

# Culture and communication



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# Culture and communication



Cultural issues are the main base of economic failures in cooperation

Cultural differences play a significant role in the following problems:



Delayed rollout

Unrealized or smaller than expected cost savings

Too much time managing the relationship

Production delays

Missed deadlines

Work that has to be redone

Quality issues

# Culture and communication



INDIA: Why we are as we are!

No institution in India is more important than the family!

The emphasis on self-regulation of emotion, empathy, and avoiding hurting other's feelings requires the development of a style that places more value on

indirect, hypothetical, and metaphorical communication....

This is the opposite of behaviour in Europe (here: Germany, Sweden!)

# Leadership: India vs. Western Europe

Most Indians grew / grow up in an extended family (network of uncles, aunties, grandparents, cousins, brothers, sisters ...)

Members learn out of necessity how to please and get along with all manner of people.

Young Indians (after age 6) are expected to listen to, obey, wait upon, and generally defer to anyone who is older.

Therefore: Indians learn how to adjust their behaviour according to the status of the person they are dealing with.

## EUROPE

Small families, 3 or 4 members. No need for waiting, to be patient, to adjust.

# Leadership: India vs. Western Europe

The hierarchical framework is so pervasive, that the Indian child internalizes it and tends to develop a relative superiority to some and subordination to others.

You must protect and take care of those who are inferior to you and maintain deference and respectful compliance with your superiors. (daughter-in-law/mother-in-law!)

Indians learn early in life to be patient, to wait their turn.

The family endows a great sense of security and group identity, but less initiative or individuality.

(Of course the younger generation is changing the values)

# Leadership: India vs. Western Europe

## INDIA

Because harmony holds the group together, preserving harmony becomes the overriding concern in many Indian social and workplace interactions.

Code of conduct: Be humble, deferring to seniors, avoid public disagreements and all kinds of confrontation, never cause offense, never embarrass anyone in front of the group.

**SAVE FACE!**

# Leadership: India vs. Western Europe

What is face?

Face is what makes it possible for people to keep their honor and dignity, what preserves self-respect.

What makes me or someone else loose face?

Correcting what someone else (a senior) said

Giving negative feedback

Saying something is not possible

Not being able to answer a question one should know

Admitting one does not or did not understand something

Criticizing someone else who is present

...

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An European asks an Indian what he thinks about Europe:

**Mainly positive features will be named!**

An Indian asks an European what he thinks about India

**Mainly negative features will be named!**

Not because India really is negative in Western eyes. But because they name the negative things, too, and like to discuss problems and their solution more than just saying something nice for the sake of it.



# Leadership: India vs. Western Europe

## INDIA

Because harmony has to be preserved in communication, this might be more important than exchange of information!

So while certain things cannot be said, it doesn't mean they can not be communicated.

**So what is **not** said is extremely important!**

Difficult messages are expressed in two ways:

1. by what is not said and
2. by what is not quite said...

## Leadership: India vs. Western Europe

So if we want to communicate, and want to say „NO“ in a way a Westerner would understand, we have to be more direct.

Direct not in the Indian way, but in the Western way.

This is not direct to an Indian, but blunt, unpolite, rude!

# Culture and communication



Europeens don't have a problem saying NO!

Indians don't have a problem saying YES!

# Leadership: India vs. Western Europe

## Management in India (1)

Indian teams do not consist of equals, but of unequals!

The hierarchical nature of Indian society demands that there is a boss and that the boss should be seen as the boss.

# Leadership: India vs. Western Europe

## Management in India (2)

The surest way to win favour is never to offend or disagree with those above you.

The superior gives in terms of affection, nurturance, blessing,  
and the subordinate in terms of loyalty, submissiveness, and obedience...



# Culture and communication



India

Europe

Indirect communication

Direct communication

Face saving

Time saving

Polite

Efficient

No problem to say YES

No problem to say NO

Focus on person

Focus on project

Chalta hai!

100%!

# Culture and communication



Let's summarize:

Westerners expect Indians to be more direct, outspoken, critical, effective... because in their mind this leads to more quality, better work, better outcome.

Indians tend to be more indirect, polite, saying Yes, saving face....because in their mind this is the way it should be and you shouldn't sacrifice face and politeness and harmony for the last % of quality.

What can we do?