

Argos diesel europe



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The Case of the Floundering Expatriate

1a. Analysis of the case situation (what and why)

1b. Specific Cross Cultural Issues

Argos Diesel Europe is experiencing cross-cultural challenges among various divisions of the company (Argos Diesel Europe, its European suppliers, local company employees and the new member - an American expatriate). The company places high priority on achieving results, and it is conscious that in order to achieve their financial targets they must become an integrated team. However, the team's cultural diversity and lack of understanding for each others differences, demonstrates an intense friction and cohesiveness among members. Depending on the group members' nationalities, each one has a different degree of expectation, motivation, participation and commitment.

The main factors affecting the company from becoming an efficient cross cultural integrated team include:

Lack of Open Communication among each other:

' I tell you, Frank, they're just going to have to join the rest of us in the postindustrial age, learn to do things the Argos way'.

* No direct confrontation to discuss the real issues and what can be done to improve problems (ex: Donaldson lack of cultural awareness and the effect on the company, group perception of him) - (back talk)

* Between Frank Waterhouse and Bert Donaldson (lack of communication as to what is expected from Bert, how he can better adjust to the culture, ways of solving friction between Bert and the team)

* Between Frank Waterhouse and Bill Loan – lack of understanding about each others necessities and overall company performance. Bill does not want to be bothered in solving the particular issues that the Zürich office is having.

* Between Bert Donaldson and his department team

* Between Bert Donaldson and the company's suppliers (as he delivered his speech, everyone in the audience was already familiar with his team-building plan)

* Donaldson and Frau Schweri (manager) – if proper communication was established at the beginning Frau Schweri could have assisted in setting up the meetings and familiarize Donaldson with the social/organisational etiquette

* Arrival of trainers in Zürich

– Two year contract being offered to the trainers, “ after Frau Schweri adviced him not to”

2. Lack of team collaboration

* Lack of having an ‘ open mind’ work approach

* Individual vs collective attitude

Examples:

– Frank's self-centered attitude toward his own career plans in the US versus an overall attempt to ensure everyone in the team properly adjusts to changes in culture to ensure quality performance.

- Frank being one of the drivers for the European team program
- Emphasis should be on overall team performance and collaboration
- * Lack of response from managers to Donaldson multiple choice survey. ‘
- * Group culture (not 1 way of doing things is better than another) - everyone should cooperate and find a middle ground
- * Lack of synergy (no pattern of interaction that involves everyone) (Berger, 165, ch 165)
- * No formal support to Bert to ensure he becomes aware of the organization culture in Zürich / no support to Bert’s family (external and internal pressures)
- He is unintentionally offending colleagues
- No one confronts about the real problems (Waterhouse or Bert)
- * Team exclusion - Bert is not part of Frank’s “ inner circle”
- * Relationship conflict - “ interpersonal incompatibilities, including tension, animosity, and annoyance” (Chuang et al. 28)
- Between Bert and the European managers
- Between Bert and Jacob Hassler, VP of HR at Schwyz Turbines

I told him I was interested in his ideas, so he pushed his chair back and said ,
‘ Please let me know what you expect.’ I reminded him that we’re on the same team, have only two more years for major change, gave him a week to
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get back to me with a few ideas, and you know what he said? He said, ' Ja, ja.' (Adler, p. 29)

- Between Bert and Ursula Lindt (regarding Bert's reference to Bettina Schwenk)

as a ' secretary', instead of referring to her with her appropriate title

* All of them are back talking negatively about each other

3. Lack of understanding for cultural differences / cultural awareness

* Lack of tolerance for individual differences (when things do not go as expected, European managers and administrative team I in Zürich becomes frustrated and complaint. Instead, they should be upfront and finding a solution/means to tell Bert what is expected of him, instead of seeing him fail. After all, the importance is to learn to overcome each others differences to ensure the company succeeds.

* Stereotypes: ' the American', ' the Germans' vs ' the Portuguese'

* Difference in perception of time (punctuality, meeting duration, the ' right' time to be part of an international assignment)

* Use of titles and names

* Ways of addressing others (secretary versus manager)

* Dress code (American trainers wearing Mickey Mouse sweaters)

* Understanding of hierarchical organisations

- * Team involvement / management styles

- “ management by walking”

- managers’ unresponsiveness to Donaldson’s multiple-choice survey

- * Use of humor

- * Presentation style and amount of information covered (“ bombardment of information”, not providing “ enough background information”)

- * Networking (allow breaks in between presentations to allow people to interact)

4. Staff morale

- * Networking and socializing is a central part of Argo’s Zürich office culture

- * Differences in culture, work habits, and management styles are affecting the staff morale in the office

5. Culturally different leadership/working styles (Berger 162, cha 11)

- * “ Management by walking” (Bert’s attempt to involve the entire department to obtain “ ideas, plans, or solutions”)

- * Working habits (ex: working during lunch time and until midnight)

- * Presentation style, material covered, and duration (meetings running too short, or not allowing for enough breaks to network)

- Decision making (individual vs collective)

6. Difference in the levels of fluency of the common language

* Everyone in the office, except from Bert is fluent in Swiss German

* Bert's lack of attempt to speak Swiss German is viewed negatively by the team

- As a leader it is expected to have basic command of the language

Cross cultural issues and managerial issues

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Meeting 2

Thursday, October 22, 2009

2a. Action plan which Bert could present to his team on ways forward to address some of these issues

Given that one of the main cultural issues faced by Bert and his team is lack of communication, before any of the following actions are implemented, Bert needs to establish a group meeting between key members (Frank, Frank Schveri, main suppliers). The meeting, which will be lead by an external facilitator, will allow everyone to share their concerns, open communication channels, relieve frustrations, share their opinions, and reach a consensus regarding the actions that everyone needs to take. Thus, allowing the team to improve their work relationship, morale, and work atmosphere. More importantly, during this first meeting, the group will complete and discuss Belbin's team roles self-assessment.

Subsequent to this meeting, Bert will also suggest weekly staff briefs to discuss current issues, in an open manner. In addition, he will present the

following set of seminars and training sessions to address the team's main cultural issues. These sessions will be placed on a year trial period (which correlates with Bert's evaluation period).

1. Intercultural communication seminar

This seminar will allow the group to acquire the skills and techniques needed for a successful communication process by:

- * Establishing open/direct lines of communication
- * Learning how to communicate effectively with a culturally diverse workforce
- * Recognizing the importance of active listening
- * Learning the significance of verbal and non-verbal communication (tone of voice, proxemics, body position and gestures, facial expression, and eye contact) (Thomas 2008).

2. Cross-cultural/diversity awareness training (Thomas 2008)

This training session will allow the team to improve interpersonal interaction among each other by:

- * Raising ' level of awareness and sensitivity to diversity issues' (Francesco et al. 2005).
- How to manage diversity (short and long term focus)
- Usefulness of cultural values differences among different ethnic groups
- Establishing ' cultural advisory groups' (Francesco et al. 2005).

- * Learning how to interact with different cultures

- Create awareness of diverse cultural and individual working, communication, behavioral, and presentation styles

- * Learning to 'manage diversity effectively' to 'develop a competitive advantage' (Francesco et al. 2005).

- * Learning about social customs, business etiquette and protocols in different countries (ex: Switzerland, United States, Great Britain)

3. Improving staff moral seminar – ‘we all matter’

This session will allow Bert's team to:

- * Establish ways of improving motivation and overall team's engagement

- * Learn the correlation between motivation and productivity

- * Creating a dynamic, positive and friendly workplace environment

- Establishing 'values which play importance on satisfaction, morale, and loyalty' (Berger, 1996, p. 22)

4. Interactive events encouraging diversity and team spirit

To encourage interaction among team members, improve communication, cultural differences understanding, staff morale, and overall dynamics of the team and the environment they operate under, the following events could be suggested to take place:

- Friday staff breakfast meetings

- These sessions will allow all team members to obtain updates and have clear visibility of everyone's activities, project, and company's current status
- These meetings will encourage open communication changes, team building exercises, and staff moral improvement
- Quarterly team challenge events (including: city challenges, bowling, boat trips, etc)
- These events will allow team members to interact in a non-working environment
- Positive moral, interaction, communication, and team synergy will be the main emphasis
- * Informal family-staff picnics

5. Conflict resolution seminar (Thomas 2008)

Through role play, group discussions, and the use of case studies, the group will be able to:

- Learn the ' background to conflict and the contribution they can make to either calming or escalating a confrontation' (The conflict 2009)
- * Learn various approaches to dealing with different cultures and difficult colleagues
- * Learn how to structure and control a conversation (The conflict 2009)
- * Learn how to manage unpredictability (The conflict 2009)

- * Learn how to make concessions and reach agreements (Thomas 2008)

- * Learn how to employ the use of assertive communication

6. Constant feedback and evaluation of progress and training/seminar sessions (will create interactive synergy)

While all of the above training and seminar sessions are imperative in dealing with individual cultural issues and group differences, as a continuous and recurring activity, the group must have established feedback and evaluation procedures.

The feedback/evaluation process will allow the group to:

- * ' Review the learning within the team' - learn from mistakes and share success (Berger 1996, p. 175)

- * Evaluate the set goals, progress, areas requiring further intervention, and the overall effectiveness of the training and seminar sessions

- * Provide individual and group feedback to ensure everyone obtains an equal and fair opportunity to develop with the group and contribute to solve their cross-cultural issues.

While the above training sessions and seminars will be suggested by Bert, careful consideration must be given to the implementation, cost, frequency, time constraints, evaluation and overall benefit of such sessions.

Nevertheless, if implemented effectively, this action plan will ' create a set of rules for the team', and help them develop ' a shared team vision'

(Francesco et al., 2005, p. 205). These activities will allow the team to discover ways of embracing their diversity, and use it as a ' sustainable

competitive' advantage that will ultimately lead to superior performance and effective working relations (Von Berger et al., 2005, p. 2).

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Meeting 3

Monday, October 26, 2009

3. Action plan for Bert on the steps he needs to take in his own cross-international development to ensure he interacts effectively in this and future interactive work groups.

In order for Bert to develop as an effective international leader, he needs to consider his current condition and future prospects. Given that he was not provided with any cultural training prior to his move to Switzerland, and due to the current turmoil, misunderstanding, and demands of his current role, the most effective and less time constraining activities during the present time will be the following. (These activities will be given a trial period of six months followed by an evaluation).

1. Cultural awareness training

* This training will allow Bert to learn ' major aspects of the host country culture, including customs, traditions, everyday behaviors (Francesco et al., 19998)

* By developing his cultural awareness, Bert's way of thinking will expand, and global mindset will broaden

- Bert will build up an understanding on how to create an environment of equal

opportunities, while being flexible and sensitive to other's differences

- He will be more receptive in learning about the needs and wants of others, while sharing openly common goals and values

2. Become involved in coaching and feedback sessions

Bert should discuss with Frank the possibility of obtaining an internal coach (possibly Frank himself). The goal for Frank, Bert, and the entire company is to reach successful results. Hence, it is to the advantage of Bert and Frank that bonds are established so that they can discuss openly their feelings, expectations, and more importantly a change of action.

During these coaching sessions Bert can:

* Access his complete a free online ' Cultural Orientation Framework' (COF) (www.philrosinski.com) in order to identify his ' existing orientations and to examine other alternatives (Rosinski et al., 2008, p. 258).

- The COF can be used with his coach to: evaluate cultures, find out new ways to create solutions, ' envision a desired culture', and learn to use diversity as a source of action and cooperation (Gilbert et al., 2008, p. 88).

* Use the GROW Model of Coaching to:

- Set up SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) goals for the short and long term

- Obtain a reality check to analyse his current situation

- Explore his options and alternative courses of action

- ' Wrap-up', decide what he needs to do, his will to do, and by when

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(Gilbert, 2009, p. 8)

* Use the ' Global Coaching Process' to access his ' desires, strengths, weaknesses, present situation and preferences' in an attempt to evaluate the expectations of his group members (Rosinski et al. 270)

3. Interaction with team members

A key to a leader's success is having the correct networking ability to connect and interact with others. Hence, while long working days, ineffective communication, and lack of cooperation has been present in his team. As a director, Bert should try be more charismatic, share a few lunch breaks with his team, or even try to interact outside of work. This will allow him the possibility to see his colleagues and team members in a richer cultural and analytical context.

In future assignments it is crucial that Bert is culturally better prepared prior to actually relocating to a new country. In order to do this, Bert should suggest to the company that not only him, but all individuals and their families who will be embarking on an international assignment undergo the following programme:

1. Country Briefings

2. Reading assignments

- Focusing on the culture of the specific country or region
- How to interact and do business with different cultures
- Provide access to similar electronic sources to accompanying family members

3. Informal chats with employees who have acquired experience in a particular country

4. Basic language courses to employees and their families

- Twice a week for a minimum period of 5 weeks

5. In country training and development

- New expatriates should be assigned a mentor/coach with the particular country relevant experience.

- The coach/ mentor will not only assist the expatriate in his development and acculturation to the new corporate environment. He/she will also assist the expatriate and his/her family to get accustomed to the new country, help them find schools, jobs for their partners, etc.

6. Repatriation

Within a month of Once return to their home country, after completing their international assignment, expatriates should be required to review their Personal Development Plans, success/failure of their assignment, and lessons learnt with their provided HR business partner and coach/mentor.

(Eangle, p. 294)

Berts' current situation demonstrates to the company, that the culture of the organization must be adjusted in order to foster successful cross-cultural assignments where It needs to promulgate coaching, mentoring, and adapt to potential new ideas and ways of doing for their employees and their families prior to departure. While cost and resources might prove to be a challenge for the company, the overall success of expatriate assignments, lie on the success of the cultural awareness pre-departure programme.

“ An effective international manager needs to develop skills for understanding and managing diversity. Since different cultures have various approaches to diversity, it is important to understand these approaches and the potential impact they could have on the manager” (Francesco et al., 2005, pp 209).

Working Together and Cross Cultural Issues

Culture is central to what we see, how we make sense of what we see, and how we express ourselves, and there are various varieties that lie within. For example, Different Communication Styles where as a group we had diverse ways of doing that varied widely between us. One aspect of communication style is language usage. Across cultures, some words and phrases are used in different ways. For example, even in countries that share the English language, the meaning of “ yes” varies from “ maybe, I’ll consider it” to “ definitely so,” with many shades in between. Therefore we found that it took some time to agree with each other about certain points but always came to a conclusion or harmony in the end.

Secondly we had different approaches to Completing Tasks From culture to culture; there are different ways that people move toward completing roles or projects. Some reasons include different access to resources; different judgments of the rewards associated with task completion, different notions of time, and varied ideas about how relationship-building and task-oriented work should go together, but found that everyone worked well together to find appropriate data that was relevant to the actual task and respected asked criteria.

Finally we had a complete group where everyone had a particular role to complete, and worked well within the context to find an applicable solution to the case for answering adequately.

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