

Gung ho essay

[Business, Management](#)



Gung Ho: U. S Vs Japanese Management Styles Gung Ho is an interesting movie, which utilizes humour to compare the managerial and cultural differences between the Japanese and the Americans. The theme of the movie is that a Japanese company takes over a failed American auto plant and saves a town from ruin. However, conflict arises due to the tremendously different cultures and work ethics of the two groups. A very important element in the movie is the portrayal of the collectivism of the Japanese both in their daily and working life.

While, the Americans are shown to be focused on, individualism. Collectivism is a phenomenon where the efforts of an individual are put forth for the betterment of a company or a social group. Individualism puts emphasis on individual values over group values.

In Gung Ho, the Japanese are shown as trying to run the auto plant as efficiently as any other plant in Japan. The fact that the labour is American does not matter as the plant is owned by the Japanese and they want it to reflect their success. Therefore the company executives give preference to working late hours and even at home, even though it causes problems at home. Whereas, the American workers are shown to arrive late but leave early and give preference to their families over the company.

The Japanese expect the products to be of a very high standard of quality like those in Japan, but the Americans do not understand the need for such quality control or work ethic. The demand for the performance of calisthenics as a group each morning is also very unusual and humorous for the Americans. Moreover, the Americans find it quite odd that the Japanese

executives go for a swim together in the river each day, but this too is a portrayal of their team spirit. Also when playing baseball, the Japanese are shown to be in sync with each other, with no player trying to outshine another player. The individualism of the Americans is portrayed by the main character, Stevenson, who is constantly trying to manipulate the whole situation, in order to grantee the safety of his job.

Even though he is chosen as a representative for the American labourers, he sells them out when his own job is threatened and makes an agreement with the Japanese which is near impossible to complete. The difference between the two cultures is emphasized when all the wives of the Japanese executives' leave the table when business is about to be discussed but Stevenson's girlfriend refuses to leave. In this, the Japanese are shown to follow tradition and conformity while the Americans do not. The difference in the power distance is also a major issue in the movie. The Japanese are more oriented to authority than the Americans. The Japanese are shown to be of the high power distance group. They are respectful of their superiors and heed special attention to any orders given to them.

They do not challenge any feedback and trust their superiors to be right. The first few scenes where the “ bad executives” are being trained in Japan can be seen as a description of the high power distance relationship. Whereas, the Americans represent the low power distance group- where they can be friendly, rude and expressive towards their superiors. This is reflected throughout the movie by the way Stevenson interacts with his subordinates, all of whom seem to be his friends. Also, the rowdy behaviour depicted in the

union meeting, where the labourers are shouting criticism and insults at their leader shows the low power distance.

This imbalance of power distance creates a problem for the Americans and the Japanese, as the Americans do not want to follow orders which they do not agree with, and in fact argue with the Japanese on such points. At the same time the Japanese find this behaviour quite out of the ordinary and think of the Americans as insolent people. Stevenson, who is suppose to handle these problems is rendered useless because he does not understand the depth of these problems and is therefore unable to find a long-lasting solution. He handles each situation by placating the people involved temporarily.