

Skills - Worksheet

Please read the description of the situation. Then work on the following four questions. Each question is worth 1 point.

A company merges with another company abroad. A project team is created. At meetings with the company management, the new employees contradict their manager. They discuss, give their opinion without being asked, and want to have a say in everything. They don't understand why the old employees from the original location never say anything and let the manager decide everything. The old employees, in turn, are appalled by the behaviour of their new colleagues toward the manager. The manager wonders what she can do.

1. What is the situation/problem?

When two companies merge, their different communication styles can clash.
The team dynamic can become divided, as new employees challenge the hierarchy while original employees stay silent. This can create tension within the project team.
The manager must navigate this cultural divide, as the assertive behaviour of new employees clashes with established norms, risking conflicts.
New and veteran employees display differing workplace behaviour and disparities in decision-making involvement, resulting in a lack of shared comprehension and the possibility of disdain.

2. What cultural patterns might explain the problem? Which elements/dimension can you recognize in the description of the situation?

Conflict in Communication: New employees speak up, while original employees hold back. New employees value individual opinions, while original employees prioritize group unity.
Struggle in Authority Acceptance: New employees question the hierarchy, while original employees follow it strictly.
Clash between Autonomy and Group Harmony: New employees value individual opinions, while original employees prioritize group unity.
Difference in conflict approaches: New employees address issues directly, whereas long-term employees often prefer to maintain harmony by avoiding open confrontation.

3. What role could the situation and personality play (cf. C-P-S model; Leenen & Grosch, 1998)?

Figure



re based on Leenen, W. R. & Grosch, H. (1998). Interkulturelles Training in der Lehrerfortbildung [Intercultural training as part of teacher training]. In: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Eds.), *Interkulturelles Lernen. Arbeitshilfen für die politische Bildung* (pp. 317-340).

Culture: Differences in communication styles between cultures affect team dynamics.
Personality: New employees may demonstrate more assertiveness due to their individualistic traits, which can contrast with the reserved nature of the existing employees.
Situation: The merger creates a situation where conflicting communication styles and decision-making approaches emerge, challenging the established hierarchical structure.

4. What are your ideas as to how the people in this situation could act in an interculturally competent way? Keeping in mind the cultural dimension, how could the parties approach each other to resolve the situation?

Develop an understanding of the differences in communication styles and power dynamics between cultures.
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Encourage a culture of flexibility, where team members can easily adjust their communication styles.

Identify common values and objectives to create a sense of unity that goes beyond cultural differences.

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A new project team with members from two countries is working on a challenging project. There are frequent conflicts between the members of the two countries. The employees from one country want schedules in advance and a detailed structure. When adjustments are needed on short notice, they are completely inflexible. They need more time for adapting the original plan than the employees from the other country. The manager wonders what he can do.

1. What is the situation/problem?

There are often disagreements among teammates from two nations.

Workers from one country enjoy organizing and detailed guidelines.

They are not flexible and take longer to adjust to changes than their counterparts from the other nation.

Quick modifications to the plan are difficult, causing tension within the group.

2. What cultural patterns might explain the problem? Which elements/dimension can you recognize in the description of the situation?

The conflict may occur due to different perspectives on time. One group prioritizes detailed plans and schedules, another is more flexible.

The preference for comprehensive structures may indicate a need for clear communication, while the other group does not require this.

Variations in adaptability may derive from the cultural aspect of avoiding the unknown. One group might be from a culture that prefers a predictable environment, while the other is more comfortable with it.

3. What role could the situation and personality play (cf. C-P-S model; Leenen & Grosch, 1998)?

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Culture: The balance between collectivism and individualism can affect how cohesive a team is and how willing individuals are to express their preferences, potentially leading to conflicts.

Personality: Traits such as conscientiousness and openness can impact a person's planning and adaptability, and may either align with or challenge cultural norms.

Situation: Project demands and complexity may cause stress for individuals who are not open to change.

4. What are your ideas as to how the people in this situation could act in an intercultural competent way? Keeping in mind the cultural dimension, how could the parties approach each other to resolve the situation?

Cultural Awareness Training: Provide training to team members to enhance their cultural awareness, enabling them to comprehend and value diverse cultural dissimilarities.
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Flexible Communication Channels: It is important to establish a communication framework that accommodates both high-context and low-context communication styles.

Adaptive Planning: Develop a plan for managing projects that incorporates both detailed planning and flexibility.

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An employee of a large company gets a management position abroad. In his old job, he was held in high esteem by his superiors and colleagues. Now he will lead a new team abroad. In the first team meeting, he emphasizes that he wants everyone to work together on solutions for the project, gives each employee time to present their ideas, and hope that everyone gets along well. However, it seems to him that there is competition between the employees. Team members discuss without holding back, criticize others' ideas, and present their own ideas as the best. The manager does not believe that they will achieve a successful result this way and wonders what they can do.

1. What is the situation/problem?

The new manager, who was highly respected beforehand, is faced with a difficult situation managing a team abroad.

Despite the manager's request for cooperation, the team demonstrates competitive tendencies during discussions.

Members of the team openly criticize each other's ideas and present their own as better, which hinders effective teamwork.
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2. What cultural patterns might explain the problem? Which element/dimension s can you recognize in the description of the situation?

The level of competition in a team may depend on the degree of power distance in their culture. This could make members more comfortable with challenging authority and stating their own views.
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The way team members express themselves, including using assertive communication with little empathy, may also be influenced by their cultural norms.

The level of competition in a team may depend on the degree of power distance in their culture. Cultures that prioritise individuals over the collective may promote individual ideas and even competition.

3. What role could the situation and personality play (cf. C-P-S model; Leenen & Grosch, 1998)?

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Culture: Differences in power distance and individualism-collectivism influence how team members collaborate and approach authority.

Personality: Personal traits such as assertiveness and openness to conflict may contribute to the observed competitive behaviour within the team.

Situation: Moving from a highly respected role to a new leadership position overseas presents difficulties in establishing power and cultivating a cooperative team atmosphere.

4. What are your ideas as to how the people in this situation could act in an interculturally competent way? Keeping in mind the cultural dimension, how could the parties approach each other to resolve the situation?

Cultural Awareness Training: Deliver training sessions to raise awareness on cultural variations in communication styles, power structures, and collaboration preferences.

Facilitated Team-Building: Arrange team-building events to foster comprehension, trust, and cooperation among team members, encouraging them to value diversified perspectives.

Leadership Adjustment: The manager should adapt their leadership style to align with the cultural expectations of the new team, fostering a balance between assertiveness and collaboration.

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Please read the description of the situation. Then work on the following four questions. Each question is worth 1 point.

An international project team is currently working as hard as they can to develop a new product that will be presented to the company's board of directors in only one month. The team leader could get a promotion if the product presentation succeeds. He tells his employees that every working day really matters now. But one of his employees asks for a day of special leave because he wants to attend a family celebration. The team leader is irritated that the employee wants to miss work because of a family celebration and wonders what he should do.

1. What is the situation/problem?

The group is working hard on a project that has a tight schedule. Even though time is of the essence, one member of the team has asked for a day off for a family event.

The leader's possible promotion depends on the presentation's success.

Even though it's urgent, a team member asks for a day off for a family celebration.

2. What cultural patterns might explain the problem? Which elements/dimension can you recognize in the description of the situation?

The project's urgency shows a culture that prioritises meeting deadlines and being efficient.
The team member's leave request might be linked to cultural norms of their background, where family celebrations and other personal commitments are considerably important.
Differences in how people place importance on work and their personal life could be a factor in the conflict. Some cultures prioritize work commitments, while others stress the significance of their personal and familial life.

3. What role could the situation and personality play (cf. C-P-S model; Leenen & Grosch, 1998)?

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Culture: Differences in how individuals view the allocation of time between work and personal life, based on their cultural background, can cause strife within the team.
Personality: Differences in how much importance individuals place on work commitments or personal obligations can cause friction within the team.
Situation: The high-stakes project with a potential promotion at stake intensifies the conflict, making the team leader particularly sensitive to any disruptions.

4. What are your ideas as to how the people in this situation could act in an interculturally competent way? Keeping in mind the cultural dimension, how could the parties approach each other to resolve the situation?

Cultural Sensitivity Training: Provide training sessions to increase awareness of different cultures, emphasizing various viewpoints on time, individualism and collectivism, and balancing work and life.
Open Communication: Create a transparent communication atmosphere.
Compromise: Look for compromises by seeking alternate approaches to enable the employee to make contributions to the project without completely forsaking their personal commitments.
Team Agreement: Establish team agreements on expectations regarding personal commitments during critical project phases