The fundamental dimensions differentiating the global from the domestic leadership environment are:

- the greater complexity of the global business environment and

- the requirement to work within and between diverse cultural environments and value structures at the same time as performing effectively as a business person

A useful starting point in defining the leadership capabilities is provided by the relatively new concept of Cultural Intelligence. This suggests that global leaders require attributes that fall into three categories;

i) cognitive (ability to know and understand things about a new culture)

ii) motivational (commitment and desire to be successful in a cross cultural environment)

iii) behavioural (capability to achieve desired outcomes in cross cultural situations)

All three attributes are necessary for effective global leadership performance. For example, a person may have the capacity to understand the global environment, the ability to behave in ways that are culturally appropriate, but have no desire or commitment to work outside their home country. Issues of business complexity and cross cultural ability fall within all three categories.

Another approach, well established in the HR world, is based on competencies and also cuts across business complexity and cross cultural ability, as well as the three Cultural Intelligence dimensions. The approach suggests successful global leaders possess a common set of knowledge, skills and abilities, an approach that is adopted in much of the global leadership literature. However, a review of the literature in 2002 found that some 56 global leadership competencies had been identified and were a mixture of several organisation behaviour aptitudes with differing levels inter-dependence.

More recently authors have begun to propose 'meta' models that attempt to integrate and simplify the diversity of research and complex array of competencies. One such model is proposed by a group of US scholars who develop a pyramid-shaped model with five distinct levels. Global competence is developed through a cumulative progression from the bottom of the model to the top (Mendenhall et al, 2008), see below.
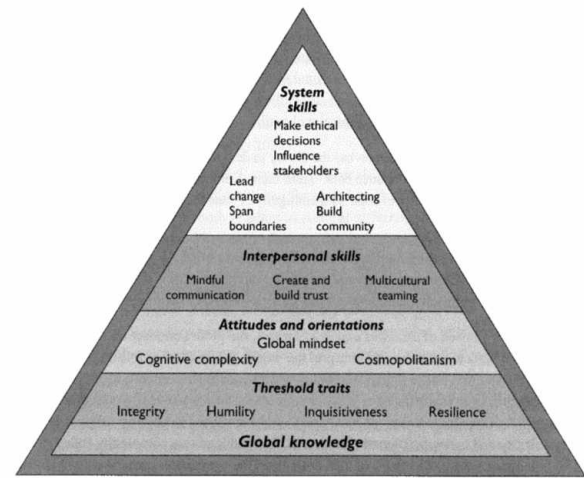

Figure 3.3 The Pyramid model of global leadership

Source: Adapted from Bird, A. and Osland, J. (2004). Global competencies: An introduction. In Henry Lane, Martha Maznevski, Mark Mendenhall, and Jeanne McNett (eds.), *The Blackwell handbook of global management*. Oxford: Blackwell: 57–80.

Global Knowledge, at the base of the pyramid, is knowledge of both a business and cultural nature. Business knowledge consists of a general understanding of how global business operates as well as more specific functional knowledge such as international regulation and finance. Cultural knowledge includes a general understanding of how cultures differ as well as an understanding of the norms, values, rituals and behaviours within specific cultures.

The second level of the pyramid consists of the relatively stable personality traits of integrity, humility, inquisitiveness and resilience. The research evidence attached to these characteristics strongly connects them to global leadership performance and hence they are viewed as necessary dimensions or 'threshold traits' for global competence.

Attitudes and orientations, represented by the notion of Global Mindset make up the third level of the pyramid. A Global Mindset makes it possible for leaders to see beyond their own culture and consists of two distinct dimensions, Cognitive Complexity and Cosmopolitanism. Cognitive Complexity refers to a person's knowledge structure, the more cognitively complex people are, the more dimensions and relationships they perceive. For example, the ability to hold competing interpretations of events and experiences and balance contradictions, ambiguities and trade-offs.

Cosmopolitanism reflects an orientation towards the external environment rather than an internal, local or parochial view. This is linked to openness, both to individuals and to alternative systems of meanings held by them, and by a willingness to learn from them.

The first three levels of competence only become valuable when they are converted into global leadership action at the fourth level of the pyramid. Proficiency in Mindful Communication, Creating and Building Trust and the Ability to Work in Multi-Cultural Teams are the interpersonal skills required for global leaders to implement the competencies discussed so far.

The fifth and final level of the pyramid comprises System Skills. These are 'meta skills' that concern global leaders' ability to adapt to cultural differences and to leverage them for competitive advantage.

They include the ability to Influence People and the Systems in which they work; Span Boundaries to act as a liaison with different functional areas, businesses, external organisations and stakeholders; Lead Change at a global level; Architect Organisation Design and redesign to create continuous global alignment; and understand the broad perspective, Make Ethical Decisions.

This model is valuable in identifying the relationship between the global leadership capabilities. However, like all such models, it does not reflect the dynamic nature of the global leadership process and defines an ideal type of global 'super-leader' unlikely to be found in the practical world. Furthermore, there is no consideration given to Motivational Factors as suggested in the Cultural Intelligence model.

Whilst valuable these models do not capture the situational and contextual requirements of any particular global leadership role and hence cannot define the appropriate level of capability for any individual position, a critical factor for practitioners.

PSi have been researching and consulting in this area for over 15 years and we have applied their knowledge and experience to develop practical tools and services. We understand the distinctive global leadership capabilities and can situationally adjust them to identify the required level of competence for specific global roles. In this way we have operationalised the research for practical application.