Editorial

Sometimes, HR departments find it hard to convince other operational or functional departments to train their teams on intercultural management subjects. This may happen even though these departments (IT, Finance, Audit, Marketing, R&D…) have already been exposed to international projects involving 5 to 10 different cultures around the world.

This is exactly what happened recently with a major International customer, in its EMEA region. The new regional Information Technology EVP and the IT top management team had been searching for a solution to renew their yearly convention. Indeed feed-back from participants from previous years had generally been mediocre, with a decline over the last 2 years. The only thing participants seemed to like about it was the opportunity to speak with colleagues from other countries outside the official sessions.

The top management decided to rejuvenate the event completely. The HR team was on-board and suggested that, while the seminar had to re-focus on IT strategy and IT major projects, it also needed to address a number of international (mis)communication and management issues. The theme **"Working more effectively in multicultural teams"** soon became obvious.

We, meaning the IT management team, the HR team and Managing Worldwide, managed a significant turn-around: from a boring, top-down, cold, technical seminar, we created "the best convention ever" as quite a few participants put it.

We are happy to share **a precious recipe** with you.

Laurent Lepez, Associate Partner

building **unity** /
through **diversity**

How to turn your 'Department's annual convention' into a major hit?
Weaving an intercultural thread
by Matthew Hill & Dominika Hirsch, Senior Consultants

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1-Logistics and people: some constraints

Managers from all over the Region met for a day and a half, in a time format allowing most of them to fly in the first day and fly back the day after.

1-Logistics and people: some constraints

managing worldwide

❑ 100 IT people from 11 countries in EMEA Region

❑ 1 1/2 day together, from Tuesday 1:00 pm
    to Wednesday 4:30 pm

❑ One single large auditorium, no split rooms

❑ Capacity to sit: 10 tables of 10 people

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2-Past experiences

Everyone in the IT department knew that a few obstacles from the past had to be overcome.

2-Past experience : until 2010

managing worldwide

❑ Convention deemed: "top down lectures only", "boring", "no vision", "nothing new"

❑ Very satisfied + satisfied: 27%

❑ The best thing: "coffee breaks + dinner + night"

❑ Tensions between several countries: us & them syndrome could materialize

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How to turn your annual convention into a major hit?
Weaving an intercultural thread (continued)
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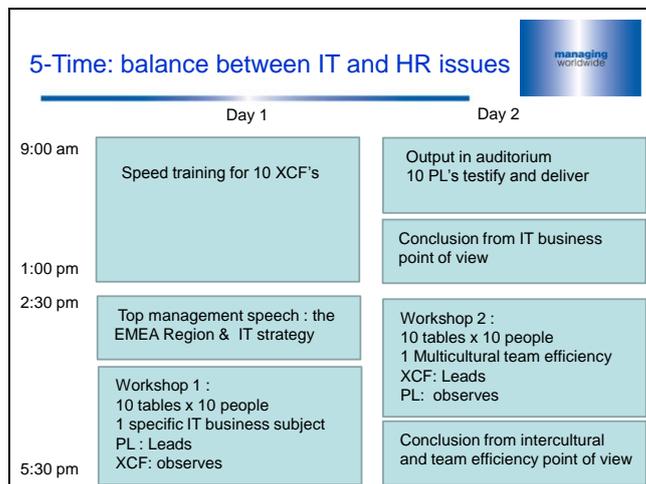### 3-Main thread: working in multicultural teams

While the top management wanted to re-focus on IT strategy and IT major projects, such as what was done 5 or 6 years ago, the Regional HR team insisted that international (mis)communication and management issues should be addressed. The theme "Working more effectively in multicultural teams" soon emerged, with HR adamant that it should not be just one more lecture. This is where we entered the picture, proposing a truly lively and bottom-up experiential learning experiment.

4-a crucial role: the XCF's

The corner stone of this success lay in the identification of 10 carefully targeted operational IT managers who played the role of **XCF's : Cross-Cultural Facilitators.**

4-a crucial role: the XCF's

❑ Why: 10 people fully involved, well trained and future ambassadors

❑ How: speed training 4 hours

❑ When: the half-day before the convention

❑ Role 1st part: observe first the multicultural team at work on IT subjects

❑ Role 2nd part: report to its team and facilitate the 2nd meeting in order to build a consensus about what needs to be improved as a MCT

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5-Time structure: balance between IT and HR

The time structure was thought out so that the intercultural issues could be intimately interwoven with the business subjects that needed to be addressed.

5-Time: balance between IT and HR issues

	Day 1	Day 2
9:00 am	Speed training for 10 XCF's	Output in auditorium 10 PL's testify and deliver
		Conclusion from IT business point of view
1:00 pm		
2:30 pm	Top management speech : the EMEA Region & IT strategy	Workshop 2 : 10 tables x 10 people 1 Multicultural team efficiency XCF: Leads PL: observes
	Workshop 1 : 10 tables x 10 people 1 specific IT business subject PL : Leads XCF: observes	
5:30 pm		Conclusion from intercultural and team efficiency point of view

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6-Outstanding results: facts and figures

It may sound awfully immodest, but outstanding results were achieved. Instant measurement showed results never seen before: Very satisfied + Satisfied: **93%**

The "Intercultural" subject came way above the "IT strategy" and the "major projects" choices, even though these topics were clearly appreciated too. We also heard and could read after the seminar many sentences like "the best convention ever".

My experience: Matthew Hill – London, U.K.

What I particularly appreciated in this convention is how 100 participants could relate instantly to the tools we provided them, based on their past experience working in in multicultural teams.

My experience: Dominika Hirsch – Barcelona, Spain

What I particularly appreciated during the convention is the confidence that the 10 XCF's gained over time. That was truly impressive and was in part due to the support they received from their colleagues, including the project leaders.

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cultures at work