



## Workshop Human Resources

### “Team Building with Chinese Characteristics”

#### MEETING MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup> 2008, 19:00  
Venue: Hotel Sofitel Hyland, 505 Nanjing Dong Lu

#### **Speaker:**

**Mr. Gabor Nagy**, Managing Director and **Mr. Istvan Mellau**, Senior Trainer & Consultant;  
HRO Consulting (Shanghai) Co., Ltd.,

#### **Moderation:**

Mr. Rolf Koehler, General Manager, Freudenberg Management (Shanghai) Co., Ltd.,

#### **Minutes:**

Ms. Nicole Schulz, German Chamber of Commerce Shanghai

#### **Agenda:**

1. Introduction by Mr. Koehler
2. Speeches by Mr. Nagy and Mr. Mellau
3. Question session
4. Closing remarks

#### **1. Introduction by Mr. Koehler**

Mr. Koehler welcomes the participants and introduces the two speakers of the evening, Mr. Nagy and Mr. Mellau. After briefly presenting the topic he asks all the attendees to actively participate in order to create an interactive workshop.

#### **2. Speech by Mr. Nagy and Mr. Mellau**

Mr. Nagy and Mr. Mellau start by mutually presenting themselves. After talking about their relation to China and the experiences in the field of training, they explain that it is important to know each other well. They continue by explaining that their informal introduction helps to become more open. When working in a team, it is important what people know about each other. Therefore they ask the participants to introduce themselves to the audience.

In the first part of the presentation Mr. Nagy explains that there is a great variety of participants and every customer is special. Therefore they usually start with an assessment. He shows that companies can be divided into 4 different categories regarding their team building activities:

- 1) No team building activities
- 2) Outing (first actions take, e.g. organized dinners, trips)
- 3) Following wish (actions taken, e.g. hire consultants, but randomly)
- 4) Systematic team building (certain vision exists how team should work, systematically work to achieve this goal)

In the development process it is not necessary to take one step after another; it is also possible to skip a step. He asks the participants where they see their company. As a result 50 % of the companies were settled in the field of “outgoing”, 25 % in the field of “systematic” and another 25 % in the field of “following wish”. Then he goes on with explaining that most of their customers of the field “following wish” are Human Resources Manager, but the customers in the field of “systematic” are line managers, or CEOs. He also asks the audience what kind of experience they have. Mr. Berger agrees with that opinion and mentions that this is because the line managers have problems if the team does not cooperate. Other facts mentioned were:

- Sometimes there is no interest in team building activities, because people think they are already a team
- In every company the HR department plays a different role, sometimes HR department and technical departments are not linked very well
- Often, there is a “systematic” plan in one department of the company, but not for the entire company
- If a company did not had team building activities, even outgoing is a step in the right direction
- Employees might be disappointed if the employer takes no action (especially if former employer did) but this also depends on the budget a company has
- When talking about teams, you also talk about performance
- One important topic in China: How to develop commitment?

Mr. Nagy asks the participants to think about problematic issues in their company and to produce a short list. Then, these problems should be discussed in small groups of two or three persons. The aim is to find out, how many of these problems are attributed to communication issues and are people related. The reason for choosing this method is that people, when talking about problems and sharing them, they are able to find out where the problems originate from. After the discussion, most people reported that 67 to 100 % of their problems are communication issues.

In the next part of the presentation Mr. Mellau continues by explaining that people are different, so there have to be different programs for training them. The company culture also has to be considered. The aims that should be achieved in a team building activity are:

- 1) Everybody listens to each other
- 2) All participants feel safe, there are no consequences or evaluations regarding their behavior (it is not working to set up energy if you keep the people disciplined)
- 3) Create balance of the team (often two levels existing: supervisors and subordinates)  
Especially Chinese participants need more encouragement, because they are more introverted compared to western people
- 4) Relax, spend time just with each other

Mr. Mellau goes on with explaining that most of the people want to know exactly what will happen in the training. At the beginning, they are often afraid because they do not know the agenda or the topics to be discussed. But if you give the power to the people they are hardly to stop in discussions. One method to achieve this, is to let the people finish incomplete sentences. So you



get a list of expectations and the participants do not even realize they are talking about their expectations or fears. Subsequently Mr. Mellau talks about the fact that combining indoor and outdoor activities can cause extra benefits. He explains the example of dragonboating: just when the entire team works together and everybody “sees” the direction of the team, you can be successful.

### **3. Q & A**

**Q:** How to convince people who do not believe in the benefits of team building?

**A:** It is hard to explain somebody the benefits. Therefore it is the best to just let them try. Of course it might not be easy to find time, but the people will make the experience that the time was well spent.

**Q:** Is it more difficult to have team building activities with Chinese than with Germans?

**A:** This is a quite difficult question; it is not possible to distinguish in “black and white”. But many expatriates have to find their way to work with Chinese. It often depends on the person: some are open-minded, and some are more introverted. In general, you can say that Chinese are more cooperative than Germans. Germans often think they already know everything. It could also be helpful to have a special cross cultural training where you ask a party of the strength and weaknesses of the other party and vice versa. To show them the things which connect will help to motivate the team in the future.

Further comments:

- It is important to respect the differences; often Chinese and Germans just have different methods to handle problems. The team must make a compromise to work together and build up a team spirit.
- Often there are wrong or hidden expectations, for example that it will work like it works at home or the Chinese expect that the westerners understand their way.
- In a company there is not just a cross cultural problem, but also the problems of the Germans abroad and the Germans in Germany

**A:** It is essential to know that people are very similar. There are two principles:

- 1) All people want to be accepted
- 2) If you ask for help nobody can refuse

Therefore you should believe in the potential of your people. When you want to participate you learn.

**Q:** In the speech was mentioned the fact of bringing the levels together. How to do that in detail?

**A:** Indeed it is hard work. Often intervention, reflection and mirroring are required. You can ask other participants of the team: What do you think was the message? The Chinese perception is very fine (deeper going than the western one). The western attitude towards things often is “I know everything”, the Chinese attitude is “I want to learn”. You have to encourage the people.

### **4. Closing remarks**

Ms. Koehler thanks the speakers and asks the participants to fill out to the questionnaires. He announces the next Human Resources workshop on 11 June with the topic “How to motivate and steer a sales force effectively?”

