

The primacy of culture

The impact of **Cultural**

competence for the construction of
business across borders

Agenda

- I - The concept of **Culture**.
- II - Why business and **Culture** are in symbiosis.
- III - **Cultural** and business features of Scandinavians versus those of some of our neighbouring countries.

Swedes - as viewed by others !:

- Ethnocentric and prone to decide the moral agenda and codes for all...
- Lean against the safety-net of the well-fare system and expect someone else to take leadership...

Swedes - as viewed by - Swedes

- An inability to relate to the meanings of aggression and armed conflicts.
- Tend to have a naive picture of the world and try to explain foreign conflicts as educational problems.
- A difficulty dealing with migration problems – fear for being “racist”?

(continued)

Swedes as viewed by others II:

- Have an informal and straightforward attitude in business...
- Have established "excellence in equality" ...
- Delegate decision-making...
- Relaxed dress-codes...

Typical features of Scandinavian culture as viewed by Scandinavians

- Hierarchy and status are non-important - "flat" organizations...
- Managers are team-leaders and inspirators rather than bosses...
- Delegation of power comes natural...
- Consensus—decisions...

Typical features of Scandinavian culture as viewed by others

- Scandinavian identification
- Liberalism
- Abiding by the rules
- High taxes
- Politicians try to decide in consensus

Cultural sensitivity – the competitive factor
that makes a difference

Culturally aware people are key:

- Strive for **Cultural** Competence.
- Have behavioral intelligence.
- Show **respect** for other cultures.

Companies suffering from **Cultural**

myopia will eventually be out of business

- Factors critical for business success:
 - quality of people
 - business know-how
 - adequate finance
 - and: **cultural sensitivity!**

Does culture matter for business?

- Yes, definitely. National values, history and traditions – “culture” - create the context of business evolution.
- Most experience supports the allegation that business prospers as cultural barriers are minimized.

Cultural regions – defined in terms of “civilizations”

- Western
- Confusian/Japanese
- Islamic
- Hindu
- Slavic-Orthodox
- Latin-American
- African

Cultures differ – and so do people

- **Major cultural regions:**
 - The Western world
 - The Sinic civilization
 - The Developing countries

Cultural identity

- Is sometimes created as a way to separate one group, tribe or nation from another.
- The formation of a national culture can be caused by major traumas – for instance military defeats or victories.

What determines culture?

- **History**
- **Religion**
- **Economics**
- **Politics**
- **Education**
- **Social structures**
- **Other cultures**

Defining "Culture"

- "Culture" as a concept is frequently stereotyped – how are we to really understand it?
- A system of values and norms that are shared among a group of people, constituting a blueprint for living.

Scandinavian Business-culture as viewed by others – stereotypes or real?

- Scandinavians are stiff and impersonal?
- As managers they prefer to take a "low profile"?
- As business-people they are honest...?
- They avoid irrelevant "bull-shit" and prefer a target-oriented focus...?
- They are cultural "ignorants"!??