
The quality of British management: Asia-Pacific perceptions

Lawson Savery,

School of Management, Curtin University of Technology, Australia

Tim Mazzarol

Small Business Unit, Curtin University of Technology, Australia, and

Peter Dawkins

University of Melbourne, Australia

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

A country can have endless resources of all sorts but unless management is applied to these factors, the production of the system will be close to zero. Moreover, the better the management, the greater the output will be. Managerial effectiveness is the critical factor in the economic system (Farmer and Richman, 1964, p. 57).

1.2 Background to the study

The importance of the Asia-Pacific as a place for international business has grown as the economies of this region expand. This economic development is highlighted by the findings of the 1994 *World Competitiveness Report* (World Economic Forum, Annual). This placed Singapore, Japan and Hong Kong in second, third and fourth places respectively in a total field of 41 countries. The 11 Asia-Pacific countries had an average competitiveness ranking equivalent to the NAFTA group of Canada, Mexico and the USA, and marginally higher than the 12 core states of the European Union. Countries seeking to trade in this region must compete within a highly competitive environment where the skills and abilities of their managers will be important in achieving a competitive advantage.

The findings outlined in this paper are drawn from a study undertaken by the authors as part of the Industry Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills commissioned by the Australian Federal Government during 1993-1994 (Savery *et al.*, 1995). This study examined the perceptions of Asian business leaders towards managers from Australia, Germany, Japan, Taiwan, the USA and UK.

1.3 Project objectives

The overall objective of this study was to identify the views of regional customers of British management skills relative to those of competing trading nations. Specific objectives for this study were:

- (1) to establish which dimensions of management skill are important to regional customers;

-
- (2) to compare British management skills on these dimensions with those of major trading nations active in the region;
 - (3) to prioritise key areas for improvement if Britain is to become a valued member of the region.

2. Methodology

The study focused on the perceptions of a selected group of “customers” within the Asia-Pacific region. This group comprised five countries: Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Japan was selected due to its role within Asia as a major economic power. Singapore and Taiwan were chosen due to their status as newly industrialised economies (NIEs). Malaysia and Indonesia are rapidly industrialising but less developed economies. All five countries are significant trading nations within the Asia-Pacific region but have a diverse range of social and political systems.

The six “competitor” countries were identified as particularly active in the region. Japan and Taiwan are both major Asian “customers” and significant “competitors”. Japan, Germany, the USA and UK are also major trading powers throughout the world and represent the main geographic regions of Asia, North America and Europe. France was initially included in the group of competitors; however, preliminary research and pilot study results found that it lacked sufficient regional profile to warrant inclusion. All the other countries were considered significantly active in the region.

2.1 Sample selection and structure

A stratified random sample was used for the telephone survey. Respondents were identified from databases compiled by associate researchers located in each of the five countries. In Singapore this database comprised 5,000 listings and Malaysia 4,000. Similar databases were used in Taiwan, Indonesia and Japan. Respondents were selected on the basis of their local orientation and tended to be medium-sized firms based in the target country. An attempt was made to avoid large multinationals as it was felt they might bias the findings, because their management orientation was considered likely to be similar to their parent nation.

As said earlier, the study comprised a telephone survey of 500 respondents in the five “customer” countries. A total of 100 respondents were interviewed in each country with interviews taking place in their local languages. Respondents were interviewed “blind” with no knowledge of which country of origin was undertaking the study. Prior to the full scale survey a total of 20 preliminary interviews were undertaken, four in each of the five “customer” countries. These interviews were used to pilot test the survey instrument and from these processes it became obvious that there was a need to translate the questionnaire into Mandarin and Bahasa for Taiwan and Indonesia.

In selecting the sample for this study, senior managers were identified from within enterprises that were locally owned. Large multinational enterprises

were avoided as they might bias the results due to association with one of the six “competitor” countries. Respondents were, therefore, drawn from medium sized enterprises with headquarters in the target country.

Each respondent was asked a range of questions relating to his/her perceptions of the abilities and skills of managers from the six “competitor” countries. Key skill areas were identified from the literature as important prior to developing the survey instrument. Questions also examined respondents’ perceptions of doing business with managers from these six nations.

In addition to the telephone survey, a series of face to face interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in the “customer” countries. Four interviews were conducted in each of the five countries. Interviewees were selected from influential, internationally oriented companies and all were senior managers. Questions asked in these face to face interviews were based on the same criteria used in the larger telephone survey.

The final sample used in the major survey provided a cross-section of managers from across the region. The composition of the sample can be summarised as follows:

- 74 per cent of respondents were male.
- The average age was 36 years (ranging from 20 to 78 years).
- The majority (75 per cent) had been tertiary trained with the remainder holding either a trade (12 per cent) or a secondary education (12 per cent) qualification.
- The most common occupation of the respondents was general management (27 per cent) followed by marketing (24 per cent).
- The industry with the largest representation was manufacturing (20 per cent) followed by the retail trade (18 per cent) and communication services (10 per cent).
- A majority of the organisations surveyed were owned by locals (69 per cent) while approximately one in 12 (8 per cent) was fully owned by foreign interests.
- The respondents’ organisations employed an average of 1,172 employees ranging from six to 31,000.
- Many of the organisations (74 per cent) imported materials or supplies directly with 10 per cent importing everything.
- One quarter of the organisations (23 per cent) imported directly 75 per cent or more of the materials or supplies used in the organisation.
- 58 per cent exported nothing and only 4 per cent exported everything produced.
- 15 per cent of the sample claimed that they had contact with British managers more than once a month, a further 14 per cent contacted their British colleagues once every one to six months, 13 per cent once every

7-11 months and 17 per cent between one and three years ago. The remainder had never had contact with British managers.

- Germany was the least contacted country with 55 per cent of the respondents never making contact. The next least contacted was Taiwan (48 per cent), followed by Britain (41 per cent) and Japan (33 per cent). The USA was the most contacted country with only 25 per cent of the respondents never making contact. In fact, 26 per cent of surveyed managers said that they contacted their American counterparts more than once a month.

The respondents in the interviews and focus groups were drawn from a range of industries and backgrounds. All were senior managers and business leaders with experience in international business. Selection was motivated by a desire to make these respondents representative of the larger telephone survey group.

3. Literature

In recent years the international competitiveness of British management has been discussed, with concern being expressed over the current level of managerial skills (Syrett, 1988). Despite large scale economic reforms undertaken in the 1980s, British management has been viewed by some as suffering from poor leadership skills and training (Emmott, 1989). The establishment of the European Union has increased the need for British management to develop enhanced international business skills, particularly in the area of languages (Lawlor, 1993). According to Schloss (1991) a recent survey of British managers found that only 10 per cent could send out correspondence in a foreign language.

Traditional management theory (Fayol, 1949; Taylor, 1911; Urwick, 1952) saw the main functions of management as planning, organising and controlling. Subsequent research suggests that whilst managers do engage in these tasks, their functions are somewhat broader (Bass, 1981, p. 274).

Eight management functions have been identified: planning, investigating, coordinating, evaluating, supervising, staffing, negotiating, and representing. Of these, planning, supervising, coordinating, investigating and evaluating comprised a central core of common activities (Mahoney *et al.*, 1965). Such functions tend to be common to most organisational types and among managers of similar specialisation or function (Fleishman, 1956; Hemphill, 1960).

Mackenzie (1969) emphasised the importance of problem analysis, decision making and people skills to all managerial tasks. Further research has highlighted the complexity of managerial work at senior levels (Tornow and Pinto, 1976). Mintzberg (1975; 1980) has suggested that management is characterised less by planning and organisation and more by brevity, variety and discontinuity. The Mintzberg thesis (1975) has been supported by other research (Kurke and Aldrich, 1979; Shapira and Dunbar, 1978). Although,

Snyder and Glueck (1977) found managers to be less chaotic than Mintzberg suggests, Alexander (1979) indicates that senior managers are more likely to fit the model than lower level managers.

Management skills have been the subject of extensive research and discussion for many years. Katz (1955) identified primary skills considered essential for effective management which he grouped into three areas:

- (1) technical skills – specialist knowledge;
- (2) human skills – communication and interpersonal skills; and
- (3) conceptual skills – analysis and problem solving.

Katz considered technical skills of greater importance for lower management and human and conceptual skills for more senior management, but these are more difficult to acquire via training (Livingston, 1971).

Of all the managerial skills, leadership has been viewed as one of the most important and is one of the most heavily researched (Stogdill, 1974). Research into leadership since the Second World War suggests that no single leadership style is effective, and that managers need to adapt or be matched to the situation (Bennis, 1961; Fiedler, 1965, 1974; House, 1971; House and Mitchell, 1974; Vroom and Jago, 1978; Vroom and Yetton, 1973).

Within an international business environment additional managerial skills appear to be required (De Wilde, 1991; Maisonrouge, 1983). The experience of international managers suggests that what is also needed are: a global perspective; flexibility; cultural sensitivity; a knowledge of the political, economic, and social environments of other nations; creativity; foreign language skills; self-confidence and sensitivity in personal relations (Ali, 1992, pp. 273-4).

The international competitiveness of British managers has focused on education levels, skills development and leadership style (Syrett, 1988). A study of 5,000 British managers identified a range of common problems regardless of industry (Steele, 1987). These problems included the tendency for managers to persistently fail to meet project deadlines, and an over-specialisation in single functions. During the late 1980s studies highlighted a lack of suitable management training and overall commitment to education among British companies (Eales, 1987). In a comparison of British managers with those of six other nations, only 24 per cent of senior British managers had first degrees. This compared to 85 per cent in Japan and the USA, and 63 per cent in Germany (DEET, 1991).

During the late 1980s efforts were undertaken to improve the level of managerial training in the UK following the release of the Handy and Constable Reports in 1987. These reports were criticised for lacking a direct application to management skills as experienced in practice (Mumford, 1987).

A comparative study of 239 Japanese and British managers found that managers in the UK appeared to be receiving more management training than their Japanese colleagues (Storey, 1991). Further examination of the findings

suggested that the relationship between training and development was somewhat ambiguous in the UK compared to Japan. A possible reason for this was attributed to the higher educational attainment of Japanese managers. British managers were more likely to claim a broader range of training and development experiences than Japanese managers (Storey, 1992).

Another comparative study of British and German managers in mechanical engineering firms found that British managers placed a greater emphasis on control than their German counterparts (Reid and Schlegelmilch, 1990). This study suggested a need for greater flexibility within the British management process. However, Poole and Mansfield (1993) point to the rapid change that has taken place in British industry during the 1980s, with most British managers now holding shares in their own companies. Japanese firms such as Nissan have successfully established large scale manufacturing operations in the UK during the 1980s. This has led to the development of a core of supervisors and managers who now possess a blend of British and Japanese skills and outlook (Williams, 1988).

The 1994 *World Competitiveness Report* (World Economic Forum, Annual) assesses the quality of a nation's management as "The extent to which enterprises are managed in an innovative, profitable and responsible manner" (p. 24). Four broad categories of management performance are identified:

- (1) entrepreneurship,
- (2) management development,
- (3) corporate performance, and
- (4) business efficiency.

Table I shows the ranking of the six competitor countries over the past four years.

As can be seen from the data in this table, Japan scored well over the past four years. The USA has also ranked well on management performance followed closely by Taiwan. Germany has experienced a decline in its ranking since the re-unification of West and East Germany resulting in a fall from third to tenth place over the past four years. Britain's ranking has improved although it still ranks 11th.

	1991	1992	1993	1994
Japan	1	1	1	1
USA	4	9	5	4
Taiwan	6	3	3	5
Germany	3	2	9	10
UK	16	16	16	11
Australia	17	19	17	14

Source: *World Competitiveness Report* (1994)

Table I.
Management
performance of six
competitor countries
(ranking out of 41)

The USA demonstrated a very high level of entrepreneurship, but rated poorly on management development. Germany also ranked high on entrepreneurship, but low on business efficiency. Britain scored fifth place on entrepreneurship but 17th on management development, 16th on corporate performance and 13th on business efficiency.

The report noted a division between the mainly English speaking or “Anglo” countries, including Australia, Britain and the USA, and the others. While management in Japan and Germany are rewarded for their long-term orientation, the “Anglo” states place greater emphasis on short-term objectives. This suggests the influence of culture within the management performance of the world’s nations.

Research into cultural influences on management performance has suggested a common set of characteristics among managers from culturally similar nations (Haire *et al.*, 1963; Hofstede, 1980; Ronen and Kraut, 1977; Sirota and Greenwood, 1971). British, Australian and American managers cluster into an “Anglo-American” group, with Germany and Japan demonstrating separate cultural traits. Despite such broad cultural differences between managers of various countries, other research into personality types suggests a high degree of similarity. For example, Guthrie (1993) cites cross-national comparisons of manager personality types measured with the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. The samples were drawn from Australia, the USA, Britain, Japan and Singapore. All countries followed a similar pattern. The most dominant types were the sensing, thinking, judgement types, either extrovert or introvert (ESTJ/ISTJ). According to the indicator, such people are traditionalists. They gather information carefully prior to making a decision and do so using logical reasoning. There is a preference for stability and seeing things brought to closure prior to moving on. Such people are somewhat more practical and achievement oriented.

If the influences of culture, values and personality are considered together, the impression gained is one of individual similarity but collective difference. Despite minor variations in personality (Barry and Dowling, 1984), most managers appear highly consistent regardless of nationality (Clark and McCabe, 1972; Guthrie, 1993; Haire *et al.*, 1963). On a national level the influences of culture serve to group managers into the clusters based on common language, history, social and cultural background (Hofstede, 1980; Ronen and Kraut, 1977; Sirota and Greenwood, 1971). What these studies suggest is that managerial values, attitudes and decision making are related more to culture than economic development or level of technological environment (England and Lee, 1971).

3.1 Management and leadership skills for international business

The functions of managers, regardless of nationality or industry, tend to be similar (Fleishman, 1956; Hemphill, 1960), and focus upon: planning, investigating, coordinating, evaluating, supervising, staffing, negotiating and representing (Mahoney *et al.*, 1965). Manager behaviour is frequently chaotic rather than planned (Kurke and Aldrich, 1979; Mintzberg, 1975;

Shapira and Dunbar, 1978; Snyder and Glueck, 1977), and involves considerable information gathering (Carlson, 1951), problem solving and people skills (MacKenzie, 1969). The main skills required of a manager are:

- (1) technical skills – specialist knowledge;
- (2) human skills – communication and interpersonal; and
- (3) conceptual skills – analysis and problem solving (Katz, 1955).

Within international business environments previous literature emphasises the importance of skills in cross-cultural negotiation, cross-national market analysis, cultural sensitivity, foreign languages and comparative politics and economics (Ali, 1992, pp. 273-4; De Wilde, 1991). The human and conceptual skills receive greater attention than the technical.

Research into leadership has in recent years drawn attention to the importance of situation, and the need for managers to adapt or match their leadership style to suit their environment (Fiedler, 1965; 1974; House, 1971; House and Mitchell, 1974; Vroom and Jago, 1978; Vroom and Yetton, 1973). Within cross-national settings, past research highlights the importance of flexibility or adaptability in the face of differing cultural contexts (Blunt, 1988; Jackofsky and Slocum, 1988; Jackofsky *et al.*, 1988; Rodrigues, 1988; 1992).

3.2 Management practice in the Asia-Pacific region

The Asia-Pacific region encompasses a vast range of social, political and economic units but management practices are dominated by the USA and Japan. Taiwanese business organisations, for example, reflect the influences of these two economic giants (Yeh, 1991). The advantages and disadvantages of the US and Japanese management models have been extensively debated (Ouchi, 1981; 1984; Pascale and Athos, 1983; Yang, 1977) with Japan's collectivist, consensus approach (Umetani, 1987) being contrasted with the individualist, decentralised style of the USA (Culpan and Kucukemiroglu, 1993).

Poor economic performance in both the USA and Japan over the past decade and a half has raised doubts about the usefulness of either approach as a model of excellence (Ouchi and Jaeger, 1978; Yamashita, 1992). Asian management theorists view, with caution, the adoption of either approach, suggesting instead the need to develop a synthesis of traditional practice with international methods (Jain, 1984).

Within ASEAN the traditional socio-economic frameworks based on rigid class systems where economic power was dominated by land owning bureaucratic élites, has given way to a growing urban middle class. Business success now depends more on professional knowledge and personal networks than patronage from military or royalty (Longton and Stening, 1991). ASEAN managers require better education encompassing both technical and conceptual skills (Aziz *et al.*, 1987).

In the newly emerging Chinese market, management practice is plagued by low productivity and a lack of skills. China's managerial class remains dominated by communist political structures overlaid by traditional Chinese values (Lockett, 1988).

Management within the Asia-Pacific region is characterised by strong authority and low individualism (Hofstede, 1980). In Japan and Taiwan, organisational structures have been described as featuring formal relationships and well defined roles (Hofstede, 1980, p. 384). In Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Hong Kong relationships are hierarchical but workflow is not subject to highly formal rules (Hofstede, 1980, p. 384).

These culturally related characteristics contrast with the more egalitarian, individualistic management styles of Europe, North America, and Australia-New Zealand (Hofstede, 1980). In Germany, relationships between individuals are relatively informal, but processes of operation are well defined (Hofstede, 1980, p. 384). The "Anglo" model of UK, USA and Australia also features informality between individuals as well as their roles (Hofstede, 1980). Therefore, Figure 1 represents a model of international managerial competitiveness.

3.3 Key management qualities

The study addressed "customer" perceptions of the performance of "competitor" managers in terms of eight key managerial qualities which had been derived from the literature and found to be important for managerial performance. Each of these eight factors were operationalised, and a list of statements developed which were considered to measure these qualities. The validity of these statements was examined in the preliminary interviews and pre-testing, and the questionnaire underwent ten reviews prior to field testing. These eight qualities are outlined as follows:

- (1) Technical expertise – education levels, formal business qualifications and specialist expertise in financial, human resource management, marketing, research and development and general management.

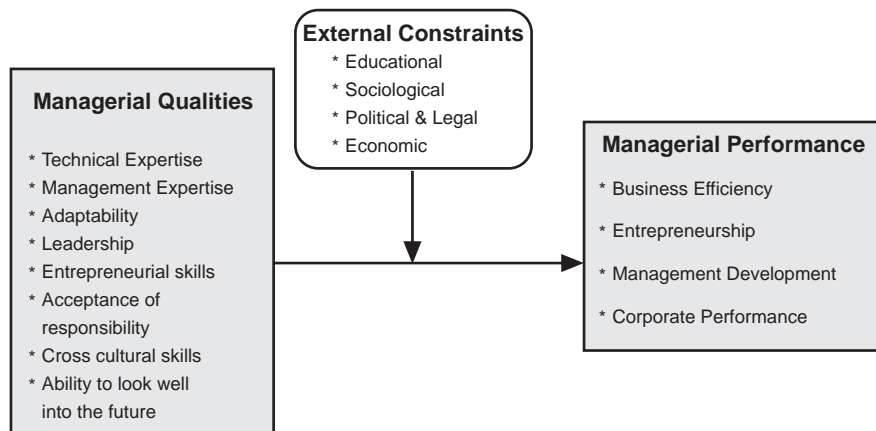


Figure 1.
Model of international
managerial
competitiveness

- (2) Management expertise – incorporating skills and abilities in customer service, people management, communication, international business and business competitiveness measures.
- (3) Leadership – managerial openness, innovation, ability to communicate the firm’s vision and convert the mission statement into well defined objectives, and utilise resources to achieve the firm’s vision.
- (4) Entrepreneurial skills – ability to explore business opportunities, take advantage of them, accept financial risks and initiate new business relationships.
- (5) Acceptance of responsibility – willingness to take responsibility for decisions and delegate responsibility effectively.
- (6) Adaptability – willingness to adapt to cultural differences, regulatory requirements, and industrial relations systems.
- (7) Cross-cultural skills – willingness to adapt to cultural difference, establish relationships with people of other cultures and be aware of cultural differences.
- (8) Ability to look well into the future – long-term vision, ability to explore business opportunities, willingness to invest in technology, capital assets, human resources and make a commitment to research and development.

Respondents were asked to rank the level of importance to them and their business dealings on these eight managerial factors. Figure 2 shows the percentage of respondents ranking these qualities as most important. It can be seen that the “ability to look well into the future” was viewed as being of most importance by the largest number of respondents.

4. Findings

4.1 Overview

The survey found British managers to rank poorly on all criteria against some of the “competitor” countries. Japanese managers ranked the highest followed closely by those from the USA. German and UK managers followed, scoring variously on different criteria. Australia ranked closely with Taiwan on many factors. These findings are consistent with the feedback from the personal interviews and focus group discussions. What follows is a summary of the findings from the survey, interviews and focus groups.

As can be seen from Table II, British managers were perceived to be worst at technical skills, however, still being ranked fourth by the respondents of the surveyed countries. Some satisfaction should be taken from the percentage of respondents who ranked British managers as the best in business ethics and courteousness in business.

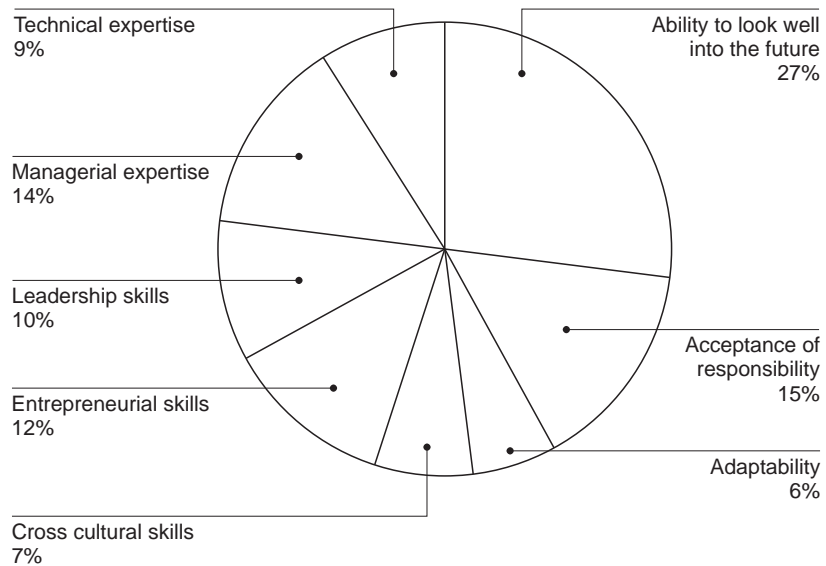


Figure 2.
Overall ranking of
managerial qualities

When each of the six “competitors” were ranked against the eight qualities British managers were generally ranked fourth out of the six comparison countries. The perception held by respondents was that British managers were weaker than many of their major competitors in adaptability (see Table III).

4.2 Perceptions of technical expertise including education level

Technical expertise was measured in terms of a number of key functional areas (see Table IV). It was also examined via questions relating to education levels, customer service and marketing skills. These later criteria are examined in Tables V, VI and VII.

As outlined in Table IV, Japanese and US managers were perceived to have the best technical expertise. The Japanese were seen as superior in the areas of financial management, marketing and production. British managers were

Type of skill	Australia % mean	Germany % mean	Japan % mean	Taiwan % mean	UK % mean	USA % mean
Conceptual skills	2	4.7	14	3.2	34	2.6
Interpersonal skills	4	4.6	6	3.6	41	2.2
Technical skills	7	3.8	7	3.9	24	3.2
Business ethics	1	5.0	24	2.7	54	1.9
Courteousness in business	4	4.3	19	3.0	39	2.7
	3	4.3	8	3.6	58	2.0

Table II.
The comparison of
different countries
ranking on a number of
different skills

Notes: The percentages sum to more than 100 because of the rounding process
The means are on a six point scale (1) best to (6) worst

Type of skill	Australia % mean	Germany % mean	Japan % mean	Taiwan % mean	UK % mean	USA % mean						
Ability to look well into the future	2	4.7	11	3.4	47	2.1	6	4.4	4	3.9	30	2.5
Acceptance of responsibility	1	4.6	13	3.1	57	2.0	3	4.7	8	3.6	18	3.0
Adaptability skills	4	4.1	7	3.9	43	2.5	16	3.6	3	4.1	27	2.8
Cross-cultural skills	11	3.8	7	4.0	28	3.1	14	3.7	6	3.7	34	2.6
Entrepreneurial skills	1	4.8	8	3.7	44	2.3	16	3.4	4	4.1	28	2.6
Leadership skills	2	4.6	11	3.4	30	2.7	2	4.8	7	3.4	48	2.1
Management skills	1	4.7	12	3.3	40	2.3	2	4.9	9	3.4	37	2.2
Technical skills	1	5.0	21	2.7	56	1.8	2	4.6	2	4.0	18	2.8

Notes: The percentages sum to more than 100 because of the rounding process
The total sample means are on an eight point scale with 1 being most important and 8 being the least important item
The means are on a six point scale (1) best to (6) worst

Table III.
Skills: percentage of respondents who ranked managers of countries the best and the means

viewed as particularly deficient in the areas of production and marketing. The strongest aspect of British managers' technical expertise was considered to be general management.

Japanese managers were viewed as possessing strong technical expertise resulting in high productivity. As one respondent explained:

Japanese companies emphasise technical expertise and quality management ... Japanese companies invest heavily in the "I" strategy which focuses on information and integration (General manager, freight forwarding company, Singapore).

4.2.1 Education levels. Related to technical expertise was the level of education achieved by managers. As Table V shows, British managers were perceived to

Type of function	Australia % mean	Germany % mean	Japan % mean	Taiwan % mean	UK % mean	USA % mean						
Technical skills	1	5.0	21	2.7	56	1.8	2	4.6	2	4.0	18	2.8
Expertise in financial management	2	4.8	8	3.5	42	2.3	6	4.4	11	3.5	33	2.5
Expertise in general management	1	4.7	11	3.4	35	2.4	3	4.8	11	3.4	40	2.3
Expertise in human resource management	3	4.5	9	3.4	39	2.6	5	4.5	7	3.5	38	2.4
Expertise in marketing	1	4.8	6	3.8	52	2.0	4	4.0	3	4.0	35	2.4
Expertise in production	1	5.1	17	3.0	63	1.6	6	4.0	2	4.3	12	3.0
Expertise in research and development	1	5.0	19	2.8	39	2.2	2	4.9	4	3.8	35	2.3

Notes: The percentages sum to more than 100 because of the rounding process
The means are on a six point scale (1) best to (6) worst

Table IV.
Technical expertise in major organisational functions: percentage of respondents who ranked the countries as the best and the means for each country

be less well educated than their major competitors except Australia and Taiwan.

During the focus groups and interviews managers from all countries were considered to have a tertiary education, but US managers were felt to be more likely to have MBA degrees. Experience in Asia was viewed as an equally important factor. As one respondent expressed it:

Australian managers have good academic qualifications but they don't know enough about Asia (Company secretary, Indonesian five-star hotel).

4.3 Managerial expertise (customer services, people management, communication skills, international business skills and business competitiveness)

4.3.1 Customer service. As part of a measurement of technical expertise the survey examined customer service variables. It can be seen from Table VI that British managers were not perceived to have as much concern about meeting delivery deadlines as their major competitors.

4.3.2 People management. Another important measure of managerial expertise was the treatment of employees by managers. Table VII outlines the results of this aspect of the survey. Japanese and American managers were regarded as best in this area. British managers were not regarded very well in some of the areas, ranking best in "caring about the welfare of individual

Table V.
General and formal
business education level:
percentage of
respondents who ranked
managers of countries
the best and the means
for those countries

Level of education	Australia % mean		Germany % mean		Japan % mean		Taiwan % mean		UK % mean		USA % mean	
General level of education	1	4.6	16	2.9	33	2.7	2	5.1	16	3.1	34	2.5
Formal business qualifications	1	4.6	16	3.1	26	2.8	4	5.0	13	3.2	40	2.2

Notes: The percentages sum to more than 100 because of the rounding process
The means are on a six point scale (1) best to (6) worst

Table VI.
Customers: percentage
of respondents who
ranked the different
countries the best and
the means for each
country

Customer variables	Australia % mean		Germany % mean		Japan % mean		Taiwan % mean		UK % mean		USA % mean	
Concern about customer service needs	2	4.6	8	3.5	59	1.9	4	4.4	4	3.8	24	2.7
Concern about quality of service	2	4.7	12	3.1	55	1.9	4	4.7	6	3.7	23	2.7
Prompt response to changes in customer demands	1	4.8	8	3.7	60	1.8	8	3.9	3	4.1	20	2.7
Meeting delivery deadlines	2	4.8	13	3.1	65	1.7	4	4.2	4	4.0	15	3.1
Concern about product quality	1	4.8	23	2.7	53	2.0	3	4.8	6	3.7	17	2.9

Notes: The percentages sum to more than 100 because of the rounding process
The means are on a six point scale (1) best to (6) worst

Employee variables	Australia % mean		Germany % mean		Japan % mean		Taiwan % mean		UK % mean		USA % mean	
Interpersonal skills	7	3.8	7	3.9	24	3.2	7	4.3	7	3.5	48	2.2
Caring about the welfare of individual employees	4	4.1	10	3.4	39	2.7	3	4.7	8	3.4	36	2.6
Obtaining commitment of employees	2	4.7	7	3.4	62	1.8	4	4.0	3	4.0	22	3.0
Effective delegation of responsibility	2	4.5	9	3.3	49	2.4	4	4.6	5	3.6	34	2.5
Effective communication with members in organisation	4	4.3	9	3.6	36	2.6	4	4.4	7	3.6	41	2.3
Ability to manage people	2	4.6	11	3.4	38	2.5	3	4.6	8	3.6	42	2.2
Selection of appropriate personnel for positions within the firm	2	4.5	11	3.2	35	2.8	3	4.9	9	3.4	42	2.2

Notes: The percentages sum to more than 100 because of the rounding process
The means are on a six point scale (1) best to (6) worst

Table VII.
People management:
percentage of respondents
who ranked the different
countries the best and the
means for each country

employees” and “selection of appropriate personnel for positions within the firm” and worst in “obtaining commitment of employee” where they were ranked joint fourth of the six countries.

These findings are consistent with the results of the focus groups and interviews where Japanese managers were considered to possess strong management expertise. The Japanese management style with its emphasis on group responsibility, collective decision making and team work was mentioned as contributing to enhanced performance:

Japanese hands-on management style has created a corporate culture in which the senior executive officers are the servants of those who serve the company’s clients. As part of this style, the Japanese go to great lengths to cultivate a close relationship with their clients including giving them all kinds of entertainment and technical support. Japanese suppliers will not hesitate to pay for an overseas customer’s expenses for a factory visit in order to close a deal (Singaporean entrepreneur, defence equipment).

The view of British managers was not as positive as that of Japanese. One respondent summed up the British management style in the following terms:

The characteristics of the UK management style are: no shared values, don’t value people enough, conflicts between members resulting in a low level of trust, poor cooperation and lack of teamwork.

Recognition was given to Australia’s recent industry reforms and restructuring. As the following comment suggests:

Most Australian managers are transforming themselves and their businesses from slow-moving, inefficient firms into sleek, more agile companies better able to compete globally. A major personal adjustment for an Australian manager is to move from an autocratic management style to team decision-working and participative management. Under this new management style, new relationships will be established and a greater effort will be made to

explain the whys, the wherefores and the value of things (Singaporean entrepreneur, defence equipment).

4.3.3 Communication skills. A sub element of managerial expertise measured within the survey was communication skills. Table VIII identifies two types of communication, one which is direct and the other which attempts to obtain and use information. In both cases British managers were perceived to be below that of their major competitors, ranking fourth out of six in direct communication and in obtaining and using up-to-date information.

In the focus groups and interviews, Japanese managers were regarded as always holding meetings and discussing company matters with their staff, although sensitive or highly political information might not always be conveyed. The open office layout facilitates these arrangements. However, it was noted that the rather strict discipline in large Japanese companies tended to restrict openness in communication:

Large Japanese companies have a strict hierarchy, whereas Australian relationships are informal and open, and this makes for friendly and open exchange of information. Because of the group and hierarchical nature of Japanese society, Japanese are more willing to accept orders unquestioningly. There is very strong discipline in Japanese companies, which tends to restrict open communication (General manager, sales division, major Japanese engineering and construction company).

American managers were perceived by the Japanese interviewees as using a highly disciplined and formalised approach to the communication process, and providing information according to job demarcation. That is, vertical communication is adequate, but horizontal communication is not. Australians and European managers were seen as being quite close to the American model in this context. Taiwanese managers and their executive assistants were criticised for not passing on management information to lower staff.

Taiwanese management is also viewed as being extremely hierarchical and important information is shared only at the manager and assistant manager

Communication variables	Australia % mean	Germany % mean	Japan % mean	Taiwan % mean	UK % mean	USA % mean						
Communicating the organisation's vision	2	4.6	10	3.3	37	2.4	4	4.8	6	3.6	43	2.2
Effective communication with members in the organisation	4	4.3	9	3.6	36	2.6	4	4.4	7	3.6	41	2.3
Effort to obtain timely information for business decisions	2	4.8	9	3.4	46	2.1	5	4.5	4	3.7	35	2.4
Using up-to-date information for business decisions	1	4.8	9	3.3	41	2.1	5	4.7	4	3.8	43	2.2

Notes: The percentages sum to more than 100 because of the rounding process

The means are on a six point scale (1) best to (6) worst

Table VIII. Communication skills: percentage of respondents who ranked the different countries the best and the means for each country

level. Americans too, are seen as being rigidly hierarchical, and management information is distributed in a vertical process, but lateral communication is not particularly effective. Australians are regarded as not being particularly comfortable in group discussion, and therefore information tends to be shared selectively amongst management colleagues, possibly behind closed doors. Europeans share their cultural origins with America and Australia, and are, therefore, perceived as having a similar reluctance to share information.

The US manager was viewed by the Singaporean and Indonesian focus groups as strongly committed to training and quality improvement. The dominance of US management education practice within the international business community was also noted. The relevance of this type of training was questioned in relation to Europe. Here it was felt that a European management style was beginning to emerge.

German managers were generally grouped with other Europeans. However, it was noted that they were now facing greater challenges with the unification of Germany, and the trend towards a European Union. As one respondent explained:

Most German managers are now learning the hard way that senior executives must keep themselves apprised of what is going on in industry and the market. Since the unification of Germany, there are both threats and opportunities for existing industries and hence German managers must now be more sensitive to issues of training and restructuring ... The key is learn how to capitalise on the available new opportunities (Singaporean, regional marketing manager, packing company).

4.3.4 Business competitiveness. An important element of technical expertise is skill in marketing. This was supported by the focus groups and interviews. Japanese respondents suggested that their approach to marketing is pragmatic and particular, requiring specialist industry knowledge and experience. In Taiwan a more individualist approach was taken to marketing with differences occurring between managers. By contrast, US, Australian and European managers were seen to rely heavily on a generalist, “scientific” approach, using university and specialist seminar style training. The consensus among the Japanese group was that the western system is too theoretical, and inferior to their pragmatic, problem-solving approach.

As Table IX shows, the survey ranked Japanese managers’ marketing skills as best, followed by US managers. British managers were rated low and the perception was that British managers had the second lowest awareness of their own country’s marketing trends and also those of the global market. British managers were also seen to be poor at taking advantage of new business.

4.4 Leadership expertise

Leadership was examined in terms of such qualities as openness of management style, innovativeness, ability to communicate the organisation’s vision and convert its mission into definable objectives. As Table X shows, British managers were not perceived to be particularly good leaders compared to their

Table IX.
Business competitive
skills: percentage of
respondents who
ranked the different
countries the best
and the means
for each country

Business competitive skills	Australia % mean	Germany % mean	Japan % mean	Taiwan % mean	UK % mean	USA % mean						
Prompt response to changes in competitors' activities	1	5.0	8	3.7	60	1.7	9	3.8	2	4.1	21	2.7
Prompt response to changes in customer demands	1	4.8	8	3.7	60	1.8	8	3.9	3	4.1	20	2.7
Awareness of changes in own country's market trends	1	4.8	5	3.7	58	1.8	7	3.9	1	4.2	28	2.5
Awareness of changes in global market trends	1	4.9	7	3.6	53	1.9	6	4.0	3	4.0	31	2.5
Taking advantage of new business	1	4.9	6	3.8	51	2.0	18	3.3	2	4.2	25	2.7
Learning from previous experience of competitors	2	4.7	8	3.6	63	1.7	12	3.6	2	4.2	13	3.0
Effort to obtain timely information for business decisions	2	4.8	9	3.4	46	2.1	5	4.5	4	3.7	35	2.4
Using up-to-date information for business decisions	1	4.8	9	3.3	41	2.1	5	4.7	4	3.8	43	2.2

Notes: The percentages sum to more than 100 because of the rounding process
The means are on a six point scale (1) best to (6) worst

major competitors and particularly in the area of "determination to succeed". Americans were viewed as the best, followed by Japanese.

Within the interview and focus group discussions similar findings were produced. The most common system of promotion (and hence motivation) in Japan, has been the seniority system, although this is changing. Traditionally, Japanese management has used appeals to the groupist nature of Japanese society, and the "company spirit" as a means of motivating staff to better

Table X.
Leadership expertise:
percentage of
respondents who
ranked the different
countries the best
and the means
for each country

Leadership expertise	Australia % mean	Germany % mean	Japan % mean	Taiwan % mean	UK % mean	USA % mean						
Leadership skills	2	4.6	11	3.4	30	2.7	2	4.8	7	3.4	48	2.1
Innovativeness in management	1	4.6	7	3.5	39	2.5	5	4.5	4	3.8	45	2.2
Communicating the organisation's vision	2	4.6	10	3.3	37	2.4	4	4.8	6	3.6	43	2.2
Utilisation of the organisation's resources to achieve the firm's vision	3	4.8	12	3.2	48	2.1	5	4.4	4	3.8	29	2.6
Determination to succeed	2	4.9	8	3.4	62	1.8	10	3.6	2	4.3	19	2.9
Ability to convert the firm's mission statement into well defined objectives	1	4.7	13	3.2	45	2.2	2	4.7	4	3.7	34	2.5
Open style of management	4	3.8	7	4.5	21	3.5	3	4.6	4	3.5	61	1.9

Notes: The percentages sum to more than 100 because of the rounding process
The means are on a six point scale (1) best to (6) worst

performance. Thus, Japanese managers were not seen as particularly good at motivating staff members on an individual basis; hence this is normally handled at the company level.

Perceptions of Taiwanese managers varied slightly in the interview and focus groups. Japanese respondents saw the Taiwanese system as varying dramatically from company to company. Although Taiwanese managers were felt to generally have a great deal of autocratic power, this could be used in a negative way as a means of demanding higher performance from staff. The Taiwanese management style was viewed in the Singaporean focus group as participatory, and requiring team work and the ability to accept responsibility:

Most Taiwanese firms select employees for their aptitude for working in a teamwork-focused environment. They use a participatory management style, decision making at the team-member level and cross-trained production teams ... With fewer layers of management, the Taiwanese style of communication is quicker and easier and things get changed without going through committees. Accordingly, a plant manager's role is more demanding than it would be in a normal plant in other countries (Singaporean regional marketing manager, industrial products).

Within the American approach it was perceived as common to have performance based evaluation systems, sometimes involving the use of credit points, which are combined with financial or other rewards. Regular counselling and performance evaluation sessions are held with staff, in order to enhance motivation and performance. This was seen as a positive and relatively objective system, better than the Japanese or Taiwanese models. Australian and European organisations were viewed as similar to American, in this context, although the systems were not believed to be implemented as rapidly or pervasively. It was felt that Australian managers could learn from the Americans:

The ability of US managers to build systems of participation leading to strong employee commitment would appear to be something Australian managers could learn from (Singaporean entrepreneur, defence industry).

4.5 Entrepreneurial expertise

Entrepreneurial skill was measured by the ability to explore new business opportunities, take financial risks, take initiatives in developing new relationships and willingness to invest in new equipment and technology. As Table XI shows, British managers were viewed as less entrepreneurial than managers from the competitor countries except for Australian managers.

Interestingly the interviews and focus groups did not entirely support these findings. Japanese respondents were rather critical of their own managers' level of entrepreneurial skill. It was generally felt that on average, very few Japanese managers are active in this area. As one respondent expressed it:

In Japanese society, if one graduates from a first class university, even those without much ability in those areas can rise to the top, simply because of the system. This is different to the West, where those with outstanding skills in those areas tend to be promoted (Marketing manager, major Japanese automotive manufacturer).

Entrepreneurial expertise	Australia % mean	Germany % mean	Japan % mean	Taiwan % mean	UK % mean	USA % mean						
Entrepreneurial skills	1	4.8	8	3.7	44	2.3	16	3.4	4	4.1	28	2.6
Taking advantage of new business	1	4.9	6	3.8	51	2.0	18	3.3	2	4.3	25	2.7
Willingness to take financial risks	2	4.6	6	3.8	36	2.7	16	3.6	4	3.9	37	2.5
Willingness to take initiatives in making friends with business people from another country	6	4.2	5	4.0	29	2.9	13	3.8	4	3.8	43	2.3
Creativity in generating new business ventures	1	4.9	6	3.7	50	2.0	12	3.6	3	4.2	29	2.5
Ability to explore business opportunities	1	4.8	4	3.8	49	2.1	15	3.4	2	4.2	29	2.5

Notes: The percentages sum to more than 100 because of the rounding process
The means are on a six point scale (1) best to (6) worst

Table XI.
Entrepreneurial expertise: percentage of respondents who ranked the different countries the best and the means for each country

Taiwanese managers – who were ranked third in the large survey – were seen as particularly strong in this area by the Singaporean focus group, even to the extent of developing new business in a corporation, and then taking key staff with them to start a new company:

Taiwan – being one the fastest growing “dragons” in Asia – is a truly entrepreneurial society ... Effective Taiwanese managers perform the four crucial roles: producers, administrators, entrepreneurs and integrators ... the Taiwanese society has embraced a culture where everybody wants to be boss instead of working for others. Hence, it is possible to generate such managers with the four roles (Singaporean regional marketing manager, packaging company).

Among the Western countries, American (senior executive level) managers were seen as the most aggressive, with Australia and European managers rated as about the same, both behind America, but ahead of Japan. American middle level management, however, was not seen as particularly entrepreneurial.

However, one respondent made the following comment with regard to Australia, Japan and America:

Australians are very entrepreneurial. They were active very early in the export of agricultural products, mining, and the export of minerals. By that I mean gold, and other minerals. All human beings are entrepreneurial, but Japanese are more sophisticated in their approach. Japan has a long history of taking technology from outside. We take ideas from outside, and make them better. The facsimile is an Australian invention, originally sold to America. Japan now controls the world facsimile market. America is very concerned about the protection of intellectual property (General manager, sales division, major Japanese engineering and construction company).

American managers were noted for entrepreneurial ability. The respondents viewed the USA in a generally positive light with such comments as:

American managers encourage employees to become “superstars” and they are rewarded on their achievements. There is a flood of literature on corporate culture recently and US managers seem to have a strong affinity in the building of such cultures (Operations manager, MNC, Singapore).

4.6 Acceptance of responsibility

The ability of a manager to delegate responsibility or take responsibility for decisions was viewed as an important managerial quality. As Table XII shows, British managers were perceived to be ranked fourth below Japan, USA and Germany.

Generally speaking, Japanese managers interviewed on an in-depth basis, were unwilling to accept general responsibility for decisions taken, preferring instead to achieve consensus. They perceived that in Taiwan, a very strict individual responsibility system was enforced, whereas in America, the system was often formalised; for example when serious mistakes are made a warning or caution could be put in writing to the manager concerned:

We have a lifetime employment system, and company loyalty is strong. In the West, managers are loyal to their professional responsibility within their specialisation, and not necessarily the company. Western managers tend to work very much to targets (General manager, sales division, major Japanese construction company).

Among the Japanese, group achievements were recognised in terms of financial or other incentives. The American system was seen to encourage the acceptance of individual responsibility and Australians were seen as being in between the Japanese and American situations in this respect. (One respondent made the comment that Australians seem a bit like the Japanese in this area, in that this area of corporate life is somewhat unclear.) In general Europeans are regarded as being closer to America than Australia, in this area.

4.7 Adaptability expertise

Adaptability was measured in terms of a manager’s ability to adapt to cultural, regulatory and industrial relations systems. As Table XIII shows British and Australian managers were perceived to be less adaptable than managers from the other countries.

Acceptance of responsibility	Australia % mean	Germany % mean	Japan % mean	Taiwan % mean	UK % mean	USA % mean						
Acceptance of responsibility	1	4.6	13	3.1	57	2.0	3	4.7	8	3.6	18	3.0
Willingness to take responsibility for decisions	2	4.7	13	3.1	41	2.4	4	4.7	8	3.5	31	2.5
Effective delegation of responsibility	2	4.5	9	3.3	49	2.4	4	4.6	5	3.6	34	2.5

Notes: The percentages sum to more than 100 because of the rounding process
The means are on a six point scale (1) best to (6) worst

Table XII.
Acceptance of responsibility: percentage of respondents who ranked the different countries the best and the means for each country

Japanese respondents interviewed on an in-depth basis, viewed their own managers as the most flexible in negotiations but did not see themselves as particularly tough or stubborn, being more concerned with attention to detail, and in reaching a consensus which is acceptable to all parties:

Japanese have the capacity to change radically and comprehensively. Two well-known examples of this are when Japan began to do business with the Western countries during the Meiji Period (after 250 years of strict isolation), and following World War II, when changes imposed by the American occupation forces were readily and wholeheartedly adopted (General manager, corporate planning, major Japanese construction and engineering company).

4.8 Cross-cultural expertise

As Table XIV shows a range of variables was used to measure cross-cultural skills. British managers were ranked joint third when consideration was given to their cross-cultural skills. The British were perceived to be unwilling to adapt to cultural differences and appeared to be unwilling to take initiatives in making friends with business people from another country. British managers were viewed as having some problems in establishing strategic alliances.

Japanese managers when interviewed saw themselves as being the most troubled group in this area, often having low levels of cross-cultural skills. According to one respondent:

The traditional agricultural basis of Japanese cultural organisation has led to a cooperative society, which the West, in particular America, cannot understand. Japan is under heavy stress and pressure from the outside (General manager, sales division, major Japanese engineering company).

This perceived pressure has tended to make Japanese feel somewhat isolated, which is sometimes reflected negatively in Japanese attitudes to the outside world. For example, it was felt that Japanese managers, because they are often world leaders in production technology, sometimes tend to “look down” on other peoples, which can lead to significant problems, particularly in the management of joint ventures. Despite this, the Japanese have successfully absorbed influences from other cultures throughout a long history, but have managed to maintain their cultural integrity.

Adaptability expertise	Australia		Germany		Japan		Taiwan		UK		USA	
	%	mean	%	mean	%	mean	%	mean	%	mean	%	mean
Adaptability skills	4	4.1	7	3.9	43	2.5	16	3.6	3	4.1	27	2.8
Willingness to adapt to cultural differences	8	3.8	6	4.1	34	2.9	13	3.6	6	3.8	34	2.6
Willingness to adapt to regulatory requirements	2	4.4	12	3.4	42	2.5	5	4.4	9	3.5	30	2.7
Willingness to adapt to industrial relations systems	3	4.5	10	3.5	46	2.4	5	4.2	7	3.7	30	2.6

Notes: The percentages sum to more than 100 because of the rounding process
The means are on a six point scale (1) best to (6) worst

Table XIII.
Adaptability expertise: percentage of respondents who ranked the different countries the best and the means for each country

Cross cultural variables	Australia % mean	Germany % mean	Japan % mean	Taiwan % mean	UK % mean	USA % mean						
Cross cultural skills	11	3.8	7	4.0	28	3.1	14	3.7	6	3.7	34	2.6
Willingness to adapt to cultural differences	8	3.8	6	4.1	34	2.9	13	3.6	6	3.8	34	2.6
Prejudice in dealing with people of different cultural backgrounds	15	3.9	12	3.2	37	2.9	7	4.1	13	3.2	17	3.6
Awareness of cultural differences between one country and another	5	4.3	7	3.8	38	2.6	9	3.9	9	3.7	34	2.6
Willingness to take initiatives in making friends with business people from another country	6	4.2	5	4.0	29	2.9	13	3.8	4	3.8	43	2.3
Willingness to accept cultural differences	9	3.8	4	4.0	28	3.1	13	3.8	8	3.7	39	2.5
Ability to establish international business relations	1	4.8	7	3.5	41	2.3	3	4.5	4	3.6	45	2.1
Ability to develop international strategic alliances between own organisation and organisations in other countries	4	4.7	9	3.6	34	2.5	5	4.3	4	3.7	45	2.2

Notes: The percentages sum to more than 100 because of the rounding process
The means are on a six point scale (1) best to (6) worst

Table XIV.
Cross-cultural expertise: percentage of respondents who ranked the different countries the best and the means for each country

The Taiwanese, being representatives of mainstream Chinese culture, were viewed as being excessively mono-cultural, and mixing only with non-Chinese for the purpose of business, almost always seeking the company of fellow Chinese (particularly family), when socialising. This is evidenced in the phenomenon of “Chinatowns” all over the world, including Japan.

Americans were also seen as rather mono-cultural and mono-linguistic, and together with the Europeans, because of their previously successful track record in industrial and commercial management and organisation, somewhat arrogant:

Japanese feel that Caucasians look down on them. The Americans and Europeans in particular, are often viewed as behaving badly in this area. Australians are seen as being culturally similar to the British, and therefore not much different from the Europeans. (Manager, overseas operations, Japanese automotive manufacturer).

The Singaporean and Indonesian focus group respondents viewed Australians as “friendly but simple”, lacking in understanding of Asians or Asian business practice. Japanese respondents suggested that although Australians have the potential to be categorised with Americans and Europeans, this is reduced to some extent by the fact that Japan and Australia have a mutually beneficial trade relationship, and there is no basis for trade conflict, or

competition. Australians are therefore seen as relatively open minded, and this positive situation is reinforced by the relatively high proportion of Australians proficient in Japanese language.

4.9 Ability to look well into the future

The quality of innovation was measured as the “ability to look well into the future”. The willingness of managers to take risks and invest in appropriate technology, capital assets or human capital is a measure of innovation which is contingent on the ability to look ahead and plan. As Table XV shows, the British did not rank highly and are ranked fourth again behind Japan, USA and Germany. British managers were perceived to be poor at the ability to explore business opportunities, investment in new technology and capital assets.

The view from the focus groups and in-depth interviews was consistent with the findings from the telephone survey. The Japanese approach was viewed as very long-term. The illustrative example of Japan’s capital investments in Malaysian production facilities was given. Having committed themselves to this course of action, the Japanese will persevere, even if in the current economic climate this means taking considerable losses, and missing current business opportunities. This is in contrast to the Taiwanese approach, which is highly dynamic and medium-term at best. Taiwanese factories established in Malaysia five or six years ago are being scrapped in favour of more lucrative industrial development in China and Vietnam.

Type of willingness	Australia % mean	Germany % mean	Japan % mean	Taiwan % mean	UK % mean	USA % mean						
Ability to look well into the future	2	4.7	11	3.4	47	2.1	6	4.4	4	3.9	30	2.5
Innovativeness in management	1	4.6	7	3.5	39	2.5	5	4.5	4	3.8	45	2.2
Willingness to invest in appropriate technology	2	4.9	9	3.2	58	1.8	5	4.4	2	4.1	27	2.4
Willingness to invest in new capital assets	1	4.8	9	3.5	49	2.1	9	4.0	4	4.0	29	2.5
Willingness to invest in human capital	2	4.5	10	3.2	48	2.2	3	4.6	4	3.8	34	2.6
Ability to convert the firm’s mission statement into well-defined objectives	1	4.7	13	3.2	45	2.2	2	4.7	4	3.7	34	2.5
Ability to explore business opportunities	1	4.8	4	3.8	49	2.1	15	3.4	2	4.2	29	2.5
Willingness to spend time building relationships when negotiating business deals	4	4.3	8	3.8	48	2.2	12	3.7	6	3.9	24	3.0
Commitment to research and development	2	4.9	13	3.0	43	2.1	2	4.9	4	3.8	37	2.3

Notes: The percentages sum to more than 100 because of the rounding process
The means are on a six point scale (1) best to (6) worst

Table XV. Perceived innovativeness of managers from the selected countries: percentage of respondents who ranked the different countries the best and the means for each country

One respondent made the following negative comment with regard to the American management approach to investment in capital assets and technology:

Managers should seek innovation. Heinz concentrates on the food business, and tends to acquire other companies, rather than really investing in innovative technologies and production methods. The senior management is always seeking new opportunities to buy other companies, in order to increase the dividends for shareholders. This is a particularly American approach to business, and not good strategy for the long term (Sales manager, Japanese subsidiary of MNC).

Overall, Europeans are rated as being more or less satisfied with the status quo, rather than taking a really long-term position on investment in capital assets and production technology.

It is interesting to note that having contact with British managers seemed only to have a positive significant influence on the view of the respondents in two areas, “adaptability skills” and “entrepreneurial skills” and only when the contact was more often than once a month. There was no significant difference with the view of the level of skills held by Australian managers when a comparison was made between those organisations which were small (100 or fewer employees) and those which could be considered large (1,000 or more).

5. Summary and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The major conclusion of this study is that British managers are generally perceived, amongst managers in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan and Japan, to be inferior to Japanese and US managers and, in most areas, inferior to German managers. British managers were ranked fourth above Australian and Taiwanese managers, who were ranked as the weakest amongst the countries being investigated.

It should be stressed that these generalisations are subject to some exceptions. For example, 11 per cent of respondents ranked British managers highest of all countries in expertise in financial management and general management, and in each area of management skills there were some respondents, albeit mostly a very small minority, who ranked British managers highest.

5.2 Recommendations

In the light of the above conclusions, we would suggest the following recommendations:

- (1) A concerted effort needs to be made to encourage managers to improve their level of education and training. Improving the education levels of British managers would not only enhance their image in the eyes of their customers, but should also assist in improving their performance in a range of technical skills (marketing, production management, quality control, customer service).

- (2) In seeking to enhance the level of education among British managers it will be necessary to address existing policy and practice in educational institutions:
- Management education has traditionally focused on business studies at both graduate and undergraduate levels. The MBA program, for example, has been viewed as a benchmark for training graduates from a range of disciplines in general management. Such courses are time consuming and expensive. Although the benefits of full-time one to two year programs are probably greater than shorter courses (Guetzkow *et al.*, 1962), the preference in industry is for short programs linked with on the job training (Midgley/NBEET, 1990, p. 29).
 - What may be required is the development of “modular” programs, involving intensive courses taken over periods of approximately two weeks. These could be focused on addressing specific areas of managerial skill. They may also prove more attractive to industry and working managers. Managers would be able to undertake a series of modules at their own pace which could be developed towards the attainment of diploma or degree qualifications.
 - Technical skills are generally readily learned and undergraduate programs should continue to focus upon teaching such skills. Many of the human and conceptual skills required of senior management levels are more difficult to teach (Livingston, 1971). Leadership is one such skill that is considered by some (Fiedler, 1974) to be difficult to learn from formal education programs. However, experienced managers have been found to benefit from such training (Andrews, 1966) and some benefit from leadership training is possible (Nelson, 1967; Schein, 1967). Closer links between education providers and industry when developing management education programs may ensure such courses are relevant to the needs of practicing managers.
 - It may be desirable to develop a two stage approach to the education and training of managers. Initial management education would focus more upon technical skills, while more senior management would address the human and conceptual levels.
 - Educating managers for international business needs to consider more than just the traditional “management” or “business/commerce” studies. Attention should also be given to enhancing managers’ general knowledge of overseas markets. Skills in cross-cultural negotiation, comparative politics and sociology are also likely to be valuable (De Wilde, 1991). Recent research highlights the importance of communication skills and team management training for international managers (Domsch and Lichtenberger, 1991). This

would suggest the need for a broadening of certain aspects of current management education. Adopting a two stage approach, as suggested above, would enable such additional training to occur once a manager had gained experience following completion of their initial technical education.

- (3) While technical skills are not unimportant, there appears to be a case for emphasising general management expertise, ability to look into the future, acceptance of responsibility, entrepreneurship and leadership. This may imply a different style of education than, for example, the traditional MBA which, while covering a wide range of areas of management, tends to cover the traditional areas and exclude such aspects as entrepreneurship and leadership.
- (4) In order to improve both the image and ability of British managers consideration should be given to the establishment of a management accreditation system equivalent to that used by certain professions (e.g. CPA Accountants). Although the term “manager” has been used widely in reference to many levels of business, the focus of attention here should be upon the more senior “general management” positions. Promotion to such positions should be contingent upon the attainment of an industry accreditation which recognises both experience and education achievement. Such a system would, if properly supported by industry, serve as a means of benchmarking management performance.
- (5) Industry should be encouraged to undertake an audit of managerial skills, with a focus on such areas as education levels and competency at specific tasks. If such an audit were conducted in concert with education institutions it would enable the identification of specific areas of need and assist the formulation of appropriate education programs.

References

- Alexander, L.D. (1979), “The effect of level in the hierarchy and functional area on the extent to which Mintzberg’s managerial roles are required by managerial jobs”, Dissertation Abstracts, 40:2156A, in Bass, B.M. (Ed.) (1981), *Stogdill’s Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of Theory and Research*, The Free Press, New York, NY, p. 285.
- Ali, A.J. (1992), *How to Manage for International Competitiveness*, International Business Press, New York, NY.
- Andrews, K.R. (1966), *The Effectiveness of University Management Development Programs*, Harvard Business Press, Boston, MA.
- Aziz, A.H., Aliah, H.M.S., Jaafar, M., and Zakaria, I. (1987), “Management education in Malaysia”, in Tan, J.H. and You, P.S. (Eds), *Developing Managers in Asia*, Addison-Wesley, Singapore.
- Barry, B. and Dowling, P. (1984), *Towards an Australian Management Style: A study of the Personality Characteristics and Management Style of Australian Managers*, The Australian Institute of Management, Research Report No.1, Victoria.
- Bass, B.M. (1981), *Stogdill’s Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of Theory and Research*, The Free Press, New York, NY.

- Bennis, W.G. (1961), "Revisionist theory of leadership", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 39, pp. 26-36 and 146-50.
- Blunt, P. (1988), "Cultural consequences of organisation change in a Southeast Asian state: Brunei", *The Academy of Management Executive*, Vol. 2 No. 3, pp. 235-40.
- Carlson, S. (1951), *Executive Behaviour*, Stromberg, Stockholm.
- Clark, A.W. and McCabe, S. (1972), "The motivation and satisfaction of Australian managers", *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 25, pp. 625-38.
- Culpan, R. and Kucukemiroglu, O. (1993), "A comparison of US and Japanese management styles and unit effectiveness", *Management International Review*, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 27-42.
- De Wilde, J. (1991), "How to train managers for going global", *Business Quarterly*, Winter, Vol. 55 No. 3, pp. 41-5.
- Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET) (1991), *The Australian Mission on Management Skills: Volume 1: Report*, June, AGPS, Canberra.
- Domsch, M. and Lichtenberger, B. (1991), "Managing the global manager: pre-departure training and development for German expatriates in China and Brazil", *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 10 No. 7, pp. 41-52.
- Eales, R. (1987), "Getting British managers on the right track", *Multinational Business*, Autumn, No. 3, pp. 40-2.
- Emmott, B. (1989), "For Japan, not world dominance, but leadership of a Yen bloc", *Financier*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 30-6.
- England, G.W. and Lee, R. (1971), "Organisational goals and expected behaviour among American, Japanese and Korean managers – a comparative study", *Academy of Management Journal*, December, Vol. 14, pp. 425-38.
- Farmer, R.N. and Richman, B.M. (1964), "A model for research in comparative management", *California Management Review*, Winter, Vol. 7, pp. 55-68.
- Fayol, H. (1949), *General and Industrial Management*, Pitman & Sons, London.
- Fiedler, F.E. (1965), "The contingency model: a theory of leadership effectiveness", in Proshansky, H. and Seidenberg, B. (Eds), *Basic Studies in Social Psychology*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, NY, pp. 538-51.
- Fiedler, F.E. (1974), "The contingency model – new directions for leadership utilisation", *Journal of Contemporary Business*, Autumn, Vol. 3, pp. 65-79.
- Fleishman, E.A. (1956), "Differences between military and industrial organisations", in Stogdill, R.M. and Shartle, C.L. (Eds), *Patterns of Administrative Performance*, Ohio State University, Bureau of Business Research, Columbus, OH.
- Guetzkow, H., Forehand, G.A. and James, B.J. (1962), "An evaluation of educational influence on administrative judgment", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 6, pp. 483-500.
- Guthrie, J. (1993), "The Myers-Briggs type indicator at the Australian management college Mt Eliza", *Practicing Manager*, April, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 1-18.
- Haire, M., Ghiselli, E.E. and Porter, L.W. (1963), "Cultural patterns in the role of the manager", *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 2, pp. 95-117.
- Hemphill, J.K. (1960), *Dimensions of Executive Positions*, Ohio State University, Bureau of Business Research, Columbus, OH.
- Hofstede, G. (1980), *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*, Sage Publications, London.
- House, R.J. (1971), "A path goal theory of leader effectiveness", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 321-39.
- House, R.J. and Mitchell, T. (1974), "Path-goal theory of leadership", *Journal of Contemporary Business*, Autumn, Vol. 3, pp. 81-97.

- Jackofsky, E.F. and Slocum Jnr, J.W. (1988), "CEO roles across cultures", in Hambrick, D.C. (Ed.), *The Executive Effect: Concepts and Methods for Studying Top Managers*, JAI Press, Greenwich, CT.
- Jackofsky, E.F., Slocum, J.W. Jr and McQuade, S.A. (1988), "Cultural values and the CEO: alluring companies?", *The Academy of Management Executive*, February, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 39-49.
- Jain, S.K. (1984), "Management education to the end of this century: the Asian scene", *Malaysian Management Review*, August, Vol. 19 No. 2.
- Katz, R.L. (1955), "Skills of an effective administrator", *Harvard Business Review*, January-February, pp. 33-42.
- Kurke, L.B. and Aldrich, H.E. (1979), "Mintzberg was right! A replication and extension of 'the nature of managerial work'", *Proceedings of the Academy of Management*.
- Lawlor, M. (1993), "Training in European languages: striking a personal note", *Training Tomorrow*, December, pp. 27-8.
- Livingston, J.S. (1971), "Myth of the well-educated manager", *Harvard Business Review*, January-February, Vol. 49, pp. 79-89.
- Lockett, M. (1988), "Culture and the problems of Chinese management", *Organisation Studies*, Vol. 9 No. 4, pp. 475-96.
- Longton, P.A. and Stening, B.W. (1991), "The cultural milieu of management: a comparative study of the role of management in ASEAN", *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 91-104.
- Mackenzie, R.A. (1969), "The management process in 3-D", *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 47, pp. 80-7.
- Mahoney, T.A., Jerdee, T.H. and Carroll, S.J. (1965), "The job(s) of management", *Industrial Relations*, Feb, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 97-110.
- Maisonrouge, J. (1983), "The education of modern international manager", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Spring-Summer, pp. 141-6.
- Midgley, D./NBEET (1990), *Report on the Benchmark Study of Management Development in Australian Private Enterprises*, AGPS, Canberra.
- Mintzberg, H. (1975), "The manager's job: folklore and fact", *Harvard Business Review*, July-August, Vol. 53, pp. 49-61.
- Mintzberg, H. (1980), *The Nature of Managerial Work*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Mumford, A. (1987), "The education and training of British managers", *Industrial and Commercial Training*, September/October, Vol. 19 No. 5, pp. 19-20.
- Nelson, C.W. (1967), "A new approach to the development of institutional leadership and communication: a challenge to deans", *Journal of the National Association of Dean's Counsellors*, Vol. 30, pp. 132-7.
- Ouchi, W.G. (1981), *Theory Z: How Can American Business Meet the Japanese Challenge?*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA.
- Ouchi, W.G. (1984), *The M-Form Society: How American Team Work Can Capture the Competitive Edge*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA.
- Ouchi, W.G. and Jaeger, A. (1978), "Type Z organisations: stability in the midst of mobility", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 3, pp. 305-14.
- Pascale, R.T. and Athos, A.G. (1983), *The Art of Japanese Management*, Penguin, London.
- Poole, M. and Mansfield, R. (1993), "A new managerial revolution? Ownership, control and perceptions", *Journal of General Management*, Spring, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 23-36.
- Reid, D. M. and Schlegelmilch, B. B. (1990), "Planning and control in the UK and West Germany: the mechanical engineering industry", *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol. 8 No. 4, pp. 30-8.
- Rodrigues, C.A. (1988), "The right leader for the right situation", *Personnel*, September.

- Rodrigues, C.A. (1992), "Application of high-quality leadership as an international competitive advantage", in Ali, A.J. (Ed.), *How to Manage for International Competitiveness*, International Business Press, New York, NY, pp. 247-65.
- Ronen, S. and Kraut, A.I. (1977), "Similarities among countries based on employee work values and attitudes", *Columbia Journal of World Business*, Summer, Vol. 12, pp. 89-96.
- Savery, L., Mazzarol, T.W. and Dawkins, P. (1995), "Customers' view of Australian management: Asia-Pacific viewpoints", *Industry Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills*, May, AGPS, Canberra,
- Schein, E.H. (1967), "Attitude change during management education", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 11, pp. 601-28.
- Schloss, S. (1991), "Training: from lay-bys to languages", *Industrial Society*, June, pp. 16-17.
- Shapira, Z. and Dunbar, R.L.M. (1978), "Testing Mintzberg's managerial roles classification using an in-basket simulation", in Bass, B.M. (Ed.) (1981), *Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of Theory and Research*, The Free Press, New York, NY, p. 283.
- Sirota, D. and Greenwood, M.J. (1971), "Understand your overseas workforce", *Harvard Business Review*, January-February, pp. 53-60.
- Snyder, N. and Glueck, W.F. (1977), "Mintzberg and the planning literature: an analysis and reconciliation", *Proceedings of the Academy of Management*.
- Steele, M. (1987), "Current organisational issues in UK", *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, Vol. 8 No. 5, pp. 1-5.
- Stogdill, R.M. (1974), "Historical trends in leadership theory and research", *Journal of Contemporary Business*, Autumn, pp. 1-17.
- Storey, J. (1991), "Do the Japanese make better managers?", *Personnel Management Development Review*, Vol. 5 No. 3, pp. 6-12.
- Storey, J. (1992), "Management development in Britain and Japan", *Target Management Development Review*, Vol. 5 No. 3, pp. 6-12.
- Syrett, M. (1988), "So what does make a manager?", *Director*, May, Vol. 41 No. 11, pp. 95-9.
- Taylor, F.W. (1911), *The Principles of Scientific Management*, Harper & Row, New York, NY.
- Tornow, W.W. and Pinto, P.R. (1976), "The development of a managerial job taxonomy: a system for describing, classifying, and evaluating executive positions", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 61, pp. 410-18.
- Umetani, S. (1987), "Japanese management: skill development and managerial efficiency", in Tan, J.H. and You, P.S. (Eds), *Developing Managers in Asia*, Addison-Wesley, Singapore, pp. 115-23.
- Urwick, L. (1952), *Notes on the Theory of Organisation*, American Management Association, New York, NY.
- Vroom, V.H. and Jago, A. (1978), "On the validity of the Vroom-Yetton model", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 63, pp. 151-62.
- Vroom, V.H. and Yetton, P.W. (1973), *Leadership and Decision Making*, Pittsburgh Press.
- Williams, D. (1988), "Nissan's great British experiment", *Tokyo Business Today*, June, pp. 46-9.
- World Economic Forum (Annual), *The World Competitiveness Report*, IMEDE, Lausanne, Switzerland.
- Yamashita, Y. (1992), "Japanese management: a study in stagnation", *Directors and Boards*, Fall, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 24-30.
- Yang, C.Y. (1977), "Management styles: American vis-à-vis Japanese", *Columbia Journal of World Business*, Fall, Vol. 12, pp. 23-31.
- Yeh, R-S. (1991), "Management practices of Taiwanese firms: as compared to those of American and Japanese subsidiaries in Taiwan", *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 1-14.