026).

Mobley, W.H. and Dorfman, P.W. (2003) *Advances in Global Leadership*. Vol. 3. Bingley: Emerald.

Perlmutter, H.V. (1969) 'The tortuous evolution of the multinational corporation', *Columbia Journal of World Business*, 4(1), pp. 9-18.

Schein, E.H. (2010) *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. 4th edn. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sinek, S. (2014) *Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't*. New York: Portfolio/Penguin.

World Economic Forum (2025) *Future of Jobs Report 2025*. Geneva: World Economic Forum.