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# Culture Shock: Hiding in Plain Sight—An Experiential Exercise

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**In Culture Shock, participants explore the potential influence of organizational culture and national culture differences on communication, interaction, and reaching agreement. The role play, with observers, involves two employees from different organizations involved in a strategic alliance who come together to plan an upcoming meeting. Their respective role information instructs them to behave and communicate in ways consistent with their own organization's culture, which also is affected by national culture. During debriefing discussions afterward participants explore the impact of cultural differences—as well as other kinds of differences—and how employees can more effectively work across organizational cultures and national cultures. Facilitators can suggest “cultural due diligence” as a way to increase the likelihood of successful interaction and discuss steps that could be taken if the role play interaction does not achieve its objectives. *Organization Management Journal*, 9: 120–138, 2012. doi: 10.1080/15416518.2012.687996**

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In today's workplace, it is critically important to be able to collaborate and work on common goals/tasks with individuals who may communicate, interact, and negotiate differently than we do. Given continuing globalization, growing diversity of the U.S. workforce, and the number of strategic alliances, joint ventures, and mergers, and acquisitions—both within and across national cultures—it is imperative that employees at all levels of an organization develop a rich awareness of the myriad factors affecting human interaction and communication. A lack of such awareness can lead to lower individual and lower organizational performance.

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How individuals are socialized by their national/ethnic cultural background and the culture of the organization for which they work are but two of the numerous factors that influence our communication and interaction. Indeed, significant portions of organizational behavior courses are typically focused on the wide range of differences that individuals bring with them beyond culture—differences such as personality, education, attitude, mood, and level of emotional intelligence—that affect their communication, behavior, and performance. Therefore, as we observe behavior, it is virtually impossible to attribute behavior to one particular factor. Yet among potential influences, culture is one of the most fascinating and relevant in our ever-changing work environment.

Culture can be explored conceptually at multiple levels of analysis, although organizational culture and national culture have undoubtedly received the most scrutiny in the business world. Whether viewed at the level of practices and behavior—such as Drennan's 1992 definition of culture as “how things are done around here” (p. 1)—or at a level underlying practices and behavior—such as Hofstede's “software of the mind” (1997, p. 4) and the shared beliefs, values, and basic assumptions approaches of Davis (1984), Schein (1985), and Hunt (1992)—culture is understood to shape how people behave and communicate.

In this experiential exercise, participants explore the potential influence of organizational culture differences and national culture differences on communication, interaction, and reaching agreement. The role play scenario involves two employees from different organizations who come together to plan an upcoming three-day meeting. Their respective role information instructs them to behave and communicate in ways consistent with their own organization's culture, which, of course, is affected by the broader national culture. Each culture's preferred ways of communicating and interacting, however, may contribute to misunderstanding, negative evaluations, and difficulty in achieving their joint task—that is, agreeing on plans for the meeting. During the debriefing following the role play, facilitators can stimulate discussions on the impact of cultural and other differences, elicit/offer suggestions on how employees can more effectively work across organizational cultures and national cultures, stress the usefulness of

engaging in cultural due diligence, and explore what could be done if the meeting interactions did not achieve their desired objectives.

### VALUE OF AN EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH TO EXPLORING POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Each of us goes through life every day communicating and interacting in ways that make sense to us—ways in which we have been socialized by our own cultures. We try to understand what others mean, but we interpret what they say and how they interact through our own lenses—judging others by what we would say or do in the same situation. An experiential approach demonstrating how challenging it can be to work with others who think and act differently underscores that efforts to truly understand each other are important—that understanding can enable us to live and work together more harmoniously and with greater success in achieving both personal and organizational goals.

### OVERVIEW OF EXERCISE

The Culture Shock exercise includes a role play, observer observation and feedback, and both trio and whole-group discussions. Two actors role play representatives from different companies involved in a strategic alliance. The two actors come together to plan an upcoming meeting of representatives from their respective companies. The exercise proceeds as follows:

1. The exercise begins with trios. Two participants role play the company representatives and a third participant observes and makes notes regarding their communication and interaction.
2. Following the role play, each trio discusses what happened, guided by written questions provided by the facilitator.
3. Then the facilitator brings all trios together to debrief the experience and highlights selected issues as appropriate for a particular course or workshop. Potential questions and issues to raise are suggested in a later section.

*Additional options* could permit more exploration of how heightened awareness of cultural differences might affect the role play outcomes. The facilitator can then underscore the importance of cultural due diligence.

1. Readings on cultural differences could be assigned to only *some* of the actors/observer trios. During the exercise debriefing the facilitator can identify whether these role players, whose awareness of cultural differences had been heightened by the readings, experienced better results and more satisfaction. Likewise, the observers in these trios might notice different behaviors more readily.

2. The role play could be repeated. The facilitator could suggest that the knowledge gained about each company's organizational and national culture during the previous discussions in step 3 provides at least some information that might be obtained during a cultural due diligence effort prior to cross-cultural interaction or negotiation. Then acting participants could meet again with a different partner, observed by a third participant. Afterward the facilitator could lead the total group in discussion of differences from the first role play to the second, highlighting desired issues in greater depth and exploring the effect of previous knowledge or heightened awareness of cultural differences. Additional discussions could include the impact of interacting with a partner who may bring other differences to the interaction, selected principles of negotiation, meeting management, and communication.

### LEARNING GOALS

The overall goal of this exercise is to involve participants in an engaging experiential activity that illustrates the influence of organizational culture and national/ethnic culture on our communication and interaction. The activity and its subsequent debriefing discussions can enable participants to:

- Explore links between culture and communication/interaction.
- Experience firsthand the challenge and potential frustration when cultural norms lead people to communicate and interact in different ways.
- Heighten awareness of some cultural differences that might result in varying approaches to situations.
- Realize how varied perspectives may be equally valid.
- Explore the interplay among organizational culture, business culture, and national/ethnic culture.
- Recognize the advantages of “cultural due diligence,” that is, learning about potential organizational and national culture influences, preferably prior to working or negotiating across cultures, but also trying to learn about such influences while the interactions are underway.
- Explore ways to salvage a cross-cultural interaction that has not ended successfully.

### TARGET AUDIENCE AND EXERCISE PREPARATION

#### Target Audience

This exercise has been used with MBA students in organizational behavior courses, a management course, and a cross-cultural management course. It also has applicability for a strategy course, as the exercise provides insight into the cross-cultural differences that must be understood when embarking on global growth strategies that utilize strategic alliances and mergers and acquisitions. The exercise could work with upper

level undergraduate students as well as graduate students. It also could fit within a corporate training workshop aimed at better understanding organizational and national cultural issues that are often “hidden in plain sight.”

### Time Required

It is possible to run this exercise all in one class session if there are at least 75 minutes available. The most thorough reading of the role material, however, can be assured by giving participants their assigned roles and materials to read prior to the class session, or by having the “Preparation” stage described below take place in a prior class period.

The time estimates below apply if the entire exercise—from role reading to debriefing—takes place in one session. Time ranges for various stages of the exercise are provided, thus allowing facilitators to move the exercise forward based on their monitoring of progress in the trios. The period of time required for the exercise, including debriefing, could therefore range from 62 to 75 minutes. If a second role play round is used, an additional 30 to 40 minutes would be needed.

### Number of Participants

The exercise can work with as few as six participants but also can accommodate a large group as participants are divided into trios.

### Materials Needed

Each actor will need a copy of his/her role instructions. The observer receives instructions on what to look for during the role play. Participants who play the Fran or Chris roles also receive a worksheet as they begin the trio debriefing. The actors’ role instructions, observer instructions, and the actors’ debriefing worksheet are provided in Appendices A through D. Additional materials for debriefing are available in Appendices E through J, to be used at the discretion of the facilitator. A flip chart or board space where trios can record various themes identified in their debriefing may also be helpful.

### Preparation Needed by the Facilitator

The facilitator should reproduce the materials needed, arrange for flipcharts and markers, and prepare appropriate comments to highlight the concepts he/she wants to emphasize during the exercise debriefing discussions. Depending on the class time available, the facilitator should decide whether to run the entire exercise in one session. If in one session, the facilitator would then provide the role information and time to read these instructions during the class period. If there is insufficient time for having participants carefully read and plan their approach during the class period, the facilitator can give participants their role instructions at the end of the previous class (with instructions *not* to discuss their role with others) or the

“Preparation” stage described later can take place in a previous class session.

Facilitators may want to assign appropriate readings for participants. As mentioned previously in the exercise overview options, facilitators could decide to assign readings on cultural differences to only some of the trios, thus enabling later discussions on any differences in satisfaction or results when awareness of cultural differences has been heightened. Most organizational behavior textbooks include such information, and at the undergraduate level, those readings may be sufficient. Additional readings for graduate students are suggested in Appendix K.

### Preparation Needed Before Class by Participants

Participants should read any materials assigned by the facilitator, whether role instructions, textbook chapters, articles, or websites.

## STRUCTURE OF THE EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE

### *Introduction (Suggested Time: 5 Minutes)*

The facilitator introduces the exercise simply as an opportunity to explore how culture—at different levels—may affect how we communicate and interact with others to achieve mutual goals and assigned tasks. All participants receive an assignment as Chris, Fran, or an observer and are separated into these groups. The facilitator should mention that there will be four separate stages to the exercise and that additional instructions will be given at the beginning of each stage. It is helpful to note the stage of the exercise and time allotment on the classroom whiteboard.

### *Stage I—Preparation (Suggested Time: 15–18 Minutes)*

During Stage I all actors read their roles and then talk with one or two others playing the *same* role on how they might portray their role. The Chris actors and the Fran actors should be separated so they will not overhear the comments of those playing the other role. After observers have had time to read their instructions, the facilitator takes all observers outside the room, explains the scenario, and answers any questions observers may have.

### *Stage II—Role Play (Suggested Time: 12–15 Minutes)*

The two actors engage in the role play and try to achieve their stated objectives. The observer takes notes on the interactions.

### *Stage III—Trio Debriefing (Suggested Time: 10–12 Minutes)*

During the first three to four minutes of this stage actors use the debriefing worksheet to record notes regarding which objectives were achieved and their thoughts on what either facilitated or hindered achievement of the objectives. During this time the observer organizes the comments he/she wants to make. Next, all trio members discuss the role play. Actors take turns sharing

their thoughts first and then the observer shares comments about what he/she noticed during the role play.

**Stage IV—Total Group Debriefing** (*Suggested Time: 20–25 Minutes*)

The facilitator invites comments and observations from either several trios (if the number of trios is large) or all trios on the experience and leads the discussion on the issues reflected.

**EXERCISE DEBRIEFING**

First and foremost, the exercise debriefing is meant to pedagogically support the seven learning goals previously presented. Of course, a general discussion of the experience also can serve to highlight multiple issues, depending on the course, the facilitator’s instructional objectives, and how the experiential exercise progresses in a particular classroom setting. The exercise was originally designed to highlight the impact of organizational culture and national/ethnic culture on our communication and interaction in a business setting with someone with a different cultural orientation. We have occasionally included brief discussions of negotiation as well, although the exercise, as set up, does not permit true negotiation. Suggestions on adapting the exercise to focus more on cross-cultural negotiation will be given in a later section entitled Additional Learning Topics.

If actors follow the advice given them by their respective bosses, they both most likely will end up frustrated. It is the very experience of the frustration and feeling like they cannot agree in ways consistent with their organizational culture—which is influenced by the parent company’s national/business culture—that is such a powerful learning experience. The frustration is not unusual for those who work across cultures, even when they intellectually understand the cultural differences and, by nature, appreciate differences. Regardless of the emphases chosen by the facilitator, the exercise works well to underscore the importance of understanding differences each of us brings to the table as we work with others either within organizations/cultures or across organizations/cultures to achieve goals and tasks. If participants can “buy into” the importance of such understanding, they seem to readily accept the usefulness of cultural due diligence.

Despite the exercise’s effort to prescribe role behavior, it is surprising how often very different outcomes occur in the trio groups. If these differences are pronounced, they provide another opportunity for student learning, as the facilitator-led discussion explores why different outcomes might occur. Such discussions could take place either in Stage IV or, if an additional role play round is added, after that round.

**Suggested Debriefing Questions**

Questions facilitators may want to use during the whole-group debriefing discussions follow. The questions we consider key to achieving the stated learning goals of the exercise are

preceded by a checkmark. Following most of the suggested debriefing questions are numbers referring facilitators to issues (discussion points) described fully in the next subsection. In discussion of a particular debriefing question, facilitators also may want to cover the cross-referenced issue(s) or make use of any of the cross-referenced appendices. Both the issues and the appendices offer information highlighting the cultural differences that make coming to agreement so challenging.

- ✓ What were you expecting from your counterpart as the meeting began? Did you have any assumptions about what your counterpart would be like or how the meeting would go? How did these expectations and assumptions play out? Were they confirmed or were you surprised? In what ways?
- ✓ Were Chris and Fran able to agree on the various issues regarding the upcoming meeting with Delphi and Centro representatives? If not, which issues seemed to be difficult to resolve? *Why* do you think these particular issues were problematic?
  - Did either Fran or Chris seem to be frustrated? If so, how did that frustration manifest itself? If so, how did the characters seem to deal with the frustration? (See Issue 7.)
  - What specific behaviors of Chris and Fran seemed to help the two agree on the issues? What behaviors seemed to get in the way of reaching agreement on the issues?
- ✓ What differences did you notice in the approaches Chris and Fran took? Why do you think each took the approach he or she did? Speculate on potential influences on Chris and Fran’s communication and interaction styles. (See Issues 2 and 3; Appendices E, F, and G.)
- ✓ Chris and Fran both had received some advice from their managers before coming to this meeting. Presumably, their bosses gave them instructions consistent with “the ways things are done” in their respective organizations. In other words, Chris and Fran were bringing their own organization’s norms to the table. What organizational culture norms seemed to be in play? (See Issues 4 and 5; Appendix E.)
- ✓ Chris worked for a North American company and Fran worked for a subsidiary of a Japanese company. Did you notice any behaviors or styles that might be attributable to national culture? (See Issues 4, 6, and 7; Appendices E and F.)
- ✓ If Chris and Fran magically had an opportunity to redo this meeting, what would you suggest they do differently? (See Issues 8 and 9; Appendices H and I.)
- ✓ Assume the meeting between Chris and Fran is almost over and the results so far are not going well. How do you think Chris and Fran could try to salvage the situation? What should they do before they end the

- meeting? What should they do after they return to their respective organizations? (See Appendices I and J.)
- ✓ Why is understanding another's perspective and reasoning so important in today's organizations? (See Issue 1.)
  - Did any of you find yourselves playing a role for which you were asked to communicate/interact in ways quite different from how you would normally act? If so, how difficult did you find it to act according to the role instructions you were given?
  - Have there been times at work (or during an interview) when you have questioned whether your preferred ways of conducting yourself fit with the company's?

### Suggested Issues to Raise in Debriefing

Issues or discussion points facilitators might want to highlight during the whole-group debriefing follow. They are numbered to enable cross-referencing with the previous discussion questions.

1. *Seeking to understand others contributes to effectiveness at work and in our personal lives.* Our ability to communicate successfully and to influence other people is greatly enhanced when we understand both why we act as we do and why others act as they do.
2. *Culture is but one of numerous influences on our behavior, interaction, and communication.* Other influences include values, cognitive abilities, education, family socialization, religious instruction, personality, previous experiences, and so on.
3. *There may not be one single cause for behavior.* Attributing a specific behavior or style to any one given influence, such as organizational culture or national culture or personality, and so on, is simplistic. In reality, there are always multiple influences on behavior, communication, and interaction. These include not only cultural orientation (national/ethnic or organizational) but also more commonplace differences in people themselves, such as personality makeup, gender, attitude, mood, emotional intelligence, education, training, and so on—and, in this exercise, how seriously people are engaged in the role play. Being aware of how various factors may influence behavior enhances our understanding of other perspectives. Facilitators may find Appendix G helpful in stimulating this discussion.
4. *Culture—whether organizational culture or national/ethnic culture—shapes our behavior.* Potential points to include:
  - 4.1 Culture can be explored at various levels of analysis, that is, a family's culture, a team's culture, an organization's culture, a national culture, and so on.
  - 4.2 Some definitions of culture include:
    - Set of beliefs, values, and attitudes that guide how members of an organization perceive and interpret events (Hunt, 1992).
    - Shared beliefs and values that give an organization meaning and provide members with rules for behavior (Davis, 1984).
    - “Deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic “taken for granted” fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment” (Schein, 1985, p. 6).
    - “How things are done around here” (Drennan, 1992, p. 1).
    - “Software of the mind” (Hofstede, 1997, p. 4).
    - “Visible and invisible values and beliefs that underlie behaviors and are unique to each society” (Solomon & Schell, 2009, p. 37).
- 4.3 Culture does the following:
  - Guides our understanding of everything and everyone around us.
  - Teaches us how we are supposed to behave, interact, and communicate.
  - Gives us rules for being successful in our given culture.
  - Influences how we look at problems and decisions.
- 4.4 Business cultures and organizational cultures are influenced by national/ethnic cultures—and vice versa. Although the relationship between national culture and organizational culture is complex and multidirectional, the research of Hofstede (1980, 1997, 2010) and Laurent (1983) suggests that the influence of national culture is amazingly persistent. Hofstede (1997) believes his IBM studies offer evidence that the effects of national culture are present even in a strong organizational culture.
- 4.5 In today's business world even employees who never travel abroad are likely to work with people from other national cultures—whether sitting next to someone from a different culture or working virtually with fellow company employees (or customers) located in a different country.
- 4.6 Each of us will experience many different organizational cultures, whether as employees in different companies, customers of different companies, or working with people in other organizations to achieve objectives and tasks.
5. *Understanding and managing organizational culture is considered important.*
  - 5.1 The pervasive assumption is that organizational culture is closely related to organizational effectiveness (Denison, 1990; Weiss, 1996).
  - 5.2 Organizational culture contributes to the success or failure of large-scale change efforts (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Burke, 1994; Senge et al., 1999).

- 5.3 Attention to integrating diverse organizational cultures is often cited as a key success factor in mergers and acquisitions (Veiga, Lubatkin, Calori & Very, 2000; Stahl & Mendenhall, 2005).
6. *National culture differences may result in varying approaches to business situations.* Discussions about varying behaviors and approaches based on cultural differences can be general or can illustrate researched cultural dimensions and values orientations. Frameworks of dimensions/values along which cultures vary can be very useful in helping us understand the effects of values, assumptions and norms. Frameworks developed by Geert Hofstede (1997, 2010), Fons Trompenaars (1993), and the more recent GLOBE study (House et al., 2004) are among the best known. Appendix F gives a brief summary of some dimensions that help to explain differences across cultures.

National culture differences that may surface during the role play include:

- 6.1 The two characters differ in their degree of directness/indirectness of communication, also known as high/low context communication (Hall & Hall, 1995). Fran may be much more indirect than Chris in the role play, especially in discussing topics on which they disagree.
- 6.2 There is less open expression of emotion in Japanese culture (a high-context culture). Expressing disagreement or saying no is communicated in much more subtle ways than in low-context cultures. In low-context cultures saying directly what one means is considered important, whereas subtlety of expression and communication are valued in high-context cultures.
- 6.3 There are often significant differences in how decisions are made from organization to organization and from culture to culture. For instance, who makes final decisions and the speed at which the decisions are made will depend on the norms of the organization and may also depend on the norms of the national business culture. In this role play, the Centro culture values quick decisions and Chris's boss encourages him to make the decisions. Fran, however, knows that others at Delphi, including management levels above him, will need to buy into the decisions before they are considered final. Differences in decision making are affected by a complex interplay of the individualism/collectivism dimension described by numerous cross-cultural frameworks and the power distance dimension described by Hofstede (1997) and the GLOBE research (House et al., 2004).
- 6.4 The role play reflects the greater importance Fran and Delphi place on relationships—a hallmark of more collectivist cultures—and their willingness to take whatever time is necessary to cultivate the relationship. People from collectivist cultures usually are higher

context communicators because subtlety enables harmony among people and avoids potential loss of “face” (Ferraro, 2006). Although Chris and Centro also recognize the importance of relationships, Chris's direct and candid style, the eagerness to move decisions along rapidly, and the emphasis placed on tasks over relationships are more characteristic of individualist cultures.

- 6.5 The degree of overt respect shown for those higher in authority and the degree of formality preferred will undoubtedly vary from organization to organization. Those factors are influenced by national cultural differences as well.
7. *At the actual time of interaction we often are unaware of how a situation is being affected by cultural differences.* Unless we understand conceptually the potential influences of organizational culture, national culture and, indeed, any kind of differences on communication and interaction, we will likely experience some degree of frustration or uncertainty when we cannot seem to accomplish what we want in the interaction. The effects of the differences are, in a sense, “hidden in plain sight.” Awareness that organizational culture and national culture differences could be at play can make us more alert to cues and prompt us to surface such differences with inquiries about how things are typically done in another organization or culture—and why. Understanding can then lead to finding solutions that will somehow work for both cultures.
8. *Cultural due diligence, which has gained the attention of managers involved in strategic alliances, mergers, and acquisitions, is particularly important in cross-cultural interactions and negotiations.* The concept of due diligence is not a new one. Those involved in determining the feasibility of alliances and mergers or acquisitions typically engage in a due diligence process to establish value and risk, during which legal, financial, regulatory, accounting, and tax issues are investigated prior to finalization of contracts. Some corporations extend their due diligence to marketing, operations, product development, and technology considerations. In addition, because culture is often cited as the primary cause of failure in alliances, mergers, and acquisitions (Berger & Sikora, 1994; Carleton & Lineberry, 2004; Clemente & Greenspan, 1998), the desirability of *cultural due diligence* has gained attention. Cultural due diligence involves a comprehensive assessment of organizational culture, how it influences people in the organization, and how it shapes “how things are done” in the organization. Cultural due diligence also would include assessment of national culture differences that lead to behavioral differences, whether at the individual or organizational level.

In this experiential exercise, it becomes clear that both Chris and Fran are interacting, communicating, and trying to reach agreement in ways that are appropriate in their particular organizations, that is, the way each of their organizational cultures has conditioned them to act. If they knew

more about each other's organizational and national cultures, they might still have challenges in reaching agreement but, at least, they would understand some of the stumbling blocks and would have a better chance to resolve differences in a more satisfying manner. Appendices G and H can help to illustrate the influence of myriad factors on behavior/interaction and results as well as the idea of cultural due diligence.

During the discussion on cultural due diligence the facilitator also can ascertain who already has had previous experience working with those from different cultures and which trios read the articles on cross-cultural differences (if readings were assigned to only some participants). A discussion of any differences in satisfaction or outcomes of the meeting when participants had heightened cultural awareness could then be interesting.

9. *Knowing how to salvage an interaction gone awry is important.* Appendix I illustrates a general approach to take when a "culture clash" or another obstacle to communication unexpectedly surfaces that makes it more difficult for the parties to reach agreement. Appendix J extends that advice with scenario-specific suggestions for Fran and Chris—what they should do before they depart from their first meeting together and what to do when they return back to their respective organizations.

### ADDITIONAL LEARNING TOPICS

The exercise often results in discussion of other related issues. Thus, the facilitator may choose to pull the discussions in directions deemed useful for the particular group. Other potential topics include:

- *Negotiation*—The instructions given the actors constrain their ability to negotiate because they are encouraged to conform to their own organizational culture norms. Thus, if the facilitator wants to run the exercise as a "negotiation," then the actors need latitude to negotiate. Either the instructions to Chris and Fran could be altered so that despite the information included about the particular organizational culture, they are free to make agreements, or the facilitator could verbally offer participants this flexibility, either in the first role play or in a second round. Some potential negotiation topics could include "principled" strategies (Fisher & Ury, 1983; Fisher, Ury & Patton, 1991), information on cross-cultural negotiation specifically (Brett, 2001; chapter on negotiation in Adler & Gundersen, 2008), and information on how cross-cultural synergy can be promoted. See also Appendix K, which includes a few potential supplementary reading articles on cross-cultural negotiation.
- *Meeting process management*—Another issue for exploration could be meeting process management for

Chris and Fran's meeting, including recommendations such as:

- Ensuring clarity of hopes/expectations for the meeting.
- The usefulness of a meeting agenda.
- Up-front discussion of how decisions will be made and whether they might need to be finalized with their respective organizations.
- Ensuring common understanding of what has been decided.
- Agreement on what will happen after their meeting.
- *Communication process*—The communication process itself is fraught with potential for misunderstanding, even among those who are quite similar. Misunderstanding may result from message encoding or decoding as well as from *noise*—a communication term representing any kind of barrier that may distort the clarity of the meaning transferred among those communicating. Sources of noise may include factors as different as—literally—sounds that make it difficult to hear someone, perceptual differences, language, semantic or communication styles, and cultural differences (Robbins & Judge, 2010, p. 144). Debriefing discussions on communication aspects such as active listening, ensuring understanding of the other's perspective, and common understanding of what has transpired could be useful.

### PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES AND UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES

Participants have generally enjoyed this exercise, although the Fran and Chris actors often become frustrated when they cannot agree on some of the assigned issues. Yet it is this very frustration that enables insight into the challenges of working across organizational cultures and national cultures. Sometimes as participants begin the debriefing discussions they do not readily identify the influence of national culture. As the discussions continue, however, most participants are able to reflect on the role play and they then "get it." When participants in the management class were directly asked ways the experiential exercise could be improved upon, two items came up: (a) have the bosses offer more advice regarding the relative importance of the 10 organizational meeting topics, and (b) allow Fran more latitude to compromise on the 10 organizational meeting topics. Following those suggestions would undoubtedly make the role play easier but might also lessen the discomfort that is so central to the learning experience.

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## APPENDIX A: ROLE INSTRUCTIONS FOR FRAN

### Background

You are Fran. You will be meeting with Chris. You know very little about Chris. Like you, Chris is between 36 and 38 years old. Chris earned a master's degree from New York University about ten years ago, around the time you earned your master's degree from Northwestern University. Unlike you, Chris has never traveled much outside North America, while you spent five years in Japan teaching English to Japanese students right after your graduation from college.

Both you and Chris have had very successful business careers: you in the automotive after-market industry; Chris in the chemical manufacturing industry. You work at Delphi, a subsidiary of Drago Industries, a large Japanese-owned multinational company. Your company, Delphi, is located in Los Angeles. Chris works for Centro, also a subsidiary of a large multinational company, Circuit Industries, which is U.S. owned and based in Manhattan. Chris's company, Centro, is located nearby in Edison, New Jersey.

As a result of intense competition in both your industries and demand for more environmentally friendly products, senior management of the parent companies, Drago and Circuit, has decided to join forces to develop more environmentally friendly automotive air conditioning systems that rely on less toxic chemical refrigerants. In five years, the strategic alliance between their two subsidiaries—Delphi and Centro—is expected to be marketing automotive air conditioning systems that will be more fuel-efficient, but the huge dividend of these collaborations will be state-of-the-art automotive air conditioning systems that are 25% less harmful to the environment in terms of the chemicals used as the cooling refrigerant.

This is what Jim Collins in *Built to Last* (2004) would call a BHAG, a “big, hairy, audacious, goal,” and corporate management at both parent companies wants to get the process going quickly. In a month from now, there is to be a three-day, off-site meeting. Each subsidiary company has been asked to recommend a point person to help organize and structure that meeting. Because of your and Chris's stature and broad

functional experience, you and Chris have been appointed as the two point people.

### Tips for Planning the Meeting

#### *Delphi and Drago Industries' Company Culture*

Your frequent business trips to Japan to participate in corporate meetings at the parent company, Drago Industries, have reinforced the secrets to getting ahead at Delphi and Drago Industries. As you know, both subsidiary and parent company exhibit these cultural traits:

- Major and important decisions are shaped by all those involved, but final approval rests with the appropriate senior management.
- Business relationships are sacred and need to be nurtured; a single deal or contract is always viewed as one in a series of future deals. You learned this cultural norm the hard way when, early in your career, you recommended replacing a long-time supplier with one promising somewhat lower-priced raw materials.
- Decisions cannot be rushed; time efficiency is less important than project effectiveness, obtaining buy-in, and relationship building.
- Authority and rank *always* deserve respect and deference.
- Modesty about accomplishments is the norm. Achievement is not considered individual achievement but rather team or organization achievement.
- People get their ideas across but always do so in ways that avoid direct confrontation and maintain harmony of the relationship.

#### *Advice From Your Boss*

The helpful hints that follow are from your boss at Delphi. He highly recommended you for this assignment. He has had plenty of experience himself in achieving synergy from strategic alliances, joint ventures, and acquisitions with which he has been involved. Therefore, his advice should be quite valuable to you.

Fran, Delphi and Drago need your exceptional interpersonal skills in planning the upcoming three-day meeting with the representatives of Centro and Circuit. Take it from me, we need to get to know them, so that our future relationship will be fruitful and built on trust. It is vital we get things off on the "right foot." Let's make sure we mention—but in our characteristically modest way—the awards Delphi and Drago have won for product innovativeness and environmental initiatives. Beyond this first initiative, we are looking forward to many more joint product collaborations with Centro and Circuit.

Don't forget that this is a high-exposure assignment—given to you because of your understanding of our company culture, your open and friendly management style, and your ability to get things done. We like how you have handled relationships

with our suppliers and third-party co-developers. For the long-term value of this strategic alliance, we need to show our willingness to work together, to listen to one another's ideas, and to be patient about developing the innovations we can produce together.

Your role in setting up the three-day meeting will be noticed not only by Delphi senior management, but also by Drago senior management. And as you know, the parent company approves all major promotions. Your chances of making VP will be enhanced by success in this project. Do it the Delphi–Drago way! This is a long-term investment in our company's future—we must conduct ourselves accordingly. Therefore, Drago and Delphi management wants you to explore with Chris the following topics, but, as is protocol, the full team will want to have final approval of the decisions.

#### REMEMBER NOT TO COMMIT US TO ANYTHING SPECIFIC AT THIS FIRST MEETING.

*Meeting site.* Try to encourage the selection of a well-known and prestigious business conference site that offers plenty of opportunity for recreational pursuits like tennis and golf. Our company's most successful business relationships have started by mixing business with pleasure.

*Attendees.* Explore with Chris who they think should attend from their side; we want to make sure there's balance by rank. That will facilitate negotiations during the three-day meeting, as people in our organization cannot effectively make deals unless they know who their direct counterpart is on the other side.

*Seating arrangements/furniture.* Follow the usual protocol for title and rank. Armrests on chairs for highest ranking attendee of each organization.

*Scheduled/unscheduled time.* Start time should be late morning to allow for informal meetings at breakfast.

*Dress code.* Business casual dress in the meeting sessions, business attire for the evening dinners. Definitely no jeans. We need to show respect to our new partner.

*Topics to be covered.* Background of each parent company—values, product innovations, leaders; background of each subsidiary—values, product innovations, leaders; introductions of functional heads at both parent companies and subsidiaries. On Day 3, venture into the many ways both companies can share R&D and Sales insights to develop a winning product. Final contract negotiations have no place at this planning meeting.

*Advance materials for meeting.* We'd really prefer not to send much beforehand. Listen to what Chris may want, and we'll get a consensus here about what makes sense to send ahead of time. At this stage, these meetings should be more social than business.

*Ice-breakers.* Oh yes, let's try and avoid those awkward "ice-breakers" that management consultants always insist upon. They are unnatural and are not appropriately deferential to the authority in the room, on each side. It takes time to get to know people.

*Idea generation sessions.* Sometimes these things work, most often they put people in the awkward position of saying everything is a great idea. So, don't encourage the use of idea generation sessions, such as, "break-out" sessions. If used at all, we will need to think about how they should be formed and who should lead them.

*Commitment to next steps and post-meeting deliverables.* Let's not overly commit to doing meeting minutes, or to making hard-coded commitments at the end of the meetings. These things take time to settle, and we don't want to agree to something we haven't fully thought through. We don't want to "lose face" by agreeing to something we cannot deliver.

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 Abbreviated Instructions to Fran
 

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## General advice:

- Senior management makes the final decision on major and important matters.
- Relationships matter.
- Important decisions should not be rushed.
- Always show respect and deference to those in authority.
- No need to brag; our products speak for themselves.
- The team wins, not the individual.
- Avoid direct confrontation.
- Long-term thinking is our future.
- Remember not to commit us to anything specific at this first meeting!

## Specific Meeting Requirements:

*Meeting site:* Ideally a well-known resort with recreational opportunities; a place suited to conducting business in a relaxed setting.

*Attendees:* Balanced by rank, no surprises.

*Seating arrangement:* Protocol for rank, better furniture for higher-ups.

*Scheduled/unscheduled time:* Late morning official start, allowing for informal meetings at breakfast.

*Dress code:* Business casual, no jeans—day; business attire—evening dinner.

*Topics to be covered:*

- Days 1 and 2, formal presentations of each parent company and its subsidiary.
- Day 3, sharing of ways to make the strategic alliance successful.
- No final contract negotiations during the three-day meeting.

*Advance materials for meeting:* Avoid agreeing to send much in advance.

*Ice-breakers:* Avoid those awkward and contrived attempts to build rapport and knowledge.

*Idea generation sessions:* Like ice-breakers, idea generation sessions sound better than they are, as every idea is praised regardless of its value or who is advancing it.

*Commitment to next steps and post-meeting deliverables:* Avoid hard-coded commitments—writing of the meeting’s minutes or any timetable for future meetings or deliverables. We don’t want to “lose face” by agreeing to do something we may not want or cannot deliver upon.

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**APPENDIX B: ROLE INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHRIS****Background**

You are Chris. You will be meeting with Fran. You know very little about Fran. Like you, Fran is between 36 and 38 years old. Fran earned his master’s degree from Northwestern University about ten years ago, around the time you earned your master’s degree from New York University. Unlike you, Fran has traveled a great deal outside of North America, including five years in Japan teaching English to Japanese students right after graduation from college.

Both you and Fran have had very successful business careers: you in the chemical manufacturing industry; Fran in the automotive after-market industry. You work at Centro, a subsidiary of Circuit Industries, a U.S. owned company based in Manhattan. Your company, Centro, is located nearby in Edison, New Jersey. Fran works for Delphi, a subsidiary of a large Japanese-owned multinational company, Drago Industries. Fran’s company, Delphi, is located in Los Angeles.

As a result of intense competition in both your industries and demand for more environmentally friendly products,

senior management of the parent companies, Circuit and Drago, has decided to join forces to develop more environmentally friendly automotive air conditioning systems that rely on less toxic chemical refrigerants. In five years, the strategic alliance between their two subsidiaries—Centro and Delphi—is expected to develop automotive air conditioning systems that will be more fuel-efficient, but the huge dividend of the collaborations will be state-of-the-art automobile air conditioning systems that are 25% less harmful to the environment in terms of the chemicals used as the cooling refrigerant.

This is what Jim Collins in *Built to Last* (2004) would call a BHAG, a “big, hairy, audacious, goal,” and corporate management at both parent companies wants to get the process going quickly. In a month from now, there is to be a three-day, off-site meeting. Each subsidiary company has been asked to recommend a point person to help organize and structure that meeting. Because of your and Fran’s stature and broad functional experience, you and Fran have been appointed as the two point people.

## Tips for Planning the Meeting

### *Centro and Circuit Industries' Company Culture*

You enjoy the energetic pace of working on the East Coast. So far, your business travel has been limited to the Northeast Corridor. You have learned the secrets to getting ahead at Centro and Circuit Industries. Both subsidiary and parent company exhibit these cultural traits:

- Individuals that make quick and sound decisions are rewarded; those individuals that constantly defer to upper management are not viewed as “up-and-comers.”
- Direct talk is encouraged and people say what they think, regardless of who might disagree. Risk-taking is rewarded.
- In every business relationship, people take care to assert their power and business expertise. After all, if people don't “toot their own horns,” who will?
- Decisions need to be definite with specific deadlines. If the decision ends up being wrong, so what? Another decision can be made to correct the first one. Keep moving!
- A good idea is a good idea; it doesn't matter the authority or rank of the individual suggesting it.
- Relationships are important, but uninterrupted quarterly earnings growth comes first.
- Mavericks have a way of being noticed and getting ahead.

### *Advice From Your Boss*

The helpful hints below are from your boss at Centro. He is the one who highly recommended you for this assignment. He has had plenty of experience himself in achieving synergy from strategic alliances, joint ventures, and acquisitions with which he has been involved. Therefore, his advice should be quite valuable to you.

Chris, Centro and Circuit need your exceptional decision-making skills to get the most out of this three-day meeting and to get things agreed upon in an efficient way. Take it from me, we need to get things moving so that our collaborations with Delphi and Drago will generate incremental sales and profit opportunities for both companies in the not-too-distant future. Let's make sure they know about the awards Centro and Circuit have won for product innovativeness and environmental initiatives. Showing pride in our accomplishments is smart business. Assuming this first initiative hits our financial objectives, we are looking forward to more joint product collaborations with Delphi and Drago.

Don't forget that this is a high-exposure assignment—given to you because of your understanding of our company's “can do” mentality, your direct and candid management style, and your decisiveness. We like how you take charge in meetings and negotiations with our suppliers and third-party co-developers. For the short- and long-term value of this strategic alliance, we need to show our willingness to work with them, to be clear about our ideas for this and future joint projects, and to be insistent on getting things done as quickly as possible.

Your role in setting up the three-day meeting will be noticed not only by Centro senior management, but also by Circuit senior

management. And as you know, the parent company approves all major promotions. Your chances of making VP next year may hang in the balance. Do it the Centro Circuit way! To maintain our strong stock price, we need Wall Street to recognize that this strategic alliance will pay back and relatively fast. The Street knows that these strategic alliances often don't pan out.

Of course, Centro and Circuit management trust you can handle the details. That's why we pay you the “big bucks.” Within a week, we need to finalize the working agenda and other meeting details. The following items are the likely ones you will need to cover with Fran. Yell, if you need help—otherwise you're on your own to make the right decisions for the upcoming meeting with Delphi and Drago.

#### TO MEET THE DEADLINE, PUSH YOUR IDEAS FIRST AND HANG IN THERE.

Just a few pointers of things that have worked for us in the past:

*Meeting site.* A large city works best for us. Easy to get in and out of. No need to waste time and money at an extravagant conference site. After all, this is a business meeting, not a social event. Remember, we've got two other strategic deals to close on, and the fiscal year end is fast approaching.

*Attendees.* Round up the “usual suspects.” Sales, Engineering, Finance, and Legal will need to have representation. See who's available. Due to our relatively flat organizational structure, a VP, Senior Director, or Director can handle negotiations pretty much the same even if not matched with a corresponding functional expert from the other side. No need to put on airs by flying in all our bigwigs!

*Seating arrangements/furniture.* No prearranged seating. Comfortable chairs for all. We're all in this together.

*Scheduled/unscheduled time.* The earlier in the morning the better to get this project moving—thus leaving plenty of time for late-night entertainment and bar-hopping. We work hard and play hard. Let's get them used to that!

*Dress code.* Casual. Jeans are fine.

*Topics to be covered.* Brief background of each parent company—product innovations, background of each subsidiary—product innovations; introductions of functional heads at the subsidiaries.

- On afternoon of Day 1, agree on the process the companies will use to share R&D and Sales insights to develop a winning product.
- Day 2, discuss open items of contract.
- Day 3, sign contract; develop deliverables; set deadlines.

*Advance materials for meeting.* No problem if they want to share more information beforehand. That's a good way to show mutual respect. But suggest materials we customarily share with third parties in instances like these. Let's not get into making a lot of work for ourselves before the meeting. We can give them a “data dump” later if they want one.

*Ice-breakers.* Oh yes, and let's try to include those fun “ice-breakers” that management consultants suggest are good for team-building. That way we know who we are dealing with, and everyone feels like an equal in the room.

*Idea generation sessions.* Idea generation sessions can be quite valuable. How else will we be able to jump start the synergy that we must achieve to make this strategic alliance work? So, strongly encourage the use of idea generation sessions, such as “break-out” sessions. If agreed to, don't over-think the makeup of the groups. It might be a good opportunity to put junior members in charge so they can gain additional visibility.

*Commitment of next steps and post-meeting deliverables.* Let's make sure we get detailed minutes from the meetings—otherwise we will forget what we've agreed to do and what they've agreed to do. A timetable of deliverables and future meetings is essential!

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 Abbreviated Instructions to Chris
 

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## General advice:

- Individual decision-making is encouraged and rewarded.
- Results matter.
- Decisions need to be made quickly, and with attention to deadlines.
- It's okay to challenge senior management if you're sure of your facts.
- If you don't "toot your own horn," who will? The same goes for the company's products.
- Individual performance counts; mavericks often get noticed and advance in the company.
- Don't fear direct talk, regardless of who may disagree.
- Keep focused on the need for uninterrupted quarterly earnings growth.
- To meet the deadline, push your ideas first and hang in there!

## Specific meeting requirements:

*Meeting site:* A large city usually works best. Easy in and out. No need to waste time and money on anything extravagant that takes away from the goal—getting on with the business end of this strategic alliance

*Attendees:* Check availability of the "usual suspects," no need for a direct matching of participants by rank/title with those of our strategic alliance partner

*Seating arrangement:* No pre-arranged seating based on rank

*Scheduled/unscheduled time:* The earlier the better, with plenty of time for late-night entertainment and bar-hopping. We work hard and play hard.

*Dress code:* Casual, jeans are fine.

*Topics to be covered:*

- Day 1 morning: brief presentations on each parent company and its subsidiary, including introductions of functional heads.
- Day 1 afternoon, reach agreement on how companies will share R&D and Sales insights to develop a winning product.
- Day 2, discuss open items of contract.
- Day 3, sign contract; develop deliverables, set deadlines.
- Leave with a final version of the strategic alliance contract.

*Advance materials for meeting:* Provide materials ahead, but don't create a lot of "make work."

*Ice-breakers:* The company uses them all the time. Helps to get people involved and on the team. Forces people out of their "shells."

*Idea generation sessions:* Wonderful way to get the synergy going of the future strategic alliance. To shake it up, consider putting junior staff in charge of the "break-out" sessions, so they can gain additional visibility.

*Commitment to next steps and post-meeting deliverables:* Include a wrap-up session that includes assignment of detailed minutes of the meeting as well as a timetable of deliverables and dates for future meetings.

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**APPENDIX C: INSTRUCTIONS FOR OBSERVER****Background**

You are the Observer. You will be observing Fran and Chris's meeting. They do not know each other. Fran and Chris both are around the same age, 36 to 38 years old. They each hold master's degrees, earned about ten years ago; Fran's degree is from Northwestern University and Chris's degree is from New York University. Fran has traveled extensively outside of North America, including five years in Japan teaching Japanese students English after graduation from college. Chris has not traveled as extensively and not much outside of North America.

Both Fran and Chris have had very successful business careers: Fran in the automotive after-market industry and Chris in the chemical manufacturing industry. Fran works at Delphi, a subsidiary of Drago Industries, a large Japanese-owned

multinational company. Fran's company, Delphi, is located in Los Angeles. Chris works for Centro, a subsidiary of the large multinational company Circuit Industries; it is U.S. owned with headquarters in Manhattan. Chris's company, Centro, is located nearby in Edison, New Jersey.

As a result of intense competition in both their industries and society's demand for more environmentally friendly products, senior management of Drago and Circuit has decided to join forces to develop more environmentally friendly automotive air conditioning systems that rely on less toxic chemical refrigerants. In five years, the strategic alliance between their two subsidiaries—Delphi and Centro—is expected to develop automotive air conditioning systems that will be slightly more fuel-efficient, but the huge dividend of their collaboration will be state-of-the-art automobile air conditioning systems that are 25% less harmful to the environment in terms of the chemicals used as the cooling refrigerant.

This is what Jim Collins in *Built to Last* (2004) would call a BHAG, a “big, hairy, audacious, goal” and corporate management at both companies wants to get the process going quickly. In a month from now, there is to be a three-day, off-site meeting. Each subsidiary company has been asked to recommend a point person to help organize and structure that meeting. Because of their stature and broad functional experience in their respective companies, Fran and Chris have been appointed as the two point people.

#### *Suggestions for Observing the Role Play*

Both Chris and Fran have been given helpful hints from their respective bosses at Centro and Delphi. Their bosses were the ones who highly recommended them for this assignment. Their bosses have had plenty of experience themselves in achieving synergy from strategic alliances, joint ventures, and acquisitions with which they have been involved. Therefore, their bosses’ advice is uppermost in Chris and Fran’s minds.

Your job, as observer, is to identify the degree to which Chris and Fran are interacting well together in terms of setting the location, agenda, content, and the ground rules for the upcoming three-day meeting between representatives from Centro and Circuit Industries and from Delphi and Drago Industries.

Among the many items to be decided, the following ones are likely to be discussed when Fran and Chris first meet:

Meeting site.  
Attendees.  
Seating arrangements/furniture.  
Scheduled /unscheduled time.  
Dress code.  
Topics to be covered.  
Advance materials for meeting.  
Ice-breakers.  
Idea generation sessions.  
Commitment to next steps and post-meeting deliverables.

As an unbiased observer of their meeting, listen and take notes to help analyze what happened in this role play.

- What were Fran and Chris able to agree upon?
- What items were they having the greatest problems agreeing upon? How clear were reasons for disagreement on these issues? What were some of the reasons?
- Describe specific behaviors that Fran and Chris exhibited in this, their first professional encounter with one another. What behaviors seemed to help in accomplishing their tasks? What behaviors seemed to make it difficult to accomplish their tasks?
- What three adjectives best describe Chris’s manner? Of whom did Chris remind you?
- What three adjectives best describe Fran’s manner? Of whom did Fran remind you?
- How would you describe what Chris seemed to be trying to accomplish?

- How would you describe what Fran seemed to be trying to accomplish?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is *poor* and 10 is *outstanding*, how would you rate the effectiveness of their negotiations?
- If your rating was greater than 5, specifically what worked well?
- If your rating was less than 5, specifically what did not work?
- When did you sense concern for the effectiveness of their interaction?
- Did you observe any specific behavior from Fran or Chris that made you feel that the effectiveness of the meeting outcome was at risk?
- What suggestions do you have for either Fran or Chris if they were able to have a “do-over” of this first meeting?
- Did you observe the presence of any cultural differences (organizational culture or national culture) that created problems in the role play?

Did you observe any other differences (personality, seriousness of purpose of the actors, attitude, life experience, et cetera) that aided or led to frustration in the role play?

#### **APPENDIX D: REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR CHRIS AND FRAN DURING TRIO DEBRIEFING**

Please make some notes about the following questions in preparation for your trio’s debriefing.

- You have just completed your meeting to plan the three-day offsite discussions between Centro and Delphi. Do you feel like you accomplished your objectives? Why or why not?
- On which items did you have difficulty coming to agreement? Why do you think each item listed was problematic?
- You obviously are familiar with the culture of your “own” (your assigned) organization. Based on your just completed meeting, how would you describe the culture of your counterpart’s organization?
- The two parent companies involved are headquartered in different countries. Did you discern any differences between your positions that might be based on national culture? If so, which ones? What kind of cultural differences might be involved?
- What other differences (personality factors, seriousness of purpose of actors, life experience, level of emotional intelligence or maturity, et cetera) seemed to be evident in the role play that also affected the end result?
- Did any of our course reading assignments provide insight that helped you in the role play? If so, what specific insights were useful?

**APPENDIX E: SUMMARIZED ROLE PLAY SCRIPTS FOR FRAN AND CHRIS: ILLUSTRATING CONTRASTING CULTURAL DIMENSIONS AT WORK**

Instructions to Fran	Instructions to Chris
<p>General advice:                      Senior management makes the final decision on major and important matters.                      Relationships matter.                      Important decisions should not be rushed.</p>	<p>General advice:                      Individual decision making is encouraged and rewarded.                       Results matter.                      Decisions need to be made quickly, and with attention to deadlines.</p>
<p>Always show respect and deference to those in authority.</p>	<p>It's okay to challenge senior management if you're sure of your facts.</p>
<p>No need to brag; our products speak for themselves.</p>	<p>If you don't "toot your own horn," who will? The same goes for the company's products.</p>
<p>The team wins, not the individual.</p>	<p>Individual performance counts; mavericks often get noticed and advance in the company.</p>
<p>Avoid direct confrontation.                      Long-term thinking is our future.</p>	<p>Don't fear direct talk, regardless of who may disagree.                      Keep focused on the need for uninterrupted quarterly earnings growth.</p>
<p>Remember not to commit us to anything specific at this first meeting!</p>	<p>To meet the deadline, push your ideas first and hang in there!</p>

*Note:* Taken together, much of the general advice to Fran and Chris (just shown) and the specific meeting requirements to them (in the following table) emphasize the cultural predispositions (both national and organizational) that confound the first meeting between Fran and Chris.

In the classroom role play, the interplay of collectivism vs. individualism, the power distance dimension, short-term vs. long-term thinking, and direct/indirect communication almost always leads to frustration for those that "stay in role."

Instructions to Fran	Instructions to Chris
<p>Specific meeting requirements:  <i>Meeting site:</i> Ideally a well-known resort with recreational opportunities; a place suited to conducting business in a relaxed setting.</p>	<p>Specific meeting requirements:  <i>Meeting site:</i> A large city usually works best. Easy in and out. No need to waste time and money on anything extravagant that takes away from the goal—getting on with the business end of this strategic alliance.</p>
<p><i>Attendees:</i> Balanced by rank, no surprises.</p>	<p><i>Attendees:</i> Check availability of the "usual suspects," no need for a direct matching of participants by rank/title with those of our strategic alliance partner.</p>
<p><i>Seating arrangement:</i> Protocol for rank, better furniture for higher-ups.</p>	<p><i>Seating arrangement:</i> No prearranged seating based on rank.</p>
<p><i>Scheduled/unscheduled time:</i> Late morning official start, allowing for informal meetings at breakfast.</p>	<p><i>Scheduled/unscheduled time:</i> The earlier the better, with plenty of time for late-night entertainment and bar-hopping. We work hard and play hard.</p>
<p><i>Dress code:</i> Business casual, no jeans—day; business attire—evening dinner.</p>	<p><i>Dress code:</i> Casual, jeans are fine.</p>

(Continued)

(Continued)

Instructions to Fran	Instructions to Chris
<p><i>Topics to be covered:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Days 1 and 2, formal presentations of each parent company and its subsidiary.</li>   <li>● Day 3, sharing of ways to make the strategic alliance successful.</li> <li>● No final contract negotiations during the three-day meeting.</li> </ul> <p><i>Advance materials for meeting:</i> Avoid agreeing to send much in advance.</p> <p><i>Ice-breakers:</i> Avoid those awkward and contrived attempts to build rapport and knowledge.</p> <p><i>Idea generation sessions:</i> Like ice-breakers, idea generation sessions sound better than they are, as every idea is praised regardless of its value or who is advancing it</p> <p><i>Commitment to next steps and post-meeting deliverables:</i> Avoid hard-coded commitments—writing of the meeting’s minutes or any timetable for future meetings or deliverables. We don’t want to “lose face” by agreeing to do something we may not want or cannot deliver upon.</p>	<p><i>Topics to be covered:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Day 1 morning: brief presentations on each parent company and its subsidiary, including introductions of functional heads.</li> <li>● Day 1 afternoon, reach agreement on how companies will share R&amp;D and Sales insights to develop a winning product.</li> <li>● Day 2, discuss open items of contract.</li> <li>● Day 3, sign contract; develop deliverables, set deadlines.</li>   <li>● Leave with a final version of the strategic alliance contract.</li> </ul> <p><i>Advance materials for meeting:</i> Provide materials ahead, but don’t create a lot of “make work.”</p> <p><i>Ice-breakers:</i> The company uses them all the time. Helps to get people involved and on the team. Forces people out of their “shells.”</p> <p><i>Idea generation sessions:</i> Wonderful way to get the synergy going of the future strategic alliance. To shake it up, consider putting junior staff in charge of the “break-out” sessions, so they can gain additional visibility</p> <p><i>Commitment to next steps and post-meeting deliverables:</i> Include a wrap-up session that includes assignment of detailed minutes of the meeting, as well as a timetable of deliverables and dates for future meetings.</p>

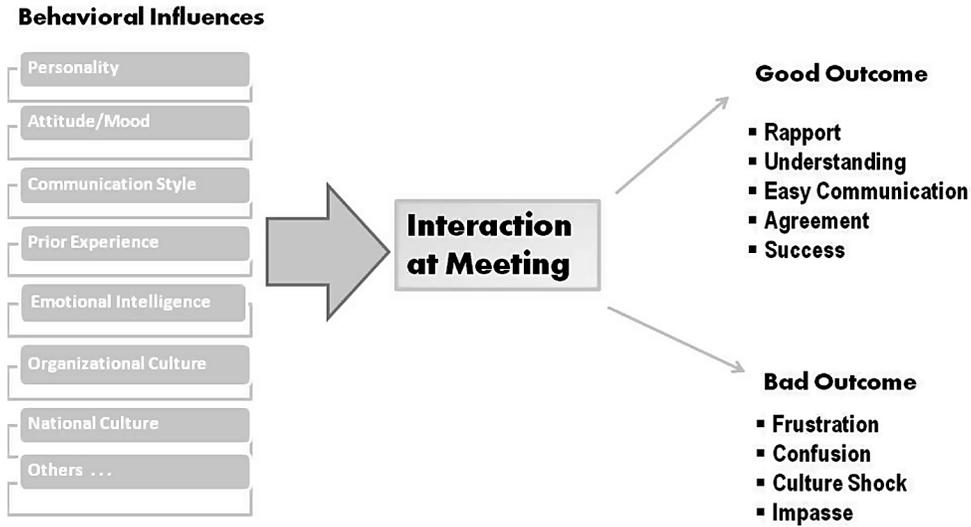
## APPENDIX F: OVERVIEW OF SOME DIMENSIONS ALONG WHICH CULTURES MAY VARY

Cultural construct	Brief definition	Main theorists
Collectivism vs. individualism	Extent to which individual identity, achievement and responsibility are stressed versus identity based in the group and loyalty to the group	Hofstede; Trompenaars; Adler; GLOBE Study distinguishes two types of collectivism
Power distance	Extent to which less powerful members expect and accept that power and status are distributed unequally in society and organizations	Hofstede; GLOBE
Short-term vs. long-term orientation	Extent to which virtues and practices oriented toward the future are fostered versus practices and virtues oriented toward the present and past	Hofstede; GLOBE; Trompenaars; Adler; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck
Uncertainty avoidance	Degree to which people are uncomfortable with unstructured or unpredictable situations and try to minimize such with rules, procedures, and belief systems	Hofstede; GLOBE
Masculinity	Degree to which assertive behavior is valued versus caring and nurturing behavior	Hofstede; (GLOBE separates into several dimensions)
Gender egalitarianism	Degree to which gender inequality is minimized	GLOBE
Assertiveness	Degree to which people should be assertive and confrontational in their relationships with others	GLOBE
Humane orientation	Degree to which people are encouraged and rewarded for being fair, altruistic, generous, and kind to others	GLOBE
Performance orientation	Extent to which individuals are encouraged and rewarded for excellent performance	GLOBE
Universalism vs. particularism	Extent to which people interact with others based on rules and norms vs. interacting based on the particular relationship	Trompenaars
Achievement vs. ascription	Degree to which status is accorded based on performance and accomplishments vs. being based on birth, kinship, connections, and one's educational record	Trompenaars
Neutral vs. affective	Degree to which expressing emotions in interactions is acceptable	Trompenaars
Relationship to nature	Degree to which people believe that humans should control nature for their benefit, live in harmony with nature or let nature take its course	Trompenaars; Adler; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck
Specific vs. diffuse relationships	Extent to which all aspects of an individual's life are involved in their work relationships	Trompenaars
Space orientation	Extent to which a person's surrounding personal space is considered private or public	Hall; Adler; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck
High/low context	Degree to which message is conveyed via words versus the context of the communication; how direct or indirect is communication	Hall

**APPENDIX G: REACHING AGREEMENT: INFLUENCES AND OUTCOMES**

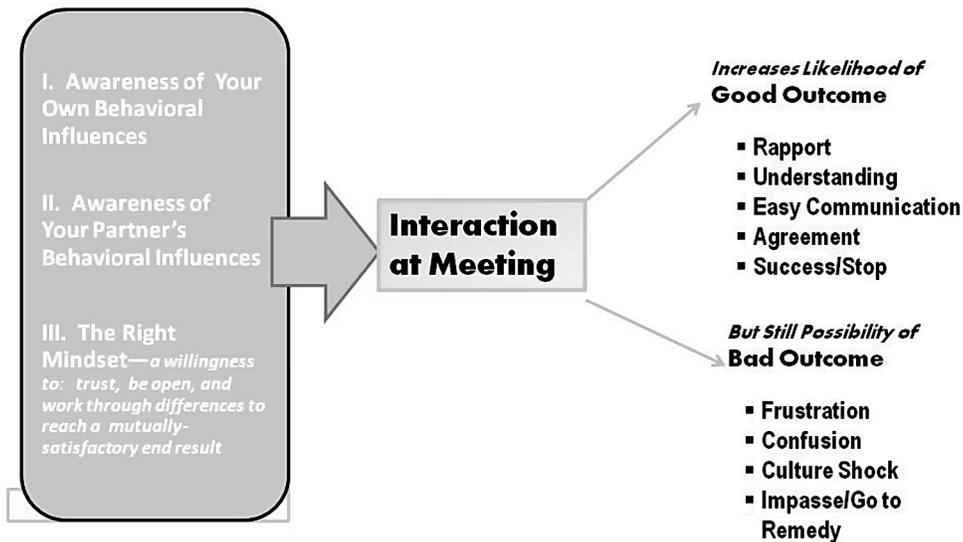
*Note.* PowerPoint slides of Appendices G, H, and I are available upon request from the authors.

**REACHING AGREEMENT  
Influences and Outcomes**



**APPENDIX H: REACHING AGREEMENT WITH DUE DILIGENCE**

**REACHING AGREEMENT  
With Due Diligence**

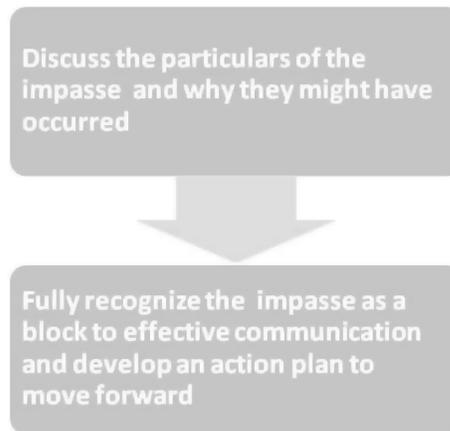


## APPENDIX I: REMEDY IF CULTURE CLASH OCCURS

## REMEDY

### If Culture Clash Occurs

**You've done the due diligence, but a bad outcome has resulted nonetheless!  
To preserve the relationship of the partners trying to reach an agreement . . .**



#### APPENDIX J: SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR FRAN AND CHRIS

As the Culture Shock role play exercise has been designed, the first Fran–Chris meeting often is a frustrating one, because students are encouraged by their role play scripts to “stay in role.” In that case, the teaching moment can reveal itself in one of three ways:

- What due diligence (cultural or otherwise) should one do when preparing for any meeting/interaction/negotiation where your counterpart is generally unknown to you?
- How does one salvage a situation where you’ve encountered “culture shock,” but weren’t prepared for it?
- Regardless of a poor start, how can the ultimate business purpose still be served?

From the Culture Shock scenario, here are five suggestions that might have led to a less frustrating first meeting between Fran and Chris and more productive outcomes in future meetings between themselves and between the representatives of both companies.

*Do before the end of the first meeting:*

1. Fran and Chris need to do their best to leave the first meeting on good terms to increase the likelihood that their next meeting will be more productive and less frustrating. They should

acknowledge to one another that the impasse they encountered probably stemmed from a cultural misunderstanding, not a personal one. By acknowledging that, they are preserving their relationship and their organizations’ goals for the strategic alliance. To be specific, they need to:

- Discuss together why the impasse might have occurred, trying to elicit from each other whether the failure to find a satisfying outcome (agenda for the three-day meeting) was cultural—organizational or national—or another communication problem.
- Clarify priorities and “must haves” of each side before leaving the meeting.
- Follow agreed-upon “next steps,” “must haves,” and priorities that resulted when they identified the impasse and discussed why the impasse occurred.

*Do back at the office:*

2. Educate and explain the cultural problem to their respective organizations. Inadvertently, their organizations’ national and organizational culture differences set them up to fail in the first meeting. Now they need to see whether their respective companies are capable of “bending a little” for the greater good of the strategic alliance.
  - Explain how cultural sensitivity will add value to both companies.

- Obtain some negotiating latitude on key items. This is especially important for Fran, as he was more handicapped by the script than Chris from making even the smallest of concessions during the first meeting.
- Share with their respective organizations the importance of moving beyond these cultural barriers to communication and of resolving the impasse for the sake of the strategic alliance.

*Do at the second meeting and ongoing:*

3. Continue to identify the real culture clashes that are “hidden in plain sight” and work to minimize them for their own future meetings with one another and for the greater good of facilitating a successful three-day meeting between their respective organizations.
4. Continue to build upon whatever common ground they develop in their second meeting with one another.
5. Help to evaluate in subsequent meetings the likelihood of the participants from each firm being able to work together to achieve business synergies—despite the different ways in which each organization prefers to operate.

#### APPENDIX K: SUGGESTED READINGS ON CULTURAL DIFFERENCES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

If this exercise is used with undergraduate students in a broad-based survey course, such as one on organizational behavior, the explanations of cultural dimensions in standard textbooks may be sufficient. If, however, the exercise is used with graduate students or in an undergraduate cross-cultural course, the facilitator may want to assign supplementary readings. Following are some possibilities.

- Buller, P. F., Kohls, J. J., & Anderson, K. S. (2000). When ethics collide: Managing conflicts across cultures. *Organizational Dynamics*, 28(4), 52–66.
- Cummins, T. (2006). Negotiation style and approach: Are stereotypes a myth? *The Negotiator Magazine*. Retrieved from [http://www.negotiormagazine.com/article346\\_1.html](http://www.negotiormagazine.com/article346_1.html)
- Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M. (2010). Studying cultural differences. In *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind* (3rd ed., pp. 27–52). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

- Javidan, J., Dorfman, P., de Luque, M., & House, R. (2006). In the eye of the beholder: Cross cultural lessons in leadership from Project GLOBE. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 20(1), 67–90.
- Sebenius, J. K. (2002). The hidden challenge of cross-border negotiations. *Harvard Business Review*, 80(3), 76–85.
- Tang, L., & Koveos, P. E. (2008). A framework to update Hofstede’s cultural value indices: economic dynamics and institutional stability. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 39, 1045–1063.

#### Useful Websites

- <http://www.grovetwell.com/pub-GLOBE-intro.html>. This site is part of Grovetwell LLC’s website. Cornelius Grove wrote an excellent introduction to the GLOBE Research Project on Leadership Worldwide, as well as many other interesting articles about the GLOBE project.
- <http://www.geerthofstede.nl>. This is the personal website of Geert Hofstede and his son, Gert Jan Hofstede. The site contains an introduction to culture, the Hofstede dimensions of culture (including the most recent sixth dimension called indulgence vs. restraint), explanation of scores, research approaches, and implications.

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