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Working as a team

Situation

PSF is an international company operating worldwide. It has recently started a new project which will introduce a single standardised software package across its organisation, replacing the different softwares used by countries at the moment. Rachel is the project leader with Lucas and Gabriella in her team supported by Eric, who is an external consultant.

The project team is meeting to discuss the development of an internal intranet site where future users of the software can access support, system information and news on the project's development. Eric, the external consultant to the project, is presenting his proposals on the design of the project's intranet site pages.



Rachel



Lucas



Gabriella



Eric

A Introduction

DISCUSS

Read and discuss the following quotes on diversity.

1 Which do you like the most? Why?

*United we stand,
divided we fall.*
Aesop

*I am not an Athenian, nor a
Greek, but a citizen of the world.*
Socrates

*Evil to some is always
good to others.*
Jane Austen

*We are of course a nation of differences.
Those differences don't make us weak.
They're the source of our strength.*
Jimmy Carter

*All conflict is about difference; whether the
difference is race, religion, or nationality ...*
John Hume

*It is time for parents to teach young people early on
that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength.*
Maya Angelou

2 What do you see as the main advantages and disadvantages for work teams of having high levels of diversity: people from different cultures, different departments, different personalities with different opinions, etc.?

VIEW (0.40–1.42)

Watch Bob talking about the impact of diversity on the efficiency of team meetings.

- 1 How do his ideas about advantages and disadvantages compare to yours?
- 2 Who does Bob say is responsible for making sure diversity becomes an advantage in team meetings?

REFLECT

Think about your own team meetings. Generally, how well are differences managed: different points of view, different personalities, different cultural values, etc.?

B Discussing the intranet design: 1

VIEW (1.43–3.39)

Watch Eric, the external consultant to the project, concluding his presentation with proposals on the design of the project's intranet site pages.

- 1 What are Eric's main ideas for the intranet page design?
- 2 Gabriella thinks differently about the design. What is her point of view?
- 3 How does Rachel handle the difference of opinion between Eric and Rachel?

REFLECT

- 1 How effective do you think the communication is between Eric and Gabriella? Why?
- 2 How effectively do you think Rachel chairs the discussion? Why?

C What happened?

VIEW (3.40–5.33)

Now watch Bob's comments on the first part of the meeting and compare his point of view to yours.

- 1 Complete the summary below of his different interpretations of the meeting.

Interpretation 1	Interpretation 2

- 2 What does Bob say is his own personal 'reading' of the meeting?

REFLECT

Which interpretation is closest to your own? How much do you disagree with the other interpretation of the meeting? Why?

D Discussing the intranet design: 2

DISCUSS

Look at the following checklist of skills for facilitating discussion in meetings.

- 1 Can you add more ideas to the list?
- 2 Brainstorm example phrases in English which you could say for each of the skills.

Facilitation skills	Example phrases
• Encourage constructive thinking at the beginning. • Invite people to give ideas. • Clarify what people have said. • Give positive feedback. • Welcome creative and alternative ideas. • Get the group to agree on a decision. • •	• • • • • • • •

VIEW (5.34–7.36)

Watch the second part of the meeting. Which of the above facilitation skills does Rachel use?

REFLECT

Look at the script.

- 1 Underline the questions and comments which Rachel uses to help facilitate the meeting. How do these questions and comments compare to the phrases which you brainstormed earlier?
- 2 How successful is Rachel in leading the discussion this time?
- 3 Which single question asked by Rachel during the discussion do you think is most important in helping to facilitate the discussion? Why?

E Conclusions

VIEW (7.37–9.55)

Watch Bob's summary.

- 1 Compare the question which you picked out as most important to the one which Bob chooses. What is the impact of asking this type of question, according to Bob?
- 2 Bob encourages people to become 'cultural architects' in order to become 'truly effective intercultural communicators'. What do cultural architects do?
- 3 How far do you agree with Bob about the role of 'cultural architect'? How far do you / should you play this role?

PRACTICE

Role play: international recruitment

Role play a meeting to decide who to appoint as the leader and deputy leader of an international project in your organisation.

Before you start to prepare, decide on one person to be the leader of the meeting.

After the meeting, give feedback to each other on how successful the meeting was in terms of:

- communication (Did people listen to each other? How effective was the facilitation? etc.)
- results (Was a decision reached? How far do people feel it was the right decision? etc.).

Background

You all work for an international cosmetics company based in Switzerland. You are members of an advisory group to the Sponsor of a major international project which started last month. The objective of the project is to persuade two key markets – UK and Italy – to rebrand a range of local products, to bring them into line with a single global branding and promotion. The project team, which is international, with members from all over the world, is working towards a meeting in six weeks' time with market heads in both countries. At this meeting, the strategy and planning for this change will be presented to local marketing managers. It is clearly understood in the project that there is resistance from local UK and Italian marketing management, who want to keep their successful local brands.

Situation

Following a sudden resignation, the project has been urgently seeking a new project leader and deputy. You should review the list of candidates below and:

- decide on the best choice for project leader and project deputy.
- identify any additional useful supportive measures to help the project team before the meeting with local Italian and UK management.

Potential candidates

Lin Ho (Chinese)

She has been with the company for 8 years. She has an MBA from Stanford University in the US. She started as a Marketing Assistant in her home market, Singapore. She was promoted quickly to Marketing Manager in charge of branding. For the last two years she has been working in Australia, before transferring Switzerland one month ago. She is someone good at getting a job done. She is very hard working, quiet but effective. She speaks excellent English and German as well as her native Mandarin Chinese. She is learning Italian.

Elio Ronzoni (Italian)

Elio has been with the company for 12 years. He studied Economics and International Marketing at one of the top universities in Italy. He worked for 6 years for an Italian advertising company before being headhunted by your company. He is very creative and knowledgeable about international marketing. He is seen domestically as a rising star with talent and ability to work autonomously. An energetic communicator – speaks very quickly. Limited international work experience so far. English skills are intermediate.

Gisela Ebke (Swiss)

Gisela was recruited straight from university, where she graduated with a PhD in Chemistry. She has now been with the company for 12 years and has a good network among global management. She worked in R & D for 6 years before accepting an international contract. Her first posting was to Montreal in Canada. Since then she has been a Product Manager for a global brand. She is very well-organised and is focused on achieving results. She speaks German, English, French and intermediate Italian. Noted for being a very direct and forceful communicator.

David Bexley (British)

Previously with your major competitor in the UK, David has been with the company for 4 years. He is an Arts graduate who went into marketing 15 years ago. He has done an MBA by distance learning. He is relatively extrovert, sociable and easy-going, with natural abilities to persuade. He speaks only English. Noted for his creativity and people skills. Limited experience in project management.