

The Benefits of Applying Cultural Intelligence Concepts to Customer Satisfaction and Team Performance

shown by example of a Chinese telecommunications firm
operating in a European environment

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Abstract

In today's fast changing business environments, people from different national and organisational cultures and mindsets need to collaborate and deliver results. Companies regard cross-cultural competence as highly important but generally do little to develop these competences in their organisations. A variety of intercultural competence models characterise different traits, attitudes and mindsets across cultures and desired capabilities for global managers. Various training programmes try to enhance cross-cultural knowledge and psychometric tests intend to measure the cultural competence. However, research so far has focused on the validation of cultural models on the individual's level. This study expands the view onto team development and the impact in the business environment across companies in a buyer-supplier relationship. Based on the Cultural Intelligence (CQ) concept, the author developed the Business Development across Cultures (BDaC) programme that consists of interventions, processes and measurement tools to validate the effectiveness of the programme on (1) customer satisfaction, (2) team and leadership performance and (3) individual cross-cultural competence development. The programme has been applied in a quasi-experimental design with post and retro-pre surveys and interviews on four projects with Huawei, as a Chinese company operating with their customers in Europe, with 120 participants (65 customers, 55 Huawei employees). The analysis of surveys and interviews show an improvement in all three aspects over a period of six to nine months. Participants of a comparison project, who only joined the surveys without going through the programme, did not report any improvements. The study provides operational procedures for cross-cultural organisational development and team coaching. The role of Cultural Brokers is introduced as team coach and negotiator across cultural groups. This role has been experienced as crucial for team communication and interventions. The study provides first suggestions for applying cultural intelligence concepts to teams to reach high performance in a cross-cultural environment.