

# Cultural clashes hrm essay



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INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT The main causes of the differences between Swedish managers and Spanish employees come as a result of the scepticism that the Swedish management style creates. The avoidance of formal planning and unwritten manuals makes Spanish employees feel confused about their tasks. So, instead of encouraging learning and taking own initiatives as individuals they become inefficient due to the fact that they are waiting for someone to tell them what to do.

Showing awareness to costs, searching for new solutions, team spirit and informal relationships with managers is something that differs from what is considered as normal. For someone used to hierarchical organizations and its clear definitions of responsibilities and knowing who's in charge there's no surprise that Spanish react with suspiciousness to what they are exposed to. The informality in the recruitment based on competence and not belonging is also something new and unknown. As IKEA has created a culture with no formal career path the culture becomes even harder for other cultures to understand since they see no direct linkage between their work and rewards. Understanding something built on humbleness and learning form experience as prerequisites for moving up the ladder will of course appear as weird for someone used to more structured environments. Moving up the promotion ladder is important to Spanish employees, with IKEAs system there is no clear definition of when or how you will move up except through long-term commitment.

During these circumstances Spanish employees are likely to feel more threatened than supported by the system. The main causes of cultural clashes between managers from Sweden and employees in Spain originate

from difference in socio- cultural dimensions and a lack of understanding for these cultural values. Following information would have been useful for IKEAs management: It has been stated by Hofstede that Swedish organizational and management culture is low in power distance, indicating participative, equality and flat organizations, while Spanish managers and employees have a culture with higher power distance, characteristic for organizations based on hierarchies with a more paternalistic approach. When it comes to the dimension of uncertainty avoidance Swedes tend to be more comfortable than Spanish employees with higher degrees of flexibility who prefers situations characterised with a high degree of certainty through control, rules and regulations.

While Swedes highly favour individualism, acting as individuals with individual incentives Spanish has a strong preference for collectivism and being a part of a cohesive group. But, they are also proud individualist who can have difficulties in cooperating. Hofstede distinguishes between hard masculine values, such as assertiveness and competition, and feminine soft values, such as life quality and caring about others. Swedes are low in their masculinity while Spanish emphasizes a medium level of masculinity. In 1991 Hofstede added a fifth dimension to the previous four called long-term orientation. IKEA aims to foster a culture where people grow as they develop greater commitment to the company.

This has created an environment in which long-term perspectives are seen as more appropriate which can be confusing for Spanish who prefer short-term targets to know their direction. Swedes see rules and regulations superior and something that should be applied universally to everyone,

universalism, while in Spain people favour a particularist culture by seeing relationships as more important “ Why employ someone that you don’t know when you can employ someone that you already know? ” (Jackson, 2002).

While Sweden is more achievement oriented Spain can be seen as more ascription oriented, meaning that their status is achieved through family background or other prior factors. Spanish culture can be defined as a culture with higher power distance than Swedish while also being less individualistic. Therefore Swedish managers could provide their Spanish employees with better guidelines, both oral and written, in order to strengthen their understanding.

Both masculinity and uncertainty avoidance are higher in Spain, clearer descriptions of the importance soft values as a way long term success and prescriptions how to practise the freedom of flexibility would be desirable to overbuild scepticism. Spanish loyalty is primarily aligned towards their families and not towards larger collectives. Managers therefore need to work hard on making employees understand the importance of team work, job engagement and its linkage to better performance. Spanish focus is socially oriented rather than task oriented and they highly emphasises quality of life rather than job engagement. Managers shall understand this cultural preference but make sure that while at work employees engagement is in accordance with the corporation’s rules and regulations.

Since self-expression and climbing on the promotion ladder is important to Spanish, managers needs to find a way to allow employees to feel important. Inequality, hierarchy, little participation in decision making, and paternalistic relationships with managers are factors contributing to Spanish employees

certainty, the key issue for Swedish managers is how to promote IKEA's culture so that employees feel secure. Clearer career paths are one example. If Spanish managers operated in Sweden within the IKEA group they would have to adapt to all of the cultural values mentioned in section two. This is due to the fact that IKEA culture is highly constituted based on these "Swedish" fundamental values as a part of their business strategy and belief.