Multinational Team Building

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Archer, Carol, (2001) *Multinational Team Building*. Downloaded from ezinearticles.com on November 17, 2009.

## Summary

The article’s author wants to create teams of students to work on community and culture projects. Initially she thinks her projects will be great since her students come from all around the world. It became apparent that it would not be that easy. People from different cultures think differently than she did. To adjust for this fact, she developed strategies outlined by the article.

During her 30 years of study Ms. Archer found that American teams work toward a common goal and when that goal is achieved, the team is dissolved. By contrast, people from collectivist societies, such as Asian, Middle Eastern and Latin American countries form groups based on their affiliation. These groups may or may not agree on the common goal and tasks are assigned by age, gender, heritage or previous achievement.

Using Bruce Tuchman’s model of team development, Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning, Ms. Archer identified the following observations. During the Forming stage, mixed teams need more time to form. Relationships need to be established. Providing forms to obtain and share basic personal information can facilitate this process.

During the Storming stage, the facilitator may have to reassure members that disagreeing is acceptable. Written assignments sometimes encourage the members to contribute more. During the Norming stage you must make certain task are not assigned based on cultural roles. Remind members of the stages and the outcomes of the process. You do not want the lone man in the project to be the leader, just because the cultures of the others expect male dominance (he may be the worst choice from a technical perspective). You want the full benefit of all the team members.

Performing, according to the author is where all of the previous suggestions will shine. With members learning and sharing each other’s experiences and attributes, the outcome is spectacular. Finally, at the Adjourning stage, mixed teams need to be reminded of the closure and given formal acknowledgment of a job completed. A social event is best as it marks the end of the project and everyone can depart on a high note.

## Analysis

The advice given by the author is relevant for the Project Manager of International ventures. Building teams is vital to project success and understanding the impact cultural differences have cannot be understated. I think the advice for providing time to build relationships in the Forming stage is imperative. In the United States, we are more homogeneous in our activities, especially if we are all from the same industry. Building teams on the spot with total strangers is not unheard of. Many foreign countries are built around strict social protocol, or tied strongly to a family structure. The simple act of an introduction and initial social activity will go a long way and be time well spent.

I wish the article spent more time on the Performing stage since most of the activity of the team will be spent here. I am certain there are many ideas as to how to get multi-cultural teams to work together. Multinational Team Building is a good article and its content should be gleaned by anyone managing a multi-national team.

References

Archer, C. (n.d.). *Multinational team building*. Team November 17, 2009, Building ezinearthcles Web site: http:/​/​ezinearticles.com/​?Multinational-Team-Building&id=1914472