

## Case Study: Success story of a joint venture



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<b>Brief description</b>	Interview addressing success factors of a successful joint venture
<b>Goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss aspects of intercultural competence</li><li>• Identify and evaluate what has been learned</li></ul>
<b>Time</b>	Approx. 45-60 min.
<b>Method</b>	Culturally unspecific; Distributive/instructive
<b>Material</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Case study</li><li>• Worksheet (competence cards)</li></ul>
<b>Implementation</b>	The participants read the case study and discuss which aspects of intercultural competence they find in the example and how they were used. Afterwards, the results are summarised in the plenary.
<b>Notes</b>	n/a
<b>Source</b>	Annika Schmidt/Andrea Voigt



### Task

#### Success story of a joint venture

Read the following interview with the HR manager of a global player about a successful joint venture and discuss which aspects of intercultural competence you find in the example and how they are used in concrete terms. Use the following competence cards as a guide.

#### The interview

Looking back, how would you describe your approach?

*My approach was mainly to appreciate what had been done in the past and also to show them the benefits of adopting our approach. The openly - sometimes even loudly - asked question "What's in it for me?" was heard all the time, so it was important to listen to the managers and meet their needs. And that was the balance we had to find, as the head office only expected the company's objectives to be met. I had to find out very quickly what could be quick, visible successes. What is a good place to start so that the HR department, management and employees of the company see the added value of the takeover? The training, which was deliberately organised with mixed teams from both companies, proved very useful in building networks and creating a common understanding of the different situations.*

How did the staff feel about the changes that were going on with the joint venture?

*The good news was that the offerings for staff development and talent management were generally welcomed with open arms. There was a lot of interest in these topics, both from employees and their managers, but for many reasons there were different expectations in some cases. And the big question was how our portfolio of offerings would fit local conditions and culture. In addition, it was not clear how the training content that had proven successful in the group would really help the company*

To what extent do you see communication as a success factor?

*The language was definitely a challenge. Yes, the corporate language in the group is English, but often nuances were crucial when it came to certain expressions, especially when the takeover led to a sensitive or emotional situation. I learned how important it is to always show the big picture and the "why". And especially when we met resistance not only to communicate, but rather to over-communicate, to repeat messages consistently. Telling the "ugly truth" and being very transparent was almost always better and more respected than saying nothing or just telling bits and pieces. Our communications team also did a great job from the beginning, communicating very transparently across both companies. There were regular news and updates on the progress of the merger.*

How did you go about it? What did you place particular emphasis on?



*The most important thing was not to act as the "law enforcers" from headquarters. It was important to show that we were also willing to learn. Even if we were sceptical, we sometimes chose to do it their way first or at least be open about it. We were then able to adapt instead of simply imposing what we were told by the centre. And the willingness to learn from their past and present as well earned us great respect and appreciation and made our lives much easier. Recognising achievements and celebrating even small successes along the way are other important points. Not always having a template for everything, following guidelines on the principle of "this is how it is done in our country", analysing statistics and KPIs, but observing, appreciating and being open and curious, learning from their past successes.*

What advice would you give to colleagues who are in similar processes?







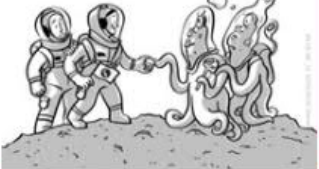














*They should be aware that adapting to the communication practices of the partner company is important for developing positive working relationships. And there is another aspect to consider in cultural adaptation: many behaviours that seem easy to change are deeply rooted in company history and experience, so expecting people to adopt behaviours that contradict their traditions and values is very problematic. The most important aspects to look out for are communication style and conflict behaviour - how colleagues treat each other, how they deal with differences and how they share information.*

Source: Adapted by Annika Schmidt and based on Matthias Kempf and Peter Franklin (2016). Adidas and Reebok: What Expatriate Managers Need to Manage M&A Across Cultures. In: Barmeyer, Christoph and Peter Franklin (eds.) Intercultural Management: A Case-Based Approach to Achieving Complementary and Synergy. London: Palgrave; pp.148-166



Task

Competence cards

 <p><b>Openness</b></p> <p> New Thinking </p> <p> Welcoming attitude </p> <p> Acceptance </p>	 <p><b>Communication</b></p> <p> Ensuring co-construction of meaning </p> <p> Exposing positive Intentions </p> <p> Being receptive to communication styles </p>	 <p><b>Culture-reflexive knowledge</b></p> <p> Awareness of global positioning </p> <p> Reflecting perspectives </p> <p> Sensitivity to Context </p>
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