

## INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

**N**ew research results from our database of *The International Profiler* show that gender, expatriate experience and national culture influences the extent to which professionals emphasise a range of international success factors. By combining these results with a survey on how interculturalists rank international competencies we reveal some key similarities and differences between professionals in the field and the trainers, consultants and academics who develop them.



## *Being International: what do international managers and professionals really think is important – and do the experts agree?*

BY NIGEL EWINGTON, RICHARD LOWE, AND DAVID TRICKEY

**M**aking transitions in a cross-cultural environment is a growing challenge for international managers and professionals. Intercultural practitioners have been providing support in these transitions for many years now with training, coaching and consultancy projects. But what type of competencies should trainers, coaches and consultants help to develop? What international skills, attitudes and areas of knowledge do professionals themselves value most (and least) in the disparate roles they cover in different sectors and in different countries? Do professionals with expatriate experience differ in the way they give emphasis to international success factors compared to those have not lived and worked abroad? How does the emphasis on certain competencies differ across cultures and across gender? And, finally, is there a match between what 'expert' interculturalists prioritise as key success factors in working internationally compared to the clients they work for?

The responses to these questions seem critical to us in ensuring that international development is targeted more accurately to the specific role requirements and cultural background of our international clients.

In this article we would like to present some research which responds to these questions and, we believe, has important implications for the approaches used to develop international professionals and managers.

WorldWork Ltd, an organisation specialising in the creation of tools to support managers involved in transferring their skills to unfamiliar cultural contexts, has collected data in response to these questions from two sources. The first is the database of responses to *The International Profiler*, a web-based psychometric questionnaire and personal feedback process which reveals the relative emphasis, attention and energy which individuals bring to a set of 10 international competencies—with 22 associated skills, attitudes and areas of knowledge (see Appendix 1).

The second is a web-based survey conducted in 2006 through Dialogin.com which asked 125 intercultural consultants, trainers, academics and international management professionals to evaluate the 22 areas used in *The International Profiler* according to their degree of importance in contributing to the successful fulfilment of international business roles.

# The Current Research

The original set of 10 international competencies was created in 2000 and was based on three years of researching the personal skills, attitudes and areas of knowledge which differentiate the more successful international operators from the less successful. From existing quantitative and qualitative research, other international competency sets and our own experience of delivering training and consultancy, we identified extra or enhanced competencies which facilitate the transfer of professional and management skills from a local level to a range of diverse international contexts and, in doing so, leverage the potential for competitive advantage. A fuller bibliography of the sources of the international competency set can be found on the WorldWork website ([www.worldwork.biz](http://www.worldwork.biz)). The 80 three-item question format ensures that the candidate is forced to choose between the areas of competencies he/she gives most value to in working in an international context. The results show the individual's relative distribution of emphasis across the 22 areas as well as a normed score which compares their results with all the other candidates in the database as a percentile. In this way they can understand how their own emphasis may differ (or not) from other international operators.

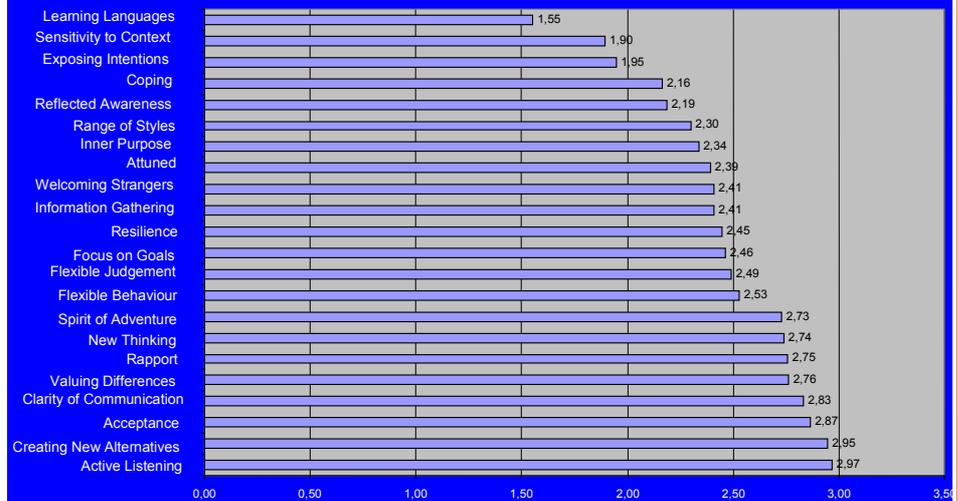
To date we have 2198 completed questionnaires for The International Profiler with responses from 85 nationalities. The database includes people from a wide range of sectors, functional backgrounds ages as well as a mix of roles, organisational seniority, activities and gender. 71% are male and 29% are female. 45% have at some stage lived abroad as an adult compared to 55% who haven't.

### What professionals value most

Looking in Table 1 at the average hierarchy of emphasis across the whole competency set (the maximum score being 5), the top 8 areas given most attention relate to Openness (New Thinking and Acceptance), Emotional Strength (Spirit of Adventure), Communication Skills (Active Listening and Clarity of Communication), Cultural Knowledge (Valuing Differences), Influencing (Rapport) and finally, Synergy (Creating New Alternatives).

Although each individual's profile is different and should reflect the specific role/contextual challenges the person faces, we can begin to create a profile of the primary success factors as reflected in the actual energy given by this database of international managers and professionals. Such a

**Ranked Means for all International Profilers - a hierarchy of focus from least to most**



**The International Profiler™**

Table 1

person would have the ability to show respect for international partners by attentive listening, negotiating meaning through checking and clarifying and by ensuring they used explicit signals to show they were listening (Active Listening). They would understand issues from multiple perspectives (New Thinking) and learn to reconcile different approaches to find creative solutions which reflect the diversity of the teams they work in (Creating New Alternatives). They would be accepting of behaviour and practices different to their own, taking people as they found them – even



*Spirit of Adventure can be understood in terms of professional bungee jumping*

looking for the best in them - and not attempting to shoe-horn others into complying with their own sense of what is right (Accepting). Such people would adapt their style of delivery to be clearly understood by their target audience employing a low risk use of language which focuses on simplicity without being simplistic (Clarity of Communication). They would have an intrinsic enjoyment in working with partners from diverse backgrounds (Valuing Differences) and build long-term trust at a personal level as a key lever to influence them in the pursuit of their professional objectives (Rapport). And lastly they would be people who seek out challenge, variety and stimulating change as a source of learning – akin to professional bungee-jumpers (Spirit of Adventure).

This would seem to be the most typical profile reflecting where international players in our database put their energy at present. This is not to say that they *should* be emphasising these aspects above others, but when forced to make a choice, there seem to be clear preferences revealed. Where are the three lowest areas of energy?

It is interesting to note that the investment and effort needed to learn different languages is the lowest priority of all. Very few people seem to see themselves as intrinsically interested in developing linguistic flexibility and seeking out opportunities to improve their language skills.

However in most development initiatives when a company is internationalising, language development is often the first (and sometimes only) priority to meet the new challenges an international environment will bring. We would not underestimate the importance of creating competence in a common language, but would point out that the intrinsic motivation to learn languages often found in the intercultural and language training community is not usually matched by the instrumental motivation shown by those who completed The International Profiler questionnaire. Once such professionals have reached an operational competence in a passport language like English their motivation to learn even a handful of phrases in other languages seems to be very limited. This has clear implications for how language training is 'sold' to busy professionals where the return on investment can seem low. The second and third area of focus revealed by the data are Sensitivity to Context and Exposing Intentions. The ability to get things done through an Understanding of how hierarchy and

decision-making works in other cultures (Sensitivity to Context) is not an area which international professionals seem to give particular attention to. Although encoding clear messages is a priority for most, ensuring that your interlocutors understand the deeper reasoning behind your requests, proposals and suggestions (Exposing Intentions) is again clearly de-emphasised by the professionals in our database.

These two low areas of energy suggest that people who work internationally do not tend to focus on the link between successful cross-border working and the need to make explicit where their suggestions, requests and thinking are coming from (the context of communication) and where decision-making is embedded in organisations (the context of power). However, qualitative research by Goodall and Roberts<sup>1</sup> suggests that local staff (in this case in Colombia and China) valued their manager's ability to expose intentions as a source of respect and trust much more highly than having linguistic competence or flexible behaviour. Goodall and Roberts also suggest that connecting teams across the disconnect between Corporate Centres and affiliates through a strong network of key sponsors is vital to the effectiveness of expatriates and other boundary

spanners in global organisations. Is the high priority given to Active Listening a cosy concept of international effectiveness based on a belief in negotiating meaning between individuals or do things happen through sharing understanding and connecting more widely across organisational powerbases?



Sensitivity to Context - the ability to understand power and decision-making across cultures

<sup>1</sup> Only Connect: Teamwork in the Multinational, Keith Goodall & John Roberts, Journal of World Business 38 (2003) 150-164

## Comparing those with expatriate experience with those who don't

If we cut the data to compare those who said they had 'lived abroad over the age of 18' with those who had never lived abroad we can see some significant differences in prioritisation.

There seems to be a significant connection between depth of international experience and relative emphasis across 'push' and 'pull' competencies. We would define 'push' competencies as those which allow us to actively drive forward our proposals, ensuring that our internal ideas are 'pushed' out in the clearest way possible for people to understand and accept, and being sufficiently robust and determined not to be distracted along the way. It's a 'from the inside-out' approach. 'Pull' competencies, on the other hand, ensure that we start with others first, 'pulling' their world into our own and extending our own perspective, learning on the way and then creating win-win solutions together with our partners. It's a 'from the outside-in' approach.

We can see from Table 2 that professionals who have lived abroad give significantly more emphasis to the 'pull' areas of competence such as Welcoming Strangers, Acceptance, Learning Languages, Spirit of Adventure, Information Gathering, Range of Styles and Creating New Alternatives.

**Table 2. The International Profiler: comparing those who have lived abroad (608) with those who haven't (732).**

Probability of significance in being higher:  
 ▲▲▲ = 99.8%; ▲▲ = 99%; ▲ = 95%

LIVED ABROAD	AREAS OF COMPETENCE	NOT LIVED ABROAD
	NEW THINKING	
▲▲▲	WELCOMING STRANGERS	
▲▲▲	ACCEPTANCE	
	FLEXIBLE BEHAVIOUR	
	FLEXIBLE JUDGEMENT	
▲▲▲	LEARNING LANGUAGES	
	INNER PURPOSE	▲
	FOCUS ON GOALS	▲▲▲
	RESILIENCE	
	COPING	▲
▲▲▲	SPRIT OF ADVENTURE	
	ATTUNED	
	REFLECTED AWARENESS	▲
	ACTIVE LISTENING	
	CLARITY OF COMMUNICATION	▲▲
	EXPOSING INTENTIONS	▲▲▲
▲▲▲	INFORMATION GATHERING	
▲▲▲	VALUING DIFFERENCES	
	RAPPORT	
▲▲▲	RANGE OF STYLES	
▲	SENSITIVITY TO CONTEXT	
▲▲▲	CREATING NEW ALTERNATIVES	

On the other hand, more home-based professionals give significantly more emphasis to the Personal Autonomy competencies of Inner Purpose and Focus on Goals and also the transparency with which they 'push' their messages out (Clarity of Communication). One hypothesis as to why home-based managers give more emphasis to Reflected Awareness is that they may be less skilled in judging how their own behaviour is being perceived by their international counterparts, and thus more concerned as to the impression they are making. High Reflected Awareness can lead to dysfunctional behaviours such as self-consciousness with unfamiliar people. If you have developed an understanding as to how you may come across to others in one particular culture this skill may become de-emphasised over time.

These results may suggest that those with expatriate experience are more likely to have developed higher level leadership skills, including the ability to draw on a Range of Styles when influencing others and in surfacing differences as a source of problem-solving and creativity (Creating New Alternatives).

In general we have found that those with expatriate experience associate more easily with the items in the questionnaire by assigning scores which reflect a higher correlation between the question items and their own attitudes, self perceptions and behaviour. What this suggests is that, overall, expatriates see themselves more easily reflected in the competency set than their home-based colleagues.

What are the implications of these results? Do people develop these attitudes and skills as a result of their expatriate experience or do those with this mind and skills set actively look for international experience? Should we prepare home-based managers to facilitate the 'pull' side of their approach and to those suffering re-entry shock build their ability to privilege the 'push' aspects more, so as not to become nomadic professional expatriates? To understand if this is a developmental process or if it tells us something about those who seek out international expatriate roles we need to carry out research comparing people completing the questionnaire both prior to and after a first major international assignment.

## Comparing men and women

When we examined any significant differences in emphasis by men and women across the international competency set we found some very interesting results (see Table 3). To a large extent we see that the 449 women who responded to the questionnaire gave a very similar emphasis to the areas of competency as those who have lived abroad (irrespective of gender).

Welcoming Strangers, Acceptance, Learning Languages, Spirit of Adventure, Information Gathering, Valuing Differences and Range of Styles are all significantly given more emphasis by women than men. These areas are also given significantly more emphasis by those with expatriate experience. It is as if women have a tendency to exhibit an intrinsic expatriate mindset even when they may never have had such an experience. This seems to have important implications for expatriate selection since the number of women supported to take on an expatriate assignment is still very low compared to men.

There are some other differences though between the 'lived abroad'/'not lived abroad' comparison. Women (perhaps predictably)

give more emphasis to the non-verbal aspects of international communication (see Attuned) while men emphasise the lower context skills of clear oral communication (see Clarity of Communication) and clarification of intentions (Exposing Intentions). Women show themselves to be significantly more focused on active listening skills but seem to de-emphasise aspects of flexibility linked to Flexible Judgement and Flexible Behaviour, relying more on their interest in linguistic adaptability. However, in terms of influencing skills women differ from men in emphasising a range of influencing styles and in focusing on building warmth in personal relationships and in building trust (See Rapport). Men tend to emphasise the political aspect of influencing, giving more attention to identifying the centres of power to get things done (see Sensitivity to Context). Men also seem to be more interested in setting specific goals and targets in their work environment and in maintaining a high degree of focus and determination in achieving them regardless of the pressures to compromise and distractions on the way (see Focus on Goals).

	Female focus (449)	AREAS OF COMPETENCE	Male focus (1012)
		NEW THINKING	▲
▲▲▲		WELCOMING STRANGERS	
▲▲▲		ACCEPTANCE	
		FLEXIBLE BEHAVIOUR	▲
		FLEXIBLE JUDGEMENT	▲▲▲
▲▲▲		LEARNING LANGUAGES	
		INNER PURPOSE	
		FOCUS ON GOALS	▲▲▲
		RESILIENCE	
		COPING	▲▲▲
▲▲▲		SPRIT OF ADVENTURE	
▲▲▲		ATTUNED	
▲		REFLECTED AWARENESS	
▲▲		ACTIVE LISTENING	
		CLARITY OF COMMUNICATION	▲▲▲
		EXPOSING INTENTIONS	▲▲▲
▲▲▲		INFORMATION GATHERING	
▲▲		VALUING DIFFERENCES	
▲		RAPPORT	
▲▲		RANGE OF STYLES	
		SENSITIVITY TO CONTEXT	▲▲▲
		CREATING NEW ALTERNATIVES	90

**Table 3.**  
*The International Profiler: differences in the competences valued by male and female*

Probability of significance in being higher:

- ▲▲▲▲ = 99.8%
- ▲▲▲ = 99%
- ▲ = 95%

They also seem to have an interest in extending their understanding into new and unfamiliar fields (see New Thinking) while women have an overall stronger readiness to take risks by seeking out challenge, variety and change (see Spirit of Adventure) in their international role.

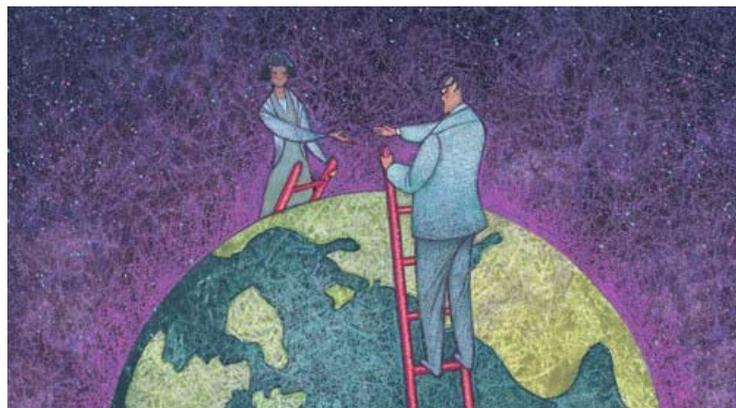
While some of these findings may be hardly unexpected, and connect to a growing canon of literature on gender differences, there are others that at first sight might seem counter-intuitive. For example why do women focus more highly than men on 'spirit of adventure' in an international context? Perhaps those women who move into positions of responsibility internationally generally need a higher spirit of adventure in the first place to push themselves forward into such positions in what remains a very male-dominated area of management. What about flexible behaviour? Do the lower levels of focus on this areas compared to men also suggest that women may show less

flexible behaviour to 'fitting in' (which may be perceived as weakness) to be given the same quotient of professional competency? Perhaps our results can corroborate some thinking by Willa Hallowell and Cornelius Grove<sup>2</sup> that female traits of consensus building, relationship orientation, greater sensitivity to non-verbal cues are more valued in many non-Western cultures and this gives female assignees an advantage.

Their other point is that women are accustomed to operating in a system where most

of the power is held by people unlike themselves (men) and they have to rely more on interpersonal influencing, collaboration and sensitivity to the views of others. Our findings on women's emphasis on rapport and range of styles in the area of influencing again supports this assertion.

<sup>2</sup> Female Assignees: Lessons Learned, W. Hallowell & C. Grove, Runzheimer Reports on Relocation



## Comparing different nationalities

The main groups of nationalities represented in the database are British (376), German (324), Italian (208), French (95), US American (93) and Indian (47). We made some comparisons to explore how each national group in the database differed in emphasis across the competency set compared to the others.

**Table 4. The International Profiler: How US Americans compared to 5 other nationalities.**

Probability of significance in giving more focus:

▲▲▲ = 99.8%

▲▲ = 99%

▲ = 95%

OR less focus:

▽▽▽ = 99.8%

▽▽ = 99%

▽ = 95%

Areas of interest focused on in the article:

- lower focus on areas in shaded darker
- higher focus on areas shaded lighter

AREAS OF COMPETENCE	Indian	British	German	French	Italian
NEW THINKING			▲		
WELCOMING STRANGERS	▲▲				
ACCEPTANCE					
<b>FLEXIBLE BEHAVIOUR</b>	▽▽▽	▽▽▽		▽▽▽	▽▽▽
<b>FLEXIBLE JUDGEMENT</b>			▽▽▽	▽▽	▽▽▽
LEARNING LANGUAGES		▲▲	▽▽▽		▽▽▽
<b>INNER PURPOSE</b>		▲▲	▲▲▲	▲▲▲	▲
FOCUS ON GOALS					
RESILIENCE		▲			
COPING				▲	
SPRIT OF ADVENTURE					▲
ATTUNED				▲	▲
REFLECTED AWARENESS	▽▽▽				
ACTIVE LISTENING			▲▲▲		
CLARIFY OF COMMUNICATION					
EXPOSING INTENTIONS	▽			▽▽▽	
INFORMATION GATHERING		▲▲▲			
<b>VALUING DIFFERENCES</b>	▲	▲		▲	▲
RAPPORT					▲▲
RANGE OF STYLES					
SENSITIVITY TO CONTEXT			▲		▲▲▲
CREATING NEW ALTERNATIVES	▲	▲▲▲		▲	

Table 4 shows how the **US American** group compares. Apart from the Indians in the database US Americans emphasise Inner Purpose more than any other group, namely, strong personal values and beliefs to provide consistency and balance when dealing with unfamiliar circumstances, or when facing pressures that question judgement or challenge self worth.

However, they also show the least focus on Flexible Behaviour (apart from the German group) and Flexible Judgement (apart from the British), that is, they are comparatively less likely to adapt their behaviour to different cultural environments, and to keep an open mind about culturally diverse colleagues and partners. These two factors combined can lead to a profile of intransigence but to some extent this is mitigated by a stronger than average emphasis on the intrinsic valuing of group diversity (Valuing Differences).



Inner Purpose is shown to be highly valued by US Americans in the sub-set

Table 5 shows some key comparisons with the **British** nationals. While Learning Languages has the lowest ranked mean focus among all respondents, the British give significantly lower focus to this area than the Germans, French and Italians in the database (even lower than the US American group). They are also significantly lower on Flexible Judgement than Germans, French and Italians.



Relatively high Spirit of Adventure may reflect low uncertainty avoidance orientation in the British subset

**Table 5.**  
**The International Profiler: How British compared to 5 other nationalities**

AREAS OF COMPETENCE	Indian	USA	German	French	Italian
NEW THINKING		▽		▽	
WELCOMING STRANGERS	▲▲▲			▲	▲
ACCEPTANCE					▲▲
FLEXIBLE BEHAVIOUR	▽▽▽	▲▲▲	▲▲▲		
<b>FLEXIBLE JUDGEMENT</b>			▽▽▽	▽	▽▽▽
<b>LEARNING LANGUAGES</b>		▽	▽▽▽	▽▽▽	▽▽▽
INNER PURPOSE					
FOCUS ON GOALS					
RESILIENCE		▽			
COPING			▲▲	▲▲▲	
<b>SPRIT OF ADVENTURE</b>	▲		▲▲	▲	▲▲▲
ATTUNED			▲▲▲	▲▲▲	
REFLECTED AWARENESS				▲▲▲	▲▲▲
ACTIVE LISTENING	▲		▲		
CLARIFY OF COMMUNICATION					
EXPOSING INTENTIONS				▽▽▽	
INFORMATION GATHERING		▽▽			▽
VALUING DIFFERENCES		▽			
<b>RAPPORT</b>			▲▲▲	▲▲▲	▲▲▲
<b>RANGE OF STYLES</b>			▲▲▲	▲	▲▲▲
SENSITIVITY TO CONTEXT			▲▲▲		▲▲▲
CREATING NEW ALTERNATIVES		▽▽▽			▽▽▽

**Table 6.**  
**The International Profiler: How the French compared to 5 other nationalities**

AREAS OF COMPETENCE	Indian	USA	German	British	Italian
NEW THINKING					
WELCOMING STRANGERS			▽		
ACCEPTANCE					▲▲
FLEXIBLE BEHAVIOUR	▽▽	▲▲▲	▲▲▲		
FLEXIBLE JUDGEMENT		▲▲			
LEARNING LANGUAGES	▲▲▲	▲▲		▲▲▲	
INNER PURPOSE		▽▽▽			
FOCUS ON GOALS					
RESILIENCE					
<b>COPING</b>	▽▽	▽	▽▽	▽▽▽	▽▽▽
SPRIT OF ADVENTURE				▽	
ATTUNED				▽▽▽	
REFLECTED AWARENESS				▽▽▽	
ACTIVE LISTENING	▲		▲		▲
CLARIFY OF COMMUNICATION					
<b>EXPOSING INTENTIONS</b>		▲▲▲	▲▲▲	▲▲▲	▲▲
INFORMATION GATHERING					
VALUING DIFFERENCES					
<b>RAPPORT</b>	▽▽	▽▽	▽	▽▽▽	
RANGE OF STYLES				▽	
SENSITIVITY TO CONTEXT					▲
CREATING NEW ALTERNATIVES					

However they display the highest risk orientation compared to all other groups with the exception of the US (See Spirit of Adventure). Interestingly, the British group gives generally more emphasis to all aspects of influencing compared to their European colleagues (apart from the French with their equally strong emphasis on Sensitivity to Context).

Table 6 focuses on **French** nationals, and indicates that the French give a higher emphasis to Exposing Intentions than any other group apart from India. In our experience this may reflect the valuing in French business culture of a clear rationale for any requests or decisions made. The aspect of Coping – or the ability to deal with the emotional impact of change and loss of personal control – is significantly lower than all the main groups and, apart from the Italians, Reflected Awareness is given a lower level of attention too.

Table 7 shows that, apart from the Anglo-Saxons, the **German** group focuses most strongly on proactively making contact with new people (Welcoming Strangers) but with the exception of the US group gives least attention to Flexible Behaviour. Interestingly, the whole area of influencing is less emphasised than the British group. This confirms our perception that in a culture which emphasises clear delivery of the facts, interpersonal influencing to build commitment is considered a kind of manipulation.

Table 8 reveals that the **Italian** group in general shows much less emphasis than the others across the whole competency set with some exceptions. The group shows significantly more Flexibility across all three areas compared to the US American group. The focus on Sensitivity to Context is lower than all the other groups.

Finally, Table 9 on the next page shows that the **Indian** group has some significant differences in focus when compared to the Western groups. Both Flexible Behaviour and Reflected Awareness score significantly higher than in any of the other groups, suggesting that Indians tend to give more emphasis to fitting in with others through understanding how their own behaviour is being perceived.

**Table 7.**  
**The International Profiler: How the Germans compared to 5 other nationalities**

AREAS OF COMPETENCE	Indian	USA	French	British	Italian
NEW THINKING		▽			
<b>WELCOMING STRANGERS</b>	▲▲▲		▲▲		▲▲▲
ACCEPTANCE					
<b>FLEXIBLE BEHAVIOUR</b>	▽▽▽		▽▽▽	▽▽▽	▽▽▽
FLEXIBLE JUDGEMENT		▲▲▲		▲▲▲	
LEARNING LANGUAGES	▲▲▲	▲▲▲		▲▲▲	
INNER PURPOSE		▽▽▽			
FOCUS ON GOALS					
RESILIENCE					
COPING			▲▲	▽▽	
SPRIT OF ADVENTURE				▽▽	▲
ATTUNED	▽			▽▽▽	
REFLECTED AWARENESS	▽▽▽		▲▲		▲▲▲
ACTIVE LISTENING		▽▽▽	▽	▽	
CLARIFY OF COMMUNICATION					
EXPOSING INTENTIONS	▽				▽
INFORMATION GATHERING			▽▽▽	▲▲	
VALUING DIFFERENCES					▲
RAPPORT			▲	▽▽▽	
RANGE OF STYLES				▽▽▽	
SENSITIVITY TO CONTEXT		▽		▽▽▽	▲
CREATING NEW ALTERNATIVES					▽

**Table 8.**  
**The International Profiler: How the Italians compared to 5 other nationalities**

AREAS OF COMPETENCE	Indian	USA	French	British	German
NEW THINKING					
WELCOMING STRANGERS	▲			▽▽	▽▽▽
ACCEPTANCE	▽		▽		▽
<b>FLEXIBLE BEHAVIOUR</b>	▽▽▽	▲▲▲			▲▲▲
FLEXIBLE JUDGEMENT	▲	▲▲▲		▲▲▲	
LEARNING LANGUAGES	▲▲▲	▲▲▲		▲▲▲	
INNER PURPOSE		▽▽			
FOCUS ON GOALS					
RESILIENCE					
COPING			▲▲▲		
SPRIT OF ADVENTURE		▽		▽▽▽	▽
ATTUNED				▽	
REFLECTED AWARENESS	▽▽▽	▽		▽▽▽	▽▽▽
ACTIVE LISTENING		▽▽	▽		
CLARIFY OF COMMUNICATION					
EXPOSING INTENTIONS			▽▽		▲
INFORMATION GATHERING				▲	
VALUING DIFFERENCES		▽			▽
RAPPORT	▽▽	▽		▽▽▽	
RANGE OF STYLES				▽▽▽	
<b>SENSITIVITY TO CONTEXT</b>	▽	▽▽▽	▽	▽▽▽	▽
CREATING NEW ALTERNATIVES				▲▲▲	▲



*Fitting in through Flexible Behaviour and Reflected Awareness is more critical in our Indian group*

**Table 5.**  
**The International Profiler: How the Indians compared to 5 other nationalities**

AREAS OF COMPETENCE	Italian	USA	French	British	German
NEW THINKING					
WELCOMING STRANGERS		▽▽		▽▽▽	▽▽▽
ACCEPTANCE	▲				
<b>FLEXIBLE BEHAVIOUR</b>	<b>▲▲▲</b>	<b>▲▲▲</b>	<b>▲▲</b>	<b>▲▲▲</b>	<b>▲▲▲</b>
FLEXIBLE JUDGEMENT					
LEARNING LANGUAGES	▽▽▽		▽▽▽		▽▽▽
INNER PURPOSE					
FOCUS ON GOALS					
RESILIENCE					
COPING			▲▲		
SPRIT OF ADVENTURE				▽	
ATTUNED			▲		▲
<b>REFLECTED AWARENESS</b>	<b>▲▲▲</b>	<b>▲▲▲</b>	<b>▲▲▲</b>	<b>▲▲▲</b>	<b>▲▲▲</b>
ACTIVE LISTENING		▽▽	▽	▽	
CLARIFY OF COMMUNICATION		▽			
EXPOSING INTENTIONS					▲
INFORMATION GATHERING					
VALUING DIFFERENCES		▽			
RAPPORT			▲		
RANGE OF STYLES					
SENSITIVITY TO CONTEXT					
CREATING NEW ALTERNATIVES		▽			

*“There seem to be clear differences in focus across the competency set when we look at people from different national backgrounds. The implication is that national culture seems to be a variable in precisely how people prefer to be international.”*

## Comparing the priorities of interculturalists and their clients

During the first half of 2006 we ran a survey through the site of one of Europe’s leading intercultural management forums - dialogin.com. The survey was aimed at opening a debate on the level of alignment between the ranking given to international competencies as factors for international management success by intercultural practitioners and academics, on the one hand, and by the international business community, on the other.

In total we received 125 responses to the questionnaire which was set up with a simple 5 point Likert scale for the definitions of the 22 areas of international competency used in The International Profiler. We asked respondents to evaluate the areas of international attitude, skill and knowledge based on their experience as an international business person, academic, consultant or trainer. The scale ranged from ‘unimportant’ to ‘critical importance’.

To provide a weighting for each of the areas under examination we used the following formula:

- Unimportant = number of people x -2
- Marginal importance = number of people x 0
- Moderate importance = number of people x 1
- Very important = number of people x 2
- Critical importance number of people x 3

Then we summed the scores for each area of competence and ranked them. The ranking with the scores is presented in Table 10 on the next page.

It is reassuring to note that for both the ‘Intercultural Experts’ sample and for the business professionals who have completed the International Profiler, Active Listening comes out as the primary success factor. When language is fragile, it seems critical to focus on aligning meaning and be seen to be listening as a way of acknowledging, respecting and valuing international business partners.

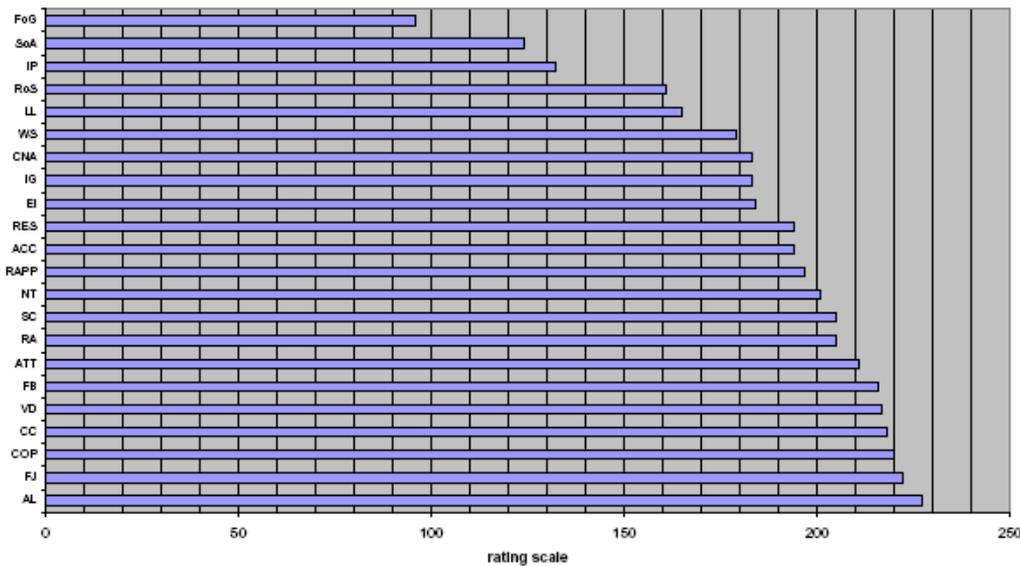


*Listening Orientation came out as the highest scoring competence, both in terms of what the professionals in the field value most and what interculturalists believe is the key area for working successfully across cultures.*

Table 10

What the 'experts' think as a ranking

See Appendix 1 for key to abbreviations



Other results show that over 90% of the 'Intercultural Experts' thought 19 out of the 22 areas of competence were of moderate to critical importance. The survey also shows that between 65% and 86% thought that 19 out of the 22 areas were either very or critically important to transfer professional ability into an unfamiliar international context. This seems to provide a considerable endorsement for the competency set among this 'Expert' community. We did ask the respondents to indicate to us if they felt that any key factors were missing from the international competency set or if people wanted to comment in some way. Checking through the 30 responses to this question we have noted that almost all of the 'additions' could be included in the more detailed description we use to define the areas of competency and which are included in the questionnaire as items. However, there were 3 areas which only attracted a 40-50% evaluation as very or critically important, namely, Inner Purpose (ranked 20<sup>th</sup>), Spirit of Adventure (ranked 21<sup>st</sup>) and Focus on Goals (ranked 22<sup>nd</sup>). This compares to our business professionals who completed the International Profiler who ranked these as follows:

- Inner Purpose (ranked 16<sup>th</sup>),
- Spirit of Adventure (ranked 8<sup>th</sup>)
- Focus on Goals (ranked 11<sup>th</sup>)

Here there is a clear discrepancy between the priorities for development indicated by the Intercultural Experts and the actual focus of energy, attention and emphasis given by professionals in the field. Dare we conclude that interculturalists are lacking in the corporate realism of their clients by de-emphasising the importance of a pioneering drive towards goals as an important ingredient for international management?

As can be seen in Table 11, there are clear matches (marked in black) between the ranking of the two groups of Intercultural Experts and Business Professionals, but also some differences (marked in grey) between what interculturalists believe are important attributes and skills compared to the priorities revealed by The International Profiler database. This is not to say that the Interculturalists are not 'right' in their ranking but simply that it may be useful to know that the clients we serve may not immediately be aligned, based on a self-perception of their current behaviours.

Table 11.

INTERCULTURALISTS' RANKING	BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS' RANKING (from The International Profiler)
<b>1. Active Listening</b>	<b>1. Active Listening</b>
<b>2. Flexible Judgement</b>	<b>2. Creating New Alternatives</b>
<b>3. Coping</b>	<b>3. Acceptance</b>
<b>4. Clarity of Communication</b>	<b>4. Clarity of Communication</b>
<b>5. Valuing Differences</b>	<b>5. Valuing Differences</b>
6. Flexible Behaviour	6. Rapport
<b>7. Attuned</b>	7. New Thinking
8. Reflected Awareness	<b>8. Spirit of Adventure</b>
<b>9. Sensitivity to Context</b>	9. Flexible Behaviour
10. New Thinking	<b>10. Flexible Judgement</b>
11. Rapport	<b>11. Focus on Goals</b>
<b>12. Acceptance</b>	<b>12. Resilience</b>
<b>13. Resilience</b>	13. Welcoming Strangers
14. Exposing Intentions	<b>14. Information Gathering</b>
<b>15. Information Gathering</b>	15. Attuned
<b>16. Creating New Alternatives</b>	<b>16. Inner Purpose</b>
17. Welcoming Strangers	17. Range of Styles
18. Language Learning	18. Reflected Awareness
19. Range of Styles	<b>19. Coping</b>
<b>20. Inner Purpose</b>	20. Exposing Intentions
<b>21. Spirit of Adventure</b>	<b>21. Sensitivity to Context</b>
<b>22. Focus on Goals</b>	22. Language Learning

This may have implications for how we 'sell' the development focus for intercultural programmes or even for what we include in such programmes. How many intercultural programmes explicitly develop a Spirit of Adventure or Inner Purpose or the ability to make things happen in the surrounding world even when under pressure to compromise? Perhaps we should be doubtful of an approach to intercultural management development that is not firmly grounded in the business issues and corporate objectives of the client organisation. Perhaps we should also be more aware of the need to more evenly balance the development of both 'push' and 'pull' competencies, where our natural instinct may be to privilege the latter.

## Conclusions and implications



Are we as intercultural consultants and trainers overestimating the importance of our own skills in listening, when giving direction, winning support and connecting others to the organisation (which many of us as outsiders to ever more complex organisations find hard to understand) may be a more realistic key to making things work across borders? Are we turning all of our clients into consultants? Are we suffering from the Pygmalion syndrome of falling in love with our own creation – the perfect international manager who accepts, adapts and integrates – when out there in the real world are people who need to blend drive with diplomacy and determination with a deep understanding of others.

We believe our findings clearly challenge some fundamental assumptions about how we prepare people for international assignments. In the past we have prepared clients by exploring values and approaches that are relevant to how they behave in their own mono-cultural operating context. However, our findings indicate clearly that in transferring skills to new and unfamiliar contexts different groups of people (defined under gender, level of international experience and national culture) have different approaches at the interface where cultures meet. Everyone is making some kind of adaptation in a cross-cultural context, but the scope and nature of that adaptation can be culturally specific.

What are the implications for moving this debate forward?

- What comes first? Does international experience lead to the consequent development of 'pull' competencies or do those who have these qualities inherent in their personality seek out international assignments more frequently? We will develop this research as our database grows in the future.
- Do we need to be giving more focus to areas that research shows are key factors which create effective international operators even though people in the field emphasise them less – such as 'exposing intentions', 'sensitivity to context' and 'learning languages'? Should we learn to communicate the value of these areas more effectively for them to be seen as a valid focus of energy?
- Should we be drawing on this research to inform organisations as to how specific groups and sub-cultures approach the bridgeheads between cultures and the potential mismatches that are predictable between groups?
- Should we be tailoring our approach to different groups to support them in their specific areas of need when cultures meet?
- What are the implications for selection? Do women who put themselves forward for international assignments need to be more proactively supported by organisations because of the added value they bring in already embodying the attitudes and skills shown by already experienced expatriates?
- Since the role requirements for being effective internationally can differ widely according to the mission and individual's present focus of energy, emphasis and attention across our international competency set, should intercultural trainers accept the need to focus on not only on sensitising clients to a deeper understanding of other people's drivers but also focus – when needed – on supporting a pioneering determination towards corporate goals?

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Below are some of the organisations which have used WorldWork products

**Consultancies/Development organisations**

- Bath University (UK)
- Language & Culture Worldwide (USA)
- Business Culture & Management (F)
- Global Excellence (UK)
- Communicaid (UK)
- Silkroad Management Consulting (D)
- Charis Corporation (USA)
- University of Konstanz (D)
- Farnham Castle (UK)
- International Corporate Communication (Aust)
- CultureWaves (D)
- Shell Learning (NL)
- York Associates (UK)
- Link-Up (F)

**Corporations**

- Quantum Clothing (UK)
- Walt Disney (USA)
- Patni Computer systems Ltd (India)
- ENI Group (IT)
- BP (worldwide)
- T-Mobile (D)
- Telecom Italia (IT)
- Heinz (Europe)
- Cisco Systems
- IVECO (IT)
- Continental (D)
- General Motors (USA)
- Beiersdorf AG (D)
- Henkel (D)
- Electrolux (Europe)
- AMEC UPSTREAM OIL & GAS (UK)
- Amnesty International (UK)
- Air Safety Support International (UK)

**PRODUCTS**

**A BRIEF INTRODUCTION**



These products will...

- Highlight development needs
- Identify generic potential for international work
- Assess individuals for international roles
- Build international teams

**INTERNATIONAL COMPETENCIES**

- The competencies required for building and maintaining high quality international relationships

**CONSENSUS ROLE ANALYSIS**

- A simple method for discovering the particular international competencies required for specific roles

**A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE**

- A training pack including a 40 minutes video drama, depicting the challenges faced by an international team brought together to launch a new product

**THE INTERNATIONAL PROFILER**

- A web-based questionnaire and feedback process to raise awareness about personal styles, and to provide a basis for future international development.

**GLOBAL VIEW 360**

- is the 360 version of TIP- it generates personal feedback about effectiveness in an international context.

**INTERNATIONAL TEAM TRUST INDICATOR**

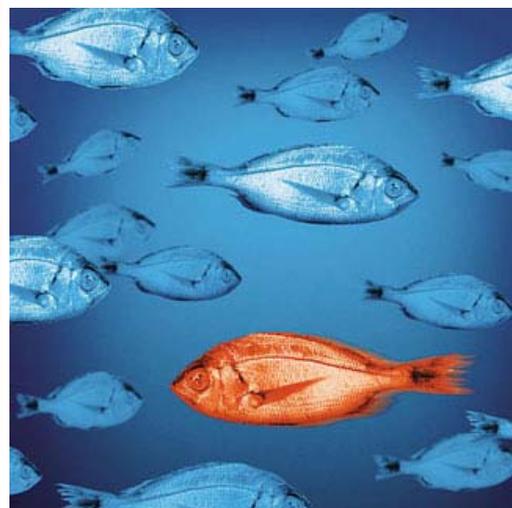
- A web-based structured process for measuring the size and nature of the trust 'gap' in international teams and to identify behaviours required to build trust in a specific context

*How can I get access to the International Profiler?*

**T**he International Profiler is available to people who have completed the training and licensing process. To obtain this you will need to attend a two-day training programme in London, complete some practice feedbacks and then attend a half-day follow up session (this second session can be done over the phone).

The training includes understanding the competency set; diagnosing your own profile and other sample profiles; understanding the different challenges of providing feedback face-to-face and over the phone; general feedback and coaching skills; advice and sharing of best practice on marketing and selling the International Profiler as part of the solutions you offer to your clients, whether through training, coaching, leadership/management development.

Further information on future licensing sessions can be obtain by calling Eric on +44 207 486 9844 or email: [info@worldwork.biz](mailto:info@worldwork.biz)



## The International Competency Set

A Summary of competencies characteristic of those who are highly effective in transferring their professional skills to an unfamiliar international context.

### OPENNESS

**New Thinking (NT)** - receptive to new ideas, and typically seek to extend understanding into new and unfamiliar fields. Like to work internationally as they are exposed to ideas and approaches with which they are unfamiliar.

**Welcoming Strangers (WS)** - keen to initiate contact, and build relationships, with new people, including those who have different experiences, perceptions, and values to themselves. Often take a particular interest in strangers from different and unfamiliar cultural backgrounds.

**Acceptance (ACC)** - not only tolerate but positively accept behaviour that is very different from their own. In an international context they rarely feel threatened by, or intolerant of, working practices that conflict with their own sense of best practice.

### FLEXIBILITY

**Flexible Behaviour (FB)** - adapt easily to a range of different social and cultural situations. Have either learned or are willing to learn a wider range of behaviour patterns. Ready to experiment with different ways of behaving to find those which are most acceptable and most successful.

**Flexible Judgements (FJ)** - avoid coming to quick and definitive conclusions about the new people and situations that they encounter. Can also use each experience of people from a different culture to question assumptions and modify stereotypes about how such people operate.

**Learning Languages (LL)** - motivated to learn and use the specific languages of important business contacts, over and beyond the lingua franca in which they conduct their everyday business activities. Ready to draw on key expressions and words from the languages of these international contacts to build trust and show respect.

### PERSONAL AUTONOMY

**Inner Purpose (IP)** - to hold strong personal values and beliefs that provide consistency or balance when dealing with unfamiliar circumstances, or when facing pressures which question judgement or challenge sense of worth. Such values also give importance and credibility to the tasks that they have to perform.

**Focus on Goals (FoG)** - set specific goals and tasks in international projects, combined with a high degree of persistence in achieving them regardless of pressures to compromise, and distractions on the way. Believe they have a strong element of control over their own destiny, and can make things happen in the world around them.

### EMOTIONAL STRENGTH

**Resilience (RES)** - usually tough enough to risk making mistakes as a way of learning. Able to overcome any embarrassment, criticism or negative feedback they may encounter. Have an optimistic approach to life and tend to 'bounce back' when things go wrong.

**Coping (COP)** - able to deal with change and high levels of pressure even in unfamiliar situations. They remain calm under pressure, and have well-developed means of coping even without their normal support networks. Have the personal resources necessary to deal effectively with the stress from culture shock.

**Spirit of Adventure (SoA)** - ready to seek out variety, change and stimulation in life, and avoid safe and predictable environments. Push themselves into uncomfortable and ambiguous situations, often unsure whether they have the skills required to be successful.

### PERCEPTIVENESS

**Attuned (ATT)** - highly focused on picking up meaning from indirect signals such as intonation, eye contact and body language. Adept at observing these signals of meaning and reading them correctly in different contexts - almost like learning a new language.

**Reflected Awareness (RA)** - very conscious of how they come across to others; in an inter-cultural context particularly sensitive to how their own 'normal' patterns of communication and behaviour are interpreted in the minds of international partners.

### LISTENING ORIENTATION

**Active Listening (AL)** - check and clarify, rather than assume understanding of others, by paraphrasing and exploring the words that they use and the meaning they attach to them.

### TRANSPARENCY

**Clarity of Communication (CC)** - conscious of the need for a 'low-risk' style that minimises the potential for misunderstandings in an international context. Able to adapt 'how' a message is delivered (rather than just 'what' is said) to be more clearly understood by an international audience.

**Exposing Intentions (EI)** - able to build and maintain trust in an international context by signalling positive intentions, and putting needs into a clear and explicit context.

### CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

**Information Gathering (IG)** - take time and interest to learn about unfamiliar cultures, and deepen their understanding of those they already know. Employ various information-gathering strategies for understanding the specific context they require.

**Valuing Differences (VD)** - like to work with colleagues and partners from diverse backgrounds, and are sensitive to how people see the world differently. Keen not only to explore and understand others' values and beliefs, but also communicate respect for them.

### INFLUENCING

**Rapport (RAPP)** - exhibit warmth and attentiveness when building relationships in a variety of contexts. Put a premium on choosing verbal and non-verbal behaviours that are comfortable for international counterparts, thus building a sense of 'we'. Able in the longer-term to meet the criteria for trust required by their international partners.

**Range of Styles (RoS)** - have a variety of means for influencing people across a range of international contexts. This gives greater capacity to 'lead' an international partner in a style with which he or she feels comfortable.

**Sensitivity to Context (SC)** - good at understanding where political power lies in organisations and keen to figure out how best to play to this. Put energy into understanding the different cultural contexts in which messages are sent and decisions are made.

### SYNERGY

**Creating New Alternatives (CNA)** - sensitive to the need for a careful and systematic approach to facilitating group and team work to ensure that different cultural perspectives are not suppressed, but are properly understood and used in the problem solving process.