

Coaching culturally different members of international business teams - the role of cultural intelligence

Article

Updated Version

Couch, S. and Rose, S. (2020) Coaching culturally different members of international business teams - the role of cultural intelligence. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 15 (1). pp. 59-80. ISSN 1750-2764 Available at <http://centaur.reading.ac.uk/93127/>

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See [Guidance on citing](#).

Published version at: <https://shop.bps.org.uk/international-coaching-psychology-review-vol-15-no-1-spring-2020>

Publisher: The British Psychological Society

All outputs in CentAUR are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including copyright law. Copyright and IPR is retained by the creators or other copyright holders. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the [End User Agreement](#).

www.reading.ac.uk/centaur

CentAUR

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online

TABLE 1

Research Questions

Purposes	RQ 1: What do participants see as the purposes of International Team Coaching?
Attitudes	RQ 2: To what extent, if any, do individual cultural differences influence attitudes towards International Team Coaching?
Practice	RQ3 What skills might international team coaches practice to better serve culturally different clients?
Western Model	RQ4 To what extent is a largely Western model of International Team Coaching appropriate to working with culturally different team-members?

TABLE 2**Sample Profile Characteristics**

Country and Reference Number	Gender	Country of Origin	Age Group	Role Level	Years working in research country	Years with IBC	Other countries worked in for 3 months or more
Czechia 1	Male	Slovakia	Gen X	1	8	8	Slovakia
Czechia 2	Female	Czechia	Gen X	3	Career to date	4	None
Czechia 3	Male	Czechia	Gen X	1	Career to date	14	None
Hong Kong 1	Male	UK	Gen X	1	14	30	UK, Singapore
Hong Kong 2	Male	Malaysia	Gen X	1	Career to date	19	None
Hong Kong 3	Male	Hong Kong	Gen X	1	Career to date	20	None
Hong Kong 4	Female	China	Gen X	1	Career to date	16	China
Kazakhstan 1	Female	Kazakhstan	Gen X	2	11	11	Switzerland
Kazakhstan 2	Female	Kazakhstan	Gen X	3	9	9	Russia
Kazakhstan 3	Female	Kazakhstan	Gen X	3	Career to date	10	USA
Singapore 1	Female	Singapore	BB	2	Career to date	10	None
Singapore 2	Male	UK	Gen X	2	10	18	UK, Russia
Singapore 3	Male	India	Gen X	2	Career to date	17	India
Singapore 4	Female	USA	BB	1	11	24	USA, Indonesia
South Africa 1	Female	South Africa	Gen X	3	10	10	None
South Africa 2	Female	South Africa	Gen X	3	16	16	USA
South Africa 3	Male	South Africa	Gen X	1	16	16	USA
South Africa 4	Male	South Africa	BB	2	35	35	UK, Netherlands
South Africa 5	Male	UK	Gen X	1	18	25	UK
USA 1	Male	USA	Gen X	1	Career to date	28	None

USA 2	Female	USA	BB	1	Career to date	32	None
USA 3	Male	USA	BB	1	Career to date	21	None

Participants per country:

Czechia: 3 (14%); Hong Kong: 4 (18%); Kazakhstan: 3 (14%); Singapore: 4 (18%); South Africa: 5 (22%); United States: 3 (14%).

Key:

Role Level: 1: Business Leader; 2: Senior Executive; 3: Senior Manager.

Age Group: BB: Baby Boomer born in 1964 or before; Gen X: Generation X born in 1965 or later.

IBC: International Business Consultancy.

TABLE 3**Participants' Comments on Team Coaching Experience**

Czechia	Hong Kong	Kazakhstan
Positive views about TC, particularly in more complex teams, for example teams with different age groups.	Few views about the use of TC with suggestions that hierarchical leadership has greater influence. Comments on the high level of attention given to defining individual roles team-roles in teams.	No mention of having worked with a team coach – references to hierarchical leadership approaches and need for certainty provided by a clear leader.
Singapore	South Africa	USA
Communication for teams is typically practiced by working with team-members on an individual basis rather than with the whole team.	Teams operate more for information sharing and are largely hierarchical – incidences of TC are uncommon.	Higher level issues e.g. helping leaders to take a back seat and holding up a mirror to poor team behaviours were raised.

TABLE 4**Participants' Comments on the Domestic Use of Individual Coaching**

Czechia	Hong Kong	Kazakhstan
Market is developing, hampered by a belief that Czech leaders see coaching as remedial rather than as a positive development intervention.	Participants primarily referred to coaching in relation to performance review processes rather than as e.g. a way of facilitating the generation of fresh ideas.	All participants mentioned stronger non-work coaching relationships, that were of much greater value than workplace development support.
Singapore	South Africa	USA
A clear divide between participants who sought coaching for instruction and those who had spent time working in the West and looked for a coach to help create new ideas and perspectives.	Seen more as a tool for on-the-job development and training. Used most frequently in anticipation of significant promotions.	Coaching used widely in the workplace. Each participant had been supported in seeking personal coaches to address their individual coaching needs over an extended time period.

TABLE 5**Participants' Comments on Approach to Working in International Teams**

Czechia	Hong Kong	Kazakhstan
Participants are energised by working with international colleagues, consciously seeking others' ideas, and by understanding different cultural approaches.	Contributions may not be immediate due to fear of losing face, and anticipation that effective decision making may have taken place before the meeting.	Participants seek higher levels of direction and psychological safety to build trust, and expect clear structure and direction from those chairing meetings.
Singapore	South Africa	USA
Participants feel that they work in a cosmopolitan environment and see working cross-culturally as a straightforward extension of working domestically.	Addressing high levels of domestic cultural difference has provided cultural sensitivity when working with others, and heightened sensitivity to the weaknesses of ethnocentricity.	Approach to working with cultural difference likened to working with colleagues in various parts of US. All participants were curious to understand much more than country stereotypes.

TABLE 6**Participants' Comments on Working with an International Team Coach**

Czechia	Hong Kong	Kazakhstan
Valuable role for international team coach in helping all to avoid using country stereotypes and untested assumptions about others	Team leaders consistently expressed frustration with the lack of individual team member contributions and were positive about the potential of coaching to help achieve this.	See role for team coaches in giving attention to tolerance, flexibility and sincerity which were identified as vital elements of building trust.
Singapore	South Africa	USA
Participants would value the ability of team coaches to adapt a team's approach to the specific cultural requirements of individual team-members and the team as a whole.	Support for the potential for TC to enhance cultural interaction and understanding. Value seen for working domestically as well as internationally.	Scope for team coach to address others' fears of imposing a dominant US viewpoint on others, and supporting deepening team-members' relationships and trust.

TABLE 7**Participants Comments on Cultural Perspectives**

Czechia	Hong Kong	Kazakhstan
Legacy of Soviet influence lingers seen, for example, in a tendency to make quick judgments based on limited and unverified information.	Representatives at international meetings may be chosen based on familiarity with Western cultural behaviour, and may not represent all aspects of domestic approach.	Participants said that they find it hard to get to know foreigners who they see as comparatively slow to open up, being more focused on transactional areas.
Singapore	South Africa	USA
There is a reluctance to be openly critical of others, and to receive negative criticism in public. Helping others and using cultural sensitivity are highly valued.	Concern for others captured by 'The rainbow nation is always at the back of your mind.' indicating the value placed on sensitivity towards others.	Americans may be comparatively direct with their colleagues, which they see as helping to meet deadlines, recognising that this can hinder creativity, diversity of thought and open expression.

TABLE 8

Using ICF Competencies to develop Cultural Sensitivity

ICF Core Competency	Insights for developing cultural sensitivity
3: Establishing Trust and Intimacy with the Client	Develop greater awareness of, and comfort with own cultural biases. Share uncertainty and vulnerability. Acknowledge the learning that each team-member is providing to you.
5: Active Listening	Mirror language proficiency of team-members in the pace that you speak. Consider higher risk of language ambiguity – ensure team shares understanding. Focus on how comfortable/uncomfortable team-members are in discussing different matters e.g. emotions in the workplace culturally different team members.
6: Powerful Questioning	Focus on clearly understood questions. What is a culturally powerful question?

	<p>Sensitivity around culturally taboo matters.</p> <p>Sensitivity to potential loss of face.</p>
--	---

TABLE 9

Components of Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

Metacognitive CQ	Acquisition and understanding of cultural knowledge.
Cognitive CQ	General knowledge about culture.
Motivational CQ	Attitude towards learning about cross-cultural situations.
Behavioural CQ	Capability to exhibit appropriate verbal and non-verbal behavior when interacting with people from a different culture.

Word Count: 1,354