

# Trust as an Essential Ingredient for Global Collaboration

Continuing the investigation of *What differentiates Truly Global Leaders*, this fourth article in this series focuses on another one of the key characteristics that defines their success.

While being a competent leader continues to require having all or at least most of the answers, the increasing complexity of true global collaboration also requires a strong capability to be inquisitive and curious.

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*Foreign workers pouring into China in unprecedented numbers is a trend that will continue to pick-up momentum as the Chinese economy continues to thrive amidst the global slowdown.*

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At the same time there will be both fierce competition and higher levels collaboration needed between local and foreign firms in efforts to tap into China's large consumer market, forecast to make up 80 percent of the demand for China's manufacturing within 5 years. All of this will mean that the ability for both Chinese and foreign leaders to build trusting relationships with each other, both in and outside China, will be more important than ever.

And at the heart of building trusted relationships lies the genuine sense of inquisitiveness and curiosity which leads to deeper levels of understanding.



At the recent EU Summit, **collaboration and cooperation** were of course key themes in the speeches of Premier Wen Jiabao and President Jose Manuel Barroso. Global and local CEOs also emphasized collaboration and in their stories of recent acquisitions the importance of first really understanding each other and establishing trust was repeatedly mentioned. How could European workers in companies that were in the process of being acquired by Chinese firms have a positive outlook if they did not have some understanding of the overall intentions, values and cultural norms of the company they were becoming part of or merging with?




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*Of course what came out clearly in the stories was that the understanding and trust has to begin at the senior leadership level.*

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Leaders who are in a mode of giving all the answers, 90% of the time are no longer well equipped to build the understanding and trust needed to forge the bridges of global collaboration.

**So how do truly global leaders balance having the right answers and at the same time being genuinely curious?**

Certainly knowing when it's the right time to give answers and show off expertise and when it's the right time to be curious is a talent that global leaders who embody trust seem to have.

These leaders are able to confidently transition to a stance of curiosity, especially when they're not sure of the 'right' answer.



They are able to suspend judgment and rather than jumping to their own fixed conclusions based on what they are hearing, they are able to pay full attention and use what they are hearing to gain brand new insights. Through their genuine sense of curiosity they also naturally gain a better understanding of the deeper motivation and needs of the other leaders they are dealing with. Of course having the understanding of deeper motivation and needs is a pre-requisite to finding win-win solutions.

### Powerful coaching questions to consider in assessing your own ability to be inquisitive and curious:

- What percent of the time are you operating in the 'having the answers' mode and what percent are you operating in the mode of curiosity?
- What do you think the ideal percentage split is for the role you are in?
- To what extent are you naturally able to be curious and inquisitive in your relationships with colleagues/ other leaders/ team member (from 1 to 10)? To what extent would you like to be able to be curious and inquisitive as a leader or manager (from 1 to 10)?
- Recall a business interaction or relationships where you felt high levels of trust and collaboration. How important were curiosity and understanding in that situation?
- Where are the biggest opportunities for you to be curious in your current role? What are two to three things you need to be doing to maximize those opportunities?

### Consider some actions you can take today to be more inquisitive and curious:

- **Practice asking more questions** to get to know more about some of the people you interact with regularly. Ask about things that you normally would not ask, but are interesting – like their hobbies, their heritage, their preferences and their way of thinking. By being genuinely curious you will sometimes be surprised at what you find out and how it shapes the relationship.
- **Attend an event or activity** that you normally would not have the time to, but do find quite interesting. At the event try to focus on the details that are present and notice things that you would not normally have time to pay attention to in your busy schedule. After the event write down the things you noticed. Paying attention to things in the present without drawing conclusions is a great way to develop a greater sense of curiosity.

*Future articles in the MDS Newsletter will continue to examine some of the other characteristics of successful global leaders – so please stay tuned!*

Any comments or questions on this topic are welcomed – please send to [elisa@mdsbeijing.com](mailto:elisa@mdsbeijing.com)

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