



# Competency Based Assessments Across Cultures

*By*

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# Same Principles Across Cultures

- **Reflect Job within Organization Accurately**
- **Use multiple tools e.g. in-baskets, role-plays, case studies, presentations**
- **Valid**
- **Reliable**
- **Competency Based**

# Same Principles



**The Devil is in the Details ...**

# Different Cultures, Different Values



- Teaming - ubuntu
- Trust in relationships: more
- Rapport - customer
- Content > packaging
- Delayed response time
- Communication: context, stories



- Teaming - individualistic
- Trust in relationships: less
- Report - bottom line
- Packaging > content
- Prompt response time
- Communication: short, to the point



Also leading USA organizations are CEO's from Korea, Japan, China, UK etc.



# Different Market Influences



- 35% jobless rate
- Smaller skilled labor pool
- Firing employees difficult
- Non-legalistic
- More unionized businesses
- Becoming proudly SA
- Scale (geography, org size)



- 6% jobless rate
- Large skilled labor pool
- 'Pink slips' common
- Legalistic
- Fewer unionized businesses
- Economic World Leader
- Scale (geography, org size)



# How does different cultural values and market drivers impact Assessment Centers?

# Difference Matters

## Construction of in-basket items, case studies

- **Language**
- **Industry Realities**
- **Interpretation of concepts**

# Difference Matters

## USA Assumption

- The product with the best quality and price will win.
- Alternative viewpoints are good.
- This is a win-win situation, an expanding pie.
- The written contract is the final word.

## China/Russia/Saudi Arabia Interpretation

- We don't have a relationship. We don't trust you. Why should we buy from you?
- You are the boss. You decide.
- What is pie? You are always changing the subject to put us at a disadvantage.
- But the situation has changed. You must be flexible. Bringing in your lawyers is an insult.

## South African Interpretation

# Difference Matters

- **Behavior Indicators across cultures**
  - Leadership
  - Teamwork
  - Communication
- **Evaluating behavior**

# Overcoming Challenges

## Common Pitfalls

- Outsourcing assessments to practitioners without experiential understanding of your culture
- Do-it-yourself

# How can the global practitioner become more effective?



# Global Competence

## Significant Dimensions: $p < .05$

- Ability to transact business in another country
- Ability to change style
- Openness
- Knowledge of professional contacts worldwide
- Knowledge of company's worldwide business structure
- Knowledge of international business issues

*Caliguri, Rutgers & Di Santo, Shering Plough - HRPS*

# Development Journey



# Development Journey

## Unlearning > Learning

- Overcome myths
- Common 'industry knowledge' differs
- Different Behavioral indicators apply to effective leadership, communication, teamwork etc.
- Implications for personality questionnaires
- Implications for behavioral indicators of 'off the shelf' competency programs

# Development Journey

## Improve Personal Cultural Awareness

- Remain Open-minded, refrain from being judgmental
- The more we observe, the more we learn
- Don't make assumptions
- Learn to cope with stress without your usual support network
- Get a mentor or mentors with cross-cultural experience
- Learn the language

***Multicultural understanding doesn't mean that cultural differences don't matter***

# Development Journey

## Improve Organization's Cultural Effectiveness

- Know your own and your organization's values and how they color your perceptions
- Know your own and your organization's values, strengths and fit when assessing across cultures
- Collaborate with practitioners who know both cultures (experienced living in both with minimum of 2 to 3 years on each side)
- Adapt behavioral indicators to fit cultures

# Development Journey

## Learning More by Learning Together

- **Work with colleagues who represent a mix of cultures and business areas**
  - Typical mix for Business Leadership Development (AXA)  
18 countries / 33 companies / 78% Europe / 14% North America / 8% Asia & Pacific Rim
- **Participants to be selected based on several criteria:**
  - professional experience: preferably 5 - 10 years
  - prior international exposure
  - growth potential
  - meet the candidate profile
- **Read**
- **Observe**
- **Apply assessment center tools**

# Candidate Profile

- **Dynamic**
- **Energetic**
- **Emotionally intelligent**
- **Customer-centered**
- **Holds up well under stress**
- **Open-minded**
- **Team player**
- **Travel internationally**
- **Refrains from being overly judgmental of people or situations**
- **Cope with difficult or conflict situations**
- **Defend his or her position in the face of opposition**
- **Has successfully managed and implemented projects**

# Development Journey



# Summary

- Create Learning & Development programs for assessment practitioners that include cross-cultural exposure.
- Have a formal sponsor/mentor program where ex- or repatriates are the sponsors or mentors for potential new global practitioners.
- Create an in-house employee program for multicultural awareness using in-house resources, this would also reinforce employee's sense of belonging.
- Read e.g. Building Cross-Cultural Competence and Riding the Waves of Culture: Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars
- Travel and work abroad where your success depends on working effectively with other cultures.



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- **Leadership Selection & Development**
- **Change Management**
- **Cross-Cultural Effectiveness**
- **Process Improvement**
- **Performance Management**