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DIPLOMA THESIS

Challenges related to managing an international workforce

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Declaration of Integrity

I declare that I have worked on my diploma thesis called “Challenges related to managing an international workforce” on my own with the usage of only the listed literature and with the help of my supervisor.

In Prague,

Adéla Michková

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Ing. Richard Selby, PhD. for his help and guidance with this thesis so I could achieve academic level of my research.

Challenges related to managing international workforce

Problémy spojené s řízením mezinárodní pracovní síly

Summary

This Diploma thesis focuses on the concept of managing international workforce and the challenges it entails. It also researches the question whether Czech managers are capable of managing a multi-cultural team.

It is divided into two main parts. The first part is a literature overview of the topic. It starts with general managerial responsibilities and then it describes cultural differences that affect not only managers. Such differences include different cultural values and habits, the perception of time, planning differences, respect towards authority, risk taking, preferred characteristics of leaders and others.

The second part includes the findings of the research that was conducted for the purposes of this thesis. The target group of this research includes members of multi-cultural teams that are led by Czech managers. It provides insight about how capable Czech managers are in such positions.

The last part of this thesis includes an overview of the most challenging areas that managers of multi-cultural teams have to deal with. The final results of the research are also described in this part. The purpose of this thesis is to point out the main challenges connected to managing international workforce as well as find out whether Czech managers are capable of handling multi-national teams.

Keywords:

Management, culture, international workforce, cooperation, leadership, cultural dimensions, multi-national teams

Souhrn

Tato diplomová práce pojednává o konceptu řízení mezinárodní pracovní síly a problémy, které tato práce zahrnuje. Také se zaměřuje na otázku, zda jsou čeští manažeři schopni řídit multikulturní tým.

Práce je rozdělena do dvou hlavních částí. První část je teoretická a obsahuje přehled o daném tématu. Začíná popisem obecných manažerských odpovědností a dále popisuje zásadní kulturní rozdíly, které ovlivňují nejen manažery. Tyto rozdíly zahrnují různé kulturní hodnoty a zvyky, rozdílné vnímání času, rozdíly v plánování, respektování autority přístupy k podstupování rizika, preferované charakteristiky vůdčích osobností a další.

Druhá část zahrnuje výsledky výzkumu, který byl zpracován pro účely této práce. Cílovou skupinou tohoto výzkumu jsou multikulturní týmy, které jsou vedeny českým manažerem. Tato část poskytuje přehled o tom, jak schopni jsou čeští manažeři v takovýchto pozicích.

Poslední část práce obsahuje přehled těch nejnáročnějších oblastí s kterými se musí manažeři multikulturních týmu potýkat na denním pořádku. Konečné výsledky výzkumu jsou také popsány v této části. Cílem této práce je poukázat na hlavní problémy spojené s řízením mezinárodní pracovní síly a také zjistit, zda jsou čeští manažeři schopni vést multinárodní týmy.

Klíčová slova:

Management, kultura, mezinárodní pracovní síla, spolupráce, vedení, kulturní dimenze, multinárodní týmy

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1. Introduction

The aim of this Diploma Thesis is to study the proper ways to manage an international workforce when taking into consideration the cultural factors that affect the behavior of not only the managers but subordinates as well. The question, which this Diploma Thesis focuses on, is whether Czech managers are capable of managing multi-cultural teams.

Management is a very broad field and managers are needed in any industry. Their general goal is to make sure that the required work is done properly, on time and within the designated limits and that the subordinates of the manager are actually satisfied with their jobs. A manager's job is complex enough already, but what if the workers come from different cultural backgrounds on top of everything else? What is affected and how? And how should a manager deal with such situations? And what if the manager is Czech; will he/she be able to handle it? The answers to those questions are the focus of this thesis.

This thesis is divided into two parts. The first part includes the literature review of the subject – what is required of any manager, cultural differences and their effects on management, what are the advantages and challenges of multi-cultural teams and an overview of the Czech nationality which is later used as a measuring stick for Czech managers. The second part includes the findings of the research, which was conducted for the purposes of this thesis. It shows how satisfied are multi-cultural teams with their Czech managers in the Czech Republic.

2. Objectives and Methodology

The main objective of this thesis is to research and specify how to properly manage international workforce, what may be the challenges that need to be dealt with concerning the differences in cultural backgrounds of the members of the manager's team. It also analyzes whether Czech managers are capable of managing multi-cultural teams.

The literature overview provides a theoretical background concerning the subject. The resources also include published empirical studies, which provide insight into not only management, but cultural differences around the world as well.

The practical part consists of the evaluation of the questionnaire, which focuses on multi-national teams, which are led by Czech managers. Large international companies were contacted in order to obtain the answers. The companies wished to remain anonymous and the questionnaires were completed anonymously as well. This was done so that the respondents would not be shy and answer as accurately as possible. The questionnaire was spread by e-mail due to its speed convenience. No one besides the researcher got to see the answers.

The questionnaire is made up of open questions, which are analyzed using a codebook to provide more qualitative insights and percentages are used in its interpretation together with possible reasoning. Since the questionnaires were completed anonymously, it is expected that the respondents were not shy to write their opinions. No names are thus mentioned.

3. Literature Overview

This part of the thesis reviews manager's duties one should have to be a successful manager. Then, it focuses on the differences that should be taken into consideration when managing an international team of people, how different cultures approach business cases in their own ways. It also describes how cultural factors affect management.

3.1. Defining a manager

Managers are usually the ones responsible for their own teams of people or projects and its final results. Managers basically "*achieve results through others*" and in order to do that properly, they actually play many roles combined into one. ^[1]

As a leader, it is the manager's duty to focus on the entire workload, its division among subordinate workers and the way they are or aren't successfully fulfilling the plan. It is the manager's responsibility to make sure it is on the right track to getting to the planned and preferred outcome as well as exactly how everything will get achieved. The workload includes planning and working by concrete strategic steps, which are set during the initiating stages as well as using the most effective way possible to achieve it. Simply put, work needs to be managed in order for everyone to work effectively on the right things in the right time and it is the manager's responsibility to make sure that happens and while doing so, making sure that the employees are satisfied as well. ^[2]

The manager is typically the one who determines different ways of solving issues that need to be solved. A plan of the workflow is usually needed in any project, including specific job descriptions and timelines with steps. Plans also generally include specific goals. Delegation of work onto other members of the working team is usually everyday practice because that is what the manager's team is for. The managers then just make sure that every subordinate knows what their task is. ^[3]

Contributing to the overall work of the team is also a part of the manager's job. It is important, that the manager also motivates and helps other employees in order for the work to get done. Managers can help out with various separate tasks but does not necessarily have to work on every part of the entire project. ^[1]

Managers can also be considered as facilitators. Then their focus should be on the following objectives: fostering collective effort, managing interpersonal conflicts and building teamwork. By fulfilling the mentioned objectives, the manager will achieve that

the team with all its members actually functions as a proper team and not only as a group of people, where the employees only work individually on their own tasks but have otherwise no idea what the rest of their co-workers are working on.^[4]

Another important thing for managers is observing what their subordinates are doing and how they are doing it. Managers need to pay attention to what is actually happening in their teams, with their subordinates, in the rest of the company. It is important that the workflow goes smoothly and that can be achieved when all the workers are clear on what they are supposed to be working on and where all the work put together leads to achieving the company's set goals.^[1] It is the managers' task to make sure that their subordinates keep on the right track in order to complete the goals and objectives. Subordinates should understand what is important and only stick to it, otherwise information as well as work overload can occur. So it is clear that it is important that the managers pay attention to their teams and are up-to-date to what is happening. So, by proper observation of the teams, it is then much easier to manage the teams^[4].

Innovation is a big part in any functional work area. When a company follows innovation and keeps its equipment very modern, it is also important for the employees to get regular training sessions where they can learn how to use the new equipment so they can adapt faster to changes.^[5] That will consequently lead to better results because they won't get stuck.

Any working team should also hold modern and recent trends within the society and keep up-to-date. When the needed changes are determined, it is important to plan appropriate application if it is in fact possible or useful. Such changes may include environmental or technical upgrades as well as special skill tutorials. Any implemented changes should be helpful to the workers and make the working conditions better, not worse and it is up to the manager to provide them and help his/her team to adapt.^[1]

Sometimes the manager needs to act more as a coach, and in such cases he/she needs to be helpful to his/her subordinates, caring, empathetic, considerate, sensitive, approachable, open and fair in all his/her actions toward others. This helps the manager's team function the way it is supposed to in the long term.^[2]

All in all, there are many types of managers out there and since every person is different, no two managers will be identical. Different managers have different approaches to different matters at work as well as personal lives.^[3] We can distinguish good or bad

managers. Some managers may use different techniques to attain their goals, others may lack some of the skills that were already mentioned or have different opinions. Either way, it is up to them how they chose to manage their subordinates. ^[2]

3.2. Measuring the strength of a workplace

Managers in any field of company should make sure that the working environment is suitable. Let's now focus on the core elements, which are needed to keep the most talented employees. ^[5]

Every employee should always know what is expected of him/her at work. That is why defining job descriptions is very important, and it is usually the job of a manager. When they know what they are supposed to work on, then they can work continuously and not waste time. ^[5] If the employees don't know what their job entails, they may work on something completely different not is not necessary and by that waste both time and resources. ^[2]

It is also very important for the employees to have the proper equipment and materials they need to fulfill their tasks. Otherwise, it slows them down and create stress, which in turn leads to employee dissatisfaction and demotivation at work. ^[6]

Employees should always have the opportunity to do what they do best. ^[2] It not only helps their self-esteem when they complete something well, it also motivates them since they do a good job to continue working. They also already know how to do it, so there are no problems there either. ^[4]

It is also important to praise employees for good work. This way, they know they did a good job and it will motivate them to keep on working. ^[5] It shows that their work is appreciated and that they are valuable in the company. Recognizing someone's work doesn't motivate only the one being praised or the one who gets the reward, but also others because they see that if they work hard that they will also be appreciated and that there will be something in it for them as well. The recognition does not always have to be in the form of a present or money, even though that usually motivates more, but a simple honorable mention in front of other colleagues is also motivating. ^[4]

Showing care for the employees is also important at the workplace. It is linked to the previous point of showing appreciation for good work but it also includes having

friends at work. Employees tend to work better in a friendly environment and that in turn brings better results for the company. ^[3]

Managers should also encourage development of their subordinates. This involves helping them evolve their skills and learn new things. This way the employees are satisfied because they develop their skills and will be able to move on in their careers. It also shows that the managers care about their subordinates and makes both sides more satisfied. ^[5]

Another important thing is letting everyone say what they think and make their opinions count. This again leads to employee satisfaction and in turn to them working better and being more motivated to work. ^[6]

The mission and vision of a company should also be set and presented in a way that will make them feel like their work is important. ^[4] Because if they don't believe that their work is important they will not work towards accomplishing the set goals. When the employees believe in their company, they work towards helping the entire company succeed. ^[5]

Working towards quality is also very important. When it comes to proper management, the quality of the outcome of anything is always observed. ^[2] When things are done properly and thus are considered as high quality, the company builds its image in that direction. This does not always have to be connected to production. Quality concerning the care for employees or customers is also important. ^[5]

All in all, managers have a lot on their hands and have to keep track of many things. It is challenging enough in their home countries with people from one nation. But what happens when the team a manager leads is made up of different people each from a different country? The basics of management still apply, but other important aspects that need to be taken into consideration are added. ^[4]

3.3. National identities

We have to keep in mind that countries (as well as different regions) do not differ only in their cultures. The sources of differences include identity, values and institutions. All of these sources have their roots in the historical developments of the countries. ^[7]

Identity is quite often rooted in religions or the language of the country. However, it is not a center part in national cultures, it is connected to the symbols or rituals of the country. It is also possible that identities shift perhaps several times over a lifetime. For

example emigrants, who somehow need to adapt to the culture into which they move. Usually, they end up with a mixture of values from both nations.^[7]

Values are very personal and include motives, emotions as well as taboos. It is kind of like everyone's own culture. A similar concept can be observed when dealing with national cultures.^[8] What if very different cultures meet?

“Cultural Relativism affirms that one culture has no absolute criteria for judging the activities of another culture as “low” or “noble.” However, every culture can and should apply such judgment to its own activities, because its members are actors as well as observers.” (Lévi-Strauss & Éribon 1988)^[7]

Cultural relativism calls for deferring judgment of other cultures when someone has to deal with a different society or a culture. It implies that we shouldn't try to apply our norms to the other culture right away, but gain more information and insight first.^[7]

3.4. Dimensions of national cultures

Such dimensions include views of oneself within the society, opinions about authority, opinions about the masculinity and femininity concepts, ways of dealing with conflicts, etc. The concept was established by Geert Hofstede based on empirical studies.

3.4.1. Power distance

The power distance dimension deals with the question of how is the fact, that people are unequally handled. It focuses on the distance between bosses and their subordinates in the business world. How they perceive the decision-making processes and styles of their managers. It does not generally show objective differences in power distribution, it focuses on the manner in which the people from different cultures perceive power differences.^[8]

Higher values of power distance index means that the culture supports political rather than strategic thinking, personal planning and control. This means that the higher a person is within the hierarchy of a company, the less formal is his/her planning and control. Lower values of the power distance index suggest that trust is put into

subordinates, they have the power to make decisions within the company.^[8] Also, low power distance means that the culture expects democratic relations and problem-solving.^[9]

For example, Latin, Asian, Arab and some African areas have very high scores in power distance. The Germanic and Anglo areas have lower values in power distance. In Europe, power distance inclines to be lower in northern areas and a bit higher in the southern and eastern parts.^[8]

3.4.2. Individualism vs. collectivism

This dimension focuses on the degree to which people from different cultures have tendencies to form groups and work together or whether they prefer a more solitary approach. Individualistic countries value personal achievement and individual rights. They are generally expected to make their own way and connections as well as stand up for themselves and their families.^[8] On the other hand, members of collectivist societies form life-long groups or organizations and behave in a way to support those groups. Families in such societies are usually greatly extended and used as protection in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. The general behavior includes members to act in a way to support the achievements of the entire groups and its proper function and stability.^[9]

North America and Europe are seen as quite individualistic. Canada, USA and Hungary have the highest values for individualistic behavior. On the other hand, Asia, Africa and Latin America have very strong collectivistic values. Guatemala can be considered as the most collectivistic country. Japan and the Arab world are somewhere in the middle on this dimension.^[8]

3.4.3. Uncertainty Avoidance

The uncertainty avoidance dimension defines “a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity”. It shows the degree to which members of a culture or a society try to deal with anxiety by minimizing uncertainty. High uncertainty avoidance cultures incline to be more emotional. They want to minimize the happening of unknown events and unfamiliar circumstances. Their changes are planned carefully and step-by step, then they tend to implement rules, laws and regulations. Cultures with low uncertainty avoidance tend to accept changeable environment and feel more comfortable in unstructured conditions.

They try to have as few rules as possible. They are more tolerant to changes and are generally more pragmatic.^[8]

Higher uncertainty avoidance values suggest that it is less likely for such culture to plan activities strategically. Such societies also need more detail in their plans and they also call for feedback in shorter time periods. Planning itself is generally left to some specialist. However, it limits the view of what is actually relevant since the planning is done by someone else than who will actually be performing it.^[9]

Uncertainty avoidance is highest in Latin American countries, Southern and Eastern Europe countries, it also includes German speaking countries and Japan. It is lower for Anglo, Nordic, and Chinese cultures. However, few countries have very low uncertainty avoidance values. For example, Germany has a high uncertainty avoidance value and Belgium a bit more, compared to Sweden or Denmark, even despite their geographical closeness.^[8]

3.4.4. Masculinity vs. femininity

This dimension describes “The distribution of emotional roles between the genders”. Masculine cultures usually value competitiveness, assertiveness, materialism, ambition and power. Feminine cultures value relationships and quality of life more.

The differences between gender roles are much more intense and less flexible in masculine cultures than in feminine cultures. Cultures that are more feminine are proud to have men and women have the same values and caring equally.^[8]

Due to the gender generalizations implied by this terminology, this dimension is often called Quantity of Life vs. Quality of Life.^[9]

Nordic countries have extremely low masculinity. In contrast, Masculinity is very high in Japan as well as in European countries such as Hungary, Austria and Switzerland where the influenced by the German culture is visible. The Anglo world also scores relatively high values of masculinity. Latin countries are somewhere in the middle as well as with quite opposite values. Venezuela inclines much more to masculinity than, for example, Chile, which is very feminine.^[8]

3.4.5. Long- versus Short-Term Orientation

Research by Michael Bond and his colleagues led to adding a fifth dimension called Long- versus Short-Term Orientation. ^[8]

Long- term oriented societies focus on rational ideas and qualities, which are concerned with future rewards. This means they are keen of saving, persistence, and adjusting to altering circumstances. Short-term oriented societies promote qualities and merits, which are connected to the past and present, for example, national pride, respect for traditions, status and the fulfillment of social obligations. ^[10]

East Asia, especially China, Hong Kong and Japan, are highly long-term oriented. Eastern and Western Europe can be considered as somewhere in the middle. The Anglo countries, the Muslim world, Africa and in Latin America are more short-term oriented. ^[8]

3.4.6. Indulgence versus Restraint

This dimension was added later by Michael Minkov. It focuses on the fact how different societies enjoy life freely or are rather restrained somehow. Indulgence societies allow reasonably free satisfaction of basic and natural human drives, which are connected to having fun and enjoying life. Restraint societies on the other hand tend to overcome such gratification of needs and rather control everything with strict social norms.

The different country scores for this dimension are quite relative where societies are compared to other societies. The scores have also been verified to be relatively stable over generations. If the cultures are caused to shift within this dimension, it is usually due to a global or continent-wide effect. This means that when some countries shift, they actually shift together, whole regions usually, and that means that their relative positions still remain the same afterwards. There isn't much data about this dimension, however, we can still see that indulgence scores are highest in Latin America, parts of Africa, the Anglo world and Nordic Europe. On the other hand, restraint societies are generally in East Asia, Eastern Europe as well as the Muslim world. ^[8]

3.5. GLOBE

The GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior) research focused on cross-national differences and insights in leadership styles in different cultural settings. It stands by its premise that if any leader is to be considered as effective it not only depends on his/her abilities but it is also contextual within the given society, the norms and values that the ones he/she is leading are used to within the organization. This means adapting to the culture when leading outside of one's home country. ^[11]

The GLOBE study empirically established nine cultural dimensions that describe the similarities and also the differences in cultural norms, values and beliefs within different societies. They are said to be very important for any leader and/or manager who wishes to grasp their part within a different culture. ^[12]

3.5.1. GLOBE Cultural Dimensions

The cultural dimensions used by the GLOBE study are actually based on the research of Hofstede (1980), Schwartz (1994), Smith (1995), Inglehart (1997), and others, because it was considered useful and so we can see similarities.

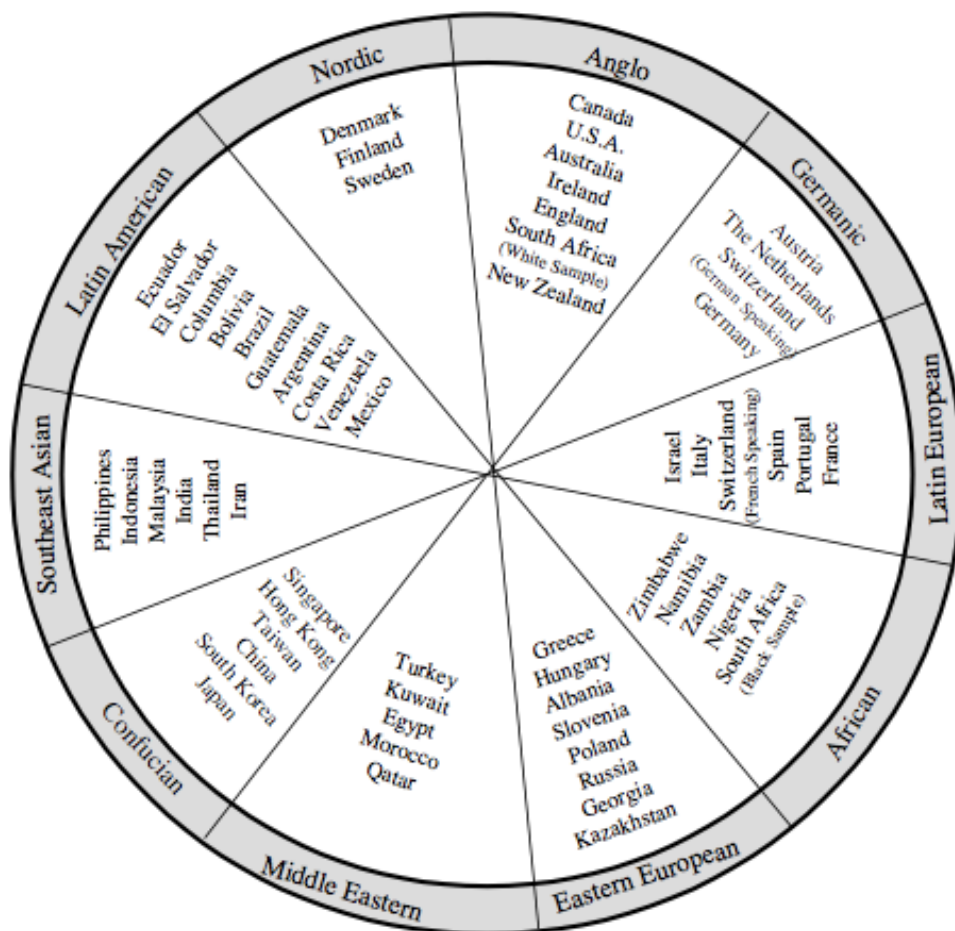
Power distance describes the degree to which the members of the team or any other social group expect that the power should be distributed equally or rather shared unequally. *Uncertainty avoidance* specifies how much an organization or a society relies on established norms, rituals, procedures and rules in order to avoid risk and other unpredictable aspects of the future. *Humane orientation* shows the degree to which the given collective encourages and rewards its members for behaving fairly, altruistically, kind and caring towards others. The GLOBE also distinguishes two types of collectivism. The first is *institutional collectivism*, which focuses on the degree to which a societal institution encourages societal collective actions, such as collective distribution of resources. *In-Group Collectivism* describes the degree to which the individuals of the group express pride, loyalty and cohesiveness within their groups, organizations or families. Another dimension is *assertiveness*, which shows the degree to which the members are determined, confrontational or aggressive in any social relationships or rather the opposite. *Gender Egalitarianism* describes the degree to which they minimize gender role differences and how much they promote gender equality in different positions. The dimension called *future orientation* specifies the extent to which individuals from a group engage in planning,

delaying activities, investing into the future and other future-oriented activities. And the last dimension is *performance orientation*. It describes the degree to which the given society encourages and rewards for excellence and any kind of improved performance within the group. ^{[11][12]}

3.5.2. GLOBE Clusters

The GLOBE research defined 10 regional clusters with specified desired leadership behaviors set to the regions. ^[11] The following diagram shows which countries belong to which cluster. The table after that describes them in detail.

Figure 1: Country Clusters according to GLOBE



Source: Adapted from House et al., 2004

Table 1: Characteristics of country clusters according to GLOBE

Cluster	Desired Characteristics
Anglo	Motivating, visionary, considerate of others, team-oriented, autonomous, autocratic
Germanic	Participation, charisma, autonomy
Latin European	Inspiring, collaborative, participative, self-confident
African	Caring, inspirational, collaborative, not self-centered
Eastern European	Independent, strong interest in protecting position as leader
Middle Eastern	Status, face-saving, status
Confucian Asia	Works with others, cares about others, uses status to make independent decisions
Southeast Asia	Collaborative, inspirational, sensitive to peoples' needs, face-saving, status
Latin American	Charismatic, self-serving, collaborative, inspiring
Nordic Europe	Inspiring, involve others, not concerned with status

Source: Adapted from House et al., 2004

3.5.3. GLOBE leaders

The GLOBE study defines an outstanding leader as someone in an organization, who is “*exceptionally skilled at motivating, influencing, or enabling you, others, or groups to contribute to the success of the organization or task.*” It also generated six specific leadership styles.^[12]

The study set a scale based on which it ranked the styles from being the most universally desirable to the least. The defined leadership styles are the following:^[11]

The charismatic/value-based style is strongly performance-oriented. Such leaders hold quite high standards, are very decisive and innovative. They generally desire to inspire people around them and draw them towards a common vision and by that also drive their subordinates to be more passionate about their work and their performance. They also hold core values very dear and expect high performance from others. ^[12]

The team-oriented style emphasizes team-building and working towards a common purpose within the team. It values loyalty, teamwork and building of relationships. The teams are desired to work cohesively and towards common goals and purposes. ^[13]

The participative style supports involvement of others in the decision-making processes as well as the implementation of solutions. This way it encourages inputs and ideas from everyone involved. It also inclines towards delegation and equality among the workers. ^{[11][12]}

The humane leadership style emphasizes being supportive, considerate, compassionate and generous. The key is being patient and concerned with the well-being of others within the subordinate group. ^{[11][12]}

The autonomous style stresses the importance of the leader to be independent and individualistic. It defines a more self-centric approach to leadership.

The last, but not least global leadership style is the self-protective style, which focuses on the insurance of safety and security of the leader as well as the group. It stresses the importance of procedural, status-conscious and “face-saving” actions and behavior. ^[11]

3.5.4. Universal and Culturally Contingent Leader Characteristics

The study then defined leadership characteristics, which are universally acceptable and if a leader or manager possesses them, he/she will be seen as an outstanding leader in any culture and it also defined the ones, which will definitely cause the leader to be considered as inadequate. ^[11]The following table shows a summary of these characteristics.

Table 2: Universal Leader Characteristics

<i>'Universal' Leader Characteristics</i>	
<u>Contribute to a Person Being Seen as an Outstanding Leader</u>	
Trustworthy	Decisive
Just	Excellence-oriented
Honest	Dependable
Foresight	Intelligent
Plans ahead	Effective bargainer
Encouraging	Win-win problem solver
Positive	Administratively skilled
Dynamic	Communicative
Motive arouser	Informed
Confidence builder	Coordinator
Motivational	Team builder
<u>Inhibit a Person from Being Seen as an Outstanding Leader</u>	
Loner	Irritable
Asocial	Egocentric
Indirect/Non-explicit	Ruthless
Non-cooperative	Dictatorial
<i>Culturally Contingent Leader Characteristics</i>	
Anticipatory	Intuitive
Ambitious	Logical
Autonomous	Micro-manager
Cautious	Orderly
Class conscious	Procedural
Compassionate	Provocateur
Cunning	Risk taker
Domineering	Ruler
Elitist	Self-effacing
Enthusiastic	Self-sacrificial
Evasive	Sensitive
Formal	Sincere
Habitual	Status-conscious
Independent	Subdued
Indirect	Unique
Individualistic	Willful
Intra-group competitor	Worldly
Intra-group conflict avoider	

Source: Adapted from House et al., 2004

We can see that people around the world generally want their leaders to be trustworthy, honest, decisive, etc. However, the expression and presentation of those desired characteristics differs from society to society. ^[11] This means, that, for example, a decisive leader in the United States is one who makes quick decisions, which tend to be

approximate. On the other hand, a decisive leader in Germany or France would be one who is more deliberate and has a more precise approach to making any decisions. The same applies to negative and undesirable characteristics.^[14] Culturally contingent leadership traits, for example ambitiousness, enthusiasm, formality, logical thinking or risk taking, are also generally appreciated and seen differently around the world in different cultures. That is why not only general traits and characteristics are important for managers, but the given culture also needs to be taken into consideration.^[12]

3.6. Importance of minding cultural diversity

Cultural diversity will not disappear any time soon and so we need to take it into consideration and plan accordingly. Mutual understanding is not only important in life, but in business even more. Cultural diversity and its mutual understanding can bring many benefits.^[7]

Even though countries are evolving and still developing, there still are some essential attitudes as well as beliefs deeply rooted in different cultures and we need to count with those ahead and take them into consideration, especially in business.^[15] Such traits can also be used to make assumptions and even calculate how some cultures may react or approach others, rather than suffering a cultural shock and other unpleasant surprises. By knowing different cultures, it gives us certain insights in advance, which can prove to be quite beneficial in the end.^[7]

3.6.1. Contracts

In business, we come across contracts quite often and thanks to globalization, these contracts are made even between managers from different countries.^[15] To some cultures, like the Swiss, Americans or British, a contract is an important formal document that has to be fulfilled and the signatures make it final. To Japanese, a contract only means a starting document, which can be modified whenever needed. And a business person from South America will see a contract as an ideal that would be nice to achieve, but already knows that it is unlikely and they sign it only to avoid possible arguments. We can't say that one of those ways is the only right one because each is ethical for that given culture.^[7]

3.6.2. Language is not the only barrier

It is not enough to learn the foreign language to fully understand. Customs and cultures are important as well, and may even be more important than knowing the language perfectly. We can see that international companies are aware of this fact since some of them have invested in cross-cultural programs for those employees, who represent them abroad. ^[16]

When two people from different cultures are communicating, some meaning can get lost. Not due to poor translation, but due to different meaning and feeling of the cultures. ^[7] It may be translated word-for-word and still may mean something a little different because some words may have a stronger or a poorer feel to them within different cultures. Some languages can have several words, each being slightly different than the next, for only one word with the same translation in another language. Some cultures simply feel strongly or less fond of some meanings, so sometimes they may need several similar expressions that can be translated with only one word in another language. ^[17] For example, English has plenty words for describing someone being good or doing a good job – as great, excellent, amazing, magnificent – however another language, for example Japanese, may have only one word translated simply as for a good job with others being used in different situations. This shows the American emphasis of praising good work where as Japanese only approve of good work being done since it followed directions. ^[7]

Humor is a common thing that cannot be easily translated. Some nationalities, like the Americans, may use it while dealing with business partners and will not see any problems. While the Japanese or the Germans will definitely not approve or even understand how one may talk that way in business matters. ^[18] Such situations may cause problems and deals may not be made due to such misunderstandings. However, when one knows who they are dealing with, such meetings and business matters will be resolved much easier and without such misunderstandings. ^[7]

3.7. Cultural conditioning

A very popular definition of culture from Geert Hofstede states that culture is “*the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one category of people from another.*” ^[18] It clearly shows that people can be divided into groups, in this

case by their cultures, and their state of mind is set by where they grow up. During childhood, the learned national concepts turn into our beliefs. ^[19]

It is important to first understand our culture fully, including its special features that may seem strange to other nationalities. Then we can move on to understanding other cultures, which we may see as abnormal. ^[7]

3.7.1. Categorizing cultures

All the different cultures in the world can be, more or less, classified into the following 3 groups: Linear-active are those who are task-oriented and highly organized planners (such as Germans), multi-active are those who are rather people-oriented on interrelations (such as Italians) and reactive are more introverted and respectful listeners (such as Japanese). ^[7]

Linear-active people, such as the Swiss, Swedes, Dutch, Americans and Germans, generally do one thing at a time and put all their concentration to that specific thing and finish it within a set timetable. They believe that this is the most effective way how to complete tasks. Multi-active people are very flexible and are generally not interested in schedules or punctuality. They consider reality and the current situations happening more important than sticking to appointments. Multi-active cultures include the Portuguese, Spanish, Latin Americans or Africans. ^[7]

This means that when people from multi-active cultures work together with people from linear cultures, it creates stress and irritation on both ends, unless one side adapts to the other.

Reactive cultures listen more and very rarely initiate action or even a discussion. They generally listen first and establish the position of the other side and then they react to it and formulate theirs. Reactive cultures also excel at nonverbal communication, which often substitutes interjections other nations are used to, for example a sigh. They are also known for being economical and they don't waste time. However, they usually don't aspire for leadership. Reactive cultures include Japan, China, Taiwan, Singapore, Korea, Turkey, and Finland. ^[7]

The following table shows the common traits of the three mentioned categories of cultures:

Table 3: Common Traits of Linear-Active, Multi-Active and Reactive Categories

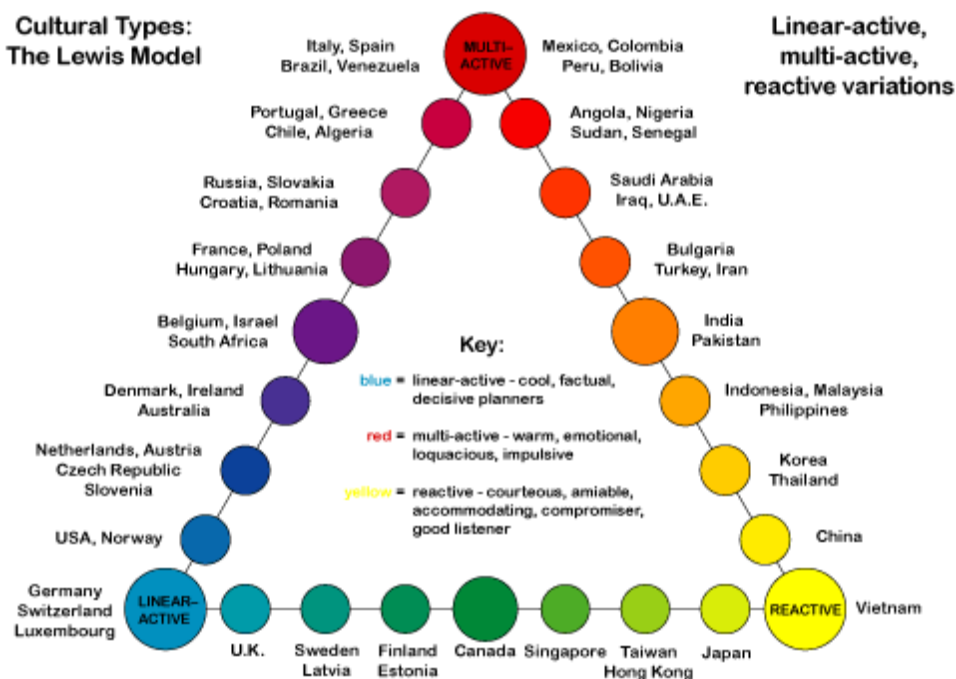
Linear-Active	Multi-Active	Reactive
Introvert	Extrovert	Introvert
Patient	Impatient	Patient
Quiet	Talkative	Silent
Minds own business	Inquisitive	Respectful
Likes privacy	Gregarious	Good listener
Plans ahead methodically	Plans grand outline only	Looks at general principles
Does one thing at a time	Does several things at once	Reacts
Works fixed hours	Works any hours	Flexible hours
Punctual	Not punctual	Punctual
Dominated by timetables and schedules	Timetable unpredictable	Reacts to partner's timetable
Compartmentalizes projects	Let's one project influence another	Sees whole picture
Sticks to plans	Changes plans	Makes slight changes
Sticks to facts	Juggles facts	Statements are promises
Gets information form statistics, reference books, database, internet	Gets first-hand (oral) information	Uses both first hand and researched information
Job-oriented	People-oriented	People-oriented
Unemotional	Emotional	Quietly caring
Works within department	Gets around all departments	Considers all departments
Follows correct procedures	Pulls strings	Networks
Accepts favors reluctantly	Seeks favors	Protects face of other
Delegated to competent colleagues	Delegates to relations	Delegates to reliable people
Completes action chains	Completes human transactions	Reacts to partner

Likes fixed agendas	Interrelates everything	Thoughtful
Brief on telephone	Talks for hours	Summarizes well
Uses memoranda	Rarely writes memos	Plans slowly
Respects officialdom	Seeks out (top) key persons	Ultra-honest
Dislikes losing face	Has ready excuses	Must not lose face
Confronts with logic	Confronts emotionally	Avoids confrontation
Limited body language	Unrestricted body language	Subtle body language
Rarely interrupts	Interrupts frequently	Doesn't interrupt
Separates social/professional	Interweaves social/professional	Connects social and professional

Source: Adapted from Lewis, 2005

The following diagram shows which countries tend to be either linear-active, multi-active or reactive or somewhere between based on their general characteristics.

Figure 2: Cultural types: The Lewis Model



Source: Adapted from Lewis, 2005

3.7.2. fine- tuning

We also have to keep in mind that we need to focus on the context since that is an important factor when categorizing. Also, 3 factors also have to be considered, and those are age, profession and field of study. ^[16]

Age influences the attitudes about society, freedom, law, and authority. Younger people are generally strongly linear-active or multi-active, based on their culture, and older people become more reactive with higher age. ^[20]

Someone's profession also influences his/her behavior. ^[10] Linear-active people are generally engineers, accountants, and technologists and by doing such jobs, it also strengthens their linear-active attitude. Multi-active professions include teachers, artists and also sales and marketing managers. Proactive jobs include doctors and lawyers. However, HR personnel, for example, should be more of a hybrid in-between since they need values from all groups. ^[7]

Also, someone's field of study has an influence on his/her cultural profile. Anyone studying mathematics will find it difficult to ignore the linear factors same way as students of literature or politics will lean more towards multi-active choices. Anyone in medicine, law or history will definitely benefit from developing reactive abilities. ^[20]

We cannot simply say that someone from one country will definitely have all the qualities of that country or that someone of a certain profession will definitely have the qualities of that specification. ^[7] It simply does not work that way. However, people are formed by their cultures as well as their professions and backgrounds, so some general guidelines still apply. ^[17]

In today's world of globalization and the ability to interact with partners all over the world due to constantly developing electronics, it is desirable to deal with people from different cultures in the business world. Understanding of cross-cultural differences is the first step towards creating and keeping better relationships and reducing misunderstandings. It becomes a question of adaptation. ^[21]

Adaptation to all kinds of cultures is quite impossible. However, there is a simplified way of dealing with different cultures and that is by categorizing them into different dimensions, which then helps us understand them better. ^[9] Such categorization helps to predict behavior within a specific culture, clarify certain behavior, avoid offending

someone, search for unity with the culture in question, standardize policies as well as perceive neatness.^[7]

3.7.3. Time

Every country views time differently, every nationality evaluates it in a different way. We can categorize several groups for simpler presentation and understanding.

1.1.1.1. Linear time

Linear time is most visible in America. The Americans are famous for their saying *time is money* because for them it is truly expensive. America is a profit-oriented society where time flows fast and people act fast to make the most of it today. They forget about the past and focus on the present. They even use expressions as wasting time, spending time and saving time – that is because they value it so much.^[7]

Timekeeping is also very important in Switzerland as well as Germany. Linear perception of time is also visible in Anglo-Saxon countries, the Netherlands, Austria and Scandinavia. These nations see time as passing and that it is wasted when no decisions or actions are being made. They also prefer to do one thing at a time and stick to schedules and deadlines. That is the most efficient way for them.^[20] These nations also equate working hours with success. They generally believe that the more hours one works, the more successful one will be and the more money one will make.^[17]

The Swiss have even made precision their national symbol – their watches, optical instruments, banking. Every bus or any other means of transport leave on time, everything can be calculated and predicted.^[7]

1.1.1.2. Multi-Active time

Culture in Southern Europe are multi-active. This means that the more things one can do at the same time, the more fulfilled one is. They are generally not really interested in schedules or punctuality because they see the present reality more important than appointments. Completing *human transactions* is much more important than the passing of time.^[7]

Multi-active cultures include Spaniards, Italians, Arabs and Latin spheres. For them, the meeting itself is what is important, not the timing of it. ^[7]

1.1.1.3. Cyclic time

Some Eastern cultures see time as cyclic. Every day the sun sets and rises again, seasons follow the same pattern, etc. Time is not seen as a scarce commodity, on the contrary, there seems to be an unlimited supply of time. That is why Asians don't see time as racing away but rather that it comes around again when the same opportunities as well as risks will come again and then they will also be much wiser. The expression "*If I had known then what I know now, I would have never done what I did*" proves the cyclical nature of time. ^[7]

When a problem arrives, Asians do not try to solve it as once, they circle around it for a while (days or weeks) and then they commit to solving it after a suitable time of reflection. In Buddhist cultures, like Thailand or Tibet, life goes around in circles as well, not only time. They see generations following generations, crops being harvested over and over, taxes being paid again and again, the sun rises and sets over and over, etc. Such events cannot be changed, definitely not by rushing. ^[22]

1.1.1.4. Chinese

The Chinese also take time to make decisions, but they also value their time. They especially consider taking up someone else's time and they often apologize for that. Also, punctuality is important. It is not unusual for a Chinese to arrive early even up to 30 minutes early. This is done so that the business can be finished before the appointed time for the discussion and that way no personal time is stolen from the other person. Another thing that is customary is to announce about 10 minutes after a meeting has started that they will have to be leaving soon, in order to make their point of the value of their time. However, the meeting will go on as long as is needed to complete the transaction. It is important for the Chinese to develop a sense of trust between the business partners in order to see a prosperous future. ^[7]

1.1.1.5. Japanese

The Japanese see time as *unfolding* or *unwrapping*. We can see breakneck paces in factories and unhurried contemplation in their gardens. The Japanese have a curious way how they segment time – this segmentation does not follow the American most effective use of time manner, it is more concerned with how the time is divided by the interests of appropriateness, politeness and tradition. ^[23]

The Japanese have a conformist and regulated society – they like to know where they stand at all times, both in personal life as well as business. For example, exchanging cards at the beginning of a business meeting is important because it marks the beginning of a relationship. They also clearly define beginnings and endings. All types of classes have to be preceded by a formal request from the students and they have to show appreciation when the class is finished. Other events that need a formal beginning and a formal end include the tea ceremony, gift giving, festivities, drinking, picnics and many others. The Japanese simply must experience the unwrapping of the meaningful phases of the events. ^[22]

When dealing with the Japanese, it is important to “*do the right thing at the right time*” and symbols and form are often more important than content. ^{[7] [23]}

1.1.1.6. Madagascar

In Madagascar, they see the future as flowing into the back of their heads, passing from behind and then it stretches out in front of them. The past gets in front of them because it is known, visible and influential. They spend a lot of time observing their ancestors. They consider the future unknown, behind them where they don't see it.

For example, busses in Madagascar don't follow timetables but wait until they are full of passengers, don't order more supplies/goods until the shelves in the stores are empty, etc. It makes economic sense. ^[7]

1.1.1.7. Objective view of time

We can see that there are several different ways how the concept of time can be understood in different cultures and we can easily spot the situations that may cause conflicts in the business environment. The objective view of time and mainly its sequential

quality is, obviously, advantageous in connection to industrialized organizations and business. Commercial structures are based on time values – time wages, interest, rent, depreciation, insurance, etc. ^[18]

Organizations today demand a particular degree of synchronization of targets and timetables. However, the philosophies of the best ways of how to use time may still remain completely different and will still affect it. ^[17]

3.8. Failure of large companies and success of others

It seems to be too late for many large multi-national organizations to start learning about cultures and take them into consideration. ^[10] Large companies from the biggest economies, such as USA, Japan, Germany or France, have generally been insensitive when dealing, or in their cases rather not dealing, with cultural issues. Throughout history, many companies simply dictated the terms as they were used in their home countries. ^[17]

Both the USA as well as Japan failed to understand or consider other cultures because they are geographically and mentally isolated from the rest of the world. The Americans follow their “American dream” and don’t really consider anything else, the Japanese only obey their emperors and don’t consider anything else as a possibility and such developments influenced their international development and failing to deal with different cultures. Also, Germany, Britain and France have yet to learn how to manage across cultures. ^[19]

Meanwhile, small countries knew they had to follow the rules set by the larger and stronger countries because they simply did not have the power to stand up to them. This actually meant that they sought multiculturalism. ^[7] Canada is a good example of a successfully adapted multicultural society and has great potential for the future. Countries that have reached certain levels of empathy with more powerful countries include Belgium, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, and with lower levels also Greece, Hungary and The Czech Republic. The Latin countries as well as France, Spain and Italy still need to develop their English-language skills. ^[10]

Northern European countries (Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Nordics) possess intercultural skills and are doing quite well on the international market, just consider Nokia, Scania, Volvo, Ericson, Heineken, Shell, Nestlé, or Unilever. Asians can also be

considered as successful because they have learned English and developed an understanding of the Western consumers. ^[7]

3.9. Roots of leadership

The development of leadership is based on historical development and the structures within the cultures. Different societies “breed” different types of leaders based on their own needs, expectations, habits and their historical development. However, it can be seen throughout history that many countries have failed to learn from history as long as the culture survives and proves to be successful. ^[7]

The mentality of cultures is created not only by historical development of the nation and the location, but also by their language. Language has great influence on visions, poetic feelings, charisma, discipline, emotion and hierarchy. All that combined creates influences the beliefs and values of a culture, which are then passed on from generation to generation. ^[24]

The views on authority differ greatly not only between continents, but even neighboring countries as well. Organizations are basically created by leaders, no matter if the leadership style is despotic, individual or collective. Networking styles focus on the status of the leader, chain of command, management style, motivation of employees and the language used. Task-oriented styles need leadership that tackles issues, formulates strategies, creates work ethics, decides on efficiency, use of time and task distribution. ^[20]

Managers from linear-active cultures are more task-oriented. They generally look for technical competence, focus more on facts and logic rather than emotions and value results. They stick to set agendas and are prone to careful planning. ^[7]

Multi-active managers are extroverted; they persuade and inspire their workers more and focus on emotions. They develop their contacts and devote time to it, they are more network-oriented. ^[7]

Leaders from reactive cultures are generally people-oriented and they lead with their knowledge, patience and quiet control. They are also modest, courteous, and focus on creating harmonious working atmosphere where teamwork can work best. They are more paternalistic in their companies. They also use more meaningful body language. ^[25]

As we can see, leadership styles are culture-bound. Authorities are based on all kinds of things, like charisma, birthright, wealth, education or achievement. Corporations

also have different structures. All this, as well as the government structures, religions within the given cultures and other requirements have its affect on the fashion of authority and leadership within companies. ^[25]

3.10. International Teams

Today’s world is constantly changing and companies are growing into large international companies. The borders between countries are mostly open and so people can travel for work almost anywhere. ^[21] This means that international and multi-cultural teams are being formed. Let’s look at why that may or may not be rewarding for the companies and what it entails.

International teams provide wider horizons, which are gained through the compound diverse views. Even though individuals’ abilities depend on their personal talents, education and their experience, when they are members of international teams, their strengths (as well as weaknesses) can be derived from their cultures. ^[7]

The following table shows strong insights of some cultures as well as their weaknesses – or blind spots – that can either greatly benefit international teams or lead to problems as well.

Table 4: Insight and blind spots of different nationalities

Nationality	Insights	Blind Spots
Finns	- common sense - accuracy	- small talk - why Latins say one thing and do another
Germans	- order - processes - details	- subtle humor
Americans	- drive - bottom-line focus - optimism	- insensitivity to non-American values
Japanese	- courtesy - patience	- individual decision-making - Western humor

French	- logic - rhetoric	- seek to win the argument rather than discover the truth
Italians	- communicative skills	- agendas - punctuality
Spaniards	- idealism - imagination - human warmth	- shaky planning - impatience with details
Brits	- diplomacy - reasonableness	- foreign language - “up-to-dateness”
Swedes	- collective skills - planning	- slow decision makers - complacency
Chinese	- negotiating skills - patience - courtesy	- lack of international exposure - sense of urgency - Western humor
Overseas Chinese	- experienced - risk takers - bottom-line focus - organized	- almost none
Indians	- skilled negotiators - communicative - warm	- strict planning
Koreans	- energetic - hard-working - good planners	- distorted worldview due to excessive nationalism
Latin Americans	- imaginative - risk takers	- mañana - cooperation - accuracy
Arabs	- sincerity - morality	- unity - teamwork
Africans	- warmth	- organizational skills

	- colorful	
	- humor	
Russians	- warmth	- sustained effort
	- directness	- trust
Malaysians	- moral	- ambition
	- educated	- drive
	- culturally sensitive	
Thais	- easy-going	- ambition
	- cooperative	- dislike responsibility
Vietnamese	- educated	- modern management
	- hard-working	techniques
	- persistent	
Filipinos	- democratic	- punctuality
	- friendly	- accountability
	- neat	
Eastern Europeans	- culturally aware	- structure of business in a
		democracy

Source: Adapted from Lewis, 2005

3.10.1. Advantages of Diverse Teams

International teams can generate more alternatives due to their different points of view when solving problems as well as create better critical analysis. They generally also respond better to cultural preferences and forecasting in local markets. Also, they are said to create better product designs due to their broader perspectives. It has also been proved that bilinguals generally have higher levels of divergent thinking. When communicating in different languages between different cultures, more stimulation and real dialogue goes on between the people involved. Also, such groups are said to tolerate chaos or ambiguity better with a better moral basis in the group. ^[7]

3.10.2. Challenges of multi-cultural teams

Even when the manager is aware of the differences within his/her multi-cultural team and knows about their nationalities, some aspects of everyday management have to be focused on more.

Since communication is essential for any team, the manager needs to balance properly between direct and indirect communication. Some cultures are used to communicate directly and in a simple way. Others don't see it polite.^[18] It is up to the manager to figure out whether his/her subordinates are more direct or not because it may lead to misunderstandings and conflicts as well. People from indirect cultures may not inform about problems directly and someone not used to such communication may just overlook it as only a comment, which may lead to even bigger problems.^[26]

Troubles with accents and fluency in languages may also cause problems. Even though English has become the international language of business, many international teams consist of members who are not particularly fluent in English or have their own accents which others may find difficult to understand. Overall communication may be slowed down.^[18]

Differing attitudes toward authority and different hierarchies within companies may also cause problems. Workers may feel uncomfortable or even embarrassed in the environment opposite to their home culture. For example, Western cultures tend to have rather flat hierarchies and people from high power distance countries may see it as inappropriate and maybe even humiliating to be working in such an environment.^[10]

The speed of decision-making processes is very conflicting and probably the most stressful aspect of multi-cultural teams. This is connected to the perception of time in different cultures, as was discussed above. Some cultures, as the US, see it important to make decisions very quickly, others, like the Koreans, feel the need for longer processes before they can decide. Such situations, where decisions have to be made between two "opposite" nationalities can lead to stress and unhappiness within the team.^[26]

3.10.3. Strategies

When communication issues and differences in decision-making strategies cause problems, it is important for the manager to make sure that the team members recognize and, more importantly, acknowledge their differences and are prepared to figure them out. Simply put, the team members need to adapt to their new team environment and find a way

how to work together, taking into consideration each other's differences. If they don't do it themselves, it is up to the manager to help them. However, it may take time. ^[26]

Structural intervention can be used in cases when problems connected to language barriers or any prejudices occur within a team. The tension within the team needs to be reduced. It may help to subdivide the team, however, it may cause even more barriers.

Managerial interventions are needed when basic rules are missing or are broken, the work hierarchy has been dishonored or when someone "loses their face". ^[18] The manager has to intervene and resolve the problem. However, it has to be explained to everyone what is going on and why, otherwise the manager may just be seen as making decisions and changing things on his/her own. ^[26]

A strategy thought of as being of last resort is called "exit" and it simply means that a member of the team is let go. It can be voluntary or by request from management. It usually happens when too much "face was lost" on both sides and there is no way of going back. ^[26]

We can see that multi-national teams are quite common nowadays. They have their advantages as well as disadvantages connected to management. Some guidelines can be set, but mostly managers have to work from the concrete situations separately.

3.11. The Czech Culture

The Czech culture is classified as linear-active and data-oriented. The Czechs are seen as inspiring with many skills and a high level of education. However, some may still be influenced by the historical development of the republic. ^[8]

3.11.1. Values

The Czech cultural values include individualism, creativity, morality, tolerance, flexibility, discipline, rationality, steadiness and loyalty. Czechs are also considered as pragmatic, egalitarian, lacking self-confidence and having sense of humor. They also value work ethics, create lasting friendships and love learning, music and theater, which have a great tradition in The Czech Republic. Czech people generally begrudge power that would be imposed from the outside from foreign rulers as well as inequality. ^[7]

3.11.2. Concepts

The Czech Republic has a high rate of literacy and the great level of education throughout history has helped the development of democratic and liberal thinking. However, Czechs have been stuck with strict bureaucracy and high value of regulations for many years. ^[27]

Even though Czechs hold handshaking as a necessary ritual when meeting people or leaving, embracing or kissing in public are not so common. Many Czechs like to keep to themselves within their comfort zones further away from others. ^[27]

Czech Republic has been estimated to be a country with average power distance, with average values of masculinity. It also has a relatively high level of uncertainty avoidance with average individualism values. ^[7]

3.11.3. Czech time

Czech timetables, whether it's for bus schedules or appointments, are quite orderly and kept. Means of transportation generally leave on time and people come on time as well, whether it's for work in the morning or to a set meeting. They are also quite used to starting work in the morning and rather start earlier and finish sooner in the afternoon than work late at night – or course this differs among specific professions. ^[7]

3.11.4. Communication

Czech people are generally soft speakers and prefer to communicate in a more considerate style. They don't like to make fast conclusions, they are more phlegmatic and unenthusiastic. Czech humor is said to be "dry and black."^[7]

Czechs are also generally polite and listen closely to others. They also don't fancy feedback so much. Responses may quite often be sarcastic. Since they see time as linear, they don't like ambiguous discussions. Negotiation with Czechs is usually rational and thoughtful. Confrontation is generally disliked. Czechs consider themselves as very flexible or adaptable when it comes to problem solving. Decisions may be pushed a few days, but not too far ahead. Other nations see them as creative, serious, unpredictable and moralistic. For example, there are many entrepreneurs in The Czech Republic.^[27]

Czechs go by set structures and regulations. They also handle planning quite well. However, this causes that they are not so good at dealing with chaos as some other nations may be.^[27]

People in the Czech Republic are also considered as more reserved than others. They generally don't like to show emotions, especially during negotiations. They also prefer a more low-context way of communication.^[7]

3.11.5. Manners

Czechs value old-fashioned concepts when it comes to formalities. They may be less gallant towards women, but they dress up whenever they attend social occasions, such as the theater, and they always shake hands.^[27]

Another important aspect of the Czech social life is always addressing people by their academic titles. This is how they show respect for education. They like to be seen as very civilized. Also, in the business world, Czechs do not invite their business associates to their home so fast as some nations. They prefer doing that when their loyalty and acquaintanceship matures between the involved parties.^[7]

Czechs are deal-focused. This means that talking straight about business is not considered rude. Czech are also comfortable with doing business with strangers.^[7]

3.11.6. Motivation and empathy

Czechs generally like being challenged by their work. However, money is a strong motivator for the majority. They like to invent new things and by that find specific solutions. They are keen of maintaining a certain amount of formality, otherwise it may lead to damaging their work drive. Any discussions should be calm and rational, otherwise it serves as a strong de-motivator. Also, Czechs do not like to talk about politics, war or religion (because of history). One should definitely avoid slouching when in the company of business associates. ^[7]

4. Primary Research - Questionnaire

The primary research that was conducted for the purposes of this thesis was in the form of a questionnaire. It was distributed among members of multi-cultural teams, which are led by a Czech manager. The questionnaires were completed anonymously and spread by email. Large international companies were contacted for the purposes of the questionnaire. The questions are open-ended so that the respondents are not limited by any options and can express exactly how they see it.

The target group, which filled in this questionnaire, are members of multi-cultural teams in the Czech Republic that are managed by a Czech manager or team leader. The main focus is to find out how satisfied the subordinates of a Czech manager are and consequently evaluate whether Czech managers are able to manage multi-cultural teams effectively. All questions are open-ended since a qualitative research method was applied – the use of a codebook and cross-referencing. The results are summed up and evaluated below.

4.1. Nationality

The first question asked the respondents to fill in their nationality in order to show the scope of the responding group. This questionnaire was filled in by 20 Brits, 15 Americans, 15 French, 12 Koreans, 10 Germans, 9 Italians, 9 Slovaks, 7 Japanese, 2 Indians and 1 Kazakhstani. It is considered as a diverse enough group for the purposes of this thesis.

4.2. Age

The second question asked the age of the respondent. Half of the respondents were between 30-40, 35% were between 20-30 and the rest was above 40. We can see that the majority is a younger generation and we should take it into consideration with further results. It can be assumed that younger generations are more adaptable as well as more willing to be a part of a multi-cultural team.

4.3. Gender

The third question asks about the gender of the respondent. The responding group consisted of 65% males and 35% females. We can see that even though it is not exactly evened out between the two genders and so multi-cultural teams are made up of more men than women, the difference is not considered as so large. The explanation can be that women may not wish to travel from their home countries so much, especially if they have stronger ties to their families at home. The women also belong to the younger group, no women over 40 took part in this research.

4.4. Attitude towards working with people from other cultures

The fourth question focuses on whether the respondent likes working with people from other cultures than is his/her own. Here, 80% of the respondents replied positively, 5% said that they don't like it and 15% of the respondents said that it depends on what culture.

The reasoning behind the negative replies included facts such as complicated communication, language barriers and too many differences to get used to. The ones that responded with a "yes" wrote that they like learning about different cultures, they think that different people come up with different ideas at work and bring different views on matters. Several also answered with "it is more fun" or "it is more interesting". This clearly shows the willingness towards working among people from different cultures.

The 15% who responded with "it depends" obviously have had some good and some bad experience with some cultures because the majority of them commented with "sometimes it is more complicated" and "some cultures have habits that make work harder" or "some are easy to get along with, others are weird". It is clear that they notice the differences and that they have run into some trouble previously, but they are still not completely opposed to the idea. It can be considered as a good sign since they are aware of the differences, they may also respond to them differently or even be more adaptable. Those are definitely good qualities for members of intern-cultural teams.

This question shows us that the majority of the respondents like working with others from different cultures, they probably wouldn't be working where they are if they didn't. It also shows that some differences are easy to spot and may cause problems in the

workplace and affect the employees negatively, which is always a risk in multi-cultural teams. However, being aware of it is the first step.

4.5. Duration of work in the Czech Republic

The fifth question asked the respondents about how long have they been working and living in the Czech Republic. It can be assumed that the longer someone lives in a country, the more accustomed he/she gets. Twenty percent of the respondents have been living in the CR for less than a year when they filled in the questionnaire, 50% were between 1-3 years and the rest was above 3 years. We can suspect that most of them have had time to get to know the Czech culture well enough as well as their new work environment and have overcome their first shocks. However, such situations may be considered quite differently on personal levels.

4.6. Strictly set rules in the workplace

The sixth question asked whether the respondent thinks that strictly set rules are needed in a workplace and why. As we have found out in the literature review, Czechs are bureaucratic and they usually strictly follow rules and regulations. They also generally require discipline. So, it can be assumed that similar conditions can be set by Czech managers.

All of the respondents replied that rules are definitely needed. However, 43% didn't agree fully with the word "strict" in front of it. They rather feel that things should go a bit smoother and in a friendlier and a more flexible manner. The rest simply wrote that there would be chaos without rules, that regulations are necessary for the work to get done properly and that it creates a kind of a measuring stick (depending on what the rules involve) in the workplace.

The results show that the respondents are not against regulations, they are perhaps used to being guided in this way. This means that Czech managers should not have serious problems in this area.

4.7. Personal relations in the workplace

The next question focuses on whether personal relations in the workplace are important for the respondents or whether they just want to focus on the work and not make friends. Czechs value friendship, but tend to hold back before foreigners.

The majority, 73%, responded that personal relations in the workplace are important for them. The reasons don't vary much, they agree that if they didn't have friends or at least someone to talk to and share ideas with at work that they would definitely enjoy it less, that they need personal support from someone at work. It was also interesting, that out of these 73%, 1/4 added that good personal relations at work in a foreign country are more important for them since they don't really have any friends outside of work in the country. This means that such situations may influence someone's attitude as well as their answers.

Perhaps someone did not really have friends at work at their home country and did not mind but when they came to a foreign country things changed. Since they don't know anyone outside of work (at least not in the beginning) they may see it more important to form personal relations at work. Either way, the majority prefers to have friends at their workplace.

The rest, 27%, said that when they don't really need good personal relations at work because when they are at work, professional relations, sticking to goals and work itself are more important. They don't think it is important as long as they have friends outside of work, they can have it separate and not mind. The nationalities that answered negatively to this question included Germans and Japanese, so we can connect it to their cultures.

It is very common that people prefer to have good relations at work because they have to communicate and be with their colleagues every day. Many people find it easier to work with someone they consider friends. However, if someone does not wish to act that way and deals strictly with business at work, they should be respected.

4.8. Standing up to authority

This question asks whether they would stand up to authority if they were certain that they were right about something at work and they were positive that their managers/ team leaders were not. Here, 66% said that they would definitely speak their mind and say

what they think, the rest, 34%, answered that they would respect the order of their manager.

The reasons for speaking their mind are simple – if they believe that they are correct, they will say something or at least point the differences out because it is the work of the team, which involves them and they would not want to be responsible for failure or have doubt. A phrase like “everyone should contribute” occurred many times. They simply feel that if they are sure of something, and especially when there is evidence, they do not see a reason why not to say something.

The reasons for not speaking up included mostly “out of respect towards authority” or that they wouldn’t want to make fools of themselves if perhaps they were wrong. Even phrases like “I don’t see why” or “I would never do that” occurred. Here we can see strict respect for their managers or team leaders. This again often comes from cultural background. Some cultures take authority very seriously.

Czech managers should not have problems with someone pointing out mistakes, as long as it is straight to the point with supportive evidence and leads to constructive solutions. In other cases, they may not ask twice whether everyone agrees and wait if someone has to make up their mind whether to speak up or not.

4.9. Collective decision making

The ninth question focuses on the problem of collective decision-making. Whether the team the respondents work in makes decisions together or not and whether they are comfortable with the situation or not. To this question, 82% replied that their team makes decisions collectively and that they like it this way, so the result is pretty straightforward. However, the ones that said that they do not make collective decisions in their teams, the reasons were either that the manager usually just says what to do or that there are a few people involved in the decisions but not everyone. There also was another option among the responses combining that they did not get to make decisions collectively but that the respondents did not mind it. This group summed 6%.

It is clear that they notice. It may be harder for them to recognize that they also can contribute to the discussions. Either way, it is up to the manager to include everyone, even if they have to ask everyone separately. Still, the result for the Czech managers is considered as good.

4.10. Why Czech Republic?

The next question asked why the respondents came to The Czech Republic to get insight why they chose it or how they got into the team they are in now. It is clear that the majority of the respondents came to the Czech Republic on business already in contact with the company and to a certain position. The phrase “on business” occurred in 91% of the responses. However, 9% of the respondents said they wanted to work in Europe and basically stumbled on Czech Republic. Also, 45% of the respondents wrote something in the sense that they have previously visited the Czech Republic (mainly Prague) and fell in love with the country (or city) and so they wanted to return. Here we can assume that they had at least some kind of an idea where they were going and that they have met Czech people before. Another reason was that thanks to its position (Central Europe) it is easier to travel to the neighboring countries. We can see that the Czech Republic is considered as a quite good location to come to, at least among the target group of this research.

4.11. The hardest obstacles when moving to the Czech Republic

The next question focused on what was the hardest thing they had to overcome when they moved to the Czech Republic. More than half of the respondents wrote more than one reason.

The majority, 80%, answered that they had to get used to the different mentality of people and to the different habits and the different culture. Getting used to the new environment was also a very common response, usually together with the cultural differences. A phrase “cultural shock” appeared among 12% of the respondents. It is interesting to see that the respondents actually wrote their answers in context with cultural differences and that they are actually aware that it is due to the different cultural backgrounds instead of writing something like “the people are different”. The explanation can be that they are in fact highly educated people and they have thought about it previously. This means that most of the members of such multi-cultural teams are aware and perhaps prepared for such differences beforehand.

Also, 57% replied that it was hard to be away from their families, which is quite understandable. Another reason, which appeared in 23% of the responses, was the moving

itself, buying everything and that generally everything was new. Also, 37% of the respondents wrote that they had to get used to the different weather. Language barriers, or any comment connected to the fact that they couldn't understand Czech or had any troubles with communication, appeared in 67% of the responses.

Another obstacle that appeared in 27% of the responses was that they had some kind of a problem with a colleague. None of the respondents specified what the problem was so we can only assume it was work related and perhaps had something to do with different attitudes (culturally related or not) at work.

Generally speaking, most of the reasons are connected to cultural differences. None of the respondents wrote anything about difficulties at their jobs, so we can assume that their companies helped them adapt in the workplace or that the change was simply not that difficult.

However, what is most important for this research is that no one wrote that they had any problems with their managers. This means that at least for these respondents, the hardest things for them when moving to another country and starting to work for Czech managers were in fact cultural differences and issues connected to the country itself, but not any troubles with their Czech managers/ team leaders. It may seem a little too optimistic. However, we have to take into consideration that maybe there were problems the respondents did not wish to specify, they just weren't so important in the whole context.

4.12. Information about the Czech culture and the working environment beforehand

The 12th question asked whether the respondents were told about the Czech culture and the working environment conditions in the Czech Republic before they came or not, and if not if they would like to be informed or not. Here, 63% replied with a simple "yes" so we can see that some companies take this into consideration. Also, 31% out of those replied by "I found it myself" and the majority of them as well as the rest of the respondents said that they had a seminar at their company when they came to the country. This shows that the companies in the Czech republic and their managers think of the cultural differences and are prepared for it beforehand, even though it is not such a big percentage from the whole.

However, with the “yes” answers, we do not know where these respondents got the information because it may not have been within their companies, but perhaps friends or someone else. The respondents did not specify. Either way, we can see that this issue of preparation beforehand (at least to some extent) is not omitted, which is definitely a good thing.

4.13. Valued characteristics in Czech team leaders/managers

The next question asked what characteristics do the respondents value in their managers/ team leaders. Every respondent wrote at least 3 characteristics. The most common characteristics were flexibility (81%), friendliness (75%), skills (73%), rationality (71%) and formality (69%). Keeping to timetables had 65%. Other, also very common were creativity (54%), discipline (52%), tolerance (52%) and keeping calm (41%). Good humor and “takes time with decisions” appeared in 30% of the answers.

It is interesting to see flexibility at the top. This points to the fact that anyone working in a multi-cultural environment should be flexible in many ways and that people notice and value it. Friendliness comes out also very important. This shows that anyone in a foreign country tends to value relationships at the workplace more and friendlier managers can help in this way. One of the previous questions showed that personal relations at the workplace are needed and this only supports that Czech managers are mostly friendly, which turns out to be a good thing. Valuing skills and saying that Czech managers are considered as skillful only bodes well for the managers as well.

The question of time, especially in the context of keeping to set schedules, is quite controversial in the world as was described in the literature review of this thesis. We can see that more than half of the respondents were happy with the way Czechs stick to timetables. Even enough satisfied to consider it a positive characteristic. Which is not a bad result. We don't know whether others did not include it because they consider it too strict and thus not a positive characteristic, or whether their manager in question is simply not so good at keeping set times.

Tolerance is also very important, especially when managing a multi-cultural team. If the members felt that they, and mainly their differences, were not tolerated, it could make them feel uncomfortable in the workplace. This means it is definitely positive that Czech managers can be tolerate. Overall, the named characteristics match some of the

“universal leader characteristics” previously mentioned. This is considered as a positive find.

4.14. Disliked characteristics in Czech team leaders/managers

The next question asked quite the opposite – what characteristics do the respondents dislike in their managers/ team leaders. Most of the respondents answered with only one characteristic, some with two but no more. We can assume that they chose the one that they truly have a hard time getting used to.

The ones that score most include slow-decision making (52%) and responses somehow describing that the managers keep to themselves (individualistic) in a distance in their comfort zones (49%). This shows the clash of cultures in the area of time management. Some members would be more comfortable if the decisions were just made fast and not a lot of time was taken up – for example the Americans involved in this research. Czechs don’t like to risk as much so they rather devote more time to decision-making. It may cause problems but Czechs are more cautious. Even though it depends on the specific situations and the respondents may have had some in mind, it does not seem like a deal-breaker.

Keeping to themselves and acting individualistically may cause problems because the team may start feeling left out. However, half of the respondents don’t mind it. It is another example of cultures colliding. Nonetheless, if a team made up of foreigners in a strange country for them feel like their manager is too distant, it may cause problems. Mainly at the beginning of their stay, when they don’t know their way around, they expect help and support to a certain extent and if the manager fails to connect, the relationship may be hurt from then on.

A reply connected to strictly kept timetables appeared in 31% of the responses. It was actually from the more “relaxed” cultures so it wasn’t so surprising. However such conflicts may cause larger problems if the subordinates get stressed. If they are willing to adapt a little it should be fine. This problem is expected in such situations and somehow a compromise should be reached. It is up to the manager to explain why and how things are done (in connection to time management) and to perhaps adjust it a little if he/she sees that it causes some problems within the team. However, we can expect that even someone who

is not used to sticking to schedules can be persuaded with good reasoning to change a little for the good of the team.

Lastly, 27% of the respondents were uncomfortable with the sarcasm the manager uses and his/her sense of humor in the workplace. This is something the manager can control easiest of all. Even though it is a relatively small percentage and perhaps the subordinates can get used to it, it should be kept under control. Making subordinates uncomfortable is definitely not the way to go. It is important that the manager does not act sarcastic or tell jokes that may be easily misinterpreted by the rest of the team. Definitely not in the beginning, maybe when they form friendships in time and get to know each other better. Otherwise it is strongly advised not to joke or be sarcastic in such a multi-cultural workplace.

All in all the disliked characteristics don't seem to look so bad and are something the managers can change if they try. This supports the idea that Czech managers are capable of leading multi-cultural teams.

4.15. Satisfaction with communication in the team

The next question focused on how satisfied are the respondents with the communication within their teams. This question was asked since communication is essential in business teams, as we know from the theory of management. This means that if they were to be found unsatisfied, it could be considered as a problem of the manager in charge.

The results came down to 83% being satisfied and 17% unsatisfied. However, some of the positive answers were "OK" or "fine" or simply a "yes", which may suggest room for changes, but that the overall communication is considered as acceptable, which is definitely a good sign.

Also, most of the negative responses had only a simple "no" and 12% added a comment which showed that they were fine with the way the manager communicated, they had some problems with the other members. We can only guess but such problems may be caused by language barriers or severe differences in behavior, which can be affected by the cultural background or which are simply someone's own completely.

Either way, this means, that we can say that the managers are quite well prepared and more conscientious in their roles. The majority of the answers proved that Czech managers are capable in this area.

4.16. Overall satisfaction with Czech managers

The next question asked whether the respondent is happy with his/her manager as well as a part of the team. Surprisingly, 85% said that they were satisfied and only 15% were not happy with their managers overall. This is considered as a very good result for Czech managers, at least for the ones that were evaluated. On the other hand, some may have answered only with respect to their managers as is custom in some cultures, so we cannot really say that this result is exact.

Not everyone commented their response, which is a shame. However, the comments ranged from “he/she is cool”, “I admire his/her strength/bravery to have a multi-cultural team” to “I could never do what he/she does”. Such comments made up about 20% of the comments. Then there were a few responses such as “not perfect but good enough”. Even though it may not be something many people would like to hear, it is still considered as positive. The working atmosphere can get tough sometimes, not everyone gets along all the time so people have reserves toward one another. Some just don’t like to compliment others. Either way, it is still considered as acceptable.

The comments that were negative included “does not seem to take much seriously”, “lacking authority”, and “does not consider everyone’s differences”. Other negative replies did not specify their reason. These are serious accusations. The comments concerning not taking things seriously were actually mostly from the same people who complained about bad humor in the workplace, so it only underlines the importance of holding such jokes and sarcastic comments back. It is obviously something that affects other members of the team in an unpleasant way.

From this question, we can generalize that Czech managers are doing fine. They still have some areas they need to perfect in their managerial skills, but who doesn’t? The overall impression seems very positive.

5. Conclusion

The focus of this thesis is the concept of managing international workforce – namely a multi-cultural team. First, theoretical aspects of management were observed and basic responsibilities of any manager were summarized. Second, cultural differences were studied together with its general affects on management in the business world. These differences have to be taken into consideration by any manager with an international team of workers. Thirdly, research was conducted in the form of a questionnaire. It was focused on multi-cultural teams that are led by Czech managers. Thus, it provided insight how satisfied are subordinates of Czech managers and providing answers to the question, whether Czech managers are able to properly manage multi-national teams.

We can distinguish several important differences between cultures that can cause severe problems in the business world. Each culture basically has its own identity, own values and these values are embedded in the members of that culture (and everyone within a culture also has their own personal attitudes). These cultural values can be expected to be rooted deeply in everyone who is a part of that given culture and they practically may not change, ever. However, when we are aware of them and calculate with it beforehand, it will surely make things easier, especially when doing business between different cultures. Because to a certain extent, we not only know who exactly we will be dealing with, but we can prepare for that encounter and perhaps adapt or change at least slightly for a better approach.

It is important to remember not to judge other cultures based on some differences that may seem strange. Everyone should remember that their culture is not “perfect” either. So, before trying to judge others, one should think about their values first more objectively. Then individuals from different cultures may learn from each other as well as respect each other.

The main cultural differences that can cause problems (not only) in the business world and to any manager include differences in respect to authority, different approaches towards working together or solitarily, taking risks, planning or generally caring for subordinates. Different approaches towards authority and respect connected to it may cause problems in communication. Sometimes, the subordinates may feel like they cannot speak up and say their opinion to their bosses/managers or that they don't have the right to

urge something. Such situations may lead to larger problems and even more serious consequences. For example, when there is a problem discovered by the worker but completely overlooked by the manager or another complication and the subordinate feels that he/she cannot say anything out of respect because the manager said that it is okay. The manager may have just overlooked it by mistake, but if nobody points it out it will not get fixed. Or when we turn the situation around and someone from a more relaxed and free culture where they don't focus on keeping their "face" were to speak up every time or even joke around with a manager that strictly holds his/her status, it will make them uncomfortable and they will think that the worker is being rude. Thus, it is important to explain how such communication should be handled and declare some ground rules about what is okay and what is not okay beforehand.

Teamwork may also not be supported in every country, some cultures focus solely on the achievements of individuals and some prefer team efforts. Where one might feel natural with sharing everything with their team and doing everything they can to help the company and are completely loyal, others just focus on their own work, their own success and prefer to work alone. This may lead to complications as well. The same applies to risk taking. Some cultures are simply more cautious and prefer to have all the facts and enough time to make decisions, others dive right in and accept risks connected with it. So, when people from cultures with opposite views on risk taking work together, they can drive each other mad, unless perhaps some guidelines are set and they treat each other with respect.

Planning, being an essential part of any business, is also done differently among different cultures. Some cultures prefer to plan far ahead with goals for several years in the future, others don't really have a grasp on planning and think only about short-term plans. Such differing views can cause trouble with decision-making and bringing new ideas to life.

Perhaps the most controversial and causing the most stress in the workplace is the different perception of time between different cultures. We can distinguish three basic types – linear, multi-active and cyclic, however, the situation is not entirely that simple. Linear cultures generally like to do one thing after the other and stick to plans, usually dealing with things as fast as possible. Multi-active cultures juggle several things at a time and focus on finishing human transactions, constantly adjusting their schedules. Cyclic cultures view time as always coming back in cycles and they always have the right time for

things. They also value their past and take the lessons learned in consideration. Other cultures may have a mixture of the three or even something different. As is clear from the different descriptions, cooperation between cultures with different viewed of time is definitely tricky. The most common example is the “coming on time” perception. Some culture will come 30 minutes early, some exactly on the minute and some will not see it as a problem if they arrive two hours late. So, when someone has to manage a multi-cultural team, it is important to stress these differences and explain how “punctual” subordinates should be. If it is not underlined in the beginning, it will definitely cause problems later on. This is the kind of thing the manager needs to take into consideration all the time.

When it comes to managers, it is possible to generalize several “universally” valued characteristics. This means that such a manager would be acceptable in any culture. Such manager should be trustworthy, honest, positive, motivating, intelligent, decisive, communicative, motivational and a team builder. If a manager possesses some of these qualities, it can be expected that he/she will succeed with any culture, thus also in a multi-cultural team. And, of course, generally bad characteristics can be specified as well.

It is clear that the management of international workforce has to go as smoothly as possible without many conflicts of misunderstandings that may cause trouble. Some large international companies have succeeded and some haven't and many times the reasons include cultural misunderstanding. The need for international teams today is obvious and so it is important to manage them properly. International teams wider the horizons for companies in many aspects. However, it is a challenge. It is clear that certain adaptation and adjustments have to be made.

The research that was conducted for the purposes of this thesis dealt with the question, whether Czech managers are capable of leading a multi-cultural workforce. It showed that the most important characteristic of a Czech manager seems to be flexibility. It makes sense since a manager in such a position has to be flexible enough to handle all the responsibilities of a manager of a multi-cultural team. Many changes as well as abnormalities from general management can occur and the manager needs to be able to deal with it appropriately. The second most important characteristic is being open and friendly, supporting teamwork and good personal relations at the workplace. Which again makes sense since the manager's team is made up of foreigners in a strange country for them so they need to hold together at work and support each other. If the manager can

support such behavior, then he/she will be perceived as a good manager by his/her team. These traits are also in the “universal” characteristics of leaders, so no wonder they came up as positive characteristics of Czech managers. It is also important to remember, that communication is essential in the business environment. It needs to be set up in a way that everyone from the team is fully informed and on time. Czech managers have also proved to be capable in this area.

However, we need to take into consideration that this research did not include all Czech managers or potential managers and when they get to the post to manage international teams, we can assume that they have to prove themselves capable in some way. So, some positive qualities have to show up. It is possible that the managers of the researched group of people are adequate, but we can definitely meet some that would surely not pass. Also, the answers may not be one hundred percent true or complete. The respondents may have just answered very quickly due to time constraints or not completely truly, etc. But as the figures are quite high or show pretty straightforward results, such differences were not considered as high as to change anything drastically.

All in all, since Czech managers came out to be quite adaptable and flexible and the questionnaire has shown that their subordinates are generally satisfied with them, we can conclude that Czech managers are fully capable of managing multi-cultural teams.

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7. Appendix

Questionnaire – members of multi-cultural teams with a Czech manager

1. Nationality
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Do you like working with people from other cultures? Why/Why not?
5. How long have you been living in the Czech Republic?
6. Strictly set rules are always needed in the workplace, do you agree? Why/Why not?
7. Are good personal relations in the workplace important for you? Why/Why not?
8. Would you stand up to authority (in this case your manager) if you were positive you are correct and they are not? Why/Why not?
9. Do you believe that decisions are to be made collectively or not? How are they made within your team and are you comfortable with it? Why/Why not?
10. Why did you come to the Czech Republic?
11. What was hardest when you first moved to the Czech Republic?
12. Did someone tell you anything about the Czech culture and the working environment before you came? If not, would you like them to?
13. What characteristics do you value in your team leader/manager?
14. What characteristics do you dislike in your team leader/manager?
15. How are you satisfied with the communication in your team?
16. Are you happy with your team leader/manager? Please comment in detail.