

A SHRM 2019 Interview with Global Competence Associates President, Christi Hunter

Interview conducted by Brett Familoe



Who is Global Competence Associates? Tell us everything, just as you would someone approaching your booth and asking you this question at SHRM19 in Las Vegas.

Global competence means having cultural knowledge, adaptable interpersonal skills, and respectful attitudes in order to interact effectively with people around the world. Global Competence Associates has been the leader in global competence research, assessment, and development since 1999. Once this groundbreaking [research](#) was published, we developed an assessment—the [Global Competence Aptitude Assessment®](#)—to objectively measure all the dimensions of global competence. We also use our research as the foundation for our global competence and diversity and inclusion (D&I) training programs, as well as for our certification, consultation, and public speaking engagements.

Let us in on the magic. What’s the training process like at Global Competence Associates? How do you utilize your own practices to ensure not only global competence, but diversity and inclusion in your employees?

Our training programs cover both D&I as well as global competence. Our [global competence training](#) programs infuse all dimensions of the [Global Competence Model™](#), which includes self-awareness, attitudes, cultural knowledge, and interpersonal skills, since a globally competent person uses all aptitudes synergistically. Our approach to [D&I training](#) is to use the same framework of global competence, but instead of a global context, we scale down the geographic scope to meet the needs of our clients.

It’s important that our associates understand how to treat people of different backgrounds with respect in order to foster inclusivity and positive working interactions. In addition, we encourage open dialogue about our diverse experiences so

that we can learn from each other, and we promote both an expectation and an environment of continuous learning.

What are the biggest challenges companies face in regard to diversity and inclusion? How do they overcome those challenges?

Having a diverse staff offers an organization tremendous advantage. However, the work is not complete after talent acquisition professionals have actively recruited new hires to diversify the organization or when people of different backgrounds are already on staff. Organizations must be prepared and receptive so that there is an internal culture of acceptance and respect for difference. Otherwise new hires will leave the organization, which is very costly and counterproductive. Existing employees need to feel a sense of belonging and that their perspectives and contributions are valued, or they will move to a competitor who offers a more inclusive working environment.

From our experiences, many times organizations have focused on physical diversity dimensions, such as race or gender, as well as training to reframe attitudes. The issue is that other key aspects of diversity are often overlooked—the ones that get to core human elements of beliefs and feelings. Value systems impacted by religion, culture, etc., as well as societal elements, such as national origin and native language, are foundational regarding how people connect with each other.

Additionally, our approach to D&I is to develop flexible interpersonal skills so that individuals can adjust their approach to make another person feel comfortable and thus build rapport. Inclusion requires that we welcome participation, communicate thoughtfully and empathetically, and have respectful interactions with others. Such behaviors build stronger working groups and maximize performance potential.

What do you wish more HR professionals and recruiters knew about the importance of global competence?

Developing a talent pipeline of individuals who can effectively bridge cultures is critical for organizational success. Even if your organization is domestic, you likely have staff members of different backgrounds, as well as suppliers, customers, and end users, whether they are consumers, patients, or clients. We live in an omni-migrational society: a stew of humanity having different backgrounds and experiences intermixed around the world. Winning new business, effectively negotiating agreements, and keeping your clientele content require a globally competent staff simply to maintain operations under today's realities.

Making cultural faux pas can spell doom in today's global economy. Recruiters and HR professionals need to protect the relevance and effectiveness of their organizations by ensuring that the competency of global competence is in the forefront of selection and development decision making. Ignoring global competence means being left behind.

How important is global competence in today's business world? What about a diverse perspective?

Global competence means readiness to interact with anyone from any culture across the globe at any given time. Due to the rise of globalization decades ago, professional

interactions require flexibility to work with people around the world. We need to be prepared to pivot and nimble to respond to any possible opportunities, including unplanned situations. A culture-specific paradigm, such as intercultural competence (also called cultural competence), no longer meets that breadth of today's global economy and society. The Scout motto "Always Be Prepared" exemplifies the proactive approach of global competence.

Diverse perspectives help us avoid "tunnel vision." Therefore, we are less likely to overlook issues, miss opportunities, and make mistakes. Working with people who have different strengths, backgrounds, experiences, styles, and preferences lends greater perspective to our work, thereby increasing the likelihood of success.

For anyone who won't be able to make it to the Global Competence booth in Las Vegas, what do you want them to know?

Our clients span every continent of the world as well as all sectors: business, nonprofit, government, and education. We would be happy to speak with you to understand how we can help you meet your objectives.

To learn more about our research, assessment, and solutions, please visit our website at www.globallycompetent.com or call us at **610-717-4220**