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Key Finding

Wherever we are in the world, success depends on our ability to navigate through the different cultural realities of how people think and get things done.

Business Application

Managers and executives must learn to work effectively with people from dramatically different cultures and backgrounds, often without leaving their desks.

Where once managers and executives might have been expected to collaborate with nationals from one or two foreign territories, today they are part of global networks connecting nationals scattered around the world. At INSEAD I have developed a Culture Mapping system to help international managers to navigate the complexity of their multi-cultural interactions.

In today's globalised economy you might be an American doing business in Nigeria, a French woman making a deal with Japan, or a Brazilian trying to woo a new customer in Australia. You can do your business over the phone or by SKYPE. That's the easy part. The tough part is figuring how to conduct yourself in a different culture. Is it Mexicans who don't like criticism and Danes who don't want you to mince words? Or is it the other way around? Is it Americans who like social talk and Chinese who stick to business? Or the reverse?

When you throw together people from starkly different backgrounds and cultures, the result can be interesting, even funny at times, but can also lead to misunderstanding and confusion.

For the past 50 years, management research and literature has been mainly focused on the intricacies of motivating teams and negotiating deals with people who share the same cultural background. But given the rapid globalisation of our economy what it means to be an effective manager has fundamentally changed. From now on every time we think about how to be effective, we need to think « Will this strategy work in the different countries where my company operates ? »

Read more:

Meyer, E., (2014). *The Culture Map: Breaking Through the Invisible Boundaries of Global Business*, PublicAffairs.

Meyer, E., (2015). « Getting to Si, Ja, Oui, Hai, and Da ». *Harvard Business Review*

Roper, J., (2017). « Don't get lost in culture translation », *HR*, February. Interview with Erin Meyer.

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WOMEN,
IDEAS.

Erin Meyer is Senior Affiliate Professor in the Organisational Behaviour Department at INSEAD. In 2017 Thinkers50 ranked her as one of that year's top 50 business thinkers and HR magazine as one of the top 30 HR influencers. She publishes widely and has been interviewed on CNN, Bloomberg TV, the BBC and NPR. To know more, visit her [website](#).



Research interests:

Cross-cultural differences in how executives reason and analyse; leadership competency differences between asian and western managers; how global managers overcome intercultural team challenges.