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Leading in a Global Environment

According to the conference's panelists, you not only have to work globally, you have to think globally to lead in a global environment. "The universe does not revolve around the U.S.," said Richard Corson, director of the Pontiac U.S. Export Assistance Center of the U.S. Commerce Service. "We are only one out of approximately 200 countries in the world and companies who recognize this fact become more successful. If you aren't geocentric, it can be a deal breaker."

Greg Garrett, (SECS '97) chief strategy officer, VW of America, emphasized the importance of being aware of global opportunities when they present themselves.

"In the next 20 years, 80 percent of the world population growth will occur in areas least capable of supporting this growth," Garrett said. "By 2030, one fourth of Western Europe will be over the age of 65. In 2025 60 percent of the world will live in cities. These statistics, and many others, represent opportunity. Be ready to diversify, focus on new markets, use the global tools that exist today and apply them to fit within your unique market. That's the secret to success."

Joe Tori, principal of g2businessdevelopment.com, a company known for transcending bricks and mortar, suggests the global marketplace requires a unique way of thinking. "Maybe your company needs to recognize that some services don't have to be in house. You may want to look at a flexible organizational structure, expand your markets or decentralize your management."

Tori also emphasized looking within the U.S. for global opportunity. "Our country was founded on innovation and while we may have given up a lot of our manufacturing base, we are still advanced in the integration of technologies, and that's a real opportunity."

When asked how OU and other universities could become more global, Tori thought OU should continue to push its innovative global projects. "It's refreshing how OU has made connections with other global companies and links with universities around the world," he said. "It mirrors what is happening economically today."

Garrett suggested OU and other universities could take globalization a step further in looking at their leadership. "Let's change the face of the school," he said. "How many members of your Board of Visitors and Board of Directors come from outside of the country, or even from outside of Michigan? Adapting global thinking starts at the top."

Corson agrees colleges must globalize their curriculum, but states, "Here in the U.S., we really have to start in elementary school with opportunities to study international business and foreign language. Otherwise, we'll be left behind."

Conference participant, Christine Miska, an HR professional in career transition, enjoyed the global leadership panel. "It validated for me what I did right as a parent, having my children study abroad and opening my home to an exchange student. I also was encouraged with the discussions around U.S. innovation and the idea that integration itself can be considered a viable product."

SUMMARY

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