

Case Study Success Story

The IDI and Coaching for Intercultural Sensitivity

USING ASSESSMENT TOOLS FOR CANDIDATE SELECTION

The *Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)* is a theory based, statistically valid cognitive instrument revealing attitudes toward other cultures. The instrument requires sensitivity in its use, and is very powerful in identifying cultural sensitivity and the potential for intercultural competence.

Culture in the Workplace (CWq) is an assessment instrument that measures users' preferred cultural values on five dimensions, as identified by the research of Geert Hofstede, compares them to the statistical averages of selected countries, and illustrates their impact on global business behaviors. Questionnaires are completed online prior to the workshop, and participants receive a 7-page personal profile including strategies for dealing with differences in the business environment.



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Situation

A Fortune 500 company had recently moved an executive from a series of Eastern and Western Europe management assignments to the U.S. Midwest as VP in charge of a production plant. The executive, a multi-lingual Western European from an aristocratic family, had a British university education and an American technical Ph.D. He was married, with children, to an American professional, and had previously worked for the company in the U.S., directing their research center. He had been very successful in his European management positions as well as with direct reports in Asia and South America. However, his return, after 7 years outside the U.S., was to a much-altered corporate climate of political correctness with great sensitivity to the growing diversity of the workforce. Within months, despite his familiarity with American culture, he was experiencing difficulties with management, with staff, and with Human Resources.



Plan of Action

Hoping to be able to retain their employee, HR implemented a several-tiered developmental plan which included a thorough briefing on U.S. diversity issues from a legal perspective and a leadership coaching plan. However, since the executive was European, they invited IOR to propose an intercultural element. In our conversations with HR we introduced the concept of intercultural competence and the use of the *Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)* to measure intercultural sensitivity. We suggested that, despite significant intercultural experience, it is quite possible to misinterpret a new cultural climate, especially if one thinks he or she already understands it. We proposed administering the IDI and using the resulting profile to challenge the executive's sensitivity to the nuances of his new cultural environment. We would then use a cultural values instrument, *Culture in the Workplace (CWq)*, to differentiate discreet elements of the diverse U.S. workforce in order to sensitize the executive and generate strategies together for more effective interactions.

Implementation

IOR organized a series of six two-hour coaching sessions over 6 months, the first two devoted to the debriefing of the IDI and the CWq, respectively, and each of the remaining four focused on the cultural attributes of a significant American minority group, namely women, African-Americans, Latin Americans, and Asian Americans. The executive himself identified his goal as becoming aware of the sensitive edges between the cultures. As predicted, the executive's intercultural sensitivity, as indicated by the IDI score, was considerably lower than he had expected. This surprise brought out a new perspective and an increasing curiosity about cultural differences which made the remaining sessions very productive.

Results

The executive implemented the new interaction strategies with considerable success, which encouraged him to further develop his understanding. The problematic workplace situations began to diminish and soon disappeared, and within 18 months the executive, as the result of an intense competition, was promoted to a considerably higher level of corporate responsibility.