Globally Responsible Leadership
A Leading Edge Conversation

By:
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Globally Responsible Leadership

OVERVIEW

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE:

In the current business environment, the challenge is “no more business as usual.” Increasing pressures of globalization, demanding and diverse stakeholders, the war for talent, scarce resources, and increased risks and opportunities, are causing leaders to ask if there is a better way to cope with complexity. Leaders all over the world are embedding Global Responsibility in the fabric of their business to deal with these challenges. Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability represent a new competitive business advantage and one of the most powerful drivers for growth and innovation in today’s organizations.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS WHITE PAPER:

- Questions and answers on:
  - What leadership practices enable organizations to develop direction, alignment and commitment for Global Responsibility?
  - How can Global Responsibility perspectives and practices be developed?
  - What challenges do leaders face in using a Global Responsibility framework?
  - What organizational systems and strategies have been implemented to foster responsible growth and innovation?

PROPOSED OUTCOMES OF READING THIS WHITE PAPER

- Identify how to develop as a leader with emphasis on providing long-term vision and strategic leadership addressing social, environmental and economic issues.
- Gain insight on the new role leadership plays in today’s organizations.
- Understand how to support globally responsible leadership and how to integrate it with other organizational development efforts.
- Gain insight into the changing nature of the business leadership environment and how leadership for Global Responsibility contributes to shaping a high performance leadership culture.
- Understand the importance of building a learning environment for globally responsible leadership development to deal with impending and future organizational challenges and sustainable business development.
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Globally responsible leadership asks business organizations to pay attention to the impact their operations have on the planet—requiring a systemic view and addressing diverse economic, social and environmental issues. It also brings vitality and new opportunities to an organization through innovation, talent engagement and cost savings.

Unfortunately, not much is understood about how leaders and organizations deal with the expanded and integrated principles of globally responsible leadership (GRL). This white paper reports on the leadership practices, policies, strategies and systems of companies recognized for their GRL efforts. Specifically, it reports on eight core leadership domains that successfully enable global responsibility:

1. Developing globally responsible vision, strategies and policies
2. Operationalizing global responsibility
3. Consistent support of top management
4. Communicating global responsibility
5. Engaging with stakeholders and across boundaries
6. Empowering employees to act responsibly
7. Establishing performance and accountability processes
8. Pursuing ethical actions for global responsibility

Given our learning so far, the following are considerations for any organization embarking on the path to global responsibility:

- Leadership practices play a significant role in establishing how an organization’s culture supports—or hinders—global responsibility efforts.
- Since leadership does play such an important role in an organization’s ability to have successful global responsibility outcomes, development of leadership competencies and capabilities is critical, both at the individual and organizational levels.
- Leadership for global responsibility goes beyond setting a vision and goals. The central point is action to create alignment and to maintain commitment, such as: configuration of resources, development of supporting policies, implementation of globally responsible decision-making criteria, setting personal examples, stakeholder engagement and alliances, and development of a globally responsible mindset.

The journey to global responsibility involves challenges most organizations have never experienced. Facing these challenges requires leaders to be agile, think in new ways, ask the right questions and be comfortable not having all the answers.
Globally Responsible Leadership

There are many ways to describe global responsibility—such as corporate social responsibility, sustainability, corporate citizenship, corporate stewardship, and the triple bottom line (people-planet-profit). Going beyond labels or definitions, the idea of global responsibility suggests businesses have a duty and a strategic interest in innovation and in integrating the interests of their stakeholders into all aspects of their business operations.

Businesses are more than just profit-seeking entities. They have a vested interest in generating positive outcomes and limiting any detrimental impact. While the “what” of global responsibility is well defined, little is known about “how” to implement the triple bottom line effectively or how to identify the relevant leadership practices. Conceptual approaches also offer no recognition of the individual or organizational challenges encountered when implementing a globally responsible strategy or when developing a culture of responsibility. Many organizations find that the right kind of leadership is a key challenge when developing workable global responsibility strategies, redesigning organizational systems and processes, and/or forging the required culture change in support of global responsibility. As a company begins to move toward globally responsible operations worldwide, it will need to develop and implement a new or more adaptive business model that addresses how the organization sets direction, creates alignment, and maintains commitment to its responsibility goals.

This white paper presents eight domains of leadership practices that, when sufficiently developed and carried out throughout the organization, supply the groundwork for successful implementation of global responsibility initiatives. This figure presents the eight categories, explained in full in the following pages.

**SUMMARY OF KEY QUESTIONS**

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<td>What leadership practices enable organizations to develop direction, alignment and commitment for global responsibility?</td>
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Globally Responsible Leadership: Practice 1

DEVELOPING VISION, STRATEGY AND POLICIES

Ground the vision for global responsibility in a company’s values, core business strengths and external demands. Craft a strategy that enables business opportunity and social/environmental good. Develop specific policies that support the strategy.

Grounding the vision for global responsibility in a company’s values, core business strengths and external demands sets the foundation for the global responsibility journey. The elements of vision, strategy, and policy are closely intertwined, and it takes resilience and continuity to set these new directions effectively. First, to build global responsibility, a company needs a long-term vision that goes beyond “being green” or “doing good.” This vision should be rooted in the core business of the firm, take into account its strengths, and focus and recognize the demands of a variety of stakeholders. The vision is a joint effort that takes into account demands and knowledge from across the organization’s leadership team. Creating a vision helps order and prioritize the many potential activities a company undertakes. Once a compelling, globally responsible vision is developed, strategies are crafted to achieve the vision. Some strategies enable business opportunity, social good, and environmental protection. In addition, these strategies often go above and beyond compliance or what is required by law and include long-term goals.

Developing specific policies that support global responsibility serves to link vision and strategy to organizational systems and day-to-day operations. A dynamic, organizational vision and far-reaching globally responsible strategies require new rules for operating and a new understanding of how systems work and processes link together.

Organizations purposefully employ a process of small but steady steps towards the achievement of key goals. Furthermore, creation of a formal vision statement, strategies, and policy does not always precede socially responsible actions and projects. Companies can develop formal strategy after becoming familiar with the global responsibility lexicon made visible through various media and emphasized by various interest groups.

The implementation of basic practices is the push factor for more integrated and advanced leadership for global responsibility. In other cases, the visibility and demand for global responsibility will drive social assistance or environmental action, which in turn will encourage integration into the business model and will support the creation of strategies and policies for prioritizing possible directions.

DEVELOPING VISION, STRATEGY AND POLICIES

Practices: Screen for global responsibility in investments, acquisitions and partnerships. Set globally responsible goals on various levels throughout the organization. Start with a dual bottom line and move towards a triple bottom line. Create a spirit of exceeding compliance standards.

Integrated into: Mission statement, company vision statement, official procedures and documents, strategic business plan, balanced scorecard, activities outside the core business
Globally Responsible Leadership: Practice 2

SUPPORT FROM TOP MANAGEMENT

In order for global responsibility to have impact, top management support is vital. Senior leaders – and the executive team – must show active and consistent support for the organization’s globally responsible strategies and efforts.

Top management support sets the tone for an organizational transformation, often including major change processes. It takes visible top management support and sustained commitment from executives to convince others in the organization that a move towards global responsibility is not just a response to current fashion, but a continuous and strategic reorientation that is worth the effort. While change can also come from the bottom up, it is clear that to make a systemic change, top management support is vital. This support is shown in actions that create visibility and awareness of global responsibility inside the company and in the provision of hard resources for responsibility efforts. It is also shown through consistency, which makes the difference in whether global responsibility is seen as a real business commitment or as simply “the flavor of the day.” Top management support proves particularly relevant when challenges arise – such as rising costs and decreasing revenues, difficulties with sustained stakeholder engagement and client acceptance of globally responsible policies.

**TOP MANAGEMENT SUPPORT**

**Practices:** Allocate adequate resources. Create a dedicated position. Brand globally responsible efforts. Maintain continuous global responsibility efforts. Participate in globally responsible programs and events.

*Integrated into:* Investment decisions, strategic planning, regular briefings, executive speeches, internal newsletters, awards, and recognition, celebrations, global responsibility programs

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Integrate globally responsible actions across business functions and locations.

To move from vision and strategy to operation, actions need to be integrated across business lines and locations. The challenges an organization faces across locations and business lines are too diverse to be dealt with by the same tools or actions. Yet to make a difference, some high-level integration is necessary to ensure the common vision will be enacted in all geographies and at all levels. As one global human resources manager said:

“There was a necessity to make a link between our company statement, the code of conduct and … some key performance indicators, which are really showing with numbers that we are doing what we have written on nice paper. So I had meetings with all the HR managers all around the world and we came out with 45 key performance indicators, which we then reduced to five for the current reporting cycle. Each of the five is in the report to ensure we are really doing this. All plants, each site, has to deliver according to the goal they set for themselves. For example, for the area of training … we want to have the action plan – and the training session for the people actually held.”

To further integrate global responsibility into the business, local specification of efforts that make sense in the particular geography is a plus. In other words, from the same mission or common goal, different leadership practices are needed across different geographies with a tangible local/regional value.

In order to make global responsibility effective operationally, it also is necessary to integrate efforts with specific job responsibilities. Doing so enables the workforce at all levels to make sense of the organization’s focus on global responsibility and to act accordingly.

**OPERATIONALIZING GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**Practices:** Incorporate global responsibility into every day processes and procedures. Develop a logo/symbol. Specify local goals. Integrate goals globally. Translate materials into necessary languages.

**Integrated into:** Strategic planning, global and local operations, job descriptions, supply-chain management
Develop and implement a set of leadership practices for global responsibility that will engage internal and external stakeholders. Create effective partnerships and networks.

Leadership practices that reach across boundaries and engage stakeholders promote the triple bottom line (people-planet-profit). Global responsibility requires leaders to work across personal boundaries of social identity, internal boundaries of level and function, and external boundaries of organization, country or region.

Leaders who engage across boundaries develop relationships with diverse stakeholders culture and systems to approach stakeholders. These stakeholders are not limited to employees of the organization, but include vendors, suppliers, customers, members of the community, the press and non-profit organizations. Relationships are established with these groups to understand the impact the organization has on them as well as the influence the stakeholders have on the organization. In the best stakeholder relationships, there is a sharing of power and influence, created by processes of dialogue and inquiry that is ongoing and continues even when differences occur.

In this global society, national, international, multinational and global companies are a conglomeration of different realities. There can be different standards and needs for global responsibility across levels, divisions, country subsidiaries and cultures. The dialogue among stakeholders is advanced by bridging these differences and boundaries. Ownership and responsibility for stakeholder engagement becomes a core leadership practice. Commitment is maintained when coalitions are clearly established and overcome difficulties that may arise. Diverse challenges are seen as opportunities. These include internal stakeholder engagement, difficulties in raising global responsibility awareness outside a headquarters location, variable standards in developing countries, and difficulties in making global responsibility something that is shared at every level in the organization. Development of training programs can partially address and overcome such organizational obstacles.

In summary, the concept of global responsibility requires organizations to focus on their impact beyond the traditional “walls” of the organization.

“First you have to talk their language, so you don’t talk sustainability, you don’t talk GRI, you don’t talk because they don’t know whatever it is and they don’t care. But you just have to go ok, this is a project. We want to reduce the losses from our factory and benefit the extended community by donating the leftover production.” (CSR manager)

**ENGAGING ACROSS BOUNDARIES**

**Practices:** Conduct 360-surveys with all stakeholders. Hold “visitor’s” days. Encourage two-way communication with all stakeholders. Make organizational efforts and goals publicly visible.

**Integrated into:** Community involvement programs, government liaisons, industry-specific lobbying, partnerships and collaboration
Develop a communication system for global responsibility that is grounded in the organization's core culture and communication systems.

Leaders who excel at global responsibility develop effective practices, policies and procedures for communication, using a multitude of channels and communicating frequently. They share information about core business needs and directions, successes and challenges of responsible development, as well as its application throughout the organization and across organizational boundaries.

When firms span diverse contexts and cultures, as is common in multinational and global organizations, communication practices must consciously reflect these differences. Effective and varied communication is initiated by leaders and managers and directed towards various stakeholder groups. Communication includes both informal and formal activities, verbal and written, with the strategic purpose of maintaining and widening organizational understanding, acceptance and commitment to global responsibility. As one of the people we interviewed said:

“We try to communicate that [commitment to GRL] at various levels in a top-down manner and, hopefully, this then percolates through the organization and the managers take the responsibility and... they take this on board and actually use it in their day to day life.”

Another option is to create and implement a real-two way communication process with people inside and outside the organization to inform them about the company's direction for global responsibility and to ensure commitment and create a deeply shared understanding among stakeholder groups. The two-way leadership practices that are important to communication include listening, educating, and creating an ongoing dialogue with others inside and outside the organization.

The most effective path incorporates honest communication practices that are oriented towards sharing or celebrating success for alignment and advancement, rather than advertising or social marketing. Using globally responsible plans and accomplishments as a marketing tool is not seen as contributing to the strategic progress of the company. As one manager said:

“You can do a lot of these things, but you don’t want to brag about them. If you do, it could easily create bad sentiments....”

On the other hand, genuine pride in outstanding achievements that are communicated transparently can contribute to a high level of alignment and commitment inside and outside company boundaries.
COMMUNICATION SYSTEM AND PRACTICES (continued)

Transparent communication practices include honesty about progress and problems involved in implementing environmental or social goals. Articulating how global responsibility “translates” into the day-to-day work of each employee represents an important practice and challenge and is closely tied to the need to have everyone on board. For example, communication about global responsibility should be included in new employee on-boarding programs and in the internal company newspaper.

The type and level of communication is targeted to translate globally responsible strategy into understandable language that can ally employees at all levels. Successful external practices include open dialogue with other companies – even competitors – who are walking the same path.

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<td><strong>Integrated into</strong>: Staff meetings, shareholder meetings, verbal or text-based and visual communication, PR/advertising, reporting, media, website information</td>
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Globally Responsible Leadership: Practice 6

Establish systems and practices that empower employees to act in globally responsible ways. Include global responsibility in organizational development activities. Link all empowerment and development efforts to global responsibility.

Designing and implementing globally responsible activities can bring a company together. Empowerment and development for global responsibility refers to leadership practices that enhance an individual’s power to perform responsibly and to individual and organizational development efforts that promotes the understanding and implementation of globally responsible activities.

Effective leadership practices for empowerment and development include mentoring, coaching and training for sustainability. Moreover, offering challenging assignments that link core business activities with the triple bottom line have clear benefits. Formal training helps employees understand and commit to people, planet and profit goals. Training can be provided as a stand-alone activity or integrated into other development activities. From one organization we learned what follows:

“We have training – three trainings in a month where I spend one hour explaining sustainability to them… so in the next three months I can be sure that every guy in this unit will know what sustainability is and how his way of working will impact people and the planet.”

Nevertheless, formal training activities alone are not enough. It is also important to develop managers who feel personally responsible for developing their subordinates on globally responsible systems, culture and activities. To this end, challenging assignments can help managers learn how to align core business activities with the triple bottom line approach. Emerging leaders express strong need to be part of the movement to create a better world. Because they are bringing this call into the workplace, we have a unique opportunity for companies to learn, innovate and grow within a globally responsible framework.

The purposeful mentoring of others is a developmental leadership practice providing clear outcomes, as expressed by one of the managers we spoke with:

“It definitely depends on me and people down the line, so I have to ensure that I give the right amount of training and time to people to speak about this kind of thing.”

Other globally responsible leadership development practices include a focus on the development of systems thinking capabilities, support and encouragement for responsible actions, projects and ideas initiated from the bottom up, and delegation of decision making to the lowest possible level. This does not mean flat acceptance of whatever is proposed, but instead a clear request for potential projects and ideas. As one manager said:

“If someone presents a project and we cannot prove that this new process can be built in a closed loop approach where there’s no waste, then I can block it. I can push the people to think further and say okay come back and go back to the drawing table and come back with something which is completely closed loop.”
EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

In addition to developing capabilities and support, leaders must pay attention to developing a culture in support of global responsibility. Given the complexity of issues and opportunities surround global responsibility, it is important for the organization to identify the type of culture that will best support this focus. A culture valuing and practicing collaboration and interdependence is especially helpful for global responsibility.

Practices:
Mentor, coach and train others. Give challenging assignments. Use employee surveys and feedback to assess competencies and capabilities related to global responsibility. Establish regular question and answer sessions with the CEO/Top management to discuss issues.

Integrated into:
Training and development activities; organizational culture work; onboarding processes
Manage performance to promote global responsibility and hold individuals and groups accountable for their contributions.

Numeric measures ensure progress towards globally responsible actions. As the saying goes, “what gets measured gets done.” Global responsibility goals, standards and norms can be set at the individual, group and organizational levels. If global responsibility goals are included in employee performance development plans, they are much more likely to be achieved. These formal measures serve to monitor and control performance and inform plans for the future.

Managing performance to enhance global responsibility efforts in a company doesn’t mean achieving certain standards and then suspending efforts. Instead it entails a focus on continuous improvement, always striving for innovative ways to become better. Measures are seen as tools, not as ends in themselves.

Accountability is necessary and exploited to ensure that global responsibility goals are not only set but enacted. Accountability at the individual level is achieved by incorporating responsibility targets into performance development processes, feedback sessions, regular reporting, professional development and certifications (voluntary and required), as well as rewards and recognition. At the organizational level, audits and regular reporting help to ensure accountability.

“We choose external auditing because it’s more challenging. I think this is (a) far more ambitious way to audit. For sure (it is) a tougher way for us because there is no mercy. Internally you can say okay we have this difficulty and these priorities, but with an outside firm they are paid for that, they have their own reputation and there is no way for them to be gentle. They can see it like it is.”

Another CEO spoke about the reporting system implemented to ensure accountability:

“At that time we were ending a reporting loop for our five-year reporting. We were at the end of this timeframe and so there was the opportunity to start a new one and we said stop, we want to do it as we have done it in the last year where we have the sustainable reporting. But proper. We will set Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s) for the environmental part and for the social part, so that we can have the same KPI’s all over the company, which we can focus on and communicate.”
Globally Responsible Leadership

PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY (continued)

Accountability is the practice company leaders use to ensure integrity and responsibility. Globally responsible leadership is maintaining commitment by reconciling the demands, needs, interests and values of employees, customers, suppliers, communities, shareholders, nongovernmental organizations, the environment and society at large. A company’s track record in globally responsible accounting is more effective when appropriate measures are included in both internal and supply-chain activities and good global accountability practices are disseminated.

PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY


Integrated into: Performance development plans, audits/measures, feedback, goals, standards and norms, reporting, certifications (voluntary and required), rewards and recognition, bonuses, celebrations, awards
The recognition that ethics and integrity are at the foundation of organizational and individual decision making contributes powerfully to employee commitment to global responsibility.

Acting with integrity sets an example inside and outside the company and indicates that global responsibility is taken seriously. In turn, this speeds up the integration of global responsibility into a company’s business model. Ethical leadership sets the example and convinces third parties of the importance of integrity in their own organizations. Leadership practices that display leaders “walking their talk” result in commitment throughout the organization. Also, consistency between the personal and professional behaviors of leaders is central and sets the company’s tone.

Leaders and managers who openly practice global responsibility in their personal life are role models for the workforce. Employees are more convinced to adopt globally responsible actions when leaders exhibit personal examples of how to bridge personal and professional responsibility, such as being involved in charity or volunteering in social and environmental activities.

Integrity and ethics are imperative at the organizational level and are reflected in participative decision making that includes all stakeholders. Integrity also is reflected in the use of decision criteria that integrate environmental, social and financial considerations and that make the commitment of a company to global responsibility visible.

Again, at the organizational level, ethical actions refer to open book practices, the establishment and enactment of integrity policies when dealing with suppliers and clients, and organizational consistency in decision-making and honesty in reporting.

As one CEO revealed during an interview:

“We really tried to get our principles right before we tried to communicate them and already put them partly in place so that people recognized, when we started to talk about sustainable development, what it was about at least partly and that it wasn’t something new that was being heard at a certain given time but was already starting to become part of the fabric of the company.”

**ETHICAL ACTIONS**

**Practices:** Walk the talk. Adopt an open-book policy. Avoid greenwashing. Lead by example. Develop consistency between private and professional behavior.

**Integrated into:** Leadership model, public relations, accounting, reporting, visible leader behaviors
Activities focused on social and environmental concerns started long before the concept of corporate responsibility became popular. When global responsibility gained widespread recognition, many corporations realized their journey had already begun.

We have outlined a variety of leadership practices that can help or hinder an organization’s journey toward global responsibility. Given our learning so far, we see the following implications for organizations:

- The consistent application of the identified leadership practices will support an organizational culture of global responsibility.

- As leadership plays such an important role in this journey, the development of individual and organizational capacities to engage in the respective leadership practices is critical.

- It is the task of leadership to ensure the fit between globally responsible practices and company characteristics. In doing so, leadership for global responsibility goes beyond setting direction. It includes actions to create alignment of systems and policies, and to maintain employee and management commitment. And companies cannot simply copy successful practices from others. Leadership practices that promote global responsibility are successful when they resonate with a company’s vision, mission and culture.

- The recognition that global responsibility is a never-ending journey rather than a destination indicates that only innovative, continuously improving leadership practices will enable organizations to progress.
Globally Responsible Leadership

We now have research-based assessment tool available for your use. The “Globally Responsible Leadership Assessment” (GRLA) gives organizations wishing to improve and enhance globally responsible leadership a clear and concise picture of their strengths and weaknesses. It is supported by learning days, webcasts and other customized programs. Research results and practices are shared interactively, to offer companies support and advice along their globally responsible leadership journey.

Organizations interested in the GRLA can contact CCL or the authors of this whitepaper.

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In addition to all those we have had the privilege to meet and interview in the course of this work, we would like to thank the following for their support of the project:

- The CCL executive team for their ongoing support of research and investigation on this topic.

- In particular, we would like to thank the following companies for participating in this study and for sharing their journey with us:

  - **Wilh. Wilhelmsen (WW)** is a global maritime industry group and a leading global provider of maritime services headquartered in Norway. The group has 350 offices in 70 countries, which cooperate with partners in an extensive global network. Founded in 1861 in the port of Tønsberg, south of Oslo, WW has developed from a traditional shipping business with an emphasis on owning and operating vessels into a global supplier of maritime services. The group ranks as one of Norway’s foremost centers of maritime expertise and as an innovator with its focus on forward-looking technological development.

  - **Danone Poland** is part of Groupe Danone, a global leader in cultured dairy products (including yogurt, cheese, and dairy desserts). Danone Poland is the country’s leader in fresh dairy, with a market share of approximately 40% (Q1, 2007). The company’s vision is to be the most trusted, responsible and life-enhancing brand in Poland, chosen by consumers every day.

  - **Umicore** is a materials technology company headquartered in Brussels, Belgium. Its activities are centered on four business areas: Advanced Materials, Precious Metals Products and Catalysts, Precious Metals Services and Zinc Specialties. Umicore’s overriding goal of sustainable value creation is based on the ambition to develop, produce and recycle materials in a way that fulfills its mission: materials for a better life. The Umicore Group has industrial operations on all continents and serves a global customer base.

  - **MRW** is an international package delivery service headquartered in Barcelona, Spain. Founded in 1977, MRW has grown into the leading urgent delivery and logistics company in the Spanish and Venezuelan markets, with sales of more than 500 million. Its success is based on great service from an 800-franchise network of offices and enthusiastic employees who are motivated by lifetime employment and “family-friendly” policies.

  - **Dr. Reddy’s** is a global pharmaceutical company headquartered in India and with a presence in more than 100 countries. It has wholly-owned subsidiaries in the US, UK, Russia, Germany and Brazil; joint ventures in China, South Africa and Australia; representative offices in 16 countries; and third-party distribution in 21 countries. Dr. Reddy’s is the first pharmaceutical company in Asia outside of Japan to be listed on the NYSE. Its aim is to help people lead healthier lives through two parallel objectives: delivering affordable and accessible medication to all parts of the world and discovering, developing and commercializing innovative medicines that satisfy unmet medical needs.
ABOUT THE CENTER FOR CREATIVE LEADERSHIP

Focusing exclusively on leadership education and research, the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) offers what no one else can: unparalleled expertise in solving the leadership challenges of individuals and organizations everywhere. Founded in 1970 as a nonprofit, educational institution, CCL helps clients worldwide cultivate creative leadership – the capacity to achieve more than imagined by thinking and acting beyond boundaries – through an array of programs, products and other services. To learn more, please contact us at the CCL location most convenient to you.

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