Creating Synergies for Leading:
Three Key Success Factors for Western Expatriates in Russia

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Angela Baxter, director of business development of Berlitz International, was sent from the U.S. to Russia for a three-year assignment. Knowing that Russia is a highly dynamic market undergoing a fundamental transformation, she expected that work-related values and leadership styles in her new working environment would have been westernized: "I thought that the culture was changing and that Moscow must be becoming very cosmopolitan. There are a lot of international businesses. There is a whole new generation of young and ambitious people who I expected to have adopted a Western style of doing business. But that's not the case." Over time, she discovered the expectations of her Russian subordinates and adjusted her own leadership style to successfully cope with the new situation. Speaking to 20 Western expatriates, we realized that they all faced the same challenge. The study that emerged from this research offers an in-depth analysis of the recent experiences of these expatriates, and identifies leadership-related success factors for Western expatriates in Russia.

Introduction

In terms of international assignments, Western expatriates and human resources (HR) departments find Russia to be one of the most challenging destinations. Why? One of the key reasons is the often profound difference in leadership behaviors between East and West. Managers have a keen interest in understanding which management styles are necessary to succeed in a Russian professional setting. Yet a review of the research literature reveals contradictory answers to the question of whether the country's current leadership culture has incorporated Western values. Some note a convergence toward a Western leadership style with participative and democratic elements; others see no change in the country's past authoritarian leadership style. Some have even suggested that it would be difficult to implement Western leadership styles altogether.

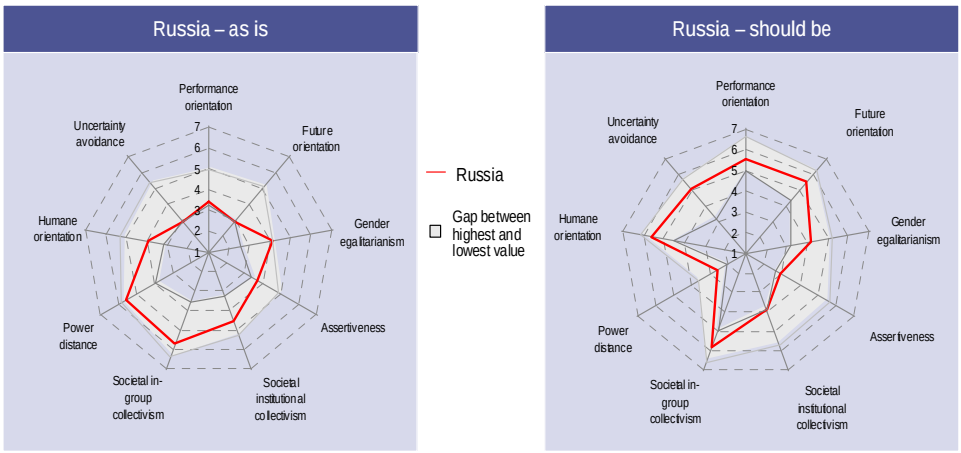
This need for clarification was addressed by Amrop Hever, ESCP-EAP European School of Management, ESMT European School of Management and Technology, both in Berlin, and HBR Russia. In 2007/2008, they conducted a study in order to take a closer look at how Western expatriates are coping with leadership challenges in the dynamic work environment of Moscow, and to what extent their leadership styles are being accepted by Russian superiors and subordinates. A series of 35-hour interviews were conducted with a total of 20 Western expatriates and 15 locals.

Three key findings emerged from the research:
It is necessary for expatriates to become more authoritarian, but not as much as the Russians themselves. They must also find the right balance between authority and a people-orientation. Finally, they must learn to motivate Russian employees through a

combination of control and rewards. This necessarily has implications for HR departments, because they need to adapt their pre-departure training and ongoing support programs differently and more extensively than in other countries.

Western-Russian Synergies in Leadership Styles

The challenge for Western expatriates working in Moscow is underscored by the results of the most recent large-scale international study on work-related values and leadership, the GLOBE study (Global Leadership and Organizational Effectiveness Program). The GLOBE study collected data during the years 1994-1997, surveying 62 societies and more than 17,000 managers regarding work-related values and leadership styles. Interestingly, especially for the analysis of such a dynamic environment as the Russian market, this study directly compares a society's current situation (the "as is"-dimension) with its people's future development preferences (the "should be"-dimension). Russia is, for example, characterized by an extremely high power distance, an indication that there is an unequal distribution of power within the society. Russian companies, for example, tolerate a much greater power distance than their Western industrialized counterparts. However, Russians also stated that power distance should be reduced in the future. At the same time, the society's humane orientation – factors which include fairness and caring about others – was perceived to be much lower than it should be in the future.



Source: House, R. J., Hanges, P.J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., Gupta, V. (Eds): Culture, Leadership and Organizations. The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies, Thousand Oaks et al.: Sage 2004.

Figure 1: Russia's work-related values according to the GLOBE Study.

Rather than value power distance, the study indicates that Russians seek a stronger humane orientation in the long term. This demonstrates the ongoing dynamic of value

changes in Russia. The central part of our study focused on this dynamic, and how it is influencing successful leadership styles of Western expatriates in Russia.

Our study supports the findings of the GLOBE study: that the cultural environment has a profound impact on the social acceptance of leadership styles, and that these styles differ greatly between Western and Russian companies. Our study, however, goes several steps beyond the GLOBE study. We not only acknowledge that there *are* differences in various dimensions, but we also cite important details and examples of *how* leadership styles vary – based on the recommendations of managers who have worked in both cultures and know them in depth. All interviewees point to the fact that it is a mix of Western and Russian leadership styles that leads to success:

> *"I think that for Russia, the mix of Russian leadership and Western management is good. For our people, it is important to have a very strong leader to whom they can report – plus a bit of Western-style leadership that gives them more flexibility and freedom."*

As a result, expatriate managers recommend creating cultural synergies between leadership styles as a prerequisite for successful international assignments. Although classic elements of Russian leadership were retained, typical Western leadership style elements were also highly appreciated by locals. They were, for example, perceived as creating a positive and effective working atmosphere. Thus, successful expatriates in Moscow combined the positive aspects of both working cultures and leadership styles. In fact, they perceived this hybrid form to be superior to the pure transfer of Western leadership styles into the Russian environment.

Yet to get a more thorough understanding of why – and how – this type of hybrid leadership paradigm can succeed, we must take a closer look at the valuable contributions from both societies. What exactly are the features that were perceived as positive in both cultures?

Most of the interviewees pointed to two major differences between Russia and the West. "Typical" Russian leadership was described by two main factors:

- A strong employee-oriented behavior: People, whether superiors or subordinates, are the centre of consideration in Russia. Constant attention is expected when cooperation within work settings is desired.
- The prevalence of an authoritarian leadership style that includes intense control: Employees appreciate clear commands. Control is seen as a commonly accepted tool and does not have the negative connotations it may have in many Western countries.

By contrast, Western leadership styles were perceived as participatory, with a strict separation between private life and work.

From the outset, both Western and Russian leadership styles have inherent advantages and disadvantages. Transferring some leadership styles into a foreign environment can be difficult, while others can be readily implemented – and even appreciated. What became readily apparent over the course of the study is that successful expatriate managers combine the best of both leadership styles to achieve synergy. In

the interviews and analysis that follow, we explore the pros and cons of each style in greater depth, and view real-life case studies of successful expatriate managers.

Striking the right balance: a synergistic approach to leadership styles

The Russian employees interviewed in our study consistently mentioned several advantages to an authoritarian style of leadership, among them a clearer task orientation and a certain level of responsibility relief because of a higher degree of control. However, Russian interviewees also saw major negative implications. These included unpredictable behavior among leaders. Employees were also forced to be deferential to their bosses and depend on their good will more often. As a result, strong personal interdependencies occur that may result in nepotism. In such an environment, individual development and career opportunities are not transparent.

By contrast, Western company cultures and leadership styles were admired by locals for their higher degree of formalization when compared to Russian companies. Nearly all locals highlighted the advantages of working for a multinational company because of a positive working atmosphere. Locals pointed to the fact that a more elaborate set of rules were in place to counterbalance the risk of nepotism. Consequently, the Western leadership style was described as being more fair. Locals positively emphasized the prevalence of trustworthy personal relationships and a friendly working atmosphere within Western companies. They felt motivated by a high degree of transparency regarding their own personal career. One local describes an expatriate manager in the following way:

> *"He leaves his personal likes or dislikes at the door. In most cases, his likes or dislikes are based on what people do, not like 'I like her appearance' ".*

Local interviewees also perceived challenges when evaluating the participatory leadership style. Some of them felt over-challenged because of unclearly defined roles. Other Russian interviewees said that they faced increased workloads because they had to continuously consult with their subordinates. These perceptions were confirmed by expatriates. Most of them stated that a participative leadership style was not easy to implement in a Russian context. The majority of them pointed out that an anti-authoritarian form of leadership was also not effective.

> *"Here, if it is not clear on paper, people won't feel comfortable – not because it's not part of their job description or because they don't want to work hard, but because they feel insecure. 'Is it part of my mandate or not? Tell me what to do! ' "*

Employees of Russian companies, as well as those of the Russian subsidiaries of multinational enterprises, were described as being over-challenged because of the lack of task structure. Some expatriates stated that they had to shift their leadership behavior toward a more authoritarian style.

> *"I have had to adapt, because the expectation of our staff is that they would like to have a clear leader. You have to show them 'I am the boss.' This is*

expected. It's not really my favorite kind of behavior, but it is really expected."

Combining the perceived advantages of both leadership styles seems to be the most effective way to lead employees during the transition phase of the Russian market. Expatriates cited a high degree of task structure, firm leadership and control. These qualities, combined with a high degree of employee orientation and other participative elements, were identified as the essential ingredients for effective leadership in Russia. These results are summarized in Figure 2.

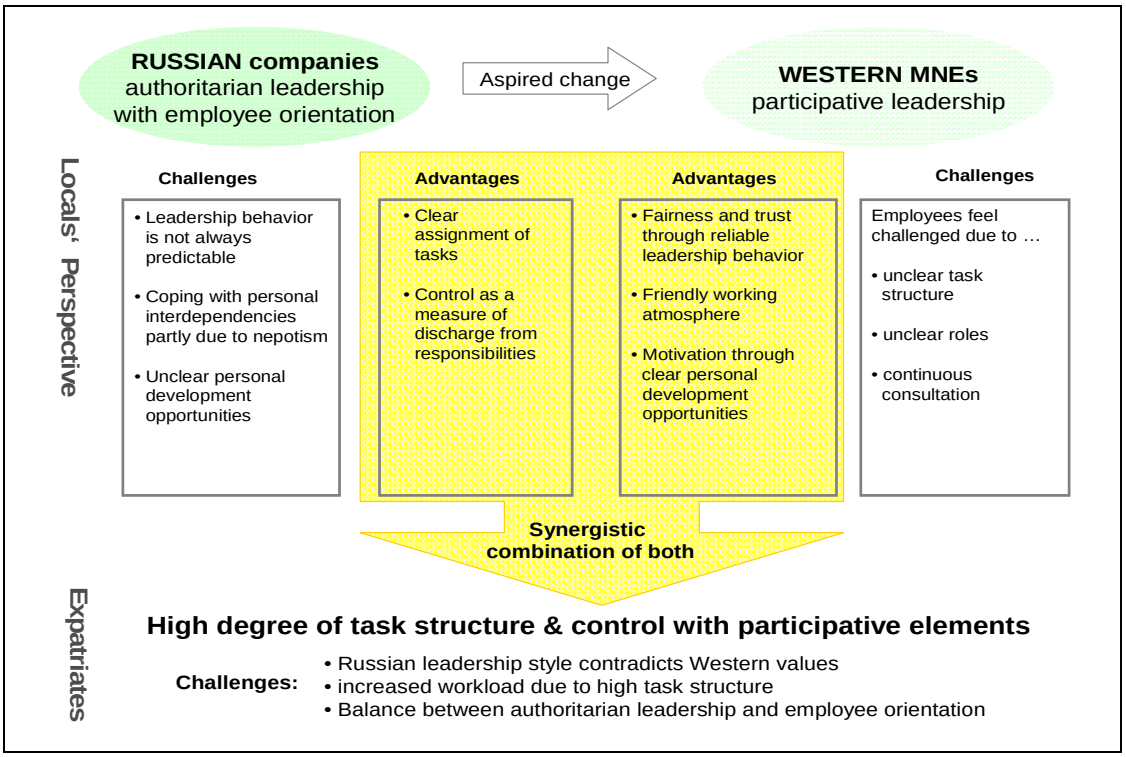


Figure 2: Synergies in Western-Russian leadership styles.

Lessons Learned: Three Key Success Factors for Western Expatriates in Russia

Our study has shown that creating cultural synergy in leadership styles is the key to success for Western expatriates in Moscow. Once combined, the elements of both cultures can offer results far better than an across-the-board transfer of Western leadership styles. This approach is capable of meeting the expectations of both leaders and subordinates from different cultures. The key is, of course, that expatriates carefully observe the cultural differences and develop new behavioral patterns to cope with this cross-cultural interplay.

Yet it also became clear from our study that it is not easy to change leadership behavior and work habits. Each of these behaviors represents evolutionary adaptations that have been successfully reinforced in the native environment over time. Most Western expatriates did not feel comfortable in the role of an authoritarian manager. Nearly all of them stated that an authoritarian leadership style contradicts their Western values. At the same time, they also felt challenged by having to display strong employee-oriented behavior. Managers also said that the need to provide more detailed task assignments created heavier workloads. Thus, managers had to develop new solutions that would enable them to be strong leaders in these challenging situations. In many cases, this involved a trial and error strategy. To enable future Western expatriates to learn from interviewee experiences, three important success factors for expatriates are outlined in the following sections.

1. Be more authoritarian, but not as much as the Russians

Working in a Russian environment means to accept that power distance is still high - in multinationals as well as in Russian companies! This means that expatriates have to display at least some elements of an authoritarian leadership style. One expatriate put it this way:

> *"In Russia there is a big respect for the boss. He has to have a separate office. He needs to have a specific style of chair – very often it is a leather one with a big desk. This is something which is still important here."*

While authoritarian leadership styles may also occur in a Western environment, most expatriates reported that the typical leadership style in Russia was more authoritarian than in their home countries. One of the participants actually used the word "dictatorial." Leaders gave clear orders, and told employees what to do and how to do it. Interviewees perceived a smaller degree of participatory elements. In some cases, Russian employees openly requested a more firm management style:

> *"I think sometimes she should be tougher. For Russian employees it's very important to be tough."*

Yet when asked why they are in Russia, expatriates clearly expected to play an instrumental role in changing the local authoritarian style, and to take employees along a path of greater participation and democracy.

> *"I think that the [expatriate manager's] most important role is still to break the autocratic leadership style, and to get people involved in management – to integrate the management team together with your business processes. I think that is the expatriate's role."*

But if this represents part of the expatriate's *raison d'être* in Russia, how does it tally with the need to adapt to authoritarian leadership? Interviews show that it is a matter of degree. Neither expatriates nor local employees want a full-fledged, archetypal authoritarian leadership style. Instead, most employees also explicitly expressed the desire for participatory elements. Some wanted them more than others, to be sure. Yet all believed that they were the source of two key advantages of working for

expatriates: more delegation of authority and more freedom for decision making. The solution for expatriates, then, is not to become a better Russian, but rather to create a new integrative, adaptive leadership roadmap that can be shaped and executed over time. Two employees praised expatriates working in their firm for this very ability: to be both authoritarian and participative.

> *"I think that he has a good combination of different leadership styles. Sometimes, when he needs to push more, he can push. His other approach is to always involve his employees in the decision making process. He always listens to what they say, and he really likes the details, I think. Sometimes, when his employees come to him with good analysis, he can change his mind, which is good."*

Once the adaptation to a more participatory leadership style has taken place, people value the results:

> *"Once you earn [their] trust, I think it is fantastic. Because they give you – again, this is the positive feeling you get in Russia - they will delight you. Unfortunately, they sometimes neglect their families for you and the company. They are ready to risk their lives. Actually, this is what I love about Russia."*

Summary

The results of the interviews suggest that expatriates should ideally take a middle road. They need to be more authoritarian than they would be in their home countries, but they can also begin introducing participatory elements over time. Even if mutual misperceptions emerge, this does not mitigate the success of working relationships. In many of the superior-subordinate scenarios, it came down to a matter of perception: Expatriates believed they had become completely authoritarian by their own standards. At the same time, Russian employees felt empowered to reach their own decisions.

2. Find the right balance between authority and person-orientation

A worst-case scenario of how authoritarian behavior can lead to misunderstandings – and backfire – also emerged over the course of our study. An expatriate manager, arrogant and eager to tell everyone "what to do and how to do it," arrived in Russia with no understanding or interest in the country:

> *"You've hired me because I am here to tell you – all you idiots – how wrong you've been. You…you guys don't know how to work. I'll show you how to work. That's why they pay me a ridiculous amount of money – because I am brilliant."*

As mentioned before, Russia is a country where good personal relationships are one of the keys to success. Expatriates coming to Russia must keep this in mind:

"Here, it's much more about relationships and much more about the fact who is above you. People share very close bonds. Even if a person is not an ideal leader or competent, even then they are loyal to that person."

These relationships are, however, reciprocal: Employees are expected to demonstrate loyalty towards superiors, just as superiors are expected to show a sincere interest in subordinates and praise their work.

"So, here in Russia, you need to explain to people why you are asking them to do something. That's just like in one of the jokes: A milk maid comes to milk a cow. She milks and milks and milks and milks – fills the whole bucket. As the maid gets ready to leave, the cow turns around and says, 'а поцеловать,' *or* '*Hey, how about a kiss!' " And the milk maid responds, 'But you are a cow! It's your job to give milk! That's why we feed you!' I think a lot of Russians need that special treatment. Otherwise they start to get - 'Ah! I am so demotivated.' "*

What can we learn from this anecdote? While work relationships under a more neo-liberal and capitalist paradigm are seen as an exchange of money for high performance, this results-oriented attitude may be de-motivating in the Russian context. People, whether superiors or subordinates, are the center of consideration in Russia. Employees expect constant attention, feedback and praise before they will provide their highest level of cooperation. These attitudes were confirmed by nearly all interviewees.

This reflects the results of the GLOBE study, which reveal the high demand for a "humane orientation" in Russia. Relationship building at work takes place both vertically as well as horizontally. All expatriates talked about the intense quality of personal relationships that go well beyond the occasional office birthday party. In fact, these ties often spill over into spheres that many Western cultures reserve only for a private circle of friends outside work. In Russia, the assessment reveals less of a distinction between work and private life. Expatriates must take this into account and act accordingly if they wish to build up a trustful relationship with their employees. Russian employees, on the other hand, feel that there is reluctance – or even fear – on the part of expatriates to engage on a more emotional level. They do not appreciate this.

"Mostly, expatriates are afraid of personal relationships," responded one local employee. Expatriates who wish to be successful must work on their relationship styles. This includes allocating time for employees' personal issues, and it begins at a very fundamental level.

"The first advice is to say 'hello' to everyone when you come in the morning. You have to say 'hello' to everyone. You shake the men's hands. You say 'hello' to the women, okay? And you do it only once during the day. What Americans do, they say 'hello,' 'hi,' and 'what's up' all the time. That's the worst thing that you can do to Russians."

Interest in people must be sincere. Rhetorical questions like "what's up?" are insufficient. Instead, a much stronger expression of personal commitment is expected:

"There are a couple of things like parties, birthdays and celebrations where you have to do it with your team if you want to succeed. This isn't the case in Europe. If you want people to follow you; if you want to have a very good team; if you want to have results; you also have to somehow give something of yourself to them."

This type of giving can be accomplished in two ways. One is to show more direct interest in employees. The other is to show indirect interest by building up a rapport with the language and culture. It comes as no surprise that language skills play an enormous role. Grammar or pronunciation mistakes in no way detract from the positive impact of trying to speak Russian. Indeed, one employee actually suggested that speaking Russian imperfectly may actually have a purely positive effect:

"I can say that a little bit of an accent and some small mistakes make it even better. Because it makes it obvious that you are a foreigner. People in this country take it for granted that a foreigner can do something better than the locals. I think it runs in our blood."

What makes this different from other countries? After all, expatriates learn the language to strengthen relationships in many countries. But we are convinced that this issue is especially poignant in Russia. In a country where expatriates have to adopt an authoritarian style and, at the same time, foster personal relationships, the language tool becomes much more important. By comparison, countries where requirements are less complex typically do not require managers to cultivate close personal relationships with employees.

The strong emphasis on personal relationships, however, can also have negative side effects. As expatriates become more personally involved with employees, they often find it difficult to assert executive authority and discipline.

"I have found that it's hard for Russian employees to switch from business to personal – to separate business and personal. Say you are having a nice conversation with someone. The next thing you know, this persons calls and says, 'I can't come to work today, because remember when I told you about all these problems I have with my husband?' So you feel trapped."

Expatriates who have lived and worked in Russia for longer periods of time manage to find the critical balance. Many accept that the development of personal ties is inevitable, and that it will put them under a greater moral obligation as an employer.

Strong personal relationships, in and of themselves, do not present significant challenges for expatriates. It is not difficult to develop or show more interest in someone. The greater challenge for expatriates lies precisely in combining a greater personal involvement with a more assertive, authoritarian leadership style. Expatriates often face a dilemma: At any given moment, a manager may be called upon to show concern for a sick relative and chat about weekend plans. The very next moment, a manager may have to make an iron-handed decision that negatively affects that same employee. Expatriates accustomed to more participatory leadership styles often take issue with this dilemma, and find it difficult to achieve a balance.

Our research shows that the solution for a number of expatriates has been to think of their employees as children, and of themselves as a parent. This allows things to fall into place. The authoritarian role takes on a more educational character, while the personal relationship aspect resembles a parent's heartfelt desire to provide for a child's welfare.

> *"You need to create this fatherly or motherly relationship. You can reprimand them. But even when you reprimand them, you always have to know that you love them and that you will ultimately protect them - because this is what they expect. They will follow you if you include them, involve them and develop them. Reprimand them – slap them when need be – but you will always fight for them or, in other words, you have to demonstrate to them that you have their interests at heart. When I say 'treating them like children,' I don't mean to patronize them."*

Finally, the research also shows a blurring of the distinction between private life and the office. This may also lead to a new type of conflict that can block cooperation. One local employee described a problem she experienced with her expatriate superior. The employee organized her own office birthday party, but did not invite a colleague whom she disliked. From the employee's perspective, it was normal to avoid contact with an unlikable person. For her Western counterpart, this was seen as unprofessional and childish.

Summary
The juxtaposition of high power distance and deep personal relationships is difficult for expatriates. Knowledge of the language, as well as a true interest in Russia and the Russians, are invaluable.

3. Motivate via control and rewards

Russian interviewees also indicated that performance motivation must be managed differently than in many other countries. The following expatriate statement shows how important it is to find the right approach in the Russian working environment:

> *"For Russians, I think there is a lot of black and white. In the case of Germans — even if a person is not very motivated because of the culture and the environment and maybe because of his boss — they will still do their job at least 90 percent. The Russian in this case would go down to 50 percent. On the other hand, if he is motivated — because he believes in the task; he's got the heart and blood for the company; and he likes this and the environment — then you can get him to 120 or 140 percent."*

At first glance, the motivation-related findings of this study appear to be contradictory. The interviews revealed, however, that there are two ways to motivate the workforce. First, there should be more elements of control than in other countries. Second, a greater focus on rewards is needed. The prevalent authoritarian leadership style appears to be responsible for this. If the way to lead is to tell people exactly what to do and when, then control is a necessary consequence. But because self-motivation

and authoritarian leadership styles may not be completely compatible, other performance motivation measures like rewards become more important.

Motivation via control

In the old days it was the *prikaz,* a written agreement that gives subordinates a step-by-step explanation of their responsibilities, now it is the unequivocal command: both have caused expatriates numerous problems in the areas of delegation and self-responsibility. Although these instruments proved to be effective in environments that required a high degree of control, they were negatively evaluated by many Westerners. They saw these control measures as the product of an environment without trust – counterproductive when it comes to innovative and participative collaboration:

> *"Basically, in a Russian company, trust is very low. And God knows the controls are there to remind everybody it is very low.*

However, control is not negatively perceived by the locals. On the contrary, they describe it as a necessary organizational tool.

Here, the culturally embedded perceptions of both expatriates and Russians become evident. While some locals viewed participative leadership as a waste of time, some expatriates complain about the time they have to spend controlling subordinates. Once expatriates understood these issues, they usually solved the problem by giving clearer commands and focusing more on controlling their workforce.

Motivation via rewards

The interviews clearly indicated that motivation is not only increased by control measures, but also through tangible rewards. In the past, many Russian companies had not paid much attention to the issue of performance orientation, either with motivating words or with reward systems. In our interviews, one participant explains it this way:

> *"When I entered this company, there was a rule that if you achieved less than 80 percent of your target, you would be fired. So, I found out that there were a lot of people achieving 81 percent all of the time. So, we were always missing 19 percent. How did we change it? We raised the motivation system target above 100 percent. Now we fire people, not for achieving 81 or 79 percent, but for continual bad performance, no matter what their percentage is."*

Behavior that breaks out of this traditional way of thinking can lead to surprising results:

> *"I said '**thank you**' to her afterwards and she replied, '**This is the first time in 13 years anyone has said '**thank you**' to me.**'"*

Expatriates who come from countries with greater humane orientation did not find the issue of workforce motivation difficult to cope with. Monetary rewards were obviously available, but responsibility proved to be an even more useful tool. Because the role of the traditional Russian leader led to nearly absolute power, our interview

results suggest that allocating power into smaller areas can have a positive motivational effect. This, of course, is also attractive for expatriates trying to enhance the participatory aspect of their organizations:

> *"Changing to a flat organization structure is what worked for me. I mean, there were some issues because the start was important, so you had to create different roles: junior, senior or leading senior – whatever you call it with them – so people feel promoted."*

A short-term rather than long-term timeframe appears to have the strongest motivating effect on performance.

> *"There is no such thing as long-term planning. They don't want to think about what their goals are. What is being done today is the most important thing. 'As long as I have accomplished this – I have survived.' "*

Performance motivation, therefore, is more successful when it delivers immediate, measurable changes rather than intangible, future promises. Pension plans, long-term executive education schedules or career building posts abroad were seen as being less effective than direct promotions or rewards. The situation is changing, but there are still many people who prefer short-term motivation and rewards.

> *"We have had a lot of situations where we wanted to send people abroad for training, but we wanted some kind of commitment from them – that if you go, you stay, say, for half a year or something like that. Because of that, a lot of people refused to move to another country. It was because they calculated: 'Well, Hong Kong means working six days a week. I have to pay for an apartment. I will make $15 less in the long run. So I won't go.' They don't seem to understand what this is actually about."*

Summary
Russian employees are more accustomed to clear structures in both command and reward situations. Clear, measurable performance indicators not only help to initiate necessary performance levels, but also begin to build the kind of trust between manager and employee necessary to empower teams with participatory methods. Again, the upside of these methods appears to be particularly rewarding. Because the Russian workforce is not only highly educated but also extremely hardworking, good working relations make a significant contribution toward supporting sustainable management success.

Implications for International Human Resource Management

Expatriates are crucial to the success of the multinational enterprise. Their performance before, during and after the international assignment has a critical impact on the international activities of a firm. Particularly in a challenging environment like Russia, selection, pre-departure training, coaching and re-entry should be carefully managed by international HR management departments.

In establishing selection criteria for sending managers to Russia, HR managers should consider the main results of our study. As previously discussed, a leader in Russia is expected to be authoritarian as well as employee-oriented. These expectations have certain implications: A candidate should have a high tolerance for ambiguity, and possess both technical and social skills. One interviewee noted that the greater the cultural distance between expatriate managers and Russian employees, the greater the potential for psychological or emotional difficulties. In short, some nationalities seem to find it easier to work in Russia than others:

> *"Germans can easily work here. I think because they are like, you know, like German knights. If there are difficulties, they just overcome them. They are strong. They have discipline. And they work despite all difficulties. It's like a German football team, you know. Three players might have broken legs, and they still win, you know, for whatever reason. But, for example, we had people in the creative department from Italy. And, you know, they had excellent portfolios. But they couldn't come up with any good ideas here. I don't know why. It's like, you know, maybe 'this golden bird cannot sing in this cage,' or, you know, certain animals cannot give birth in captivity. I don't know what happens, but these conditions… maybe it's too cold here".*

Cultural awareness training prior to departure is particularly recommended. Expatriates should learn to develop coping strategies. They should also learn to create a leadership style that achieves the right balance between employee-oriented behavior, authoritarian behavior and task- and control-oriented approaches. Training programs should also teach managers that, unlike Western employees, many locals do not perceive the issue of control negatively. Expatriates should learn how to best use various control mechanisms efficiently. Last but not least, expatriates should develop strategies that help them demonstrate a sincere interest in their employees, particularly those managers who tend to be superficial in small-talk situations. Another important channel is language skills. Because Russian is difficult to learn, however, long-term strategies are necessary. Language training should begin early.

The dynamic work environment also means that expatriates will require more support during their assignment. Young expatriates in particular, who possess less international experience, need the support of more experienced colleagues or locals. Our results indicate that expatriates sometimes feel insecure regarding legal issues, especially when their own local practices do not conform to Russian law. This could result in legal problems for the company. In these situations, competent advice is very important and should be offered. In addition, expatriates should receive coaching on leadership styles and work roles. HR departments can also be invaluable in facilitating integration by educating Russian colleagues on how to cope with cultural differences. One expatriate tells the story of a successful training program on team cohesion:

> *"We divided a room into four separate areas with a group of 20 people — half Russians; half foreigners. All those who supported very aggressive marketing were asked to assemble in one corner. And those who were more conservative were asked to group themselves in other corners. People divided themselves up very differently, with a mix of both Russians and foreigners in each of the groups. We saw who was in favor of what kind of*

strategy. It made people start thinking: 'Well, maybe there are other differences in business that matter besides nationality.' "

Because there are so many prerequisites for management success in Russia, many successful expatriates typically request longer assignments in the country. The minimum for being able to work effectively and successfully was seen as five years. This is something which international companies need to consider for their planning processes.

Expatriates who have successfully completed an international assignment in Russia have gained important experiences that can be useful for future assignments. Research has found, however, that expatriate turnover rates following a foreign assignment are high. Reasons include the perception that the psychological contract and other related expectations have not been fulfilled. When expatriates return to their home country, they also often experience another culture shock. Old routines must be relearned. The home country appears alien. Consequently, companies should support their employees during the re-entry phase and should maintain contact with expatriates.

Summary and Conclusion

This study has shed light on how Western expatriates in Moscow define successful leadership behavior. It clearly shows that a synergistic mix of Western and Russian leadership styles leads to higher rates of management success. This hybrid approach is particularly effective compared to strategies that either (1) try to completely adapt to "typical" Russian leadership styles, or that (2) try to transfer purely Western leadership styles.

This study is designed to provide HR managers and expatriates alike with a strategic roadmap for embarking on a successful assignment in Russia. Yet there is no silver bullet approach: Local social norms, corporate cultures and individual personalities throughout the chain of command may require individual solutions. Expatriates must be aware of cultural differences and adjust their leadership behavior accordingly.

As the GLOBE study has amply demonstrated, however, the "as-is" and "should-be" dimensions of cultures are never completely stable. Whether the dynamic Russian business landscape will further integrate Western management styles, or whether it will continue to draw upon its own leadership tradition, will be a source of great interest over the coming decade.

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