



Paulo Marcelo, Resource IT CEO

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In Search of the Extraordinary Executive

How to evaluate your unique leadership situation:  
**A CEO's perspective**



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## Paulo Marcelo, CEO of Resource IT

As CEO of Brazilian multinational company Resource IT, Paulo Marcelo is currently leading over 2500 professionals spread out across more than twenty units in five different countries.

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In the article “How to evaluate your unique leadership situation” we discussed how to analyse your unique leadership situation by its scope, distance and pace. In this article we will illustrate the concept by further exploring the differences between global and local leadership. Though part of the same organisation, the situation of a local leader greatly differs from the situation of a global leader. What are the distinctive requirements of the two roles, and how do you become successful in the different leadership roles of your organisation?

To elaborate on these questions, we sat down for an interview with Paulo Marcelo. As CEO of Brazilian multinational company Resource IT, he is currently leading over 2500 professionals spread out across more than 20 units in five different countries. Prior to Resource IT, Paulo was CEO of Capgemini's Brazilian subsidiary for 10 years where he reported to the company's headquarters in Paris.

With his deep experience from leading multinational companies as well as being a local leader at a global company, Paulo has gained a holistic perspective on the distinctive differences between local and global leadership, and how they relate to each other.

“Successful leadership is only possible if you manage to put yourself in the position of the person at the other end. Global and local leaders are interconnected, and they need to understand each other's realities”, Paulo says.

### ***What do you see as the main difference between global and local leadership?***

“One of the more obvious differences is the dimension of distance, which has a profound influence on the leadership situation. Although technology allows us to minimise the perception of distance, being present in various markets always means having to manage different local cultures and contexts. Properly understanding and respecting these cultural differences is critical for both global and local leaders”, Paulo says.

As an organisation expands across markets and countries with different cultures and conditions, leadership becomes a much more complex and challenging task. According to Paulo, the key to success is having a well-defined shared purpose and objective throughout the organisation.

“In order to successfully steer a global organisation you need to define a shared purpose and objective. It's the global leader's responsibility to develop the overall vision of where we want to go, while the local leaders' task is to translate the purpose and objective into their own local reality. So as a global leader it is not about controlling the means to reach the objective step by step, but rather controlling the final destination to which the different parts of the organisation are working towards”.

### ***So how do you as a local leader successfully translate the shared purpose and objective of the organisation into your own reality?***

“As a local leader you need to know the reality of your market and be able to integrate the purpose of the global organisation. Every market differs in terms of maturity, market penetration etc., but no one understands the characteristics of the different local markets as well as the local leaders. It's their responsibility to find the best way for how to reach the shared purpose and objective locally, and every local leader will have to find his or her own way forward depending on the reality of the market”.

A common challenge among local leaders is, according to Paulo, to always prioritise the objective of the global organisation.

“The achievement of objectives should focus on the interests of the entire organisation rather than simply on what can be achieved locally. A successful local leader has the sensitivity and the sense of urgency needed to strengthen the organisation's interests, and always acts in line with the global leadership”, Paulo explains.

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### ***How do you as a global leader ensure that local leaders act upon the shared objective?***

“It is absolutely critical for global leadership to have its local leaders aligned and attuned to the organisation's objectives; keeping them in sync with global expectations, motivating and connecting the parts. Not only do you need to be able to communicate coherently and demonstrate passion and ambition, you also need to fully understand the realities of your local leaders”, says Paulo.

He emphasises the importance of reducing the perception of distance, by being physically present in the local markets.

“As a global leader you must not underestimate the importance of visiting your local leaders and their markets. In order to understand your people's expectations, the environment and how this shapes people's reality and behaviour, you really need to be present in the local markets.”

In addition to distance, pace was also identified as a dimension influencing the leadership situation in the article “How to evaluate your unique leadership situation”. According to Paulo Marcelo, finding a common pace for reaching the purpose and objective of the organisation is critical to success.

### ***How do you successfully coordinate the pace within an organisation?***

“As a global leader you need to synchronise the organisation, so that all parts reach the common objective together at the “right” moment. Although it might be tempting, there is really no point in reaching the objective earlier in one market if the timing is not synchronised to maximise results”, Paulo says.

Basically, you want to enable all local markets to reach the common objective at the same time, in the way that best suits the reality of each market. To do it successfully, the organisation needs high levels of communication and collaboration between highly diligent global and local leaders. Paulo uses his own organisation to illustrate:

"The vision of our organisation is "closer, faster, better". This is shared by the whole organisation; advocating service excellence, proximity with the client and agility in our solutions. As global leader I discuss with the local leaders how this vision translates to their local market and culture; finding the right solutions, go-to-market strategy and product portfolio. These choices are then continuously reviewed, thereby giving the opportunity for all stakeholders to challenge the ideas and validate the buy in."

### ***What happens when local leaders don't buy in?***

"The initial reaction would be to blame the local organisation and think that changing the local leadership would be the solution. However, leaders can no longer simply impose ideas, they need to influence their followers' commitment by connecting emotionally. So perhaps the root of the problem is more likely the global leaders' poor communication and inability to establish an inspiring purpose and vision?", Paulo asks rhetorically.

However, managing lack of commitment or misalignment is a common challenge among global leaders, according to Paulo Marcelo.

"When it happens, local leaders must get full support from global leadership. Giving people space and letting them express their opinions and challenging views are important tools".

### ***Drawing on your experience, what is your best advice to someone looking to become an effective global or local leader?***

"I've had the chance to work on both sides, and I strongly believe that the ability to understand the reality of others is hugely important for global leaders. Whatever task I perform today I remember when I was a local leader, and take this into consideration to enhance dialogue and make sure that the other party feels involved and has "a voice". As a local leader you need to be energetic to face the challenges of your market, sensible to understand other's position and resilient to adapt and find al-

ternative routes to reach the objective", Paulo says and continues:

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**Leadership is like running a marathon. You need to have a long term view of a journey which will only be completed if each stage is successful. A few successful meters are what allows us to eventually reach the finish line. The present makes the future feasible and having a future is what feeds the present”**

Paulo Marcelo, Resource IT CEO



## Writer

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