CHAPTER 1

Human Resource Management’s

Strategic Pressures

## Chapter 1: Suggested answers to quiz exercises

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# Quiz 1.1: Assessing Different National Cultures*[[1]](#endnote-1)*

This quiz asks you to review different cultures and apply three criteria used in Hoftstedt’s classical culture framework, [[2]](#endnote-2) and the GLOBE research program.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Your instructor might ask you to compare your results in groups guided by a facliator. The facilitator is asked to chair a discussion on the implications of your responses and the research summarized below.

Institutional Uncertainty Gender

Collectivism Avoidance Egalitarianism

Confucian Asia High Medium Medium

Germanic Europe Low High Medium

Anglo (outside Europe) Low Medium Medium

Middle East High Low Low

Nordic Europe Low High High

In your discussion, you might ask what essential HRM practices are central to each dominant profile? For example, group and team methods are more appropriate in cultures where there is higher collectivism.

# Quiz 1.2: How successful are general change programs in instilling new practices[[4]](#endnote-4)

There are several high profile change programs in implementing various human resource ideas – concerning strategic planning, decision-making, health, stress and physical fitness. This quiz asks you to respond to questions assessing the success of programs which focus on changing behaviours and instilling new practices. The instructor might ask you to compare your results in groups. What are the implications of this research in terms of implementing change?

**HR related programs**

1. What percentage of effectively formulated strategies are implemented?

*Answer:* 60-80% of effectively formulated strategies are not implemented

2. What percentage of decisions ended in failure (that is, not used after two years)?

**Answer:** 50% or half of decisions studied were not used after two years; one third were never used.

3. What percentage of re-engineering (core review) efforts are judged to be successful?

**Answer:** 25% are judged to be successful.

**HR related personal change programs**

4. What percentage of people reach their target weight after participating in one of our best programs for health and diet?

*Answer:* Only 5% -7% of weight watchers were able to take off the weight they projected to take off.

5. What percentage of these people kept this weight off or maintained their target weight?

*Answer:* Only ½ of 1% kept it off for two years.

6. Of the 60 goal-oriented people who entered the program and set goals for swimming, what percentage of people met their goals?

*Answer:* 19% of the swimmers meet their stated goals.

7. What percentage of people quit smoking after their physicians counsel them to quit?

*Answer:* 2.3% - A guideline from the US Department of Health, based on a meta-analysis, estimated that physician advice led to a quit rate of 10.2 % as opposed to 7.9% who did not receive physician advice. (10.2% - 7.9%)

8. What percentage of people quit smoking and never start again after a major health event?

*Answer:* Some 43% quit smoking after a major health event?

A first step is to recognize that changes are difficult to implement in many areas including organizational and personal changes. Some of the key reasons might be: (i) the lack of an effective strategy or goal which is compelling and important, (ii) not recognizing that people have to feel a strong need for change, and (iii) unclear targets. Other important reasons include implementing ideas just because others are doing things, too high expectations, poor leadership, and inability to mobilize commitment to sustain the change.

## Discussion

We might begin a discussion defining change. In the above examples, change involves changing habits and beliefs, like the changes a person might undergo in becoming more participative after years of being very authoritarian. We might ask people about the changes that they have experienced.

This quiz should provoke a discussion about he difficulties of implementing changes in many areas, including personal and organizational changes. What makes for ineffective change?

Some of the key reasons might be: (i) the lack of an effective strategy or goal which is compelling and important, (ii) not recognizing that people have to feel a strong need for change, and (iii) unclear targets. Other important reasons unrealistic expectations, poor leadership, and inability to mobilize commitment to sustain the change.

People might be more compelled to change if one of two conditions exist (i) there is a ***compelling vision*** which pulls people forward, or (ii) if there is a ***burning platform*** or set of circumstances which encourages people to change. The compelling vision idea is like a promise of something, which is so attractive (like a future) that it pulls us in a new direction. The burning platform is illustrated when things are really bad, such as in number 8 above when people experience a traumatic health event and they question their life style. In the same way, organizations might have a higher need for change when there is a perceived need for change, such as when things are not going well.

# References

1. House, R.J., Hanges, P.J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P.W., & Gupta, V. (2004*) Culture, leadership, and organizations,* Thousand Oaks: Sage, 193. Ratings from 1-3 are low; 4 and 5 are medium: 6 and 7 are high. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid.; Hofstede, G. (1993) Cultural constraints in management theories. *Academy of Management Executive,* 7: 81-94. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. House, R., Javidan, M., Hange, P., & Dorfman, P. (1999) Understanding cultures and implicit leadership theories across the globe: An introduction to project Globe. *Journal of World Business,* 37: 3-10. These grew from the first GLOBE research conference at the University of Calgary where 54 researchers from 38 countries convened to begin a project to gather information in 61 countries. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. House, R.J., Hanges, P.J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P.W., & Gupta, V. (2004*) op.cit.* [↑](#endnote-ref-4)