

Going global starts within

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Extended abstract

There is considerable comfort to be derived from the familiar; this is as true of the world of business as it is of our own domestic arrangements. The unknown, the alien, the seemingly forbidding have always caused us anxiety and that is as true in this so-called era of Globalisation as it was in the past. The difference now is that we have unrivalled access to information about other people and places thanks to the Internet and a greater degree of connectivity than at any time in the whole of human history. Yet for all this reticence appears to reign supreme, a fact that results in an institutional and cultural myopia that blunts the spirit of adventure and forges a mindset that is risk averse and appears far more at ease with inertia than outreach. Once buccaneering enterprises have retreated into the redoubt and allowed themselves to become smothered by the comfort blanket of parochialism.

*A company or community is made up of a collection of individuals and thus it is with them that change surely must begin. Unless we tackle the fears and anxiety there is little hope of driving forward a spirit of engagement. Anyone familiar with Dr Spencer Johnson's *Who Moved My Cheese? An Amazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and in Your Life* (1998) will appreciate the value and importance of being prepared to venture forth both mentally and physically. It surely behoves us all to encourage and provide an environment that enables the first few steps to be taken. An outward looking organisation recognises it has much to gain from seeing what is done elsewhere, as this is an excellent way of benchmarking as well as being a means by which to avoid the danger of complacency. Staff can easily be empowered to become regional specialists, others may have cultural and linguistic ties that form a natural route in to a given area of the world. Even relatively small institutions and organisations can encourage an interest in designated regions, whether the Middle East & North Africa or the Caribbean. Gunnar Myrdal (1898-1987) the Swedish Nobel laureate economist was a passionate advocate of a regional approach rather than confining one's focus to the narrow confines of a single nation state.*

Self-Globalisation can be enormously fulfilling and invariably enables people to become the conduit for new ideas, fresh perspectives and potentially fresh opportunities. Naturally, the success or failure of such an initiative will ultimately be down to the open minded approach of those in leadership and management roles, especially their willingness to foster and reward an outward looking enthusiasm. Rather than being a futile exercise this has the potential to challenge existing attitudes, as well as enriching individuals, who themselves become repositories of knowledge and understanding. Formal and informal mechanisms have their respective merits. There are various routes into such activity whether it be exploring languages, twinning connections or something as arbitrary as those regions people feel drawn too. Going Global deserves far more serious consideration and if entered into in the right spirit could enable globalisation to become far less daunting.
