

Interkulturelles Management: Friktionen und Fallen in internationalen Projekten

Methodischer Rahmen und Erfahrungen mit der Ableitung konkreter, operationalisierter Handlungsempfehlungen

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Key Messages for today

- **Cultural differences can be described by empirical means**
- **Insights lay the grounds for a structured approach**
- **Insights can be used for backward analysis**
- **Insights may have prescriptive character**
- **The challenge is to make it operational**
- **The challenge is to have it implemented**



The Business Purpose behind (1)

- **Assignment in Delhi for two years**
- **“Go there and do something. I can’t tell what, but do something.”**
- **“What is he actually doing there?”**
- **“I don’t know, but it makes a difference.”**
- **Half of the budget for Liaison Management is wasted money**



The Business Purpose behind (2)

- Two questions arise:
 1. What kind of person is he?
 2. How long can he stand it?
- But people will change their behavior immediately
 - 50% could be achieved by a crash-test dummy
 - 25% of the remainder can't be changed
 - **25% can be changed!**
- The question is not about the cost – but how much it costs in case you don't do it



Cultural Differences and Similarities

- Tokyo story
- What is considered being the most disgusting crime in...?



How to describe cultural Differences?

- **Again, you feel there are differences, but how can you describe them in a structured way?**
- **Hofstede's research is one approach among others**
- **IBM: Why does one and the same process work perfectly fine in one country – but not in another?**
- **As a result, Hofstede identified five dimensions to measure cultural differences**
- **Quantifiable indexes**

Hofstede's cultural Dimensions

1 Power Distance

To which extent do people freely obey formal positions and rules?

2 Uncertainty Avoidance

How well can a culture deal with risk?

3 Individualism

To which extent are individuals independent?

4 Masculinity

How 'macho' is a culture?

5 Long-term Orientation

How far ahead do you think? How far do the constraints of tradition go?

- **Later: Perception of time and reality, ground truths... (Trompenaars et al)**
- **Pragmatic: Apply it to USA, Brazil, Germany, Sweden, Japan, India...?**

Hofstede: you can measure and compare!

Scale from 1 (very low) to 100 (very high). Differences of 10 points between two countries show a significant difference in workplace, attitudes and behaviors).

Dimensions	Power distance	Uncertainty avoidance	Individualism	Masculinity	Long-term orientation
Countries					
Germany	35	65	67	66	31
Netherlands	38	53	80	14	44
UK	35	35	89	66	25
France	68	86	71	43	-
Italy	50	75	76	70	-
Sweden	31	29	71	5	33
Russia	95	75	47	40	-
U.S.	40	46	91	62	29
Japan	54	92	46	95	80
China	80	40	15	50	114
South Korea	60	85	18	39	75
South Africa	49	49	65	63	-
India	77	40	48	56	61
Mexiko	81	82	30	69	-
Brazil	69	76	38	49	65

Challenge: Making it operational

- **Again, a nice framework for analyses: now you know where the differences are**
- **But: you still have to make insights operational and apply them**
- **And: be aware of stereotypes and generalizations**
 - There is no such thing as an average Indian or typical German!



One-Page Insight Summary for Indians (1)

- Don't misunderstand German distance or 'arrogance'
- Never take challenging personal
- Expect Germans to come straight to the point – little warming up
- If you want to impress Germans, show you are a 'structured' and well 'organized' thinker & contributor
- When faced with a problem, look for solutions (instead of returning two problems)
- Bring each item to an end before moving on to the next one
- Do only one thing at a time
- Dedicate your full concentration on your partner
- And “stick” to agreements – and dates – unless explicitly revised
- Be *prepared* and be *timely* – understand what is important to Germans

■ One-Page Insight Summary for Indians (2)

- Learn how to clearly say “no” and how to share concerns openly
- For Germans, no – or no clear – response is by far more impolite and bothering than a “no”
- Understand that Germans don’t shoot the messenger for the message
- Learn how to convey bad news; provide reasoning, circumstances and available options
- Give notice in case you are late (even for minor things)
- Understand that being late stresses Germans much more than Indians
- Letting others wait is a severe offence for Germans
- Make decisions; Germans will never punish as long as they are well-considered
- **Keep in mind that you are as strange to them as they are to you!**

One-Page Insight Summary for Germans (1)

- **Understand collectivistic dynamics and protocol**
- **Understand that decision making and consensus building happen differently**
- **Your partner may not be in the position to make decisions immediately**
- **Always be polite, stay calm, somehow above, do not lose your face**
- **Know that any criticism might be understood as being personal**
- **Do not 'punish' for bad news**
- **Encourage decision making**
- **Do not misuse shared inside information**



One-Page Insight Summary for Germans (2)

- **Focus on personal integrity: Say what you do – and do what you say**
- **Do not follow hidden agendas, play it openly**
- **Be ‘human’ and show some self-irony**
- **Avoid anything that might hurt the trust level**
- **Do not return home and start complaining – do it immediately**
- **Be aware that you might be overrunning people**
- **Be aware that Indians expect opinion building to happen in groups during the meeting (and less before)**
- **Indians are somehow much more afraid of making mistakes than Germans**
- **Expect many iterations and repeated negotiations!**



■ One-Page Insight Summary for Germans (3)

- **Be aware that Indians are pragmatists and have little consciousness for broad, comprehensive methodologies**
- **Provide in digestible portions**
- **Be ready to repeat often**
- **Understand that Indians by nature actually do less see the need for extensive preparation**
- **And do not expect immediate confirmation or effectiveness of discussion results**
- **Respect hierarchy and protocol**
- **Talk to the right person in the hierarchy: not below, not above**
- **Never negotiate under time pressure**

- **Keep in mind that you are as strange to them as they are to you!**

Experiences that make you go ballistic

- **Be ready for the unexpected!**
- **It might go far beyond what you can imagine**
- **Stay cool and think before reacting**



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- The challenge is to make it operational
- The challenge is to have it implemented
- **The goal is to have condensed, agreed and accepted one-pagers for operational daily use**



Other Workshops

1

Intercultural Issues

2

**Leadership/Management/Senior
Management Expectations**

3

**Sabotage – Collaborative and
Non-collaborative Behavior**

4

Customer- and Process-Orientation

5

Business Strategy and IT





Thank you!

