

MANAGING OUR MINDSETS IN CONFRONTING COMPLEXITY AND CHANGE

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In their recent study of global chief executives, IBM found that *dealing with complexity* was the number one challenge among the 1500 CEO's in their study.¹ The global *interconnectiveness* of supply chains, financial markets, information and technology flows across multiple boundaries, combined with the *speed* of these flows and the speed of change, are a challenge for managers and leaders. Confronted with these complexities, we frequently seek simplicity and parsimony and rely on our most well-developed competency or approach that had worked for us in the past. However, it may be that what we need in the face of this complexity and speed of change is to *further develop, balance and integrate our portfolio of mindsets*.

In our ongoing series *Advances in Global Leadership*², we have published a number of papers from various authors on the concept of *Global Mindset*; most recently the work of Javidan & Teagarden from Thunderbird.³ In this work, Javidan & Teagarden defined *Global Mindset* as: An individual's ability to influence individuals, groups, organizations and systems that are unlike one-self. In their integration of multiple academic and practitioner literatures, these authors concluded that to succeed, global leaders need a combination attributes called *Global Mindset* that includes three components: *intellectual capital* (intellectual and cognitive capabilities including understanding of global markets, value networks and organizations; cultural acumen); *social capital* (relationships inside and outside the firm including international connections, interpersonal competence, and leadership skills to mobilize employees at the global level); and *psychological capital* (a positive psychological profile, cosmopolitanism and passion for cross-cultural encounters). Drawing on this and our own work, I would suggest that a fundamental question for current and aspiring leaders and those responsible for developing

¹ S. Berman & P. Korsten (2010). *Capitalizing on complexity: Insights from the global chief executive study*. Somers, NY: IBM Global Business Services.

² Mobley, W. H., Wang, Y., and Li, M. (Eds.) (2012, 2011, 2009, 2006, 2003, 2001, 1999). *Advances in Global Leadership*. Vol. 1-7. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.

³ M. Javidan & M. B. Teagarden (2011). Conceptualizing and measuring global mindset. In W. H. Mobley, Ming Li & Ying Wang (Eds.) *Advances in Global Leadership*, (Vol. 6, pp. 13-19). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.

leaders is how well are we developing and balancing our intellectual, social and psychological capital?

While Javidan & Teagarden are primarily focused on senior global leaders, Gosling & Mintzberg focused on the five mindsets of managers in general.⁴ They argued that making sense of the complicated and contradictory world of modern managers requires not a knack for simplification but *the ability to synthesize insights from different mind-sets into a comprehensible whole*. These authors suggested five such mindsets.

1. *Action mind-set*: getting it done, managing change;
2. *Analytical mind-set*: rational, logical, decomposing problems and issues, managing organization;
3. *Collaborative mind-set*: getting things done cooperatively, orchestrating relationships among individuals and teams, managing relationships;
4. *Worldly or contextual mind-set*: practical, cultural and social insights, managing context; and
5. *Reflective mind-set*: understating and managing self, openness to new ideas and approaches.

There appears to be some overlap in several of Gosling & Mintzberg's mindsets and the three components of global mindset identified by the Thunderbird group.

I am in agreement with Gosling and Mintzberg that a major challenge faced by executives is *the ability to synthesize insights from different mind-sets into a comprehensible whole*. In my work as a professor of management, in executive development work, and in our Mobley Group Pacific (MGP) work as executive assessors and coaches in China and Asia-Pacific, we seek to assess and develop the three capabilities inherent in global mindset (*Intellectual Capital; Social Capital; and Psychological Capital*) and the five mindsets described by Gosling and Mintzberg (*action, analytical, relationship/collaborative, worldly/contextual, and reflective*). In my experience here in Hong Kong and Shanghai over the past 16 years, the analytical and action mindsets are fairly well developed in executives. Less well developed are the worldly (context)

⁴ J. Gosling & H. Mintzberg (2003). The five minds of a manager. *Harvard Business Review*. November. P. 3-11.



and the collaborative (relationship) mindsets; and least well developed is the reflective mindset. And for many executives, the synthesis among the multiple mindsets is incomplete and fuzzy at best. As individual executives and as developers of executive talent, allocating development time and focus to further developing our reflective mindset and to effectively synthesizing all our mindsets will help assure our effectiveness in the face of complexity and speed of change.

For those wishing to further develop their multiple mindsets, a good starting point is the measure of *Global Mindset* developed by Javidan and Teagarden; and the Hogan Assessment Series⁵ that provides insights into all five of the mindsets described by Gosling and Mintzberg. Our MGP team will be happy to share more.

⁵Hogan, R. T., & Benson, M. J. (2009). Personality, leadership, and globalization: Linking personality to global organizational effectiveness. In: W. H. Mobley, Y. Wang & M. Li (Eds.), *Advances in global leadership* (Vol. 5, pp.11–34). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited; Hogan, R. T., & Hogan, J. C. (2007). *Hogan personality inventory technical manual* (3rd Ed.). Tulsa, OK: Hogan Assessment Systems; Hogan, R. T., & Hogan, J. C. (2009). *Hogan development survey technical manual* (2nd Ed.). Tulsa, OK: Hogan Assessment Systems; Hogan, R. T., & Hogan, J. C. (2010). *Motives, Values, Preferences Inventory* (2010 Administrative and Norming Updates). Tulsa, OK: Hogan Assessment Systems.

William H. Mobley Biographical Summary



Dr. William H. Mobley is the Visiting Chair Professor of Management and co-director of the Asia Pacific Academy of Economics and Management at the University of Macau; and Chairman of Mobley Group Pacific Ltd. (MGP). His focus is on leadership development, executive assessment and coaching, and organizational culture and change, particularly with firms in China and Asia-Pacific.

Mobley also serves on the board of directors of several firms and foundations including: Green Packaging Solutions Ltd.; WGP Investments Ltd.; Keystone Group Ltd.; Kan Pak LLC; and the Ta Tong Education and Culture Foundation, Taipei. Dr. Mobley previously served as manager of HR research and succession planning for PPG Industries; as dean of the College of Business Administration and later president of Texas A&M University, where he is now President Emeritus. He also is Professor Emeritus at China Europe International Business School in Shanghai where he taught for eight years and served as academic advisor for executive education programs and where he was program director for the IBM A/P Client Executive Program; the L'Oreal North Asia Transition to Advanced Management Program; the Diploma in Management Program; among others.

Mobley earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology and economics from Denison University and his doctorate degree in industrial-organizational psychology from the University of Maryland, College Park. He also has been awarded honorary degrees from the University of the Americas in Pueblo Mexico and the University of Akron and is an Honorary Professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He has served as a visiting professor at National Taiwan University and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and as a visiting fellow at Cornell University. He is executive editor of *Advances in Global Leadership*, (Emerald Group Publishing) as well as author of multiple articles and books on turnover, leadership and multinational organizations. He resides in Shanghai and Macau with his wife, Dr. Marjorie J. Woo.