

Underestimated Importance of Cultural Differences in Outsourcing Arrangements

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In international business, it is important to be sensitive to a variety of different cultural backgrounds and to understand how to adapt the behavior when dealing with provider's from other cultures. Individuals often do not realize that they communicate differently, have different understanding of the same subject, or hold differing beliefs about appropriate and inappropriate behavior, until they actually experience the impact of those differences to the final result.

Cultural differences are named to be one of the biggest reasons why outsourcing deals are experiencing problems. Physical obstacles to successful outsourcing such as infrastructure and facilities have been mostly resolved, but the soft issues, cultural differences, will continue to be the main challenge.

By its very definition, offshore outsourcing involves interplay of different companies, countries, regions etc. That evidences, that representatives of different nations will expect different results and will have different expectations from business relationships. Culture is difficult to assess, as it embraces so many aspects. Awareness of cultural differences in all the dimensions, mentioned in the paper, between outsourcing partners would be very helpful in reducing communication gaps and to understand the reasons of misunderstanding.

Cultural compatibility in existing outsourcing country selection models is treated just as one of the multiple sub-criteria. Cultural differences are not marked as one of the Top features to be considered and therefore cause many outsourcing deals to fail, because they were not properly evaluated and addressed. There are certain cultural criteria, which are very important in selecting the site. The results of the empirical survey are presented in the article.

Some authors assigned cultural differences only to company's culture differences and that is not exactly correct. There should be distinguished between Nations' cultural differences and companies cultural differences. In onshore outsourcing arrangements the key is companies cultural differences, while in nearshore and offshore outsourcing Nations cultural differences are far more important.

Often cultural hurdles can be overcome, when approached with a non judgmental, open mind and with preparation in advance. The goal of both parties should be: making the most of both cultures to add value to outsourcing relationships much beyond cost reduction. Requirements for the nations around the globe to work so close, so dynamic and at such scale as today – have never been present before. We are at the stage of major cultural shift: not only

embracing extreme diversity but also enabling this diversity to synchronize and deliver results effectively.

Keywords: *outsourcing, culture, cultural differences, offshore, nearshore, outsourcing models, nations culture.*

Introduction

In the past outsourcing concept was associated only with the larger companies. A call center or software development center for IBM, Dell or Microsoft in India, Philippines or Brazil was considered a norm. These days mid-sized companies are taking advantage of outsourcing as well. By being conscious on what process they select to outsource and what partner is chosen, these smaller companies are expanding into the outsourcing world. Outsourcing is more than buying raw material or inputs (Bartkus, Jurevicius, 2007). Successful outsourcing does not end with just negotiating a contract and letting the service run. There are hundreds of factors to be considered. Nowadays physical obstacles to offshore outsourcing such as telecom lines, infrastructure and facilities have been largely resolved. However, the soft issues, particularly cross-cultural differences, will continue to be the main challenge for realizing full potential of global sourcing's in the foreseeable future.

Many companies fall too easily to an argument, that we all live in a globalized world and distance, borders and place no longer matter (Ghemawat, 2007). However, large differences still exist and they are causing issues, which still need to be overcome. Complex outsourcing contracts are always difficult to manage, and if we add the time zone differences, language barriers, significant distance, rare face to face meetings, diversity – which are usual offshore deals companions - challenge is becoming really enormous. The success of an outsourcing project is highly dependent on the developed relationship between the outsourcing company and their provider. And all must admit that big cultural gaps between parties still exist.

Cultural differences are one of the biggest reasons why offshore outsourcing deals fail or run into problems. According to major Big 4 auditor – Accenture – study, **69% of all outsourcing deals fail**, completely or partially. The main reason for this is lack of cultural compatibility between the vendor and the client and poor relationship management (Accenture, 2008).

Recent research, performed in March 2009, by Vantage partners, identified, that “Culture” is the biggest issue, causing challenges in outsourcing arrangements (Ertel, 2009).

Cultural issues are even more painful, when companies

have employed multi-sourcing strategy. In multi-sourcing arrangements companies are dealing with many managers from different providers in different countries, therefore managing cultural differences is one of the top priorities for success.

Cultural difference is an important component in cross-cultural project management (Zeng, Xie, et al. 2009).

The world is full of confrontation among people, groups, nations, who think, feel and act differently. At the same time, people, groups, nations are exposed to common problems and need to do business together, what demands cooperation. People need to find the way to cooperate, what in other word means – to adjust their cultural differences to both parties acceptable level. The above mentioned facts prove, that cultural differences are very important in outsourcing arrangements and unfortunately up to now they have not received enough attention from all stakeholders: scholars, managers, outsourcing providers and customers.

The object of the research – culture definition and cultural differences in outsourcing context.

The main objective of this research – identify cultural differences role in outsourcing arrangements and significance for overall deals’ success.

The methods of the research are systemic, logic and comparable analysis, empirical research.

Culture criteria in traditional outsourcing schemes

The importance of location/country from where outsourcing services will be provided, is different depending on the outsourcing type. In onshore outsourcing, the question of location is subordinate to choosing the most qualified provider. In nearshoring and offshoring concept, location importance is completely different, as choice of countries can determine myriad unique benefits or penalties (Vashistha, 2006).

There was a usual practice in outsourcing decisions, vendors were judged solely on their own merits in a provider selection process. The practice showed need to expand thinking and see “big picture”. The fact, that the supplier’s country determines the “makeup” of its workforce and wage structure is obvious. Nearshore and offshore vendor’s expertise, language skills are largely the product of country’s educational system and business culture (Robinson, 2005). Actually no detail is irrelevant in a country selection: geography, history, culture, language, government policies, infrastructure, etc. contribute to the development and growth of every country’s industries and labor productivity, however, all they have different degree of significance in the total “bucket”.

There can be found several country selection models for the outsourcing purposes in the scientific literature and other available sources of information. It is worthwhile to mention, that models are quite inconsistent, valuating different sets of criteria. Their review and comparison is not in the scope of this article, therefore we will focus only on the identification and analysis of cultural feature.

Table 1

Summary of Country selection models

<i>A.Vashistha. „The Offshore Nation“</i>	<i>A.T.Kearney’s Offshore location attractiveness index</i>	<i>P.Ghemawat. “Redefining global strategy”</i>	<i>M.Robinson. “Global outsourcing”</i>	<i>Neo IT. „Mapping offshore markets“</i>	<i>M.Minevich. F.J.Richter. “Global outsourcing report”</i>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Exogenous Factors	Financial structure	Cultural distance	Workforce attractiveness (o/w is Cultural compatibility)	Financial benefit	Cost
Catalyst Factors (o/w one is Cultural compatibility)	People skills and availability	Administrative distance	Locations attractiveness and risks	Service maturity	Risk (o/w one sois cultural risk)
Business Environment factors	Business environment (o/w one is cultural adaptability)	Geographic distance		People	Market opportunity
		Economic distance		Infrastructure	□
				Catalyst (o/w one is cultural compatibility)	
Source: Vashistha (2006)	Source: A.T.Kearney’s (2004)	Source: Ghemawat (2007)	Source: Robinson (2005)	Source: Neo IT (2005)	Source: Minevich (2005)

Table 1 presents the summary of the country selection models and is showing: source/author of the model and Top groups of selection criteria in a particular model, e.g. (1) model by Vashistha has 3 groups of criteria: exogenous, catalyst and business environment factors. These criteria

consist of a number of sub-criteria. Cultural feature in this model is called “Cultural compatibility” and belongs to Catalyst factors criteria.

The above models should be analysed in more details:

- Model 1. Cultural compatibility is mentioned as one of the catalyst factors, i.e. those, which identify attractiveness of the location as an outsourcing destination. Other sub-criteria in this group are: physical placement of the country and time zone, labor pool and language proficiency. Metrics for evaluation of cultural compatibility are not clear.
- Model 2. Cultural adaptability is shown as one of the Business environment sub-criteria, together with country infrastructure, economic, political aspects and IP protection. The metrics for evaluation is A.T. Kearney's Globalisation Index, which actually comprises more technical data about telephone, internet users, international organizations, etc. than about culture itself.
- Model 3. Culture is marked as one of Criteria groups, called "Cultural distance", and is significant when comparing pairs of countries. However, description about what has to be valued in specific is quite blurry.
- Model 4. Cultural compatibility is assigned to Workforce attractiveness criteria and is in the same group with technical labor skills, labor pool and language proficiency. Metrics for evaluation of cultural compatibility are not clear.
- Model 5. Culture is mentioned just as one of the catalyst factors, together with government support, time zone and physical placement of the country. The whole catalyst criteria makes only 15% from total valuation, so cultural impact is very insignificant for final decision.
- Model 6. Culture is mentioned as part of the risk criteria, however, it is taking just insignificant 6% portion from the total risk.

The above statements make obvious, that beside the fact, cultural compatibility in different models is assigned to different criteria groups, it is treated just as one of the multiple sub-criteria. Cultural differences are not marked as one of the Top features to be considered and this is one of the key reasons for many outsourcing deals to fail.

Cultural differences are somewhere in the "grey" area, because still many people do not understand their impact to be so high due to a completely new level of required cooperation. But what exactly those cultural differences are?

Definition of Culture and cultural differences

Culture, as defined by the UNESCO is, "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs". "Interculturality" refers to the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions (UNESCO, 2001).

Each of us has his own "mental programs". The source of mental programs' lies within the social environment in which the person grew up and collected his life experiences. It starts with the family, continues with the neighborhood, school, in youth groups, workplace and in the living community. That is the culture - mind's "mental software" (Hofstede, 2001).

Culture is a collective phenomenon, it is shared with people who live or lived in the same social environment. It consists of unwritten rules of the social game. Figure 1 suggests 3 levels of mental persons programming: it starts from human nature, on top is added culture and the last one is personality. On one side, culture is being learned and should be distinguished from the human nature, on the other side, it is not the same as individual's personality. Where exactly are the borders between nature and culture, and culture and personality, is still a matter of discussion among social scientist.

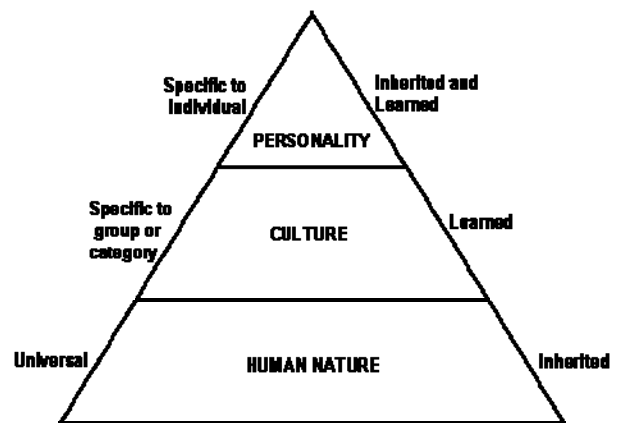


Figure 1. Three levels of mental programming

(source: Hofstede, 2001)

There are many other definitions of the culture, which actually have relations to concept presented in the above figure. M. J. Herskovits' culture definition is that culture is part of environment created by people (Herskovits, 1955). Culture and social environment influences people values and values influence the view and behavior (Alas & Tuulik, 2007). In scientific researches culture is an independent variable, i.e. part of external environment, which together with economic, social, political, technological and other factors, influence company's development and affects managerial decisions (Zitkus & Junevicius, 2007).

"Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster" was said by prof. G. Hofstede, Emeritus Professor, Maastricht University, who has conducted the largest surveys ever done in the area of cultural differences (Hofstede, 2001). G. Hofstede has worked on identifying and quantifying different cultural forces across countries. He surveyed thousands of IBM employees in over 50 countries, and developed five measures of cultural differences:

- power distance,
- individualism,
- uncertainty avoidance,
- long-term orientation,
- masculinity (Hofstede, 2001).

A country has been scored on each of these dimensions, and comparing one country's scores against others we can get an insight into the cultural differences between them.

Unesco defines cultural differences as:

- differences in decision making, communication, coordination styles;

- differences based on individual, family, cultural values;
- language differences;
- protocol and courtesy differences;
- differences in religious needs and values;
- communication style differences;
- differences in logistical needs;
- differences in customs (Unesco, 2001).

Cultural differences between societies can also be described as "high context" and "low context" (Hall, 1989).

High context refers to societies or groups where people have close connections over a long period of time. Many aspects of cultural behavior are not made explicit because most members know what to do and what to think from years of interaction with each other.

Low context refers to societies where people tend to have many connections but of shorter duration or for some specific reason. In these societies, cultural behavior and beliefs may need to be spelled out explicitly so that those coming into the cultural environment know how to behave.

Even when negotiating an outsourcing contract and dealing with high context cultures the proceedings are likely to take longer, in comparison to dealing with low context cultures:

- high context cultures, like Indian, Arabic or Asian, put great price on honor, reputation and tradition and will try to avoid surprises and minimize confrontation. Politeness being valued more than clarity;
- low-context, individualistic cultures, such as the American, or most European cultures, tend to focus more on figures and closing the deal, and can be perceived as aggressive.

Differences are among the nations, which are geographically quite close to each other and belong to the same low context group. For example, attitude to work will be different comparing Lithuania to Denmark (Kazlauskaitė & Buciušienė, 2009).

Culture is difficult to assess, as it embraces so many aspects. Awareness of cultural differences in all the above dimensions between outsourcing partners would be very helpful in reducing communication gaps and to understand the reasons of misunderstanding (Gislen, 2008).

Successful adaptation starts when people admit, that they not necessarily know other culture specifics (Vitkauskaitė, 2009).

By its very definition, offshore outsourcing involves interplay of different companies, countries, regions, etc. That evidences, that representatives of different nations will expect different results and will have different expectations from business relationships. Our differences start from the very childhood and we have differences even among the same nations people. So of course we will have differences between nations. What issues do those differences cause in outsourcing contracts in particular?

Culture is a biggest challenge

In Vantage partners survey (2009), there were interviewed 378 companies all over the world as providers and customers. The biggest challenge was identified as culture. Geographic distance and language barriers were much less.

In cultural section there were evaluated tendencies across 13 cultural dimensions: individual vs group, status and hierarchy risk, directness of communication, relationships vs tasks, time frame, multi-tasking, decision-making, formality, agreements, ambiguity, dealing with conflict and making commitments.

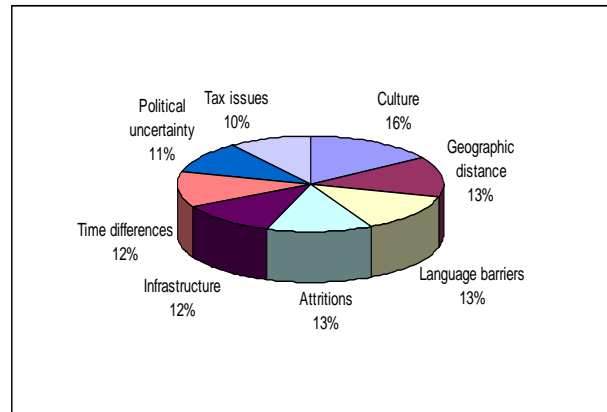


Figure 2. Biggest challenges in outsourcing contracts
(source: Vantage partners survey, 2009)

Perceptions of customers and providers were different, however, all of them agreed, that these areas are an "issue areas" and have to be improved.

Cultural differences make the following activities difficult: communicating effectively, managing performance, generating innovation, identifying, raising and resolving issues, establishing an effective governance structure, managing commitments, creating buy-in with stakeholders, managing scope, making joint decisions (Vantage study, 2009).

And actually according to the survey, providers and customers jointly agreed, that the outcomes in reality of the differences are: time wasted on conflict and revisiting decisions, service complaints from end users, scope overruns, poor quality, missed innovation, missed deadlines, low staff morale, lost savings. (Vantage survey, 2009).

Key issues in everyday outsourcing relations

- Directness of Communication

Classical example is Indian's "yes" syndrome. In Indian culture people avoid giving negative responses. Junior individuals may not speak on an issue without permission by a supervisor. Therefore if someone asks an Indian counterpart if the task can be completed by the end of business tomorrow, and the answer is "yes," it does not mean "yes, it will be done". This is more likely "yes, i'll do my best." Therefore if you have urgent project and rely on this "yes" consequences might be sad. In some cultures, it would be rude to say at once, that something is not possible, so the person is saying he'll see what he can do. As the result - project is delayed and everybody is under pressure, just because the person couldn't say right away what couldn't be done (Bowers, 2009).

- Different life/business experiences mean different assumptions

Especially in software development projects, the customer knows, what users would like to see, what messages to write, what input screen should be. The offshore team does not. Therefore if there are no very specific and detailed instructions, design results might be far below the expectations, because the team has different experiences.

- Native language differences

Providers team does not necessarily speak perfectly the language in which a customer is communicating to them, even if it is English. That means customer should not assume everything he said, will be immediately understood, taking into account also the accent issues, therefore the requirements might not be understood or even if understood, might not be exactly captured what was meant.

- Hierarchy and status

In some societies there are strict divisions between social groups. Such perceptions affect how formally or casually we address people. In the western cultures, if a customer calls a company with a query, company employee often gives just a first name. If a customer from a society with a strict sense of social order is calling, it would consider this as impoliteness of the person to give just a first name as it shows too much familiarity (Kaushik, 2009).

- Decision making

In many western cultures a person's capacity for taking initiative is generally praised and we do not like our behavior to be restricted by too many bureaucratic structures. In other cultures, people's choices are much more restricted and they prefer to obey clear guidelines rather act alone and take a risk. Therefore customer should not expect initiative and improvement suggestions and be not disappointed.

- Individual vs group

In Western culture people value personal freedom and freedom of speech but many countries have a far more collective attitude. Freedom of speech is subordinated to the good of the group, so individuals are careful about what they say (Kaushik, 2009). Therefore humor, which is often used as ice-breaker and help people to feel relax, might be risky, especially jokes about politics, religion, other nationalities or groups.

- Time

Northern Europeans usually equate punctuality to politeness. They see time as valuable and do not like to overrun schedules and miss deadlines. In other parts of the world people are much more relaxed about time. If a South American client invites to a meeting but keeps person waiting for half an hour, it is the norm, as he did not expect person to arrive on time and does not think time and punctuality to be important.

- Management Style

In Western countries managers in general do not ask frequent progress reports, since that would be considered as the lack of trust on the employee. However, in India, if the managers do not follow up frequently, then employees would treat the task as an unimportant one (Gislen, 2008).

- Mum Effect

There is so called Mum Effect - a state of no communication. According to Ramingwong and Sajeew, the mum effect occurs when one or more stakeholders who have information indicating a project is failing decide to

remain silent and let the project continue. Their observations indicate that based on cultural considerations, the risk of mum effect is higher in Asia than in the West (Ramingwong & Sajeew 2007).

Comparing nearshoring and offshoring concepts, nearshoring provider is much closer cultural, linguistic and geographic fit with the customer's organization (Kvedaraviciene, 2008). Language, sense of humor, similarity of education, common history in neighboring countries are important elements in successful interactions and directness of communication. Providers should be very keen on understanding their customers values, as this helps to gain deeper understanding of customers and their behaviour, what leads to long-term relationships (Salciuviene & Auruskeviciene, 2009).

In outsourcing contracts, customer's employees deal with provider's employees every day. The above mentioned issues can be peer to peer everyday reality and what if we multiply this by numbers of employees and numbers of projects? Misunderstandings amount can be enormous and very costly. We should not also forget, that these issues can affect company's core competences, i.e. company's features, which are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate and difficult to substitute (Boguslauskas & Kvedaraviciene, 2008).

Monetary impact

In business environment matter those things, which have monetary value. One of the major drivers of global outsourcing is the promise of costs savings from the labor arbitrage. However, these are people who can make or break the project (Robinson, 2005). Vast issues in management of cultural differences can appear as huge loss on company's profit line instead of delivering cost savings. Many problems in various economies, as well as in companies, which use global resources, expense statements, may be formulated as optimization problems (Paulauskas & Zilinskas, 2009).

Proper planning of costs before the outsourcing decision should be done and they have to anticipate realistically. Extensive amounts should be dedicated to: telephone calls, telephone conferences, web-based meetings, video conferences, travelling on a regular basis. The quality of the distance learning is largely influenced by competently prepared educational resources and an effective study support system (Dzemydiene & Tankeleviciene, 2009).

As all these are additional costs to the project and financial evaluation of project pay-off should be also revised – if it is still worthwhile to consider outsourcing.

The Strategic Outsourcing Plan should capture all cultural impacts starting from strategy level ending every days costs management (Boguslauskas & Kvedaraviciene 2007).

Companies often underestimate the resources required to manage outsourcing providers. The plan on internal management resources should be from 4 to 6% of outsourcing contract's value. Learning by doing is an effective, but expensive, way of mastering cross-cultural management.

Different corporate cultures vs different nation's cultures

Some authors treat cultural differences between customer and provider, as differences in business culture between outsourcing partners.

Duening writes, that "misunderstanding and mistrust can arise, when customer initiates a project with provider whose company's organizational culture and operating style is different from its own. Cultural organization is often overlooked and that oversight is a leading cause of failure" (Duening, Click 2005).

In proposed structure of outsourcing decision, Greaver interprets culture as an organizational culture for decision making and suggests to compare organization's and provider's company values (Greaver, 1999).

Different business cultures are the most difficult challenge in managing offshore relationships (Bubman & Enlow, 2008).

Each company has its own culture and these company cultural ideas and beliefs have to be taught to the partners just like they are taught to new employees (McLaughlin, 2009).

However, there are also thoughts, that organization is a collaboration of multiple and diverse constituencies and interests, referred to as stakeholders and it is quite rare that company adopts a strategic approach to relationship building that is governed both by deep social values and by recognition of the bottom line (Susniene & Sargunas, 2009).

In our view, there are two different things: nation's culture and company's business culture. It is too narrow approach to call everything differences in business culture and think, that solution may be achieved just by introducing a customer's company culture to a provider. There are certain nation's culture differences, which should be dealt first and afterwards, i. e. proper planning and management of outsourcing contract, part of which is introducing customer's company culture and setting expectations. Indians "yes" example is not company culture - this is nation's cultural feature. Working hours from 9 to 5 or working on a problem until it is resolved regardless of the hours - this is definitely company's culture.

Company's culture differences are primarily in onshore outsourcing deals, as nation's culture is the same in both parties. Nearshore implies soft nation's cultural differences and of course company's cultural differences. Offshore major focus point should be nation's cultural differences.

Differences in cultures have to be analyzed and understood so that appropriate measures can be taken to overcome them and similarities can be used to strengthen the outsourcing partnership (Gislen, 2008).

Empirical survey of significance of cultural criteria

In order to evaluate if really cultural differences are important and which features exactly need to be analyzed, when choosing outsourcing location, we have performed an empirical survey. As there are various classifications of cultural differences and various items to be considered when choosing an outsourcing location, first step was to put a structural framework. We have reviewed, analyzed and

compiled a lot of available data and proposed a new set of grouping. We have classified criteria into 5 groups and made a set of criteria for valuation of each group. The groups are:

- Country Background,
- Country Cultural Compatibility,
- Country Internationalization,
- Country Social System,
- Country Religion.

The analyzed and grouped information was presented to experts' valuation in order to find out, which groups and criteria are really important for outsourcing arrangements. People often say, that they are different because they have different religions, different social systems, different level of internationalization, but are they important for outsourcing projects? The survey was conducted during 2009 February – May via internet access port www.surveymonkey.com. There were 27 survey participants, coming from Finland, Sweden, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Denmark. All survey participants are dealing with global resources in outsourcing projects and have daily basis relationship experience. They were asked to value the above groups in scale from 1 to 5, where the highest importance is 5 and the lowest is 1. Survey participants ranked groups by importance in the following order:

1. Country Cultural Compatibility.
2. Country Internationalization.
3. Country Social System.
4. Country Background.
5. Country Religion

In the below figure the groups are shown in % significance.

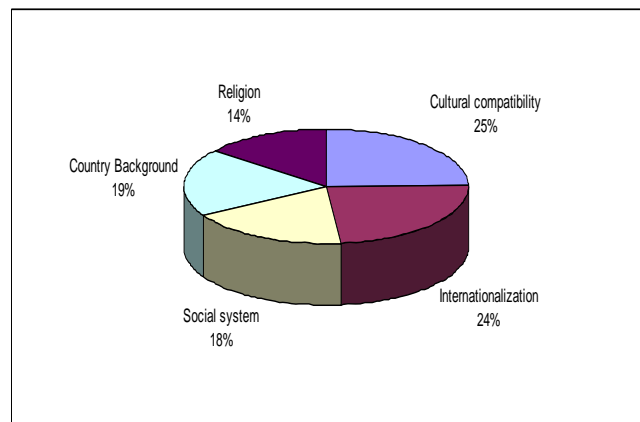


Figure 3. Cultural criteria significance

(source: authors empirical survey)

As it is seen from above, the most important group is Cultural Compatibility. The survey participants also ranked the proposed criteria of Cultural Compatibility. The article authors suggested the following criteria:

- common languages with the outsourcing country,
- communication and networking behaviour,
- different understanding of the same things,
- nation's features,
- working habits and traditions,
- different moral values and norms,
- ethnical networking,
- traditions similarity with the outsourcing country,
- cultural gap with outsourcing country.

The results of the ranking are presented in the figure below and it is obvious that the leaders are common languages and communication.

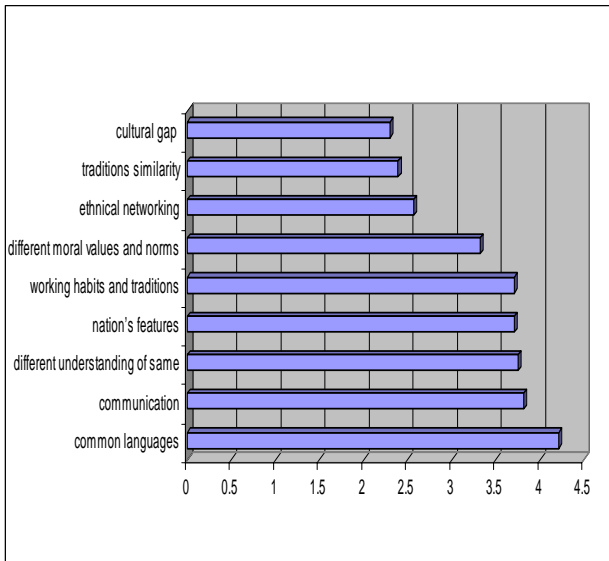


Figure 5. Cultural compatibility criteria and their significance

(source: authors empirical survey)

The second most important group was “Internationalization”, i.e. what is the number of population and how much can they travel abroad, what is the immigration and emigration ratio and ability to learn foreign languages. Actually the more turnaround we have in travelling and immigration/emigration ratios, the more people understand the value of foreign languages and want to learn them, the more they see the world, the more they understand different cultures and are more open for cooperation.

Country Social System and Country Background have not so much impact on Culture in outsourcing decision context. These two items should be considered when evaluating potential countries geopolitical environment, which is another dimension of outsourcing location selection model.

The survey also showed that the least impact to cultural criteria in the scope of outsourcing decisions has religion, the latter being very interesting finding, because quite often different religions are identified as big and influential part of the culture. However, according to the survey results, in outsourcing decisions context, religion does not play a major role.

The survey results showed, that not all cultural differences among different nations are important when choosing outsourcing location and only those, which matter should be carefully investigated before making final selection decision. In the below figure there are shown all groups and all criteria, which were presented to experts' valuation. Criteria in each group are shown according to experts ranking.

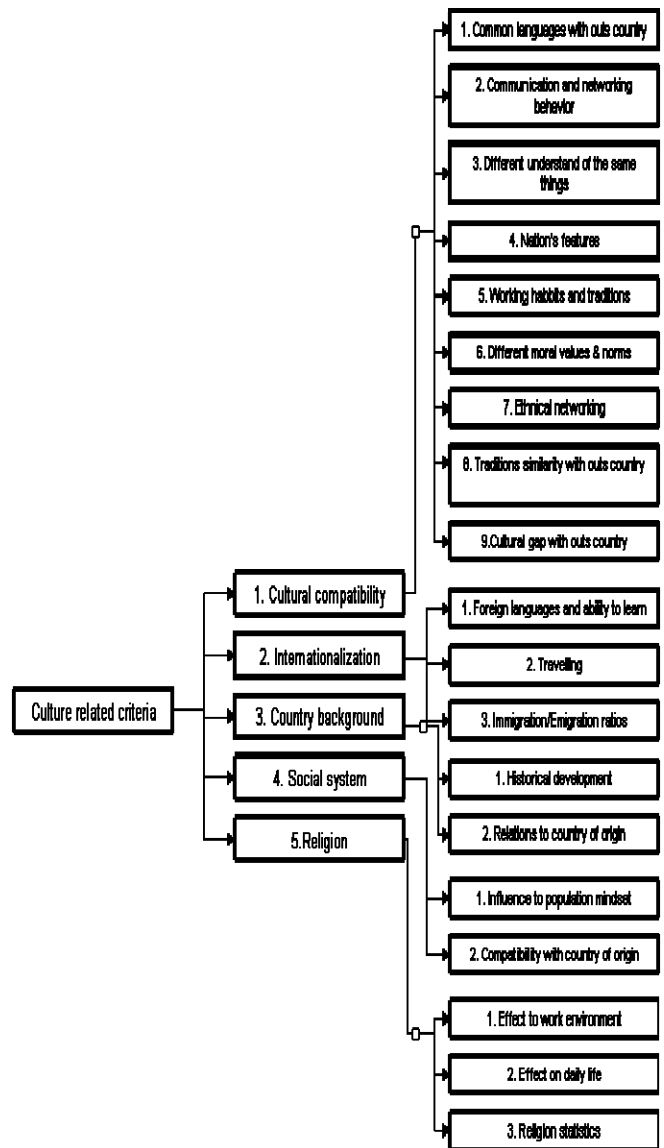


Figure 6. Culture related groups and their criteria

(source: authors' empirical survey)

Conclusions

- According to recent surveys, cultural differences are one of the biggest reasons why offshore outsourcing deals fail or run into problems.
- Culture can be defined as an integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, behavior, values and practices that characterize a country, region, religion or any other institution or group.
- Cultural differences importance is underestimated in currently existing country selection for outsourcing purposes models.
- Cultural differences cause issues in effective communication, performance management, generation of innovations, identifying, raising and resolving issues, establishing an effective governance structure, managing commitments, creating buy-in with stakeholders, managing scope, making joint decisions.

- Offshoring requires to work **on-line** very **different** people, who have common task: **to solve issues efficiently** and provide **on-time deliverables**. This is a major difference compared to earlier cooperation among nations and this is why “adjustment” of cultural differences becomes so important. Right methods still need to be developed, as most of the existing ones cover introduction to other cultures: WHAT and WHY is happening, but not yet HOW – to adjust each other.
- Learning by doing is a costly item, therefore to start learning cultural differences when project is up and running – the result will be enormous budget overruns.
- Nation’s cultural differences should be distinguished for company’s culture differences.

These are two different concepts. Company’s culture differences are primarily in onshore outsourcing deals. Nearshore implies soft nation’s cultural differences and company’s cultural differences. Offshore major focus point should be nation’s cultural differences.

- The empirical survey showed, that importance of cultural criteria in the selection of outsourcing site can be ranked in the following way: cultural compatibility, internationalization, social system, country background and religion. Therefore the biggest attention when choosing outsourcing location should be paid to cultural compatibility and internationalization.

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Kultūrinių skirtumų įtakos svarba kompetencijų nuomai

Santrauka

Dalyvaujant tarptautiniame versle labai svarbu jausti daugybę skirtingų kultūrinių aplinkų ir žinoti, kaip reikia prisitaikyti savo elgesiu bendraujant su verslo partneriu iš kitos kultūros. Žmonės dažnai nesupranta, kad jie skirtingai komunikuoja, skirtingai supranta tuos pačius dalykus, turi skirtingus įsitikinimus apie tai, koks elgesys yra tinkamas, o koks ne, kol nepajunta šių skirtumų įtakos galutiniam projekto rezultatui.

Kultūriniai skirtumai yra įvardijami kaip pagrindinė priežastis, sukelianti daugelio kompetencijų nuomos kontraktų problemų. Fizinės kliūtys, tokios kaip infrastruktūra, tinkama aplinka, kurios anksčiau buvo laikomos svarbiomis, šiuo metu yra beveik išspręstos, tačiau fiziškai „neapčiuopiamos“ problemos, sąlygotos kultūrinių skirtumų, dar ilgai bus sudėtingas kompetencijų nuomos projektų iššūkis.

Kompetencijų nuomos kontraktai, kuriuose dalyvauja nutolę resursai, apima skirtingas kompanijas, skirtingus regionus, skirtingas tautas, skirtingas kalbas ir t. t. Tai leidžia daryti prielaidą, kad skirtingų tautų atstovai tikėtis skirtingų rezultatų ir verslo santykiams turės skirtingus lūkesčius. Kultūros faktorius yra sunkiai įvertinamas, kadangi jis apima be galo daug aspektų, todėl verslo partnerių pasirengimas ir supratimas yra būtinas, norint išvengti nesusipratimų ir išsiaiškinti jau įvykusių problemų priežastis.

Egzistuojančiuose šalies kompetencijų nuomos paslaugų tiekimui pasirinkimo modeliuose kultūriniam suderinamumui nėra skiriama ypatinga reikšmė. Jis vertinamas tik kaip vienas iš daugelio subkriterijų. Kultūriniai skirtumai nėra priskiriami svarbiausių veiksnių grupėms, todėl nepakankamas jiems skiriamas dėmesys ir sąlygoja daugelio kompetencijų nuomos kontraktų problemas. Ne visi kultūriniai skirtumai tarp tiekėjo ir pirkėjo šalies yra svarbūs. Straipsnyje pateikiamas autorių atliktas empirinis tyrimas, kurio metu buvo bandoma išsiaiškinti, kurie kultūriniai faktoriai yra svarbūs pasirenkant šalį. Tyrime dalyvavo dvidešimt septyni darbo su globaliaisiais resursais ekspertai iš Suomijos, Danijos, Švedijos, Lietuvos, Slovakijos ir Čekijos Respublikos. Remdamiesi savo praktine patirtimi, jie įvertino kultūrinių aspektų svarbą. Straipsnyje pateikiami atlikto tyrimo rezultatai.

Daugelis kompanijų šiomis dienomis per lengvai patiki teiginiu, kad mes gyvename globalizuotame pasaulyje, kur sienos, atstumai, vieta, laiko juostos jau nėra svarbios, nes įvairios ryšio priemonės padeda tai išspręsti. Deja, vis dar egzistuoja daugybė skirtumų, kuriuos reikia įveikti arba bent jau išmokyti su jais tvarkytis. Sudėtingas kompetencijų nuomos kontraktus ir taip yra sunku valdyti, o pridėjus laiko zonos skirtumus, kalbos barjerus, retus susitikimus, kitus kasdienio bendravimo ir supratimo skirtumus, iššūkis sėkmingam kontraktui tampa milžiniškas. Sėkmė daugeliu atveju priklauso nuo išugdyto tarpusavio supratimo tarp pirkėjo ir kompetencijų nuomos tiekėjo, kuris įmanomas tik abiem pusėm pripažinus kultūrinius skirtumus ir išmokus juos valdyti.

Verslo aplinkoje paprastai visi svarbūs dalykai turi piniginę išraišką, todėl kalbant apie kultūrinių skirtumų svarbą reikia nepamiršti paminėti ir jų įtaką bendram finansiniam projekto rezultatui. Viena iš pagrindinių globalios kompetencijų nuomos priežasčių yra darbo jėgos sąnaudų mažinimas. Tačiau nereikia pamiršti, kad būtent nuo žmonių, o ne nuo skaičiavimų ar planų priklauso galutinis rezultatas. Todėl netinkamai valdant kultūrinius skirtumus gali rasti didelių nuostolių vietoj tikėto didelio pelno. Taip pat svarbu planuojant kontraktą dideles išlaidų sumas skirti telefoniniams pokalbiams, telefoninėms ir vaizdo konferencijoms, reguliarioms kelionėms.

Literatūroje, nagrinėjančioje kompetencijų nuomos klausimus, vartojami du terminai: *kultūriniai skirtumai* ir *kompanijų kultūriniai skirtumai*. Kai kurie autoriai kultūrinius skirtumus priskiria tiesiog kompanijų kultūriniams skirtumams, kas, straipsnio autorių nuomone, nėra teisinga. Privalu skirti tautų kultūrinius skirtumus nuo kompanijų kultūrinių skirtumų. Nagrinėjant kompetencijų nuomą, kurioje naudojami tos pačios šalies ištekliai, svarbūs yra tik kompanijų kultūriniai skirtumai. Kai naudojami nutolę ir tolimieji ištekliai, gerokai svarbesni yra tautų kultūriniai skirtumai.

Kultūriniai skirtumai klasifikuojami įvairiai ir beveik visais atvejais vertinami skirtingi aspektai. Straipsnio autoriai išanalizavo, sugrupavo ir apdoravo įvairius kasdien kultūrinių skirtumų aprašymus. Užduoties tikslas buvo išsiaiškinti, kurie iš minimų kultūrinių skirtumų yra svarbūs pasirenkant šalį, iš kurios bus tiekiamos kompetencijų nuomos paslaugos. Autoriai pasiūlė naują skirto schema, apimančią, jų nuomone, svarbiausius vertinimo kriterijus. Visi požymiai buvo suskirstyti į penkias grupes:

- Šalies fonas.
- Kultūrinis suderinamumas.
- Internacionalizacija.
- Socialinė sistema.
- Religija.

Požymiai ir juos apibūdinantys kriterijai buvo pateikti ekspertams vertinti norint išsiaiškinti jų svarbą. Ekspertai, kurie turi ne vienų metų su kompetencijų nuomos ištekliais patirtį, požymius pagal svarbą įvertino taip:

1. Kultūrinis suderinamumas.
2. Internacionalizacija,
3. Socialinė sistema,
4. Šalies fonas,
5. Religija.

Straipsnyje yra pateikiami visų požymių kriterijai ir jų svarba. Taip pat pateikiami svarbiausio požymio „Kultūrinio suderinamumo“ kriterijai, kurie ekspertų pagal svarbą buvo išdėstyti taip:

- bendra kalba su paslaugos pirkėjo šalimi,
- komunikacija ir tarpusavio bendravimas,
- skirtingas tų pačių dalykų supratimas,
- tautos ypatumai,
- darbo tradicijos ir įpročiai,
- skirtingos moralinės vertybės ir etikos normos,
- tautinis bendravimas,
- tradicijų panašumas su paslaugos pirkėjo šalimi,
- kultūrinis „plyšys“ tarp tiekėjo ir paslaugos pirkėjo šalies.

Dauguma kultūrinių skirtumų gali būti įveikti, juos vertinant be išankstinio nusistatymo, atviru protu ir tinkamai pasirengus. Abiejų šalių tikslas turėtų būti toks: gauti kuo daugiau iš abiejų kultūrų sinergijos, nei vertinti tik sąnaudų mažinimo aspektą. Šiomis dienomis globalizacija kelia naujus reikalavimus – dirbti labai dinamiškai ir labai aktyviai bendradarbiaujant – tokiais mastais bendradarbiavimas nėra vykęs anksčiau. Pasaulis yra labai netoli nuo didelės tarpusavio supratimo ir kultūrinės revoliucijos – ne tik plėtoti ypatingą kultūrinį įvairiapusį skumą, bet ir įgalinti šį įvairiapusį skumą veikti sinchronizuotai, taip pat pateikti efektyvius rezultatus.

Tyrimo objektas – kultūros ir kultūrinių skirtumų apibrėžimas kompetencijų nuomos kontekste.

Pagrindinis tyrimo tikslas – atskleisti kultūrinių skirtumų vaidmenį kompetencijų nuomos projektuose ir jų svarbą bendrai kontrakto sėkmei.

Tyrimo metodas - sisteminė, loginė ir palyginamoji analizė bei atliktas empirinis tyrimas.

Išvados

- Neseniai atliktus tyrimus, kultūriniai skirtumai buvo įvardyti kaip viena iš didžiausių priežasčių, dėl ko kompetencijų nuomos kontraktai su nutolusiais ir tolimaisiais ištekliais žlunga arba patiria esminių problemų.
- Vykdamas kompetencijų nuomos projektus su tolimaisiais ir nutolusiais ištekliais, reikalinga dirbti gyvai (*on-line*) ir kartu labai skirtingiems žmonėms, kurie turi bendrą užduotį: spręsti problemas efektyviai ir laiku pateikti reikalingus rezultatus. Tai yra didžiulis skirtumas, palyginti su ankstesne tautų kooperacija, ir todėl kultūrinių skirtumų suderinamumas pasidaro itin svarbus. Teisingi metodai šiai problemai spręsti vis dar turi būti sukurti, kadangi esantys sprendimai tik supažindina su kitomis kultūromis ir aiškina **kodėl** ir **kas** vyksta, bet nesiūlo, **kaip** spręsti.
- Kultūrinių skirtumų svarba yra nepakankamai vertinama egzistuojančiuose šalies, kompetencijų nuomos paslaugų tiekimui, pasirinkimo modeliuose.
- Kultūriniai skirtumai sukelia problemų ir apriboja efektyvią komunikaciją, rezultatyvų valdymą, inovacijų kūrimą, problemų identifikavimą, komunikavimą ir jų sprendimą, efektyvios valdymo struktūros sukūrimą, išpareigojimų valdymą, susijusių šalių palaikymą, bendrų efektyvių sprendimų priėmimą.
- Netinkamai valdomi kultūriniai skirtumai gali daryti didelę įtaką kontrakto pelningumui ir turėti neigiamų pasekmių sąnaudų taupymui. „Mokymasis darbe“ yra daug kainuojantis metodas, todėl pradėti nagrinėti kultūrinius skirtumus, kada projektas jau vykdomas, nėra tinkamas laikas.
- Tautos kultūriniai skirtumai turi būti skiriami nuo kompanijų kultūrinių skirtumų. Tai yra dvi skirtingos koncepcijos. Dirbant su tos pačios šalies ištekliais svarbūs yra tik kompanijų kultūriniai skirtumai. Naudojant nutolusius išteklius, turi būti atsižvelgiama į tautų kultūrinius skirtumus ir vėliau į kompanijų kultūrinius skirtumus. Naudojant tolimuosius išteklius svarbiausi yra tautų kultūriniai skirtumai.
- Kultūra gali būti apibrėžiama kaip integralus žmogaus žinių, įsitikinimų, vertybių ir tradicijų, kurios apibūdina šalį, regioną, religiją ar kitą instituciją, visuma.
- Empirinis autorių tyrimas parodė, kad kultūrinis aspektas yra labai svarbus pasirenkant šalį, iš kurios planuojama pirkti kompetencijų nuomos paslaugą. Tyrimo dalyvių nuomone, kultūrinių kriterijų svarba yra ši: kultūrinis suderinamumas, internacionalizacija, socialinė sistema, šalies fonas, religija.

Raktažodžiai: *kompetencijų nuoma, kultūra, kultūriniai skirtumai, tolimieji ištekliai, artimieji ištekliai, kompetencijų nuomos modeliai, tautų kultūra, kompanijų kultūra.*

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