European Journal of Cross-Cultural Competence and Management
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Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the second and third issue of the EJCCM combined in a double issue. Let me first take the opportunity to thank all of those who gave us such a tremendously positive feedback on our new journal. Your kind e-mails and letters were all very welcome. After the excitement of the publication of our inaugural issue, we are now in the phase of standardisation of our journal work and it seems that our vision of establishing the EJCCM as a platform for academic discussion comes true. The papers in our first issue already stimulated a couple of responses from other scholars and we gladly put them at the beginning of our second issue. We would like to make the section of discussion papers a permanent part all future issues of the EJCCM and encourage all scholars to comment to papers as well if you feel like it.

The first responses are excellent examples of such short discussion papers. Firstly, Slawomir Magala comments on the paper ‘Setting the stage’ by Gerhard Fink and Wolfgang Mayrhofer (published in EJCCM, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2009). In his comment, he pleads for a major overhaul of the theories of cross-cultural values and encourages the authors to deepen their approach in order leave the tradition of sophisticated national stereotypes behind. At the same time, he expresses his concern that the inclusion of other concepts must be well-prepared and not rushed to avoid a result that is too instable and fragile to serve as a stage for others. Malaga’s remarks called for a response not only by the authors of the original paper but also by Maurice Yolles who was mentioned in the comments by Magala as well.

Yolles starts his discussion by describing the way from the beginnings of cybernetics to the development knowledge cybernetics (KC) and his model of social viable systems (SVS) which was used by Fink/Mayrhofer in their paper. Furthermore, he points out the links between SVS and the work of Maruyama and explains his concepts of SVS and KC and their benefits for the discussion of culture in further detail.

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The next response comes from the authors Fink and Mayrhofer directly. They refer to the works of Inglehart and Welzel to point out the relative stability of cultural values, which Magala had questioned in his comment. On the other hand, they explain why in their opinion the concept of personality is to be included in a discussion of culture rather than the one of identity.

In the section of short papers, Kevin Lo and Snejina Michailova demonstrate how studies outside the mainstream of cross-cultural literature can help to gain deeper insights in the complexity of cultural patterns. Using the example of three studies in the context of China, they point out how utilising less-explored research contexts may enable researchers to develop a more sophisticated view on a culture, to identify emics and to understand intra-culture variations better.

We stay in China with the next paper. The full paper section starts with an overview on the literature on the dimensions and construct of organisational citizen behaviour (OCB). Its forms in P.R. China are compared to those in North America and West Europe. Yong Han and Yochanan Altman compare the various forms of OCB, critically examine the empirical findings for both antecedents and consequences of OCB and indicate research gaps for future research in both the PRC and North America and West Europe.

Muayyad Jabri takes a closer look at different types of narratives and their role in the formation of identities. He claims that the combination of cultural and voice narrative cannot only be used as a method of inquiry but also as a concept of social ontology. Taking a closer look at the relationship of the two types of narratives produces new insights and is to be distinguished from approaches using only cultural narrative to identify the value orientation of the members of a culture.

Linguistic aspects of expatriation are explored by Magdalena Bielenia-Grajewska. She uses the concept of hybrid linguistic identity to discuss the factors determining the acquisition of the host language by expatriates. The importance of language for expatriates is explored both on an individual level looking at the linguistic performance of expatriates and on a collective level like the language policy within an organisation.

In their paper, Eelke de Jong and Chris van Hooijdonk take a closer look at certain cultural aspects of the transition process in Central and Eastern European countries. They examine if the financial systems of these countries reflect the cultural patterns according to the Hofstede dimensions. In their study, they investigate whether high scores on uncertainty avoidance and low scores on individualism actually correspond with a lower level of stock market capitalisation and less protection of shareholders’ rights in comparison to countries with a lower UAI and higher individualism scores.

With the next paper, we take a closer look at a certain aspects of multiculturalism. Babette Gekeler and Helene Joffe studied a group of young British people and tried to examine whether the ideological symmetry hypothesis stating that a stronger identification with one’s own group leads to greater openness towards other groups could be verified. The results of their study showed that the results also depended on the membership to the dominant or the non-dominant group in a multicultural setting.

A different aspect of diversity is the basis of the next paper by Helga Eberherr and Edeltraut Hanappi-Egger. In their paper, they present a conceptual framework for diversity policies. Using the example of the City of Vienna, they highlight the challenges associated with intersectionality and diversity for city councils.

In our Practitioner’s Corner, we look at the practical aspects of multicultural teambuilding using the example of German-Czech cooperation. Carolin Oder describes
the teambuilding activities used in a workshop designed to lead the two management teams from an initial state of mutual distrust and lack of understanding to a more cooperative working culture in the spirit of intercultural competence.

This issue concludes with our new section of book reviews. The first book reviewed by Gerhard Fink is: *The Management of Meaning in Organizations* by Slawomir Magala, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2009.

As announced before, we will from now on regularly review new books with intercultural content in our next issues.

We hope that you find the topics of this issue both interesting and stimulating and look forward to hosting your article or a comment on one of the papers of this or the first issue of the *EJCCM* in one of our next issues.
Multicultural teambuilding: case study of a German-Czech Greenfield project

Carolin Oder
Kulturion,
Schwenninger Str. 11, 78083 Dauchingen, Germany
E-mail: carolin@kulturion.com

Abstract: Solid empirical evidence, produced during a German-Czech Greenfield project, formed the basis of this article. The medium-sized company’s initial situation showed a lack of mutual understanding and trust among the management teams. This constrained and prevented management from solving the problems inherent at the start-up stage. The case study focuses on the multicultural teambuilding approach with an overall goal to increase collaboration and trust among the German-Czech team members. A team charter was developed to bridge differences and to maintain similarities in participant’s work culture in order to define a common team culture. The article will end with the evaluation of the workshop results as well as an exploration of the most effective time to implement intercultural competence development in the course of international projects.

Keywords: intercultural competence; Germany; Czech Republic; Eastern Europe; case study; multicultural teambuilding; international teams; soft-skills development; collaboration; work culture; relationship management; team charter; Greenfield project.


Biographical notes: Carolin Oder is the Founder and Owner of kulturion. Her company is based in Southwest Germany and offers solutions to enhance international business relationships and supports sustainable international growth. She has a German background and combines her expertise as Export Manager with her intercultural experiences and excellent relationship management skills.

She holds a Diploma in International Business with focus on International Marketing and Communication. She worked and lived in USA, France and Sweden and has authored several articles. She lectures at German business schools and universities on intercultural competence.

1 Introduction

Over the last few years, the industry’s investment focus has rapidly shifted towards the growth regions in Asia and Eastern Europe. Among Eastern European countries, the Czech Republic is an attractive region, due to prevailing moderate location costs, the favourable geographical location and the comparatively good infrastructure. In the light
of foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into the European Union accession countries of 2004 and 2007, the Czech Republic ranks behind Poland and Rumania, but is ahead of Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Slovenia (EIU, 2007).

Germany was the Czech Republic’s largest investor, even before the Eastern European extension of the European Union in May 2004. This big neighbour on the northwest borderline accounts for nearly 25% (15.4 million Euro) of total investments. According to a study from the German-Czech Chamber of Foreign Trade, 4,500 German companies operate in the Czech Republic (DTAHK, 2007). Operations include distributors, own subsidiaries, joint ventures and/or the relocation of production plants. The set up of a production plant outside the headquarters’ home country is now not confined to just the big players like Volkswagen, Robert Bosch or Siemens. More and more small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) choose this strategy to ensure their competitiveness through cost advantages.

This article presents a case study of a German medium-sized company, which launched a Greenfield project in the Czech Republic. The article will start with the description of the company’s initial situation and the outline of the problems occurring during the first year of operation. The approach focuses on the soft-skill development of the management teams in the form of multicultural teambuilding. The overall objective of the multicultural teambuilding was to optimise the collaboration between Germany’s headquarters and the Czech Republican production plant by enhancing mutual understanding, building trust and generating awareness for diversity among the team members. The approach will be described in three separate parts; the workshop concept; the workshop preparation and finally, the workshop design and accomplishment. The case study will close with a review of the workshop results and end by exploring the most appropriate time to develop intercultural competence in the course of an international project.

2 Initial situation and problem outline

2.1 Initial situation

The German company, with more than 500 employees, has been successful in the manufacturing industry for more than five decades. To ensure its future competitiveness, the management board decided to launch a Greenfield project in Eastern Europe. The board chose the Czech Republic because of its prevailing moderate location costs. Beside that fact, there were two other decision drivers for the management board. The most important argument was the fact, that the chosen region offered companies for Greenfield projects an attractive tax model, in form of a remission of their corporation tax. This promised a remarkable tax saving advantage depending on the future profit of the company. Additionally, the cost advantage on total cost of labour played a key role. The Czech Republic is, because of manpower shortage, no low-wage country. However, the level of total cost of labour is still favourably beneficial compared to German standards. According to a recent study, Roland Berger Strategy Consultants forecast the average hourly total cost of labour for an unskilled worker for 2009 in Germany at 25.90 Euro compared to the Czech Republic at 6.70 Euro (Roland Berger Strategy Consultants, 2005). There are forecasts that it will take at least three decades before the Czech income level would reach Western European levels (DAHK, 2007).
In August 2006, the construction of the factory officially started and ten months later, the first testing operations took place. In July 2007, the Czech company started production, mostly for orders from the German customer base.

2.2 Problem outline

The company faced several start-up difficulties in its first year of operation. The biggest issue was the serious lack of skilled workers. The unemployment rate in the Czech Republic was in 2007 at 5.3% (DAHK, 2007). This number was different from region to region. The area around the capital Prague achieves nearly full employment. The region where the company built the production plant has an unemployment rate of about 4%. These circumstances made the recruiting process for the local management team difficult. As only a limited number of skilled worker could be hired, on-the-job training of workers took valuable time. Further problems were caused by the rollout of the German ERP-system, which needed to be customised to fit the Czech accounting law and for special requirement regarding production management and stock on hand. Differences in the Czech health and safety regulations required adaptation of the company’s existing German working time model.

In addition to all these manageable start-up challenges, the potential conflict between the management teams in Germany and the Czech Republic increased. Language barriers occurred frequently during daily interaction. Relying on and utilising the German language led to the uncertainty that the participants always understood each other correctly. The German colleagues could not speak Czech and the Czech colleagues spoke very little German. Using a second language, English, was only occasionally helpful. This led to misunderstandings. In addition, there was a lack of trust from both sides. The Czech employees did not know enough about the reasons for the German management decisions, therefore did not fully trust them and their leadership. The German management team missed personal engagement and proactive information flow from the Czech counterparts and employees. This made communication inefficient and counterproductive and, because of lack of mutual understanding between the management teams, the problems were never solved.

The General Manager of the German headquarters found himself more and more involved in troubleshooting and mediating, while the break-even point of the project was behind schedule. He began to believe that this conflict situation was mainly due to intercultural misunderstanding. He concluded that a deficit in intercultural competence could be the cause of the problems. He wanted the German and Czech management team to act together, in concert, and be able to find effective and fast solutions for the start-up challenges.

3 Approach: multicultural teambuilding

Our offer to the German General Manager and the design of the workshop were based on the following considerations. International teamwork and projects are gaining more and more importance due to globalisation and coalescent markets. The challenge for international teams is to effect collaboration across different cultural values, expectations, perceptions and behaviours. Figure 1 below describes, that our identity (layer one of the
onion) is shaped and formed through our values, attitudes, behaviour, customs, rules, roles and our perception (layer two of the onion), and those again are shaped and influenced by different cultural elements, like our nationality, ethnicity, regional origin, sex, education, age, profession or physical characteristics (layer three of the onion).

**Figure 1**  Multicultural onion: our many-layered multicultural self

![Multicultural onion: our many-layered multicultural self](image)

*Source: kulturion © 2008, adapted from Bennett (2005)*

Cultural elements influence our way of being. Most visible differences are between genders. The behaviour of a woman in a specific situation differs from the behaviour of a man in the same situation. Or just think about how different understanding and values are perceived between generations. Elder people, who lived through the Second World War, for example, have different expectations and perceptions than a 16 year old German in 2009. Regional origin plays an important role in our identity too. Some people might have experienced differences in there own country between North and South or between East and West. In Germany, for example, people from the Midwest of the country, like Düsseldorf, Köln or Duisburg, are known for their open-mindedness and approachability, whereas the population in the Southwest of Germany, the Swabians, are recognised for their diligence and their austerity.

The cultural elements like education, profession, company culture and departmental culture influence our preferences to work. The communication style of a professor is different to the communication style of a blue-collar worker. It is soon evident during a meeting that mutual understanding is lacking between the Research and Development Manager and the Sales Manager. There are stereotypes in our minds how a typical employee in the accounting department acts and how different a typical employee in the marketing department likes to work. Visible differences in our work culture are evident on a daily basis. There are different expectations, perceptions and behaviour to the understanding of time; decision-making processes; communication styles or towards the understanding of leadership and motivation.
3.1 Workshop concept

The first meeting with the customer took place at the German headquarters and focused on developing a rough concept of how to approach the situation. The workshop’s concept was based on the process of developing intercultural competence. This process contains and combines three sets: the Mind Set, the Skill Set and the Heart Set.

**Figure 2** Concept of intercultural competence

The Mind Set focuses on generating awareness of one’s own culture. This enables the participant to recognise differences in values, expectations, perceptions and behaviours among team members. The Mind Set is the first part of the process of developing intercultural competence. As long as we are unable to perceive our own culture, we are not able to see differences to other cultures. The Skill Set illustrates knowledge of other cultures, develops skills and provides tools to bridge cultural differences. This set contains information based on anthropological studies, for example focusing on values, communication, leadership or understanding of time. Finally, the Heart Set supports the attitude and the motivation a person needs to utilise to be effective in intercultural situations and competent in various international contexts. Such attitudes inherent in an intercultural competent person include, for example, being non-judgemental, taking their own cultural background as a last resort or recognising and admiring cultural differences.
At the end of the first customer meeting, the definition of the overall goal of the workshop has been agreed. The workshop should create increased collaboration and support trust building among the German and Czech team members. Additionally, a team charter should be developed, to define the common ground for future collaboration.

The workshop structure comprises four steps, which will be described in more detail in the workshop design and accomplishment section.

### Figure 3   Workshop structure

![Workshop structure diagram](image)

The parties agreed on a one-day workshop and the target group of the German and Czech management team. It was decided that the venue of the workshop should be outside the company in the Czech Republic. German was chosen as the workshop’s language and an evening teambuilding event was planned in order to build closer relationships among the team members. The training would end with a common breakfast the other morning.

#### 3.2 Workshop preparation

An intensive needs assessment has been carried out to prepare the workshop. A needs assessment can provide clarity concerning the expectation of the client and can help to reconcile them with the needs of the participants. There are several other beneficial outcomes including increased commitment from management and potential participants for the training and development effort. Also, it can clarify crucial organisational issues and conflict potential and provide the best use of limited resources as well as design ideas for the program (Warshauer, 1988). One of the most important goals of our needs assessment was to get to know the participants personally. To conduct the workshop in the best possible way, it was crucial to connect with the participants ahead of the workshop. In addition, the face-to-face meeting offered the opportunity to get an impression of subliminal conflict potential.

Personal meetings were scheduled with each participant. Each meeting took 45 to 60 minutes. The meetings consisted out of two parts. The first part was conducted with a questionnaire and the second part was a self-assessment according to selected collaboration dimensions.

The questionnaire collected answers about the participants’ nationality, regional origin, age, education, seniority, job title and function, major tasks and challenges, language knowledge, intercultural experiences and their expectations of a multicultural teambuilding workshop.
The self-assessment focused on ten different collaborative dimensions relevant to the German and Czech working culture. Each dimension was explained and displayed on a continuum. The participants had to assess their personal appraisal on each scale. They had to appraise their understanding of time, their focus on task versus relationships, their communication style, and their opinion concerning authority, hierarchy and status. Furthermore, the participants had to decide if they value individualism or collectivism, how they handle humour in business, assess their preference in problem solving, define how they deal with uncertainty, think about their understanding of how the superior and subordinate relationship should work and their understanding of leadership. These dimensions are based on anthropological studies of G.H. Hofstede and G.J. Hofstede (2005) as well as Edwart T. Hall (1981) and on the authors’ leadership and business experiences.

The following paragraphs will explain five out of the mentioned above ten collaboration dimensions in more detail. The dimension task vs. relationship is relevant for international teamwork. There are nations in the world, like Germany, USA or Sweden, which focus on the task. That means that results and goals are the first priority in business. Private life is strictly separated from business life and there is no need for personal relationship to deliver good results. Whereas other cultures in the world, like Arabic, Asian or South and East European cultures, need to know the person to be able to complete a task effectively. Without trust and honest interest in the other person, the target is hardly achievable.

The two poles of the dimension communication style are called high and low context style, according to Edward T. Hall’s anthropological studies. In low context style, meaning is conveyed through direct and explicit statements to the recipient, with little reliance on the context. In discussions, arguments can easy be followed as they are conducted in a straight line – argument A, B, C follows the point D. Emotions are mostly detached from the issue. Low context style communicators stay calm and weigh all facts objectively. Feelings are clearly separated from facts. It is professional to stay cool and calm. Disagreement or conflict is direct and brought into the open. Low context style communicators criticise the idea, not the person who communicates the idea. The sentence ‘what you see is what you get’ summarises the low context communication style best. In the high context style, meaning is conveyed by clues. The receiver of the message is responsible to read between the lines. Discussions are conducted in circular movements. This means that the main point is not mentioned clearly, it is ‘hidden’ within additional context information. In high context style societies, the right interpretation of the message is very important to consider who says what to whom under which circumstances. If something is important to someone, issues are taken with emotion. The speaker shows engagement in a subject by sharing his/her feelings. When disagreements occur, face-saving and hierarchically sensitive behaviour is expected and is the accepted norm. The majority of Germans have the tendency to communicate in low context style, whereas Czechs tend to communicate in a higher context style.

The approach of how to perceive authority, hierarchy and status may have two poles - equality versus hierarchy. In some cultures, a deep feeling for democratic equality manifests itself in a lack of deference shown to those in authority. People who take their own authority or status too seriously are ‘cut down to size’ by humour and/or criticism. First names or nicknames are frequently used and everyone should proactively share opinions and ideas. In other cultures, the emphasis on hierarchy assures that one is
shown deference and respect from those in positions of lesser authority. Titles are frequently used to address those in authority. Opinion and ideas are usually expected from above.

Expectations of the relationship between superiors and subordinates have a strong impact on daily cooperation. It can either purely be based on business only or the relationship is a mix of private and business subjects. In some cultures, for example in Germany, the relationship between superior and subordinate should be friendly but impersonal and businesslike. Evaluation of the subordinate’s worth to the organisation is based on performance alone. The supervisor is only concerned with work-related matters pertaining to the subordinate. In contrast to this, other cultures, for example the Czech Republic, treasure a close relationship between superior and subordinate. The supervisor shows genuine concern for the welfare of the subordinate and appreciation for his or her worth as a human being. The supervisor should deal with a subordinate as a whole person and should be concerned with personal as well as work-related issues.

The goal of the self-assessment was to discover the work preferences of each individual participant in order to draw a picture of the team’s work culture. It would not have been helpful to stick to the general literature about the typical German or the typical Czech.

3.3 Workshop design and accomplishment

The workshop design was based on the process of developing intercultural competence (Mind Set, Skill Set, Heart Set) and on the motivational framework for culturally responsive teaching, established by Wlodkowski and Grinsberg. This teaching model is respectful of different cultures and capable of creating a common culture that all learners in the learning situation can accept. There are four essential motivational conditions that teachers and learners can create or enhance: Establishing inclusion – creating a learning atmosphere in which learners and teachers feel respected and connected to each other. Developing attitude – creating a favourable disposition toward the learning experience through personal relevance and choice. Enhancing meaning – creating challenging, thoughtful learning experiences that include learners’ perspectives and values and finally, engendering competence – creating an understanding that learners are effective in learning something they value (Wlodkowski, 1999).

To establish inclusion, the workshop design took several activities into consideration to introduce the participants to each other, engage them to talk about issues they usually do not talk about and to build trust. To develop attitude, the personal information and impression from the individual interviews helped to find out what learning style each participant prefers and what was most relevant to the participants. Throughout the entire workshop, experiential learning activities enhanced meaning by sharing practical experiences. The fact, that at the end of the workshop a team charter would be developed, engendered competence, as the participants understood, that this could be directly transferred into practice to enhance collaboration.

Step 1: Orientation and cultural introduction

The first step of the workshop is part of the Mind Set and began with intensive participant introductions. Participants had to individually answer a question about their own identity.
However, the answers were based on a choice of images. Memories and associations that emerge through images are often quite different from those stimulated through verbal dialogue. This enables participants to go beyond the rational side of their minds and tap into a more intuitive part of themselves (VisualsSpeak, 2009). Following this, they shared information with their team mates, information that they would usually keep secret. This established an atmosphere of trust right from the start. In two groups, the participants prioritised their expectations of a multicultural teambuilding workshop. These expectations were collected during the individual meetings. This led to the development of the workshop’s goals and further orientation of the day. An experiential icebreaker exercise opened the intercultural introduction session. The focus of this phase was to generate awareness of one’s own culture. The participants created their own cultural onion. A worksheet, which displayed the Onion figure, was used (as illustrated in Section 3). Everybody had to reflect the cultural elements and mark those, which shaped their personal life in particular. Participants were invited to share their Onion with the rest of the group. As the Onion includes very private information, the group got to know each other better and each person generated awareness for his/her own culture. Discussion about German and Czech stereotypes reduced tension among team members and completed the first step.

**Step 2: Multicultural teams**

The second step belongs to the Skill Set and opened with the question “What is a team?” The participants were asked to draw the answer. The individual drawings displayed the diversity in the room. Together, a common definition was developed. General input on multicultural teamwork followed. A collection of opinions about what was considered ‘good teamwork’ was compiled. These opinions were prioritised and discussed within the big group as to reach a consensus of ‘good teamwork’. This built the basis for the team charter, which was drafted in Step 4 of the workshop.

**Step 3: German-Czech collaboration dimensions**

Step 3 took place in the afternoon and continued the Skill Set part. The ten selected collaboration dimensions were discussed in detail. Practical examples from the participants and the trainer illustrated the different characteristics of each dimension. A chart, which summarised the entire self-assessment, was generated to provide an overview of the working culture of the team. This has been anonymously shared within each dimension. The graphical overview showed the preferred working style of each team member. This made it quite handy for the participant to recognise differences and similarities within the team. It also exposed where the team charter has to bridge differences and maintain similarities in order to define a common team culture. Related to the four dimensions described in the Workshop Preparation Section, the team results were as follows: on the task vs. relationship dimension, the group was quite diverse. Whereas the majority of German colleagues focused on task, some of the Czech team members focused on relationship and some assessed themselves to some extent task focused. In terms of communication style, the majority of the group focused on low context style. The dimensions Authority, Hierarchy and Status were quite challenging as half of the group valued equality and half of the group preferred the
hierarchical characteristic. In the case of the dimension Relationship Superior vs. Subordinate, the group was coherent in preferring a relationship, which mixed business and private.

Step 4: Relationship management

The focal point of Step 4 of the multicultural teambuilding workshop was the finalisation of the team charter and appertains to the Heart Set. To support the engagement of the group, several teambuilding exercises were accomplished, for example, small group competition or blindfolded teamwork. To carry out those exercises successfully, trust and respect is essential. The team charter defined the guidelines of successful collaboration. These guidelines focused on the consensus, found by the team during the discussion around ‘good team work’ in Step 2 of the workshop, and bridged the differences and enforced the relevant similarities of the collaboration dimension assessment. The result of the day was to draft a team charter, which needed to be discussed further and finalised properly in additional internal company meetings. The team charter addressed, among others things, how to communicate with each other, what supports a good working atmosphere, how the superior and subordinate relationships should develop and what it means to show initiative and take responsibility. As the team charter was already more or less specific, the participants could well imagine how it would work in practice and how this would support future collaboration among the team members.

The joint evening event played a decisive role in relationship management. An event-dinner had been arranged, which encouraged the team members to get into more private interaction and to have fun together. The company sponsored the entire evening and the accommodation for all participants, which meant that the local team members did not have to drive home afterwards. The team enjoyed a relaxed evening together and met for breakfast the next morning before everybody individually departed.

4 Evaluation

Assessing training outcomes often entails using the four-level model developed by Donald Kirkpatrick (2006). According to this model, evaluation should always begin with Level 1, and then, as time and budget allows, should move sequentially through Levels 2, 3, and 4. Information from each prior level serves as a base for the next level’s evaluation. Thus, each successive level represents a more precise measure of the effectiveness of the training programme, but at the same time requires a more rigorous and time-consuming analysis (Kirkpatrick, 2006). The following paragraphs will take a closer look at the four levels of evaluation.

Level 1: Evaluation – reactions

Just as the word implies, evaluation at this level measures how participants in a training programme react to it. It attempts to answer questions regarding the participants’ perceptions – Did they like it? Was the material relevant to their work? According to Kirkpatrick, every programme should at least be evaluated at this level. In addition, the participants’ reactions have important consequences for learning (Level 2). Although a
positive reaction does not guarantee learning, a negative reaction almost certainly excludes it.

**Level 2: Evaluation – learning**

To assess the amount of learning that has occurred during a training programme, Level 2 evaluations often use tests conducted before training (pre-test) and after training (post-test). Assessment at this level moves the evaluation beyond learner satisfaction and attempts to assess the extent students have advanced in skills, knowledge, or attitude. Measurement at this level is more difficult and laborious than Level 1. Methods range from formal to informal testing to team assessment and self-assessment. If possible, participants take the test or assessment before the training (pre-test) and after training (post-test) to determine the amount of learning that has occurred.

**Level 3: Evaluation – transfer**

This level measures the transfer that has occurred in learners’ behaviour due to the training programme. Evaluating at this level attempts to answer the question – Are the newly acquired skills, knowledge, or attitude being used in the everyday environment of the learner? For many trainers, this level represents the truest assessment of a program’s effectiveness. However, measuring at this level is difficult as it is often impossible to predict when the change in behaviour will occur, and thus requires important decisions in terms of when to evaluate, how often to evaluate, and how to evaluate.

**Level 4: Evaluation – results**

Level 4 evaluation attempts to assess training in terms of business results. Frequently thought of as the bottom line, this level measures the success of the programme in terms that managers and executives can understand—increased production, improved quality, decreased costs, reduced frequency of accidents, increased sales, and even higher profits or return on investment. From a business and organisational perspective, this is the overall reason for a training programme, yet Level 4 results are not typically addressed. Determining results in financial terms is difficult to measure, and is hard to link directly with training.

In the present case study, Kirkpatrick’s Level 1 evaluation has been accomplished. According to the individual feedback of the participants directly after the workshop, the tenor was very positive. The participants felt that the day helped them carry out their work more effectively in future. The workshop helped them learn more about their own values, expectations, perceptions and behaviours and enabled them to see the differences in their team mates (e.g., in work preferences). This increased mutual understanding and reduced conflict potential. Additionally, the participants experienced that there was much less ‘us vs. them’ thinking, as they could deepen their relationship and gain trust in each other and the team. Especially developing the draft of the team’s charter, which could be transferred into practice at short notice, raised the overall opinion that the day was relevant to their work. The participants learned something they could value, thus they engendered competence, which is one of four important motivational factors in adult education.
For further evaluation (e.g., Kirkpatrick’s Levels 2 and 3) additional research, post-interviews or post-assessments would be required, however, these time and cost-consuming analyses have not been agreed with the company.

5 Conclusions

The challenge for international teams is an effective collaboration across different cultural values, expectations, perceptions and behaviours. This workshop helped the team members to learn about their own values, expectations, perceptions and behaviours and enabled them to see possible differences in their team. The goals of the training were to reach an increased collaboration and a growth in mutual trust among the German-Czech team members and to develop a team charter to define common ground for future collaboration. As the evaluation of the workshop showed, the goals have been achieved.

The same workshop was conducted for the second level of management two months later. The devolved team charter of the second group was merged internally with the team charter from the first group. The final document was communicated company wide into all departments and displayed at prominent spots, for example in meeting rooms or in the entrance hall at the German headquarters and the Czech production plant.

6 The appropriate time to develop intercultural competence: setting expectations, prevention and motivation to learn

When is the appropriate time to develop intercultural competence in the course of an international project? This question will be discussed in the following chapters. There are three possibilities. Before a project, during a project or after a project has been determined. According to the author’s experiences, the most appropriate time to develop intercultural competence is during a project, more precisely in the start phase of an international project. The justification for this statement will be discussed in the light of three critical issues: setting expectations, prevention vs. crisis management and adult’s motivation to learn.

Setting expectations

When expectations are clear right from the beginning, frustration and disappointment are less likely to occur. The alignment of expectations makes it easier to act in concert. A team charter would clearly determine a common ground for collaboration, which can be borne from all team members independent of their individual cultures. In almost all project courses, a kick-off meeting is scheduled in the start phase to inform all team members about the project goal, details and duties. Ideally, this meeting is conducted face-to-face, so that the team members have a chance to get to know each other. The multicultural teambuilding approach could be done in one extra day after the kick-off meeting. Within the course of a Greenfield project, this training could be done as soon as all team members are defined and employed and before the operation runs or production starts.
Prevention vs. crisis management

Prevention is less time and cost-consuming than crisis management. When developing intercultural competence in the start phase of a project, hence before problems arise, the role of conflict management can be neglected and this would save precious time and energy for the team members. Although the problem awareness is higher during a crisis (and the necessity of a multicultural teambuilding becomes more obvious), experience shows that conflict management takes up valuable recourses and that there exists a higher risk that the relationship could hurt future projects, too.

Adult’s motivation to learn

Learning comes in many forms. In an ideal world, people would only learn through positive experiences, in other words, individuals would learn though their actions and those of others and see results that benefited all. The reality of life, however, is that we often learn easier and faster from bad decisions or negative experiences. It depends on the learning style of the individual, however, a lot of people learn from reflection and observation. To look back and analyse why things went wrong supports the learning. Thus, in terms of soft-skill development, the thinking like ‘why would we need this’ needs to be overcome at the beginning of the teambuilding process. The multicultural teambuilding approach, described in this article, takes this into account and evaluates it as manageable.

In general, intercultural competence is essential for effective relationship management towards customers, colleagues or team members. It demands awareness, skills and knowledge, and the right attitude to collaborate successfully with people who are different from us within a stressful and demanding business environment. So what do you consider as the most appropriate time to develop intercultural competence within your organisation? Prevention or crisis management? We would be happy to discuss this with you further. Please get in touch at info@kulturion.com.

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References


Notes

1 Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system is a complex software application, which regulates all relevant business processes. Typical functions of ERP Software are materials management, production management, finance and accounting, controlling, R&D, sales and marketing and master file data administration.

2 Break-even point is the point on which revenues and costs of a production (or product) are even, thus neither loss nor profit is obtained. If the break-even point is crossed, the project moves into the profit zone.


5 The workshop accomplishment, especially the applied activities are not described in more details, as the author does not like to disclose more. However the following two sources offer several activities, which are recommendable:

