

A Study on Cross Culture Skills in Management

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ABSTRACT: Globalization and migration are the main causes of growing number of multicultural enterprises. Culture is important for managers. The article discusses the importance of cross cultural skills in management. "We didn't all come over on the same ship, but we're all in the same boat." - Bernard Baruch, American financier and statesman. Cross culture is the interaction of people from different backgrounds in the business world. Cross culture is a vital issue in international business, as the success of international trade depends upon the smooth interaction of employees from different cultures and regions.

I. INTRODUCTION

Cross culture can be experienced by an employee who is transferred to a location in another country. The employee must learn the language and culture of those around him, and vice-versa. This can be more difficult if this person is acting in a managerial capacity; someone in this position who cannot effectively communicate with or understand their employees' actions can lose their credibility. In an ever-expanding global economy, cross culture and adaptability will continue to be important factors in the business world.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RELATED STUDIES

2.1 Nature of Culture:

- **Learned:** Culture is acquired by learning and experience
- **Shared:** People as a member of a group, organisation, or society share culture.
- **Transgenerational:** Culture is cumulative, passed down from generation to generations

2.2 Manifestations of culture:

- **Symbols:** words, gestures, objects that carry a particular meaning which is only recognized by those who share the culture.
- **Heroes:** Persons, alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics which are highly prized in a culture and who thus, serve as models for behavior.
- **Rituals:** collective activities, considered socially essential.
- **Values:** basic assumptions about how things should be in society. They are convictions regarding right or wrong, good or bad, important or trivial. Learned implicitly. Cannot be discussed.
- **Practices:** what is visible to an outsider?

2.3 First approach to culture:

- **The way you live** – Customs, habits, traditions, Food clothing, religious practice, health practice, family structure and relationships.
- **The way you view things** – Beliefs, values, spirituality, perceptions, attitudes, expectations.
- **The way you communicate** – Meaning of language, interaction pattern, and communications, verbal and non-verbal.

2.4 International Management Skills:

Cultural differences and different languages can be challenging when leading a team remotely. Whether your team is based over different continents or all over the world, your communication skills will help you to keep your people motivated at all times.

As a manager of a multi-cultural and international team of people your understanding of their culture, their clients and the way of doing business in their part of the world is your key to success. You may have come across 'lost in translation' situations where you have lost business, and you want to kick yourself because you didn't do your homework prior to closing the deal.

Managing an international team and business can be a different ball game and at times may require a different skill set; however the satisfaction you'll get out of it will be even greater and it feels like the world is your oyster when you succeed. The best leader in the world will fail miserably if she is unable to communicate to her team.

The importance of the skill of communication lies in the fact that it is not a discrete skill. Communication is inextricably linked to all the other leadership competencies. With good communication skills you will raise your profile in all aspects of your leadership role. So, we look at how to hone the art and craft of language. We learn to speak clearly and to present logical and compelling arguments. We develop our style and focus on the content of what we have to communicate.

The need for understanding different cultures is necessary as cultures have their own way of interpreting things and what is good for one may be bad for others. And what is believed to be an essential for one group may not be necessary for others.

2.5 Key Benefits to get better cross culture management skills:

- Improve your communication across different cultures
- Build the confidence to influence clients, suppliers and colleagues from a variety of countries
- Benchmark your individual management style against preferences from around the world – and learn to adapt accordingly
- Learn how to lead across international matrix systems and other organisational structures

2.6 Culture Models:

2.6.1 Edward Hall's "Silent Language"

5 "Silent languages":

- Time
- Space
- Materials goods
- Friendship
- Agreements

2.6.2 Hofstede's Five Cultural Dimensions:

- Power Distance
- Uncertainty Avoidance
- Individualism
- Masculinity
- Long-Term Orientation

2.6.3 Reasons for multicultural teams:

- Outperform individuals on tasks requiring multiple skills, judgement, and experience
- Better utilization of employee talents
- More flexible and responsive to changing events
- Facilitate employee participation in operating decisions
- Effective in democratizing the organization and increasing employee involvement and motivation

2.7 New Challenges at Work place: Managing Remote teams:

With the technological advances (and Globalisation) work places are not limited by boundaries and have challenges to cultural aspects and can determine the success of coordination and communication which are essential factors for team success. Even though the other person can't feel physical presence the effect of culture can still be felt. Speaking to colleagues in Switzerland is quite different than people in Middle East; speaking about personal things is quite acceptable in Swiss. In UK where it is mostly individualistic based, speaking about personal things quite may not work.

To manage remote teams a set of factors are vital like being objective, encouraging others in the call to participate actively, paraphrasing, stressing on agenda and being open for other ideas.

2.8 Priorities of cultural values:

UNITED STATES	JAPAN	ARAB COUNTRIES
Freedom	Belonging	Family security
Independence	Group harmony	Family harmony
Self-reliance	Collectiveness	Parental guidance
Equality	Age/seniority	Age
Individualism	Group consensus	Authority
Competition	Cooperation	Compromise
Efficiency	Quality	Devotion
Time	Patience	Patience
Directness	Indirectness	Indirectness
Openness	Go-between	Hospitality

2.9 Impact on management:

- Type of management structure
- Decision process
- Flow of information
- Inequalities/equalities
- Formalism
- Status

2.10 Common Problems:

There are a number of problems that all cultures try to address and bring solutions to:

- Relation to nature
- Relation to others
- Relation to power
- Relation to rules
- Relation to activity
- Relation to emotions
- Relation to space
- Relation to time

III. CONCLUSION

Each culture has a different way of looking at things and it is indeed a challenge for managers who work cross-culturally. It is very essential for managers to be conscious of cultures with whom they interact. Organisations believe in diversity as it helps them to tackle diverse set of problems. People from different cultures bring in different skill sets to table. This diversity in turn brings in competencies to compound present skills to be more competitive and flexible in finding solutions. And the best way to make these cultural issues work for Manager's benefit is by building a strong relationship through personal rapport and reputation, being motivated and caring for others.

Cultural differences need to be seen as an asset, not a liability. Managers need to be culturally aware and flexible in their leadership styles.

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