

India is the most  
hierarchical society



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

**BRIEF:**

India is the most hierarchical society in the world and this, obviously, has an impact on its management style. It is imperative that there is a boss and that the manager acts like a boss. The position of manager demands a certain amount of role-playing from the boss and a certain amount of deferential behaviour from his subordinates. The boss is definitely not expected to perform any seemingly 'menial' tasks such as making coffee for everybody or moving chairs in a meeting room! Anglo-Saxon concepts of egalitarianism where the boss is the primus inter pares are virtually incomprehensible in a society still dominated by the historical conventions of the caste system.

Therefore, the boss is expected to give explicit instructions which will be followed even if everybody knows that the instruction is incorrect. Managing people in India requires a level of micro-management which many western business people feel very uncomfortable with but, which is likely to bring the best results.

Indian management is paternalistic and is characterized by:

- Patronage
- Families feelings
- Sense of security in staff
- Obedience to authority
- Personality cult
- Personality based delegation
- Aversions of the staff to the leaders who are outsiders
- Ascent on short rather than long term planning

- Restricted sharing of information
- Gulf between personnel policies and practices

### **Traditional Indian management:**

Management practices:— Traditional Indian management

1. Employee requirements- family relation and caste of employee is considered
2. Leadership style- leaders display a high level of personal involvement with their subordinates.
3. Motivational aspects and rewards- work is viewed as a means to an end i. e for sake of satisfying family needs.
4. Human resource management practices- nepotism and caste consideration affect selection and compensation. Training is less emphasized.

### **TYPES OF MANAGEMENT STYLE IN INDIA-**

#### **1) Conservative style:**

- Integrating ideology- old is gold, change carefully
- Performance control- through traditions, conventions, precedents
- Coordination- hierarchical
- Staff motivation- financial security, psychological safety

#### **2) Entrepreneurial style:**

- Integrating ideology- no risk no gain, pioneer, innovative, revolutionize
- Performance control- through shared vision of corporate team
- Coordination- hierarchical
- Staff motivation- through charisma of the person at top

**3) Professional style:**

- Intergrating ideology- scientific, rational approach to management
- Performance control- through norms of professionalism and other tools of management
- Coordination- variety of mechanism like hierarchy, committee planning
- Staff motivation- formalized menu of progressive, productive and quality oriented incentive.

**4) Bureaucratic style:**

- Orderly management, clear accountability
- Through rules and regulation
- Hierarchical, standard operating procedures
- Job clarity, steady promotion on basis of seniority

**5) Organic style:**

- Flexibility
- Through peer pressure, personal commitment
- Team work, mutual feedback, intensive lateral as well as vertical communication
- Job variety and richness

**6) Authoritarian style:**

- Obedience, organizational patriotism
- Through fear of punishment
- Hierarchical
- Patriotic feel and fear of punishment

**7) Participative style:**

- Relatively powerless decision making

- Through collective assessment on jointly agreed criteria of evaluation
- Through representative committee
- Feeling of participating in decision making

**8) Intuitive style:**

- Experience and common sense
- Thumb rule
- Hierarchical, also by informal norms
- No need for formal qualification

**9) Familial style:**

- One big happy family
- Through relationship of bosses
- Through personalities
- Feeling of being a part of family

**10) Altruistic style:**

- It's a means to social and spiritual end
- Through sense of mission or pursuit of great ideal
- Hierarchical, shared ideal or social commitment
- Opportunity to control something noble and meaningful

**Being a Manager in India**

To ensure successful cross cultural management in India, you need be aware of the strict protocols and rituals that exist. The official caste system may be illegal, but a strong hierarchical structure, based upon job title, still exists in business.

The Role of a Manager

In India managers may take a somewhat paternalistic attitude to their employees. They may demonstrate a concern for employees that goes beyond the workplace. This may include involvement in their family, housing, health, and other practical life issues.

It is the supervisor's job to regularly check on the work of a subordinate and to provide regular constructive feedback. This may include monitoring work quality and the timing of its completion.

### Approach to Change

India's intercultural adaptability and readiness for change is developing all the time. India is seen to have a medium tolerance for change and risk. It is important for innovations to have a track record or history noting the benefits if they are to be accepted and implemented.

Failure in India causes a long-term loss of confidence by the individual as well as by others. Because of this attitude, intercultural sensitivity is going to be required, especially when conducting group meetings and discussing contributions made by participating individuals.

### Approach to Time and Priorities

Indians are generally quite careful about time guidelines in business situations where schedules and deadlines are regarded seriously. In addition, however, Indian society is concerned with relationships so there may be instances where there is some flexibility to strict standards of adhering to schedules. When working with people from India, it's advisable to reinforce the importance of the agreed-upon deadlines and how that may affect the

rest of the organization. Successful cross cultural management will depend on the individual's ability to meet deadlines.

Global and intercultural expansion means that some managers may have a greater appreciation of the need to enforce timescales and as such, agreed deadlines are more likely to be met.

### Decision Making

The culture in India is very relationship and group-oriented, so a strong emphasis is placed on maintaining harmony and proper lines of authority in the workplace. Some Indians, however, are extremely direct, in which case you can deal with them in the same way.

The manager makes decisions and accepts responsibility for work performed by subordinates. The middle manager may consult with subordinates before reaching a decision, although it is more likely that he will confer with trusted advisors or relatives.

To ensure successful cross cultural management, you will need to bear in mind the importance of people in the office maintaining the proper behavior relative to their position. For instance, it would be inappropriate for a manager to make copies or move a piece of furniture because these are tasks that lower level people do. To engage in behavior beneath you would lower your esteem in the office.

### **Boss or Team Player?**

If you are working in India, it is important to remember that honor and reputation play an important role. The risk becomes amplified in a team or

collaborative setting. When meeting together and moderating ideas, intercultural sensitivity is necessary. It is important to qualify ideas that are raised in a gentle manner, protecting the reputation of those bringing up ideas, so no one is shamed.

### Communication and Negotiation Styles

Cross cultural management will be more effective if you understand the importance of personal relationships. They are crucial to conducting business and are based on respect and trust. It takes time to develop a comfortable working relationship and you will need patience and perseverance.

Indians are non-confrontational. It is rare for them to overtly disagree, although this is beginning to change in the managerial ranks. Decisions are reached by the person with the most authority but reaching that decision can be a slow process. Never appear over legalistic in negotiations; in general Indians do not trust the legal system and someone's word is sufficient to reach an agreement. Successful negotiations may be celebrated over a meal.