

UMUC Business and Executive Programs Podcasts

**Executive MBA Education in Global World**

**Interviewer:** Dr. Nancy Gentry Glenn

**Interviewee:** Mr. Subash Bijlani

**Podcast Title:** Leadership, Ethics, and Values in International Corporate Governance

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**Glenn:** Welcome to Executive MBA Education in the Global World, a weekly podcast that features an overview and highlights of the Executive MBA Program and discussion of how the program prepares executives for today's global business environment. I'm Nancy Gentry Glenn, Director of Administration, Business and Executive Programs, your host for the day.

Our guest today is Mr. Subash Bijlani, Executive in Residence, Executive MBA Program.

The topic for today's show is Leadership, Ethics, and Values in International Corporate Governance. Our discussion addresses Residency 2 of the Executive MBA program, focusing on how country mentors help students identify the effects of cultural differences on leadership behaviors.

Mr. Bijlani, what is the main goal of the residency focus on cultural differences?

**Bijlani:** There is a growing global dimension to U.S. businesses. It is not just limited to markets, but extends to the entire supply chain, access to capital markets, technology, and partnerships that take the form of joint ventures, franchising arrangements, and joint research and development. There are also increasing investments coming from other countries in the United States. The main goal of the residency is to increase an awareness of the cultural aspects of doing business, understand what culture is, how it differs in different countries. Our focus in the residency is on four countries -- Brazil, China, India, and U.S. Our goal is to understand how our own behavior is determined by our own culture, and how it may be viewed differently than we intend when it is observed by others coming from a different cultural background. An insight into how our own culture and of others plays out in work situations is an important part of our competitive advantage in the United States.

**Glenn:** Thank you. Would you describe the kinds of exercises or activities that are used in this residency to create an awareness of different cultures?

**Bijlani:** The exercises we have developed to create an awareness of different cultures are through country team assignments that include negotiating business collaborations through role playing. The exercises are based on a U.S. pharma company that seeks to establish a presence in Indian, Chinese, and Brazilian markets. The way these team assignments are structured is through role playing, discussing different dimensions of a proposed memorandum of understanding that the teams conclude as part of their

negotiations. At the end of these discussions we do a comparative analysis of cultures in these four countries. Guiding the process are mentors who have special knowledge and a special insight of their respective countries, in this case India, Brazil, and China.

**Glenn:** Would you tell us a little more about the role of the country mentor?

**Bijlani:** The role of the country mentor is to bring a deeper understanding of national cultures as they play out in corporate setting. The mentors provide critique and advice on cultural biases, and the role of the mentor is to provide potential responses to the teams who are negotiating with their counterparts from other countries. They also suggest how these national cultural gaps may affect the success of a business relationship. For example, in the residency last year where we negotiated with companies from Brazil, China, and India, I provided the cultural insights into Indian setting. The teams which were negotiating with their Indian counterparts were advised on how negotiations with the family controlled business in India plays itself out. It is interesting that one of our students subsequently travelled to Bangalore in India to negotiate with one of the companies there and told us that he was able to use these insights in a practical way.

**Glenn:** Thank you. Would you tell us how leadership is enhanced by understanding cultural differences?

**Bijlani:** Clearly, the growing globalization of businesses requires that there is an increased cultural sensitivity. An increased cultural sensitivity is part of global literacy. Cultures differ within organizations, too, and between companies. Therefore, understanding of cultural differences at different levels and recognizing our own cultural biases, we create more successful interactions with different departments and with other companies, with customers, with suppliers who come from different company cultures, and also with peers from different cultural backgrounds. This is an essential ingredient of leadership in the global setting.

**Glenn:** And finally, what will students take away from the residency session that they can use in their organizations?

**Bijlani:** Clearly, the important contribution the residencies make to the student's capabilities is first and foremost recognizing their own organization's culture, their own individual biases, how they fit into their own value systems and backgrounds, and how it influences behaviors in the organization. It also helps understand how to influence the culture of an organization and provide an understanding of how the organization's culture can effect success in the global environment.

**Glenn:** This is Nancy Gentry Glenn and I'd like to thank Mr. Subash Bijlani for helping us understand how country mentors help students understand the effects of cultural differences on leadership behaviors. Thank you, listeners, for joining Executive MBA Education in the Global World.

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