

DEVELOPING GLOBAL LEADERS FOR SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL FOR ACCOR GROUP



STUDENT - DANIEL PAYNE - 1803525

MODULE - LEADERS IN GLOBAL BUSINESS BMSW7002

LECTURER - REBECCA FRANCIS-DAVIES



ACCOR

WHY THIS MATTERS:

DEVELOPING GLOBAL LEADERS FOR SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL FOR ACCOR GROUP

THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

Accor operates across more than 110 countries and diverse cultural, regulatory and economic environments. As the organisation expands globally, leadership complexity increases. Leaders must manage cross-cultural teams, navigate diverse stakeholder expectations and deliver sustainable business performance across borders (Javidan and Walker, 2013). Consequently, leadership effectiveness increasingly depends on the ability to influence stakeholders, adapt across cultures and maintain strategic consistency across geographically dispersed operations.

EXECUTIVE INSIGHT

Domestic leadership capability is no longer sufficient for multinational organisations. Accor requires leaders who can operate effectively across cultures, markets and stakeholder systems.

KEY STRATEGIC RISKS

- Leadership pipeline gaps
- Talent retention challenges
- Inconsistent leadership capability
- Difficulty implementing sustainability initiatives globally
- Reduced organisational agility

THE COST OF DOING NOTHING

- ✓ Higher expatriate failure rates
- ✓ Reduced talent mobility
- ✓ Poor stakeholder relationships
- ✓ Cultural misunderstandings
- ✓ Inconsistent customer experience
- ✓ Sustainability implementation failures

(Mendenhall et al., 2017)



ACCOR

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

WHY GLOBAL LEADERSHIP IS DIFFERENT

LEADING ACROSS BORDERS REQUIRES A FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT CAPABILITY SET FROM TRADITIONAL DOMESTIC LEADERSHIP.

DOMESTIC VS GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

Domestic	Global
Familiar culture	Multiple cultures
Local stakeholders	Global stakeholder networks
Stable regulations	Regulatory complexity
Direct control	Influence across boundaries
Local decision making	Cross-border coordination
Limited cultural adaptation	Continuous cultural adaptation

WHY DOMESTIC LEADERSHIP IS NO LONGER ENOUGH

Traditional leadership models were developed within relatively stable and familiar environments. Global leaders must instead navigate cultural complexity, institutional differences and competing stakeholder expectations across international markets. Consequently, leadership effectiveness increasingly depends upon adaptability, influence and cross-cultural capability (Mendenhall et al., 2017).

CRITICAL INSIGHT

Global leadership is fundamentally different from domestic leadership because success depends less on authority and more on influence, adaptability and stakeholder engagement. Leaders must align diverse stakeholders, navigate cultural complexity and deliver consistent organisational performance across international markets.



ACCOR

WHY THIS MATTERS:

CRITICAL GLOBAL LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

THE CAPABILITIES REQUIRED TO LEAD EFFECTIVELY ACROSS CULTURES, MARKETS AND STAKEHOLDER ENVIRONMENTS

CRITICAL GLOBAL LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES



Global Mindset

Ability to balance local responsiveness with global strategic thinking (Javidan and Walker, 2013)



Cultural Intelligence

Capability to adapt behaviour and communication across cultures (Earley and Ang, 2003)



Stakeholder Management

Ability to create value across diverse stakeholder groups (Freeman, 1984)



Responsible Leadership

Leading ethically while balancing organisational and societal interests (Maak and Pless, 2006)



Sustainable Leadership

Embedding environmental and social responsibility into strategic decision-making (Visser and Courtice, 2011)



Strategic Thinking

Managing uncertainty and complexity across international environments (Mendenhall et al., 2017)

EXECUTIVE INSIGHT

Organisations
become truly global
when leaders
develop the mindset,
adaptability and
stakeholder skills
required to operate
effectively across
cultures and markets



ACCOR

WHY THIS MATTERS:

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

Global leadership differs fundamentally from domestic leadership because it requires leaders to operate effectively across multiple cultural, institutional and regulatory environments while maintaining strategic consistency. Javidan and Walker (2013) argue that effective global leaders develop a global mindset, enabling them to interpret complexity, manage ambiguity and balance global integration with local responsiveness. Similarly, Mendenhall et al. (2017) suggest that global leadership extends beyond traditional management by requiring leaders to build relationships, coordinate geographically dispersed teams and adapt leadership behaviours to different cultural contexts. For Accor, whose operations span more than 110 countries, these capabilities are essential to maintaining service quality, organisational performance and brand consistency across international markets.

Responsible leadership provides the ethical and strategic foundation for effective global leadership. Maak and Pless (2006) argue that responsible leaders create long-term value by balancing the interests of multiple stakeholders rather than focusing solely on financial performance. Pless and Maak (2011) further suggest that responsible leadership requires organisations to address wider societal and environmental challenges while maintaining legitimacy and stakeholder trust. Within Accor, these principles support the integration of sustainability, responsible tourism and stakeholder engagement into leadership decision-making.

Cross-cultural intelligence represents another defining characteristic of successful global leaders. Earley and Ang (2003) define cultural intelligence as an individual's capability to function effectively across culturally diverse settings. Research suggests that leaders with higher levels of cultural intelligence communicate more effectively, build stronger international relationships and are better equipped to manage multicultural teams (Bird and Mendenhall, 2016). Consequently, developing cross-cultural intelligence should form a central component of Accor's leadership development programme.

Collectively, these theoretical perspectives suggest that successful global leadership depends upon integrating global mindset, responsible leadership and cross-cultural intelligence. Rather than relying upon technical expertise alone, leaders must develop the strategic, interpersonal and ethical capabilities necessary to lead effectively across complex international environments.



ACCOR

WHY THIS MATTERS:

PROPOSED GLOBAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

AN EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH DESIGNED TO DEVELOP THE MINDSET, CAPABILITIES AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED TO LEAD SUCCESSFULLY ACROSS GLOBAL HOSPITALITY MARKETS.

PHASE 1 – ASSESS

Global Leadership Assessment

- 360° feedback
- Global mindset assessment
- Cultural intelligence assessment
- Leadership diagnostics

Why? Identify leadership capability gaps and development priorities.

PHASE 2 – LEARN

Global Leadership Academy

Core learning modules:

- Leading Across Cultures
- Responsible Leadership
- Sustainable Leadership
- Strategic Decision-Making
- Global Stakeholder Management

Why? Build foundational global leadership capabilities.

PHASE 3 – EXPERIENCE

Experiential Development

Research consistently shows that global leaders develop most effectively through practical international experiences rather than classroom learning alone (Mendenhall et al., 2017).

Activities:

- International projects
- Cross-border teams
- Global action learning
- International secondments

Why? Translate learning into real-world capability.

PHASE 4 – GROW

Executive Coaching & Mentoring

- Executive coaching
- Senior leader mentoring
- Reflection and feedback
- Career development planning

Why? Support long-term leadership growth and retention.



ACCOR

WHY THIS MATTERS:

IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP & BUSINESS BENEFITS

BUILDING ACCOR'S NEXT GENERATION OF GLOBAL LEADERS

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Months 1–3

Assessment, Capability diagnostics, Participant selection & Development planning



Months 4–6

Leadership Academy, Core modules, Workshops & Leadership simulations



Months 7–12

Experiential Learning, International projects, Cross-border teams & Action learning



Months 13–18

Coaching & Evaluation, Mentoring & Impact measurement



WHY THIS MATTERS:

DISSEMINATION, LEARNING TRANSFER AND EVALUATION

ACCOR

EMBEDDING LEARNING ACROSS ACCOR

Embedding Learning Across Accor

The effectiveness of a global leadership programme depends not only on the quality of its formal learning activities, but also on whether participants transfer new knowledge and behaviours into their everyday work. Baldwin and Ford (1988) argue that training transfer is influenced by the design of the programme, the characteristics of participants and the extent to which the working environment supports the application of learning. Therefore, Accor should treat dissemination as an integral part of the programme rather than as an activity that occurs after formal training has ended.

Participants should apply their learning through cross-border business projects addressing genuine organisational priorities, such as improving multicultural collaboration, enhancing guest experience or supporting sustainability objectives. Each participant should agree an individual development plan with their manager and identify specific opportunities to practise global leadership behaviours. Managers should provide feedback, access to relevant assignments and sufficient psychological support to encourage experimentation. This is important because even well-designed development activities may produce limited organisational value when participants lack opportunities or encouragement to apply their learning (Burke and Hutchins, 2007).

Creating a Leadership Multiplier Effect

Learning should also be disseminated through structured peer networks. Graduates of the programme could form a global community of practice through which leaders exchange knowledge, reflect on international experiences and share solutions to common leadership challenges. Wenger (1998) argues that learning is strengthened through participation in communities organised around shared practice. Within Accor, this approach would enable insights from one geographical market to be adapted and transferred to others while recognising that practices may require adjustment for different cultural and institutional contexts.

Programme participants should also act as mentors, facilitate local learning sessions and sponsor future cohorts. This “leader-as-teacher” approach would create a multiplier effect by extending learning beyond the initial participant group. However, dissemination should not mean imposing identical leadership practices across every market. Global principles should remain consistent, while local leaders retain flexibility to adapt their application to cultural, regulatory and operational conditions.



WHY THIS MATTERS:

DISSEMINATION, LEARNING TRANSFER AND EVALUATION CONT.

EMBEDDING LEARNING ACROSS ACCOR

Evaluating Organisational Impact

Evaluation should extend beyond attendance, participant satisfaction and course completion. Day (2000) distinguishes individual leader development from broader leadership development, which strengthens collective organisational capacity. Accor should therefore assess changes at individual, team and organisational levels. Measures could include improvements in cultural intelligence, leadership behaviour, employee engagement, internal promotion, retention, cross-border collaboration and delivery of strategic projects.

Evaluation should take place before the programme, immediately after key phases and at six- and twelve-month intervals. Evidence from assessments, manager feedback, project outcomes and business indicators should be used to refine future cohorts. This ensures that the programme operates as a continuous organisational capability rather than a one-off training intervention.

The Strategic Imperative for Action

Global organisations can no longer rely on traditional leadership approaches developed for stable domestic markets. Accelerating digital transformation, geopolitical uncertainty, labour shortages, changing customer expectations and increasing sustainability requirements are reshaping the hospitality sector. The World Economic Forum (2024) identifies geopolitical instability, climate-related risks and workforce capability as among the most significant challenges affecting organisations globally. Consequently, developing leaders who can operate effectively across cultures, manage complexity and respond to rapid change has become a strategic necessity rather than an optional investment. For Accor, investing in global leadership capability today will strengthen organisational resilience, support sustainable growth and ensure the organisation remains competitive within an increasingly complex international environment.

WHY THIS MATTERS:

INVESTMENT AND RETURN ON INVESTMENT

INVESTING IN GLOBAL LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY

Leadership development should be viewed as a strategic investment that enables organisations to build long-term organisational capability rather than simply as a training cost. Research demonstrates that organisations investing in leadership development benefit from stronger succession planning, increased employee engagement, improved collaboration and enhanced organisational performance (Mendenhall et al., 2017). Within multinational organisations such as Accor, investment in global leadership capability also supports international expansion by improving leaders' ability to operate effectively across culturally diverse and geographically dispersed environments.

Although the precise cost of implementing a global leadership programme will vary according to the initial organisational scale and programme design, an indicative investment of approximately £350,000 would provide a realistic budget for leadership assessment, executive coaching, international action-learning projects, facilitated workshops and programme evaluation. These figures are illustrative and demonstrate the level of investment typically associated with executive leadership development.

The return on investment should be evaluated using both financial and non-financial performance measures. Financial benefits may include reduced management turnover, improved succession planning and lower recruitment costs. Equally important are broader organisational outcomes, including improved cross-cultural collaboration, stronger stakeholder relationships, enhanced employee engagement and improved organisational resilience. Developing leaders capable of integrating sustainability into strategic decision-making also supports ESG performance and contributes to long-term competitive advantage (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011; Visser and Courtice, 2011).

Consequently, the success of a global leadership development programme should not be evaluated solely according to short-term financial returns, but according to its contribution to organisational capability, international performance and sustainable long-term value creation. This reflects the principles of responsible leadership, which emphasise creating value for multiple stakeholders while strengthening organisational resilience in an increasingly complex global environment (Maak and Pless, 2006).

WHY THIS MATTERS:

BUSINESS BENEFITS

BUILDING ACCOR'S NEXT GENERATION OF GLOBAL LEADERS



EXPECTED ORGANISATIONAL BENEFITS



Stronger Leadership Pipeline - Build future global leaders.



Greater Talent Retention - Increase engagement and career progression.



Improved Cross-Cultural Collaboration - Strengthen international teamwork.



Better Stakeholder Relationships- Improve global stakeholder management.



Enhanced Sustainability Leadership - Support ESG and sustainability goals.



Sustainable Competitive Advantage - Develop leadership capability that competitors cannot easily replicate.

WHY THIS MATTERS:

EXECUTIVE RECOMMENDATION

DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ACCOR'S GLOBAL LEADERS

Why Invest Now?

Globalisation, sustainability expectations and increasing stakeholder complexity require a new generation of leaders capable of operating effectively across borders.

Without investment in global leadership capability, organisations risk leadership pipeline gaps, inconsistent performance and reduced competitiveness.

Accor's future success depends not only on where the organisation operates, but on the capability of its leaders to navigate cultural complexity, manage diverse stakeholders and deliver sustainable performance across global markets. Investing in global leadership development is therefore not a training initiative, but a strategic investment in long-term organisational success.

REFERENCES



- ACCOR (2024) UNIVERSAL REGISTRATION DOCUMENT 2023. PARIS: ACCOR GROUP.
- ACCOR (2024) SUSTAINABILITY REPORT. PARIS: ACCOR GROUP.
- ACCOR (2025) CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND ESG REPORTING. PARIS: ACCOR GROUP.
- AVERY, G.C. AND BERGSTEINER, H. (2011) SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP: HONEYBEE AND LOCUST APPROACHES. NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE.
- BALDWIN, T.T. AND FORD, J.K. (1988) 'TRANSFER OF TRAINING: A REVIEW AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH', PERSONNEL PSYCHOLOGY, 41(1), PP. 63–105.
- BIRD, A. AND MENDENHALL, M.E. (2016) 'FROM CROSS-CULTURAL MANAGEMENT TO GLOBAL LEADERSHIP: EVOLUTION AND ADAPTATION', JOURNAL OF WORLD BUSINESS, 51(1), PP. 115–126.
- BURKE, L.A. AND HUTCHINS, H.M. (2007) 'TRAINING TRANSFER: AN INTEGRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW', HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW, 6(3), PP. 263–296.
- CIPD (2023) LEARNING AT WORK 2023. LONDON: CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF PERSONNEL AND DEVELOPMENT.
- CALIGIURI, P. AND TARIQUE, I. (2012) 'DYNAMIC CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCIES AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS', JOURNAL OF WORLD BUSINESS, 47(4), PP. 612–622.
- CARROLL, A.B. (1991) 'THE PYRAMID OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: TOWARD THE MORAL MANAGEMENT OF ORGANISATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS', BUSINESS HORIZONS, 34(4), PP. 39–48.
- DAY, D.V. (2000) 'LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: A REVIEW IN CONTEXT', LEADERSHIP QUARTERLY, 11(4), PP. 581–613.
- DOH, J.P. AND QUIGLEY, N.R. (2014) 'RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP AND STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT: INFLUENCE PATHWAYS AND ORGANISATIONAL OUTCOMES', ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES, 28(3), PP. 255–274.
- EARLEY, P.C. AND ANG, S. (2003) CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE: INDIVIDUAL INTERACTIONS ACROSS CULTURES. STANFORD, CA: STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.
- FERDIG, M.A. (2007) 'SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP: CO-CREATING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE', JOURNAL OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT, 7(1), PP. 25–35.
- FREEMAN, R.E. (1984) STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT: A STAKEHOLDER APPROACH. BOSTON: PITMAN.
- JAVIDAN, M. AND WALKER, J. (2013) DEVELOPING YOUR GLOBAL MINDSET. BASINGSTOKE: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN.
- MAAK, T. AND PLESS, N.M. (2006) 'RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP IN A STAKEHOLDER SOCIETY: A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE', JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS, 66(1), PP. 99–115.
- MENDENHALL, M.E., OSLAND, J.S., BIRD, A., ODDOU, G.R., MAZNEVSKI, M.L., STEVENS, M.J. AND STAHL, G.K. (2017) GLOBAL LEADERSHIP: RESEARCH, PRACTICE AND DEVELOPMENT. 3RD EDN. LONDON: ROUTLEDGE.
- PLESS, N.M. AND MAAK, T. (2011) 'RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP: PATHWAYS TO THE FUTURE', JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS, 98(S1), PP. 3–13.
- UNITED NATIONS (2015) TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD: THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. NEW YORK: UNITED NATIONS.
- UNFCCC (2015) THE PARIS AGREEMENT. BONN: UNITED NATIONS.
- VISSER, W. AND COURTICE, P. (2011) SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP: LINKING THEORY AND PRACTICE. CAMBRIDGE: UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP.
- VOEGTLIN, C., PATZER, M. AND SCHERER, A.G. (2012) 'RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP IN GLOBAL BUSINESS: A NEW APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP AND ITS MULTI-LEVEL OUTCOMES', JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS, 105(1), PP. 1–16.
- WENGER, E. (1998) COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE: LEARNING, MEANING, AND IDENTITY. CAMBRIDGE: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS.
- WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (2024) THE GLOBAL RISKS REPORT 2024. GENEVA: WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM.
- YUKL, G. (2013) LEADERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS. 8TH EDN. HARLOW: PEARSON EDUCATION.