

# Good case study on workplace intercultural conflict

[Business](#), [Company](#)



## **Introduction**

This is a case of colleagues holding the same job position in a multinational company. EUROi is an IT company that was formed as a result of a merger between a British firm, RoyalPC, and a French firm, Internet du France (IDF). Margaret, who is 50 years old and her 35 year old colleague Georges are supposed to work together each representing their respective companies. Georges works as the marketing manager representing the French company while Margaret was sent from London to France to work in the same position for the British partner. Although both employees have exceptional leadership skills, they are not ready to work as a team. While Margaret seems to interfere with Georges personal life, Georges considers her uneducated and he categorically states his displeasure with her focus towards company policies and money. On the other hand, she accuses Georges of being lazy and autocratic.

## **Identification of the Problem**

The main problem arising from the strained workplace relationship between Margaret and Georges is the different cultures that the two employees come from (McFarlin & Sweeney, 2013). While Margaret is from England, Georges comes from France, a country with a slightly different culture. Margaret believes that company rules and finances should be taken seriously, something that Georges believe is a weakness rather than a principle. On the other hand, Margaret is not ready to accept the fact that a person holding a senior position such as Georges can have extra marital affairs. Going by her standards and basing her argument on the moral values from her society,

the idea is unacceptable. In other words, she does not bother finding out how serious such an act is in the new country that she is now operating from, but goes ahead and demonize the act and let it strain their already poor relationship. Therefore, she takes it personally, something that Georges considers nosy.

Additionally, the two employees have different abilities; while Georges' ability is based on the education that he received, Margaret's ability is based on her fifteen years' experience working in the corporate world. Also, Margaret has personal abilities such as quick learning. However, the two employees fail to recognize each other's abilities leading to an unnecessary friction. Georges, for example; fails to recognize the special talents that Margaret has, but instead insists that she is not educated.

Although the two employees hold the same position, they are fifteen years apart in terms of age. He accused her of having backdated ideas, a situation that was worsened by the fact that George's idea on advertisement was preferred while her idea was rejected. Also, a problem emanated from the fact that the two employees held the same position in the same company. This generated friction as each employee wanted to show superiority over the other. The battle for supremacy between the two employees strained their relationship as none of them was willing to involve the other (Gramberg, 2006). For example; instead of teaming up to come up with a collective advertising idea, they both prepared separate plans, each planning to outdo the other. The fact that Margaret spent half an hour downplaying Georges indicated that she was using the platform to undermine Georges. On the other hand, Georges secretly prepared his project and presented it

without the knowledge of Margaret, a clear indication that he was also prepared to embarrass her.

In some parts of the world, experience is considered to be more precious than education. However, education is considered a basic qualification in other parts of the world where promotions to higher levels are based on further studies rather than experience and personal capabilities (Gramberg, 2006). For instance, Margaret is highly regarded in her society back in England, but her lack of education may not be substituted with her exceptional experience and personal skills in France. One of the reasons why the two colleagues are not cooperating is because Georges believes in that he is superior due to his education. He goes ahead and publicly announces that Mrs. Williams is not educated; therefore, hinting that he was not ready to share ideas with her.

## **Analysis and evaluation**

In any organization, a dispute between employees is a common phenomenon, especially when the employees are holding the same job position in terms of hierarchy (Gramberg, 2006). However, senior members of staff have the capacity to solve the difference between their juniors to ensure that the rivalry does not affect the daily running on the organization. In this case, the two warring employees need to solve their issues before the involvement of others. Since they were both busy battling each other, they were too busy to discover the usefulness that the other person probably had.

Georges needs to understand why Margaret was the most preferred candidate for the international job opening. Instead of criticizing her on her

way of life and her strictness on company funds and policies, he should consider the good side of such concerns. Georges was wrong to criticize Margaret on lack of formal education. His attitudes towards her have been shaped by his assumption that she has nothing to offer and she is wrongly placed in such a position. This explains why he is always criticizing her choices, including personal choices such as fashion.

Going by Margaret's standards, individuals holding senior positions are supposed to be morally upright. However, this may be only taken serious in her home country. She fails to appreciate the new culture that she is now working under and goes ahead to criticize Georges on personal issues. Additionally, she adjusts her way of communicating with Georges after she learns about his extramarital affairs. On realizing about the cold treatment, Georges fights back; therefore, straining the already unstable relationship.

## **Recommendations**

Trying to solve their issues should be between the two of them where they can vent out their disagreements. This idea should be advised by the management since a continuation of the rivalry will jeopardize the activities of the marketing department that they are leading. Apparently, they disliked each other from the beginning of their joint working in the newly formed company. The rivalry between them and their disrespect for each other can be addressed by the pair; thus, changing their attitudes towards each other (Paludi, 2012).

However, there is a possibility that the pair are in a serious disagreement that they cannot entertain sitting together and talking about their conflicts. Therefore, their senior employee should take over the negotiation process.

Here, a person who holds a higher position should manage the conflict professionally without bias. The mediator should allow the two employees with conflicting ideas to give their own stories (Ray, 2011). This will provide the mediator with the important information on how to handle the situation. Afterwards, the mediator should bring a reality check where the pair can be able to see the bigger picture of the implication caused by disagreement. This will help them realize the need for working together for the better performance of the company. Once the two have vented their issues, the mediator should take over basing his or her arguments on the information collected (Ray, 2011). The management should focus on bringing the two employees together without alienating either of them. Here, the mediator should politely address the attitudes and behaviors of the two that is believed to fuel the differences.

## **Conclusion**

In every workplace conflict, there is always a reason for the misunderstanding, which can be addressed to solve the issue. There is a need for international organizations that rely on multicultural employees to build formal intercultural communication strategies that will be easily followed to find the solution (Brislin, 2008). Increasingly diverse workplace cultures offers opportunities for improved problem solving capacity where all the employees are given a chance to offer their expertise where needed. Conflicts in the workplace can go out of hand if allowed to escalate; therefore, a timely solution is required to solve it (Paludi, 2012). Firstly, the warring parties should be allowed to solve their differences, failure to which a mediator holding a higher position should intervene (Ray, 2011). Once the

problem is solved, the employees can resume working together for the benefit of both their company and their careers.

## **References**

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