

## ViewsWire

### COUNTRY BRIEFING

#### FROM THE ECONOMIST INTELLIGENCE UNIT

Brazilian managers have enjoyed good fortunes in the job market lately. When the shareholders of Inbev (Belgium/Brazil), the world's largest brewer in volume, chose a successor to CEO John Brock last December, they picked a 45-year-old Brazilian, Carlos Brito. They were already familiar with Mr Brito, since Inbev emerged from an equity swap between Interbrew (Belgium) and Ambev (Brazil) in 2004. Mr Brito's promotion—he was previously Inbev's head of North America operations—was an acknowledgment of his skills in cutting costs and boosting the company's performance in a competitive environment.

Mr Brito is now regarded as an example of a type of young and successful executive who is prized for his aggressive style, dynamism and ability to tackle crises. Before him, Brazilian executives of an older generation, such as Henrique Meirelles (now Brazil's central bank head) at BankBoston (US) and Alain Belda at the aluminium producer Alcoa (US), had already been selected to run global businesses.

#### **Brazilian leaders' DNA**

Head hunters have identified some key qualities that make Brazilian managers solid candidates to hold top jobs in global companies:

\* **Charismatic and visionary.** Brazilian executives are said to have a great ability to mobilise and unite teams. Their sense of emotional intelligence is acute, and this generally benefits the people who work around them. Beyond the easy-going Latin touch that is common to many executives in the region, Brazilian bosses know how to lead and motivate their staff. They have a long-term vision that can inspire their directors, who are sometimes turned into disciples, says Sérgio Averbach, director of Korn Ferry (US), a human-resources consulting firm. While others would emphasise technical skills, Brazilian executives are said to also benefit from having great empathy for their staff. They are more participative than argumentative. They lead without having an authoritarian manner. They are also open to input from others.

\* **Flexible and intuitive.** Partly because Brazilian culture is a mix of various influences from around the world, Brazilian leaders enjoy a great dose of intellectual, cultural and managerial flexibility. Due to decades of economic volatility, they are able to react to unforeseen circumstances and implement contingency plans. Their ability to work in an uncertain environment or even on the edge of chaos is a great asset in a global environment. In addition, they rely on their solid intuition. ("They trust butterflies in the stomach", says Mr Averbach.)

\* **Cosmopolitan by nature.** They can understand foreign cultures easily and adapt rapidly without appearing the odd man out. [Expatriation is part of their “natural talent”, says Frédéric Donier, a management consultant in São Paulo.](#) The Rio de Janeiro-born Carlos Ghosn is recognised for having saved the Japanese automaker Nissan from being driven out of business before he was appointed president of Renault (France). Mr Ghosn had previously led the Brazilian subsidiary of the tyre manufacturer Michelin (France). Another Brazilian, Heraldo Marquezini, was director-general of Sanofi Aventis (France) in Poland, before leading the subsidiary in Brazil.

\* **Financially agile.** Most Brazilian executives are prized by head hunters for their financial agility, as they have had to cope with long periods of hyperinflation and high interest rates. Many have a solid educational background, including MBAs earned abroad, and experience in the financial markets is also common, as the career of Mr Brito from Inbev shows. Indeed, Mr Brito is part of a large group of young executives trained by the investment banker Jorge Paulo Lehmann, one of the founders of Brahma, the brewer that later merged with Antarctica and Interbrew.

\* **Ready-to-go style.** Brazilian managers usually have a high level of energy and self confidence. They have an avid desire to take on responsibilities and complex tasks. And, experts say, they can maintain a level of total commitment during long periods of time.

Moreover, the sheer complexity of the Brazilian market, which is huge in size but features a large majority of low-income consumers, has taught many executives how to find creative solutions to difficult problems. Their approach is often aggressive, and they demand results. A large part of these executives' compensation is variable and depends on their performance.

While many of the qualities that human-resources specialists prize in Brazilian executives are by no means unique to them, it is clear that the Brazilians have begun to make their mark in corporations around the world.

SOURCE: ViewsWire Latin America