

# Intercultural Work at the very Heart of the Business

Mixed Top Management Team within  
German Automotive Industry in Romania

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# Bicultural Consultant Team

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# What could be your benefit?

- n See an real life example for a East–West business development
- n Merging intercultural and organisational work
- n Balancing between business pressure and intercultural ethics
- n Experiences of an East-West Trainer Team

# Starting Points

Problems in the Romanian Plant of a German multinational company:

- Productivity
- Quality
- Rentability / Costs
- Cooperation between departments and hierarchies  
(between RO and D and within RO)

# Overall Original Targets

Solving the problems  
within 3 months!!!

# Who is involved ...

Germans

- n Top Level Leaders

- n Techn. Experts

Romanians

- n Plant Manager

- n Department Leaders

# Process Design

1. Start-up interviews and visits to the plant
2. Development of design
3. Agreement and adjustment with board
4. Multicultural management workshop (national and organisational cultures)
5. Postprocessing of workshop (documentation)
6. Reflexion with board – Future steps

# Statements of Romanian and German Managers

Interaction with cards

# Questions

- n Which of the cards surprised you?
- n If you were a consultant, which one specific topic would you address in the workshop?

# Targets of the Workshop

- n RO-D Leadership-Team Development
- n Intercultural Integration
- n Kick-Off for the Change programme to follow
  
- n Adapt the above to concrete work problems à

# Focus on a Major Topic: „Fehlerkultur“

What do we mean by „Fehlerkultur“?

„The way of communicating and handling mistakes in the organisation“

# Focus on a Major Topic: „Fehlerkultur“

## Why?

- n Links several targets and problems
- n Has reference to intercultural and
- n Organisational and systemic aspects

# Which cultural dimensions may impact the „Fehlerkultur“?

Interaction  
Flipchart

# Possible Cultural Dimensions

- n Communication
  - Direct / indirect
  - Low / high context
- n Avoiding / confronting conflicts
- n Feedback – giving and taking
  - Criticism – giving and taking
  - Problem analysis
- n Hierarchy / leadership style
- n Separation / diffusion of private and work

partly according Schroll-Machl

# Organisational Aspects

- n Trust
  - Fear / Transparency
- n Clarity of targets, roles, work process
- n Common understanding of
  - Quality
  - Leadership team
- n Meaning of mistakes
- n Treating Mistakes
  - Expertise through expats
  - Mistakes analysis tools
- n Learning from mistakes

# How did we address „Fehlerkultur“ à Interactions

- n „Pride and Regret“ – admitting past mistakes
- n Strengths and weaknesses of avoiding / confronting conflict
- n How would a German/Romanian boss, employee, colleague react if you make a mistake?

# How did we address „Fehlerkultur“ à Interactions

- n What should the new „Fehlerkultur“ be like?
- n How can you contribute to spread, what you learned about the new „Fehlerkultur“?
- n Roleplay: Try a realistic case from the plant
- n Large Group Game – to discover systemic change
- n What will we do next week ...

# Visible Results

- n Some surprising common views during the exercises
- n RO/D getting closer continuously
- n Easy with joint task solving, even at narrow body contact
- n All recognized the need for change
- n Transfer workshop results into praxis

# Next steps regarding „Fehlerkultur“ after the workshop

- n Further development of ideas from the workshop (in general)
- n Original working teams from the workshop are continuing the initiated process
- n HR and Board are cooperating well
- n Cascading of „Fehlerkultur“ from top to blue-collar level

What is your experience  
with „Fehlerkultur“  
in  
East-West Teams or  
Cooperation?

# Reflections on Trainer Team

- n Each felt more responsible for her/his side (mama!/papa?)
- n Different need for appreciation of the Romanian pains
- n Different perceptions about customer needs and dealing with it
- n Sales vs. customer care
- n Need for completeness vs. focus / need for efficiency