MANY CULTURES, ONE TEAM

Build Your Cultural Repertoire

first edition

Catherine Mercer Bing

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Global competition is fierce, and the timeframe within which businesses maintain their competitive advantage is now counted in months rather than years. One important source of competitive advantage is human behavior. Team leaders that manage the subtle, but powerful, forces of group dynamics and culture achieve better business outcomes. Team leaders that fail to identify and manage these subtle forces in real-time risk having their plans thwarted.

"Many Cultures, One team" is based on Cass Mercer Bing's extensive experience helping virtual and multi-cultural teams achieve their full potential. "Many Cultures, One Team" provides extensive advice for team leaders and consultants in a ready-to-use format. It is a crucial guide to anyone who wishes to gain a better handle on a crucial source of competitive advantage: human dynamics on global and virtual teams.

Dr. Amitai Touval, Zicklin School of Business

My favorite part is the case box. It raises questions and makes me think, 'darn, I don't really know!'... The explanations tend to give me a 'Yes, yes, I know' feeling.

Gert Jan Hofstede, Associate Professor at Wageningen UR, The Netherlands

In her new book "Many Cultures, One Team", author Cass Mercer Bing has correctly identified the key to team performance as being team process. In business to date, team process is defined in frameworks that do not sufficiently account for cultural differences. These frameworks are offered in the context of ***what*** *we want to accomplish; change management frameworks for implementing change, project management frameworks for projects, and information technology frameworks for implementing IT projects. But if the change management framework calls for engaging stakeholders,* ***how*** *can you accomplish this if you do not understand the Power Distance or Need for Certainty among those stakeholders? If the project management framework calls for chartering and team engagement,* ***how*** *do you know what to do if you do not understand the Individualism and Quality of Life orientations of your team members? Enter "Many Cultures, One Team", which lays out complete definitions, real world examples, and practical solutions for tipping the odds of success in your favor. It is not that methodologies such as Agile/Scrum, PMI, or CMI need to be modified or replaced. The knowledge Cass Mercer Bing offers has to be added to and applied in the context of these approaches. It is essential reading for all who lead, or, aspire to lead, diverse and global teams.*

Erik Granered, Author of "Global Call Centers: Achieving Outstanding Customer Service Across Cultures and Time Zones"

"Many Cultures, One Team", is a book for today's visionary-pragmatic managers, in-company practitioners and all those consultants and learning facilitators following up the development of their organizations into sustainable transformation processes including business partnership strategies. Catherine is providing practical tools and relevant experiences to integrate effectively Culture and daily/strategic management with better results.

Sergio Gardelliano, Lic. Sustainable Organizational Transformation
International Consultancy & Learning Facilitation, Vienna, Austria

Catherine has produced a truly groundbreaking handbook and toolkit for designing world-class teams. "Many Cultures, One Team" is unique in its presumption that team members are different, they are affected by their own cultural norms and those of their organizations, and it is absolutely essential for team members to mutually adapt to each other's needs and perspectives!

In most organizations, people are placed on a team and "wished well." "Many Cultures, One Team" illustrates how this frequently dooms a team to at-best mediocre results. The book does a masterful job of combining practical questions and tips to consider with specific roadmaps and tools to develop team members and leaders while also developing the organization so that it may best support and enable the success of its teams. The sections on the Culture in the Workplace Questionnaire™ and the Team Process Questionnaire System are especially valuable since they provide tools by which a team may further develop itself in culturally-adaptive ways.

Peter Bye, President of MDB Group

One of the most challenging aspects of global organizations is creating and leading cross cultural global teams including business units, functional teams, project teams, divisions, etc. It requires an understanding of the complex dynamics of the mental operating systems and cultural preferences of individuals in global organizations. Too often, leaders approach global teams thru their own lens of cultural bias or reference without regard for those of the team members.

Cass has presented a framework for global leaders to go beyond their own comfort zone allowing leaders to recognize and appreciate the cultural challenges involved in leading cross cultural teams. The leader is able to recognize and identify the cultural dynamics and utilize these techniques and strategies in making the organization function more effectively. This approach and the techniques outlined can be applied at multiple levels in the organization which makes a compelling case for leaders and HR professionals who operate in the complex network of cultural behavioral preferences present in global teams.

John E. Warren III, Global Human Resources Executive

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Acknowledgements

This book never would have been written if Artie Mahal had not asked me to write a chapter is his book *Facilitator's and Trainer's Toolkit: Engage and Energize Participants for Success in Meetings, Classes and Workshops*. We were talking about the work I do (Cross-cultural consulting) and I mentioned the "Team Leader Tool Kit" we had created for sell to clients. When Artie saw it he suggested that it might be more effective at marketing the company and the capability in book form. He offered to introduce me to Steve Hoberman (Technics Publications), who agreed to publish my book.

I want to thank my husband, John W. Bing, not only for doing the first copy editing, but more importantly for introducing me to the world of cultural differences. He is the founder of our business and has the personal relationships with Geert Hofstede, on whose research our consulting business is centered. Without his support and backing, I never would have found time or the focus to start much less finish this book.

Finally I want to acknowledge all the staff members who ever have worked at ITAP and those current employees (Ann, Linda and Amitai) who supported me throughout the many years of our working together. I want to especially thank Ann Dougherty whose creativity framed a lot of the kinds of materials used in this book. She also is a terrific editor and proofreader and she made sure I was accurate in my analysis of what cultural drivers were at play in various situations.

Finally, I want to thank both Geert Hostede for his important work in the field that allowed us to create our business. John and I appreciate the friendship and guidance Geert has given us over the years. Also I appreciate that Gert Jan was very gracious in giving me very sound advice about how to make this a much better book.

While I am grateful to all of the above, any errors in the book are mine alone.

About the Book

This book is an essential aid for anyone who leads, is a member of, consults with, or supports global teams. The purpose of this book is to give team leaders, team members, and consultants information about where to look to help identify what might be the cause of problems with the team.

The content addresses organizational practices as well as team member cultural orientations and how these impact (negatively or positively) the success of the team. It speaks to employee engagement, improved productivity, and human process interactions (HPIs) on teams. It challenges team leaders and team members to reflect on their cultural assumptions—to improve their cultural metacognition. The book starts with the impact on the team of various organizational practices and continues through the team lifecycle (the team charter, team meetings, celebration of the team's accomplishments) with a specific focus on the impact of culturally driven attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

The case stories, examples, and strategy suggestions are the result of collective experiences over the past 25 years. These are real, and most of the stories are examples of teams that have stumbled or those who did not meet their deliverables on time or at/under budget. The Whole Team Support System Framework is introduced in Part I, and the questions at the end of the sections are designed to help the reader seek the root causes of organizational practices that may cause issues that impact team success.

As you can imagine there are specific types of issues for each type of team. Since we cannot possibly deal with all the types of issues for the wide variety of teams, the focus here is on cross-cultural project management teams. These are common types of teams in many organizations. They also have the highest level of complexity, primarily due to cultural differences, functional boundaries, and likelihood that some members are not co-located.

Katzenbach and Smith, in *The Wisdom of Teams*, define effective teams as:

> *…a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.*

In multi-cultural teams while common purpose and goals are held in common, different approaches are more likely the norm. The strategies listed in the chapters in Part II are focused on national culture (cultural drivers of behavior) and are designed to give team leaders and team members culturally-appropriate approaches as they conduct team interactions, rather than always using "common approaches."

Teams are wonderfully various in composition, purpose, and form, and they exist in almost all organizations. Someday someone will write the taxonomy of teams, but I have a more practical goal: **To help teams work more effectively for their organizations and for the team members.**

Team Issues

You are a senior internal or external consultant specializing in creating effective team interventions. A client comes to you and during the conversation asks for team building training for members of a globally dispersed technology team. The client is convinced that members are not committed to the work of the team even though the outcomes are very important to the success of that division of the company. He points to missed milestone deliverables and a lack of urgency about meeting deadlines.

In a conversation to uncover examples of the problems on the team, the client writes, *"…broadly speaking we have seen the following:*

- *Lack of motivation/initiative*
- *Lack of confidence*
- *Lack of ability to work independently*
- *Lack of taking ownership*
- *Lack of domain knowledge*
- *Inadequate technology skills."*

In discussions with the team members, they believe that the team leader is not committed to the success of the team. They complain that the team leader:

- Is not keeping team members informed of project updates
- Is not available during their work hours because they are not all located in the same time zone
- Gives assignments that develop skills to those employees co-located with the team leader
- Has never visited their site even though their section was acquired over five years ago.

Who is more committed…the team leader or the team members? Are there cultural issues on this team? Could there be performance issues? Can you tell which of these problems might be exacerbated by organizational alignment or organizational practices? Are the team members interacting effectively? Is the team leader capable of leading a multi-cultural team?

This real life example demonstrates some of the complexities that teams face. A variety of factors here negatively affect team success. They include, but are not limited to:

- Remote selection practices (not knowing which foreign university degrees actually prepare remote employees with "adequate technical skills")
- Organizational policies (budget constraints) that limit travel to remote locations
- Misunderstanding of the leadership needs of the employees (for example, how much context and specific directions to give them when delegating)
- Lack of appreciation for the needs of the employees to have more accessibility to the remote supervisor
- Limited foresight as to the impact on both employee development and employee motivation when interesting assignments are distributed.

Teams, because they represent significant corporate investment, require proactive attention and continued support. Many teams are multi-cultural just by the nature of today's workforce. Success requires early detection of and response to obstacles pressuring the teams from outside or from within. To prevent these difficulties from hindering the team's productivity and effectiveness, proper identification of what can derail even the most dedicated team is essential to creating high-performing multi-cultural teams.

As companies strive to improve their global reach through the use of teams, two factors are critical to that goal:

1. Technical Expertise: Such as research, finance, sales, marketing, project management, general management, and
2. Human Process Expertise: How teams interact to establish clear goals, communicate across national and cultural boundaries and time zones, solve problems, work together as well as independently, and resolve differences. Actions in all these areas are, at least in part, culturally defined.

Of course technical / functional approaches also are impacted by culture. For example, Dr. Marieke de Moojj has written *Global Marketing and Advertising; Understanding Cultural*

Paradoxes and Consumer Behavior and Culture: Consequences for Global Marketing and Advertising.

Significant corporate Human Resource efforts focus on hiring and compensating the best technically qualified people, some of whom become members of global teams. It is too often assumed that technical expertise is all that matters. When we look at teams that miss milestones or deadlines, we often see two equally qualified employees produce widely different quality or quantity of work. Therefore, other factors obviously are playing a role.

If global teams, which represent significant corporate investments towards important goals, receive the attention and support of management, their chance for success is magnified. Such support can provide early detection of and response to looming obstacles in order to prevent them from hindering the team's productivity and effectiveness. Global team leader development, combined with focused team process monitoring and support, significantly improves team effectiveness.

Employees require knowledge, skills, information, competencies, resources, motivation and incentives to perform tasks. They will fail to the extent that these elements are missing or less than optimal.

A relationship between process and performance exists on teams. At the most basic level, it should be obvious that dissatisfied team members are more likely to contribute less to team productivity.

HOW THE BOOK IS ORGANIZED

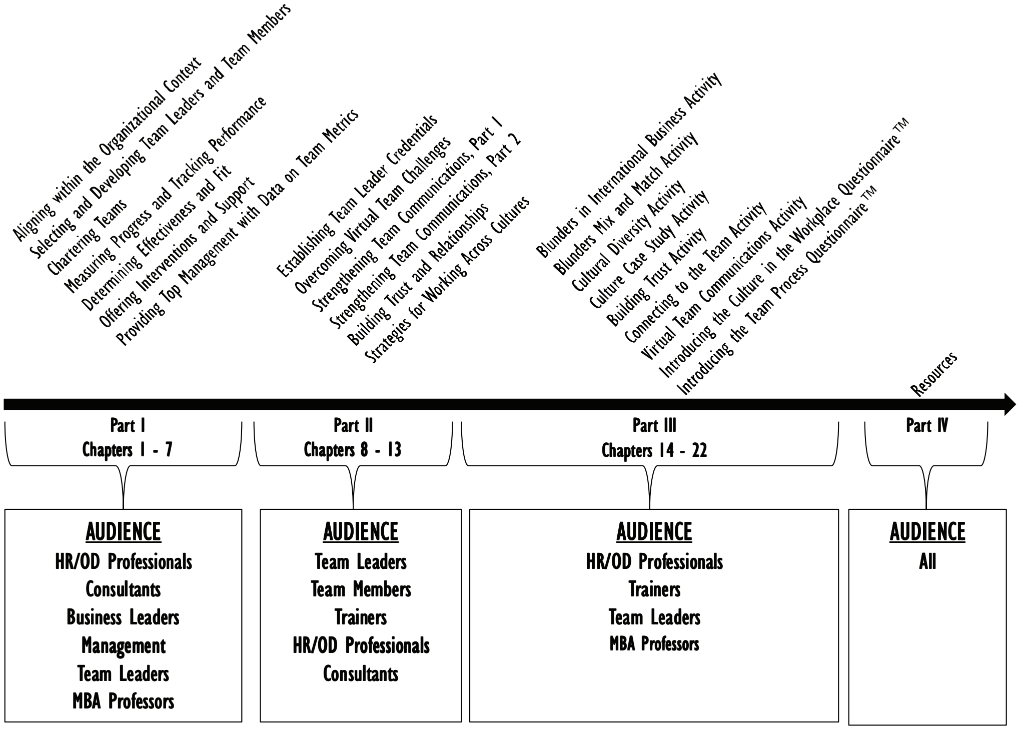
In the first ten books on teams that I looked at to start my research, I realized that not one of them included how organizational practices **external** to the team can be a barrier to team success. This book fills this important niche.

This book also helps readers build their cultural repertoire. The strategies in the chapters exist to provide information about what kinds of team activities are more effective with people who have specific cultural orientations. These are meant as options for team leaders and members to help them embrace diversity by giving them alternative ways to be more effective with each other. These lists are not intended to be prescriptive but to give readers tools and approaches to help them understand why what they are currently doing works sometimes but may not work all the time or with all team members.

The basis of the contents of the book comes from:

- A breadth of understanding of the pressures on global, multi-cultural teams (from within the team and from outside the team or from the organization),
- Creating applications to measure Human Process Interactions (HPIs) on teams and administering these assessments to hundreds of teams,
- Consulting about dysfunctional teams and providing consulting interventions and training to improve productivity, and
- Leading large, cross-functional, multi-cultural teams. Building practices based on the work of Dr. Geert Hofstede, the pioneer in comparative intercultural research.

The book starts with an introduction to cultural dimensions identified by Dr. Geert Hofstede and the two orientations associated with each dimension. Contained in the four sections outlined below are an examination of external and internal factors that impact team success, recommendations, ideas and suggestions for team interventions, activities and assessments as well as a list of resources. Each section may be more or less valuable for particular audiences.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Selecting and Developing Team Leaders and Team Members
Chartering Teams
Measuring Progress and Tracking Performance
Determining Effectiveness and Fit
Offering Interventions and Support
Providing Top Management with Data on Team Metrics
Establishing Team Leader Credentials
Overcoming Virtual Team Challenges
Strengthening Team Communications, Part 1
Strengthening Team Communications, Part 2
Building Trust and Relationships
Strategies for Working Across Cultures
Blunders in International Business Activity
Blunders Mix and Match Activity
Cultural Diversity Activity
Culture Case Study Activity
Building Trust Activity
Connecting to the Team Activity
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Introducing the Culture in the Workplace Questionnaire™
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Trainers
Team Leaders
MBA Professors
AUDIENCE
All

I. External Factors (Organizational Practices) that Impact Team Success: The first section of this book looks at the organization as a whole in order to help the reader ensure that organizational barriers and bridges to building productive teams are identified. In it I introduce the Whole Team Support Framework and devote one chapter to each segment of the framework. Chapters end with a series of questions that can be used to diagnose problem areas.

- Chapter 1 – Aligning within the Organizational Context
- Chapter 2 – Selecting and Developing Team Leaders and Team Members
- Chapter 3 – Chartering Teams
- Chapter 4 – Measuring Progress and Tracking Performance
- Chapter 5 – Determining Effectiveness and Fit
- Chapter 6 – Offering Interventions and Support
- Chapter 7 – Providing Top Management with Data on Team Metrics

AUDIENCE: This part is most useful for Human Resources (HR)/Organizational Development (OD) specialists or consultants, business leaders and somewhat useful for team leaders.

II. Internal (National) Cultural Factors that Impact Team Success: The second section of the book offers approaches to consider for management, team leaders, and team members to improve team performance. Included in each section are stories of either team problems or successes as well as lists of strategies aligned with particular cultural orientations. These lists are intended to offer alternatives to help teams build their repertoire of culturally varied approaches.

- Chapter 8 – Establishing Team Leader Credentials
- Chapter 9 – Overcoming Virtual Team Challenges
- Chapter 10 – Strengthening Team Communications, Part 1
- Chapter 11 – Strengthening Team Communications, Part 2
- Chapter 12 – Building Trust and Relationships
- Chapter 13 – Strategies for Working Across Cultures

AUDIENCE: This part is most useful for management, team leaders, team members, trainers/facilitators and HR/OD professionals.

III. Many Cultures One Team Activities—Tools and Techniques: The third part includes Instructor Guides to team activities for cross-cultural and virtual teams, intervention ideas to help readers improve team process and performance, and recommended instruments for measuring cultural profiles and Human Process Interactions (HPIs).

- Chapter 14 – Blunders in International Business Activity (for in-person team meetings) designed to establish the importance of cultural differences in business.
- Chapter 15 – Blunders Mix and Match Activity (for virtual team meetings). This activity is a version of the previous activity modified for use in virtual team meetings.

- Chapter 16 – Cultural Diversity Activity designed to improve cultural diversity metacognition.
- Chapter 17 – Culture Case Study Activity designed to give an example of how cultural orientations may intersect and overlap in real business situations. It also can be used to measure how well members can identify behavioral characteristics of various cultural orientations.
- Chapter 18 – Building Trust Activity designed to identify what builds, breaks or is a barrier to trust on teams.
- Chapter 19 – Connecting to the Team Activity designed to help build relationships on the team.
- Chapter 20 – Virtual Team Communications Activity designed to get the conversation started about how to set communication protocols and determine each team members' preferred technology. This speeds and smoothes virtual communication.
- Chapter 21 – Introducing the Culture in the Workplace Questionnaire™. This is an instrument used to measure and report on the respondent's personal cultural profile. It also can be used to create team profiles and for research.
- Chapter 22 – Introducing the Team Process Questionnaire™ System. This includes three instruments for global, mono-cultural, and action learning teams to measure human process interactions.

AUDIENCE: This part is most useful for HR/OD professionals, trainers, team leaders, team members, trainers/facilitators.

IV. Resources: The final section includes a bibliography.

Dr. Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social scientist, created the field of comparative intercultural studies. He is Director (Emeritus) of the Institute for Research on Intercultural Cooperation (IRIC) at the University of Maastricht, the Netherlands. Dr. Hofstede's pioneering study of IBM affiliates in fifty countries, elaborated in his book *Culture's Consequences*, helped to form the foundation of the field of comparative cultures. In *Culture's Consequences*, Dr. Hofstede analyzed how workplace values are influenced by culture. Over 200 subsequent studies validating his earlier results have included, among many others, commercial airline pilots, students in 23 countries, civil service managers in 14 countries, and high-income consumers in 15 countries.

Hofstede can be regarded as one of the leading representatives of intercultural research and studies. According to The Wall Street Journal, Geert Hofstede is the 16th top influential business thinker in the world, "based on Google hits, media mentions and academic citations."[1]

The findings of his research and his theoretical ideas are used worldwide in both psychology and management studies. His more recent book co-authored by Gert Jan Hofstede and Michael Minkov (the third edition of *Culture and Organizations: Software of the Mind)* examines what drives people apart, even when it seems obvious that cooperation would be in the interest of everyone. His book examines society's unwritten rules and explores how national cultures differ.

Cultural differences come from patterns for thinking, feeling, and potential acting learned in childhood and practiced throughout our lives. Once these patterns are established, they must be unlearned before being able to learn something different. Values learned at a very early age are deeply held, often unconscious, and the most difficult to unlearn. Mental software or culture for a group is the aggregate of those patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting.

For example, imagine a child in school who is misbehaving. What would you define as "misbehavior"? In your experience, who gets the blame for his/her misbehavior – the parents, the child, the school? How is the blame administered? The answers to these questions may vary by culture and these practices are later reproduced in the workplace.

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[1] New Breed of Business Gurus Rises, By Erin White, May 5, 2008.

What we are not talking about is "organizational culture/climate." Reichers and Schneider (1990) define organizational climate as "…shared perceptions of organizational policies, practices, and procedures *[within an organization]*." These are not learned when we are young and are not deeply held beliefs or patterns, as evidenced by our ability to move from one organization to another. Instead, in this book, what others call organizational culture is referred to as "organizational practices" which is meant to include practices, procedures, and policies.

Culture, what Dr. Hofstede defines as "software of the mind or mental programming," is one of the variables that guides peoples' actions and reactions. Understanding one's own culture and the impact of culture on the actions of others is essential for effective global team interactions.

The cultural terminology used in this book will refer to Hofstede's model with the updated and simplified terms used in the Culture in the Workplace Questionnaire™ (CWQ) application.

If you are already familiar with the work of Geert Hofstede, you have noticed that we are using different terminology in this section. There are notes after the definitions and examples which list the original Hofstede terms.

INDIVIDUALISM DIMENSION

Individualism (the dimension) is the degree to which decisions are made for the benefit of the individual or the benefit of the group. Individualism has two orientations, **Individual Orientation** or **Group Orientation**. Different cultural groups will define the qualities and characteristics of an effective team member based on their cultural orientation. They may either prefer a more linear work flow—I do my work and pass it off to you (**Individual Orientation**)—or a more collaborative effort, where we work on it together—I help you and you help me (**Group Orientation**).

In teams, those who exhibit behaviors associated with Individual Orientation may appear to those with a Group Orientation as loners (they go off and do their work alone) who lack commitment to the success of the team. Those who exhibit behaviors associated with Group Orientation may be perceived as unable to make decisions on their own and may be perceived as not qualified (especially when it appears that they need others to help them).

Original Hofstede terms:

- DIMENSION: Individualism
- ORIENTATIONS: Individualism / Individualist or Collectivism / Collectivist.

Here are some approaches to consider when working with those whose orientation is different from yours.

If you have been socialized with values from an Individual Orientation:

- Learn that others will respond after considering the group interests and impact of your expectations…
- …and that they may expect and require consultation before making or acting on a decision.
- If you meet resistance, passive or active, identify the common interests and outcomes up front; make the collective case.
- Be patient; learn to trust the team to deliver when they have collectively worked out together.
- Know that others may expect you to put the team interests before their or your own self-interests, and that is OK.

If you have been socialized with values from a Group Orientation:

- Learn that people may respond quickly and directly before considering other's input or interests…
- …and they may expect decisions, and make their own decisions, without waiting to consult others.
- If you are meeting inertia, think about and identify individual outcomes, actions and interests; engage individuals in support of team targets.
- Break down the group objective into individual actions and responsibilities; trust individuals to deliver their portion.
- Know that others may expect you to recognize their and your own interests up front before the team's, and that is OK.

POWER DISTANCE DIMENSION

Power Distance is the degree to which the difference between those in power and the less powerful is accepted. Power Distance has two orientations, **Hierarchical Orientation** or **Participative Orientation**. This dimension affects how people from different cultures would describe the qualities and characteristics of an effective leader very differently—say, China and Great Britain.

People from participative cultures, (even those with a relatively weak Participative Orientation, such as the US) often have a difficult time understanding why anyone would prefer a hierarchical approach. Western practices such as 360° feedback on teams (Give feedback to your boss? Not a wise career move in some Hierarchical cultures!) and matrix organizations (not knowing who is really in charge or who has the most power) are practices from a Western perspective. However, these practices can be confusing at best or career limiting at worst in some hierarchical cultures.

In teams, comfort with hierarchy (not questioning who is in charge, not raising issues to management, not offering ideas different from the team leader's) may appear to those with a Participative Orientation as lacking commitment to the team or lacking creativity. Those with a Participative Orientation may be seen by those with Hierarchical Orientation as disloyal to the leader and they may be pegged as "troublemakers" because they are pointing out flaws or recommending changes in how things are done.

Original Hofstede terms:

- DIMENSION: Power Distance
- ORIENTATIONS: Large Power Distance or Small Power Distance.

Here are some approaches to consider when working with those whose orientation is different from yours.

If you have been socialized with values from a Hierarchical Orientation:

- Learn that others expect to be consulted and required to contribute before the decision; that helps make things happen…
- …so be sensitive to irritation and hang on a bit; ask opinions, encourage ideas, and show that you've taken them seriously.
- They know you have power; you don't have to always use it, so allow others to make decisions and guide them if they go wrong.

- Recognize that others are happy to access the lower levels in the business if that works; your clients may not need you if someone in your team can do it for them.
- Know that others may not see that their loyalty will be reciprocated; they may not trust you to protect them if they take the hit.

If you have been socialized with values from a Participative Orientation:

- Learn that others may expect the boss to tell them what to do; that helps make things happen…
- …so brace yourself and give more up-front direction if people seem frustrated or puzzled by questions and invitations to speak up.
- If you have power, use it more openly, more obviously, more directly; people will respond positively to your lead.
- Be sensitive to other's use of hierarchy as a way to make things happen; your clients may expect you match their hierarchy as the appropriate means of access.
- Know that subordinates (it's OK to call them that) may even take the blame, but will expect you to protect them if they do.

CERTAINTY DIMENSION

Certainty is the extent to which people feel anxiety unless there are rules, regulations, and controls, or are more comfortable with unstructured, ambiguous, or unpredictable situations. The two orientations for the Certainty dimension are **Need for Certainty Orientation** or **Tolerance for Ambiguity Orientation**. (Note: This dimension is not about risk but about anxiety when there is less planning and communication than is preferred.)

Some team members want more information before making a decision (**Need for Certainty Orientation**), and others feel comfortable making a decision with less information (**Tolerance for Ambiguity Orientation**). Those who want more information (Need for Certainty) may feel uncomfortable and may distrust those who seem to want to make quick decisions because it appears that their decisions and actions may not be carefully thought out. Those with a Tolerance for Ambiguity may feel that gathering more information is a waste of time ("analysis paralysis") and they may view others as not competent because they seem unable to get to the work of the project.

Original Hofstede terms:

- DIMENSION: Uncertainty Avoidance
- ORIENTATIONS: Strong Uncertainty Avoidance or Weak Uncertainty Avoidance.

Here are some approaches to consider when working with those whose orientation is different from yours.

If you have been socialized with values from a Need for Certainty Orientation:

- Learn that others may be ready to act with less information than you think they should have; "analysis paralysis" de-motivates…
- …so brace yourself to allow quicker, less-informed decisions and actions to happen—and focus others on lessons learned.
- Be brief in your reassurance that a given course of action is tried and tested; build the case around questions rather than having all points covered up front.
- Expect and allow creativity based on new ideas and untried methods; even your clients may expect that of you.
- You may need to focus more on improvement rather than accepting the status quo.

If you have been socialized with values from a Tolerance for Ambiguity Orientation:

- Learn that others may expect professionals to provide full and complete information before taking action…
- …so invest more up front in analysis, information and guidance; even if the parameters are set wide, still set some.
- You may be confident it will work, but that may not be enough to convince others; anticipate their concerns and address them without waiting to be asked.
- Your creativity may generate lots of ideas, but it may leave others puzzled or uneasy; your clients need to know you will deliver.
- You may need to focus more on compliance with procedures and policies.

ACHIEVEMENT DIMENSION

Achievement is the degree to which we focus on goal achievement or have a preference for quality of life and caring for others. The two orientations for the Achievement dimension are **Achievement Orientation** or **Quality of Life Orientation**. In both cases, people want to get things done, but those with a stronger **Quality of Life Orientation** work through relationships, even with people not part of their in-group, to achieve their goals. In cultures with higher Quality of Life country scores (Nordic countries, for example), you will find longer maternity and paternity leave and more weeks of vacation benefits than in countries with a high achievement orientation.

Team members who are focused more on goals and winning (**Achievement Orientation**) than on the impact this may have on people may feel it is not fair that they have to work with others (with a Quality of Life Orientation) whom they judge not to be as committed to team success. Those who prefer working with people and working to find win-win scenarios (Quality of Life Orientation) to achieve their goals may find it difficult to work with people who they perceive as uncaring.

Original Hofstede terms:

- DIMENSION: Masculinity
- ORIENTATIONS: Masculinity / Masculine or Femininity / Feminine.

Here are some approaches to consider when working with those whose orientation is different from yours.

If you have been socialized with values from an Achievement Orientation:

- Recognize that not everybody sees the need to subordinate their lives to work; they can deliver and have “quality of life.”
- Emphasize humility and modesty in your approach. Focus on continued service to the internal and external customer.
- Recognize quality may be equally important than quantity or speed.
- Stress interdependence and concern for others.
- You may enjoy “constructive conflict,” but others may see it as unproductive and part of the problem; harmony can be effective.

If you have been socialized with values from a Quality of Life Orientation:

- Recognize that others may not need you to allow for their wider lives; they will take care of it and will expect the same of you.
- Show drive or ambition for completion of tasks and meeting of deadlines. Communicate and respond with a sense of urgency.
- Deliver what you promise, when you promise, and give more than you promised.
- Stress and reward performance and results.
- Expect more conflict than seems prudent and try to see it and use it as a source of solutions rather than as a problem.

TIME ORIENTATION DIMENSION

Time Orientation is the extent to which members of a society are prepared to adapt to reach a desirable future (pragmatism) or the extent to which they focus on fulfilling their present needs and objectives. The two orientations for the Time dimension are **Long-Term Orientation** or **Short-Term Orientation**. One clear distinction between the two orientations is the focus on profits (**Short-Term Orientation**) vs. market position (**Long-Term Orientation**). Companies in the financial sector (such as banking, insurance, and investment firms) focus on the short-term horizon due to the pressures of quarterly earnings reports.

Too often teams are pressed to get it done now, and even if they can only achieve 80% of their objectives, that is seen as good enough (Short-Term Orientation). Those who work to the 80% may be perceived as lacking attention to quality or customer needs by those with Long-Term Orientation.

Those with a Long-Term Orientation may approach their projects or tasks with the attitude that it is worth it to put in the time to get it right, even if it delays the deliverables. They may be ostracized and often criticized by those with a Short-Term Orientation for impeding the team's work.

Original Hofstede terms:

- DIMENSION: Long Term Orientation
- ORIENTATIONS: Long Term Orientation or Short Term Orientation.

Here are some approaches to consider when working with those whose orientation is different from yours.

If you have been socialized with values from a Long-Term Orientation:

- Recognize that others may be expecting and requiring results soon—or even now; look for quick-wins that address that need...
- ….so track back from the longer horizons to identify the shorter-term deliverables that are important for long-term success.
- Know that others may expect frequent and quick recognition for specific achievements rather than waiting for long-term outcomes.
- Others may expect a reliance on past and recent experience to frame or drive tactics for the next phase rather than developing new methodologies for markets that may not exist yet.
- Use measures that focus on profit and near-term success to identify and articulate the longer-term trends.

If you have been socialized with values from a Short-Term Orientation:

- Recognize that others may be less concerned with delivery now and more focused on tomorrow's issues and needs...
- ...so stress the mid/long-term benefits as well as the short-term wins.
- Know that others may expect the value of their long-term focus to be recognized as much as those who deliver now.
- While recognizing near-term delivery may be necessary, others may be requiring you to focus "ahead of the curve" by ensuring the resources and planning are in place to meet the needs of the market long term.
- Introduce and maintain measures that track and recognize long-term success, linking with data that tracks today's output.

INDULGENCE DIMENSION

Indulgence is defined as a tendency to allow for relatively free gratification of basic human drives related to enjoying life and having fun or the conviction that such gratification needs to be regulated by strict social norms. The orientations are **Indulgence Orientation** or **Restraint Orientation**. The differences relate to whether one acts as one pleases, spends, or indulges in leisure and fun-related activities with friends or alone (**Indulgence Orientation**) or has the conviction that such gratification needs to be curbed and regulated by strict social norms (**Restraint Orientation**).[2]

Original Hofstede terms:

- DIMENSION: Indulgence versus Restraint
- ORIENTATIONS: Indulgence/Indulgent or Restraint/Restrained.

Here are some approaches to consider when working with those whose orientation is different from yours.

If you have been socialized with values from an Indulgence Orientation:

- Show your serious side. A sober and austere attitude is a sign of credibility and professionalism in the workplace.
- Demonstrate discretion and prudence. Enthusiasm and vivacity may be mistaken for lack of self-control.
- Don't be surprised if when you smile at someone in greeting, they do not return your greeting in kind. Smiling may be suspect. Expect instead a neutral face and a sober demeanor.
- Expect that others may be more reticent and guarded in their interpersonal interactions. This does not mean they are unapproachable.
- Recognize that for others, maintaining order is key.

If you have been socialized with values from a Restraint Orientation:

- No matter your inclination or mood, it is expected that your actions and behavior reflect optimism and enthusiasm. Think positive!
- Demonstrate exuberance, energy and cheerfulness. Circumspection could be mistaken for apathy.
- Smile! It is not uncommon to greet both acquaintances and strangers with a smile and pleasant demeanor. For customer service interactions, it is expected.

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[2] Hofstede, G., Hofstede L.G., Minkov, M. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*, quoted with permission.

- Expect that others may be more outgoing, upbeat and open in their interpersonal interactions. This does not mean they lack seriousness.
- Recognize that for others, happiness, a sense of well-being, and freedom of expression are key.

COUNTRY SCORES

Cultural terminology provides non-threatening language that is useful when talking about differences or similarities in behavioral approaches. The Hofstede dimensions are value neutral, without judgment of which side of the orientation dichotomy is better.

In this book it is deliberate in that there is rarely naming of countries with particular orientations (scores) in an effort to avoid stereotyping. After all, just because the country score indicates a certain orientation, that is not predictive about all individuals from that culture. People from the same culture can have very different cultural orientations depending on where they were raised, how they were raised, and by whom. The country score is a collective result, and since culture is by definition a shared phenomenon, an individual cannot be a culture. However, individuals can and do demonstrate culturally-based behavioral preferences. It is these preferences that are articulated and explained by the Hofstede model of culture.

The Hofstede cultural dimensions are a framework, a starting point from which to analyze the behaviors of others. This book offers a straightforward view of how the orientations may impact workplace behaviors and offers strategies on how to respond.

The country score is a valid first-reference to help anticipate the preferences of people from different cultures when there is no prior knowledge about them. The country score provides a basis for determining appropriate action but behaviors can (and should) be adapted in the light of experience with and observation of other individuals.

What is most helpful is developing the ability to recognize behaviors that indicate a preference for one orientation or the other of a cultural dimension. Only in recognizing specific behaviors in self and others can one be more likely to act and respond appropriately.

If a person's preference is for a particular cultural orientation, it does not mean that the individual will always or even usually behave that way. People learn to adapt – and may be able to sustain it, even if they don't like it. However, their "preference" will most likely remain constant and in their consciousness.

Each side of a dimension can be a strength or become a vulnerability in a cross-cultural environment. What may be advantageous in one situation may be a hindrance in another; what counts is what level of self-awareness a person can bring to different situations – and through that self-awareness, the person's ability to adapt appropriately even if it means they sometimes behave in a manner which is far from their culturally-based preference.

How each cultural orientation manifests itself may differ slightly from one culture to another.

To help think about the differences in country cultures please see the results charted below. Each of these spidergrams represents the country scores as measured in Geert Hofstede's research. The charts below are listed in the following order. First are the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) because these often are of most interest as important emerging markets. A few other countries are listed for comparison. These, listed in alphabetical order, include Argentina, Germany, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and the US.

The spokes are the dimensions that were introduced previously.

1. As you can see, for example, Russia, China, and Singapore have relatively high Power Distance scores. This indicates a strong Hierarchical Orientation. When the Power Distance score is low, this indicates a strong Participative Orientation.
2. Scores over 50 on the second spoke indicate the Need for Certainty. Brazil, Russia, Argentina, Japan, and South Korea have strong Need for Certainty scores.
3. For the spoke at the top of the spidergram (Individualism) you can see that the US has the highest score (Individual Orientation). It is helpful to remember that over two thirds of the countries have Group Orientation scores.

(For a full description of the research on which these scores are based, please see ***Culture and Organizations; Software of the Mind*** [3rd edition] by Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede and Michael Minkov.)