

# Chapter 1

## “When in China...”: A Teaching Case in Global Leadership

**Ivonne Chirino-Klevans**

*Kenan-Flagler Business School, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, USA  
& International School of Management, Paris, France*

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*Leading in a global environment requires the development of unique skills such as openness, curiosity, inquisitive mind, tolerance to ambiguity, among others. It is not enough to be willing to reach out to other cultures to be successful in a global business environment. Understanding that adjusting our leadership style according to the context is key in creating effective synergies when doing business across cultures. This teaching case is a tool to be used in the classroom as a resource for a Leadership Course, Organizational Behavior course or Global Business course.*

### **TEACHING CASE**

Michael sat on the porch at 7 am in front of his computer as he had been doing for the past 8 months. It was the start of a new day browsing his professional social media site hoping to find his dream job... again. He had been a successful business development executive for an important learning technologies research institute. He was still wondering what had gone wrong and how his dream job had vanished right in front of his eyes. Michael was a middle age industrial engineer who had been quite successful as an individual contributor in roles that required great attention to detail and a strong level of conscientiousness. Early in his life he had learned discipline and work ethic from his parents. He came from a military family. His Dad had been stationed in 2 different countries. Although Michael’s family lived at base overseas

his mom always made a point of helping Michael and his brother John get to know the local culture, have local friends and learn about different local traditions. The exposure to different cultures helped Michael’s family develop curiosity about other cultures, openness to new information and experiences; disciplined questioning of their assumptions about other cultures, and very importantly, enjoyment in the process of experiencing new and different traditions. As an adult Michael usually found himself looking for jobs that would put him in cross cultural environments and those experiences helped him launch a successful career in global business development. He was very good at seeking out new experiences in global market environments in order to accelerate his understanding of a new culture and how to approach it from a business perspective; he was very skilled at cultivating wide networks in new regions of the world to help his company position their products. He had a unique ability to develop multiple sources of information by creating trust with global clients demonstrating real interest in their history, institutions, and points of local pride in other countries. If there was a new market to explore, his boss knew that Michael was the right person for the job. He did not only identify the local country’s best practices but he was quite skillful at building on those existing best practices in different locations before introducing his own ideas or headquarters’ mandates.

Mike’s boss, Henry, had been in the company for almost 30 years. He had started as a business analyst and worked his way up to VP of Marketing. He knew the company inside out, had survived 3 mergers and one divestment. In fact, he was one of the only 3 founding members of the company who were still employed there. He had a keen eye for identifying talent. The first time he met Mike he was impressed with his charisma and ability to connect with others. Both necessary skills in a business development role. Henry was the kind of boss that many people would love. He would take the time to get to know his direct reports. He knew that empowerment was key to help employees succeed, but only when one as a leader is able to understand the things that matter to your people. His employees loved him. He was able to adjust his leadership approach according to the situation. He was firm when he needed to be. He would not put up with commitments not kept, deadlines missed or excuses. But he allowed his employees to try new things and make mistakes if these mistakes were used as learning experiences. Accountability was the name of the game.

Michael had been hired by Henry to help open new markets in Beijing and Shanghai. During the job interview Henry could identify Mike’s passion for opening new markets around the world and could see the internal drive and commitment to high standards. That is what this new role needed. The company had had some success in Beijing in the past but changes in leadership ended with the relationship they had with important customers in that city. And Mike would be the new face of the company in China with the goal of recovering and finding new customers. Henry was sure Mike was cut for the job.

4 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: [www.igi-global.com/chapter/when-in-china/237816](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/when-in-china/237816)

## Related Content

---

### Online Signature Recognition

Indrani Chakravarty (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition* (pp. 1456-1462).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/online-signature-recognition/11012](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/online-signature-recognition/11012)

### Predicting Resource Usage for Capital Efficient Marketing

D. R. Mani, Andrew L. Betzand James H. Drew (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition* (pp. 1558-1569).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/predicting-resource-usage-capital-efficient/11027](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/predicting-resource-usage-capital-efficient/11027)

### Survival Data Mining

Qiyang Chen (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition* (pp. 1896-1902).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/survival-data-mining/11078](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/survival-data-mining/11078)

### Process Mining to Analyze the Behaviour of Specific Users

Laura Maruster (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition* (pp. 1589-1597).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/process-mining-analyze-behaviour-specific/11031](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/process-mining-analyze-behaviour-specific/11031)

### Hierarchical Document Clustering

Benjamin C.M. Fung, Ke Wangand Martin Ester (2009). *Encyclopedia of Data Warehousing and Mining, Second Edition* (pp. 970-975).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/hierarchical-document-clustering/10938](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/hierarchical-document-clustering/10938)