

# Cross Cultural Management

When you work in an international team, the obvious challenge is the language. Then of course the task at hand. And during these task oriented activities, cultural differences emerge: use of agendas, straight forward work process or going in loops, use of time, planning horizons, discussion habits. You need to involve higher levels of management? Now that requires local knowledge!

Cultural challenges always emerge together with business challenges. Focusing on the business requires paying attention to culture. Sometimes culture differences are obvious, like communication styles, sometimes it is difficult to trace a business problem back to its cultural roots, e.g. thinking styles. We have seen 'culture differences' being used to explain all sorts of problems in international teams. Thus culture can even become the scapegoat.

When we work with international challenges, for instance in a project team, we apply a systematic approach focusing on the business tasks and addressing cultural themes only as re-quired to solve the business issue:

1. Exploring the topic: what outcome is desired, expected
2. Identifying the challenge: what is required to solve the issue, from a business perspective
3. Facilitating a problem solving approach, bringing together stakeholders
4. Live exploration of cultural issues as they emerge in the current work process, becoming aware of their impact in the project
5. Introducing cultural know-how to facilitate communication, taking decisions or making organisational procedures compatible
6. Going back to the task level with increased awareness and know-how of cultural implications.
7. Solving the business issue

