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Innovating for the Poor

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Areas of Interest:
International business and strategic human resource management; Company’s leverage of talent and social networks towards global innovation
Shad Morris

Department of Organizational Leadership and Strategy
Marriott School

Assistant Professor of International Business
1 Billion >$60 a day
1.4 Billion 10-60 $ a day
3 Billion 2-10 $ a day
1 Billion <2 $ a day

Purchase Power
12.5 Trillion

Humanitarian
5 Trillion

Fairly urban, extremely competitive, well served
Fairly rural, under served, informal economy, inefficient and little competition
“Without _____________________, foresight is forgone—and the future is forfeit”

-Govindarajan & Trimble, 2011
Top of the Pyramid Business Approach:
- revenue per unit focus (dollars)
- corporate understanding
- centralized structure
- top-down processes focused on searching for solutions from corporate HQ to the local context

Base of the Pyramid Business Approach:
- overall revenue focus (pennies)
- local understanding
- decentralized structure
- bottom-up processes focused on searching for solutions from the local context to the global context
Research Agenda

• How do employees come up with innovative solutions to local problems?
Preliminary Findings

• The farther you reach outside of the local context, the more likely you are to find innovative solutions

• The farther you reach outside of the local context, the more likely you are to reach for templates and move away from principles... which decreases innovative solutions

• People are more likely to draw on principles over templates when they have cosmopolitan experience