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Intercultural Competence Report

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Introduction

As the newly appointed General Manager at the Multicultural Hotel & Spa in London, this report aims to outline the key differences between England and France, analyze and compare the two countries using the GLOBE Project's culture and leadership study, and critically discuss the challenges of intercultural leadership in the hospitality industry. This analysis will aid in understanding and effectively managing a multicultural team, ensuring smooth operations and maintaining high brand standards.

Key Differences Between England and France

Cultural and Social Norms

In England, cultural norms place a high value on politeness, reserve, and maintaining formality, especially in business settings. This formality is reflected in a high degree of individualism, where personal achievements and individual rights are emphasized. Punctuality is critically important, with a strong adherence to schedules and deadlines. Communication in England tends to be direct, though it remains polite and often understated (Hofstede Insights, 2023; Captio, 2023).

Conversely, French culture also values formality but with a pronounced emphasis on hierarchical structures in both social and professional contexts. French workplaces often exhibit a greater focus on collectivism and centralized decision-making, typically following a top-down approach. While punctuality is important in France, there is a bit more flexibility compared to England. French communication styles are often more nuanced and indirect, utilizing diplomacy and subtlety more frequently than their English counterparts (Hofstede Insights, 2023; French Quarter Magazine, 2023).

These cultural distinctions are crucial for understanding interactions and business practices between the two nations. In France, the formality extends to dress codes and a clear separation between professional and personal lives, whereas in England, there is a stronger tendency to blend social activities with professional

relationships, such as after-work gatherings (Captio, 2023; French Quarter Magazine, 2023).

Customs and Daily Life

In England, the tradition of afternoon tea is a hallmark of social interaction and relaxation, underscoring the importance placed on taking time to unwind and connect with others. This ritual, typically observed in the late afternoon, is an integral part of English culture, reflecting broader societal values of leisure and social etiquette (BBC Good Food, 2021). Work-life balance is another significant aspect of English daily life, with a clear demarcation between professional and personal time. This balance is supported by labor regulations that advocate for reasonable working hours and ample personal time, contributing to overall well-being (ONS, 2022). Additionally, queuing and waiting one’s turn is a deeply ingrained social norm in England, highlighting a cultural emphasis on order, patience, and respect for others (Telegraph, 2019).

In contrast, French culture places a significant emphasis on cuisine and dining experiences. Meals in France are often longer and more social, serving as a key time for family and friends to gather and connect. This emphasis on dining is reflective of the broader cultural appreciation for food and communal eating experiences (France Today, 2021). Similar to England, work-life balance is highly valued in France, though there is a notable tendency for longer lunch breaks and a more relaxed approach to the end of the workday, allowing for more personal and family time (OECD, 2020). Social etiquette in France frequently involves greetings with a kiss on the cheek, known as "la bise," which contrasts with the more reserved English handshake and reflects the warmth and openness of French social interactions (The Local France, 2023).

GLOBE Project's Culture and Leadership Study

The GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) Project provides a comprehensive framework for understanding cultural differences in leadership and organizational practices. It identifies nine cultural dimensions, but for this scenario, we will focus on the most relevant ones: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Collectivism vs. Individualism, and Assertiveness.

Power Distance: In England, there is a lower power distance, indicating a preference for egalitarianism and decentralized decision-making, with leaders seen more as coaches or mentors rather than authoritative figures (GLOBE Project, 2020). In contrast, France has a higher power distance, with a strong acceptance of hierarchical order and centralized control. Leaders in France are often viewed as authoritative and are expected to make decisions without extensive consultation (GLOBE Project, 2020; House et al., 2014).

Uncertainty Avoidance: In England, there is moderate uncertainty avoidance, showing a balanced approach to risk and innovation, where flexibility and adaptability are valued, and there is a willingness to embrace change (GLOBE Project, 2020; Hofstede Insights, 2021). In contrast, France exhibits high uncertainty avoidance, indicating a preference for clear rules, stability, and structure. Innovation in France is approached cautiously, with a strong emphasis on planning and risk management (GLOBE Project, 2020).

Collectivism vs. Individualism: In England, there is a high degree of individualism, focusing on personal goals, autonomy, and individual rights, with an organizational culture that emphasizes personal initiative and self-reliance (Hofstede Insights, 2021; GLOBE Project, 2020). In contrast, France exhibits more collectivist tendencies, with a stronger emphasis on group goals, loyalty, and collaborative efforts. French organizations often prioritize group harmony and consensus, reflecting their collective approach to achieving objectives (House et al., 2014; GLOBE Project, 2020).

Assertiveness: In England, there is moderate assertiveness, valuing diplomacy and tact in communication, with a competitive spirit maintained within the bounds of politeness and respect (GLOBE Project, 2020). In contrast, France exhibits higher assertiveness, with a direct and sometimes confrontational style in negotiations and decision-making, being competitive and often persuasive in achieving goals (House et al., 2014; GLOBE Project, 2020).

Challenges of Intercultural Leadership in Hospitality

Managing a multicultural team in the hospitality industry presents several challenges, particularly in navigating the diverse cultural norms and expectations of team members from different backgrounds. Here are some examples:

WORK ETHIC AND EXPECTATIONS

POTENTIAL CONFLICT	EXAMPLE	SOLUTION
Differences in work-life balance expectations can lead to conflicts, with English employees expecting strict adherence to work hours and French employees valuing longer breaks and more flexible hours.	An English team member might feel frustrated by a French colleague taking extended lunch breaks, viewing it as a lack of commitment, while the French colleague might see it as a normal part of their workday.	Clearly communicate and align expectations regarding work hours, break times, and overall work ethic, ensuring that all team members understand and respect the agreed-upon standards.

COMMUNICATION STYLES

POTENTIAL CONFLICT	EXAMPLE	SOLUTION
English team members may prefer direct communication, while French colleagues might use more nuanced and indirect communication. This can lead to misunderstandings or perceived lack of clarity.	An English manager might interpret a French colleague's indirect feedback as evasiveness, while the French colleague might find the English manager's directness to be blunt or rude.	Encourage open dialogue and create a platform where team members can express their communication preferences and find a middle ground that respects both styles.

DECISION-MAKING AND LEADERSHIP STYLES

POTENTIAL CONFLICT	EXAMPLE	SOLUTION
The centralized decision-making style in France might clash with the more egalitarian approach favored in England. French team members might expect clear directives from the top, while English colleagues might anticipate collaborative decision-making.	During a staff meeting, French employees might wait for instructions from the General Manager, while English employees might actively participate in brainstorming and expect their input to be considered.	Establish a hybrid decision-making process that incorporates input from team members but also provides clear leadership when necessary, balancing inclusivity with effective leadership.

Conclusion

Successfully managing a multicultural team at the Multicultural Hotel & Spa in London requires an in-depth understanding of the cultural differences and leadership preferences between England and France. By leveraging insights from the GLOBE Project's culture and leadership study and addressing the potential areas of conflict with tailored strategies, it is possible to foster a collaborative and harmonious work environment. Embracing cultural diversity not only enhances team dynamics but also enriches the overall guest experience, aligning with the brand's commitment to multicultural excellence (House, Dorfman, Javidan, Hanges, & de Luque, 2014; GLOBE Project, 2020). Recent studies have shown that culturally diverse teams are more innovative and effective in problem-solving (Harvard Business Review, 2021; McKinsey & Company, 2020), which is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge in the hospitality industry. Implementing inclusive policies and continuous cultural competence training are essential strategies to ensure that the team functions efficiently and cohesively (CIPD, 2021; Deloitte, 2022).

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