

*Securing the benefits of globalisation • Part IV, Chapter 4***Conducted
by****Catherine Distler (PROMETHEE)***Strategic
conversation
with***Patricia A. Bradford****Head of Worldwide Human Resources, UNISYS¹**

Nurturing talents; aligning corporate values

Unisys presents itself as a worldwide company specialising in information technology consulting services and solutions with clients located in more than 100 countries. What is the main challenge such a global corporation faces in terms of human resources?

Patricia A. Bradford: The overarching challenge is to be global while remaining agile, flexible and adaptable in order to make fact-based decisions quickly. In human resources, this means that each company policy is unilaterally applied to hiring practices, employee performance management and performance assessment worldwide. In addition, we have to compete all the time for talent as Unisys is still transforming itself to be both a services-led and technology-enabled company. Last but not least, our human resources function must be organised and positioned to help drive our top-line growth.

1. Patricia A. Bradford is Corporate Vice President and Vice President, Worldwide Human Resources, Unisys Corporation. As head of Worldwide Human Resources, Pat works with Unisys management to continue building the capabilities of Unisys people and enhancing organisational effectiveness by implementing additional leading-edge initiatives in the areas of recruitment, retention, training and evaluation.

Securing the benefits of globalisation

Let me give you the most obvious example. Because we are becoming a services-led company, we saw the need for a certain kind of services-oriented skill set and consultative behavioural model for our employees. The skill set and model we have now adopted are similar to those you would find in the former 'big five' consultant organisations. Having to hire 450 senior managers and partners in 44 countries, we then adopted a programmatic approach worldwide. This hiring initiative was successfully conducted at the top tier, but we know that we have to develop it for local managers too.

Can you elaborate on the obstacles you encounter when you try to implement a global human resources strategy?

PAB: Two basic, but formidable, challenges reside in retaining high performing and engaged employees, and keeping pace with our changing workforce demographics to meet business demands. The former is a concern for virtually all of today's global organisations while the latter is an admission that as populations age and elect to retire there are unfortunately fewer new entrants into a marketplace that is now fiercely competitive.

What is the Unisys recruiting strategy to deal with these challenges?

PAB: We concentrate on recruiting and retaining people with the right skill sets to meet our business requirements. It is increasingly difficult, however, to find new employees with the expertise we desire because there are fewer entrants from which to choose. As far as our workforce is concerned, our employees must both maintain and constantly enhance their proficiency. Like the enterprise itself, they must be agile and adaptable to change.

Additionally, I would emphasise two further obstacles, or barriers, to the roll-out of a global human resources strategy. The first is resistance to change. As Unisys *transforms* itself into a services organisation – 80% of our revenue now derives from services and 20% from technology. With this shift from tech to services, we needed to implement a different type of performance management discipline, as well as new compensation schemes and incentive plans. An important component is to ensure that our managers understand *why* we are making such changes so that they are more likely to embrace them in practice.

The second obstacle is really one of *cultural differences*. Indeed, this is a further reason underpinning our need to continually emphasise the *why* of policy implementation. Of course, we are acutely aware that certain policies may need to be localised according to cultural differences.

You mention cultural differences, and one would infer that human resources is among the primary arbiters of these issues within a company. Could you expand upon some of the concrete difficulties you encounter on this front?

PAB: One example is the changing nature of the workplace. As a global company, we see the traditional office person giving way to a new mobile employee, working remotely and communicating and interacting in virtual teams and virtual offices via the web. This change has surely caught on in Europe, North America and elsewhere, but in other regions, such as the Pacific Rim, it may not be so far along. We respect those traditions as much as possible. But the changing workplace is definitely one of the cultural differences that companies must address today while keeping their competitive edge – reducing costs and increasing value for the client as well as the employee.

As another example, I would mention verifying and providing evidence of what an employee has earned at prior companies before an employment offer is made. This is culturally unacceptable in certain countries, and we adapt to the local custom.

Why is a global human resources policy so important, and what are the benefits Unisys expects from it?

PAB: We are principally attuned to *aligning corporate values* globally. Indeed, our human resources policies ultimately strive to embed such values – and the goals associated with them – into every program and initiative, on a global basis, in order to guarantee strategic unity. One of the key manners in which we accomplish this is through our global employee communication programs. Here, we have daily internal news reports that are accessible to 36,000 employees worldwide through what we call U-Net or Unisys Network.

Such communication programs have proved to be a great success and are central for our transition to an IT services business, not to mention the role they have played in helping us to reach *strategic unity firm-wide*. When the business climate is as tough as at present, many companies abandon similar programs, but we have supported them and will continue to do so.

We also are driving communication and collaboration across the company through our *Knowledge Management initiatives*. Today we have approximately 60 'Knowledge Management communities' across the company. These communities are part of our overall knowledge network of people continuously learning, sharing, improving, and growing our collective knowledge assets to deliver the business solutions our clients require.

Securing the benefits of globalisation

As I hope is evident, our value system is one of our most important assets and is arguably the real glue of our corporate culture. To be sure, it is contained in what we call our 'Seven Operating Principles', which we have embedded into the skill profile of every job. We regularly assess employee skills through our talent review and succession management programs.

Let me highlight our operating principles from a human resources perspective:

The first principle is 'external obsession': Our culture has to be client-oriented, not inward facing as in the traditional, and increasingly outdated, computer company model.

'Best or nothing' means that we understand our competition and recognise that our customers will accept nothing less than the finest service. To constantly gauge client satisfaction, we have considerable dialogue with clients.

'Invent the future' is really about how we position ourselves in the innovation field to create world-class business solutions for our clients.

'Be bold': Being in IT services requires us to take some calculated risks, and we strive to take the high ground as a thought-leader.

'Team for speed': We must have leaders who are task-focused, who make expedient and efficient decisions, and who are skilful at recruiting the best and brightest talent around them.

'Deliver or die' means that Unisys must deliver or it will go out of business.

And, as the foundation of the other principles, we stress 'absolute integrity': This principal is exceptionally straightforward; it's the value that supports all of our endeavours. It speaks to the high ethical standards required of every Unisys person.

So, this is how we want to operate. We have gone to great lengths to embed these principles into our performance management plans and skills assessment system, and feel they allow us to develop a *unified corporate culture and value system* within the company.

When did you establish these seven principles? Are they related to the various scandals in the business world generally that have occurred since 2001?

PAB: Three years ago, Unisys CEO and President Joe McGrath hired numerous professionals from the marketplace to help energise the Enterprise Transformation Services organisation that he headed up at the time. In fact, a majority of the 450 partners and senior managers I already mentioned came from the 'big five' consultancies during this period. However, while they

brought diverse and valuable business cultures to the table, we ultimately aimed to establish a unique culture within our company – an amalgam of these new influences, but something that nonetheless retained the positive aspects that Unisys already possessed.

To best achieve this, we asked our leadership team to identify the key set of operating principles and core values to propel our enterprise into the future. This took considerable time and effort, and we relied substantially upon client feedback to drive the process. When satisfied, we ended up with these seven principles that have since been embedded into all of our policies. I think we have made a lot of progress over the last three years. Are we perfect yet? No, but we have made substantial advances in transforming our corporate culture and putting our principles into practice.

Many companies advocate global values. What makes the Unisys principles different from those endorsed by other corporations?

PAB: The difference between Unisys and most other companies is the degree to which our value system is embedded into all of our policies – including our hiring practices, for instance. Talk of global values is a matter of living and breathing at Unisys. I think this is a key point of distinction. These objectives are highly visible, and we clearly communicate them externally, for instance, through our annual report. However, the main emphasis is on internal communication, making exemplars of people that have demonstrated the operating principles. The point is that employees must understand how these macro principles relate to them personally – and then apply them in their work.

In which areas do you think Unisys could do better or needs to improve internally?

PAB: I think we still need to improve on speed and execution because the market is so fiercely competitive. In conjunction with this, we also have to eliminate bureaucracy wherever possible. In a global company like Unisys, there will always be opportunities to focus and execute every day for our customers. So we must constantly challenge ourselves to do so.

What tools can be developed so that managers can better assess local situations and make decisions aligned with the company's values and strategic orientations? For example, everybody agrees with the statement, 'team for speed,' but what can help a local manager act upon that principle?

Securing the benefits of globalisation

PAB: Each of our managers utilises strong web-based human resources solution tools to administer his or her local workforce needs. This extends from salary planning to hiring and skills training and these web-based tools are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The tools let managers process all aspects of human resources management electronically (paper-free) and on a worldwide base.

Thus, performance goals are established for individual employees and teams. Employee evaluations are made via periodic reviews. And, it's all documented online. Of course, managers also have regular conversations with employees and these too are part of our performance management database and are stored online.

If it is deemed culturally important, we may then create hard (non-electronic) personnel files from the stored information, but this is something that varies from one country to the next. With this system in place, we can then access the progress and accomplishments of our workforce over the course of each year and beyond. Significantly, this technological framework has also facilitated our ability to manage salary planning, to distribute our budget and to track the market. Managers are thus continually up to speed and may suggest amendments to their local operations within a given budget.

You just mentioned the Unisys web-based training tools. How do they specifically apply to training through Unisys University? Is most of the training conducted online?

PAB: Seventy percent of our total learning is done through a distance or web-based learning type of course that we may develop in-house or purchase from an outside vendor, and thirty percent is done in classroom training. However, Unisys University is more than a training tool. It stores employees' role profiles and indicates the kinds of skills that are needed to become more professional. Our employees can then access these records and assess the skills that need to be strengthened. Unisys University indicates what type of training is available to them – whether web-based or classroom (if it is a leadership training) – and, most importantly, highlights the operational experiences they should be seeking in practice. So, it really provides three different avenues in order to increase individual skill sets.

How do you assess employees' competencies, and how frequently?

PAB: All employees are formally assessed by their manager on skills related to the operating principles twice a year. Team for speed, for example, relates

to collaborative skills as well as to decision-making from a team and speed standpoint. For example, can the employee make effective decisions? Does he or she take productive and progressive risks? From service-oriented, client-facing professionals to IT personnel, a large percentage of our workforce proficiency levels are tracked by managers and if need be, employees enrol in Unisys University to sharpen relevant skills.

Although software, technology and hardware are integral to our global business model, employees are our greatest assets. It is now their individual responsibility to continually enhance and update their expertise. This is a big change from 15 years ago and further reflects our ability to adapt to a shifting cultural climate.

Everybody would agree that it is very useful for Unisys to know their employees' competencies. However, it is equally key for employees to be familiar with their own skills so as to increase their effectiveness and acquire additional expertise for Unisys and their potential employability beyond...

PAB: That is a very important point. We want to keep the 'best and brightest', but obviously, employees need to make sure they are marketable. Providing them with the appropriate tools and resources helps them ensure their own continued professional development.

To keep the best and the brightest is one of the main problems in a competitive market. Another dimension relates to employee engagement: how is it possible to assess and nurture this?

PAB: Employee engagement to me is the discretionary effort that an employee makes in order to accomplish something. Is the person willing to make that extra effort? If you can get people to do so, they are going to stay with you – as long as you treat them fairly. This is a critical area for us because we feel it greatly impacts long-term success or failure. To keep the best and the brightest, we want to be able to show employees that we are prepared to invest in them and in their careers, and to increase their job satisfaction. It's a full circle.

Of course, employees also contribute by their individual *diversity*. We don't want every one to be the same. That would be boring! Some people are extremely creative while others are practical, so we need to retain all of those skill sets and to profit from the different ideas or approaches in circulation. We also know we have to manage cultural diversity as it adds value to the enterprise.

Securing the benefits of globalisation

For instance, we understand that employees from France or Germany may have different business perspectives, each of which could add something we may not have previously considered. However, unless we clarify and communicate our corporate objectives, illustrate how our employees can help achieve our goals and motivate our workforce to be engaged, they are less likely to step forward and actively contribute to this process.

Are there other techniques or initiatives that you implement in order to mobilise knowledge globally rather than locally?

PAB: I would mention two major initiatives that are definitively global: one is client-oriented and the other is more of an internal productivity tool.

3D Visible Enterprise (3D-VE) is a tool that lets clients see the dependencies between strategy, business processes and IT infrastructure before they invest large resources. When a client decides to implement changes in its organisation, our methodology lets us demonstrate to them the business opportunities of this decision and the resulting consequences both in terms of infrastructure and business process. This is a differentiator for Unisys; all of our employees are required to take 3D-VE training.

A second major initiative, called Six Sigma Lean, is a productivity tool, which we require all our middle management to use in their projects and proposals. They receive 'Green Belt' training and certification.² Ultimately, this tool will help us get better organised around fact-based decision-making. We are also mobilising knowledge through our Knowledge Management initiatives that I mentioned earlier.

In both cases, we want people to understand the *why* of these initiatives so that they can make use of them independently. Hence, employee engagement commences with understanding of why we are doing certain things and continues with their implementation of these procedures in practice. I feel this to be an anchor of our performance management philosophy. I cannot overemphasise the importance of such contributions to our overall strategy.

What impact do these initiatives have on human resources policy beyond training?

2. Six Sigma is a management methodology driven by data. It aims at improving consumer satisfaction and business performance. It focuses on projects that will produce measurable business results. 'Green Belts' are Six Sigma project leaders who have received certification after two weeks of training in the Six Sigma roadmap and the successful conduct of a project using this roadmap.

PAB: Human resources is considered as an important and operational function within Unisys that helps our managers solve workforce planning and staffing issues. Are they over or under-staffed and is there attrition? To understand the cause of attrition, for example, is not as obvious as one might expect. It is certainly not always about pay. So, I have fought to create a new organisation to help drive Six Sigma through human resources. Indeed, it allows us to conduct cause analysis for such issues and fosters a variety of initiatives from sales to delivery excellence. At present, Six Sigma is being led by one of my top professionals, and three of his colleagues are now undergoing 'Black Belt' training which requires several weeks of training in the Six Sigma roadmap. In fact, this was the first structural change that I implemented when I became head of Unisys human resources.

Reputation is a critical factor of success for companies in general, and for a service-oriented company like Unisys in particular. What policies can be implemented to ensure that critical aspects of reputation are accounted for everywhere within your company?

PAB: For Unisys, reputation is of utmost importance and is one leg of the 'three-legged stool' that is a highly visible symbol of the new Unisys. Employees and customers are the other two legs of this metaphorical stool, and this triad acts as a fully interlinked system.

Reputation is built on absolute integrity, one of our aforementioned operating principles. From our CEO to an office clerk, we require 100 percent of our employees to go through ethics training annually at Unisys. Absolute commitment to the firm's reputation is integral for our employees to succeed, while the continuance of our excellent reputation is necessary for a number of mission-critical contracts we have both in the public sector – for example, the US Federal Government and governments worldwide – and private sector.

To be sure, business relationships and contracts, such as that with the US Transportation Security Administration or the Municipality of Rome require the client's absolute confidence. We want to be known as a good company with whom to do business. As a consequence, we request of those in strategic alliances with us – and other partners or distribution channels – to comply also with a high set of standards.

Of course, such rigorous standards – and the esteemed *reputation, honour and integrity* associated with them – also help us to attract an exceptional pool of employees.

Securing the benefits of globalisation

Has Unisys set up processes to help employees face ethical problems?

PAB: We have an ombudsman whom they may either call or mail anonymously. Every single case is investigated. So, if employees are worried or are unsure about something – let's say they receive a gift from a vendor but aren't certain whether it is appropriate to accept it – they can always contact this valuable internal resource.

Does 'absolute integrity' encompass aspects beyond ethics?

PAB: One example is *privacy law*, which can pose a substantial issue. This has been the case for quite some time in Europe and is increasingly so in the US. We want to ensure that we comply with local laws.

How can a company become a global employer of choice?

PAB: Ultimately, all employers strive to attain this status, but I think there are several requirements they have to meet.

First, as I noted previously, the company has to have a good reputation because this is essential in the marketplace, and it is a key factor in attracting potential employees. Obviously, this means a corporation must pay competitive wages, and offer attractive benefits for their workforce and respective families. This alone doesn't constitute an employer of choice, but it does motivate people to apply for positions with your company.

Second, such a company must guarantee that its employees have the time, tools and resources to grow and learn on the job. Unisys offers them these tools through intense training programs and through Unisys University.

Third, it is really important for employees to understand their significance within the overall operations of a company. This is the hardest thing to do, and such responsibility falls to the managers who dictate the roles of individual employees and oversee their daily contributions. I don't think people leave bad companies or a leadership team they never see; they leave bad managers!

Since the immediate manager plays such a critical role in negotiating an employee's career, we must certify that middle managers have the appropriate training in leadership and communication to coach those around them. Of course, in a global company such as Unisys, employees are ultimately responsible for their own careers. It is our priority to guide and motivate them as much as possible, but it is their choice to establish how much they give in return. It is not only about work, it's about maintaining a viable work / life balance and engaging our employees in what they do best.

We've already discussed a lot about how individuals are evaluated at Unisys. Do you maintain any system of measurement for the achievements of human resources as a whole?

PAB: We do a lot of benchmarking with regard to how effective human resources is within our overall business objectives. As you can understand though, some areas are more difficult to measure than others because they are softer and lack quantitative parameters. We constantly ask, how effective are we? How much do we contribute to the various businesses? How much do we cost?

These are three basic questions – and we always want to make sure that we contribute more than we cost. More specifically, we also benchmark our internal tools – such as our performance management or leadership systems – and frequently attend seminars to get benchmarking data and to better understand what other companies are undertaking.

Furthermore, internal customer satisfaction surveys are conducted for human resources, as for all other staff functions, such as finance, legal and marketing, and we constantly ask our line managers around the world for feedback on the effectiveness of our actions. This allows us to better understand our internal customers, how they value our services, and what could be improved. In total, it is an evolving process of implementation, evaluation and revision.

What is the most significant human resources achievement over the past year?

PAB: We get a lot of feedback regarding our leadership team, and we've contributed substantially to evolving this initiative by bringing up some really top quality professionals. I think we've done this in a cost effective way, and within a very short time frame, thus making the whole transition remarkably successful.

Securing the benefits of globalisation



Lucio Loubet

9^{ème} série de la Métamorphose n° 17
(116 x 89 cm)