

# The New Global Russian Business Leaders: Lessons from a Decade of Transition

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With the fall of the Soviet Union, private enterprise in Russia has sky-rocketed and a new generation of Russian entrepreneurs has begun to emerge. In their article, Kets De Vries et al. study Russian business leadership's formation of a new "global Russian" style. After briefly discussing seven successful entrepreneurs, the article goes on to find commonalities, listing eight leadership lessons found from these Russian leaders and their experiences. Next, the article highlights four challenges to the new leadership style. And finally, Kets De Vries et al. discuss the future of Russian business leadership and research on the topic.

Described as "energetic opportunists," the examples of successful "global Russian" business leaders are seen to break from the norm of past, more centralized organization. Emerging from these leaders are lessons other prospective Russian entrepreneurs can follow. The first lesson is to be flexible with both the self and the environment, motivated to always reach one's potential. The second lesson calls for creating successful leadership networks, made up of ample connections with sellers, buyers, government officials, etc. The third lesson to follow is to focus on creating positive change and not waiting for others like the government to follow through instead. Related to this idea is the fourth lesson: "develop tenacity," always being persistent in overcoming obstacles. In the spirit of the former Soviet Union, the fifth lesson calls for refining one's emotional intelligence, knowing how to read others emotions and react properly. The sixth lesson mentions the importance of a "council of boyars," a private, inner-circle of advisors that protects a leader from the public while making decisions. The seventh lesson involves a powerful and charismatic leadership style, and the eighth lesson calls for complete understanding of one's primary goals.

With these lessons, however, come challenges for "global Russian" leadership. The first challenge is finding and developing future leadership for one's business. A second challenge is found in building trust for the organization, creating openness that allows for easier transformation when new problems arise. The third challenge deals with the difficulty of protecting assets and managing government relations, as the Russian government has gained central power and influence since the initial Soviet fall. The final challenge is to build a modern, 21st-Century organization that truly involves a unique Russian model. This model includes four objectives: goals for long-term success and competition, skills other international rivals have already mastered (flexibility, productive

innovation and speed, among others), better employee empowerment and networking, and greater information sharing.

Due to a common reticence among Russian business organizations – an unfortunate testament to their former Soviet roots – more research on the executives themselves and their advisors can be done. But as Kets De Vries et al. conclude on the future of business leadership in Russia, “Global Russians have collectively created a hybrid leadership model, flexible enough to reflect the requirements of different types of organizations, that will serve not only a new generation of Russian entrepreneurs, but also other business professionals engaged in creating organizations that will provide sustainable returns in global markets” (646).