

14

Culture

Learning objectives in this unit

- Talking about cultural differences
- Narrating past events
- Giving explanations
- Talking about films, TV and books
- Talking about past events using past continuous, past simple and past perfect

Case study

- Investigating an intercultural communication problem

Starting point

- 1 A common piece of advice to people travelling to another country is 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do'. What does this expression mean?
- 2 How much do you change your behaviour if you visit another country for work? Or as a tourist? Why?

Working with words | Cultural differences

- 1 If you do business with a different culture, what is it useful to know about that culture? Read the text and compare your ideas.

Working across cultures



Professor Geert Hofstede of the Netherlands conducted a study of how values in the workplace are influenced by culture. His research, based on a large database of employees' values collected by IBM, covers 74 countries and regions.

Working, entertaining, negotiating and corresponding with colleagues from different cultures can be quite difficult. One misunderstanding could have a negative effect on months of work. Understanding intercultural differences can help communication with colleagues from other cultures. According to Hofstede, if we compare the key factors in our own culture with those in another culture, we can predict possible difficulties.

Hierarchical or egalitarian?

Some cultures, like Malaysia and Indonesia, are **hierarchical** with a caste or class system; and there is often a big difference in wealth between individuals. At work, employees respect authority, don't usually take responsibility and have a **formal** relationship with their manager. Other cultures, like Australia and Denmark, are more **liberal** and **egalitarian**. Managers give their employees

responsibility and often socialize with them.

Individualistic or collectivist?

Individualistic cultures, such as the US and the Netherlands, think that individual rights and freedom of speech are important. Personal goals, choices and achievements are encouraged. In more **collectivist** cultures, such as Korea and Colombia, this self-centred approach is discouraged. The group, such as the family, has a big influence on people's lives and is often seen as more important than business. Companies have a strong work group mentality and praise is given to teams rather than individuals.

Masculine or feminine?

In 'masculine' societies, like Brazil and Mexico, the male dominates the power structure. Competitiveness and assertiveness are encouraged, and the accumulation of wealth

is important. Many employees 'live to work' and take short holidays. In 'feminine' societies, such as Sweden and Finland, family, personal relationships, and quality of life are more important. Conflicts are resolved through negotiation, and people 'work to live', enjoying longer holidays and flexible working hours.

Cautious or risk-taking?

Some cultures, especially those with a long history such as Greece and Portugal, are quite **cautious**. They often have religious backgrounds and resist new ideas. At work, people prefer to follow **strict** rules and do things as they always have been done. Other cultures, like Jamaica and Singapore, often have a younger history and are willing to take risks. They are more **open** to new ideas, are less **accepting** of rules and regulations, and are more likely to welcome change.



2 Read the text again. According to Hofstede, which culture(s)

- 1 think family life is important?
- 2 like to be very polite to their manager and / or follow rules and regulations?
- 3 adapt easily to change?

3 Which of the key factors would you use to describe your own culture?

4 Work with a partner. Match the adjectives in bold in the text to these definitions.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1 very polite: _____ | 6 allowing freedom: _____ |
| 2 organized in levels: _____ | 7 shared by all the group: _____ |
| 3 classless: _____ | 8 must be obeyed: _____ |
| 4 careful: _____ | 9 do something without complaint: _____ |
| 5 receptive of new ideas: _____ | 10 focusing on one person: _____ |

5 Discuss how each adjective in 4 could be seen as both positive and negative.

6 55▶ Listen to two people talking on the subject of culture.

- 1 Summarize the main points of the first speaker's story.
- 2 What type of course is the second speaker talking about? What do people learn about on the course?

7 Use these words from audio 55▶ to complete the sentences.

*aware sensitive familiar respectful
tolerant informed adjust used*

- 1 People from the Czech Republic don't like to offend other people, so they're always very _____ to their guests' feelings.
- 2 I found it quite hard to _____ to the hierarchical culture in Thailand – my culture is much more egalitarian.
- 3 I wasn't very _____ with the way business is done in Romania so I was surprised by the amount of bureaucracy.
- 4 I wasn't _____ of the custom of greeting the oldest person first in China so I'm afraid I offended my host.
- 5 Mexico is a hierarchical culture so it's important to be _____ of people of a higher rank.
- 6 My boss sent me on a cross-cultural training course so I was _____ about business etiquette in Brazil before I was seconded there.
- 7 I'm _____ to people being direct in my own country so the indirect communication of Singaporeans seemed strange to me.
- 8 My colleague is always very punctual so he wasn't very _____ of the Greek custom of arriving late for dinner!

8 Use five of the words in 7 to make questions to ask a partner.

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 14** on page 128.

9 Work with a partner. Prepare some information for someone from a different culture who is coming to work in your company. Think about the things below and explain how aspects of your culture influence expected behaviour.

- how people behave in meetings
- relationships between different members of staff, e.g. formality
- individual efforts and teamwork
- responsibility
- company policy
- social events

Context

'Critical incidents' are communication situations which the participants find problematic or confusing. They often consist of a misunderstanding, a linguistic mistake, or some kind of cultural faux pas. They are events that can highlight different cultural beliefs and values. They are about ways of behaving that might be interpreted in different ways by different people, particularly when people from different cultural backgrounds communicate with each other.

Exchanging information | Narrating past events | Giving explanations



1 56▶ Listen to two conversations describing critical incidents. Which two of these situations is mentioned in each conversation?

- 1 importance of punctuality
- 2 questioning an authority figure
- 3 importance of seniority and titles
- 4 small talk before meetings
- 5 saying 'yes' to avoid loss of face

2 56▶ Listen again. Complete the sentences with these phrases.

*in the end that's but then it came about because of as time went by
so that was it wasn't until due to so what that was when*

Critical incident 1

- 1 ... for years. As _____, I noticed that things weren't being done that I'd requested ...
- 2 ... it wasn't done. _____ I was aware we had a problem.
- 3 Well _____ understandable.
- 4 And _____ I talked to a Korean friend that I realized what was wrong.
- 5 My team didn't want to refuse my request _____ respect for my seniority.

Critical incident 2

- 6 Yes ... _____ I realized they hadn't actually told him this.
- 7 ... authority figure. _____ the first problem solved.
- 8 _____ did you do?
- 9 Well, _____ I asked Anna, a Polish colleague.
- 10 Yes. _____ the lack of information about why we were questioning them.

3 Which of the phrases in 2 do the speakers use to

- a help tell the story of the incident and indicate the sequence of events? _____
- b explain the reason for the incident? _____
- c show they are listening / encourage more information? _____

» For more exercises, go to **Practice file 14** on page 128.

4 Work with a partner. Read the culture tip about Indonesia on page 87. Look at the pictures and work together to tell the story of the critical incident.

Tip | It seems (that) ...

Use *it seems (that) ...* to depersonalize a situation or avoid blaming.

It seems that none of them wanted to question an authority figure.

Doing business in Indonesia

It's important to offer refreshment to guests. This is seen as respectful and polite. Guests should wait before drinking – their host will indicate when drinking can commence. Often there is a pause between receiving the drink and being asked to drink. The sign to drink may indicate that business is over. Make sure you wait and follow your host's example.

Key expressions

Giving an explanation

... due to ...
It seems that ...
The reason being that ...
It came about because of ...

Linking the narrative

It wasn't until ... that ...
Luckily ...
And / But then ...
What's more, ...
Despite ...

Time expressions

While / When ...
At first ...
After that ...
As time went by, ...
In the end ...

Encouraging more information

So what did you do?
What had you done?
And what did (she) say?
What happened (next / then / after that)?
That's (understandable).
Go on. / Oh?
What was (her) view?
So how did you ...?

Summarizing the narrative

That was when ...
So that was the first problem ...
All in all ...
It really surprised me, (but it worked).
I was extremely disappointed.

i » Interactive Workbook
» Phrasebank



1 Last year – Indonesia with colleague – meeting to negotiate new contract



2 Near end of meeting – refreshments offered



3 Picked up my cup – colleague said 'wait'



4 Negotiation completed – host invited us to take refreshments

5 Work with a partner. Think of a situation where there was a misunderstanding between you and someone from a different culture. It could be when on business or on holiday. Tell your partner about the incident. Use these ideas if necessary.

- in a restaurant – ordering food and drink
- asking for directions
- on the telephone
- talking about own country and background
- deadlines and dates
- being unaware of traditions and cultural differences

i » Interactive Workbook » Email

Practically speaking | Talking about films, TV and books

1 57▷ Listen to work colleagues chatting in a break. What are they talking about in each of the three extracts?

2 Which of these phrases can you use to talk about

- 1 a film? 3 a book?
2 a TV programme? 4 all three?

*I don't get / have much time to ... There's a ... twist at the end. (It's) a blockbuster.
I'm completely hooked on it. It's a real page-turner. I can't miss an episode.
I'd definitely recommend it. (It's) a box office hit. I couldn't put it down.
I tend to channel-hop. It's set in ... / It's about ... I've just finished ...
What I really can't stand is ... It's very well written. ... a star-studded cast ...
I just like to unwind in front of ... (You'll be) on the edge of your seat.*

3 57▷ Listen again and check your answers.

4 Work with a partner. Choose a film, TV programme or book and tell your partner about it. Find out what your partner likes. Refer to the *Useful phrases* on page 135.

Language at work | Narrative tenses – past continuous, past simple and past perfect

- 1** Read this supposedly true story about a billionaire entrepreneur. Number the events a–i in the order they happened.

One evening in December, an American billionaire was driving down the motorway in New Jersey. It was raining hard, but the road was busy as thousands of people were leaving for their Christmas holidays.

Suddenly, the car had a flat tyre, and the chauffeur pulled over to the side. When he opened the boot, he realized that he had left the tool kit behind. While he was standing there in the rain, wondering what to do, another motorist saw him and stopped.

Together, they changed the wheel, and as the man was leaving, the billionaire wound down the window. He asked if there was anything he could do to thank him, and the man said his wife might like a small bunch of flowers.

Two weeks later, a bunch of flowers arrived at the man's house. With it there was a small note from the billionaire, thanking the man for his help and telling him that the whole of his mortgage had been paid off.

- ___ a The chauffeur and the motorist changed the wheel.
- ___ b The car had a flat tyre.
- ___ c The billionaire set off down the motorway.
- ___ d The chauffeur realized he couldn't change the wheel.
- ___ e The chauffeur left the tool kit behind.
- ___ f The billionaire paid off the mortgage.
- ___ g A passing motorist stopped to help.
- ___ h Some flowers arrived at the house.
- ___ i The billionaire spoke to the man.

- 2** Underline all the verb forms in the story. What tense is used to

- 1 set the scene and give background information at the beginning of the story?
- 2 describe the main action and events in the story?
- 3 talk about an action in progress that is interrupted by another action?
- 4 talk about an action that happened before another past action?

» For more information and exercises, go to **Practice file 14** on page 129.

- 3** Complete these sentences with the past continuous, past simple or past perfect form of the verbs in brackets.

- 1 They cancelled my flight because it _____ (snow) so I _____ (sleep) in the airport lounge.
- 2 I didn't want to interrupt my colleague while he _____ (talk) on the phone so I _____ (send) him an email instead.
- 3 I felt very embarrassed when I realized that I _____ (forget) my host's name so I _____ (apologize) quickly.
- 4 During the time I _____ (stay) in Denmark, I didn't know whether to arrive on time for dinner so I _____ (decide) to arrive five minutes late.
- 5 My host offered me a small gift just as I _____ (leave) for the airport and I _____ (give) her a souvenir from my own country.
- 6 I didn't know if the party was formal or informal because I _____ (lose) my invitation so I _____ (wear) a smart outfit.

- 4** Work with a partner. Take turns to talk about one of the situations below. Give some background information about the situation, explain how it came about, what happened and how it was resolved.

- a time when you had a minor accident or injury of some kind
- a time when you had car problems
- a time when you were extremely late for something

Investigating an intercultural communication problem

Background

Frustrating time for PCR

PCR is a medium-sized company based in Germany. It produces software solutions for banks and has acquired a new client – a large, well-established bank in Malaysia. Since finalizing contracts well over a year ago, very little progress appears to have been made. Employees working on the project at PCR are frustrated because everything is taking so long and ‘cut over’ (the transfer from the old system to the new system) has been postponed for the fifth time. There seems to be reluctance

from the Malaysian bank to take on the new system. Constant changes are being made to suit the customer – something that PCR normally works on once the system is up and running, so users can input their problems. Training has taken place on an ad hoc basis and hasn't run very smoothly – it has often been decided on at the last minute so PCR doesn't have much time to prepare. Communication has been unpredictable and difficult, and critical decisions haven't been made.

Discussion

- 1 What problems might a company face when changing to a new IT software system?
- 2 What could be the reasons for the difficulties that PCR is experiencing with its Malaysian client?

Task

Work in groups of four. You each have some further information about PCR's situation. Student A, turn to File 32 on page 145. Student B, turn to File 40 on page 147. Student C, turn to File 45 on page 148. Student D, turn to File 29 on page 144.

- 1 Read your information and make notes on the problem. Think of one or two possible reasons why the problem has occurred.
- 2 Take turns to report your information to your colleagues using your notes. Give reasons why you think the problem occurred. While you listen to your colleagues make notes under these headings.
 - Problem
 - Possible reasons for problem
- 3 Discuss and analyse the situation. Try to establish what went wrong and why, and what lessons can be learned. (Read the cultural information about Malaysia in File 49 on page 149 to help you.)
- 4 Compose a short verbal report about the situation. Give your report to the class and compare your analysis of the situation.

The Expert View

We have a natural tendency to interpret the behaviour and attitudes of individuals from different cultures according to our own pre-conceived ideas of cultural norms. But if we focus selectively only on actions or words that appear to fit these pre-formed views, this can lead to a serious misinterpretation of interactions. To understand other people's cultural frames of reference and value systems, we need to be self-aware and, by watching and listening for all the signals, remain sensitive to the nuances of communication. If we are patient and respectful, make an effort to 'put ourselves in another person's shoes', and to build trust, we can minimize the potential for misunderstanding.

David Simmons, International Development Director & Graham Heard, Lecturer in Languages
Cranfield School of Management

File 27 | Unit 13

Working with words, Exercise 10, page 79

Talk about your own company or one of the companies below, giving as many figures and trends as possible. If you do not know the exact figures, use some of the 'approximating' language from 4. Give details of

- company activities
- company HQ
- number of countries it operates in
- number of employees
- annual revenue
- performance in the last ten years (turnover / profit / loss).

Name: Hengist Healthcare

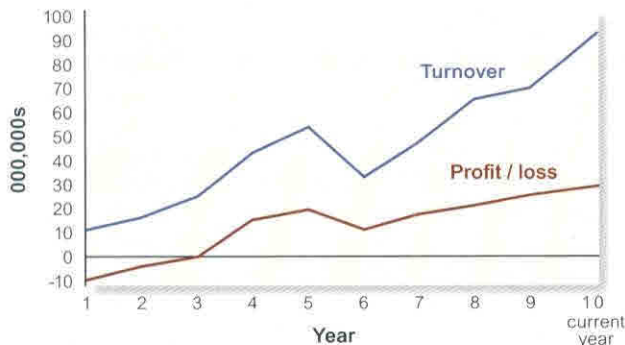
Activities: Biopharmaceuticals, antivirals, hepatitis care

Company HQ: Copenhagen, Denmark

No. of countries: 16

Employees: 372

Annual revenue: €93,000,000



Name: Wengler

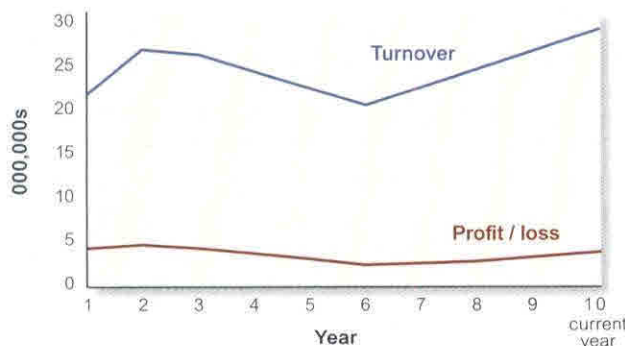
Activities: Accountancy and financial consultancy

Company HQ: New York

No. of countries: 22

Employees: 950

Annual revenue: US \$28,000,000



File 28 | Unit 13

Case study, Task, page 83

Student A

Craigslist.org

Founded: 1995

Users: 4 bn page views per month

What is it?: Centralised network of urban communities featuring free classified ads and forums

Who started it?: Craig Newmark

Approximate statistics / facts:

- Began as an email listing events in San Francisco
- Risen to more than 30m users a month
- 2004: eBay acquired 25% share of company
- Receives 25m classified ads each month
- Up to 500,000 new job listings each month
- 80 topical forums with 40 m user postings (comments)

File 29 | Unit 14

Case study, Task, page 89

Student D

PCR finds it very frustrating when cut over is postponed, especially when it needs to see what problems arise once the system is actually being used. PCR sent regular emails and made phone calls to get feedback about the project. Emails remained unanswered and PCR was frustrated by what it saw as a lack of communication. The Malaysian customer felt hurried and hassled by the constant bombardment of calls and emails.

File 30 | Unit 2

Case study, Task, page 17

Student C

COMMUNICATION

There was a mixed reaction to this subject. Positive comments were made about the emailing policies we introduced two years ago. However, overall face-to-face communication can be seriously improved upon.

'Each department seems to go their own way on many matters. We employees just do what we're told and don't bother to question it any more.'

'Sometimes I don't know what's going on. Decisions have been made and I haven't been consulted - and I'm in a more senior position and need to know these things!'

'There must be more communication between us! We work together but don't actually have time or opportunity to get to know each other.'

'It's difficult for ideas to filter through.'

'The company is quite big - so I sometimes feel I'm just a number.'

File 31 | Unit 15

Business communication skills, Exercise 5, page 93

Student A

1 You are the appraisee. Discuss your personal performance over the past year with your appraiser, using this information.

Achievements / Failures	Explanation / Comments	Requests for resources / Advice
+ Presented new office procedures at Europe-wide meeting	This was my first presentation. Very nervous.	
+ Organized a regular office meeting - brought great results: more communication and cooperation in office	If management attended regularly - been even better	Ideas for ensuring management attend
- Dropped out of company English course	Stayed if teacher spoken my language	
- Turned down PA job offer	'Better' job, but not much more pay	Other chances for promotion?

2 Change roles. You are the appraiser. Conduct the appraisal interview. Comment and ask questions as appropriate to complete this form.

Achievements / Failures	Explanation / Comments	Requests for resources / Advice
+ Organized successful kick-off meeting for international salespeople - v. happy with this		Offer: to get more work like this, possibly a transfer to international department?
+ - Rejection of trainee mentoring scheme - extremely disappointed		Could look at budget again for next year
-		

File 32 | Unit 14

Case study, Task, page 89

Student A

The biggest problem was time-wasting. When PCR arranged teleconferences and called at the scheduled time, only half the participants had been there. PCR employees regularly had to wait 30 minutes or longer until they all turned up. Occasionally PCR employees were called and put through to teleconferences which hadn't been scheduled. They didn't want to refuse as these conferences provided an opportunity to follow up on unanswered questions, and any direct contact was very important. However, these unscheduled calls often meant the PCR employee was participating in a teleconference on the way to work and being bombarded with questions which they hadn't prepared for.

File 33 | Unit 5

Case study, Task, Exercise 1, page 35

Student B

1 **Situation:** you work in Graphics in an advertising agency. There are a lot of campaigns starting at the moment. You receive a call from a customer. Make a note of the problems and clarify any information that isn't clear.

Action: decide which course of action you can promise.

- You promise all changes can be made in time for the deadline.
- You need to check details with the magazine publishers and try to change things with them - ad has already been sent! Will get back to customer by the end of the week.
- It's too late to make any changes as the ad has been sent; the ad was sent for proofreading to your client weeks ago so it isn't really your fault.

2 **Situation:** your company is decentralized, so every department is responsible for its own office area and finances. You are the PA for Marketing and you coordinate the booking of meeting rooms, equipment, etc. and issue offers and invoices for use of the rooms by other departments. It's a busy time of year. You receive a call from a colleague in Lisbon. Make a note of the problems and clarify any information that isn't clear.

Action: decide which course of action you can promise.

- Check everything's free, but also check options from other departments and send new quote by the end of the week.
- Deny giving the original quote and ask for the information again in writing. You'll reply some time next week.
- Check all rooms and equipment are free and send a new quote by this afternoon.

3 **Situation:** you work in Denmark in the PR department of a confectionery company. You've been invited to a local school to talk about nutrition. Call Marketing in France.

Problem: none of your PR literature is suitable for children. You need

- 350 free merchandise, e.g. hats, pens, badges
- 400 free sample products - chocolate / biscuits, etc.
- 450 information folders with recipes, quizzes, etc.

Deadline: talk in two weeks' time

4 **Situation:** you work in a company PR Department. You have received a press release which needs to be translated into Urdu. Call your translation agency.

Problem: 1,000 words approx. over 5 pages - some graphs which need titles translating too / financial text - need translator who is familiar with this type of text / need an offer before work can commence

Deadline: by tomorrow

File 39 | Unit 9

Case study, Task, Exercise 2, page 59

Group B: HR Managers

- 1 Look at the proposed incentives and possible consequences. Think of an alternative proposal for each incentive (based on the original idea), which could be a realistic compromise if you need it.

Proposed incentives / perks	Consequences of this	Alternative / amended idea
Overtime is paid at double time	This puts you over budget and would have to be implemented for the whole company	e.g. Overtime is taken as time in lieu
Costs of children's schooling at the private International school covered	There's not enough money to pay for school fees for all employees on the project	e.g. Help children to get a scholarship for the International School (private tutor if necessary)
Interest free loan for living costs, e.g. deposit for a house or car	This would make a divide within the workforce – not fair for those who weren't chosen for the project abroad	Assistance for rehousing and / or loan for deposit for a house / car
1 month assimilation time before going back to full-time work	May give employee time to look around for another job	
Job promotion on return	This is difficult to implement as there may not be a position available	

- 2 Think of two extra proposals (plus the possible consequence) to suggest to the Team Leaders.
- 3 Prioritize the three incentives you would really like to persuade your team leader to accept.

Points system

While you negotiate, consider this scoring system.

- 2 points if you get agreement on an alternative
- 1 point if you agree on the whole incentive
- 0 points if you completely refuse the incentive

File 40 | Unit 14

Case study, Task, page 89

Student B

In theory everyone has been trained up who needs to be trained. There was no regular training as there was a lot of time between visits. PCR tried to check everyone was following in the training sessions and regularly took breaks for questions and to clarify misunderstandings – but everyone always said they understood. After the breaks PCR recapped and asked each trainee to run through a bit of the program they'd just covered. The trainees generally got it wrong or seemed confused. PCR are not sure where the problem lies but are sure there are still areas that aren't clear for the Malaysians.

File 41 | Unit 2

Case study, Task, page 17

Student D

WORKING CONDITIONS

The offices were given a good rating and the facilities are satisfactory. Improvements need to be made to working times and perks.

'I sometimes need the flexibility to work from home and look after my children.'

'One major reason my colleague left her job recently was because she needed somewhere with flexitime, to fit in with her family commitments – I agree with this.'

'Extra provisions for women returning to work after having a baby would be nice.'

'Pay is fair (but not great) but I'd like to see some more benefits, which would compensate for the salaries.'

'We must be the only subsidiary which doesn't offer its staff discounted products!'

'Our subsidiaries in other countries provide private health insurance. How can it be possible for them and not for us?'

File 42 | Unit 3

Language at work, Exercise 3, page 22

Student B

- 1 You are in a project team which is converting an old building to provide new company premises. Update your colleague, using these prompts and / or your own ideas. Use *already* and *yet* and appropriate time expressions.
 - finish the first floor building work
 - have delays caused by plumbing contractors
 - not complete the second floor adaptations
 - postpone date for roofing work
 - find good decorating firm
- 2 Your colleague is involved in the building of a new warehouse and office complex. Ask how the project is going. As your colleague is speaking, comment on what he / she says and ask additional questions.

File 43 | Unit 10

Case study, Task, page 65

Student C

Favour	Name of person agreeing to favour
Help me organize 'office warming' party for new division – I'm not very interested in doing this.	
Give me two of your offices as we don't have enough space in our department.	
Give me the name of a good, reliable, financial controller.	

Favours you must refuse to do:

- Give contact names for mailing list.
- Contact IT company for internal network.
- Use / share your department's coffee machine.

File 44 | Unit 13

Case study, Task, page 83

Student C

Slashdot.org

Founded: 1997 **Users:** 5.5 m per month

What is it?: Technology news website and technical forum

Who started it?: Ernst Kohl / Luciana Francolini

Approximate statistics / facts:

- Hosts discussion forums for 'techies'
- Discussions run to 10,000 comments a day
- Pioneer of 'user-generated' site
- Developed from a personal blog – was bought by current owners for \$5 m in 1999
- Only 10 employees maintaining the site!
- Holding company was bought for \$900 m in 2006
- Based in California

File 45 | Unit 14

Case study, Task, page 89

Student C

PCR employees took part in meetings and expected a round of discussion resulting in a decision. They questioned their Malaysian counterparts, asking for opinions and tried to draw conclusions from the answers. However, there were no direct answers to the questions. A result of this was that PCR became frustrated, thinking meetings were a waste of time. The Malaysian counterparts were frustrated because the decision-maker wasn't always consulted and PCR seemed to be expecting decisions to be made from any one of the participants.

File 46 | Unit 2

Case study, Task, page 17

- Set up 'sideways' moves across to different departments / job areas and promotion. Organized internal transfers with subsidiaries abroad.
- Revised pay scales in alignment with industry standards.
- Introduced compensation package which included private health scheme.
- Brought in a 24-month leave period for new mothers – although legal requirement is 15 months.
- Promoted flexible working and home working.
- Introduced training budgets per head – encouraged training and personal development. New policy: each employee is entitled to four training courses a year – two must be attended, one of which is job-related.
- Arranged a monthly managers' breakfast. This took the form of an informal meeting where a big breakfast was provided. The idea was to promote discussion / small talk amongst managers in an informal setting.
- Made gift giving at Christmas standard throughout company – same given to everyone.
- Required departments to arrange a once-a-month Friday lunch to encourage socializing and teamwork.
- Management met department heads individually, twice a year, to review job and discuss concerns, wishes, etc. and most importantly, to give them feedback, thanks and praise.

Results:

As a result of these changes, voluntary staff turnover reduced to 3.3%; absenteeism reduced to 0.3%; 20–30% of staff accepted the offer of working some of their week from home.

File 47 | Unit 16

Language at work, Exercise 5, page 100

Student A

You want to take a one-year career break but do not want to risk losing your job on your return. Answer your manager's questions (use your own situation or invent the details).

Student B

You are the HR Manager. An employee wishes to take a career break. Ask questions to find out:

- what they like about their current job
- if there is anything they dislike about the work
- what they are planning to do / where they would like to go
- how long they hope to go away for
- if they are planning to develop any new skills
- if they want to carry on working with the company when they get back / if they are expecting to get the same job back
- if they would be prepared to do a different job on their return
- if they will mind earning less than their colleagues.

When you have finished, change roles.