**Building a Global Team: Tariq Khan at Tek**

Abhay Nagarkoti

Bikash Baskota

Dhiraj Pradhan

Harika Devineni

Shaeesta Shaha

Muhammed Shahinsha ER

Venkataramanan Mohandass

Golden Gate University, San Francisco

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**IDENTIFYING KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES**

## **Key relevant information to be addressed**

Tariq Khan, known for his expertise in managing multicultural, multilingual, and religiously diverse teams in Pakistan, is conducting a comprehensive assessment of a talented global team previously led by his predecessor, Ali, who failed to lead effectively. The team has become fatigued, disconnected, and demoralized, leading to a 50% loss in the company's value. Additionally, the time zone differences have made coordination even more challenging. Expectations are high for Tariq, as Tek hopes he can reunite the team, restore their enthusiasm and sense of belonging, revive the brand's image, and drive sales within two years. Tariq is delving deep into the issues, from management to team dynamics, uncovering significant misalignments caused by linguistic and cultural sensitivity factors that he must address to maintain his proven track record before accepting the offered role at Tek.

## **Root cause**

The main reason for this global team becoming dysfunctional [[1]](https://learn.upgrad.com/course/7172/segment/52888/313509/950156/4742356) is the lack of understanding and awareness of linguistic, cultural, and religious sensitivities regarding communication. Both consciously and unconsciously, this communication style has affected the psychological safety [[2]](https://learn.upgrad.com/course/7172/segment/52888/313509/950157/4742360) and SCARF [[3]](https://learn.upgrad.com/course/7172/segment/52888/313511/950162/4742379) of the individuals involved in the process, and the time-zone difference acts as a paramount barrier to team connectivity. This has led to the team becoming excluded, disjointed, uncooperative, demoralized, and divided, ultimately disrupting the team dynamics that are reluctant to buy in new ideas. [[4]](https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-emea/consumer-insights/consumer-trends/five-dynamics-effective-team/) Evidence of this can be seen in the team's failure to adhere to English as the primary language (Lingua Franca), the team in the Soviet region needing to speak in three non-native languages, irrationally blaming team members for the company's failures, as seen in interactions between Sunil, Ramazan, and Lars, Lars insulting Mohamed, a Muslim from Saudi Arabia, for not drinking alcohol while celebrating cracking a successful deal, fragmented understanding of information, as demonstrated by Farah's misconception that the company is performing well while it’s actually in holistic picture Tek is suffering huge 50% loss, and the failure to address equality and practicality while setting targets.

## **Best-, worst- and, likely-case scenarios**

In the best-case scenario, the cultural, linguistic, and time zone differences may gradually diminish as the team begins to gain positive momentum. Despite the initial challenges and friction caused by these issues, the current turbulence could ultimately lead to a transformation, reshaping the dysfunctional team into a more semi-cohesive and semi-functional unit. As a result, this newfound alignment could drive profit growth for Tek. In the most likely case, the linguistic and cultural issues could escalate further, potentially leading to heated arguments, unhealthy conflicts, and toxic corporate politics. A "working just to survive" culture may start to emerge, with extreme language and culturally identical team clusters forming. This fragmentation could severely damage Tek's reputation, making it a terrible brand for which to work. In the worst case, the entire team becomes completely dysfunctional and pushes Tek to go tanked. The linguistic, cultural, and time-zone issues will become too humongous for everyone to control and comprehend resulting in complete decimation of the entire global team. This could leave a huge dent in Tek brand reputation in the market and the company may not be operable globally. Existing and upcoming employees may consider Tek to be a linguistically and culturally hazardous place to commit to.

**GENERATING ALTERNATIVES**

Cross-team functionality can be improved by holding quarterly orientation meetings internally, as well as from annual public conferences (e.g., NVIDIA GTC, GitHub Universe, Oracle OpenWorld, etc.). The former can bring about cultural sensitivity and inclusivity as a result, team harmony while, the latter can promote a sense of belongingness by aligning each other with a common set of goals or a vision thereby, motivating the team having better employee satisfaction. It is evident that the team is lacking cultural sensitivity, from Lars’ comment on Ramazan’s refusal on the religious fronts the Kazakh’s traditional way of celebrating a deal. An absence of inclusivity can be seen when Farah, a customer service representative is unhappy about the increase in workload upon the sales team closing-in more sales. The team harmony gets hampered due to the blame game between Lars and Sunil on not meeting the set targets last year. These meetings can on one hand make the team more dynamic and harmonious, on the other hand make them more opinionated from redundant cultural information, leading to more biases then, dysfunctionality.

Professional and assertive communication skills can be developed by conducting related coaching sessions and proficiency assessments for English as the official language, to overcome the language barriers for putting forward of any ideas. The native and the fluent English speakers are quick to deliver their views and opinions than their less fluent counterparts whereby, concerning the latter to an extent that they check the credibility of the former. Working with three non-native languages (English and, either two of Russian, Kazakh, Uzbek) in the formerly-Soviet region for government & business communications can be cumbersome. These skillsets can help every team member to participate equally in the decision-making processes, from different perspectives in order to generate more revenue. However, it is challenging for the company to come-to-terms with an employee with high KPIs who performs poorly in the proficiency tests.

The workforce needs to be re-organized so as to support round the clock operations, being a global team. Also, incentivizing working during additional hours, night shifts and, holidays with an option to opt-out. It can be quite difficult for an organization to be coherent with just three common working days in addition to that, having different government and national holidays. Various business processes can be streamlined when the company is up 24x7 thus, attracting more prospective shareholders hence, improving its market share. Providing compensations can increase the operating costs wherein, putting a financial strain on the company, given its situation. ||→ timezone

**OFFERING RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommended course of action for Tariq Khan is to prioritize fostering cultural sensitivity and implementing comprehensive training programs at all levels. This includes executive-level orientation and participation in public conferences to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and collaboration.

We assume that increased cultural awareness will lead to improved communication and collaboration, even in the presence of language barriers. By understanding and appreciating each other's cultural backgrounds, team members can build stronger relationships and a greater sense of psychological safety.

This approach addresses the root cause of many of the team's challenges, namely cultural insensitivity and ethnocentricity. It aims to create a more inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and respected. While other alternatives, such as flexible work arrangements and reward systems, may offer short-term benefits, they may not be as effective in resolving the deeper-seated issues stemming from cultural misunderstandings and biases. Moreover, implementing a 24/7 operational model without first addressing these underlying cultural issues could exacerbate existing tensions and lead to further coordination challenges.

In essence, the chosen alternative focuses on fostering a culture of respect, understanding, and inclusivity. By prioritizing cultural sensitivity training and promoting open communication, Tariq can lay a strong foundation for a high-performing global team that leverages its diversity as a source of strength and innovation.

**PREPARING PLAN OF ACTION**

**Goals:**

The overarching goals are to foster a psychologically safe environment, promote cultural and linguistic awareness, and align the team towards a common vision. Ultimately, this will lead to improved team harmony, employee satisfaction, and increased productivity.

**Who Does What:**

Tariq takes the initiative to address the issue at the executive level, securing support and resources for the implementation of a comprehensive orientation program. He then collaborates with Lars, Ramazan, and Sunil to design and execute the program, leveraging their diverse perspectives and expertise. Ramazan and Sunil, with Tariq's guidance, will play a vital role in training and orienting the workforce, ensuring a smooth transition to a more inclusive and collaborative team culture.

**Timeframe for each activity:**

The plan unfolds over a year:

* Month 1: Secure executive buy-in and allocate budget for the program.
* Months 2-3: Conduct orientation and training sessions focusing on cultural awareness and sensitivity.
* Months 4-6: Build team cohesion, reorganize the workforce to enable 24/7 operations, and develop professional communication skills.
* Months 7-12: Scale up the business for round-the-clock operations, leveraging the improved team dynamics and communication.

**Measures of Success:**

Success will be evident in increased net profit, indicating alignment towards common goals and effective decision-making. A 5% increase in market share will demonstrate improved business processes and greater appeal to prospective shareholders. Enhanced employee satisfaction scores will further validate the positive impact of the cultural awareness and team-building initiatives.

**Possible Coordination Issues:**

Lars, with his ethnocentric tendencies and strong performance record, may resist Tariq's leadership and the proposed changes. The executive team might also express reservations about Tariq's leadership style or the investment in cultural training.

**Possible Challenges:**

The implementation process may be time-consuming and require ongoing adjustments to address the team's evolving needs. Tariq, while experienced, may face challenges navigating the complexities of an extremely diverse team at Tek. The "do or die" nature of this project adds pressure and could impact his leadership effectiveness.