

The world is beating a path to Canada. Why isn't Canada beating the world?



MARCUS GEE
ASIA-PACIFIC

mgee@globeandmail.com

Deizzo Horvath is frustrated.

In two decades as dean of York University's Schulich School of Business, he has made it his life's work to create business men and women who see the world as their oyster. His international orientation has made Schulich a global contender.

So why, oh why, isn't Canada? Over the recent years of rampant globalization, its share of global trade has actually fallen. A few years ago, Mr. Horvath says, Canada at least had two or three companies among the top 100 transnational companies. Now it has none.

"We really lost out," he says. "We are almost nowhere."

To him, that is not only annoying but perplexing. A Hungarian émigré who moved to Sweden and has lived and worked around the world, he is

convinced that Canada has the potential to be one of the leading competitors in global business. With its diverse population, linked by language and family to countries around the world, it should be a big presence in booming markets like China's or India's. It simply isn't. Others, he says, are beating us to the punch.

"Why is Denmark succeeding? Why is South Korea succeeding? Why is Germany succeeding? Why are we not succeeding?"

It's a fair question. When Mr. Horvath came to Canada in 1976, he was amazed at how open it was to the world. "It didn't matter if I had an accent. The prime minister had an accent! It didn't matter where I was from."

Canada, he says, "is heaven for an internationally oriented person." Yet he believes this country has largely squandered that advantage. "Somehow there came this attitude that we are too small to compete globally. Many are just content to compete in Canada, or go to the United States."

Mr. Horvath has battled for years to change that attitude. When he took over as dean he decided to take a flyer and do



Dezso Horvath of the Schulich School of Business says Canada has the potential to be one of the leading competitors in global business because of its diverse population. CHARLA JONES/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

what no other school in Canada was doing at the time: Make Schulich a truly international school with its eyes on the world's horizons.

Today the school has students from 90 countries. In its top-rung international MBA program, 80 per cent of students speak three or more languages. Courses are taught in seven different tongues. To make sure its students are truly proficient, the school brings in executives from Russia or Germany or China to stage mock

negotiations. Schulich has more than 80 alumni chapters, covering every continent but Antarctica.

China has been a focus for Mr. Horvath since the early 1980s, when he travelled there to help offer some of the earliest Western management training in the reform era. He remembers riding through the streets in a big, black official limousine as people passed by on bikes or on foot.

Mandarin Chinese is more and more popular at the

school. More than 500 graduates, most of them of Chinese background, work in China, many in senior government or corporate posts. Schulich offers a popular dual-city MBA along with China's Peking University. Students study one year in Beijing, one in Toronto.

As a result of Schulich's relentless global focus – its slogan is "global, innovative, diverse" – it has started appearing on lists of the top-ranked international business schools. Managers from around the world come to learn at its magnificent \$100-million-plus building on the York campus in northwest Toronto or its newly renovated downtown campus.

Yet, for all this, the broader message just doesn't seem to be getting through. Mr. Horvath and Schulich emphasize the importance of learning about other cultures when doing business abroad. Thus the importance placed on language. Yet when Canadian business people roam abroad, he says, "they go over and say 'I'm going to come back with a great deal two weeks later.' Forget it. If you want to capitalize you have to do the work before."

Schulich often spends years

cultivating overseas clients for its management program. Its people spent five years courting the powerful Bank of China, travelling to China two or three times a year before interesting its executives in coming to learn at Schulich.

"How do we make Canadians more confident that they can succeed abroad?" Mr. Horvath wondered over tea in the vast, airy boardroom at Schulich. "How can we make them aware of all the opportunities outside the United States?"

"We really need a global orientation. We have to have an understanding of other languages and cultures."

Schulich has helped create a new breed of globally aware graduates, but Mr. Horvath is quick to admit that while it is big by Canadian standards – one-third of business graduates in Ontario come from Schulich – it is a small force in the scheme of things.

And in Canada, he says, "we don't have the opportunity to wait years and years." As Schulich itself has shown, globalization can be a "win-win" as both sides profit from a growing exchange of goods, skills and ideas. But first, Canadians have to get in the game.