

# Enabling growth through Global Enablement Teams

*How IBM instills cultural adaptability, aligns with  
national agendas and empowers country leaders*



## Introduction

Before people spoke of “globalization,” the concept of a multinational corporation (MNC) prevailed. To gain access to local markets, the MNC created smaller versions of the parent company in multiple countries around the world, and made heavy local investments.

In recent years, the MNC concept at IBM has given way to the globally integrated enterprise (GIE), an organizational structure that changes work in profound ways and requires leaders who recognize that employees need to be far more collaborative, far more attuned to a multiplicity of cultural differences, far more fluid and less hierarchical. These global leaders must truly embrace diversity across the enterprise’s various country locations; leverage expertise and resources wherever they reside; and transfer knowledge to where it is needed.

As IBM explored how to transform itself into a GIE, it became increasingly apparent that meeting business growth objectives meant employees around the world should play a bigger part in achieving a global mindset, with common corporate values as the glue. So, in January 2008, Chairman Sam Palmisano challenged a group of 26 leaders from the Integration and Values Team – the team of 320 senior executives charged with helping to transform IBM – to determine how to help

“IBMers” become “global IBMers.” As part of this shift, the group proposed the creation of Global Enablement Teams (GETs) to develop global leaders for the 21st century who:

- Are culturally adaptable
- Leverage enterprise-wide capabilities
- Enable IBMers to execute enterprise strategy in the face of uncertainty.

## A market imperative becomes a leadership imperative

Since 2008, IBM has truly become a GIE, improving productivity and capturing more new business in growth markets around the world. The geographic share of revenue increased from 11 percent in 2000 to 21 percent in 2010 and that share is projected to continue rising (see Figure 1).

Changing market requirements led to the question: knowing what it takes to be successful in this new world, what will it take to get us there? The answer, in part, was to “upgrade” workforce competencies to better execute strategy and win in the marketplace. Existing core leadership competencies included “embrace challenge,” “partner for clients’ success,” “communicate for impact” and more. So that set was expanded to include “collaborate globally” and “win with a systemic perspective.”

**Growth markets share of geographic revenue**  
(excluding divested businesses of PCs and printers)



Source: 2010 IBM annual report. [ftp://public.dhe.ibm.com/annualreport/2010/2010\\_ibm\\_annual.pdf](ftp://public.dhe.ibm.com/annualreport/2010/2010_ibm_annual.pdf)

Figure 1: The rising share of IBM revenue from growth markets, 2000-2010.

So, what began as a market imperative rapidly became a leadership imperative impacting the company as a whole. As first described in the 2010 IBM Global Business Services white paper, “Developing global leadership,” it became important to advance the leadership capabilities and global mindset of all employees.<sup>1</sup> One chief goal was to offer more opportunities for more employees to acquire skills and global leadership experiences, and another was to provide the means to work across the enterprise to better understand various national priorities and thus grow the business.

#### Creating Global Enablement Teams

Country General Managers (CGMs) need to respond to shifting market demands, translate and execute the GIE model at local levels, and to foster their team’s global mindset and capabilities. To accomplish this, GETs – each comprised of four or five senior executives from multiple geographies and disciplines – work with leaders of selected countries.

CGMs contribute to the selection of GET members by identifying the expertise areas that would best enable their countries’ business growth. Diversity of each team is also a critical consideration.

*“Right now, in some markets, we walk in and people see us as a technology vendor. The task is to transform ourselves into a strategic partner that draws on global ideas and resources and solutions to tackle not only IT challenges, but societal challenges.”*

Harriet Pearson, IBM Vice President and Chief Privacy Officer and member of the South Africa GET.

Through coaching and enabling, GET members help CGMs pursue several objectives, including:

- Expanding market access
- Deepening relationships with key clients and government entities
- Developing strategies to align IBM and the country’s national agenda
- Gaining access to resources and expertise throughout the enterprise
- Enhancing their leadership capabilities, particularly the ability to develop and execute strategy.

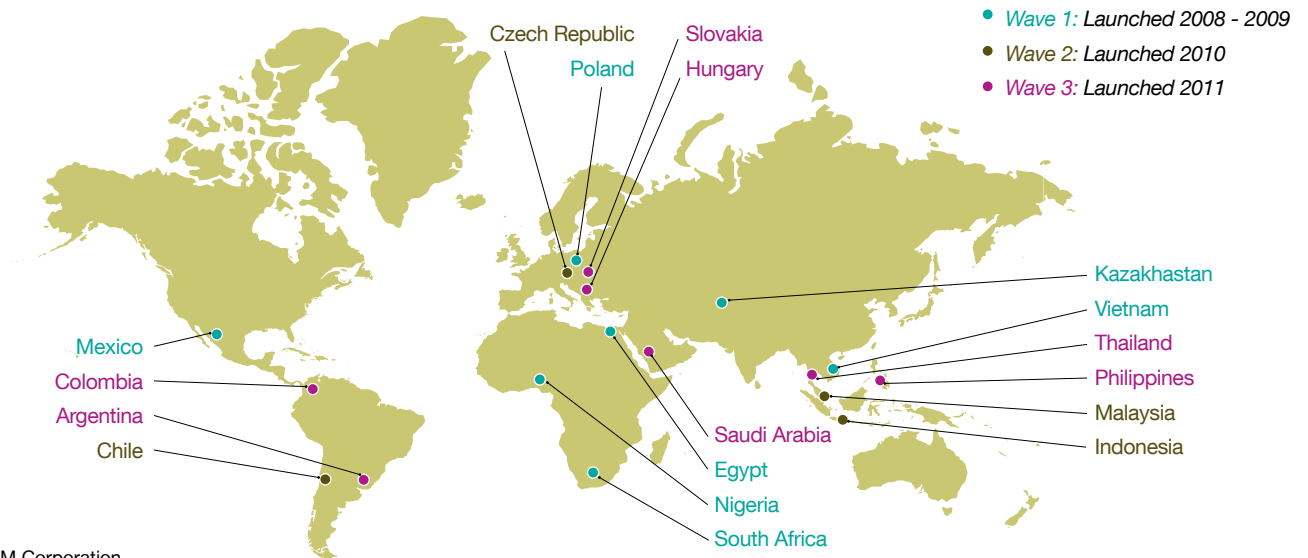
Through joint commitment to an agenda based on the Country Manager’s objectives and GET support, IBM is connecting business strategy to execution realities. Together, GET members and the in-country leadership team work to understand local perspectives about existing priorities and national conditions (including economic, political, regulatory and social). And sometimes there is a need to change a government’s perception of IBM from technology vendor to strategic partner.

At the same time, the country leaders are helping the GET members broaden their leadership and cultural adaptability skills. GET members make a three to five year commitment and remain on the team regardless of job changes. As of third quarter 2011, GETs have been commissioned in 18 countries across three waves (see Figure 2):

- **Wave 1:** Egypt, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, South Africa, Vietnam
- **Wave 2:** Chile, Czech Republic, Indonesia, Malaysia
- **Wave 3:** Argentina, Colombia, Hungary, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Thailand.

GETs typically visit their countries once or twice a year supplemented by individual member visits. Between visits, the GETs maintain contact and momentum by working on specific initiatives and forming one-on-one mentoring relationships with country leaders.

Another ongoing corporate goal is to strengthen the partnership between the GET teams and the highly successful Corporate Service Corps (CSC) and Executive Service Corps (ESC) programs. The CSC entails sending small teams of high-performing, non-executive employee volunteers on single-visit, short-term global assignments (see sidebar, “Go global for high impact”) while the ESC provides a similar experience and benefits for executives.



Source: IBM Corporation.

Figure 2: Three waves established Global Enablement Teams around the world.

### Go global for high impact

An innovative program, the Corporate Service Corps (CSC) – created in response to IBM's need for leadership development consistent with a globally integrated enterprise – provides a “global training ground” for emerging leaders and global citizens. High-performing employees are chosen for specially designed short-term projects in key growth markets which provide a triple benefit: problem solving for communities, leadership development for IBMers and increased understanding of the growth markets for IBM.

The CSC was designed to include specific policies, metrics, supporting processes and online tools aimed at building global mindsets through shared values, higher cultural adaptability and stronger teaming skills. These assignments are specifically focused on improving the livability of cities. In particular, executive involvement has aided countries in working toward Smarter Cities goals which include safe neighborhoods, smoother traffic flows, improved water management and smarter healthcare.<sup>2</sup>

CSC and ESC assignments endeavor to align with GETs to help countries connect more fully to national agendas. Since its launch in 2008, more than 1,400 employees have worked on over 120 teams with governments, small businesses and non-governmental organizations in more than 25 countries around the world.<sup>3</sup>

IBM participants come from over 50 countries and have served communities in Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, China, Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, the Philippines, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey and Vietnam. And the program keeps expanding to new locations each year. Dozens of participants have since posted audio, video and photos of their volunteer experiences on company Web pages to demonstrate how the CSC experience has benefited them personally and professionally.<sup>4</sup>

IBM has now helped a half-dozen other companies launch programs modeled on CSC and ESC, including FedEx, John Deere and Dow Corning.<sup>5</sup> In mid-2011, IBM announced a partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to encourage corporate citizenship with a goal of improving global relations.<sup>6</sup> One aspect of the alliance is a Center of Excellence for International Corporate Volunteerism, funded by USAID, which will provide resources and an information forum for companies that are interested in pursuing strategies based on IBM's model.<sup>7</sup>

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### Tangible benefits of GETs

As GET members, senior executives bring expertise in different disciplines and functional areas, and provide local country leadership and teams with access to invaluable GIE resources, including strategic mentoring, networking and execution support. At the same time, GET members are expanding their knowledge of national priorities and societal goals while gaining a greater appreciation of cultural diversity and how it impacts the business environment.

As a long-range, strategic play for IBM, GET program success is expected to evolve and be tracked in a number of ways, including:

- Market initiatives and business opportunities that the GETs help the country teams identify, cultivate, pursue and win
- Relationships built externally, with senior level officials, industry leaders and key clients
- Feedback from Country Manager regarding GET performance and results
- Mentoring relationships that enhance business acumen and strategic risk taking, as well as improving in-country capabilities to execute locally.

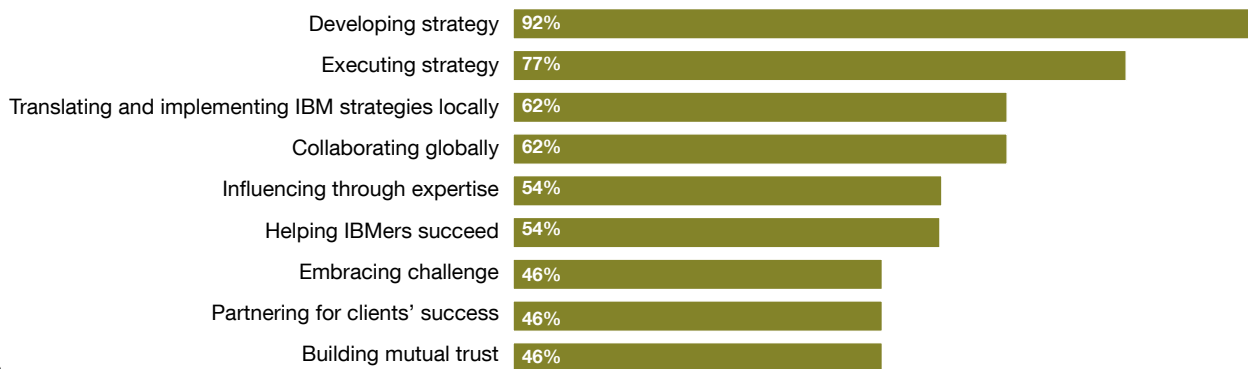
*“My team is getting expertise and a deeper, more specific view on corporate initiatives. With the GET, we can tune up and shape the approach and give all the local team members the support to do business better, with a better understanding of our corporate strategy.”*

Adam Dossymov, Client Unit Executive, IBM Sales and Distribution, and member of the Kazakhstan GET

### Increasing leadership knowledge and capability

With the GETs’ overriding emphasis on developing leadership capabilities, the teams report their top focus areas in 4Q2011 to be developing and executing strategy, translating and implementing IBM strategies locally, and collaborating globally (see Figure 3).

In November 2011, 16 country leaders responded to a GET progress survey. Country leaders are very positive about the impact of GETs in developing global capabilities.”All agreed or strongly agreed that: the benefits of access to the GET are



Note: n = 12.  
Source: IBM Corporation.

Figure 3: Capability areas where at least half of the GETs are focusing in 2011.

worth the additional time and effort required; the GET experience is having a positive impact on their own development; and they would recommend the GET experience to leaders in other growth market countries.

GET members report that the experience is helping to enhance their own leadership capabilities in a number of areas, including: cultural adaptability; understanding the opportunities and challenges of operating in a growth market; translating “worldwide” strategies; and influencing others by enabling rather than directing. They also continue to cite the benefits of engaging in these mentoring relationships, including increased willingness of local teams to ask senior leaders for help and with greater frequency, and improved ability to balance strategic thinking and risk-taking.

#### Expanding business development opportunities

Country leaders also report that the GETs are significantly helping to expand and grow IBM’s market presence. They especially see progress accelerating in these areas:

- Developing strategies to align IBM with their country’s national agenda
- Gaining access to resources and expertise outside of the country
- Pursuing Smarter Planet opportunities in areas such as transportation, healthcare and government services<sup>8</sup>
- Building relationships with key government officials and agencies
- Developing the capability to pursue complex business opportunities.

#### Success stories: What has happened on the ground

The innovativeness of the GET program is being recognized outside the company as well. An October 2011 article stated, “IBM is considered one of the poster children for the development of great leaders,” noting the importance of two practices it uses: providing both complex assignments early in careers and strong mentoring.<sup>9</sup>

And in naming IBM number one on its November 2011 list of “Top Companies for Leaders,” *Fortune* cited how “IBM sends leadership SWAT teams around the world” – a direct reference to the GET program.<sup>10</sup> Through the GET program, IBM is realizing the potential of *leaders developing leaders as they develop themselves*.

In support of each GET’s declared focus areas and targeted key initiatives, a variety of activities is underway. Here, we provide in-depth detail about early GET successes on three continents: Chile, the Czech Republic and South Africa, followed by brief highlights of GET impact in more countries (see sidebar, “Examples of further GET impact around the world”).

#### Chile GET: Innovation Discovery Workshop establishes IBM as trusted partner

A massive earthquake occurred off the coast of Chile in February 2010. In November of that year, IBM Chairman Sam Palmisano and President Sebastian Piñera met after the Smarter Cities forum in Santiago. The new Chilean Government and IBM members representing both GET and ESC groups then met in May 2011 to explore how the country could convert the disaster into an opportunity for positive social and economic change.



The vehicle for this exploration was an “Innovation Discovery Workshop.” After an emotional field visit to Concepción and Talcahuano – two of the cities most affected by the earthquake – IBM and the Government of Chile discussed how Chile could move forward in implementing principles for a world-class, efficient and effective government, invest in smarter infrastructure projects and drive meaningful economic development.

The primary workshop objective centered on identifying short- and long-term actions for sustainable water strategy for Antofagasta, a city in northern Chile where 35 percent of the world’s copper is mined. Known as “the driest place on earth,” Antofagasta lives with a perennial scarcity of water.<sup>11</sup> More than 80 people were interviewed during the workshop, mostly with translation. The findings resulted in IBM recommendations that included pragmatic best practices in water management and a strong partnership between the municipality and area mining and water companies.

After the workshop, the mayor, businesses and community expressed appreciation. The GET took ownership of “next steps,” including a joint session with government and IBM representatives, as well as follow-on work initiated with IBM Research and mining companies.

Secondary recommendations stemming from the workshop included actions to strengthen private, public and academic partnerships; long-term actions for sustainable energy; and other considerations for “quality of life” projects. The workshop was critical in establishing IBM as a trusted partner with the new government and set the foundation for future discussions and opportunities across the entire Chilean government.

### **Czech Republic GET: Discussing and demonstrating benefits of technology**

In partnership with Miroslava Kopicova, Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, the GET sponsored a “Women’s Leadership Workshop” featuring a panel discussion by the Minister, two IBM executives and Eliska Haskova Coolidge, a former advisor to five U.S. Presidents. The group discussed the contribution of women to leadership in business, politics and science, including both the opportunities and barriers confronting women in the Czech workforce. The discussion was frank, open and well-attended, including government officials representing the local, regional and national government, as well as Parliament.

The relationships established that day continue to develop and present opportunities for business/government partnerships. Post-workshop, work is underway to integrate Smarter City concepts into the forward strategy and design of at least one major city and its surrounding region.<sup>12</sup>

In the Czech Republic, the GET also recognized the need to demonstrate the importance of applying technology to advance the Union’s social and economic goals. So, the IBM Czech Republic team arranged a trip to Singapore for European Member of Parliament (MEP) Oldřich Vlasák, who chairs the EU Committee on Regional Policy and is a Czech national. The trip aimed to broaden the Committee’s perspective by providing a first-hand view of the potential benefits of Smarter City applications. A series of senior-level government-to-government meetings and Smarter City demonstrations were held for the EU Regional Committee.

The report produced by Mr. Vlasák and his Committee after the Singapore visit strongly supports the important role that intelligent technologies have in advancing the social and economic prosperity and cohesion of cities and urban environments.<sup>13</sup> In part, the report noted: “...the great potential for modernisation of infrastructure investment by means of intelligent technologies which would deal with persisting problems in city governance, energy, water supply and



utilization management, transport, tourism, housing, education, health and social care, public safety, etc. through the concept of ‘smarter urban development’....Such information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure investment can be seen as an explicit driver of economic growth and innovation-based economic activity...”

The IBM country manager reports that the “presence, agenda, passion and professionalism of the GET team members have helped us open doors to important government members and bodies. It was also very helpful [in an] effective and structured way to approach national agendas, government priorities and create sound messages about IBM translation of global strategies into local ones. Access to international resources and credentials [is] an essential part to deliver to promises made and for the strategy execution itself.”

#### **South Africa GET: Online Jam supports national agenda and builds relationships**

The National Planning Commission (NPC) of South Africa within the Office of the Presidency has already set out the key challenges the country faces in fighting poverty and inequality. The NPC is responsible for developing a long-term vision and strategic plan for South Africa and will advise on cross-cutting issues that impact South Africa’s long-term development. It is currently writing a paper to include elements of a vision statement for South Africa, based on the preamble to its Constitution and Bill of Rights.

To capture public input on key topics related to these objectives, the government worked with the IBM Global Enablement Team (GET), Country General Manager and Government Relations executive in South Africa to enable record numbers of conversations between NPC and its citizens. For 72 hours that ended on October 1, 2011, they conducted the “NPC Jam” – an interactive, online brainstorming event – to exchange opinions and gather insights.

Ten main topics were presented for discussion: the three with the highest participation were Education and Training; The Economy; and Jobs. For the NPC secretariat, the Jam was an opportunity to listen to the public and consider their opinions during the development of “Vision 2030” that was subsequently released on 11/11/11.

The NPC Jam was deemed “a resounding success.” With over 10,400 logins and over 8,900 individual posts and participants from each of the country’s 52 municipal areas, youth dominated the Jam and contributed over 40 percent of the content. Half of those who logged in made posts – a very high participation rate.<sup>14</sup>

The NPC partnership with IBM delivered value to the country through collaboration, analytics and technology. Afterward, NPC Chairperson Minister Trevor Manuel was quoted on the NPC Jam website: “Thanks for sharing your thoughts and ideas in the largest-ever online dialogue in our country. You have made history. Your contributions will go a long way in helping the commission develop a vision and plan for our country.”<sup>15</sup>

One of 26 NPC members, Cyril Ramaphosa wrote in a news article, “The NPC Jam once again showed not only the innovation of South Africans but underlined the fundamental commitment of our people to finding solutions to the challenges we face. In this experience lies the hope and promise for South Africa.”<sup>16</sup>

The relationship building among citizens and their government and demonstrated evidence of the power of analytics tools are expected to continue beyond the Jam. Through its support of the national agenda, IBM can continue to provide the government with thought leadership and business and technology solutions, such as Smarter City initiatives. Over time, the relationships being forged with the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation are expected to lead to business growth for IBM as the country moves to realize its updated national vision.

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### Examples of further GET impact around the world

**Malaysia.** In 2009, the Government of Malaysia identified six National Key Result Areas, the first of which was to reduce crime. Improving public safety in partnership with the Royal Malaysian Police became a key initiative of the Malaysian GET. The team helped formulate a concept paper that was presented to Prime Minister Najib in May 2010 and IBM has led subsequent work to demonstrate how advanced analytics can help predict criminal activity and fight crime.

**Nigeria.** GET members worked with local leaders to develop a bottoms-up program to expand market access and focus on new industries. They helped the local leaders conduct an IBM Leadership survey to understand organization climate and gather ideas on how to best motivate and develop local employees.

**Philippines.** Building on the working relationship between the GET, country leadership and the national government, His Excellency, Benigno Simeon Aquino III, the Philippine President, was a keynote speaker at the September 2011 IBM Think Forum in New York City. The Philippine President and his team are also working with GET and IBM Philippines to explore partnering on future initiatives that support the country's significant technology goals.

**Thailand.** During an audience with Dr. Theerachon Manomaiphiboon, the Vice Governor of Bangkok, the GET outlined Smarter City concepts.<sup>17</sup> Follow-on actions include analysis of the city's transportation challenges by applying analytics to more effectively manage Bangkok's growing traffic congestion.

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## Are you positioned to achieve global growth?

Organizations should answer the following questions as a starting point to determine the steps needed to prepare themselves to take advantage of global growth by becoming a globally integrated enterprise and placing leaders at the forefront of making this change.

- How can the globally integrated enterprise (GIE) model transform your organization?
- What changes are needed in your organization's leadership and business development initiatives to operate as a globally integrated enterprise?
- In what ways do you engage country leadership to align its business plans with national agendas?
- Which skills matter most for your senior leaders and growth market leadership teams? How are you developing those skills? How are you engaging leaders in helping others develop those skills?
- Have you engaged a broader team to accelerate global skills and develop client relationships in target growth markets?
- How do you measure the success of leadership development initiatives?

## Next steps: Workforce enablement for business growth

At IBM, GETs have created business leaders with deeper global mindsets, enabled competence in cultural adaptability and better connected local country teams to the global company agenda. As a whole, the company has become more relevant to national agendas, often resulting in greater market relevance. New business growth opportunities are thus stemming from an enlightened set of business leaders who possess truly global mindsets, with improved visibility and sensitivity to in-country GIE realities.

What are the chief lessons for other organizations? Senior executives who lead or will lead their enterprises need a deep understanding of vertical integration to translate corporate strategy at a local level. They must be adept at navigating the nuances of succeeding in growth markets. In turn, country leadership teams can benefit from the coaching and collaboration that comes from working with senior executives, particularly to sharpen the abilities to develop and execute strategy. The GET approach enables local country employees, senior executives and the enterprise as a whole to benefit, both in terms of talent development and business growth.

To learn more about this white paper and related IBM efforts, please visit [ibm.com/globalteams](http://ibm.com/globalteams).

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