

1. Assumptions, Strategies of a Cross-Cultural Development Program

2. Seminar Design

Understanding American and German Business Cultures

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Assumptions, strategies and training practices of a cross-cultural development program

The importance of culture sensitivity in your company

Questions of culture sensitivity are vital to any global organization for at least two reasons:

- Engineering, sales, research and development activities are a “relationship business”, where long-term relationships are created serving the specific needs of highly diverse clients.
- Innovation is key to further strengthening one’s position in the market. The rate of innovation is highest when diverse people pool their different resources and approaches and co-operate effectively.

A lack of intercultural competence in your organization therefore would have a direct impact on the bottom line.

Definition of intercultural competence

Intercultural competence is:

- The fundamental acceptance of people who are different to oneself outside one’s own culture.
- The ability to interact/communicate with them in a genuinely constructive manner which is free of negative attitude (e.g. prejudice, defensiveness, apathy, aggression etc.)
- The ability to create a synthesis, something which is neither “mine” nor “yours”, but which is genuinely new and would not have been possible had we not combined our different backgrounds and approaches.

Based on this definition, a global company would never adopt a philosophy of “cultural fit”, matching a person’s “culture profile” to a country specific profile. Rather, it is the ability to move from one profile to another that makes for intercultural competence. This skill in awareness, perception, communication, interaction and continuous personal learning will allow for a successful move to and work in another environment.

Intercultural training philosophy

Intercultural training should promote the following abilities:

- Awareness of self and (culturally diverse) others
- An attitude of “wanting to understand”, rather than “to know”
- Self-direction and self-drive
- Ability to discover and develop own resources
- Ability to tolerate and act in ambiguous situations
- Ability to continue intercultural learning

As a consequence, the training method should be:

- Participatory
- Experience-oriented
- Promoting self-reflection

Workshop in intercultural competence (awareness)

A two-day training for groups of up to 12 participants with the objective of assisting them to increase their awareness of the concept and relevance of national and organization culture, and of giving them an opportunity to develop their intercultural competence and aptitude for working in multicultural environments, be it in Germany, USA or in another country.

Understanding American and German Business Cultures

German and American personnel, whether it be on a business trip, participation in a project or the foreign assignment, often have problems adapting to different business cultures. To overcome these challenges, the acquisition of intercultural competence is necessary. Through the use of case studies, role-plays and discussions, the seminar participant learns to understand actions of the international counterpart as well as one's own culture and how to behave culturally correct in critical encounter situations. The language of instruction is in English.

Seminar Goal:

The acquisition of intercultural competence will be the focus. The main points of interest will deal with communication and behavior strategies, which can considerably influence the foreign assignment.

Who should attend:

Managing executives, group leaders, engineers, technicians, who are dealing and working with international, American, Austrian and German firms.

Seminar Contents:

1. Examining the concept of "culture"
 - The unspoken assumptions of American and German cultures
 - Theoretical frameworks of Edward Hall and Geert Hofstede
 - The need to stereotype others and behave ethnocentrically
2. Discovering American and German cultural values
 - Historical analysis of the two psychologies — values, ethics, traditions
 - Motivation: How do Americans and Germans differ?
 - What's important to me when working with my foreign counterpart?
3. Exploring different communication styles of Americans and Germans
 - Creating a successful presentation in the USA
 - Making "small talk"
 - Practical tips for speaking and listening to English more effectively
4. Contrasting American and German businesses
 - Problem-solving / Decision-making: A clash in role perception and personal responsibility
 - Using the different American and German negotiation strategies
5. Learning how to be interculturally competent
 - The cross-cultural "swinger"
 - Dealing with the relativity of cultural values
 - Building a Team Charter

Interactive (+grammar) exercises, discussions, case studies and role playing confirm the above topics

The Seminar Trainer:

Patrick Schmidt, an American by birth and education, has been more than 20 years active in the field of English and intercultural training. The focus of his seminars is international personnel work, the cooperation in multinational teams and transfer of management methods. His book "*Understanding American and German Business Cultures*" is also published in German "*Die amerikanische und die deutsche Wirtschaftskultur im Vergleich*". More information can be obtained through his website: <http://www.agcc.de>

Length of the Seminar: 2 days

Workshop Design for a two-day

U.S.-German Cross-Cultural Training Course

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Training Purpose</u>
DAY 1		
10-20 mins.	Brief self-introduction	Opening & establishing credibility
	Icebreaker activity (Arabic intro)	Establish a climate of group participation in examining cultural values
15-20 mins.	Expectations of both trainer & participants	
Transition: <i>After exploring the expectations of participants and trainer, introduce the workshop objectives that refers and reinforces (corrects) the expectations that have been expressed.</i>		
30 mins.	Participants introduce themselves; stress cross-cultural experiences and why they need to improve their intercultural awareness	Participants get to know each other; information sharing
45 mins.	Examining the term <i>culture</i>	Awareness that each culture believes it has the only right solutions to life (ethnocentric)
	<i>Driving too fast</i> case study —	How cultural values can affect decision making

Transition: After examining the term culture, we will discuss how social researchers have designed theoretical frameworks to explain why people from different countries do things in different ways.

45 mins.	Examining basic cultural concepts of Edward Hall & Gert Hofstede	Viewing cultures from low & high context, time, uncertainty, power distance, motivation
1 hour	Analyzing cultures through variables with case studies	Participants learn how to identify the core values of a culture
60 min.	LUNCH	
20- 30 mins.	Examining the term <i>stereotype</i>	Group activity involves why we need to "pigeon-hole" others and become aware of ethnocentrism
30-45 mins.	Reaching consensus on subconscious ethnocentric statements	To point out fallacies & biases in commonly held attitudes. Provoke discussions

Transition : We have looked at some counterproductive stereotypes and prejudices which we might have about people of other cultures. Now, we will examine American values as they contrast with values in Germany and Austria.

40 mins.	Quotations of foreign visitors; the common stereotypes of Germans and Americans	Group activity involves questioning why we do things the way we do, looking for the logic behind our actions, looking at ourselves from a different viewpoint
20 mins.	Discovering German, American values through media. Comparison of editorials from the <i>New York Times</i> and the <i>FAZ</i>	Seeing German and American values through ads, books, magazines
20 mins.	Discovering American, German, values through language	Seeing American and German values through proverbs
20 mins.	Ending the first day Questions or relevant comments	Questions, answers, discussion

Homework : read chapter 2 of "Understanding American and German Business Cultures"; psychology of Germans and Americans

Becoming conscious of how German values are so different from American

DAY 2

15 mins.

Welcome and review of previous day. Discussion of homework

Set the stage for activities of day 2

Transition : How do the different perceptions discussed earlier illustrate the various ways the communication was received.

45 mins.

Examining communication
Introduction and discussion on how we communicate

Introduce the idea of German American communication styles and its impact on cross-cultural interactions

45 mins.

What's important to me when working with my foreign counterpart?

Highlight how concepts like trust, teamwork, commitment, honesty are perceived according to cultural upbringing

1 hr.

Problem-solving, decision-making

Illustrate how Germans and Americans misunderstand each other because of different cultural values and communication styles

1 hr.

Creating a presentation for an international audience.

Applying theoretical knowledge to real-life situations. Exercise in self-perception and implications of one's own cultural assumptions

60 mins.

LUNCH

30 mins.

Creating a "snapshot" of German and American values

Becoming aware of one's own cultural preferences in order to become more cross-culturally effective.

Transition : We have up to now studied cultural differences from a behavior viewpoint. Another important aspect is the use of English as a language of communication.

30 mins.	Using English internationally as perceived by native and non-native speakers	Becoming more sensitive & aware when speaking or listening to English
30 mins.	Making 'small talk' English with foreigners	Practicing a social skill

Transition : When going abroad and settling down in a new culture, there is a period of adaptation, known more commonly as culture shock. It is a time of psychological disorientation. Let us discuss it and how one can best overcome it.

15 mins.	The symptoms of culture shock	Description of the occupational hazards of living overseas. Familiar things are no longer familiar
30 mins.	Characteristics of the interculturally competent person	Becoming conscious of what it means to be sensitive to other cultures

Transition : What have you learned in the past two days? What tools can we use to continue our cross-cultural development when we are overseas. What more do you need to learn?

5 mins.	Suggestions for further reading, extensive bibliographies	Where to go for more information
30 mins.	Group analysis of main points covered in workshop	Summary, evaluation and feedback
	Building a team charter	Action plan for the <i>Intercultural Manager</i> . Finding a balance between frankness and politeness
	Question : What was German and American about this workshop?	To reinforce the idea that what we do in a workshop, reflects our culture

References

Hans Schick, Leiter Controlling und Betriebswirtschaft Giessereiwerk Mannheim – DaimlerChrysler	0621 39 322 24
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