

Going Global

Characteristics of
winning global marketers

By Marc de Swaan Arons

What common traits do successful global marketers share? What characteristics do the world's most effective brand leaders consider most important? And for those eager to win the global marketing roles themselves, what personal behaviors can they adopt or emulate? In his recently published book that he co-authored with Frank van den Driest, "The Global Brand CEO: Building the Ultimate Marketing Machine" (Airstream New York, 2010), Marc de Swaan Arons, co-founder of global marketing consultancy EffectiveBrands, addresses these questions. Read this adapted excerpt to learn answers to those questions and more.

Global Brand CEO: DNA

Perch on the shoulders of the giants performing the global CMO role today and the answers become abundantly clear.

The first aspect concerns who these leaders are—and

focuses less on how they act. It encompasses the experience and perspective they bring to the job, as well as their character. It begins with an individual's DNA. Global marketing leaders must be:

Global.

The best global marketing leaders are natural global citizens—and have been all their lives. They love nothing more than working their magic across borders. They believe in the serendipitous "je ne sais quoi" quality that occurs only when people from many cultures mix and merge.

Working with people of different backgrounds, and leading and motivating them to bring out their best, is crucial stuff—especially given that global marketing leaders tend to be isolated from far-flung team members and seldom get the chance to stroll down the hallway to see how they're progressing.

Servant Leader.

Some years ago, we borrowed the term "servant leadership" from Robert Greenleaf, founder of the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership. In our opinion, it optimally sums up the mindsets of the best global marketing leaders. Greenleaf describes this role as one of "listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, growth and building community." Servant leaders recognize the dual roles they've been asked to play. They're agile enough to transition from one leadership style to another in seconds (sometimes even during the same meeting).

Let's make one thing clear: Servant leadership doesn't mean that global brand leaders should sit back and await

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instruction from key countries. (Here, in fact, is where the “leadership” component comes in.) It goes without saying that leaders must listen to important stakeholders, but global leadership is about weighing the options, then choosing the right path for the company—and not for any one individual country.

Courageous.

The new global marketing leadership job requires courage. You can’t just develop intellectual plans at headquarters and expect to push them out to markets. The role demands getting out there, interacting, willingly trying out new things and often taking big risks. If you don’t, how can you expect to come up with potentially transformative innovations? Often, the most courageous act is to admit that you don’t have the answer—but are willing to go with a proposed solution.

Smart. Smart. Smart.

If you were to ask us to name the one fundamental thing that’s changed about marketing over the past decade, we’d have to say that it’s become more complex. What used to be based on gut calls has morphed into a science of measuring and adapting. Too much consumer data is available. At the ready are many promotional and communication tools that provide real-time measurements of what’s working and what’s not.

Marketing is going through an identity crisis. Brand love and consumer intimacy are both still crucial. Yet today, quantitative analysis, econometric modeling, real-time message monitoring and adaptation are all elements of the marketer’s tool set.

Fit and Disciplined.

Let’s be clear: This is not a 9-to-5 role. Let’s play Dr. Phil for a moment (and please forgive us if the following seems out of place in a marketing article). The global CMO role

we’re talking about can easily make its practitioners, well, ill. Quite seriously, this is nothing to laugh about. Notwithstanding recent developments in videoconferencing, the job’s travel demands mean that fewer and fewer marketers are even interested in joining a global marketing team. There are too many men who have the travel burden to thank for their health issues and utter physical exhaustion, and too few women (and even fewer mothers) who say ‘yes’ to senior global marketing roles. The skies that global marketing leaders need to travel have accidentally become a glass ceiling.

Diversity and health are pressing issues. Several companies we know of have instituted health monitoring and counseling programs to help their employees cope with the demands of their key global jobs. Yet in the end, maintaining equilibrium is, of course, up to these leaders themselves, and it’s proving very difficult in today’s 24-hour economy.

Low Ego.

Some of the most successful global marketers at all levels keep their egos in serious check. After all, there is no global market to conquer, simply a number of large local markets where your brand needs to triumph. If the leaders of these local markets win, the global marketing brand wins and the CMO wins—period. Yes, it’s that simple.

Credibility. Mud on their boots.

One factor cannot be bought by bringing in a famous CMO from another company: the credibility and respect that derives from a lifetime spent knee-deep in the trenches. We regularly ask global marketing leaders, “What helped you get the job done?” The typical response: “I’ve been there myself.” These leaders truly understand what they’re asking from local and regional marketing leaders. And crucially, these leaders bring with them a deep network of important relationships. Time and again, we

Words From the Wise

"You need someone who's got enormous personal resilience—because it takes three months to work out what the hell is going on, two months to work out what you want to do, two months to convince people of the right things to do and then two months after that, you've found out whether you're right or not because you'll get results of some sort."

— **Nick Fell**, group marketing director, **SABMiller plc**

"To go deep into priority markets without pushing away the local marketers, you need to be very humble in your approach and explicitly acknowledge that you don't really know the markets as well as they do."

— **Peter Vaughn**, senior vice president of global brand management and marketing, **American Express**

"More and more companies need to see their activities as part of a much larger responsibility ... [and] consider marketing in 3-D: marketing for the triple-bottom line of people, planet and profit. I think that the marketing leader of the future is the man or woman who leads with purpose. Who builds brands to be purposeful. Who recognizes that the brands' success will be about more than just sales. This will become more and more crucial!"

— **Marc Mathieu**, global senior vice president of marketing, **Unilever**

"The best global marketers are extremely good at consultative selling. They're phenomenal writers and presenters. They understand language and the power of communication to move people. They're inspiring. You want to follow them. They're unbelievably passionate and optimistic. But more than anything else, they have the ability to frame context."

— **John Seifert**, chairman, **Ogilvy & Mather North America**

"I always look at global strength vs. local strength. Global share is total worldwide share. And local share is the average of your share in all the markets in which you play. So, for instance, if you go into 10 markets and achieve 10 percent share in each of them, or I spread myself thin in 100 markets but only achieve a 1 percent share in each of them, we'll both have the same global share. But you will have 10 strong brand positions. And I will have 100 weak ones."

— **Silvia Lagnado**, CMO, **Bacardi**

find that a major cause behind global marketers failing in their new roles is an absence of real in-depth relationships and the opposite is true, too. Often, just a simple phone call between two leaders who have had fun together at some corporate training event a decade ago can take care of everything.

Global Brand CEO: Roles

The pinnacle of a global marketing organization can be, and often is, a very lonely place. Yet it needn't be. Among the most common mistakes marketers make when they ascend to these lofty treetops is ignoring the importance of locking down their responsibilities (not to mention a behavioral contract) with the CEO and also building alignment with peers within the C-suite.

In industries like pharmaceuticals, electronics or banking—where marketing isn't the organization's natural driver—it's especially imperative that board members fully understand what marketing can contribute, and the support, focus and efforts that marketing affords. Do board members have the CMO's back? In companies in which the CEO came from marketing, it's imperative to have full alignment on roles and priorities.

With the relatively recent onset of immediate and more precise marketing results, metrics and increased transparency surrounding program effectiveness, we're also seeing vast improvements in the relationship between the CMO and the CFO.

The strongest CMOs and global brand leaders embrace these new quantitative results and transparency on the effectiveness of their programs. And because marketing accountability is a nascent field, the best CMOs realize that there's no shame in not knowing everything yesterday; it's a sign of strength to develop increased effectiveness key performance indicators through an open and accountable approach.

The cheerleader role.

Great marketers are often great communicators. They're skilled narrators of the brand story. It's a rare talent—a gift, even—that colleagues often overlook and underestimate. Needless to say, for global marketing leaders, this talent is worth its weight in uranium. Jennifer Davidson, vice president of marketing for light brands and innovation at Molson Coors Canada, confirms the importance of stewarding a brand's mythology. Nick Fell, SABMiller plc's group marketing director, agrees: "The CMO's job is to be the internal storyteller, the myth-builder and the capability builder."

The performance coach role.

The very best marketing leaders have a world view that could best be termed “panoramic,” as well as a people-centered approach that frames and enhances that perspective. They have full confidence in their abilities; they thoroughly embrace the broad demands of their charter. As a result, they strive to achieve their goals by empowering others.

As an advisor to the CEOs of large multinationals, David Gershon, founder and CEO of the Empowerment Institute, has helped us to better understand how this works and integrate the empowerment methodology into our approach. All our programs relating to global marketing leaders today devote significant time and resources on their roles as performance coaches or, as we like to call them, empowered leaders.

The monitor role.

Many former CMOs and present-day marketers remain wary of marketing effectiveness measurement (and admittedly, it can be overwhelming), but the CMO of the future thoroughly embraces these new measurement tools.

What, precisely, should be measured? How do you measure a global marketer’s success? Unusually (but perhaps not surprisingly, given the impossibility of isolating marketing cause and effect, as well as the practice’s historic lack of rigor), people’s opinions are divided.

Jim Stengel, president and CEO of the Cincinnati-based Jim Stengel Co., weighs in: “First, short-term business results. Second, key measures of brand health that drive brand preference. And third, the ability to create a world-class marketing organization.”

Rob Malcolm, formerly of premium drinks company Diageo, offers a different perspective: “I would go for strength and uniformity of business growth and brand equity. And speed of global implementation. Also, how many

markets have plans targeted against our proven growth drivers? Keep an eye on culture, and alignment.”

Those are valid approaches—and each one works, too. Conclusion: It isn’t precisely what you measure (the jury’s still out on that one), but that you make it a point to consistently measure one or more things over time, while adapting your efforts based on the results.

The global brand CEO role.

Not every marketing leader has the wherewithal to take a step back and objectively observe his or her organization, or evaluate it as a marketing machine—akin to a clock that needs to be precisely ticking. Many lack the confidence to project their presence within the organization more than one or two years down the road. Those who do find themselves freed up to adapt a more holistic view of what might well be their lasting contribution.

One key decision that global marketing leaders must make is to determine quickly what the organization is—or should be—good at. Which competencies are non-strategic and can be outsourced?

Once CMOs have resolved these issues, they’ll know how best to prioritize skill sets in a company’s recruitment efforts. If you asked us to come up with a single definition for success, we’d say that the most effective global marketing leaders must adopt the role of a global brand CEO.

The CMO role has evolved to become more of a general management role. CMOs need to focus on the return to shareholders, on building an effective global marketing machine, and on measuring and reallocating investments. So for this kind of CMO, what’s the next logical promotion? Becoming CEO. **MM**

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