

Nov 04, 2016 by [Cari E. Guittard](#)

The Five Tool Corporate Diplomat ^[1]

The conversation began innocently enough - sitting on a porch in Half Moon Bay, overlooking, ironically, *The Mavericks* - where only the best come to surf and conquer the monster waves.

“Cari, you’re a Five Tool Wife,” remarked one of my husband’s friends.

At first, I wasn’t sure whether to be offended or complimented. When I asked for an explanation, he offered the analogy of the Five Tool Player, a term used in baseball to describe a player that *has it all and succeeds in every critical skill necessary to excel over the long-term*. The Five Tool player, he clarified, “*hits for Power, hits for Average, has Skills & Speed, exceptional Throwing and Fielding skills.*”

As he shared some names of famous Five-Toolers in baseball, outlining each area in detail, I started thinking about the global skill sets that make for a Five Tool Executive and Diplomat. As I am immersed day to day through my Business for Diplomatic Action role in engaging and guiding corporate executives in public diplomacy efforts, it got me thinking about those incredible Five Tool Diplomats and Executives I’ve had the opportunity to work with and learn from over the past decade. And then I wondered, what do they all have in common that has helped guide their success internationally? What are the critical skill sets that comprise a Five Tool Corporate Diplomat?

In my mind, the foundation upon which a Five Tool Corporate Diplomat concept should be based begins with an acknowledgment at the outset that a global mindset is a critical component upon which all other skill sets are formed. Seasoned successful diplomats and global executives have this in spades; however it is hardly a uniform skill set and many acknowledge it is a difficult area to teach, especially in the business world where diplomacy has never been seen until very recently as a critical skill set.

Few MBA schools dare to delve into this area, yet Thunderbird, the #1 ranked international MBA program in the US, is leading the way with their GLOBE research efforts and Global Mindset diagnostic tools. The Global Mindset, as Thunderbird defines it, is encapsulated below and comprises the first three or my five tools: *Psychological Capital*, *Intellectual Capital*, and *Social Capital*. In a nutshell they mean: we must know ourselves and the environment extremely well, be open and constantly learning, and finally, know how to build and leverage trusting relationships.

The Thunderbird approach echoes attributes and traits that other global executive development experts have been espousing for decades. As Camille Lavington, (noted personal executive marketing authority and author of *You’ve Only Got Three Seconds*) recently shared, “In my work with executives who reach the pinnacle of their careers and then go further and farther in their success, their ability to harness and leverage a combination of powerful global skills to develop their own unique brand of influence and power makes all the difference. How they do what they do and why are the keys to un-locking the mystery of what

makes a Five Tool Executive.”

The final tools, *Passion* and *Discretion*, round out what I would define as a Five Tool Corporate Diplomat, and are derived from my experience working globally with successful global execs and diplomats. All of the global mindset capital in the world cannot make for success unless it is paired with passion and discretion.

The Five Tool Corporate Diplomat:

1. **Psychological Capital** – Enthusiasm for diversity; Self-assurance, self-confidence, and willingness to challenge oneself; Involves leveraging intellectual capital; Toughest to develop, takes a long time, based on experience.
2. **Intellectual Capital** – Knowledge of industry, market, competitors, cultures, world events; Easiest to develop
3. **Social Capital** – Ability to build trusting relationships with people from different parts of the world; Involves excellence in networking, listening, and negotiating
4. **Passion** – Powerful and enduring enthusiasm for working globally, with people from different from parts of the world.
5. **Discretion** -- Ability to make decisions and choices with prudence; the quality of being discreet, or careful about what one does and says

When taken as a whole, the Five Tools require an individual to have a high sense of self-awareness and the ability to understand and then implement changes in their behaviors as the environment and situation dictates. As great athletes (and particularly Five Tool players) know, you identify and focus on where you are weak, then work daily to build improvement. To some extent, improvement in any sport is easy to track - you simply follow stats and can readily measure improvement. Similarly, successful diplomats know that they have to, in their own way, constantly practice and hone their craft. With executives this is a difficult area to measure, especially since so much of this work is impacted by cognitive abilities, personalities and experiences. What is important to recognize about the Five Tools outlined above is that they are universal, and can be applied to anyone working anywhere, in any field, in any sector, including governments and non-profits. There is much we can all learn from Five Tool Executives and Diplomats that can help guide anyone who plans to pursue a global career.

In light of venerable journalist Helen Thomas' outburst and prompt retirement last week, I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to emphasize the last tool, Discretion. This day and age of instant and ubiquitous communication, where seemingly every detail of one's life and every thought is regularly posted, tweeted, and blurted out (and everyone is obsessed with social media as a preferred message platform) has me longing for the days when discretion was seen as a virtue. Discretion, after all is a key component for building and leveraging trust, influence, and power.

Discretion demands *wise conduct and management, cautious discernment, and self-control*. Thomas Jefferson, when reflecting on the power of society, spoke of a “wholesome discretion” and Scottish novelist Walter Scott eloquently offered, “*Discretion is the perfection of reason, and a guide to us in all the duties of life.*” Helen Thomas' blatant disregard for the impact of her words, especially from someone who has built her life's work on informing the public of current events, is not only irresponsible - it is one more example of how we've lost the art and skill of discretion in American society. However, I take comfort in thinking of all the Five Tool

Executives and Diplomats I've had the pleasure of observing or working with, like Keith Reinhard and Ambassador Marc Grossman, who in their own way epitomize not only a global mindset but a grace, elegance, and quiet thoughtfulness that I wish more Americans sought to emulate.

And on that note, it is time for America to take a candid look inward, assess our global mindset and skills sets, and begin the hard work of preparing us all for engaging effectively with the world. Subsequent generations of Americans will be increasingly interconnected and global and it is incumbent upon all of us to do our part to prepare those generations to compete and lead on a global scale.

As we hurtle closer to the November elections, with crisis after crisis unfolding on a domestic and geopolitical scale, it is important to keep a global, long-term perspective. I don't know about you, but I could also really go for a "*wholesome discretion*" movement right about now. The *Five Tools* can be a guide for success in our daily lives here at home and for those of us pursuing careers abroad.

If you know any five tool corporate diplomats you wish to recognize, please feel free to acknowledge them in the comments below.
