Transitions Asia: Managing Across Cultures

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Overview

Alfonso Farquhar was employed by a large Multinational Firm as a consultant to conduct a report and transfer a Best Practice approach to the Asian practices within the company.

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Why is Culture so important?

While corporate culture can make an organization successful it can also limit success. As cultural boundaries can prevent organizations from fully tapping their talent by excluding people who are different.

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Taiwan

Ascription
- How status is attributed to individuals in a culture

Farquhar has little ascribed status. He was young, not a top ranking manager and no one extended reflective power to him.
Taiwan

**Particularism**
A focus on the requirements of relationships and obligations

**Communitarianism**
People have a group focus, often have a 'We' mentality
This is seen in Mr Tai and the dedication to his workers and his company. ‘No one has ever been sacked from the Taiwan practice’

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India

Indians accept westernization
- Female guide was British Indian ‘Seen as Westernised’
- Indians wanted to grow and change
- Familiar with marketing concepts and strategies

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- Indians did not want to be embarrassed by the reports
- Taking the report as their own meant that they could act as though they had seen these issues and worked to rectify them before Farquar could tell them to.

- They have a high value on their image and saving face
- Focus more on achievement so they believed Farquar was good at his job and that his report would be of benefit to them
Improving Farquhar's Approach

Issue 1: Ethnocentric

As Farquhar begins to preach & implement his supposed best practices, he diminishes the Taiwanese Practices.

Overcoming this issue

- Improve current practices as well as implementing new processes within the firm
- Involvement, Negotiation & answer questions
- Acknowledgement of previous efforts to encourage new processes.

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Improving Farquhar's Approach

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Issue 2: Ascription vs Achievement
Opposing cultures have different expectations. Mr Tai felt as if Farquhar was abrupt and offensive.

- What would you do differently?
- Approach on both sides to ensure there is balance
  - Introduced by a senior manager: “Mr Sun, Farquhar although he is not a senior manager he has been praised with great results"

- Farquhar could alter his behaviour traits: Respect the status & influence of the Taiwanese even if you suspect they are short of knowledge. Do not show them up