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DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP STYLE IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Abstract:

Purpose – Expatriate leaders on overseas assignment often attempt to transfer their home organization culture to their new location. The subsequent cultural clash can have a destructive impact on both the leader and the organization. We explore the impact of organizational culture, adaptation, political environment, and leadership for expatriate managers working in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Design/methodology/approach –Expatriate leaders’ experiences in the UAE were collected through interviews, with a specific focus on cultural adaptation and most effective leadership styles for implementing strategic organizational change.

Findings – Our research revealed that a consultative style was found to be most effective by expatriate leaders in the UAE. Communication with local staff, team building, motivating staff, and involving staff in decision-making were highly effective approaches in assisting expatriate leaders to succeed within their organizational cultures. Several strategies have been identified based on the experiences of the expatriate leaders interviewed in our study.

Practical implications – The findings offer practical advice for organizational leaders anticipating an assignment in the UAE and HRM practitioners preparing expatriate leaders for their duties there. We also provide suggestions for expatriate leaders to enhance their adjustment to the organizational and political culture.

Originality/value – Numerous studies have been done on organizational cultural adaptation, however comparatively little research has been offered on practical organizational adaptation and leadership specific to the UAE.

Keywords:

Expatriate leadership, leadership styles, management, organizational

JEL Classification: M10