



The Iclif  
Leadership and  
Governance  
Centre

# The Asian Leadership Index 2014



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## **The Iclif Leadership And Governance Centre**

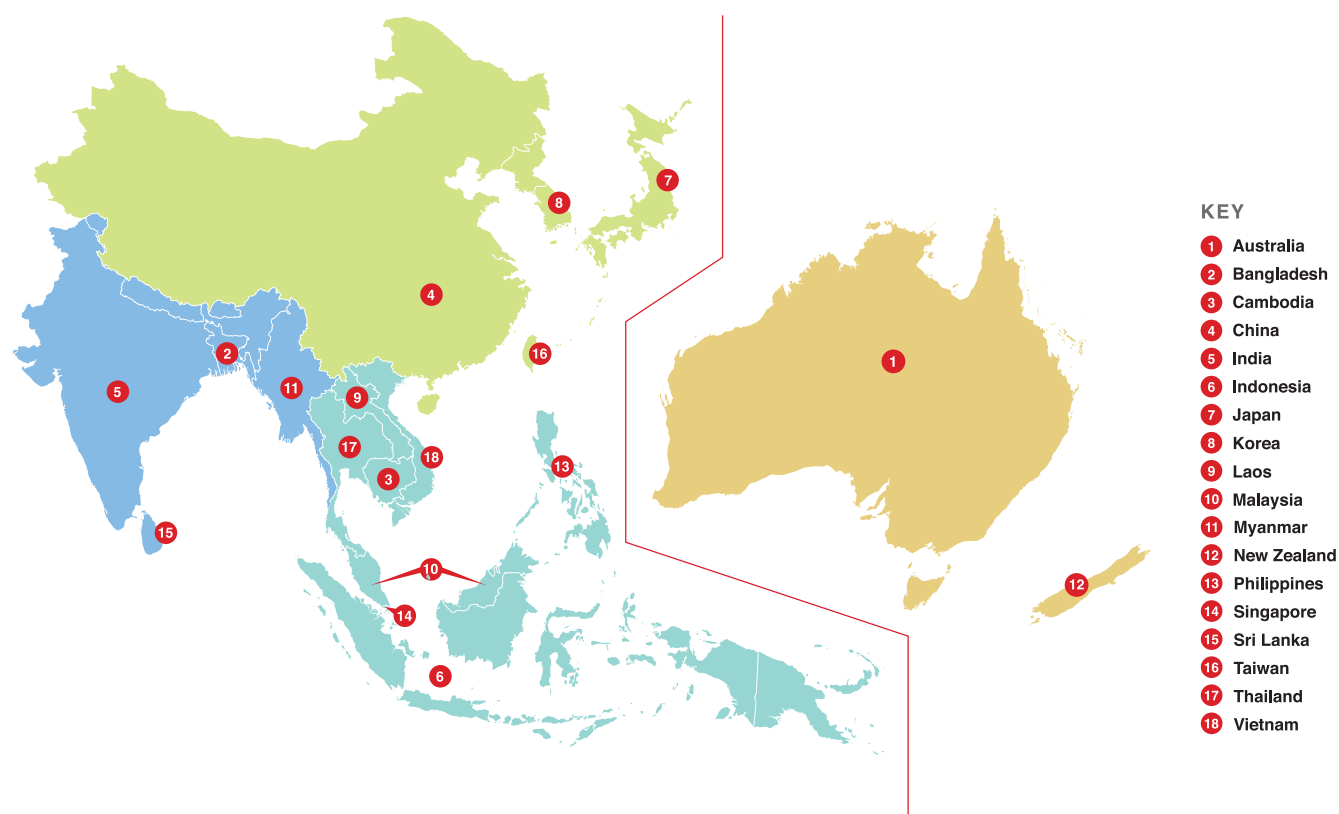
Iclif is an international, Asia-based centre of excellence delivering practical and usable leadership and corporate governance programs which help companies to visibly improve their business performance.

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# About This Report



The Asian Leadership Index (ALI) is Iclif's contribution to an important stream of global research on contemporary expectations of leaders. We focus on Asia because there exists little, if any, systematic study of leaders doing business in Asia.

ALI is an important step toward filling an information void for leaders living and working in Asia who aspire to improve their performance, but who need guidance on where to focus their attention. The Asian Leadership Index (ALI) sketches the contours of leadership across 18 countries and then fills in the outline, analyzing who thinks (and feels) what about leadership: what works and what doesn't. ALI is Iclif's reality-based inflection point for furthering thoughtful and informed development of leaders in Asia in 2014.

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on this or any other Iclif  
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# Executive Summary

The Asian Leadership Index: Create the constructive mutual relationship you need with the employees you most want to keep.

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## Leaders Commenting on Leaders

**The danger.** Consider the following.

Only one in six employees in East Asia strongly agrees that their opinions count, the lowest rating on the globe.<sup>1</sup> 64 percent of Singaporeans plan to leave their jobs in the next 12 months. Thirty-six percent of Australians plan to do the same, as do 62 percent of Chinese, 59 percent of Indians, and 65 percent of Malaysians.<sup>2</sup> The list goes on.

Plenty of research suggests that people leave leaders, not companies. Maybe that is ok. Maybe you don't want them. But what if the disengaged stay instead?

Research shows that disengaged employees return only 60 percent of their salary in value. A disengaged employee costs an employer \$3,400 for every \$10,000 in salary.<sup>3</sup> Engaged employees return 100 percent of their salary in value. Fully engaged employees return 120 percent of their salary in value.<sup>4</sup> They also drive innovation, productivity, profitability, customer satisfaction, and growth. In addition, they help to create other positive leaders.

How do you keep the people you really want? How do you sustain the interest of the ones you have?

**The opportunity.** Other studies on this critical topic focus on career opportunities, pay, brand alignment, and the talent pipeline. This study is different. **The Asian Leadership Index goes straight to the concrete behaviours and emotional connections that will change the relationship between the senior leader and other key members of the organization.**

**The solution.** The Asian Leadership Index 2014 (ALI) demystifies the attributes leaders in Asia must develop or enhance if they are to engage the people they lead. ALI does not propose a new leadership model. Rather, it identifies a limited number of highly targeted areas for behavioural change based on the attributes that respondents indicate their leaders are currently missing, and suggests a few concrete ways leaders can move forward with greater influence and impact.

The source of our information? Other leaders. ALI 2014 asks selected senior leaders and emerging leaders in companies operating in Asia to describe what their leaders need to do for them as professionals if they are to participate wholeheartedly with that leader, and fully invest in their organizations over the long term. They tell us what, in their experience, matters to them in an ideal leader and what is missing from the leaders to whom they report.

ALI has captured, collated, and amplified the voices of these professionals — leaders in their own right — whose commitment top leaders most need to move their organizations successfully into the Asian Century.

<sup>1</sup> Gallup, Inc., *State of the Global Workplace*, 2013, p. 64

<sup>2</sup> Randstad, *2013/2014 Randstad World of Work report: the talent strategy game changer-series, Game-changer #1: Leadership will ignite to drive talent strategy*, p. 21

<sup>3</sup> Gallup, *Gallup 2002*

<sup>4</sup> McLean & Co., *Optimize Employee Engagement Surveys*, August 13, 2012, <http://bespokehr.com.au/employee-disengagement>

**“What matters” and “what’s missing.”** While Asia is a diverse region with fine examples of excellent leaders and organizations, we looked for larger trends around desires and needs. Our intention: to help close important gaps. We heard the following loudly and clearly.

1. Asian professionals want to connect into a greater vision. By a large margin, the number one thing most Asian professionals want in ANY leader is a vision they can believe in.
2. Asian professionals, as a whole, report frustration that their current leaders do not create constructive mutual relationships (see sidebar, “Constructive Mutual Relationship: A Definition”) with them by
  - holding real conversations – genuinely exchanging ideas and approaches;
  - enabling them with the skills and knowledge necessary to do their jobs effectively– and empowering them to act;
  - indicating a belief that these professionals are counted among the key future members of the firm;
  - valuing fully what these professionals bring, and having sufficient awareness of their own impact on others’ energy.

In fact, of the 18 countries investigated in the ALI study, only three (India, Japan and Korea) did not identify relationship-oriented attributes among the gaps in their leaders.

Any relationship is a mutual responsibility. But leaders must accept the onus of creating the conditions for a relationship to flourish. Based on their description of what is missing from the leadership equation, we can now positively articulate what Asian professionals most want and need from their leaders if they are to wholeheartedly engage with that leader’s vision and organization.

### Constructive Mutual Relationship: A Definition

When we say constructive mutual relationship, we are consciously describing the sorts of positive connections and interactions that create better business outcomes: greater innovation, productivity, customer service, profitability, decision-making, and transparency.

This constructive mutual relationship is distinct from other types of leader/follower relationships we encountered at times in our research. These negative relationships ranged from benignly neglectful (marked by little if anything in the way of genuine encouragement and professional development) to destructive (when would-be leaders counterproductively withheld collaboration or support even at risk to the enterprise). The roots of these negative relationships can be ego, ignorance, overwork, inattention, or many other causes.

**Asian leaders need to form more *constructive mutual relationships* with their followers to deliver on a vision that is convincing to all who are required for its success.**

Leaders CAN prevent the dire consequences listed earlier and instead build a powerful advantage by developing constructive mutual relationships with those they lead.

The Asian Leadership Index provides insight into the specific behaviours leaders can, with practice and support, cultivate to form such relationships.

*This report.* We share how we uncovered the desires and unfulfilled needs Asian professionals have regarding their leaders. The resulting data provides a roadmap for Asian leaders who want to modify their behaviour and lead both their people and organizations more effectively. For the most detailed information on the study, please refer to Appendix 2: About the Asian Leadership Index and Research Methodology.

Asians most want  
**Visionary** leaders.  
Their current  
leaders must  
also be more  
**Visionary** as  
well as more...



### Trust the Data

Can we rely on these opinions? On an individual basis, there is always the risk of giving more attention or credence to the loudest voices. But on a large scale, we must listen to the collective voice as it expresses a larger truth.<sup>5</sup> Respondents' views are informed by their own real experiences – they are experts on the topic of their wish list in an ideal leader and of their relationship with their leader. Further, research has firmly established that the symptoms of leaders' shortcomings contribute to low employee engagement levels<sup>6</sup> and high employee turnover levels.<sup>7</sup> And, since we live in a digital age that gives widespread and instantaneous expression to anyone's opinions, any cyberspace cadet<sup>8</sup> can spread even a fleeting frustration quickly and colour how others start to evaluate their own leaders. We must give these ideas and emotions our immediate attention.

<sup>5</sup> Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams, *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*, New York, 2006

<sup>6</sup> Gallup, Inc., *State of the Global Workplace*, 2013, p. 47

<sup>7</sup> Randstad, op. cit., p. 15

<sup>8</sup> Georg Vielmetter and Yvonne Sell, *Leadership 2030: the six megatrends you need to understand to lead your company into the future*, New York, 2014, p. 80

# ALI Research Summary

In seeking to better understand Asia's leadership landscape, we designed a two-phased approach to this research.

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**Phase I** was an in-person qualitative inquiry designed to help us understand how leaders present in Asia. During this phase, we conducted face-to-face, 90-minute interviews with 70 senior and emerging leaders from six Asian countries. We asked open-ended questions to uncover what they value in leaders both ideal and real. This phase allowed us to document leadership attributes with behavioural descriptors of leadership and formulate two hypotheses.

1. People's ideals of leadership will vary across countries.
2. People's real expectations of leadership in their current leaders will vary across countries.

**Phase II** of the research was a quantitative phase. We interviewed almost 3,500 senior and emerging leaders from 18 countries, either face-to-face or on the phone. Our objective in this phase was to test the hypotheses formulated in Phase I, and to uncover quantitatively reliable findings that would help leaders in Asia.

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## The ALI Attributes and Behavioural Descriptors

In the table below are the attributes and behavioural descriptors of leadership that emerged from the qualitative phase.

ATTRIBUTE	BEHAVIOURAL DESCRIPTORS
<b>Visionary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in</li> <li>• Enlists others in supporting the dream</li> <li>• Sees opportunities early</li> <li>• Sees problems early</li> </ul>
<b>Communicative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listens to me and others</li> <li>• Articulates ideas in ways I understand</li> <li>• Genuinely encourages me and others to discuss and debate ideas and approaches</li> </ul>
<b>Trustworthy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds rapport with me</li> <li>• Delivers on promises; is reliable</li> <li>• Respects my contributions</li> <li>• Treats everyone fairly</li> <li>• Puts interests of others ahead of his/her own</li> </ul>
<b>Performance-driven</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puts the right people in place</li> <li>• Puts effective processes / structures in place</li> <li>• Outcome-oriented</li> </ul>
<b>Driven</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows high levels of drive</li> <li>• Radiates positive energy to me and others</li> <li>• Bounds over obstacles – never gives up</li> <li>• Is driven to create a better future</li> </ul>
<b>Empowering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not need to approve every decision</li> <li>• Delegates, but maintains a keen interest</li> <li>• Provides skills, knowledge, experience for me and my team to do the job</li> <li>• Entrusts me and my team to do the job</li> </ul>
<b>Develops Others</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets challenging but feasible goals for others – including me</li> <li>• Provides others – including me – insightful coaching and feedback</li> <li>• Helps others and me plan our futures</li> <li>• Cares about others' future, including my own</li> </ul>
<b>Bold</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is willing to do things differently</li> <li>• Is willing to disagree with crowd, even at personal risk</li> <li>• Acts for the best and prepares for the worst</li> </ul>
<b>Emotionally Aware</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands him/herself emotionally</li> <li>• Reads how others feel – including me</li> <li>• Values others' instincts, judgments, and contributions – including mine</li> </ul>
<b>Technically Competent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a very high degree of knowledge and skill in his/her job role</li> <li>• Has significant industry experience</li> <li>• Maintains his/her expertise; is constantly learning</li> </ul>



## Research Findings Part I:

# What do I most want in an **Ideal Leader?**











We asked this question for a simple reason. Since this was our first large-scale Pan-Asian study, we needed a solid starting point from which to begin to discuss and compare leaders across country divides. Making people answer the question, “What do I most want in an ideal leader?” provides a Rorschach test, in effect, of their fundamental assumptions around a leader’s role, attitude, accessibility, demeanour, and behaviour. Compiling these answers, which were provided against a defined list of attributes culled from Phase I, helps us outline a population’s mental model of a good leader. Ascribing behavioural definitions adds even more depth to the story.

# What we found

## Asia Regional

Across the region, **Visionary tops the list** as the ‘most wanted’ leadership trait in an ideal leader.<sup>9</sup> Forty percent of all respondents from across the 18 countries picked Visionary as their ‘most important’ trait. When asked to define the attribute, the region selected “Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in” as their definition from a variety of behavioural descriptors. Coming in **second** is **Trustworthy and Communicative** with a 50 percent drop from Visionary, scoring 20 percent respectively. Performance Driven and Technically Competent come within the top five as the graphic, “What Do I Most Want in an Ideal Leader in the Region?” denotes. Among the **lowest rated attributes** desired in an ideal leader across the region are **Driven, Emotionally Aware and Bold**.

### What Do I Most Want in an Ideal Leader? (Asia Regional)

ATTRIBUTES	PERCENTAGE STATING THIS ATTRIBUTE WAS MOST IMPORTANT	DEFINED IN ASIA AS...
<b>Visionary</b>	<b>40%</b> 	Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in
<b>Trustworthy</b>	<b>20%</b> 	Delivers on promises; is reliable
<b>Communicative</b>	<b>20%</b> 	Genuinely encourages me and others to discuss and debate ideas and approaches
<b>Performance-driven</b>	<b>16%</b> 	Puts effective processes / structures in place
<b>Technically Competent</b>	<b>14%</b> 	Maintains his/her expertise: is constantly learning
<b>Develops Others</b>	<b>9%</b> 	Provides others – including me – insightful coaching and feedback
<b>Empowering</b>	<b>9%</b> 	Provides skills, knowledge, experience for me and my team to do the job
<b>Driven</b>	<b>5%</b> 	Radiates positive energy to me and others
<b>Emotionally Aware</b>	<b>5%</b> 	Values others' instincts, judgments and contributions – including mine
<b>Bold</b>	<b>4%</b> 	Acts for the best and prepares for the worst

### How These Results Were Calculated

How these results were calculated: ALI data were evaluated using both average scores and percentage scores. In the Findings sections of this report, we reflect the results using percentage scores only. Percentage scores more accurately reflect true preferences as reasonable respondents can feel equally strongly about two or even more attributes as most important in an ideal leader. As a result, the total score can exceed 100. Average scores are available upon request from Iclif Research. Contact details are listed on the inside cover of this report.

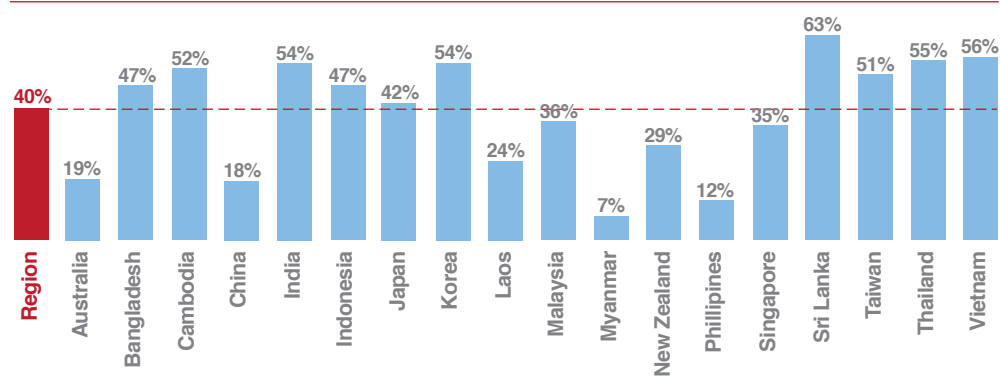
<sup>9</sup> Countries that rated Visionary as the single most important trait in an ideal leader are: Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam.



### Visionary scores by country

In the graphic ***Ideal Leader: Visionary***, the red line indicates the Asian Regional Score. Visionary gets its highest rating in Sri Lanka as 63 percent of respondents identify it as their 'most important' ideal leader attribute. High scores of above 50 percent were also recorded in Cambodia, India, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Visionary receives a lowest score in Myanmar as only seven percent of respondents rate it as number one.

### Ideal Leader: Visionary





The table *What Do I Most Want in an Ideal Leader? (by Country)* outlines what the region and each country values most highly in an ideal leader. Many people value Visionary above all other attributes, but there is variation.

### What Do I Most Want in an Ideal Leader? (by Country)

COUNTRY	ATTRIBUTE	DEFINED AS...	SCORE
<b>Region</b>	<b>Visionary</b>	<b>Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Australia</b>	Communicative	Genuinely encourages me and others to discuss and debate ideas and approaches	46%
<b>Bangladesh</b>	Visionary	Sees opportunities early	47%
<b>Cambodia</b>	Visionary	Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in	52%
<b>China<sup>10</sup></b>	Technically Competent	Has a very high degree of knowledge and skill in his/her job role	34%
	Trustworthy	Puts interest of others ahead of his/her own	32%
<b>India</b>	Visionary	Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in	54%
<b>Indonesia</b>	Visionary	Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in	47%
<b>Japan</b>	Visionary	Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in	42%
<b>Korea</b>	Visionary	Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in	54%
<b>Laos</b>	Technically Competent	Maintains his/her expertise; is constantly learning	27%
<b>Malaysia</b>	Visionary	Sees opportunities early	36%
<b>Myanmar<sup>11</sup></b>	Technically Competent	Maintains his/her expertise: is constantly learning	32%
	Performance-driven	Puts the right people in place	31%
<b>New Zealand<sup>12</sup></b>	Visionary	Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in	29%
	Communicative	Genuinely encourages me and others to discuss and debate ideas and approaches	28%
<b>Philippines</b>	Performance-driven	Outcome-oriented	42%
<b>Singapore</b>	Visionary	Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in	35%
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	Visionary	Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in	63%
<b>Taiwan</b>	Visionary	Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in	51%
<b>Thailand</b>	Visionary	Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in	55%
<b>Vietnam</b>	Visionary	Sees opportunities early	56%

<sup>10</sup> In China, two attributes scored so closely that they are considered to be ties.

<sup>11</sup> In Myanmar, two attributes scored so closely that they are considered to be ties.

<sup>12</sup> In New Zealand, two attributes scored so closely that they are considered to be ties.

The table ***What Do I Most Want in an Ideal Leader? (by Country)*** also shows where Visionary is NOT rated highly as a most desired leadership trait in an ideal leader.

- **Australians** as a population place Visionary fourth in ranking. Australians give Visionary half the importance they place on being Communicative. Instead, they rank **Communicative** as the most important trait in an ideal leader.
- The **Chinese** as a group look for **Technically Competent** and **Trustworthy** in a leader above all else, with 34 percent and 32 percent respectively identifying this as 'most important' of the 10 leadership traits. While they show less distinctive preferences among their attributes than do other nationalities, they rank Trustworthy closely behind (32 percent) leaving Visionary in fourth place at 18 percent with an almost 47 percent decrease from the top scoring trait, Technically Competent.
- **Laotians** and **Burmese** both rank **Technically Competent** as the most important trait in an ideal leader. The Laotians do not make stark distinctions among traits in their ideal leaders, so Technically Competent is only three percent more important than Visionary on their scale. Only seven percent of the **Burmese** respondents rate Visionary as their 'most important,' placing this attribute in their bottom five. **Technically Competent soars to the top with 32 percent of Burmese respondents selecting it as most important.**
- **Filipinos** value **Performance Driven** above all else in an ideal leader, and place Visionary a distant fourth in their estimation.



# Implications

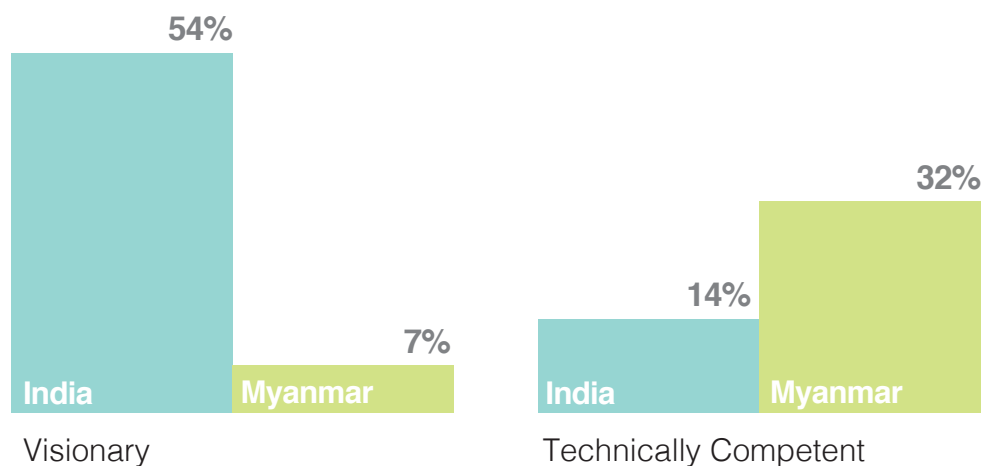
Most Asians value vision – but not all do. Asian leaders moving across borders need to consider that they may have a fundamentally different orientation based on ideals.

Let's consider a hypothetical. For example, an Indian leader is likely to place a great deal of emphasis on being a Visionary since Indians as a whole score that trait as extremely important in an ideal leader. That well-intentioned Indian leader then moves to Myanmar to direct an organization, where he diligently attempts to impress with his vision. Unfortunately, the people whom he is leading there are typical of Myanmar, and place a much higher emphasis on Technical Competence. Touting his vision instead of his technical competence might turn them off, and their unresponsiveness to his vision might frustrate him. If he is not aware of the dynamic he has helped to create, he might even begin to devalue what the Burmese bring as he feels they do not understand him. Now imagine the reverse scenario in which the technically oriented Burmese leader attempts to lead vision-hungry Indians.

## Q1: What do I most Want in an IDEAL Leader

Implications when Leading Across Borders

Scenario 1: Attributes a Senior Leader in India may encounter as highly valued when managing a team of professionals in Myanmar — and vice versa



Of course, it is important not to overplay the possibilities. There will be variation according to individuals and companies. At the same time, patterns clearly exist. The wise leader crossing boundaries must stay alert to them.

**For further detail on this and other statistics, please contact Iclif Research. Contact details are listed on the inside cover of this report.**

## In the next section of this report,

when we examine respondents' assessments of their current leaders, Ideal Leader findings can help to create context. Might other traits rise to the surface in terms of importance when ideal becomes real?

A woman with dark hair and glasses is smiling and looking towards the left. She is wearing a dark turtleneck sweater. In the foreground, the back of a person's head and shoulders in a white shirt are visible, suggesting a meeting or collaborative work environment.

## Research Findings Part II:











# What does my **Current Leader** need to better develop or improve on?

In both the qualitative and quantitative interviews, we encountered a great deal of passion on the topic of “what my current leader needs to better develop or improve on” if I am to fully sign on for his or her leadership. Not the ideal leader, but the leader I am currently working with. What will make employees perform with energy and enthusiasm every day and bring their best selves to work? What must their current leaders provide that will make them willing to forgo the other attractive opportunities that will always beckon to the most talented and accomplished?

# What we found

Across the region, respondents do not have as clear a need for one trait as they do when reporting on the ideal leader. Their take on what their current leader needs to improve on delivering is more nuanced. The significant result is less the declaration of a single trait and more the pattern of collective traits, which reveals a strong need for greater relationship as well as connection to a greater vision.

## What Does My Current Leader Need to Better Develop or Improve On? (Asia Regional)

ATTRIBUTES	PERCENTAGE STATING THIS ATTRIBUTE NEEDED MOST IMPROVEMENT	SPECIFICALLY...
<b>Communicative</b>	20% 	Genuinely encourages me and others to discuss and debate ideas and approaches
<b>Visionary</b>	20% 	Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in
<b>Emotionally Aware</b>	17% 	Values others' instincts, judgments and contributions – including mine
<b>Develops Others</b>	16% 	Provides others – including me – insightful coaching and feedback
<b>Empowering</b>	15% 	Provides skills, knowledge, experience for me and my team to do the job
<b>Trustworthy</b>	12% 	Delivers on promises; is reliable
<b>Performance-driven</b>	12% 	Puts effective processes / structures in place
<b>Technically Competent</b>	11% 	Maintains his/her expertise: is constantly learning
<b>Bold</b>	9% 	Is willing to disagree with crowd, even at personal risk
<b>Driven</b>	6% 	Radiates positive energy to me and others

How these results were calculated: ALI data were evaluated using both average scores and percentage scores. In the Findings sections of this report, we reflect the results using percentage scores only. Percentage scores more accurately reflect true preferences as reasonable respondents can feel equally strongly about two or even more attributes as most important in an ideal leader. As a result, the total score can exceed 100. Average scores are available upon request from Iclif Research. Contact details are listed on the inside cover of this report.

A more systematic look at the traits these professionals most want their leaders to develop or improve on at the regional level in Asia reveals some correlations — and some differences — with the attributes of their ideal leader.

1. There is a small spread among the five attributes identified as ‘most in need of improvement. **Visionary** ties for the top “most needed” trait, signalling that it is both very important and insufficiently developed. The other traits are **more communicative, more emotionally aware, more developing of others, and more empowering** – all relationship-oriented traits (as opposed to, say, performance-oriented).
2. In **every single country of Asia**, we find a very strong desire for at least one of these attributes.
3. Among the **lowest rated gaps to be closed** in current leaders across the region are **Driven and Bold**. It appears that Asians are not looking for charisma so much as connection in their immediate leaders.

The story gets even more interesting on a country-by-country basis. We have included some highlights below and in the section entitled Country Snapshots. **For further detail on these and other statistics, please contact Iclif Research. Contact details are listed on the inside cover of this report.**

- Five countries ranked **Emotionally Aware** as the most important trait that their leaders needed to develop or improve on: **Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore and Vietnam**. This trait emerged as third most needed characteristic in the region.
- Five countries ranked **Visionary** as the most important gap in their leaders’ abilities: **India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea and Thailand**. Visionary was also ranked as one of the most needed attributes for improvement on a regional basis.
- Five countries ranked **Communicative** as the most important gap: **Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, and Taiwan**.
- **China** and the **Philippines** named **Develops Others** as the key gap their leaders needed to fill.
- **Bangladesh** was alone in casting its top vote for **Technically Competent**.

Of the 18 countries, only three did not identify relationship-oriented attributes among the gaps in their leaders. These countries were India, Japan and Korea.

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The behavioural descriptors that explain what those characteristics mean are as important as the attributes themselves. Interestingly, most of the region selected the same behavioural descriptors for each particular attribute, all of which are the most relationship-oriented choices of the behavioural options available.

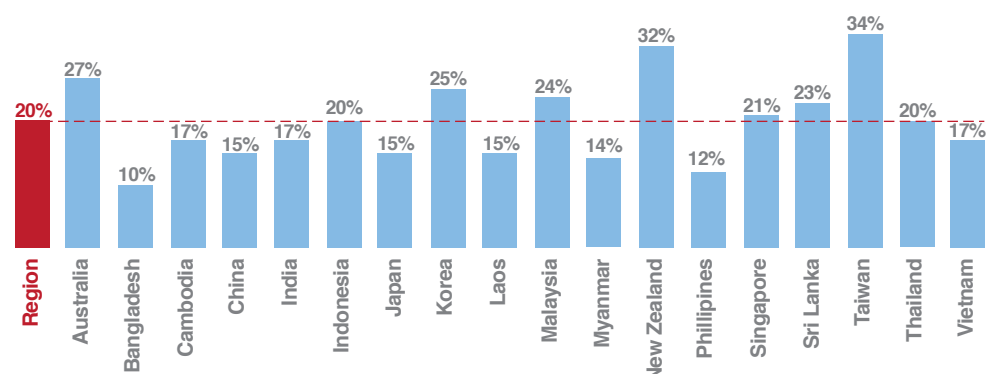
ATTRIBUTE	BEHAVIOURAL DESCRIPTOR MOST COMMONLY SELECTED IN ASIA
<b>Communicative</b>	Genuinely <i>encourages</i> me and others to discuss and debate ideas and approaches
<b>Visionary</b>	Has a <i>dream</i> for our company/group that I <i>believe</i> in
<b>Emotionally Aware</b>	<i>Values others'</i> instincts, judgments, and contributions – including mine
<b>Develops Others</b>	Provides others – including me – <i>insightful coaching</i> and feedback
<b>Empowering</b>	<i>Provides skills, knowledge, experience</i> for me and my team to do the job

## Graphics on the following pages

illustrate how the countries vary in their ratings among these top five attributes that their current leader most needs to better develop or improve on.

**How Countries Rate Communicative as the Most Important Attribute for Improvement in Their Current Leader.** Bars indicate percentage of respondents choosing this trait.

#### Current Leader: **Communicative**



The red line indicates the Asian Regional Score for Communicative. Some countries express very high unmet needs for communicative leaders. Taiwan feels the need most strongly as 34 percent of respondents there identify it as the 'most important' need to be addressed in their current leader. New Zealand follows closely with 32 percent choosing the Communicative attribute. High scores of above 20 percent were also recorded in Australia, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and Sri Lanka, indicating that professionals in those countries feel their leaders need to do a much better job of including them in real conversation about the work they are doing. Communicative receives a lowest score as a need in Bangladesh where only 10 percent of respondents rate it as number 1.

Respondents could choose how to describe the Communicative attribute by selecting from the behavioural descriptors for it that emerged in the qualitative phase. Communicative had three possible descriptions. The most frequently chosen on a regional level was: "Genuinely encourages me and others to discuss and debate ideas and approaches."

#### **Communicative**

- Listens to me and others
- Articulates ideas in ways I understand
- Genuinely encourages me and others to discuss and debate ideas and approaches

To understand how commonly "Genuinely encourages me and others to discuss and debate ideas and approaches" was selected as well as to see what definitions predominated elsewhere, please see the graphic, ***How Countries Define the Behaviour They Need in a Communicative Leader.***



## How Countries Define the Behaviour They Need in a **Communicative Leader**

**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Genuinely  
encourages me  
and others to  
discuss and  
debate ideas  
and approaches

Australia  
Bangladesh  
Cambodia  
China  
Indonesia  
Japan  
Laos  
Malaysia  
New Zealand  
Singapore  
Sri Lanka  
Taiwan  
Thailand  
Vietnam

**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Articulates  
ideas in ways  
I understand

India  
Philippines

**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Listens to me  
and others

Korea  
Myanmar

***“I can ask my Director anything, and he will explain things to me. The rest of the senior team are also very approachable. It’s the main reason why I stay on.”***

EMERGING LEADER, AUSTRALIA

***“If the leader is too formal with the team members – say, all communication is in writing – then the team won’t be comfortable expressing their feelings or opinions. Good ideas don’t come with that type of communication.”***

EMERGING LEADER, CHINA

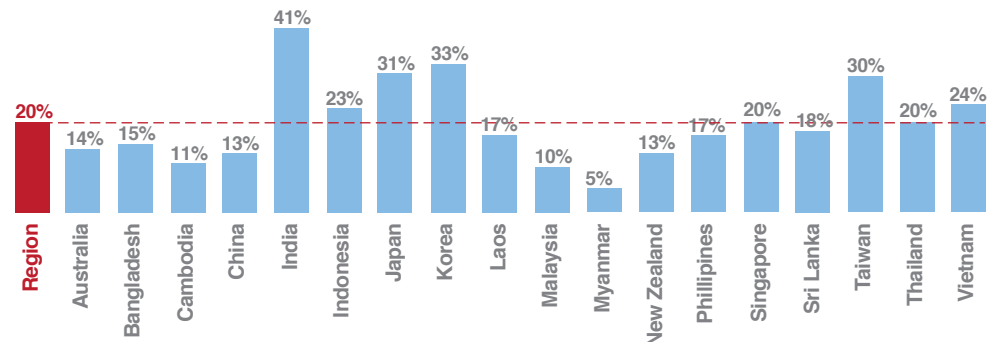
***“I idolise my boss. The best thing about him is not just his foresight but how he communicates that to the rest of the team. I find this inspiring.”***

EMERGING LEADER, JAPAN



**How Countries Rate Visionary as the Most Important Attribute for Improvement in Their Current Leader.** Bars indicate percentage of respondents choosing this trait.

#### Current Leader: **Visionary**



The red line indicates the Asian Regional Score for Visionary. Some countries express very high unmet needs for visionary leaders. Visionary gets its highest rating as an unmet need to be addressed in India (at 41 percent) followed by Korea (at 33 percent), Japan (at 31 percent) and Taiwan (30 percent). Visionary receives the lowest score as an important unmet need in Myanmar as a scant five percent of respondents rate it as number 1. Malaysia, Cambodia, and China also rate Visionary relatively low as an unmet important need.

Respondents could choose how to describe the Visionary attribute by selecting among the behavioural descriptors for it that emerged from the qualitative phase. Visionary had four possible descriptions. The most frequently chosen on a regional level was: “Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in.”

#### **Visionary**

- **Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in**
- Enlists others in supporting the dream
- Sees opportunities early
- Sees problems early

To understand how commonly “Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in” was selected as well as to see what definitions predominated elsewhere, please see the graphic, ***How Countries Define the Behaviour They Need in a Visionary Leader.***

## How Countries Define the Behaviour They Need in a **Visionary Leader**

**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Has a dream for our  
company/ group that  
I believe in

Australia  
Cambodia  
China  
India  
Indonesia  
Japan  
Korea  
Malaysia  
New Zealand  
Philippines  
Sri Lanka  
Taiwan  
Thailand

**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Enlists others  
in supporting  
the dream

Laos  
Myanmar<sup>13</sup>  
Singapore

**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Sees  
opportunities  
early

Bangladesh  
Myanmar

**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Sees problems  
early

Vietnam

***“I think most leaders have good vision but they expect everybody to know what is in their head. As a leader, you must cascade the vision and have the various business functions jive together towards achieving the same goal.”***

EMERGING LEADER, CHINA

***“Set the direction AND must make sure everybody is following. Roll up the sleeves and rally the troops!”***

EMERGING LEADER, MALAYSIA

***“The vision can’t just belong to the leader alone.”***

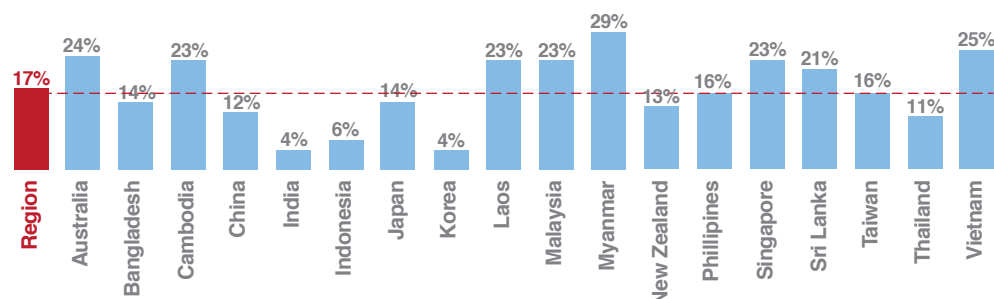
EMERGING LEADER, VIETNAM



<sup>13</sup> Respondents in Myanmar selected “Enlists others in supporting the dream” at the same rate as “Sees opportunities early.”

**How Countries Rate Emotionally Aware as the Most Important Attribute for Improvement in Their Current Leader.** Bars indicate percentage of respondents choosing this trait.

#### Current Leader: Emotionally Aware



The red line indicates the Asian Regional Score for Emotionally Aware. Some countries express very high unmet needs for emotionally aware leaders. Emotionally Aware gets its highest rating as an unmet need to be addressed in a current leader in Myanmar, followed by Vietnam, Australia, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore and Sri Lanka. Emotionally Aware received the lowest score as an important unmet need in India and Korea, followed by Indonesia.

Respondents could choose how to describe the Emotionally Aware attribute by selecting among the behavioural descriptors for it that emerged from the qualitative phase. Emotionally aware had three possible descriptions. The most frequently chosen on a regional level was: “Values others’ instincts, judgments, and contributions – including mine.”

#### Emotionally Aware

- Understands him/herself emotionally
- Reads how others feel – including me
- Values others’ instincts, judgments, and contributions – including mine

To understand how commonly “Values others’ instincts, judgments, and contributions – including mine” was selected for the attribute as well as to see what definitions predominated elsewhere, please see the graphic, **How Countries Define the Behaviour They Need in an Emotionally Aware Leader**. Note that the behaviour “Understands him/herself emotionally” was not selected as an important behavioural descriptor for this attribute.

## How Countries Define the Behaviour They Need in an Emotionally Aware Leader

**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Values others' instincts, judgments, and contributions – including mine

Bangladesh  
Cambodia  
China  
India  
Indonesia  
Laos  
Malaysia  
Singapore  
Thailand  
Vietnam

**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Reads how others feel – including me

Australia  
Japan  
Korea  
Myanmar  
New Zealand  
Philippines  
Sri Lanka  
Taiwan

***“Self-awareness and no ego – that’s key for any leader.”***

EMERGING LEADER, MALAYSIA

***“My leader shows me a frowning face – his way of refusing my ideas and not listening to me.”***

EMERGING LEADER, CHINA

***“It is critical for a leader to understand how his or her behaviour makes others feel.”***

SENIOR LEADER, AUSTRALIA

***“Compassion is something I want more from a leader.”***

EMERGING LEADER, INDIA

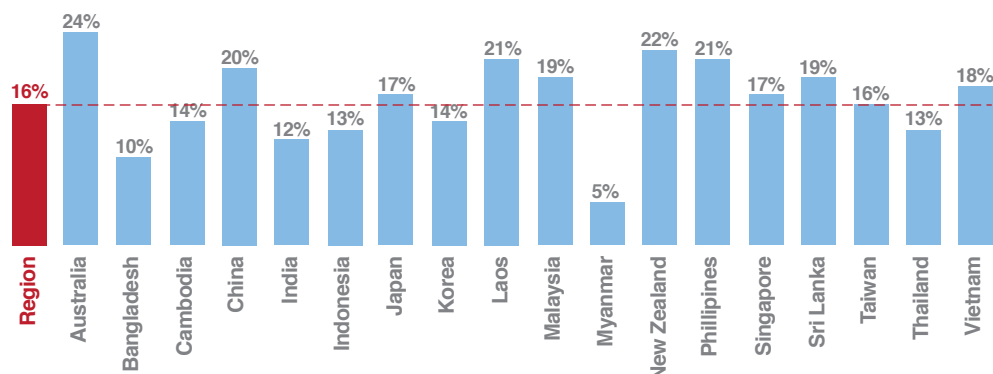
***“When my leader moved to Japan, he observed local preferences. He built respect by not bulldozing things entirely.”***

EMERGING LEADER, JAPAN



**How Countries Rate Develops Others as the Most Important Attribute for Improvement in Their Current Leader.** Bars indicate percentage of respondents choosing this trait.

#### Current Leader: **Develops Others**



The red line indicates the Asian Regional Score for Develops Others. Some countries express very high unmet needs for Develops Others in leaders. Develops Others gets its highest rating as an unmet need to be addressed in a current leader in Australia, followed by New Zealand, Laos, Philippines, China, Malaysia, Sri Lanka. Develops Others received the lowest score as an important unmet need in Myanmar, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and Korea.

Respondents could choose how to describe the Develops Others attribute by selecting among the four behavioural descriptors for it that emerged from the qualitative phase. The most frequently chosen on a regional level was: "Provides others - including me - insightful coaching and feedback."

#### **Develops Others**

- Sets challenging but feasible goals for others, including me
- Provides others-including me-insightful coaching and feedback
- Helps others and me plan our futures
- Cares about others' future, including my own

To understand how commonly "Provides others- including me- insightful coaching and feedback" was selected for the attribute as well as to see what definitions predominated elsewhere, please see the graphic, **How Countries Define the Behaviour They Need in a Leader Who Develops Others**. Note that the behaviours "Sets challenging but feasible goals for others, including me" and "Cares about others' future, including my own" were not selected as important behavioural descriptors for this attribute.

***"Good leadership is not only about surrounding yourself with good people but, more importantly, helping those you lead to be even better than they are."***

SENIOR LEADER, INDIA





## How Countries Define the Behaviour They Need in a Leader Who Develops Others

**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Provides others –  
including me –  
insightful coaching  
and feedback

Australia  
Bangladesh  
Cambodia  
India  
Indonesia  
Laos  
Malaysia  
Myanmar  
New Zealand  
Philippines  
Singapore  
Sri Lanka  
Taiwan  
Thailand

**BEHAVIOUR:**  
Helps others and me  
plan our futures

China  
Japan  
Korea  
Vietnam

***“To lead a team is to be responsible for another person’s life. I hope there will be more leaders who pay attention to each person’s motivation and goals.”***

EMERGING LEADER, MALAYSIA

***“My line manager is phenomenal in terms developing others. I really admire how she is always willing to take time out and coach me and my teammates.”***

EMERGING LEADER, AUSTRALIA

***“My previous company had a very high turnover rate because of its poor development culture.”***

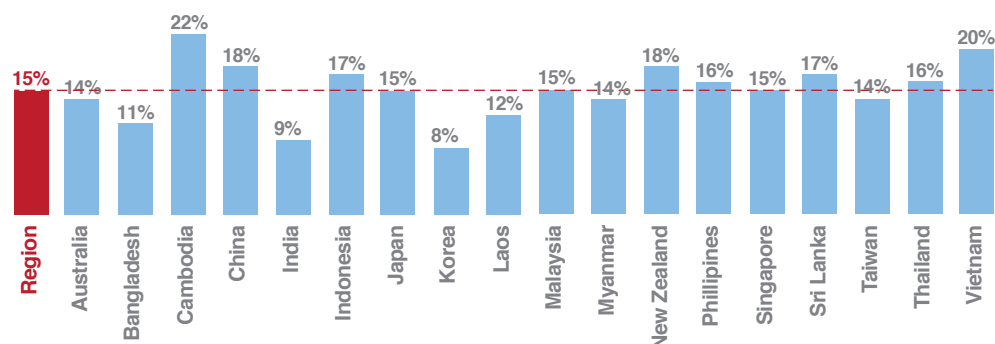
EMERGING LEADER, CHINA

***“Good leaders provide their people a lot of space to grow. They also recognize which ones don’t want to grow, and they manage them in a different way.”***

SENIOR MALAYSIAN LEADER, VIETNAM

**How Countries Rate Empowering as the Most Important Attribute for Improvement in Their Current Leader.** Bars indicate percentage of respondents choosing this trait.

#### Current Leader: **Empowering**



The red line indicates the Asian Regional Score for Empowering. Some countries express very high unmet needs for Empowering. Empowering gets its highest rating as an unmet need to be addressed in a current leader in Cambodia, followed by Vietnam, and ties between China and New Zealand. Empowering received the lowest score as an important unmet need in Korea, followed by India.

Respondents could choose how to describe the Empowering attribute by selecting among the four behavioural descriptors for it that emerged from the qualitative phase. Tied for most frequently chosen on a regional level were: “Provides others-including me-insightful coaching and feedback” and “Delegates, but maintains a keen interest.”

#### **Empowering**

- Does not need to approve every decision
- **Delegates, but maintains a keen interest**
- **Provides skills, knowledge, experience for me and my team to do the job**
- Entrusts me and my team to do the job

To understand how commonly “Provides skills, knowledge, experience for me and my team to do the job” was selected for the attribute as well as to see what definitions predominated elsewhere, please see the chart, ***How Countries Define the Behaviour They Need in a Leader Who Empowers Others.***

## How Countries Define the Behaviour They Need in an Empowering Leader



***“A leader must know how to apply the correct level of involvement. She cannot just be like, ‘ok, I have set my vision. Now you go do your thing.’”***

SENIOR LEADER, MALAYSIA

***“In my opinion, leadership for the future is not about keeping a rein on people.”***

EMERGING LEADER, INDIA

***“I definitely do not want a micro manager leading me. That’s zero trust.”***

SENIOR LEADER, AUSTRALIA

***“You don’t buy a dog and bark yourself. You need to trust and empower.”***

SENIOR LEADER, JAPAN

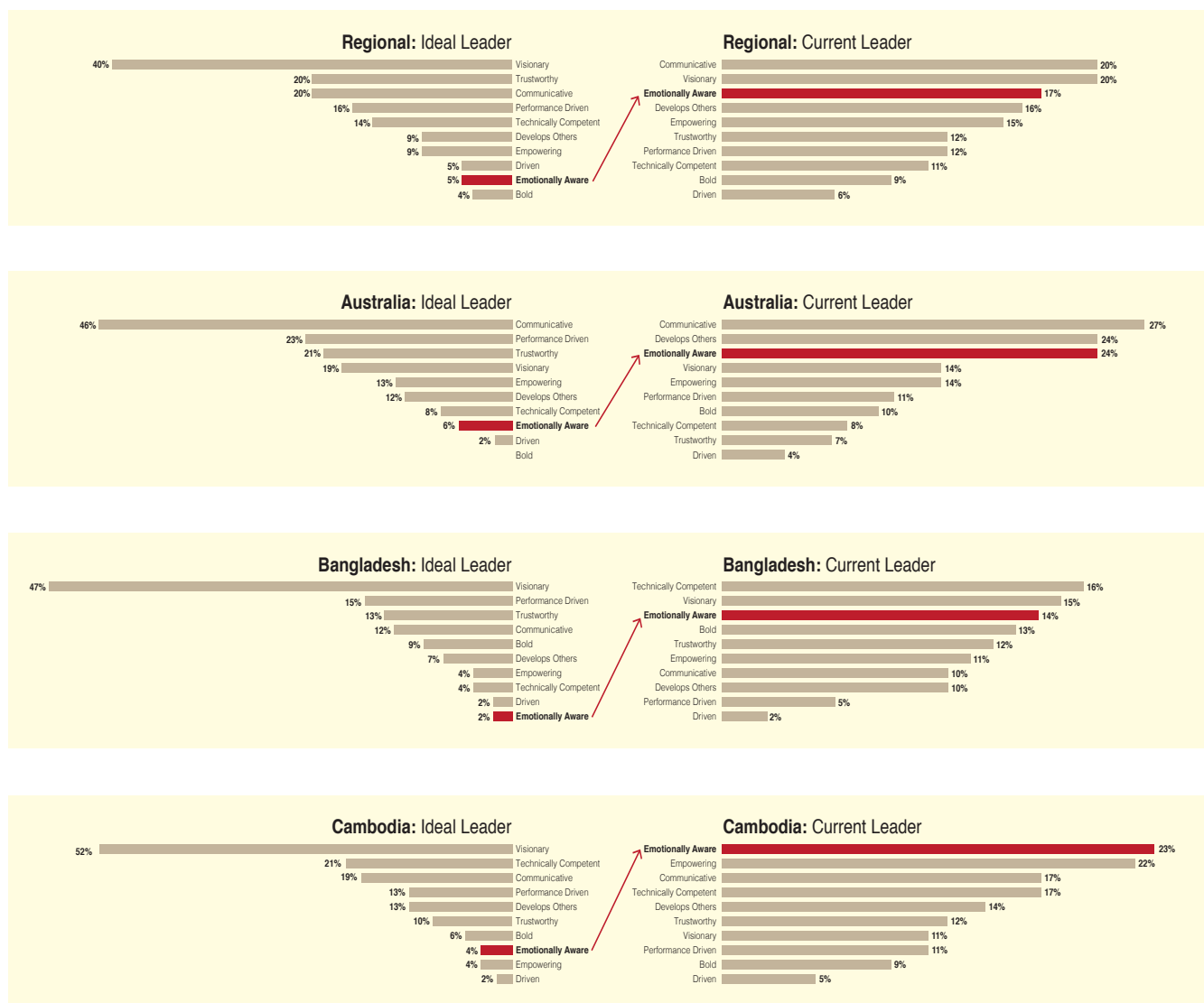


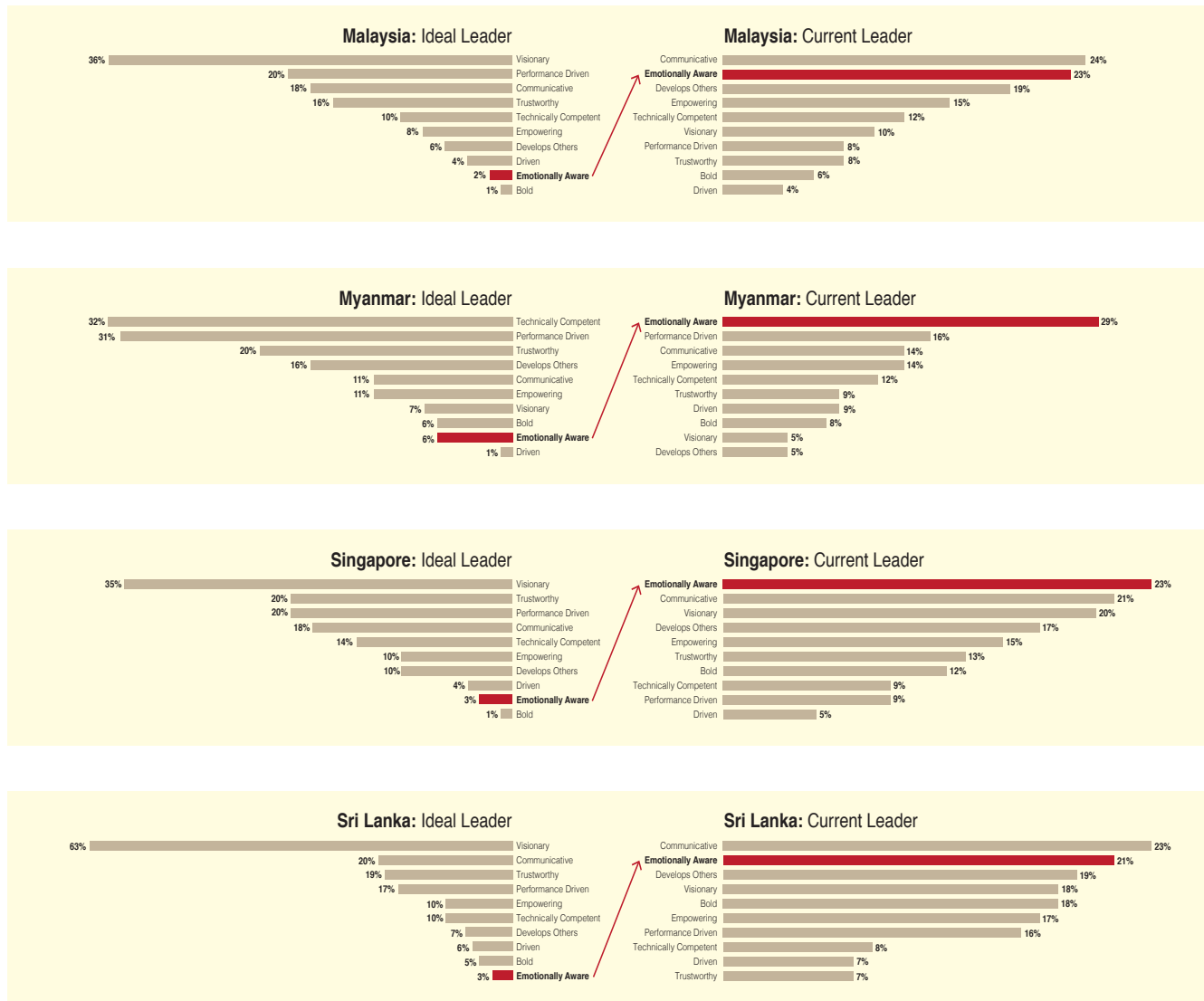
# Ideal Leader to Current Leader: A Radical Shift in **Emotionally Aware**

Emotional Awareness is distinctive among all the attributes. It is almost uniformly rated extremely low in the ordering among the attributes when respondents are asked about their ideal leaders – among the bottom two or three. It receives literally no votes in Korea. It fares best in Vietnam, Thailand and Laos, rated number five in each out of the ten possible choices – but, on a points basis, a far cry from the points scored by the top attributes. It is ranked number five in Japan.

However, when the question shifts from “ideal” to “real,” the picture changes dramatically. In the region as a whole, as well as in Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore and Sri Lanka specifically, Emotionally Aware soars in the context of the current leader. This phenomenon is well documented in the chart *Shift in Perceived Value of Emotionally Aware: Ideal to Current*.

## Shift in Perceived Value of Emotionally Aware: Ideal to Current





What does this mean? While Emotionally Aware is clearly not a trait in the classic leadership frameworks that most people name in response to a general question about leadership (the ideal leader), it is vital to a healthy and engaging relationship with a real live boss (what my leader needs to better develop or improve upon). Emotional awareness is a well-researched field, and it is abundantly clear from all the study that a high degree of emotional awareness is a prerequisite to competence in relationships. Emotional awareness is, in effect, a prerequisite to embarking on work in strengthening any of the other relationship-oriented attributes. Perhaps people in the region are starting to see the value in having leaders more strongly exhibit this trait.

## Implications

Asians as a group value relationships with their leaders — and they need more than they are getting. This is a key gap that, left unaddressed, will greatly hamper the ability of Asian leaders to fully leverage the talent they have, and will stunt the development of the talent they could be nurturing. Furthermore, leaders moving across boundaries should pay special attention to the expectations and frustrated needs of the local workforce. The vision that many report they want more of may be developed in the head of the leader, but must also be connected to the people he or she leads.

## Power Distance in Asia

The notion of power distance<sup>14</sup> was studied and popularized by Professor Geert Hofstede in the 1970s.

Hofstede's Power Distance Index measures the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality (more versus less), but defined from below, not from above. It suggests that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders.

### In high power distance cultures the following may be observed:

- Those in authority openly demonstrate their rank.
- Subordinates are not given important work and expect clear guidance from above.
- Subordinates are expected to take the blame for things going wrong.
- The relationship between boss and subordinate is rarely close/personal.
- Politics are prone to totalitarianism.
- Class divisions within society are accepted.

### In a low power distance culture:

- Superiors treat subordinates with respect and do not pull rank.
- Subordinates are entrusted with important assignments.
- Blame is either shared or very often accepted by superiors as their responsibility to manage.
- Managers may often socialise with subordinates.
- Liberal democracies are the norm.
- Societies lean more towards egalitarianism.

The Power Distance Index ranges from 1 to 120. The country in the world with the lowest score in power distance is Austria with a rating of 11. The country in the world with the highest score in power distance is Malaysia with a rating of 100. Many Asian countries have unusually high levels of power distance. Most ALI countries are rated on the index, and all are at the high end:

<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Philippines</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Bangladesh</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>China</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>India</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Singapore</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Thailand</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Korea</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Taiwan</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Japan</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Australia</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>22</b>

It is important to note that, while still relevant, this work was done a generation ago. In our larger work in Iclif, we see challenges to power distance and hear many frustrations with outmoded power structures. The prevalence of power distance in the countries above varies depending on the organization and its culture. In some places, we observe what some call "indifferent compliance": a willingness to go along without believing in its validity.

Nonetheless, we see Hofstede's high power distance as a possible explanation for some of the gaps identified in the ALI research.

<sup>14</sup> Source: <http://geert-hofstede.com>



## Major Conclusions and Implications

Asian leaders need to form more constructive mutual relationships with their followers to deliver on a vision that is convincing to all who are required for its success.

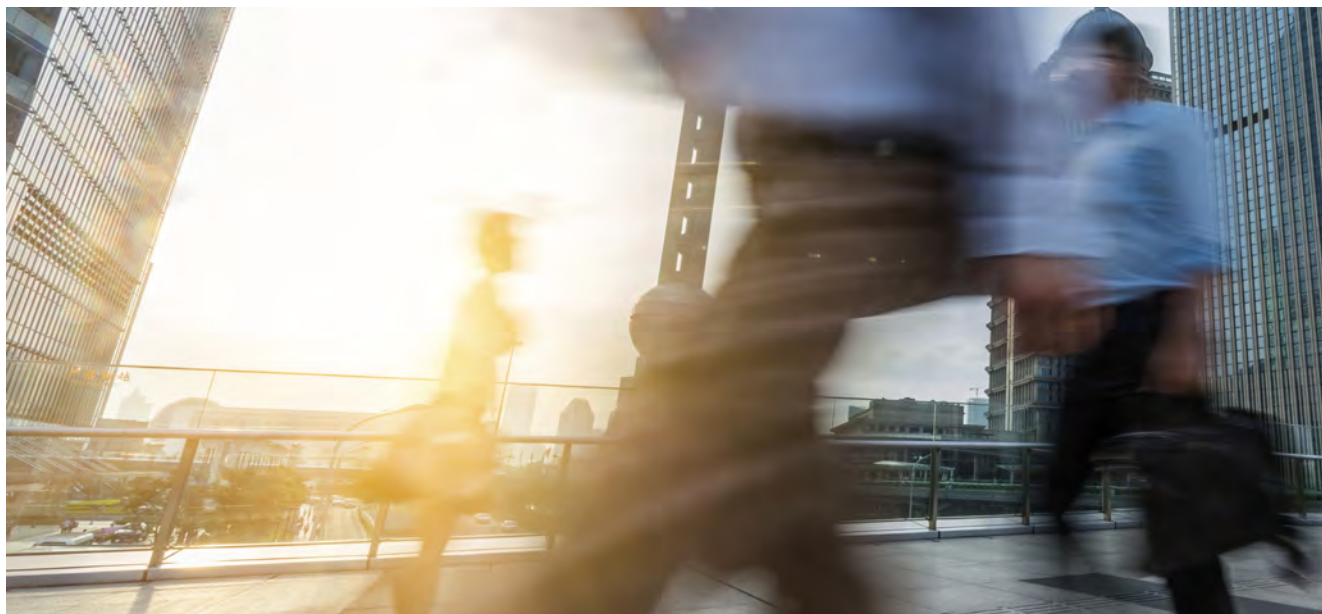
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Two years ago, in an effort to help leaders raise levels of energy and engagement in companies in the region, we set out to answer key questions around leadership in Asia. We knew that many leaders in Asia needed help in transitioning to a higher level of play. We hoped that this research would help us – and them – understand better what was commonly needed across Asia, as well as where key differences might lie. Perhaps leaders were already doing what was needed, but in insufficient measure. Or maybe leaders needed to try on some new behaviours altogether. Engagement scores, retention levels, productivity measures, and more told us that there was no question that they needed to do something differently. The conundrum was what and how.

Two years later, we believe that we have found some useful insights that we hope leaders will take to heart. Some common trends around leadership attributes and how they are expressed in behaviours cannot be ignored: we live in an age when travel, overseas educations, TV, movies, and the Internet have clearly encouraged an internationalization of expectations around leaders. These expectations have largely broken down old beliefs that have historically been prevalent in Asia around high power distance and extreme respect for authority. While stiffly formal dealings between boss and subordinate may still exist in many pockets, they are increasingly anachronistic. The same people who defer to the boss by day are tweeting about him by night. Formal power and authority are fast fading into the past.

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### How does ALI help?

**Vision.** In our thousands of conversations, we strongly heard a desire for vision. Not just any vision, but, “give me a vision that I can believe in.” Asians, like people everywhere, need meaning in their work if they are to put forward their best selves. “A vision I can believe in” speaks to the human desire to engage in something significant, however the individual defines it. When the leader provides a destination that has great worth and value for the people with him or her on the journey, it is a gift because it helps the people themselves feel more important— and justifiably so. They are now able to contribute to the success of something with great purpose, and so they sign up willingly with their hearts, minds, ideas, creativity, and energy.

**Constructive Mutual Relationship.** To engage fully in that vision, these high-octane followers need to connect with their leader. How else can they know that they truly understand the purpose? How else can they effectively and efficiently translate that vision into actions at their level? How else can they get feedback to take the right actions, course correct, learn? How else can they bring what they know forward into the conversation? Because in this day of big data and rapid change, the big boss at the top cannot know it all. And, when the follower does not know what to do, or is discouraged, or feels misunderstood, how else can she be supported but by a leader who perceives the situation and helps make it better?

**The consequences of not having Constructive Mutual Relationship.** When your highest potential people do not get what they need, they will either leave or simply stop making their best and fullest effort. When people don’t have the relationship they need from their leaders, they disengage. Sometimes the frustration they feel every day causes them to underperform: missing deadlines and delivering lower quality work than they are capable of. Sometimes they are resilient enough to perform well, but are constantly scanning the horizon for a better opportunity elsewhere. If the issues are systemic and extend beyond the organization into the region or country, then these professionals will become permanently jaded and “retire in place,” or vault out of Asia altogether and take their talents to places where constructive mutual relationships with their leaders are more likely to exist. If these gaps remain unclosed, companies and even countries will lose out on the fullest efforts of their best and brightest in both the short- and long- term.

In addition to the human cost described above, when leaders are not open to others, they by definition shut out their ideas and insights. Inevitably, this reduces the quality of decision making as fewer ideas are heard, and from a smaller group of people (usually with low diversity). Transparency is also lost, which further alienates would-be followers, laying the trap for leaders to do wrong or cover up mistakes.

## Leaders who are interested in strengthening the level of engagement with the professionals upon whom they depend may consider focusing on the following.

1. **Be Visionary:** As you create an engaging vision, do what you can to ensure that everyone relates to it on a personal level.
  - Ask yourself: How do I know others believe in my vision? How can I find out?
2. **Create Constructive Mutual Relationships.** Leadership can never occur in isolation from followers. Ask key questions and take concrete steps to create these genuine connections.
  - *Be Communicative:* Hold real conversations – genuinely exchanging ideas and approaches. It is legitimate for employees to know what is needed from them and why. Your best followers also need to know that their ideas are being heard, or they will go where someone else will listen. To begin to gauge your own situation, ask yourself:
    - Who speaks up around you? Do you reach out for fresh opinions?
    - Who is willing to disagree with you? From whom are you willing to hear disagreement?
    - How much information do you share with those who report to you so they gain insights into the real issues at hand and can contribute meaningfully to solutions?
    - Who can contact you directly, and who has to go through your gatekeeper?
    - Do you listen carefully? How do you know?
  - *Be Emotionally Aware:* Value fully what these professionals bring, and be aware of your own impact on others' energy.
    - How often do you “step into someone else's shoes” to gain their perspective – to see the world through their eyes?
    - How often do you get out of your own roles, responsibilities, and location to understand how other people live and the challenges they face?
    - How often do you have genuine conversations with people outside your social set – or read books, watch movies, or scan blogs outside your usual habits to develop greater awareness of all the diversity in the world?
    - How often do you find yourself losing your temper when challenged by those below you in rank? Do you find them presumptuous?
  - *Develop Others.* Show these professionals that they are counted among the key future members of the firm.
    - Do you personally coach, sponsor, and mentor your high potentials?
    - When someone fails, do you punish them or use the experience as a learning opportunity?
    - Do you recognize the individual strengths of those around you, and invest in developing those gifts?
    - Do you actively help others to see their future in your organization, or do you keep them guessing?
  - *Empower Others.* Enable followers with the skills and knowledge necessary to do their jobs effectively – and empower them to act.
    - How much power do you share? How much power do you hold onto: access to relationships, knowledge, organizational insights and the like?
    - Do you sponsor key employees to develop the technical and social skills they need to succeed?
    - How much do you encourage or enable others to step up and be counted?

Any relationship is a mutual responsibility. But leaders must accept the onus of creating the conditions for a relationship to flourish.

Many Asians take great pride in being relationship-oriented. ALI tells us very clearly that this great strength of Asia too often does not extend far enough into the workplace, at least not across a divide that too often separates the leaders from the led. Many professionals want and need a real relationship with leaders who are taking them forward into a better future.

### Dealing with the Exceptions

There are also two important outliers whose contrary definitions cannot be overlooked. While the vast majority of countries share the same ideals of leader – as – Visionary, in China we hear that Technically Competent and Trustworthy are the most important traits. The Burmese agree that the ideal leader is Technically Competent, and should also be Performance Driven.

We will be curious to watch these two countries over the next few years. Moving up the value chain will require more knowledge work and innovation. Innovation requires everyone engaged in the work to come forward with good ideas, speak up, be heard.

Will we see a need for Vision arise in these places? Will the Chinese start to seek more relationship oriented behaviors from their leaders? Time will tell.

## Meet the Authors of the Asian Leadership Index



**Kate Sweetman is the Head of Research and a Senior Faculty member in the leadership development practices at the Iclif Leadership & Governance Centre.** Named an Emerging Guru by the Times of London, Kate Sweetman used her base in Boston before locating to Asia to work with both senior and rising leaders throughout North America, Europe and the Middle East. A former editor for *Harvard Business Review*, her work has been published by Harvard Business School Publishing, *Fast Company*, *Forbes*, *The Economic Times of India*, *Capital Magazine (Turkey)*, *BMR (China)*, *CLO Magazine*, and *CFO Magazine*, among others. She has also appeared on CNBC in both the US and India. She is co-author of *The Leadership Code: Five Rules to Lead By*, now in 14 languages, which is all about the four key action domains of ALL great leaders, as well as the personal practise of leaders who prevail over the long haul

She has lectured at The Legatum Center at MIT, coaching young entrepreneurs who are developing for-profit, sustainable businesses in Africa, India, Asia and Latin America. Kate received her MBA from Harvard Business School and her BA from Yale University. Kate's current research examines what we really mean by "Asian leadership," and what new forms are emerging.



**Adel Jayasuria is Vice President of Research & International Markets at the Iclif Leadership & Governance Centre.** Adel has broad and deep experience in cross-cultural governance and leadership in both business and diplomacy in Asia, Australasia, the Middle East and Europe. She began her career in corporate secretarial services for Deloitte Malaysia by providing expert advice to publicly listed companies and their boards in the areas of company law, corporate practice, and compliance matters on related legislation. Following that experience, she worked as chief correspondence officer for the Cuban Ambassador at the Embassy of Cuba in Malaysia, playing a key role as liaison between the foreign affairs ministries of both Malaysia and Cuba.

In 2007, Adel pursued her interest in leadership at the international level by joining Iclif. At Iclif, she has served in various capacities that include program design, evaluation and research. Adel has been instrumental in the completion of the Asian Leadership Index study, Iclif's large scale primary research that profiles senior executives and emerging leaders across Asia Pacific. In addition to her research responsibilities at Iclif, she is the point person for its leadership development work in the Middle East.

Adel received her GradICSA qualifications from the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators, United Kingdom and completed her post-graduate diploma in Marketing with the Chartered Institute of Marketing, United Kingdom.

### Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped to bring ALI to fruition. It is impossible to name each individual but we will try to acknowledge key contributions as best we can.

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To Ethan Becker for helping to shape ALI at its earliest stages.

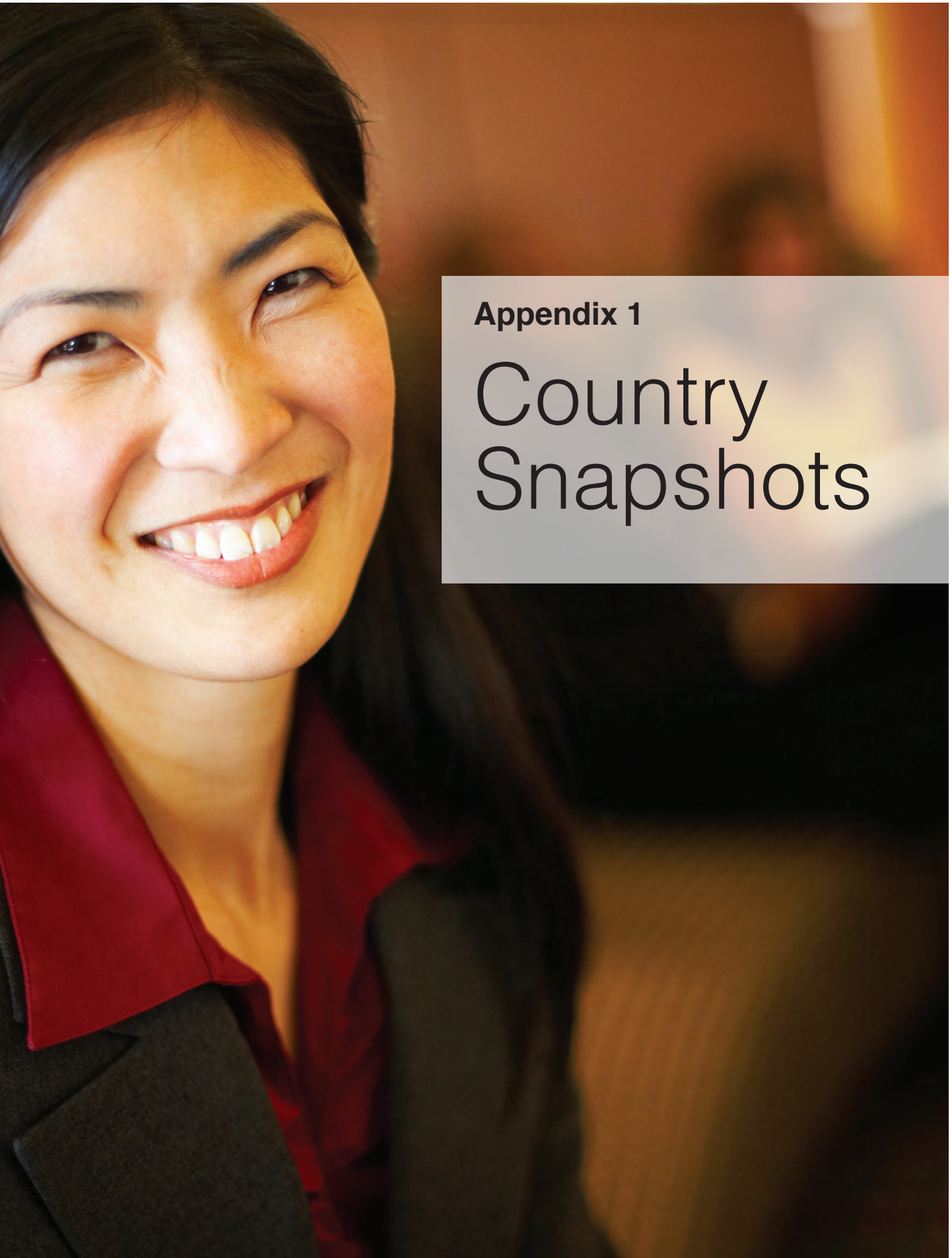
To Dave Hofferberth, Kenton Smith and Dr. Tara Cousineau for their key technical insights and generous conversation.

To the Kadence team, our invaluable fieldwork partner. To Allie Hill Design for making the ALI report beautiful.

To all family and friends who provided support and encouragement on this significant excursion through Asia.

Above all, to the many participants in this study who gave so generously of their time and opinion to advance the cause of leadership in Asia.





## Appendix 1

# Country Snapshots

## Australia

### Australians

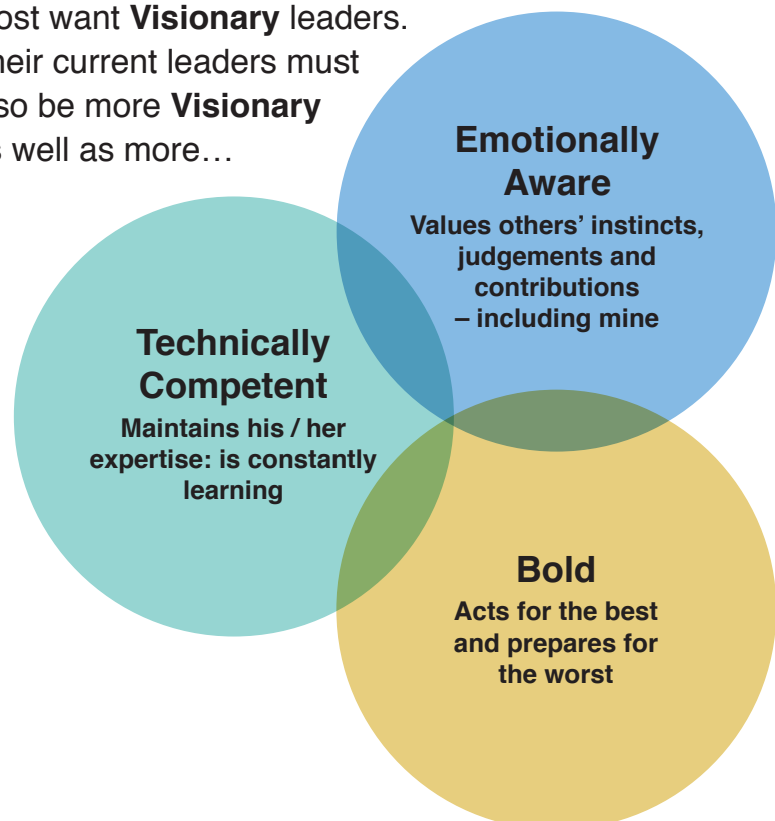
most want **Communicative** leaders. Their current leaders must also be more **Communicative** as well as more...



## Bangladesh

### Bangladeshis

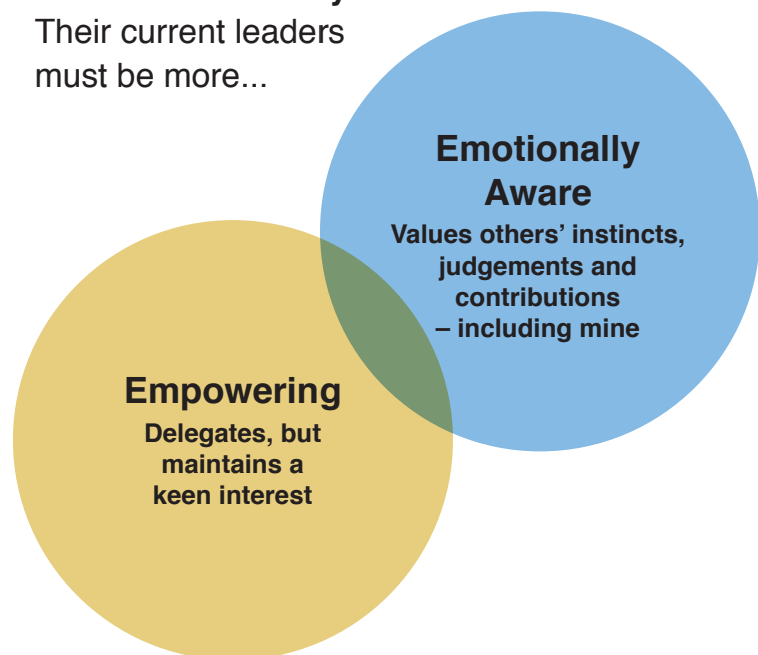
most want **Visionary** leaders. Their current leaders must also be more **Visionary** as well as more...



# Cambodia

## Cambodians

most want **Visionary** leaders.  
Their current leaders  
must be more...



# China

## Chinese

most want **Technically Competent** and **Trustworthy** leaders.  
Their current leaders  
must be more...





# India

## Indians

most want **Visionary** leaders. Their current leaders must also be more **Visionary**

---

# Indonesia

## Indonesians

most want **Visionary** leaders. Their current leaders must also be more **Visionary** as well as more...

## Communicative

Genuinely encourages me and others to discuss and debate ideas and approaches

---

# Japan

## Japanese

most want **Visionary** leaders. Their current leaders must also be more **Visionary**

# Korea

## Koreans

most want **Visionary** leaders. Their current leaders must also be more **Visionary** as well as more...

## Trustworthy

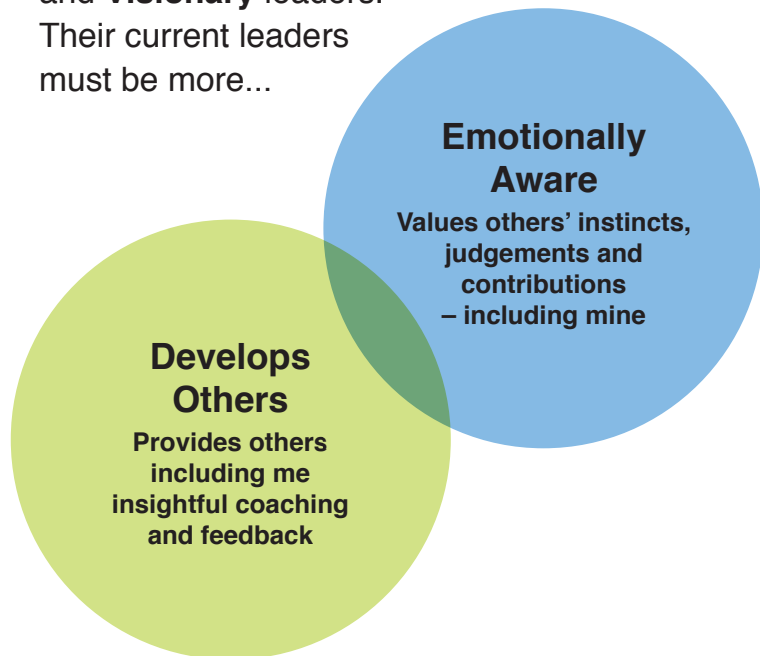
Delivers on promises;  
is reliable

## Laos

### Laotians

most want **Technically Competent** and **Visionary** leaders.

Their current leaders must be more...

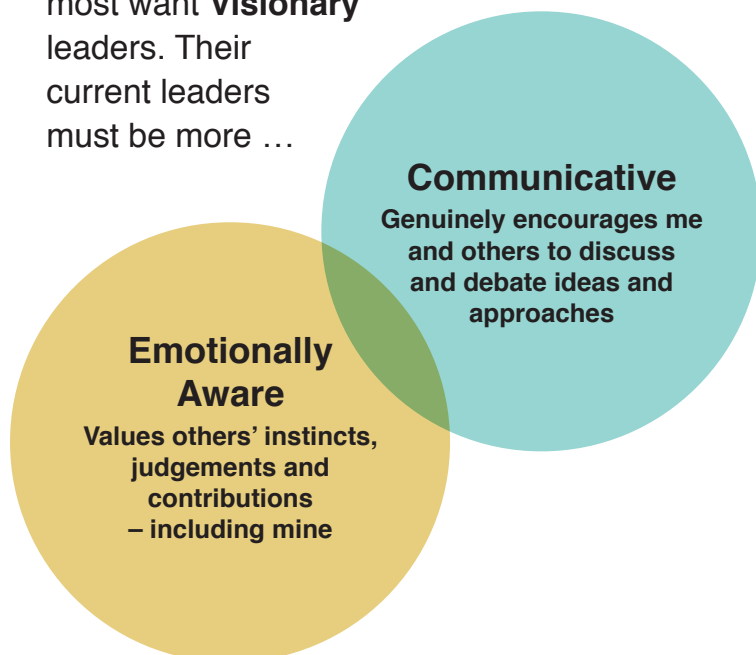


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## Malaysia

### Malaysians

most want **Visionary** leaders. Their current leaders must be more ...



# Myanmar

## Burmese

most want **Technically Competent** and **Performance-driven** leaders. Their current leaders must be more...

### Emotionally Aware

Reads how others feel  
– including me

# New Zealand

## New Zealanders

most want **Visionary** leaders. Their current leaders must be more ...

### Communicative

Genuinely encourages me  
and others to discuss  
and debate ideas and  
approaches

## Phillipines

### Filipinos

most want **Performance-driven** leaders. Their current leaders must be more...

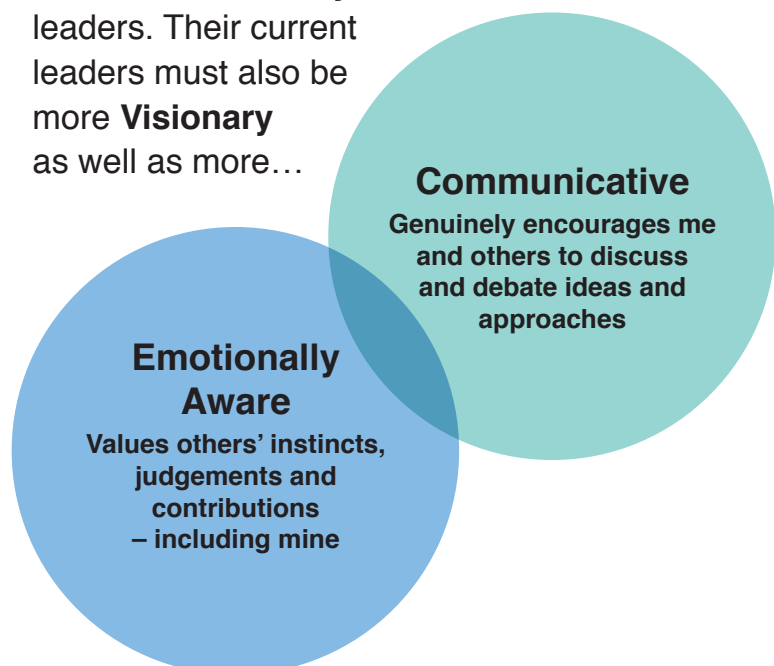


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## Singapore

### Singaporeans

most want **Visionary** leaders. Their current leaders must also be more **Visionary** as well as more...



# Sri Lanka

## Sri Lankans

most want

**Visionary** leaders.

Their current  
leaders must  
be more...



# Taiwan

## Taiwanese

most want **Visionary** leaders.

Their current leaders  
must be more...



## Thailand

### Thais

most want **Visionary** leaders.  
Their current leaders must also  
be more **Visionary**  
as well as  
more...

#### Communicative

Genuinely encourages me  
and others to discuss  
and debate ideas and  
approaches

---

## Vietnam

### Vietnamese

most want **Visionary** leaders.  
Their current leaders must  
also be more **Visionary**  
as well  
as more...

#### Emotionally Aware

Values others' instincts,  
judgements and  
contributions  
– including mine

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## Appendix 2

# About the Asian Leadership Index



# Why the Asian Leadership Index?

It has become a cliché to observe that this is the Asian Century.

Asia holds over half of the world's population and most of its economic growth potential. The smart money has been betting on Asia's promise for years: every multinational corporation has major operations here; global supply chains reach into every corner of Asia; and significant educational institutions from the West are setting up shop. Asian banks, Asian telecommunications companies, and other Asian businesses are growing beyond their home markets, spreading across the region and the globe. Shopping malls are popping up like mushrooms and a vast selection of Asian products and services are available online – the consumer economy has long been unleashed. Major spending on R&D has shifted into ambitious countries like China, which should give the West a run for its money on the Next New Thing.

If the future is so exciting – so already in evidence – why aren't there more inspired Asian companies than there already are? Why aren't more of them the most profitable and productive organizations in the world? Why, in fact, are employee engagement and retention levels in Asia so low – among the lowest levels in the world on both counts? Why is it so hard for companies in Asia to grow across the region by developing the local talent who are the future leaders of a new era? After all, didn't they just win the generational lottery?

The vision of the Asian Century seems so clear. And yet, too few of Asia's current leaders are helping the next generation to sign up for it with energy and enthusiasm. Left unaddressed, the Asian Century could fail to meet its potential.

Explanations abound for this phenomenon, ranging from educational systems designed for yesterday to cultures with values that don't necessarily include climbing a corporate ladder. Fair enough. And yet the digital generation from which emerging leaders should rise is more global than any before it, better and more broadly educated, and freer to choose its values and paths. Importantly, many who have the chance migrate to other parts of the world to pursue their futures, proving that lack of ambition is not the problem.

What is really going on?

We developed the Asian Leadership Index to examine this question. Our lens is leadership; specifically, what do the very professionals who should be most engaged in building the Asia future have to say about their leaders?

## Our Approach

**Background.** The idea for the Asian Leadership Index was sparked in 2011 by three questions we heard repeatedly.

1. *“Do Western assumptions about effective leaders apply in Asia?”* A good question, as notions about leadership have been migrating from West to East for generations. We had no response as that research had never been done.
2. *“What is special about Asian leaders?”* Attempting to answer this question, we rigorously investigated the literature and found no single, large-scale study of corporate leadership in Asia that captured the size and complexity of the region. Given that so many of our clients at Iclif are in the business of growing across Asia, a limited study of three or four markets would not meet their needs.
3. *“What do leaders in Asia need to do differently to more deeply involve others in actualizing the vision?”* We heard references to high power distance and other cultural conditions, but nothing definitive and certainly nothing recent. Given the amount of change that has taken place via the Internet alone, this question seemed well worth investigating.

## Our Response: The Asian Leadership Index (ALI)

ALI is a structured, multiphase **exploration** into the expectations, characteristics, behaviours, strengths, and weaknesses of leaders in 18 Asian countries at the level of both senior leaders and emerging leaders. Our goal: to **describe** what leadership in Asia looks like – both ideal and real – and **identify** what leadership traits would engage more high potential followers in Asia. We decided to explore two distinct yet related questions:

- 1) ***What is the individual’s schema for leadership?*** In other words, who is their ideal leader? A schema is an organized pattern of thinking, a framework, in effect, likely formed during one’s earliest experiences in life and in concert with the dominant culture. One’s schema helps to create order and meaning, and helps one to interpret the world. We were curious to see if there were any patterns by nationality or other factors around ideal leadership. For example, do a majority of Indians describe a national icon like Gandhi as an ideal leader? Or does someone from Myanmar perhaps describe an Aung San Suu Kyi? If so, *perhaps a national bias around ideal leaders might have implications for leaders trying to move across boundaries* who don’t exemplify a Gandhi-like or Kyi-like approach.
- 2) ***What is the individual’s current experience with his or her current leader? In particular, in what ways does that person’s leadership style frustrate the follower?*** We were also curious to see any possible patterns in how people described the shortcomings of their immediate leaders. *Might trends in frustration or disappointment at the regional or country level help us understand what current leaders need to do more of or differently to quickly close key gaps? Did their frustrations centre around the leader’s falling short of achieving some ideal, or might other traits be observed as critically important?* If so, that could have implications for what current leaders can address in themselves to boost employee loyalty, and through that increase various business results (commitment, productivity, profitability, innovation, and customer focus).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Alfonso Pulido, Dorian Stone and John Strevel, *The Three Cs of Customer Satisfaction: Consistency, Consistency, Consistency*, [http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/consumer\\_and\\_retail/the\\_three\\_cs\\_of\\_customer\\_satisfaction\\_consistency\\_consistency\\_consistency](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/consumer_and_retail/the_three_cs_of_customer_satisfaction_consistency_consistency_consistency), 2014

The fieldwork for the 2014 study took place over a 17-month period from July 2012 to November 2013. Our multinational team spoke directly to almost 3,500 selected corporate professionals – at no point did we rely on online surveys. Our respondents included current members of senior management teams as well as emerging leaders identified as likely to be on the senior teams of tomorrow. Our respondents worked within a range of companies that are influential both globally and within their own home markets: multinational and local corporations, government and state-owned enterprises, family-owned businesses, and government-linked companies.

The size of the sample and the variation within it would also allow us to examine the results not only by country and level (senior leaders and emerging leaders) but also by other factors that, upon analysis, might turn out to be relevant: gender, exposure abroad, educational level, industry type, company type. This particular report only addresses general findings at the level of the country.



### Phase I (July 2012 – January 2013) In- Person Qualitative Inquiry

*Objective.* The objective of Phase I was to begin to understand in a highly disciplined fashion how leaders present in Asia. From this methodical analysis, we could then develop a hypothesis or hypotheses on leadership in Asia to test in a large scale Pan-Asian study that would deliver quantitative results. We also gathered stories.

*What we did.* In Phase I, we spoke with 70 senior leaders and emerging leaders in 90-minute, face-to-face interviews in six Asian countries chosen to represent Asia's diversity: India, China, Malaysia, Australia, Japan and Vietnam. We asked open-ended questions in a consistent variety of ways to uncover what they value in leaders, both ideal and real. We tested the existing literature on cultural diversity as it relates to leadership. We worked in both English (where possible) and in the respondent's native language using native interviewers, trained and experienced in data-gathering fieldwork, who had been well briefed not only on the ALI interview protocol but also on the objectives of the study. These 60- to 90-minute interviews were recorded, and the transcripts translated into English using expert translators. In total, well over 1,000 pages of transcripts were analysed using the established social science research methodology of key word analysis.



*Who we talked to.* Senior leader and emerging leaders.

- To obtain the perspective of senior leaders, we worked with the highest level executives (i.e. Chief of X), including Managing Director and General Manager;
- To obtain the perspective of emerging leaders, our screening requirements included having more than 2 years of experience in their current job role, and having direct responsibility for at least 5 individuals in their day-to-day work with oversight for their professional development and appraisal.
- Number of interviews by level (70: 55% C-suites, 45% Emerging Leader )
- Gender (74% Male, 26% Female)
- Industry Profile
  - Conglomerate
  - Banking and financial services
  - Professional services
  - Consumer products
  - Retail
  - Media, entertainment, hospitality
  - Government
  - Education
  - Manufacturing/Industrial
  - Automotive
  - Energy
  - Healthcare
  - Technology
  - Telecommunications
  - Transportation/Logistics

*Key questions asked in Phase I:*

1. When you hear the word “leader,” what 3 words spring to mind?
2. When you hear the word “leader,” what person springs to mind?
3. In an ideal world, what does a leader provide?
4. In your current world, what does your leader provide?
  - positive
  - negative

*What we heard.* Our questions unleashed a lot of passion in our respondents. We found them very willing to share what they thought an ideal leader would provide them. They were even more eager to tell stories, both positive and negative, about their experience of their current leaders. Below are some quotes.

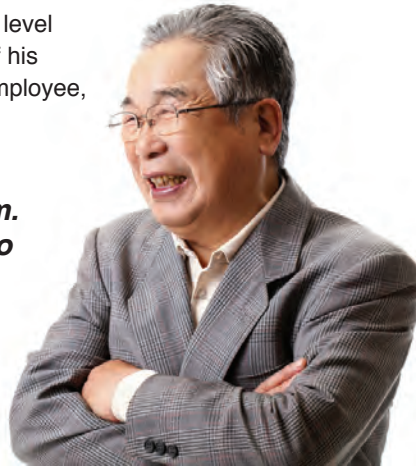
When we asked a Malaysian leader at the C-suite level what an ideal leader provides, that person answered:

***“To me, great leaders are passionate leaders. They are passionate about what they do but also they are passionate about the people who follow them. If I see that, if I see passion, sincerity, that they are doing things for the right reasons with no hidden agendas – these are the people I would follow.”***



When we asked a Japanese leader at the C-Suite level what his current leader provided, he told a story of his leader's care and consideration for an outgoing employee, and said:

***“This is just a leader who cares... about the people who followed him. He wasn’t doing it for status or ego — it’s all about collectiveness... it was the right thing to do. I said to my boss: ‘As long as you keep doing things like that, I will keep working for you.’”***



Analysis revealed 10 attributes and a range of behavioural descriptors. Our cluster analysis of the transcripts revealed that the most mentioned attributes in leaders were the following (in order of frequency of mention):

1. Visionary
2. Communicative
3. Trustworthy
4. Performance-driven
5. Driven
6. Empowering
7. Develops Others
8. Bold
9. Emotionally Aware
10. Technically Competent

But we could not stop there. We also heard people describe these traits in different ways. For example, some people described “visionary” in a way that was very “top down”: they wanted leaders to paint a picture that they could personally relate to. Others wanted a visionary who included them in creating the vision. Still others wanted a visionary who could seize an opportunity. Others wanted them to be able to envision danger and avoid it. Different definitions of the same word would have to be recognized in this study as well.



Thus, we arrived at a list of attributes and a range of behavioural descriptors that we could now test on a large scale. Each description stands alone to represent a point of view we heard in the interviews.

ATTRIBUTE	BEHAVIOURAL DESCRIPTORS
<b>Visionary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a dream for our company/group that I believe in</li> <li>• Enlists others in supporting the dream</li> <li>• Sees opportunities early</li> <li>• Sees problems early</li> </ul>
<b>Communicative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listens to me and others</li> <li>• Articulates ideas in ways I understand</li> <li>• Genuinely encourages me and others to discuss and debate ideas and approaches</li> </ul>
<b>Trustworthy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds rapport with me</li> <li>• Delivers on promises; is reliable</li> <li>• Respects my contributions</li> <li>• Treats everyone fairly</li> <li>• Puts interests of others ahead of his/her own</li> </ul>
<b>Performance-driven</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puts the right people in place</li> <li>• Puts effective processes / structures in place</li> <li>• Outcome-oriented</li> </ul>
<b>Driven</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows high levels of drive</li> <li>• Radiates positive energy to me and others</li> <li>• Bounds over obstacles – never gives up</li> <li>• Is driven to create a better future</li> </ul>
<b>Empowering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not need to approve every decision</li> <li>• Delegates, but maintains a keen interest</li> <li>• Provides skills, knowledge, experience for me and my team to do the job</li> <li>• Entrusts me and my team to do the job</li> </ul>
<b>Develops Others</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets challenging but feasible goals for others – including me</li> <li>• Provides others- including me – insightful coaching and feedback</li> <li>• Helps others and me plan our futures</li> <li>• Cares about others' future, including my own</li> </ul>
<b>Bold</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is willing to do things differently</li> <li>• Is willing to disagree with crowd, even at personal risk</li> <li>• Acts for the best and prepares for the worst</li> </ul>
<b>Emotionally Aware</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understands him/herself emotionally</li> <li>• Reads how others feel – including me</li> <li>• Values others' instincts, judgments, and contributions – including mine</li> </ul>
<b>Technically Competent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a very high degree of knowledge and skill in his/her job role</li> <li>• Has significant industry experience</li> <li>• Maintains his/her expertise; is constantly learning</li> </ul>

*Qualitative Outcomes.* Phase I also allowed us to formulate two hypotheses to test on a large scale.

1. People have ideals of leadership that vary across countries.
  - Changing the country will change the definition of an ideal leader.
2. People's real experiences of leadership in their actual bosses vary across countries.
  - Changing the country will change what the follower wishes his or her leader could do more of or better.

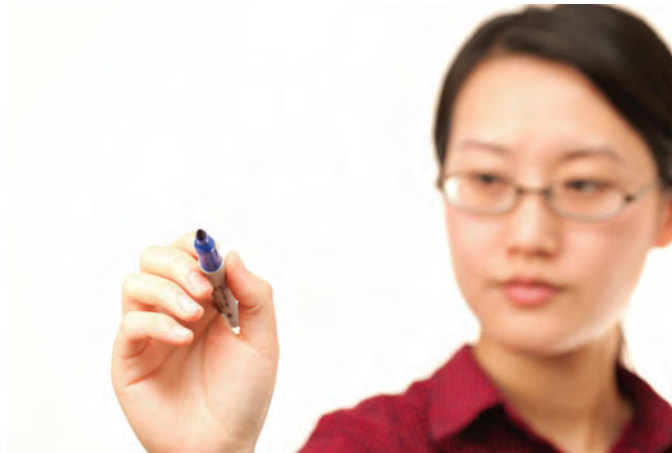
In the Quantitative phase, we would continue with a descriptive approach to this investigation of leadership.<sup>16</sup>

## Phase II (February – November 2013) Person-to-Person Quantitative Inquiry

*Objective.* The objective of Phase II was to test the two hypotheses in a high-touch way across 18 Asian countries to uncover quantitatively reliable findings that would help leaders in Asia.

*What we did.* In Phase II, we spoke with almost 3,500 senior leaders and emerging leaders in highly structured 25-minute interviews, either face-to-face or on the phone. Thirty percent of our respondents were senior leaders<sup>17</sup> and 70 percent were emerging leaders.<sup>18</sup> They came from the following 18 countries:

- Australia
- Bangladesh
- Cambodia
- China
- India
- Indonesia
- Japan
- Korea
- Laos
- Malaysia
- Myanmar
- New Zealand
- Philippines
- Singapore
- Sri Lanka
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- Vietnam



<sup>16</sup> **We chose a descriptive approach** because we were interested in understanding whether aspects of leadership varied by country and, secondarily, by level. Simply gaining clarity on that would be a large advance in our understanding of leaders in Asia. The behavioural descriptors' design would add a level of concreteness to the inquiry that would be extremely helpful in ultimately creating educational support for strengthening leaders. In a topic as complex as leadership, it is not possible to uncover cause and effect on such a large scale. In any case, good prediction does not depend on causal relationships. Correlation is sufficient to allow us to work with the study outcomes.

<sup>17</sup> **Senior leaders** are defined as the highest level executives (Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Chairman, Managing Director, General Manager) who must have a superior and/or report to someone other than stakeholders.

<sup>18</sup> **Emerging leaders** are defined as executives who have direct responsibility for at least 5 individuals or span of control of 20; have at least 2 years' experience in their current job role; come from a range of critical business functions (e.g. sales, marketing, finance, operations logistics, etc.); and are under 45 years of age.)

*Questionnaire structure.*

- **Section A: demographics and firmographics.** While respondents had been selected in accordance with our study criteria, asking these questions in the interview itself allowed a second level of security that respondents met the study design. This inquiry also allowed us to collect information that enabled us to parse the data at the regional and sometimes the country level: gender, industry, exposure abroad, education level, geographic clusters, and economic developmental level clusters.
- **Section B: What Do I Most Want in an Ideal Leader?** This section investigated the person's automatic response to the phrase "Ideal leader" using the 10 attributes identified in Phase I.
  - We asked respondents to allocate 100 points among the 10 attributes, giving attributes they thought more important more points, and less important attributes fewer points. While we encouraged them to make clear choices, they were allowed to give equal points to any attributes.
  - While encouraged to choose a "most important" attribute, they were not required to do so and so could have more than one "most important" choice.
  - A further note on methodology: to avoid bias, the order of the list of attributes was frequently scrambled.
  - We then asked respondents to define what each attribute means in an ideal leader by selecting from a list of behavioural descriptors.
- **Section C: What Does My Current Leader Most Need to Better Develop or Improve On?** This section investigated the person's real live experience with their actual boss.
  - We again used the 100 point system allocation, again frequently scrambling the list to avoid bias.
  - We again asked respondents to define what each attribute means by selecting from a list of behavioural descriptors, focusing only on the top three areas for improvement.

We also included a few test questions at the close of the interview on the topics of personal energy and followership.

*Statistical confidence levels.* Confidence Levels refer to the reliability of the result. ALI used a market research industry standard of 95 percent. This means that if we were to repeat the study 100 times, 95 times out of 100 the results will be within the margin of error.

To learn more about the findings of the Quantitative Research, please turn to **Research Findings Part I: What Do I Most Want in an Ideal Leader** and **Research Findings Part II: What Does My Current Leader Need to Better Develop or Improve On?**



# Research Detail for Quantitative Phase

- Gender: Male: 70% Female: 30%

- Industries Profiled

- |                                  |                                     |                            |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Conglomerate                   | • Media, entertainment, hospitality | • Energy                   |
| • Banking and financial services | • Government                        | • Healthcare               |
| • Professional services          | • Education                         | • Technology               |
| • Consumer products              | • Manufacturing/Industrial          | • Telecommunications       |
| • Retail                         | • Automotive                        | • Transportation/Logistics |

- Hard quotas (country and respondent level)

- Soft quotas (all other)

- |                                    |                       |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • Industry                         | • Span of Control     |
| • Gender                           | • Industry Experience |
| • Generation                       | • Number of Employees |
| • Exposure Abroad (Work/Education) | • Company Type        |
| • Highest Education Level          | • Nationality         |







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