



Meeting Training Challenges in Global Marketing Development

A White Paper by
erlanger inc

Global marketing development is important, but Why?

Global branding and the cross-market implications of coordinated marketing efforts demands not only high-quality marketing capability for the company growth, but also for the development of its talent pool of effective managers. In today's world, without a clear development track we will not attract and keep the best people needed to assure company leadership in the future. Further, having a global approach to marketing development training creates resource efficiencies to better target our personnel development without duplicate training efforts - and we can exploit our top talent from all markets, which we otherwise might miss.

Challenges we face in making this all happen

Given the suggested advantages of a global development effort one would think implementation would be obvious, however, there are challenges. Historical turf issues and the not-invented-here syndrome sometimes need to be overcome. The issue of *us vs. them* mentality, as in home country needs versus the rest of the world, can present problems. A top-management mandate can help to sideline these concerns if they occur. The next challenge is developing a consensus on exactly what is needed and once that is determined which elements should be required for all and which could be flexible depending on different career tracks. Last but not least, after we have programs developed and ready to go, we need a sustained global drive for implementation. However, experience shows that the effort in overcoming these challenges provides the company with a significant competitive edge.

Some steps towards success

The crucial **first step** in development and implementation is to establish an advisory team that is cross-regional in orientation and bridges all relevant functional areas. Getting this type of input from the beginning assures alignment with market needs and also makes buy-in of the development programs easier at implementation. **Step two** should be to clearly define the targeted endpoint, i.e. what are the desired competencies that make up the ideal marketer for the product/the region and/or the company as a whole? These must be concrete, not vague ideals. **Step three** is to look at already existing programs in light of the targeted competencies, where needs are met, what is missing and what are the priority items for development, with realistic timelines. **Now is the time** to go back to top management to inform where we are in the establishing the program, reconfirm alignment with company goals and seek the all important commitment to implement once we have developed the core programs, which focus on high priority and high impact elements. **Step five**, and critical to long term success, is tracking results and integrating them with individual career development plans. And **finally**, the complete program needs to be kept dynamic by reexamining it on a 12-18 month basis to assure we are responding to changes in the marketplace, the product line or management focus.

How can we balance global vs. local needs?

There will always be a local need that is truly unique (e.g., a unique distribution or regulatory environment) that does not fit into the global development program, but should not be ignored. These need to be clearly defined, with justification and results reviewed in the context of the corporate direction. However, once that is done, let the region or country take the initiative and ownership. Experience has shown we can actually build better support for an overall program by taking this inclusive approach and, in addition, may well end up with program development that subsequently has a broader application.

Are we teaching English or are we teaching content?

A dilemma for many companies in a global market environment is that for individuals to assume greater management responsibility they must be able to deal with diverse business situations in English. Yet the company may value the input and ideas from local managers whose English skills may not be as fluent as their local language. Another language problem situation exists with the desire for multiple market interchanges as part of a meeting objective when participants are drawn from many countries. English is often the second language for all participants but is the only common language, thereby creating roadblocks to a full exchange of ideas. These same dilemmas holds true for training consultants working with those companies.

We need to realize our task is not to teach English, but rather to be sure that participants understand and can implement the training program learnings in their daily jobs. While there are many ways of facilitating group understanding and participation there are a few key points to keep in mind. 1) be very clear on our objectives and priorities-select the group and language accordingly, 2) assure we are not including people for whom the language or program content is completely foreign to them, 3) prepare in advance for problems that may arise and for appropriate ways of handling issues, 4) do a reality check on comprehension and learning as we go through the program and 5) assure there is in-country follow-up and coaching for on the job implementation.

Building long-term development program sustainability

- Document and measure results, beyond the “feel good” qualitative assessment
- Monitor for product/industry/company trends to keep programs relevant
- Establish reinforcements, coaching and other tools that support in-country implementation of the program’s teachings
- Establish ongoing liaison with marketing/sales management to assure program alignment and responsiveness to their needs
- Build marketing development participation and results into career tracks for marketers worldwide. This broadens the pool of quality management candidates and assures that the development program is sustained as it becomes a demonstrable path for growth in the company

**Process
Framework**⇒



About the Author

Dorothy Erlanger has over 29 years of business knowledge and consulting experience gained in a corporate setting for ten years and as an independent consultant since 1984. She brings to her top-ranked global clients a unique blend of consulting and training experience coupled with her capability as an outstanding group facilitator whose programs provide a strong emphasis on actionable results.

During her consulting career, she has engaged a broad range of assignments including corporate-wide and region-specific marketing personnel development programs as well as market feasibility studies and market entrance assistance, strategic plan development and the creative use of metrics in research and development project management.

Her projects have extended globally to Asia, Europe, South Africa and the Mideast as well as the United States and Canada. Her language fluency in Spanish and Portuguese has proved especially helpful to clients in Latin American countries.

Ms. Erlanger holds a BS degree in Biology from the University of Chicago and an MBA in Finance from Seton Hall University. She has published articles on product marketing and is sought after as a speaker on marketing and health care management topics at regional and international meetings.

www.erlanger-inc.com