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How NTT Global Data Centers (GDC) is rolling out a leadership learning journey for 1,600 leaders – strengthening global alignment in leadership



When strategic clarity meets global reality

NTT GDC, an international technology company in the IT sector and the third largest data center provider, represented in more than 20 countries worldwide, is undergoing a far-reaching integration and transformation process.

At board level, there is a clear vision: leadership should become more effective worldwide, better connected across the organization, and more closely aligned with shared principles.

The reality is more complex. Different cultures, business units, and established approaches to leadership converge. Strategic expectations first need to be translated into tangible leadership practices.

The central question:

> How can a shared understanding of leadership be strengthened worldwide without imposing uniformity on local contexts?

The Challenge

NTT GDC was not looking for a standalone leadership program, but for an approach that would strengthen shared direction, connection, and leadership practices worldwide.

The objectives were to:

- develop a shared understanding of leadership across regions and hierarchical levels

- enable leaders to act effectively during transformation
- foster psychological safety, openness, and responsible leadership
- strengthen culturally sensitive collaboration in international teams
- embed knowledge transfer and cross-functional collaboration sustainably within the organization
- build an international leadership community with shared points of reference

At the same time, the program needed to be globally relevant and scalable without erasing local differences.

In large organizations in particular, the pressure to change and deliver results can quickly lead to leadership being judged primarily by short-term target achievement. Sustainable impact, however, only emerges when a shared understanding develops of how leadership contributes to long-term performance, collaboration, and transformation.

The Solution: A Global Learning Journey as a Shared Space for Translation into Practice

Together with CONTRACT, the Global Leadership Lab was developed – a virtual learning journey spanning almost a year.

The program provides a structured space in which leaders translate strategic visions into their respective contexts and work on real challenges from their day-to-day leadership practice.

Rather than an abstract guiding vision, this creates a shared framework that becomes effective in everyday work.

The program is supported by active executive sponsorship and the involvement of different leadership levels, ensuring strong alignment with the organization's strategic direction.

What Makes the Approach Distinctive – An International Leadership Community Instead of Isolated Development

The Global Leadership Lab views leadership not merely as individual capability development, but as a collective learning and cultural process.

Through consistent cross-functional learning groups spanning all hierarchical levels, an international leadership community gradually emerges, with shared reference points, greater mutual understanding, and more consistent leadership practices.

The cohorts are complemented by peer groups bringing together leaders with comparable levels of responsibility. This creates space both for learning across perspectives and for reflection specific to each leadership role.

Personal Development in a Global Context

With potentially around 1,600 participants over two years, a key question arises: How can development remain personal and relevant?

The program combines:

- small learning groups
- asynchronous digital learning
- individual support for personal development topics
- peer groups for deeper exploration
- mentoring by alumni

The learning journey deliberately uses concise virtual formats with a strong focus on practical application and learning transfer.

Real leadership challenges are continuously addressed, reflected upon, and translated directly into everyday work. Development is thus grounded in the organization's actual circumstances rather than detached from them.

A Global Cultural Approach Instead of Regional Silos

The program is deliberately international and is delivered in two global time slots to enable worldwide participation and cultural exchange.

Instead of separate regional learning structures, it creates a global leadership community with shared perspectives, leadership principles, and an increasing ability to work effectively across cultures.

> *"I have significantly expanded my global network – and now work with contacts I would never have met without the program."*

Early Impact While the Program Is Underway

The program launched in early 2026. Initial feedback already points to tangible effects, reflected in an average recommendation rating (NPS score) of 9+ out of 10.

Participants report concrete changes in their leadership behavior:

> *"The program has noticeably changed my leadership style and significantly developed my leadership capabilities."*

Reflection and shifts in perspective are also described as key outcomes:

> *"Many of the insights were real eye-openers for me and fundamentally changed how I view leadership."*

Of particular importance is the direct transfer into everyday work:

> *"The content is directly applicable – I was able to put much of it into practice immediately in my day-to-day work."*

It is already becoming clear that the program not only supports individual development but also influences cultural dynamics within the organization.

Participants report more open dialogue, stronger cross-functional collaboration, and greater capacity for reflection. At the same time, the program fosters a leadership culture increasingly grounded in psychological safety, accountability, and mutual learning.

The impact of the learning journey is reflected not only in participant feedback but also in external recognition: At Reinvention Fest 2026, NTT GDC received the Reinvention Impact Award | Organization for the Global Leadership Lab developed together with CONTRACT.

Systemic Impact: Connecting Development and Organizational Alignment

Beyond individual development, the program serves a second function that is essential for large corporations:

It makes leadership practices more aligned and comparable across the organization – without standardizing them.

This creates a shared understanding of how leadership contributes to achieving organizational goals. Leadership is not only developed; it also becomes easier to structure and coordinate across the organization.

In this way, the program strengthens the organization's ability to align its efforts even during complex transformation processes.

Impact at a Glance

- 1,600 leaders worldwide participating in the development initiative, with nearly 400 having already successfully completed the learning journey across 32 cohorts
- Global leadership community across regions and hierarchical levels
- Shared understanding of leadership taking shape
- Stronger cross-functional collaboration and knowledge transfer
- Psychological safety and responsible leadership fostered
- 12-month learning journey with a strong focus on practical application and learning transfer

Conclusion

The Global Leadership Lab addresses a central challenge facing modern corporations:

How can alignment emerge in a system that deliberately embraces diversity?

By combining personal development, global networking, and structured learning transfer, the program creates an approach that does not make leadership uniform – but enables NTT GDC leaders worldwide to work from a shared foundation.

The global learning journey is designed and facilitated by an international team of trainers. The following CONTRACT consultants and trainers based in Germany are involved:

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