



Journal of Intercultural Management and Ethics

JIME

ISSN 2601 - 5749, ISSN-L 2601 - 5749

published by

Center for Socio-Economic Studies and Multiculturalism

Iasi, Romania

www.csesm.org

TABLE OF CONTENT

Editorial.....	3
Julian Warter	
Why Do We Feel Anger... But Nurture Hatred? An Evolutionary Perspective on the Emotional Roots of Intergroup Conflict.....	5
Paulo Finuras	
Ethics and Interculturality: A Decolonial Approach	15
María Grace Salamanca González	
Curricular Renewal: A Faculty and Student Guide to Maximizing Educational Investment .	27
Hershey H. Friedman, Robert Fireworker	
Gala Galaction – An Ethics in Development Management Based on Christianity and Socialist Ideology at the Beginning of the 20th Century. Social Realities and Theoretical Context	43
Aurelian Virgil Băluță	
Intercultural Coaching Case Studies	57
Philippe Rosinski, Bérengère Ligthart-Gleyze, Orie Yokoyama, Erika Bezzo, Maureen Bridget Rabotin, Nora Sar, Adrian Green	
The Artificial Womb	73
Mircea Gelu Buta	

INTERCULTURAL COACHING CASE STUDIES

Philippe Rosinski*

Rosinski & Company, Belgium, Kenichi Ohmae Graduate School of Business, Japan

Bérengère Ligthart-Gleyze

iTF Coaching & Training, The Netherlands

Orie Yokoyama

PHC Holdings Corporation, Kenichi Ohmae Graduate School of Business, Japan

Erika Bezzo

ChangeXperience, Spain

Maureen Bridget Rabotin

Effective Global Leadership, USA

Nora Sar

Daimler Truck Asia, Japan

Adrian Green¹

Pressurepoint, United Kingdom

* corresponding author, E-mail: philippe@philrosinski.com

Abstract

This article presents a series of case studies that examine the practice of intercultural coaching across a range of professional settings. Each case illustrates how coaching methodologies engage with cultural complexity, highlighting the coach's role in supporting individual, team, and organizational development. While grounded in the intercultural coaching approach pioneered by one of the authors (Philippe Rosinski), the contributions reflect a variety of applications and coaching styles. The cases draw on the Cultural Orientations Framework (COF), a vocabulary to navigate the cultural terrain as well as an assessment tool for enhancing cultural self-awareness, fostering dialogue, and leveraging cultural differences. They exemplify a dynamic and inclusive view of culture, which promotes unity in diversity in place of division and polarization. Through detailed accounts of coaching interventions and outcomes, the article contributes to the academic discourse on intercultural competence and coaching, offering insights for researchers and practitioners concerned with leadership, cultural dynamics, and developmental processes in various contexts.

Keywords: coaching across cultures, intercultural coaching, Cultural Orientations Framework, COF, case studies

¹ Bérengère Ligthart-Gleyze, Erika Bezzo, Maureen Rabotin, Nora Sar, and Adrian Green participated in different editions of the “Leading & Coaching Across Cultures – Cultural Orientations Framework (COF) certification” program (Rosinski, 2025). They have obtained the COF Certification and COF Master Certification. Orie Yokoyama participated in the “Coaching Across Cultures for Managers” course for Japanese MBA students at the Kenichi Ohmae Graduate School of Business (offered more recently together with BOND University) before becoming Professor Philippe Rosinski's Teaching Assistant in 2023 (BOND-BBT, 2025).

Introduction

“Coaching across cultures” (Rosinski, 2003) set out for the first time to systematically integrate a cultural perspective into coaching. Doing so enables more effective work across cultures (in the broadest sense) and constitutes a more complete and creative form of coaching (by learning from alternative cultural perspectives to go beyond current cultural limitations).

Coaching across cultures (which is also referred to as “intercultural coaching” or “cross-cultural coaching”) applies at all levels of complexity, from individual to societal development. This approach promotes individual development (Rosinski, 2003), fosters team creativity, innovation and performance (Sunstein & Hastie, 2015; Reynolds & Lewis, 2017; Rosinski, 2019, 2022), facilitates mergers & acquisitions and strategic alliances by ensuring cultural differences are an opportunity and not a derailer (Bain & Company, 2025; Rosinski, 2010, 2011), and enables partnerships for sustainable development goals, i.e. SDG n°17 (Bosshard, 2023; Rosinski, 2024).

Coaching from a cultural perspective can itself be integrated into global coaching, which involves coaching from multiple perspectives ranging from the physical to the spiritual (Rosinski, 2010). This integrated form of coaching is increasingly necessary to address today’s complexity and to promote the sustainable leadership required to address our planetary challenges (Rosinski, 2024).

To help navigate the cultural terrain, the Cultural Orientations Framework (COF) has been introduced building upon the work of eminent interculturalists (Rosinski, 2003, 2010, 2018). The framework facilitates the understanding of salient cultural characteristics for individuals, teams and organizations. The COF goes hand in hand with an inclusive and dynamic vision of culture, beyond the traditional binary and static approaches, which often tend to reinforce stereotypes. The COF also comes with an assessment, which goes further than the sole national focus and allows users to examine the other cultural influencers that make up our identities (gender, profession, generation, etc.). It lets users view group cultural profiles in multiple, customizable ways (e.g., team, organization as well as profiles per categories/fields predefined by users, such as division, nationality, management level, merging entities, etc.) and allows them to add their own customized cultural dimensions to the 17 standard COF dimensions.

In this article, we intercultural coaches and leaders share our experiences and insights, which reveal some of the ways in which intercultural coaching, particularly using the COF, can add value and help to navigate complexity.

Individual coaching (Bérengère Ligthart-Gleyze)

Bérengère Ligthart-Gleyze’s case study follows the intercultural coaching journey of a senior executive, “Peter,” within a multinational corporation.

Struggling with unproductive, tense interactions during cross-departmental meetings, Peter sought coaching to become a more effective communicator and leader. I used the Cultural Orientations Framework (COF) as well as my ADA (Awareness–Detection–Action) coaching model. Peter learned to identify and to adapt his cultural and communication preferences, depending on the situation. The coaching process not only improved Peter’s individual performance but also had broader systemic effects — enhancing collaboration, reducing conflict, and contributing to organizational alignment and growth. This case highlights how intercultural coaching can surface unseen dynamics and empower leaders to transform interpersonal challenges into sustainable change.

Unlocking Communication and Collaboration Through Intercultural Coaching

At the start of the coaching, Peter, a senior executive, expressed frustration: “*My message is not getting through. I’m not perceived as cooperative, and things often escalate.*” While initially framed as a communication issue, deeper exploration revealed systemic tensions — differing departmental priorities, unclear task allocation, and cultural misunderstandings that regularly led to conflict.

Peter’s role required frequent interaction with colleagues across departments and countries, and his difficulties stemmed in part from clashing cultural communication styles and leadership expectations. The coaching approach integrated the COF to help Peter understand how his personal preferences — and blind spots — affected these interactions.

Applying the Cultural Orientations Framework (COF)

Peter completed the COF assessment, which maps individuals’ cultural preferences and abilities across multiple dimensions (e.g., communication, time management, organizational arrangements).

Several insights emerged, notably around communication style: Peter had a strong preference for explicit and direct communication, particularly in conflict. He was largely unaware of his capacity to use implicit or indirect styles — both of which he underused. His habitual style in conflict was to *loudly refuse* requests he saw as unfair — often escalating tension.

Through the COF, Peter realized that while his *intent* was to protect his team, his *style* came across as combative. This perception of being “uncooperative” was impeding his goals.

Peter didn’t need to change his values — only the *form* of his delivery. He could still protect his team, but in a way that built bridges instead of walls.

ADA Model in Action

To turn these insights into practice, Peter used the ADA Model — Awareness, Detection, and Action.

Awareness: Peter learned about his default behaviors and hidden capabilities, such as his overlooked potential for indirect communication and informal engagement.

Detection: He began journaling after meetings to reflect on what triggered conflict, helping him notice *when* and *how* discussions turned unproductive. Over time, he became skilled at identifying “energy switches” in meetings — subtle cues that tension was rising.

Action: Peter experimented with new behaviors, such as using questions rather than blunt refusals when rejecting tasks, preparing stakeholders informally in advance to gain alignment before high-stakes meetings, and separating content from tone, allowing him to remain firm while sounding less confrontational. This shift allowed Peter to be *heard* without being *harsh* — leading to more constructive outcomes.

Collaboration vs. Competition: Another Cultural Dimension

Beyond communication, the COF highlighted Peter’s strong preference — and ability — for collaboration, contrasted with a limited comfort with competition.

Initially, Peter tried to “compete” in cross-departmental meetings, which felt artificial and left him drained. Coaching helped him see that leaning into collaboration, even in tough settings, could be more effective — and more authentic to his leadership identity.

Peter started *sharing best practices* from his department in a cooperative tone. This improved trust and made others more open to his suggestions — which often aligned with organizational goals.

Organizational Impact

As Peter developed his skills and confidence, the ripple effect became visible:

- Cross-functional meetings became less tense and more solution-focused.
- Peter's team retention rate became one of the highest in the organization, thanks to a stable and respectful environment.
- Escalation patterns decreased, as Peter learned to read the room and defuse conflict early.
- Informal conversations before formal meetings helped Peter gain support — turning adversaries into allies.

Eventually, Peter's efforts contributed to a wider organizational restructuring, clarifying departmental roles and workload distribution. He became a model for *constructive leadership* — showing how personal development can lead to systemic change.

Conclusion

Peter's journey is a vivid example of how intercultural coaching can unlock profound growth — not just for individuals, but for teams and organizations. Through self-awareness and intentional practice, Peter turned perceived weaknesses into strengths, fostering more effective collaboration and leadership presence.

What began as a communication challenge evolved into a transformational process that redefined how Peter engaged with colleagues, advocated for his team, and influenced organizational dynamics. His experience underscores the power of intercultural coaching to not only navigate differences but to harness them — creating environments where collaboration thrives, conflict is productive, and leadership becomes truly impactful.

“Coaching Across Cultures for Managers” course – Kenichi Ohmae Graduate School of Business and Bond University (Orie Yokoyama)

In this section, Orie Yokoyama comments on the transformative impact of Coaching Across Cultures for Japanese professionals and MBA students navigating global business environments.

Through the application of the COF and intercultural coaching principles, participants developed a deeper understanding of cultural diversity, enhanced their self-awareness, and improved communication in multicultural contexts. Japanese learners evolved from cultural observers to cultural bridges — shifting from one-way adaptation to active engagement and leveraging of differences for synergy and innovation.

The Context: Japan's Cultural Shift in a Global Era

Japan's insular history and high-context communication culture have shaped a society where indirectness, shared understanding, and non-verbal cues are deeply valued. As globalization rapidly transforms the business landscape, Japanese professionals increasingly find themselves working across cultures — especially with Western partners — which often results in confusion and miscommunication.

Seminars on intercultural exchange and “how to do business in X country” have gained popularity, yet they often fall short, presenting only surface-level cultural differences. Many professionals still equate intercultural communication with mastering etiquette or language. This shallow approach is insufficient in a global context where deeper understanding and adaptability are essential.

Why Coaching Across Cultures Matters for Japanese Managers

Many Japanese managers treat coaching as a set of tools — nodding, questioning, mirroring. Through Rosinski's approach, they learn that coaching is not merely transactional but transformational. It's about *unlocking human potential* across cultural contexts.

Japanese managers often lump Europe and America together as “Western,” failing to distinguish cultural nuances. One example cited a negotiation with a French company that contrasted starkly with American-style negotiations. Coaching helped students see that not all Western partners behave alike — and even within a region, cultural approaches differ.

Learning Through COF: Realizations and Reactions

The COF helped students understand their own cultural preferences — and more importantly, where their default behaviors might not serve them in a global context.

One student realized: *“I tend to conceal my weaknesses, so I miss opportunities to unleash my potential.”* The COF helped them identify this as a cultural pattern and empowered them to shift toward more open communication.

Students reflected on past failures in cross-cultural negotiations. They had used logic and well-prepared arguments but failed to influence counterparts. Looking back, they recognized they had not *engaged the heart*. They learned to take advantage of both neutral and affective communication preferences — “Cool head and warm heart” — to persuade both intellectually and emotionally.

Using Cultural Differences Constructively: from “Acceptance” to “Leverage”

Rosinski expands Milton Bennett’s six-stage model of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1993; Rosinski, 2003) by adding a seventh level: *Leverage*. Students had previously believed they were culturally sensitive — respecting differences, adapting when necessary. But they had not yet thought of harnessing those differences as assets.

Initially, students struggled with the concept. Accustomed to seeing cultural difference as something to “tolerate” or “balance,” they now began seeing it as a source of *synergy* — creating a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

In multinational teams, instead of suppressing individual preferences to achieve conformity, students began imagining how contrasting values could fuel innovation — not detrimental conflict.

Personal and Professional Transformation

Students came to understand that before coaching others, they had to coach themselves. A key realization was that many of their own orientations — once seen as fixed — could evolve. As one student put it: *“I thought our orientations couldn’t be changed, but now I believe they can. So I’ll try to coach myself.”*

Another learning was the importance of self-care. To support others sustainably, one must first maintain personal well-being. Inspired by global leaders who prioritize fitness and mental health, some students began new routines like jogging to build resilience and clarity.

A New Identity: Becoming a Cultural Bridge

The most meaningful outcome for many students was a shift in identity. They no longer viewed themselves as passive cultural recipients or unilateral adapters. Instead, they aspired to become *cultural bridges* — understanding both sides, facilitating dialogue, and helping others find common ground.

They learned that respecting other cultures doesn’t mean suppressing their own. On the contrary, mutual understanding requires expressing one’s own culture clearly and openly, not retreating from it.

A telling moment came when a Japanese manufacturing company adopted the value statement “Respect for the individual and co-creation.” After studying Coaching Across Cultures, students could now interpret such a phrase not as aspirational fluff, but as a call for *intercultural synergy* — a new way of doing global business.

Conclusion

The Coaching Across Cultures course enabled Japanese professionals to transform their mindset — from simple adaptation to intercultural mastery. Through tools like the COF and frameworks like Bennett-Rosinski's seven stages, they developed the ability to analyze, adapt, and *leverage* cultural differences.

Concrete results included more effective negotiation, deeper team collaboration, enhanced self-awareness, and improved well-being. These individuals emerged not only as better leaders but as cultural bridges — essential connectors in a world where success depends on the ability to hold complexity, foster inclusion, and generate synergy from difference.

As Japan continues to globalize, the ability to lead *across cultures* is no longer optional. It is essential — and intercultural coaching is proving to be one of the most powerful vehicles for making that leap.

Cross-cultural Training at the Italian Shipping Academy (Erika Bezzo)

Erika Bezzo explores the integration of the COF into her cross-cultural training of cadet officers at the Italian Shipping Academy between 2019 and 2023.

Aimed at preparing officers for the complexities of multicultural shipboard life, the training focused on enhancing cultural self-awareness, promoting empathy, and improving safety through better communication and cooperation. The COF enabled cadets to understand cultural dimensions such as directness, hierarchy, and emotional expression, equipping them to navigate real-life intercultural challenges at sea.

For example, "G.", a third deck officer, was assigned to a tanker operating in the Gulf of Mexico, where he worked with a predominantly Indian officer team. He initially felt isolated: dinner conversations were held in Hindi, and he stood out as the only person using a knife and fork. In Indian culture, eating with one's hands is not a mere habit, but a deeply rooted tradition that carries spiritual and philosophical significance. According to Vedic and Ayurvedic teachings, the hands are considered extensions of the body and soul. Each finger is believed to represent one of the five elements—earth, water, fire, air, and ether—and by using the hands to touch and feel the food, one engages all five senses in the act of eating. This sensory connection is thought to enhance the digestive process and to foster gratitude and mindfulness. For Indian officers, this practice is not only a sign of cultural identity but also a way to express respect for the food and its source.

At first hesitant, G. eventually decided to embrace this custom while revealing how different it was from his own tradition. After a few weeks, he began eating with his hands as well. This simple gesture led to a noticeable shift: the Indian officers started speaking in English during meals to include him in the conversations. Here, the COF dimension of *protection vs. sharing* became evident. By moving from a protective stance about his cultural identity to one of openness and shared experience, G. unlocked reciprocity and inclusion.

Professionally, G. also observed a hierarchical sensitivity among his Indian colleagues. In one case, an Indian officer accidentally pressed the wrong button, triggering a series of alarms. When questioned by a stern captain, the officer offered five different, inaccurate explanations to avoid embarrassment, making it difficult to diagnose the actual issue—which turned out to be non-critical.

To counter this tendency to conceal mistakes, G. began creating egalitarian spaces outside of work hours. He organized informal gatherings with snacks and drinks, a gesture warmly received given the scarcity of such treats onboard. These moments helped foster trust, openness, and ultimately improved safety by encouraging transparent communication.

Conclusion

The experience of G. and others like him demonstrates the value of the Cultural Orientations Framework as more than an academic exercise — it is a practical tool for fostering interpersonal and operational effectiveness in multicultural maritime settings. The training at the Italian Shipping Academy empowered cadets to recognize and leverage cultural differences, reducing miscommunication and promoting inclusivity.

By enabling officers to shift from reflexive responses to intentional leadership behaviors, the COF training enhanced emotional intelligence, strengthened team dynamics, and contributed directly to safety and performance at sea. The success of this program underscores the need for cross-cultural training to be a permanent, foundational element in maritime education. In a profession defined by diverse crews and high-stress environments, cultural competence is not just beneficial — it is essential.

Team coaching (Maureen Rabotin)

Maureen Rabotin's case study follows her three-year intercultural team coaching engagement with a newly formed global team inside a US-based corporation.

Using the COF, the team evolved from fragmented individuals with divergent assumptions into a high-performing, autonomous unit that leveraged their cultural diversity. Through deep reflection on communication patterns, organizational arrangements, and personal leadership styles, team members moved beyond surface-level national stereotypes to systemic cultural intelligence, becoming more adaptable, resilient, and collaborative while strengthening their strategic impact in a fast-paced, AI-driven corporate environment.

Leveraging Cultural Orientations for Team Growth

When the coaching began, the team — made up of members from France, Germany, Japan, and the US — sought to build a self-directed, trust-based team that could thrive across national and corporate cultures. Their leader, an American based internationally, was deeply aware that culture influenced team collaboration, decision-making, and communication but wanted to move beyond simplistic cultural labels.

I introduced the COF, guiding the team through a *me-we-us* approach:

- Me: Understanding one's individual cultural preferences and abilities
- We: Recognizing collective team patterns
- Us: Operating within the broader corporate culture shaped by American values like speed, competition, agility, and innovation

Instead of focusing on "how to work with them" (the others), the team learned to recognize their own cultural blind spots — a transformative shift that laid the foundation for leveraging differences consciously.

Let us examine some of the concrete shifts that resulted from insights gained with the COF.

Organizational Arrangements: From Collaboration to Competitive Collaboration

The team showed a strong preference for collaboration but had limited ability to adapt to a competitive environment.

Through our intercultural coaching, the team reflected on how competition could be purposeful rather than aggressive. They reframed "competition" as competing with deadlines and client needs — thus reinforcing the value they added to the larger corporate mission without losing their collaborative spirit. They recognized that timely, quality delivery wasn't about internal rivalry, but about collective excellence that strengthened the entire company.

They shifted focus toward *systemic competitiveness*: recognizing how their outputs affected cross-functional teams relying on their translations and interpretations. Collaboration and competitiveness are not mutually exclusive; leveraged wisely, they amplify one another.

Communication Patterns: From Volatile Emotions to Strategic Expression

60% of the team had a preference for indirect communication and leaned toward affective styles rather than clear, neutral and factual exchanges. What's more, emotions were often not properly managed — including both overreacting and bottling up.

The team identified how their indirect communication and affective tendencies led to misunderstandings, especially in high-stakes strategic meetings dominated by direct communicators.

They adopted the RULER emotional intelligence method to articulate their needs more clearly and calmly. RULER stands for “recognize emotion in self and others, understand an emotion's cause and potential consequences, label emotions with accurate vocabulary, express emotions in constructive ways, and learn to regulate emotions in positive ways” (Nathanson et al., 2016).

Transformative Outcomes

Throughout their three-year journey, the team achieved tangible and meaningful progress:

- Created a Team Charter: Explicitly stating how they would leverage cultural diversity to outperform expectations.
- Developed New Presentation Tactics: Presenting collectively at corporate events instead of spotlighting individuals, reinforcing their team-first identity.
- Strengthened Self-Advocacy: Expressing needs more assertively without losing cultural authenticity.
- Enhanced Psychological Safety: Enabling healthy emotional communication so affectivity is no longer seen as an impediment.
- Embedded Collaborative Competitiveness: Delivering high-quality work quickly while sustaining mutual support.

By understanding their cultural orientations (preferences) and abilities (agility to adapt), the team learned to leverage — not just navigate — cultural diversity.

Conclusion

The Cultural Orientations Framework provided the critical mirror this team needed to see, understand, and leverage their cultural patterns both individually and collectively. Through intercultural coaching, the team discovered that high performance doesn't require abandoning one's cultural identity or merely blending in — it flourishes when people intentionally harness differences as resources.

Instead of trying to "balance" collaboration and competition, or factual communication and affectivity, the team wove them together into a stronger, more dynamic culture of their own — one that honored individuality, amplified collective resilience, and delivered business value.

This case exemplifies how deep intercultural work, guided by COF, can unleash not only stronger teams but more human and systemic leadership — a necessity in today's fast-evolving, complex world.

Team coaching (Nora Sar)

In this case study, Nora Sar, an international HR manager, explains how she successfully transformed an international back-office team — initially described as shy, reactive, and disconnected — into a proactive, consultative unit.

Through tailored intercultural coaching, focusing on the Past-Present-Future cultural dimension, the team shifted from task executors to valued strategic contributors. The story shows how, with cultural intelligence and targeted interventions, even historically passive teams can evolve into dynamic, high-performing groups.

Leveraging Cultural Orientations for Team Transformation

When I took over a team of five individuals from different national and organizational backgrounds (Japanese, French, Indian, Turkish, German), I encountered a group that was reluctant to socialize, camera-shy, and rigidly task-focused. While the team was respected for its reliability, it lacked visibility, initiative, and innovation.

Drawing on my COF certification, I approached the challenge strategically: instead of accepting stereotypes or simply asking for change, I sought to leverage the team's existing cultural orientations to unlock growth.

Understanding the Team's Orientation: Past over Future (figure 1)

The team had a dominant Past orientation: comfort with established routines, strong respect for tradition, and a preference for continuity.

The team members felt also very confident in their ability to engage in these traditional activities, but much less so in future visioning. Rather than criticizing this situation, I validated it — and used it as a platform to build new capacities for present action and future thinking.

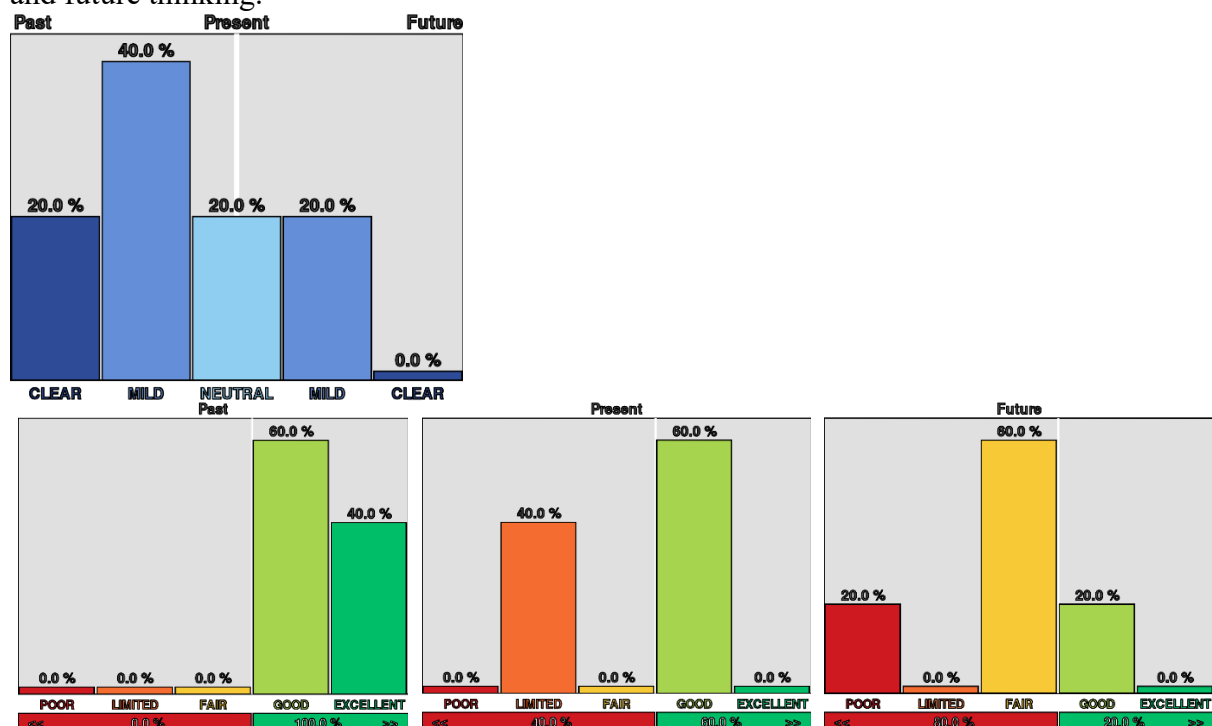


Figure 1: Team COF aggregate results “Past-Present-Future” - orientations and abilities

Gradual Cultural Activation through Practical Exercises

I didn't push for immediate radical change. Instead, I orchestrated a series of incremental activities to stimulate new behaviors, focusing on low-risk change implementation, challenging limiting beliefs, and connecting to purpose:

I identified a "low-hanging fruit" project (small process improvement). I partnered with a team member to implement it early — demonstrating how small changes can be both safe and empowering.

When team members clung to templates because "that's the way it's always been," I challenged them with simple but powerful questions like: "Who made the template?" I encouraged them to see themselves as owners and innovators of their work areas, not just followers of past practices.

I ran a session linking their administrative tasks to the company's larger mission, showing how each role contributed to societal impact — a critical step in strengthening intrinsic motivation.

Building Present and Future Orientations through Experiential Learning

To move the team from passive executors to proactive collaborators, I used dynamic team activities:

Teams built towers from the same materials without instructions. This highlighted lessons about customer orientation — how clarifying expectations upfront leads to better results.

I gave each member two easy and two unfamiliar topics to present. This helped the team experience the difference between speaking on familiar vs. unfamiliar ground — linking it to the need for mastery of their areas to confidently engage with others.

I facilitated a simulated deserted island negotiation. This taught how dialogue, listening, and finding win-win solutions are key to collaboration and influence.

Each exercise was tied back to workplace realities, helping participants see practical applications and reinforcing the value of communication, initiative, and adaptability.

Results: From Reactive Executors to Proactive Consultants

One year after beginning the transformation, the team redesigned manual processes into automated workflows (e.g., SharePoint Power Automate). They proactively collaborated with IT to solve bottlenecks (e.g., automating certificate generation). They organized and facilitated a department-wide Townhall workshop. They increased visibility and credibility within the broader organization.

Importantly, they were now seen not just as administrators but as consultative partners, contributing ideas and improvements.

Conclusion

This case study illustrates how intercultural coaching can enable profound, lasting change — even in teams initially resistant to stepping beyond traditional roles.

Rather than trying to "fix" or "overcome" the team's Past orientation, I helped them leverage it as a foundation for action, while gradually developing Present dynamism and Future visioning. Through respect, challenge, and support, I cultivated a team that now thrives in innovation, collaboration, and proactive leadership, and has become a driver of organizational success.

Organizational cultural transformation: Intercultural Coaching & Systemic Change at Business Unit of a Global Media Agency (Adrian Green)

Adrian Green's case study follows a three-year journey starting in May 2021, with a highly capable yet overstretched analytics team within a top global media agency network. It

is a story of strategic redirection, cultural recalibration, and leadership learning. Most importantly, it's a case where systemic coaching, anchored by the COF wasn't a side intervention, but the vehicle for systemic renewal

The Context: Growth Meets Fragmentation

By mid-2021, the Analytics team had become a multi-million revenue generating strategic unit within the UK division of a global media agency. Rapid success brought visibility but also exposed fractures: unclear direction, low psychological safety, and overburdened middle management. The Associate Directors (ADs), in particular, were stretched — held responsible, yet lacking influence.

The team wasn't dysfunctional, but it had lost its cohesion and identity. Leaders felt disconnected, and junior staff felt unheard. There wasn't a demand to "fix culture," but there was a deep sense that something essential needed re-finding.

Rather than jumping into problem-solving, the coaching engagement began with sensing — listening for signals beneath the surface.

Phase 1: Surfacing the System

Step 1 – Cultural Inquiry Begins

The coaching process started with interviews across three levels — ADs, non-managerial roles, and the wider team — alongside collaboration with the Managing Partner to explore vision and purpose.

Using Edgar Schein's three-level model of culture as a scaffold (Schein, 1992), the Cultural Orientations Framework (COF) was introduced. The COF offers a lens into how teams prefer to work, communicate, and make decisions across cultural dimensions. The goal wasn't categorization — it was visibility. Which cultural patterns were serving the team? Which were creating friction?

Only select COF dimensions among the following categories were analyzed in detail, chosen for their relevance to the observed issues: Sense of Power and Responsibility, Time Management Approaches, Communication Patterns, and Organizational Arrangements.

Power and Responsibility: Control vs Harmony

A clear divergence appeared: ADs showed a strong preference for Control, with little emphasis on Harmony or Humility. Junior staff leaned toward Harmony, suggesting a desire for cooperation and relational balance.

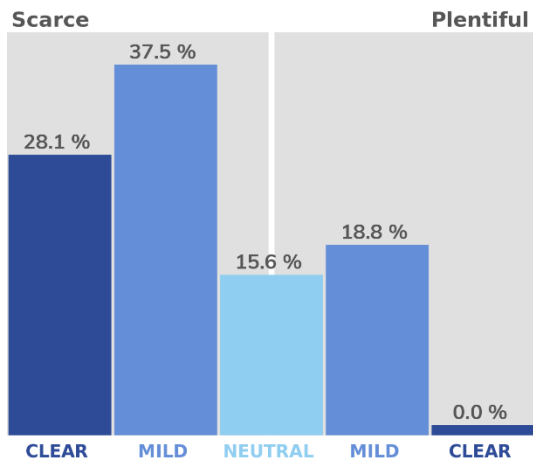
When middle managers feel powerless, they seek control. When junior staff feel over-controlled, they seek harmony. This tension became a call for clarity, shared decision-making, and mutual trust.

Time Management: Scarce vs Plentiful (figure 2)

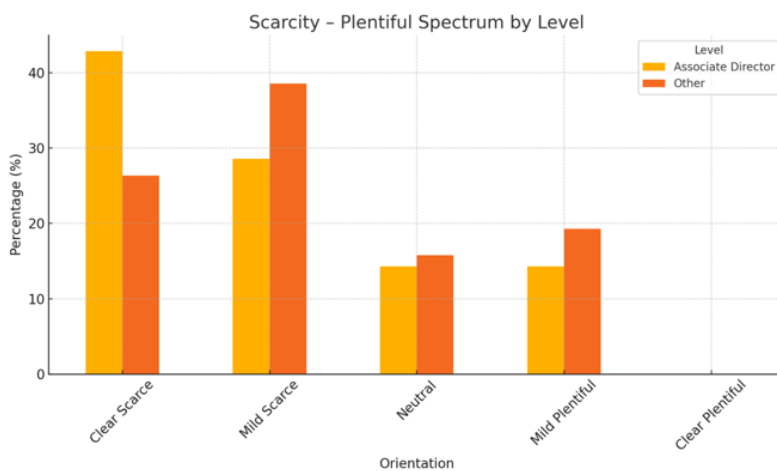
Both groups reported a strong time-scarcity mindset around time, but ADs saw themselves as excellent under pressure, yet struggled with spacious planning. Junior staff were more comfortable in "plentiful" timeframes but lacked the systemic space to operate that way.

The team was over-functioning in urgency. Coaching helped leaders reframe time as a strategic resource, not a stressor — and to distinguish the truly important from the merely urgent.

Scarce vs Plentiful Orientations for the whole team



Scarce vs Plentiful Orientations



Associate Director

Clear-Mild Scarce: 71.4%

Neutral: 14.3%

Mild – Clear Plentiful: 14.3%

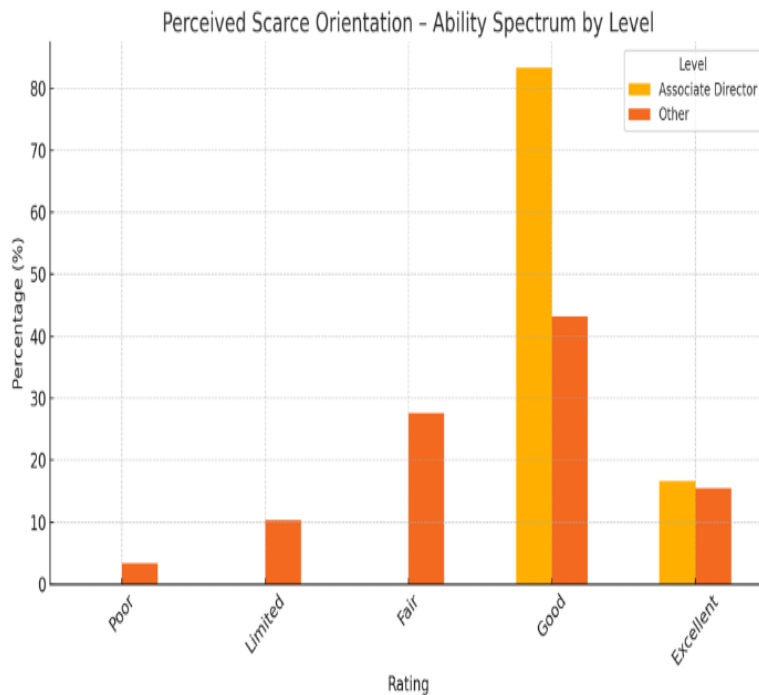
Other Roles

Clear – Mild Scarce: 64.9%

Neutral: 15.8%

Mild – Clear Plentiful: 19.3%

Time Scarce Abilities



Associate Director

Poor – Limited: 0.0%

Fair: 0%

Good - Excellent: 100%

Other Roles

Poor – Limited: 13.8%

Fair: 39%

Good - Excellent: 61%

Time Plentiful Abilities

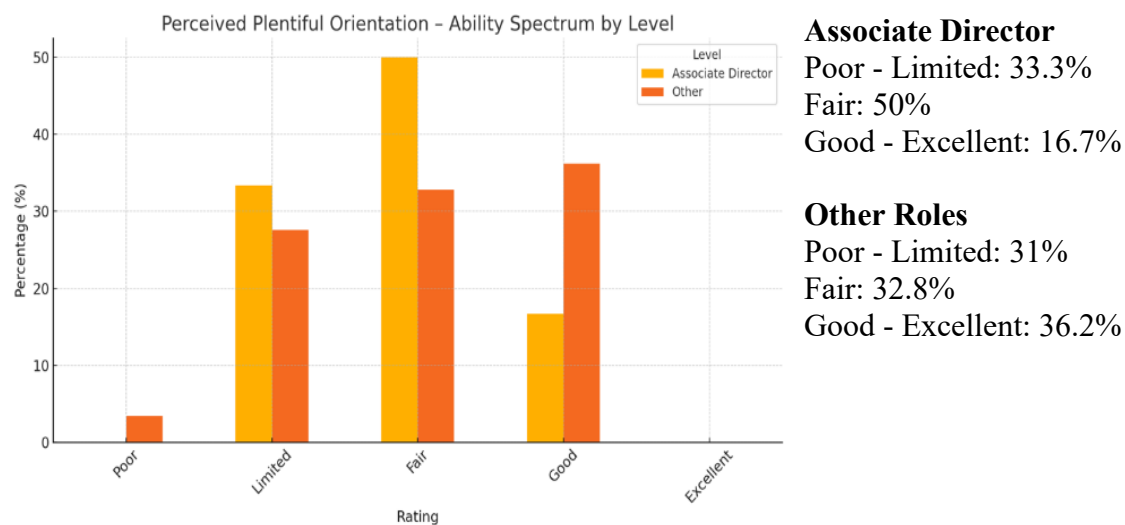


Figure 2: Team COF aggregate results “Scarce-Plentiful time” – orientations and abilities – whole team and by level

Communication Pattern: Indirect vs Direct

Perhaps the most striking insight: 71% of ADs leaned toward indirect communication, and rated themselves poorly in directness. Junior staff showed more balance but still skewed indirect.

Avoidance of direct feedback was stalling growth. The team realized that difficult conversations were not disrespectful — they were essential. Coaching built psychological safety around upward challenge and honest dialogue.

Organizational Arrangement: Universalist vs Particularist

Both groups leaned toward Particularism, preferring context-driven decisions over rules. Yet junior staff also expressed a desire for more consistency and clarity.

The informal “flexibility” of leadership, though well-intentioned, sometimes caused ambiguity. Values-based coaching helped define when to be consistent and when to adapt — and how to make those decisions transparent.

Step 2: The Team Away Day – Owning the Mirror

Rather than deliver the COF findings as a static report, the results were shared in a collaborative away day. Each layer of insight became a conversation starter. Four dimensions drove the deepest reflection:

- Power and Responsibility: ADs sought more influence; juniors wanted more voice.
- Time: Everyone felt pressure, but leadership needed to model better pacing.
- Communication: Avoidance of directness was limiting growth.
- Organizational Arrangements: “Fair but flexible” lacked clear boundaries.

This wasn’t an audit — it was a system seeing itself. The result was a shared cultural contract: things had to change, and change had to be co-created.

Step 3: Values Discovery and Translation

Using Shalom Schwartz’s model (Schwartz, 2012), the team co-developed a new set of shared values, each mapped to tangible behaviors:

For example, “Sustainable Growth” was translated into “*We grow without burning out.*”

Behaviors included saying no when at capacity and realistic planning.

“We take pride in excellence” was linked to quality control, PR strategy, and awards submissions.

This alignment process was more than philosophical — it was practical. It helped convert abstract ideals into lived norms.

Step 4: Cultural Web and CEPA Grid — System Design

The team then explored how it showed up, in terms of rituals and habits, power structures, symbols and more using the Cultural Web model (Scholes and Johnson, 1992). Using a CEPA grid (Create, Eliminate, Preserve, Accept), team members made concrete decisions about what behaviors to keep or shift using values, COF and vision as the guide. This was followed by prioritizing cultural actions using an Impact/Effort matrix, allowing the team to focus energy on meaningful, achievable changes.

Phase 2: Leadership Reflection and the PROPHET Tool

Sixteen months in, the leadership team regrouped for a reflective session using the PROPHET profiling tool (2013), which maps individual value-creation styles across a business lifecycle (Create, Design, Operate, Improve).

This gave leaders insight into their own strengths and blind spots, into misunderstandings might arise and in how to support each other intentionally.

Alignment doesn’t mean sameness — it means interdependence. Differences became resources, not friction points.

This deepened team trust and re-energized strategic focus. Notably, a persistent challenge — retention — was beginning to shift.

One of the key innovations during the cultural shift was the launch of a Graduate Program to grow talent from within. With over 20 graduates onboarded by 2023 and strong retention rates, it reinforced a culture of learning, belonging, and progression.

Culture isn’t slogans — it’s what people experience. The program proved that investing in people creates a magnetic effect: it attracts, retains, and uplifts talent.

Phase 3: Culture in Practice – Systemic Ripples

By July 2023, the effects were undeniable. Communication had become more open. Decisions were clearer. Leaders were stepping into their natural strengths. The culture was no longer aspirational — it was observable.

Annual churn had dropped to 16%, well below the industry average. Team members reported feeling heard, empowered, and aligned.

“We feel like a team again — not just a group of individuals under pressure.”

Phase 4: Growth, Specialization & Global Alignment

In 2024, the team undertook a structural redesign, moving from generalist roles to specializations across Data Engineering, Modelling, and Strategy & Insight. This shift was driven by the same principles cultivated during the coaching journey: engage early, let values guide structure, and design together.

Each member now spends over 55% of time in their chosen specialism. A new value — Collaboration — was added to reflect the demands of coordination.

This period also marked the unit’s international expansion, including setup in India. Leadership, still using the PROPHET model, adapted the operating model to ensure local alignment without compromising cultural integrity.

Conclusion: Coaching as Culture Crafting

The COF assessment proved essential to facilitate the transformational journey, not as a one-off diagnostic, but as a mirror held up to the team to guide ongoing reflection. The COF assessment was used alongside other tools, including PROPHET, which helped personalize leadership roles. Intercultural coaching allowed to translate data into dialogue — and dialogue into decisions.

Over three years, the Analytics unit shifted from misalignment to maturity — not through top-down mandates, but through cultural dialogue, intercultural insight, and team-led coaching interventions.

Conclusion: Key Lessons and the Added Value of Intercultural Coaching

The case studies presented in this article underscore the multifaceted value of intercultural coaching in today's interconnected and complex environments. While the contexts vary—from individual executive coaching to team transformation and organizational culture change—several recurring themes and insights emerge.

First, intercultural coaching enhances **self-awareness and relational agility**. Across the cases, clients and teams benefited from uncovering their own cultural preferences and assumptions. Tools such as the Cultural Orientations Framework (COF) provided a structured lens to identify both strengths and blind spots, enabling more intentional and adaptive behavior.

Second, intercultural coaching enables **constructive engagement with difference**. Rather than viewing cultural variation as a barrier, the coaching processes helped individuals and teams see it as a resource for learning, innovation, and synergy. This shift from accommodation or tolerance to active leverage of difference proved transformative in multiple contexts.

Third, the coaching work demonstrated the importance of **contextualized practice**. Effective intercultural coaching is not formulaic—it requires sensitivity to cultural, organizational, and individual dynamics. The cases illustrate how coaches tailored their approaches to local realities while maintaining a consistent commitment to development and transformation.

Fourth, intercultural coaching contributes to **systemic impact**. Even when initiated at the individual level, the coaching often had ripple effects—improving team cohesion, reshaping communication norms, enhancing leadership credibility, and catalyzing cultural change within organizations.

Finally, these case studies reaffirm that **culture is dynamic** rather than static, and intercultural competence is not a fixed trait but a capacity you build. Through reflective and experiential processes, individuals and groups expanded their range of responses, becoming more capable of navigating ambiguity and co-creating shared meaning.

Taken together, these lessons point to intercultural coaching not simply as a niche specialization, but as a vital modality for supporting growth, collaboration, and resilience in culturally diverse environments. As the global challenges facing leaders and organizations continue to evolve, so too does the need for coaching approaches that can bridge differences and foster inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable practices.

References

- Bain & Company. (2025). *Global M&A Report 2025*.
- Bennett, M. (1993). Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. In M. P. (Ed.), *Education for the Intercultural Experience*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- BOND-BBT. (2025, May 06). *Coaching Across Cultures for Managers*. BOND MBA.BBT <https://bondmba.bbt757.com/programs/mba/coaching-across-cultures-for-managers/>

- Bosshard, R. (2023). *Successful partnerships for the SDG goals in practice*. Coursera.org. <https://www.coursera.org/learn/sdgbusiness>
- Johnson, G., & Scholes, K. (1992). *Exploring Corporate Strategy*. Prentice Hall.
- Nathanson, L., Rivers, S. E., Flynn, L. M., & Brackett, M. A. (2016). Creating Emotionally Intelligent Schools With RULER. *Emotion Review*, 8(4), 305–310. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073916650495>
- PROPHET Profiling. (2013). Retrieved from <https://www.prophetprofiling.com/>
- Reynolds, A., & Lewis, D. (2017). Teams Solve Problems Faster When They're More Cognitively Diverse. *Harvard Business Review*, March.
- Rosinski, P. (2003). *Coaching Across Cultures*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Rosinski, P. (2010). *Global Coaching*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Rosinski, P. (2011). Global Coaching for Organizational Development. *The International Journal of Coaching in Organizations*, Issue 30, 8 (2), 49-66.
- Rosinski, P. (2018). *The Cultural Orientations Framework (COF)*. <https://www.cofassessment.com/>
- Rosinski, P. (2019). Delivering value through cross-cultural team coaching. In J. Passmore , B. Underhill, & M. Goldsmith (Eds.), *Mastering Executive Coaching* (pp. 130-159). Routledge.
- Rosinski, P. (2022). Diversity and Inclusion 3.0. *Journal of Intercultural Management and Ethics*, 1, 71-78.
- Rosinski, P. (2024). Enriching coaching ethics with philosophical ethics and interculturalism. *Journal of Coaching Ethics*, 1(6), 1-9.
- Rosinski, P. (2024). How to Develop Leaders for Sustainability? *Journal of Intercultural Management and Ethics*, 7(2) , 5-22.
- Rosinski, P. (2025, May 06). *Leading & Coaching Across Cultures – Cultural Orientations Framework (COF) certification program*. PhilRosinski.com. <https://philrosinski.com/academy/leading-and-coaching-across-cultures-cultural-orientations-framework-cof-certification-seminars/>
- Schein, E. (1992). *Organizational Culture and Leadership 2nd ed*. Jossey-Bass.
- Schwartz, S. (2012). An Overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1).
- Sunstein, C., & Hastie, R. (2015). *Wiser - Getting beyond groupthink to make groups smarter*. Harvard Business School Publishing.