Global Insights on Leadership Talent

Spotlight on APAC: Southeast Asia, Greater China, and India

In this quarter's edition, we turn to the Asia-Pacific region, where leadership hiring continues to evolve in response to shifting market conditions, economic diversification, supply chain realignment, and accelerating digital transformation. Across Southeast Asia, Greater China, and India, each market reflects distinct growth dynamics, sector priorities, and rising demand for agile, cross-border leadership.

Leveraging Pedersen & Partners' in-country leadership expertise, these insights highlight trends, shifts, challenges, areas where executive hiring is gaining traction, the leadership capabilities in greatest demand, and key considerations for organizations aiming to attract and retain top talent across this diverse and fast-moving region.

Market Conditions

A concise overview of macroeconomic shifts and regional dynamics shaping APAC markets.

Southeast Asia

Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia

Manufacturing Shift | Regional Cost Rebalancing | Supply Chain Diversification

- GDP growth ranges from ~1.8% to ~6.6% across key markets
- Strong investment momentum in manufacturing, electronics, EV supply chains, commodities and digital services
- Rising costs in Singapore are shifting some regional operational activity toward Malaysia and Thailand
- Policy uncertainty, tariff exposure and global trade cycles are shaping investment and leadership decisions

Greater China

Stable Growth | Industrial Policy | Geopolitical Pressure

- GDP growth ~4–4.5%
- Focus on high-tech, green energy, self-reliance
- Trade tensions shaping investment decisions

India

High Growth Engine | Digital Expansion | Global Role

- GDP growth ~6–7%
- Major contributor to global growth
- Driven by infrastructure, digitalization, manufacturing
- Increasing geopolitical and supply chain importance

Market Leader Perspective

Southeast Asia

Ruchika Gokarn
Client Partner within the Private Equity and Consumer Practice Groups and Head of ASEAN

What trends are you seeing in leadership hiring and what shifts do you expect in 2026?

- Leadership hiring is becoming more selective and ROI-driven, with companies prioritizing consolidation, measurable performance, and roles directly linked to business impact.
- Demand is strongest for leaders who can support manufacturing growth, supply chain resilience, digital transformation, data infrastructure, renewable energy, logistics, and cross-border expansion.
- Regional leadership structures are shifting as cost pressures, foreign investment, and talent availability influence where companies place HQ, operational, and senior leadership roles.

What key challenges are companies facing in attracting or retaining leadership talent?

- Experienced senior leaders remain in short supply, especially those combining local market knowledge, international exposure, digital capability, and sector-specific expertise.
- Compensation expectations are rising due to high demand, attrition, living costs, and competition for leaders who can deliver measurable results.
- Retention is increasingly affected by culture, purpose, governance, empowerment, burnout, and generational differences in leadership expectations.

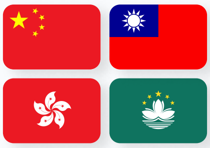
What guidance would you provide to leaders hiring for leadership roles in the Southeast Asia region?

- **Adopt a strategic search approach:** Prioritize succession for critical roles and thorough market mapping to identify high-quality leaders who can serve as long-term partners, balancing experience with future potential and learning agility.
- **Move quickly and position the opportunity well:** Clearly articulate the role, career path, and purpose while offering competitive, market-aligned compensation packages and ensuring compelling candidate engagement throughout the process.
- **Streamline and strengthen the hiring process:** Ensure efficient decision-making, clear success metrics, and strong onboarding to improve retention, while shifting from replacement hiring to strategic talent acquisition focused on long-term potential rather than pedigree.

Market Leader Perspective

Greater China

Blues Zhao
Client Partner and Managing Director - Greater China



What trends are you seeing in leadership hiring and what shifts do you expect in 2026?

- **Leaders who can strengthen strategic resilience,** drive supply chain security, and lead industrial upgrading aligned with China's economic priorities are in high demand.
- **Digital and AI leadership** capabilities are now essential as organizations integrate technology into traditional sectors and accelerate transformation.
- **Demand is rising for "global + local" executives** who can navigate China's regulatory environment while supporting international expansion and localization strategies.

What key challenges are companies facing in attracting or retaining leadership talent?

- **A noted shortage of "hybrid" leaders** with deep industry expertise and cross functional capabilities in digital transformation, strategy, and ecosystem development.
- **Governance and empowerment gaps** can limit leadership effectiveness, particularly in multinational structures.
- **Purpose, influence, and transformational opportunities** are increasingly prioritized by senior leaders over compensation.

What guidance would you provide to leaders hiring leadership roles in China?

- **Define success through real-world scenarios:** assess how candidates navigate regulatory shifts, transformation, and complex stakeholder environments.
- **Prioritize cultural and behavioral compatibility:** leverage structured assessments and stakeholder engagement.
- **Embed retention from day one:** align on long term impact, empower leaders with clear decision rights, and build sustainable leadership pipelines

Market Leader Perspective

India

Gaurav Seth
Client Partner and the
Managing Director for India

What trends are you seeing in leadership hiring and what shifts do you expect in 2026?

- **Digital, AI, and transformation leadership** are driving demand, with increasing focus on executives who can integrate technology into business strategy.
- **India-based leaders are taking on more global roles,** particularly through Global Capability Centers (GCCs), which are evolving from cost centers to strategic leadership hubs.
- **Leadership hiring demand remains strong** across Technology, Pharmaceuticals, Infrastructure, Manufacturing, and GCCs, with talent searches expanding beyond metros to fast-growing Tier-2 cities.

What key challenges are companies facing in attracting or retaining leadership talent?

- **Shortage of hybrid leaders** who combine deep technical expertise (AI, data, cybersecurity) with strategic leadership capabilities.
- **Intense competition for talent,** particularly from startups and high-growth companies, is driving compensation inflation and leadership attrition.
- **Weak internal pipelines and slower hiring processes** often lead companies to lose top candidates to faster-moving competitors.

What guidance would you provide to leaders hiring leadership roles in India?

- **Define success profiles clearly:** prioritize digital fluency, resilience, global mindset, and cultural compatibility.
- **Modernize hiring processes:** leverage competency-based assessments and data-driven evaluations rather than pedigree-based selection.
- **Move quickly and strengthen the value proposition:** combine competitive compensation with long-term growth opportunities and strong onboarding to improve retention.