



60 Seconds with...

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You're passionate about talent development. What conditions are needed for someone's talent to blossom?

I think internally a willingness to grow and learn, and the courage to take the next step. Also self-belief, particularly if surrounded by uncertainty. Externally, a supportive environment and company culture, where senior leaders and the direct manager focus on developing talent.

Have you had an experience of learning in a supportive environment?

Actually, I've worked in both supportive and tough environments and have learnt from both! However I recall a supportive manager who challenged me early in my career, whilst providing a safe environment. "You take the risk. I'll take the blame" was his favourite saying.

Now we've got the tough questions out of the way, it's all downhill after this! You've lived and worked in Shanghai - how was that?

I worked for a company that had offices in both Sydney and Shanghai. Actually I lived in Shanghai for 2 years, with my wife and 3 young kids. I loved it. It's such a dynamic culture, with a real vibe of opportunity. Things move really fast there. I also loved that you can drop into other countries - it's so close to the rest of Asia. Within my professional role, I found that people there want to grow: they are keen to learn how to thrive in a global company. 60% of the world's population is in Asia. Although global company leadership is still dominated by Westerners, this is changing quickly.

You've worked in a lot of Asian countries. Have you got a favourite?

Every country has its own charm.

Very diplomatic!

I love Australia for the beaches, Vietnam and Thailand for the extremely friendly people and China for the dynamism.

Do you speak any Asian languages?

No. I've tried learning Mandarin, but that remains a work

in progress I'm afraid. A lot of the people I have dealt with speak English, so it generally works out OK.

You've obviously got a strong background in the pharmaceutical industry. What sort of challenges does that industry face in terms of change?

It's clear there's going to be a significant shift in the regional source of revenue - from US and Europe to Asia. One challenge is adapting to different business cultures and growing leaders from the regions where they haven't yet established a strong presence. This means broadening company cultures alongside preparing individuals for global frameworks..

Is leadership coaching well embedded in the pharmaceutical industry?

It's starting. It's not where it should be yet. Rolling out skills training can only be so successful. What's needed is to identify emerging talent and foster their individual growth via coaching.

How do you think coaching translates across cultures?

Regardless of culture, it's the most effective way to accelerate the development of talent, taking into consideration the unique circumstances and individual needs. Building rapport by active listening, building trust and demonstrating value (i.e. quick wins) are important whoever you're dealing with. People want to see you demonstrate that you can be trusted, taking a genuine and demonstrable interest in their growth. Then they see the value.

What about the difference between individualist and collectivist cultures, in terms of coaching?

That's a good point. Pulling someone aside for coaching may be confronting in some cultures. It's important to connect the individual coaching to the broader context of what the organisation and/or group is trying to achieve collectively. I'm mostly dealing with middle and senior management of companies that are already into that transformation into being a global company. So there's a change in the 'culture equation' that's already in play.