A New Global Thought Leadership Community Is Born

Rita Kaufmann-Linke | March 1, 2016

Rita Kaufmann-Linke, CEO of the IRC Institute Global Executive Board, expounds on the rationale, drivers and objectives behind the launch of the IRC Institute and its contribution to leadership excellence.

Q: What is the IRC Institute (IRCI)?

A: The IRC Institute is a global community of business professionals with a common interest in developing practical knowledge for executives, among other stakeholders. It’s a public forum for thought leadership.

Q: How do you define thought leadership?

A: We view thought leadership as the presentation of ideas that go beyond common knowledge, that are ahead of the curve, something special, not a ‘me too’ statement. In the IRCI we aim to present practical, experiential wisdom and intrinsic knowledge. Rather than copying what comes from a management textbook, we strive to digest the theory, add the practical knowledge and draw conclusions that are actually relevant to the world.

Q: What inspired the creation of the IRC Institute (IRCI)?

A: IRC Global Executive Search Partners is a diverse and passionate community. We wanted to share the insight and experience of our network by exploring themes that resonate with a broad, global audience. We aimed to leverage the inherent value of our network of more than 300 partners in 47 countries by establishing the IRCI as an interactive, go-to resource base.
Q: Why did you choose intercultural management as the theme for the IRCI’s inaugural year?

A: This topic is really connected to why we established the institute. We conducted a survey among IRC partners to find out exactly which themes were relevant to the broadest set of clients. We wanted to know if there were common trends across the globe. We made this decision in dialogue with our clients, understanding what was on their minds and to make valuable knowledge available to them. Intercultural management was by far the most important topic cited across the board.

Q: How do you define culture within the context of this theme?

A: We define culture broadly, in a national context, in a generational sense, and in the context of corporate culture, which influences branding and is usually the number one factor in attracting and retaining talent. Culture has relevance within companies and between companies. We are also interested in exploring drivers of cultural change. Or
think of acquisitions, where culture plays a vital role in many ways. The culture theme is so far-reaching that it resonates with every business leader.

**Q: What other topics does the IRCI plan to tackle?**

A: It was a strategic decision to focus on one core topic, which turned out to be the theme of culture. However, we will continue exploring the topics relevant to leaders and managers operating at a global level, but we haven’t written subsequent topics in stone. We will listen to our audience and continue taking the pulse of the market as we go along.

**Q: What is the target audience for the IRCI?**

A: Our target audience is comprised of our current clients across the globe, businesspersons beyond our existing base and up-and-coming leaders. We launched the IRCI to share practical knowledge and solutions. For example, in the event a company based in the EU buys a company in Asia, there may be cultural issues that someone else has gone through that can help avoid problems for that buyer. The IRCI is a forum to share such best practices and empower business leaders by providing shortcuts to success wherever possible. We want to share conceptual tools and proven methods that empower our community to build on what others have accomplished and avoid mistakes that may have caused unnecessary challenges for others.

**Q: Who can contribute and interact with the IRCI and how?**

A: The IRCI welcomes contributions from all members of the IRC Global Executive Search Partners network, as well as academics and business leaders. They can propose ideas and content directly to the IRCI board or via IRC offices around the world. We are interested in hearing the views, experiences and lessons from a wide range of contributors. Our readership at large is encouraged to share feedback and insights by posting comments below each article.

**Q: How will the IRCI encourage senior business leaders to participate and contribute?**

A: Business leaders who have achieved success tend to be very generous in sharing the path they took, including the tough lessons and shortcuts. The IRCI provides a platform for these leaders to share knowledge and leverage their success to empower others to achieve. The IRCI is also a virtual meeting ground where business leaders can mingle on an intellectual level with like-minded individuals and come up with new ideas, get
inspired and find answers. The IRCI provides that opportunity and this is its main value proposition. Additionally, if a business leader has a specific request, on how to approach a particular cultural challenge in a certain part of the world, for example, we can leverage our network and conduct a quick survey and get results fast.

**Q: How does the IRCI engage its audience and encourage feedback?**

A: As IRC partners we are in constant contact with our clients. We provide insight and knowledge based on our experiences to add value wherever we can. When I meet with clients, they also want input from me. It’s like a living, breathing, entity that allows me to put forth ideas, explore trending issues and provide feedback on a wide range of themes. The IRCI is a forum where we’ve replicated this fundamental interactive approach that defines the IRC way of doing business, not just for our clients, but for a broad community of participants. We aim to inspire readers with fresh thoughts and expect that we’ll also be challenged with new ideas from our audience, creating a natural feedback loop.

**Q: How do you see the IRCI growing and evolving?**

A: The IRCI is still in its infancy, but our goal is to create a go-to place where business leaders can find some practical answers, from the global surveys we conduct to the thought-provoking articles written by IRC partners and invited contributors. We aim to continue building our community and increasing engagement and the publication of articles and multimedia content, including videos with business leaders and interactive webinars.
Q: Who is on the IRCI board and why were these individuals selected?

A: The IRCI board is comprised of four members: Hamilton Texeira from Brazil, Grace-Zata from the Philippines, Stepan Motejzik, from Czech Republic, and myself, from Austria. I selected these board members to represent our broad geographical regions: Hamilton from the Americas, Grace from Asia and two members from the EU, where we have our highest concentration of offices. All of us have experience in the business world beyond consulting and I wanted to have a balanced board with two men and two women, diverse in nationality, age and background. Additionally, we have an advisory panel comprised of three former IRC board members: Sylvia MacArthur from Canada, Malcolm Duncan from Australia and Richard Boot from the UK. Again, these three members represent our principal global geographies. Over the past few months we’ve brought on three external members of the advisory panel: intercultural management consultant Christa Uehlinger, Ivan Yardley, a brand and marketing expert with a military background and James Donald, a university professor with substantial insight into management theory and practice.

Q: What is the correlation between the IRC Global Executive Search Partners and the IRCI?

A: The IRC and IRCI are interconnected. IRC partners contribute with their experience, knowledge and by tapping their network of senior executives. IRCI is a stand-alone content partner of the IRC, focused on proving context and practical knowledge in articles, videos, by organizing conferences and by bringing people and ideas together. We will use the IRCI to facilitate networking opportunities with and among senior business leaders while sharing knowledge, noteworthy experiences and valuable lessons from around the globe. Many IRC partners have experience running companies themselves, so we are uniquely positioned to understand the needs of our clients.

Rita Kaufmann-Linke

Rita founded her consulting firm in 2010 and focuses both on Executive Search and Human Resources Consulting, which encompasses areas like organizational design, talent & performance management and executive coaching. She began her professional career in environmental politics before she changed to the area of Human Resources, holding several functions in HR Management, Corporate Talent Management and Leadership Development in an international natural resources
group. Until 2009 she was an executive HR Director for an international paper and packaging group with some 35,000 employees in 35 countries. She is very experienced in managing complex challenges of international HR management and has an excellent track record in finding the best qualified candidates for open positions. Her broad academic background includes a Master Degree of Natural Science at the University of Vienna, an Executive MBA, a postgraduate study in Law and Economics, and an MSc for Executive Coaching. She is also certified as a systemic consultant for organizational development (Beratergruppe Neuwaldegg).

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