

Same Team - Different Clocks

Why do people in multicultural teams sometimes struggle with coordination?





**Cross-cultural differences in
time perception might be
one of the reasons!**

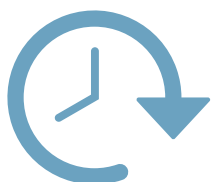
1. Time Orientation

Culture can influence whether a team focuses on the present, past or future in their perspective and planning



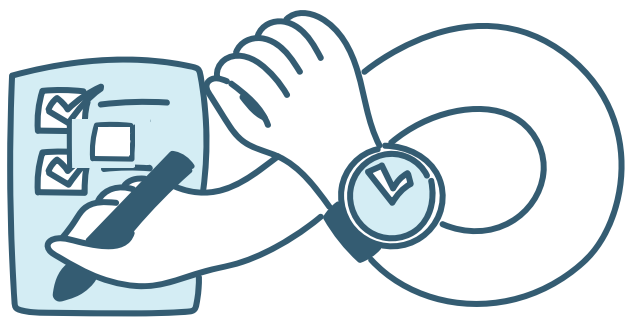
Past-oriented team members value traditions and often compare their current situation to past conditions when completing tasks and setting goals.

Present-oriented team members focus on the immediate future and tend to set short-term goals. A more present-oriented team may excel in time-sensitive matters due to their short-term focus.



Future-oriented team members interpret their work from a macro perspective, aiming for long-term impact. They excel at aligning tasks with a strategic vision due to their focus on distal outcomes.

2. Monochronic vs Polychronic Time Use

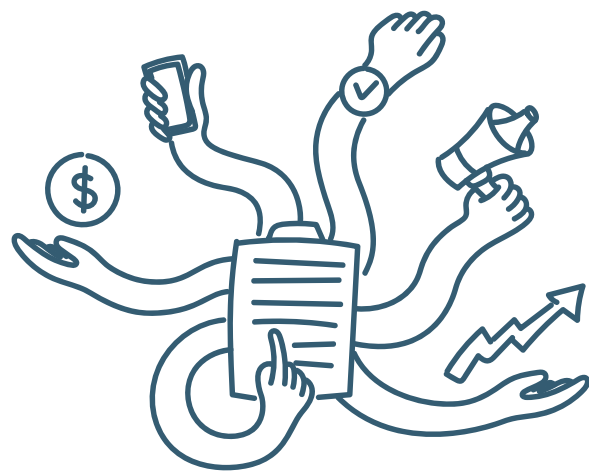


Monochronic Team

Completing tasks sequentially and focusing on a single task at a time

Example:
Latin American
cultures

This approach does not directly affect strategy formulation processes



Polychronic Team

Time management when many tasks are performed simultaneously

Example:
USA and
Canada

Strong in strategic planning and coping with unexpected situations

3. Punctuality



In multinational teams, views on punctuality may vary.



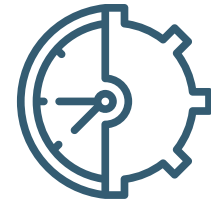
For example, in Western European countries, being even a few minutes late to a meeting can make people feel uncomfortable. In Turkey, however, a slight delay is considered a normal part of daily life.



Therefore, multinational teams need to come to an agreement on punctuality to coordinate effectively.

4. Time Efficiency

Team members may have different perceptions of how to use time efficiently. These differences affect how they progress toward their goals.



Highly time-sensitive American and some European cultures attach great importance to "deadlines". These cultures reward the employees who finish the first.

Asian cultures value patience and tend to prioritize the quality of results.



Teams that perceive time as a scarce resource tend to engage more in goal monitoring.

5. Time as a Symbol

Time is symbolized differently across cultures, influencing how multinational teams operate.



North American and
Japanese cultures

Time is considered a symbol
of high value, like money

Working long hours has
become the norm



European
cultures

The time individuals spend
for themselves is valuable

Teams take longer
leaves of absence

6. Dealing with Periods of Silence

Cultures interpret long periods of silence in different ways

In Eastern cultures, such quiet moments are seen as opportunities to focus and evaluate thoughts.

Since they don't view these moments as problematic, they feel less need for motivational discourse.

Long periods of silence are frowned upon in Western cultures.

This time is filled with motivating activities such as pep talks or feedback.

7. Pace of Life

Tempo has been culturally examined by studying walking speeds, service times and accuracy of public clocks.

Fast Tempo

For example:
Germany, Japan and
Switzerland

Effective time
management and strict
follow-up of deadlines

Slow Tempo

For example:
Brazil, Indonesia and
Mexico

Dates are more
flexible and serve as a
guide

When team members have similar perceptions about the pace of life, it increases harmony within the team and reduces conflict.



Insights for Coaching Global Professionals

- When coaching global professionals, cultural awareness is essential.
- Time perception is a key but often overlooked cultural variable.
- Concepts like punctuality, pace and time management vary widely and impact experiences at work context.
- Being flexible with time orientation shows cultural sensitivity and agility.

AND

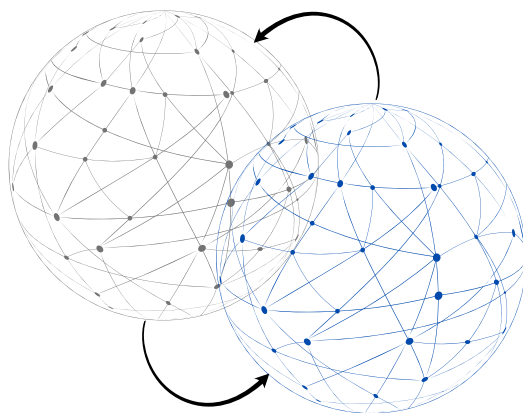
- These differences can also affect how we plan, structure and run coaching sessions with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Cross-cultural differences in perception of time: Implications for multinational teams

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Members of multinational teams likely have different perspectives on a variety of factors stemming from their different cultural backgrounds. The use and perception of time is one of the specific cultural values that differ cross-culturally and may have implications for the group dynamics and team effectiveness in multinational teams. Concepts such as time orientation, punctuality and pace of life are influenced by time-related differences among cultures. In the present article, it is argued that temporal diversity in multinational teams may serve as an input within the Input-Mediator-Output-Input model of team effectiveness (Ilgen, Hollenbeck, Johnson, & Jundt, 2005) and influence the team processes and outputs. Implications of cross-cultural differences in perception of time on multinational team functioning are discussed within the framework of the Marks, Mathieu, and Zaccaro (2001) taxonomy of team processes, which consists of 3 higher order team processes (i.e., transition processes, action processes, and interpersonal processes) that encompass 10 distinct, more specific processes. Propositions regarding the impact of temporal diversity on many of the distinct team processes and outcomes are put forward to help provide a temporal lens to future research on multinational teams.



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