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Windows on the World: An Experiential Exercise

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In Windows on the World, participants explore how national culture differences may affect managerial practices when expanding into another country. In the exercise, a U.S. niche grocery retail chain plans expansion into Brazil and China. The role-play is between a consultant team and a client team that has hired them. The consultant team gives expert advice about which, if any, of the managerial practices in place in the home market might require modification in Brazil or China. Facilitators can suggest "cultural due diligence" as a way to increase the likelihood of successful international business expansion. *Organization Management Journal*, 11: 228–242, 2014. doi: 10.1080/15416518.2014.963834

Cultural adaptation—especially from a management standpoint—is critically important to doing business successfully in today's globalized world. That being said, it is often quite difficult to appreciate the nuances of managing in another country or to be open to the myriad changes that may need to be adopted in order to be successful in a dramatically different environment, culture, or country. Lack of such awareness or failure to effectively execute important cultural adaptation requirements often leads to lower organizational performance, sometimes resulting in major blunders that are costly and challenging to recover from.

Even the giants have made giant missteps in this regard. Disney had enormous issues expanding into Europe, after a very successful launch in Japan. Walmart failed in its expansion into Germany and subsequently withdrew—despite otherwise successful international forays into North and South America. Recently, we learn that Target is experiencing challenges in its aggressive retail store expansion into Canada, which will likely result in multi-billion-dollar losses (Austen, 2014, pp. B1, B7). Perhaps because of their past successes, it is not uncommon for organizations with significant domestic or international scale to become overconfident while entering a new marketplace,

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thereby increasing the likelihood of major execution mistakes.

In the Windows on the World exercise, participants explore how national culture differences may affect managerial practices when expanding into another country. In the exercise, a U.S. niche grocery retail chain plans expansion into Brazil and China. The role-play is between a consultant team and the client team that has hired them. The consultant team gives expert advice about which, if any, of the managerial practices in place in the home market might require modification in Brazil or China. Facilitators can suggest "cultural due diligence" as a way to increase the likelihood of successful international business expansion.

POTENTIAL IMPACT OF CULTURE IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EXPANSION

The concept of culture has been explored at various levels of analysis. But whether it is defined as norms of practices and behavior, that is, "how things are done around here" (Drennan, 1992, p. 1), or at a level underlying practices and behavior—such as "software of the mind" (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 5) or the shared beliefs, values, and basic assumptions approaches of Davis (1984), Schein (1985) and Hunt (1992)—"culture is understood to shape how people think, behave, interact, and communicate" (Trefry & Christian, 2012). Of course, culture is only one of the many factors that influence how people communicate, interact with others, and conduct themselves in a workplace environment. Yet culture has a powerful, if indirect, effect on how well companies do when they seek to grow internationally.

As alluded to earlier, lack of cultural sensitivity and the related ignorance regarding necessary adaptation to the local culture have doomed or severely undermined many companies' dreams for international business growth. In *Blunders in International Business*, Ricks (2006) offers numerous (often humorous) examples of international business blunders, including management blunders resulting from inattention to cultural differences. In the recap of his chapter on management mistakes, Ricks states,

> Obviously, management practices that work domestically do not necessarily work overseas. Different cultures require that companies

take different approaches. Managers need to understand local business procedures, governmental expectations, and labor practices. A minor misunderstanding can easily lead to a major blunder and the wrong person on the job can lead to disaster. (Ricks, 2006, p. 113)

Even success stories in international business often are qualified by the costly (and unnecessary) lessons the organization learned along the way. Simply put, the hugely successful domestic business model does not often "travel" as well as one would hope. Whether through inattention to the cultural challenges ahead, naiveté, or sheer arrogance, management can encounter serious setbacks if "cultural due diligence" is poorly done, or if only lip service is paid to it. Success or failure often depends on how well the organization has considered the degree to which adaptations of its successful home-based business model will be necessary in the new territories targeted for business expansion and is willing to make such adaptations.

As Gupta, Govindarajan, and Wang (2008) suggest in *The Quest For Global Dominance,* "People must cultivate a global mindset. They must view cultural and geographic diversity as opportunities to exploit and must be prepared to adopt successful practices and good ideas wherever they come from" (p. 3). They further suggest that the development of a more global, less parochial, mindset increases the likelihood of a proper "transplantation of the corporate DNA." "One of the most important things the globalizing company must figure out is how to transplant the core elements of its business model, its core practices, and its core beliefs—in short, its DNA—to the new subsidiary" (Gupta et al., 2008, p. 41).

Clearly, before a management team decides to pursue the promise of revenue and profit growth via international expansion, many considerations are in order, including but not limited to selection of product or business to take international, selection of territories to pursue, and mode of entry. And while international business and strategy courses do typically discuss ways to undertake the initial business expansion steps already mentioned, including researching external factors/trends (economic, political, sociocultural, technological, environmental, legal), understanding industry growth prospects, and closely analyzing the competitive landscape, they seldom engage in a "deep dive" into how an understanding of cultural differences may significantly help or hinder international business success. Yet the understanding of cultural risks is paramount. Doing one's "cultural due diligence" and developing a global mindset are often stressed as crucial before embarking on international expansion (Bartlett & Ghosal, 2002; Gupta et al., 2008; Solomon & Schell, 2009). This experiential exercise is intended to help in that regard, as its focus is how "cultural due diligence" can assist an organization in developing a global mindset and thinking about how to best "transplant its corporate DNA" in order to increase the chances for success in its international forays.

Perhaps most importantly, this exercise isolates the management function, apart from the multitude of other functions and external factors that must be examined when contemplating business entry into another country, especially if that country is very culturally dissimilar to that of the home market. The Windows on the World exercise focuses attention on the management function itself, as it seeks to identify the often harder-to-see, harder-to-quantify managerial issues that will arise in successfully fulfilling an international growth strategy. Successful international business expansion often requires some adaptation in terms of how classic management functions (planning, organization, leading, and controlling) are executed in a culture substantially different from that of the home market. To maximize the human resources potential of the new international enterprise, attention must be given to culturally acceptable decision making, communication, delegation, motivation methods, reward systems, and leadership styles. The exercise neither addresses nor prescribes the important role of cultural sensitivity in other non-management realms like marketing, advertising, or negotiation. But we do suggest that the exercise could easily be adapted to address the cultural issues inherent in adapting the marketing mix for global marketing. We share possibilities for other areas of focus besides management practices in the Additional Learning Topics section.

We believe that this experiential exercise offers an opportunity for significant learning through application. The value of integrating cognitive conceptual learning and learning from experience has long been recognized, both in education and in the management development literature (Kolb, 1984; Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2009; Potter, 2009). Proponents of experiential learning have contended that exercises and simulations shift learners from passive to active participants in the learning process (Johnston & Burton, 2009; Potter, 2009) and significantly enhance the overall learning experience and learning outcomes (Blanton & Barbuto, 2005; Salacuse, 2010). Salacuse (2010) explains how role-play simulations confront students with the need to truly understand details and issues that they have previously only studied through reading and scholarly commentary. Likewise, we believe that an experiential role-play like this one can facilitate better comprehension of cultural concepts impacting management practices. Cultural concepts, while fascinating even in a lecture format, become less abstract and more vivid and compelling when participants are required to apply them.

OVERVIEW OF THE EXERCISE PROCESS

In the Windows on the World exercise participants review the business model and product/service approaches that have performed exceptionally well in the home market of a U.S. based specialty grocer—Friendly & Fresh Foods—but that may have to be discarded, slightly modified, or substantially adapted if the company is to perform well in another country and culture. The role-play scenario involves a consulting team (see Appendix A) and the client's management team (see Appendix B). The consulting team has been

hired to identify those salient cultural differences between the home market and the countries targeted for international expansion that might require adaptation, such as leadership styles and approaches, organizational structure and hierarchy, decision making, interpersonal and organizational communication, working through disagreement, motivating employees, delegation, policies/procedures/rules, employee training, and employee recruitment and retention.

The Windows on the World exercise is scheduled so introduction and initial team planning precede research on cultural differences of two cultures. That research is conducted outside of class and before the main exercise activities taking place in a second class session. Then pairs of student teams participate in two role-plays—one as the consulting team and one as the client team. In the first round, consultants offer advice on various management issues to clients who are considering expanding their operations to a given country. In the second round, the teams switch roles, with the client team becoming the consulting team offering advice—on a different country—and the initial consulting team serving as the client team considering expansion. Afterward, debriefing can highlight how cultural differences may affect success in expansion to another culture and how each consultant-client pair approached the assignment. For purposes of illustrating the exercise, the authors use Brazil and China, two of the rapidly emerging BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) economies, although other countries could be substituted.

LEARNING GOALS

The overall goal of this exercise is to involve participants in an engaging experiential activity that dramatically reveals to them the significant influence of national/ethnic culture on successfully launching and doing business in another country, especially a country that may be very culturally different from an organization's current territorial scope of operations. While the focus is on how to adapt culturally appropriate management practices to the new country, the exercise could be adapted to include other functional areas such as marketing, advertising, operations, and finance. The activity and its subsequent debriefing discussions should enable participants to:

- Heighten awareness of cultural differences that are critical to the management function, especially how sensitivity to those issues can contribute to successful international business expansion.
- Explore links between cultural constructs and how they come into play in management, planning, and human resources practices.
- Appreciate the value of doing one's "cultural due diligence" well and prior to business entry into another country.

- Recognize how to be an effective consultant or advisor, especially with regard to dispensing advice about culture or making change management recommendations.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This exercise was designed for an interdisciplinary master's in business administration (MBA) course; earlier versions of it have been used in a cross-cultural MBA course. The interdisciplinary MBA course focuses on identifying international expansion opportunities for "student-envisioned" products/services that a multinational company would decide to offer outside of its domestic market by virtue of making a substantial investment in establishing a business presence in another country (culture). The exercise would have applicability to any course within which culture or global management is a significant topic: organizational behavior, strategy, international business, human resource management, or general management courses. It could even be expanded upon to work as a large component of a capstone course dealing with international business expansion. Though we have used the full exercise only with MBA students, it could also work with upper-level undergraduate students, and we have had success in using elements of the exercise as part of an undergraduate capstone course final project.

TIME REQUIRED

Time ranges for various stages of the exercise are provided in the following. The period of time required in class for the exercise, including debriefing, could range from 90 minutes to 152 minutes. This range excludes the participant preparatory time required outside the classroom, estimated at between 2 and 3 hours, but subject to the facilitator's discretion. The estimates also exclude time for lecture. Depending on class time available, the in-class portions of the exercise might span two sessions.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

The exercise can work with as few as six participants but can also accommodate a large group as participants are divided into paired teams (consultant team and client team comprise a paired team). The recommendation is to have at least three and no more than five participants/students assigned to each team.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ROOM SETUP

It is helpful if writing pads and pens/pencils are provided to the teams for note-taking. For each consultant–client paired team, the ideal room configuration is two rectangular tables and the right number of chairs, arranged so that the consultant team (three to five participants) are seated and are directly facing the client team (three to five participants). Some instructors may ask the consultants to prepare a professional PowerPoint presentation instead; in that case, the room would need to be configured

with the appropriate computer/projector setup and remote presentation clicker, and additional time would need to be allotted to prepare the presentation.

PREPARATION NEEDED BEFORE CLASS BY PARTICIPANTS

No preparation is necessary in advance of the first of two class sessions during which the exercise will be run. Between the two class sessions, however, participants need time (at least several hours) to read two journal articles, access several websites, and research cultural information on their two assigned countries. The facilitator may choose, however, to assign some of the reading prior to the first class session.

PREPARATION NEEDED BY THE FACILITATOR

The facilitator should reproduce the materials needed, ensure that participants either have copies of the journal articles or can access them electronically, arrange for the room configuration, and prepare appropriate comments to highlight the concepts that the facilitator wants to emphasize during the exercise debriefing discussions.

STRUCTURE OF THE EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE

The plan described next usually is executed over a two-class period so that sufficient time can be devoted to the research required between the two class sessions.

Stage 1—Introduction to Exercise (Suggested Time: 10–12 Minutes)

The facilitator gives an overview of the exercise and explains that all participants will experience two roles—consultant and client—and that they will receive separate instructions for each role (Appendices A and B). The facilitator also offers guidance on how the teams should prepare and explains how the experience can be most valuable. Thus, the facilitator:

- Highlights briefly overall and specific goals of the exercise, such as developing awareness of cultural differences that may have an impact on a company's expansion into another country or exploring management implications of cross-cultural constructs at a practical applications level.
- Explains that although expanding operations into another country would obviously require "cultural due diligence" and research on numerous different issues, for purposes of this exercise, teams will focus on implications of the cultural differences identified for management practice. The facilitator indicates that participants will receive some questions (Appendix C) that will help them think about potential management implications.

- Identifies specific cross-cultural frameworks or cross-cultural constructs the facilitator wants students to explore and not to neglect. For example, the facilitator may want teams to develop their consulting advice based solely on insight from various cross-cultural frameworks, such as the GLOBE study (Grove & Grovewell, n.d; House, Hanges, Javidan & Dorfman, 2004; Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque & House, 2006) or from the most recent (2010) Hofstede dimensions and country scores (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Or, the facilitator may prefer that particular cultural constructs be researched, such as low/high context communication (Dodd, 1998; Hall & Hall, 1995); face (Graham & Lam, 2003); different norms for eye contact (Beamer & Varner, 2008; Solomon & Schell, 2009); or *guanxi*—personal network/relationships (Graham & Lam, 2003; Javidan et al., 2006).
- Instructs consulting teams to offer their advice in terms that the clients will understand, as most managers will not be familiar with the concepts or frameworks known by the consultants.
- Stresses the value added for everyone when the team roles are taken seriously.

During this introductory stage, teams choose—or are assigned—a country on which they will offer advice. At that time, they are given Appendices A, B, and C. Appendix A includes a description of current norms at Friendly & Fresh Foods, lists some management issues the consulting team will want to cover, and provides tips on research. Teams then choose or are assigned a second country on which they also should do some basic research. Information on this second country will be helpful when team members are playing the roles of clients. They will thus be able to question the consulting team more readily and challenge recommendations made by the consulting team if the consultants' recommendations do not seem relevant. Instructions for the team playing the role of clients are found in Appendix B. Appendix C contains questions to help both consultant and client teams as they explore management implications of cultural differences.

Stage 2—Team Planning (Suggested Time: 10–15 Minutes)

Teams meet in class to plan how they will conduct their research. For example, they may decide that all team members should research all topics, or they may decide to assign different cultural frameworks or concepts to different team members. They also may decide that everyone should prepare preliminary ideas on the various issues in their team instructions (i.e., in Appendix A and the questions in Appendix C), or they may divide up those issues among team members in preparation for talking altogether in Stage 4.

Stage 3—Research and Recommendation Planning (Suggested Time: Students Conduct Their Research and Planning Outside of Class)

Participants individually or in teams research information on their two assigned countries and then prepare recommendations for their clients. This research and planning is usually done outside of class, as it may take a few hours. Recommendations are based on what they have learned about the country during their research and the instructions given in Appendix A. Team members should also briefly discuss how they want to handle their roles as client managers (instructions in Appendix B). Appendix C offers useful questions that can help facilitate exploration of potential management implications of cultural differences identified between their home country and the targeted expansion country.

Facilitators may choose to have participants research their two cultures in a class setting if they want to provide more guidance, although this option would require significantly more class time. Participants would also then need to have computers and have already read any assigned articles.

Stage 4—Teams Prepare Their Final Recommendations (Suggested Time: 5–10 Minutes)

Teams generally benefit from some brief time in class to finalize their thoughts and approach. The facilitator also has time to check in with each team and answer any questions. The facilitator may decide, however, to skip this stage in class, telling teams that they must be ready to present when they come to class.

Stage 5—First Consulting Session (Suggested Time: 20–30 Minutes)

Two teams meet together, with odd-numbered teams (i.e., 1, 3, etc.) role-playing consultants giving their advice and even-numbered teams (i.e., 2, 4, etc.) role-playing the consultant team's clients.

Stage 6—Second Consulting Session (Suggested Time: 20–30 Minutes)

Teams reverse roles, with even-numbered teams giving their advice as consultants and odd-numbered teams role-playing the clients. Another option is to have teams rotate tables so that they are playing their second role with a new team. Utilizing that option requires care on the part of the facilitator to have teams rotate in such a way that the new client team has basic knowledge on the country culture to be explored by the new consulting team.

In most classroom settings, it is likely that there would be a need for multiple paired teams (one consultant team/one client team). In that case, the facilitator has the choice of having all the paired teams work through Stages 5 and 6 on a simultaneous basis, or having one set of paired teams engaged in the role-plays while the other paired teams become the audience. Certainly, listening to others' recommendations for managerial practice in a different country can be instructive and provide a catalyst for discussion during the debriefing stage. If, however, the participants have to repeatedly listen to advice on the same countries, the experience may become too repetitive. The facilitator will thus need to weigh the trade-offs—allocating more class time to allow pairs of teams to consult/receive advice sequentially with the possible advantage of them gaining insight by exposure to alternative approaches other than their own. The sequential approach, of course, introduces the risk of diminishing returns if the advice becomes repetitive. Or, the facilitator can allocate less class time to allow pairs of teams to consult/receive advice simultaneously, with the disadvantage that multiple perspectives may be sacrificed and the instructor will not hear everything being said. If the choice is to conserve time and have the pairs of teams role-play simultaneously, the facilitator may want to have two student observers for each role-play. If so, some time would need to be reserved for these observers to report.

Stage 7—Team Debriefing Session (Suggested Time: 5–15 Minutes)

Each team discusses its experiences, both as a consulting team and as a client team, using questions in Appendix D.

Stage 8—Total Group Debriefing (Suggested Time: 20–40 Minutes)

The facilitator leads the session with all participants, adapting as appropriate given the facilitator's particular goals and impressions gained by observing the teams in action and during their debriefings. Note, however, that in the case of having multiple pairs of teams role-playing simultaneously, a single facilitator cannot have heard all the advice offered by every team.

EXERCISE DEBRIEFING

Facilitators should conduct debriefing in a manner that supports learning goals presented or different learning goals deemed appropriate by the facilitator. The discussions can highlight multiple issues as relevant for a particular course and also will depend on how the exercise progresses in a given class setting. Various teams may experience different outcomes. Discussion of why significant differences may have occurred can offer opportunity for additional participant learning.

Suggested Debriefing Questions/Issues

Facilitators may want to first touch on some of the debriefing questions discussed by teams in Stage 7, determining which questions/issues to use based on insight gained as facilitators

listened in briefly on the team debriefing sessions. Other suggested questions could include:

Questions About the Experience
- How would you describe the experience of taking information learned during your team's research on your proposed expansion country and then developing advice on managerial practices there? How did your team develop your recommendations?
- Even when we understand the basic ideas of cultural constructs, it is sometimes difficult to "translate" those into specific behavioral practices. How difficult did you find developing specific recommendations? How confident did you feel about your recommendations?
- What did you learn about being an effective consultant? Did you feel there were things you should have said (or said differently) that would have captured the clients' attention more effectively?
- How difficult was it for you as clients to hear the consultants' advice? Were there times when you thought they were off track or you did not agree with what they were saying? If so, what did you do?

Questions/Discussions to Gain Cross-Cultural Insights
- Let's have each team share an example of a cultural dimension in which you learned that the United States and your targeted country are significantly different. Explain the dimension, what it means, and how the two countries differ. Then share how you developed conclusions on implications for management practice in your targeted country. What adaptations in approach, if any, did you conclude might be appropriate?
- This exercise can provide a good opportunity for participants to become familiar with some major cross-cultural constructs and frameworks and to use information from those to identify implications for management practice. In addition to the examples given by students, the facilitator may choose one or more to discuss. For example:
  - *Hofstede cultural dimensions* —The website for the Hofstede Centre provides an easy way to compare the U.S. culture and another culture (and even several cultures) on the first five Hofstede dimensions (http://geert-hofstede.com/geert-hofstede.html). The site also explains the sixth dimension, Indulgence versus Restraint, added in the 2010 edition of *Cultures and Organizations, Software of the Mind,* 3rd edition. In addition, the site explains what scores mean for a given country. The country scores obtained and the explanations provided highlight the significant differences between China and the United States and between Brazil and the United States on several major dimensions.
    - China and the United States—(a) individualism/collectivism dimension (China is collectivist and the United States individualist); (b) long-term orientation (China's orientation is long term and the United States' orientation is short term); and (c) power distance (China has a significantly higher power distance orientation than does the United States).
    - Brazil and the United States—individualism/collectivism (Brazil is more collectivist compared to the United States' strong individualist orientation); Brazil also exhibits a higher power distance orientation compared to the United States.
  - *The GLOBE study* —House, Hanges, Javidan, and Dorfman (2004) describe in detail the results of the GLOBE study of 62 societies, while Grove and Grovewell offer a brief introduction to the study and selected major findings (http://www.grovewell.com/pub-GLOBE-intro.html). The Javidan, Dorfman, deLuque, and House (2006) article, although long, is undoubtedly more manageable reading for students. It explains the GLOBE dimensions, discusses leadership differences, and then provides detailed information on management implications for U.S. managers working in Brazil, China, Egypt, and France. For instance, the article points out that Brazilians expect people to treat them according to their social and organizational levels and that the typically informal interaction style of American managers with subordinates may be seen as inappropriate (Javidan et al., 2006, p. 76). The expectations stem from difference in the power distance dimension.
  - *High/low context communication*—or direct/indirect communication. This concept, explained by Hall and Hall (1995) and Beamer and Varner (2008), is crucial for managers to understand whenever there are significant differences between the cultures involved. In high-context (indirect) cultures such as China and Brazil, people prefer more subtle, nuanced, and indirect communication than is often the norm in the United States, considered to be a low-context/direct-communication culture. The direct approach favored by Americans may be seen by people in high-context cultures as too aggressive and likely to lead to loss of face.
  - *Seven dimensions of culture*—This model was developed by Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner (2012). Two of their dimensions—*universalism versus particularism* and *achievement versus ascription*—may be interesting to explore in the Windows on the World exercise. In countries like Brazil and China, there will be a greater tendency than in the United States to be open to the "gray"

(the particularist viewpoint) of a given situation where one's non-compliance to the rules and norms is less strictly judged. This is especially true if the consequences of the infraction are moderate or if there is an established relationship (e.g., family, friend, coworker, boss) with the individual whose behavior has deviated from the conventional norm. The *achievement versus ascription* construct dimension should be evident in United States to Brazil and China comparisons. In both Brazil and China, compared to the United States, meritocracy (recent achievements) tends to mean far less than ascribed status, including status granted by one's birth, gender, age, education, and personal relationships or "network."

The facilitator can help participants work through implications of these general orientations. As must always be the case with cultural comparisons, however, the facilitator can remind participants about the nature of country "scores," that they are averages, and that not all people within a given culture reflect the average. As Hofstede stresses on his website, "Country scores on the dimensions are relative—societies are compared to other societies. Without making a comparison a country score is meaningless" (http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture).

Indeed, the facilitator may want to initiate a brief discussion about the use of cross-cultural framework scores for countries and other generalizations found in numerous cross-cultural resources. We cannot assume that generalizations apply to all people in a given culture. They do, however, describe characteristics of many people in a culture and can serve as a starting place before we get to know people individually. It's particularly important to avoid offending people when exploring business opportunities in another culture.

Information About Specific Management Issues

Consulting teams will be offering recommendations on various management issues to their clients. The points in the following may be useful in some of those discussions. Once again, the facilitator should stress that generalizations need to be approached with care as there are wide ranges of expectations/behavior/approaches in any culture. The information here has been drawn from only five sources, but the possibilities of finding additional relevant information are limitless.

- Communication.
  - Brazil—high context; speak profusely; write in elaborate style (http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html).
  - China—high context; convey and interpret meaning through context; subtlety in expression valued; emotions not generally displayed (Javidan et al., 2006).

- Relationships more important than in United States.
  - Brazil—take time to build relationships before doing business; treat employees and their families as extended family and spend time together; people in same in-group expect preferential treatment (Javidan et al., 2006); importance of face—and thus the norm to never criticize or embarrass (www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/country-profiles.html).
  - China—relationships must be built before business is conducted; personal relationships and organizational relationships (*guanxi*) are critical; intermediaries or agents are often used to begin business relationships; group harmony is essential and not to be disturbed; importance of face—never losing one's own face or causing others to lose face (Javidan et al., 2006).

- Leadership preferences.
  - Brazil—leader must somehow make group feel involved but group does not expect to make decisions; leader is not dictatorial; formal relationship between leader and employees; both leader and employees respect the importance of position and status; leader uses symbols of status; leader helps to avoid conflict within group to protect harmony; employees prefer leaders to take cautious approach (Javidan et al., 2006).
  - China—leader expected to be polite, considerate, and dignified; leader as paternal figure who is benevolent and supportive of employees; leader considers and includes family members and takes care of them; must have ability to build and strengthen *guanxi* through personal ties and relationships—with individuals and groups; strives for performance improvement; indirect communication approach using metaphors and stories to communicate points; must demonstrate confidence but in nonaggressive way (Javidan et al., 2006).

- Hierarchy.
  - Brazil—hierarchy to be respected; difference in power and status acceptable; boss assumes ultimate responsibility; strong class system in society, with little interaction between classes; status symbols reflect social position (http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html); eye contact with superiors generally indirect to demonstrate proper respect (Solomon & Schell, 2009).
  - China—hierarchy important; relationships ordered by status; leader tends to be authoritative, expecting obedience (Javidan et al., 2006); considered disrespectful to stare into the eyes of a person senior in rank because of status or age (Solomon & Schell, 2009).

- Decision making.
  - Brazil—employee views are considered but leader makes decision; employees often hesitant to give their ideas (Javidan et al., 2006).
  - China—comfortable with ambiguity; pragmatic (http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html); leaders often make autonomous decisions (Javidan et al., 2006).
- Policies/procedures/rules.
  - Brazil—rules, procedures, and bureaucracy help structure life; however, rules and procedures often are not followed (http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html).
  - China—adherence to laws and rules flexible to suit particular situation; adaptable and entrepreneurial (http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html).
- Motivation.
  - Brazil—employees may not identify with company visions; more motivated by individual and team interests; good to have reward system based on both individual and team performance; base strategy on short-term milestones (Javidan et al., 2006).
  - China—exciting vision can be effective; high performance orientation (Javidan et al., 2006); success oriented and driven; leisure time not as important (http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html).
- Recruitment and promotion.
  - Brazil—older and more powerful members of extended family expected to help younger ones to be hired (http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html); nepotism considered positive—reflects importance of hiring people one knows and trusts (www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/country-profiles.html).
  - China—in-groups and extended family considerations affect hiring and promotion (Javidan et al., 2006).
- Training.
  - Brazil—may prefer more didactic techniques (expert, trainer-centered, low risk) rather than experiential techniques; trainers must be sensitive to participant comfort levels to lessen potential resistance and withdrawal; participants may be uncomfortable when higher-power managers are around (Francis, 2001).
  - China—success and performance oriented although more used to didactic learning approaches; tie training to success; comfortable with ambiguity (Francis, 2001).

A Good Final Debriefing Question

As a consultant, how would you respond to a client who says, "Management is management. It's the same everywhere, no matter whom you are managing and no matter what they do in the company."

ADDITIONAL LEARNING TOPICS

- *Shift the emphasis from culture's role on managerial practice to culture's role on marketing.* Profound advertising and marketing implications need to be addressed when trying to position a new product/service in a different country. In fact, some of the more widely known international business fiascos center on marketing mistakes where "cultural due diligence" was either ignored or seriously misinterpreted. In the Friendly & Fresh Foods scenario, one fairly important variable would be whether customer service is valued highly or not. Clearly, other marketing/advertising variables such as branding (logos, symbols, brand names), product line appeal, advertising strategies, advertising outlets, distribution, grocery shopping behavior (frequency, price sensitivity, receptivity to promotional gimmicks), hours of operation, and location would be important to gauge on a country-specific basis to determine whether culturally appropriate change in the marketing mix can be cost justified. Keegan and Green (2011) emphasize this point well: "In some instances, strategies and marketing programs will have to be adapted; however, marketers should also take advantage of shared cultural characteristics and avoid unneeded and costly adaptations of the marketing mix" (p. 107). De Mooij and Hofstede (2011) offer a review of research on cross-cultural consumer behavior, which could serve as an interesting starting point for students.
- *Substitute another industry or other companies instead of the specialty grocery retailing industry and its players.* The facilitator should freely use another industry and other industry players—real or fictionally depicted—to suit their own preferences. The fast food industry, specialty retailers, and restaurant chains would work equally as well as the specialty grocery industry used in this exercise.
- *Substitute other countries.* The home market need not be the United States, and the international expansion countries need not be Brazil and China. For example, the authors use the exercise in an MBA course and give student teams the choice of exploring expansion to any BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India or China) or MIST (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, or Turkey) country. Contrast between a home market country and targeted expansion country is helpful to maintain, however, in

order to drive home the point that cultural sensitivity plays a huge role in executing a successful global growth strategy.

PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES

Participants (students and facilitators) have indicated in both formal and informal feedback that the learning from this exercise is rich. Not only have our students attested to the exercise's value for the immediate global project they were engaged in, but also some students have mentioned the exercise months later when asked to demonstrate examples of their global learning in the program. Students' comfort level with the experience, on the other hand, seems to vary based on three major factors: (a) how much effort they put into the required research on their assigned cultures (and thus how prepared they were); (b) how confident they are generally in speaking and giving advice to others; and (c) how seriously they take their roles.

Regardless, students do feel some pressure as members of the consultant team, especially if they are not comfortable speaking, even in a smaller group of six to eight students. Moreover, when clients ask questions, the more timid participants may feel uneasy. What helps with such discomfort is the general culture of the class, that is, if people have gotten to know each other fairly well already and if the instructor has previously encouraged sharing of diverse perspectives and disagreeing agreeably with course classmates and the instructor. Also helpful is the fact that participants may not be playing their roles in front of the entire class. The facilitator can, moreover, lessen the pressure by indicating that the exercise is not necessarily about having the "right" advice but rather the value of playing with the concepts and trying to apply them at a practical level.

In the interdisciplinary MBA course for which this exercise was designed, other observations became evident in terms of how the learning goals of the exercise can be best achieved. First, more time dedicated to the exercise seems to help. Second, explicit "take this exercise seriously" instructions given to students by the instructor seem to pay off. Though this was not done intentionally as an assurance of learning evaluation, when we first piloted the exercise, it was administered somewhat differently in two sections of an MBA interdisciplinary course that focuses on identifying international expansion opportunities. In one section, one 3-hour class session was utilized in a lecture/exercise format, supplemented by advance readings and team preparation. In the other section, two 3-hour class sessions were utilized, with the first session being in a lecture/class discussion/exercise planning format, and the second session being dedicated exclusively to the role-play and debriefing. Also in the second section, it was stressed by the instructor that the exercise should be taken very seriously, as it had been designed to assist them in their upcoming global launch team project and would be included as part of their class participation grade. The lessons learned were that (a) the role-play is taken much more seriously and conducted more professionally and (b) the learning is more pronounced when participants have

sufficient time to prepare and understand the importance placed on the exercise by the instructor.

ASSURANCE OF GLOBAL AND CULTURAL LEARNING

While no control versus test group was established to measure the increased achievement of the exercise's four learning objectives when used in an MBA cross-cultural and an MBA multidisciplinary-international course, the authors' experience indicates the exercise helped tremendously by getting students more familiar with cross-cultural concepts, especially the appropriate use of them in projects and case assignments that involved establishing best managerial practices in another country different from their own.

The purpose in developing the exercise was to enhance global learning in a vivid and hands-on manner, not to precisely measure whether and how much learning had indeed occurred. But if documented assurance of global and cultural learning is deemed important given the amount of classroom time required for the exercise, we have developed (and recently used) an assessment/grading rubric (Appendix E), which instructors may use or adapt in trying to measure the value participant teams obtained from the Windows on the World experiential exercise.

Through repeated use of the exercise and the recent introduction of the evaluation rubric (Appendix E), the authors are convinced that the Windows on the World exercise does meet the outlined learning objectives—heightening awareness of how important cultural differences related to the management function are when expanding internationally; providing linkages between cultural constructs and how they affect management, planning, and human resources practices; stressing the importance of doing one's "cultural due diligence" well and before entry into another country; and emphasizing how to be an effective consultant/advisor when dispensing advice about culture or making change management recommendations. We feel this way because:

- When directly asked in debriefing sessions and outside of class, students have generously complimented the exercise as being engaging and a relevant guide for the course assignments that followed. On an unsolicited basis, MBA students—in summarizing their learning in the MBA program—have often identified this exercise as helpful to their overall global learning.
- In having used the exercise with approximately 20 student teams, we have encountered only two teams not taking the assignment seriously—either in how they approached the pre-work required or in how they conducted themselves in the role-play itself.
- Recently, we developed an assessment rubric (Appendix E) and employed it in two sections of the same MBA course. We did so in an attempt to better validate our own impressions that the exercise was effective. In each section, three different faculty

members—two from management/strategy and one from marketing—served as judges for four team presentations. In total, eight teams were thus assessed, all the same evening. With minor exceptions, the eight teams were rated as "meets or exceeds expectations" on all the elements of the rubric, except number 3, where three teams either showed limited use of the cultural constructs or did not use them in a managerially persuasive way. The somewhat surprising result was how well student teams scored on rubric element 5—the team's effectiveness as consultants offering advice on culture. In fact, one team went so far as to develop a client handout as part of its consulting assignment, benchmarking the cultural differences between the United States and Brazil and offering up excellent guidance on where management practices might have to be modified or changed. The requirement of producing a client handout or preparing PowerPoint slides may be something facilitators might want to add to the assignment, especially if they think doing so would enhance the seriousness with which the teams prepare for the exercise. With MBA students, we prefer to let consultant teams decide what materials would be appropriate to assist the role-play. But if the exercise were conducted with undergraduate students, requiring a professional client handout would probably enhance the seriousness students would attach to the assignment.

Another team became so engaged in the exercise that its members argued strenuously to the client team members that they should not risk entering the country assigned. While this was outside the assignment and an unorthodox consulting approach, it did demonstrate how seriously the consulting team was weighing the business risks of Friendly & Fresh Foods entering that particular country.

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APPENDIX A: ROLE INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONSULTANTS GIVING ADVICE

Your team has been hired as consultants to advise owners of a successful U.S. business that does specialty grocery retailing—along the lines of niche grocery chains like Trader Joe's and Whole Foods. The name of the fictitious company is *Friendly & Fresh Foods*. Over the past decade, the company has successfully expanded their operations to different regions of the country, but they have not as yet established operations outside of the U. S. Management is convinced that their business model

is exportable, but they do not want to be blindsided by management practices that may differ substantially from those used at home. They are adamant that they do not want to fail in their initial globalization efforts to extend the *Friendly & Fresh Foods* franchise outside the borders of the United States.

Management has targeted two countries for expansion—Brazil and China. They need consulting advice and information about these two rapidly emerging markets, as they intend to launch operations there next year. The clients need your expertise regarding *best practices* for managing in those countries. Your instructor will let you know which country—Brazil or China—your consulting team is assigned to research. Rest assured that the client already has commissioned a world-renowned advertising agency to guide them regarding advertising and marketing modifications that may be necessary. In addition, *Friendly & Fresh Foods'* Finance and Treasury departments are actively engaged in getting the funding, banking, and tax issues sorted out. Your job is to advise on the management practices that can easily be exported and those that may be a bit more problematic. Given *Friendly & Fresh Foods'* focus on customer service and the large number of employees they need to employ, the client believes their management challenges will be equal to their marketing and financial challenges. Information contained in the table below highlights some of the ways that *Friendly & Fresh Foods* conducts business in the United States. Your job is to determine whether those ways of conducting business will work well in the new country. However, your consultant assignment also should address other cultural considerations that management should be alert to in any of the following areas: leadership styles and approaches, organizational structure and hierarchy, decision making, interpersonal and organizational communication, working through disagreement, motivating employees, delegation, policies/procedures/rules, employee training, and employee recruitment and retention.

The Home Market for *Friendly & Fresh Foods*

Mission	• To be the world's best niche grocery chain, with the utmost respect for our stockholders, employees, customers, and communities.
	• The company is environmentally conscious in terms of not using plastic bags and encouraging use of reusable shopping bags.
Product line	• There's an emphasis on organic and healthy grocery items.
	• Frozen meals/fruits/vegetables are prominently featured.
	• Products typically carry *F&FF* labels, not manufacturer brand names.
Ambience of retail outlets	• Employees are super friendly, knowledgeable, and helpful to customers.
	• There are no self check-out registers.
	• There's a cozy, relaxed atmosphere—even a nostalgic feel to the stores.
	• Employees feel at ease kidding fellow workers, even about mistakes.
HR practices (hiring, training, reward incentives)	• *F&FF* training is extensive with much give and take expected of participants. The focus is encouraging employees to be innovative, open to recommending change, and willing to take risks in moving the organization forward.
	• Only prior work references from non-family members are allowed.
	• Customers are encouraged to use a drop-box to vote for "employee of the month."
	• High school degree is a prerequisite for employment.
	• Referrals of family members strongly discouraged.
Employee requirements and expectations	• All employees must dress alike in Caribbean-style shirts, including the general manager and the stocking crew.
	• Employees must be well groomed.
	• Employees are promoted based on how innovative and assertive they are with respect to new product ideas, enhancements to customer service, and challenging the status quo.
	• Employees are expected to give constructive criticism to their fellow employees and report major violations of policy to management.
Rules and regulations	• There are few rules and regulations besides the ones related to the dress code and making the customers happy.
Decision making	• Every full-time employee expresses his/her ideas for the top three products to feature each week at a weekly meeting.
	• Decisions are made expeditiously and revisited as needed.
Chain of command and communication	• A very flat organization exists at the store level.
	• Communication is informal, including the playful tone of the store flyers.

Research Tips

Read, as part of your research on your assigned countries:

- Hall, E. T., & Hall, M. R. (1995). Key concepts: Understanding structures of culture. In *Understanding Cultural Differences*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Javidan, J., Dorfman, P., de Luque, M., & House, R. (2006). In the eye of the beholder: Cross cultural lessons in leadership from Project GLOBE. *Academy of Management Perspectives, 20*(1), 67–90.

Websites you should visit:

- The Javidan et al. (2006) article just mentioned will give you a good overview of the GLOBE Project framework. You will also want to learn about the Hofstede framework. There are several websites with information but you will, at least, want to look at the Hofstede Centre website for a good explanation, country scores, plus information on what those country scores mean. The URL is http://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html. You can learn about the Seven Dimensions model of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner by visiting http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/seven-dimensions.htm.
- There are numerous websites that offer information on different cultures, among them Cyborlink.com, ExecutivePlanet.com, and Kwintessential. At a minimum, look at the Kwintessential website. The url is www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/country-profiles.html.

Remember, the more you know about the countries, the better advice you can provide as consultants and the better you can, as clients, evaluate the advice you are given.

APPENDIX B: ROLE INSTRUCTIONS FOR CLIENTS RECEIVING ADVICE

Your team is the senior management team of *Friendly & Fresh Foods*. The company has been successful in expanding operations to different parts of the U.S. and you now are planning to establish locations outside the country, with the first ventures being in Brazil and China. You've already commissioned a world-renowned advertising agency to help guide you on advertising and marketing modifications that may be necessary. Moreover, your internal departments are already engaged in getting the funding, banking, tax and legal issues sorted out.

Today you are meeting with the consultants regarding management issues and challenges *Friendly & Fresh Foods* may face as you expand into these countries. The consultants in front of you have a stellar reputation and, indeed, you are paying "big bucks" for their services. Your entire team already has engaged in preliminary research on Brazil and China and thus you believe you have a good feel for those cultures and some

of the challenges you may face. Therefore, you're eager to hear what the consultants have to say. To attain the maximum benefit from the consultants, you know you need to question, demand rationales, and perhaps even challenge their recommendations to ensure sufficient understanding. There's not a reticent person in your team, so you feel fully prepared to get your money's worth and to ask and challenge as necessary.

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONS FOR COMPARING MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

The general questions here will stimulate your thinking about challenges managers may face as they begin to operate in a significantly different culture.

- What will U.S. managers need to know about the preferences and expectations of local employees who will staff operations in your targeted expansion country?
- How might these preferences and expectations differ from those of employees in the United States?
- What implications might such differences have for everyday interaction as well as human resource management?
- What kinds of challenges might expatriate managers from the United States and local managers face in working with each other? What suggestions do you have for approaching such challenges?
- What types of management issues are likely to be difficult, given cultural differences between the two cultures?

Consider each of the following issues and recommend approaches, *given the possible differences between the two cultures.*

Leadership Styles and Approaches
- In what ways might expectations of leaders vary?
- How formal will relationships between managers and employees be?
- Will status and position differences be expected or minimized?
- Will managers and employees socialize outside of the workplace?
- How much freedom will employees want to plan their own work?
- Is it acceptable/desirable for an employee to complain to or disagree with a manager?

Organizational and Task Structure
- Are job or position descriptions common in the expansion country?
- Will employees want and closely adhere to job descriptions?

- Will employees be eager to go beyond their job descriptions when doing so may benefit the organization?
- Will employees follow specified reporting procedures?
- Are employees likely to bypass the organizational hierarchy to accomplish something?
- Will employees want clearly differentiated roles and responsibilities?

Organizational Decision Making and Strategy

- How are important decisions made in the organization?
- Who is involved in decision making—and how?
- Do employees expect to be involved in decisions that affect them?

Communication

- Is communication likely to be through formal channels or informal channels?
- How likely is it that there will be frequent two-way communication between managers and employees?

Motivation and Performance

- How might employees in the two cultures (U.S. and the targeted expansion culture) rank rewards such as good wages, interesting work, job security, feeling of being in on things, opportunity to learn, appreciation for work done, promotion and growth in the organization, good working conditions, personal loyalty to employees, and sympathetic help with personal problems?
- Would job enrichment be appropriate in the expansion location?
- How important would achievement be in the two cultures?
- How might motivational programs appropriate in the U.S. operations need to be modified for use in the other culture?
- What incentive systems would be appropriate in each culture?
- Will it be appropriate to have formal performance review systems or not?
- How much supervision will employees expect or accept?

Dispute Resolution

- Are differences of opinion and disputes considered positive and of value to the organization or negative?
- How tolerant is the culture of conflict?

- Is competition encouraged between individuals and groups?
- What factors will influence successful resolution of conflict within the organization?
- What strategies would be most helpful in resolving conflict? What strategies might be inappropriate?
- Is it acceptable to openly disagree with others or to criticize others?

Ethics

- Are there business behaviors common in one culture that might be considered unethical in the other culture?
- Can common ethical guidelines be established?

APPENDIX D: TEAM DEBRIEFING DISCUSSIONS

You have just completed two consulting rounds, one in which you played the role of consultants giving advice and one in which you played the role of clients receiving the advice. Before all teams meet together for the total group debriefing, take time to reflect with your own team members on the experience.

- How would you describe the experience of taking information learned during your team's research on your proposed expansion country and then developing advice on managerial practices there? How did your team develop your recommendations?
- Each team will share an example of a cultural dimension in which you learned that the United States and your targeted country are significantly different. You'll be asked to explain the dimension, what it means, and how the two countries differ. Then you will share how you developed conclusions on implications for management practice in your targeted country. What adaptations in approach did you conclude might be appropriate?
- Even when we understand the basic ideas of cultural constructs it is sometimes difficult to "translate" those into specific behavioral practices. How difficult did you find developing the recommendations? How confident did you feel about your recommendations?
- What did you learn about being an effective consultant? Did you feel there were things you should have said (or said differently) that would have captured the clients' attention more effectively?
- How difficult was it for you as clients to hear the consultants' advice? Were there times when you thought they were off track or you did not agree with what they said? If so, what did you do?

APPENDIX E: RUBRIC FOR ASSESSING LEARNING OF CONSULTING TEAMS

1. To what degree did the consulting team offer up relevant advice on the cultural challenges and adaptation requirements for successful business expansion of *Friendly & Fresh Foods* into the country they were assigned?				
Needs Improvement	**Meets Expectations**	**Exceeds Expectations**	**Things Done Well**	**Things Done Inadequately or Not Addressed**
Comments			**Comments**	**Comments**

2. How in-depth was the consulting team's "cultural due diligence" of the country they were assigned?				
Needs Improvement	**Meets Expectations**	**Exceeds Expectations**	**Things Done Well**	**Things Done Inadequately or Not Addressed**
Comments			**Comments**	**Comments**

3. To what degree did the consulting team use cultural theories (e.g., Hofstede, The GLOBE Study, communication context, *guanxi*, "face") correctly and express those theories in a managerially useful way to the client management team?				
Needs Improvement	**Meets Expectations**	**Exceeds Expectations**	**Things Done Well**	**Things Done Inadequately or Not Addressed**
Comments			**Comments**	**Comments**

4. To what degree did the consulting team respond to the questions posed to them by the client management team?				
Needs Improvement	**Meets Expectations**	**Exceeds Expectations**	**Things Done Well**	**Things Done Inadequately or Not Addressed**
Comments			**Comments**	**Comments**

5. Assess the team's effectiveness as consultants offering advice on culture?				
Needs Improvement	**Meets Expectations**	**Exceeds Expectations**	**Things Done Well**	**Things Done Inadequately or Not Addressed**
Comments			**Comments**	**Comments**

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