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Intercultural Challenges in the Selection of Managers and Officers in Shipping

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Overview

1. Industry context
2. Intercultural challenges
3. Relevance to managers / officers
4. Necessary commitment
5. Discussion



1. Industry context



- International operation (internal and external)
- Multinational team
- Relatively high rate of personnel turnover
- Diverse fleet size
- Complexity of organizational structure
- Commercial discrimination relative to strategic operation
- Scarcity problem in the labor market

2. Intercultural challenges

- Culture defined:

Edgar Schein (1990): " Culture is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaption and internal integration, and have worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems".

Hofstede (1994): "The collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organisation from another."

Payne (1996): "Culture is about values, and developing systems and symbols that reinforce and perpetuate those values, so that people behave reliably and predictably to achieve the culture's purposes."

IRS Management Review (1997): "Culture is the commonly held values, attitudes and beliefs that distinguish one group from another, and the systems and symbols that perpetuate the culture."

2. Intercultural challenges

- Multinational culture: people from different countries coming to work together
- Inter-organizational culture: people with different organizational background coming to work together in a particular organization
- Intercultural challenges: barriers and constraints
- Selection and retention issues: establishing an organization with members (especially managers and officers) with strong intercultural competence
- Critical issue: Managers / officers not being able to distinguish the significance of intercultural context and its consequences, or in short, intercultural competence.

3. Relevance to managers / officers

- The Human Element in Shipping (MCA, 2010)



3. Relevance to managers / officers

- Decision-making (practical scenarios)
 - Decision in treating the provision for crew repatriation on compassionate ground.
 - Decision to deal with red tape.
 - Decision on crew mix preferences.
 - Decision to work during holidays and after-office-hours.
 - Decision on reporting errors and non-compliances.

3. Relevance to managers / officers

- Management (practical scenarios) – planning, organizing, leading / influencing, controlling
 - Management styles – ashore and on board
 - Personality and judgments towards subordinates
 - Consistency of general principles in management
 - Human resource management

4. Necessary commitments

- Relative to multinational culture:

- Selection: system of recruitment and relations with crewing agents
- Intercultural assessment: structure of recruitment criteria
- Training: development and enhancement of intercultural competence
- Practice: learning scenarios and serious performance evaluation



4. Necessary commitments

- Relative to organizational culture:
 - Selection: assessment of organizational affiliations background
 - Intercultural assessment: agility and competence in working within a culturally diverse environment
 - Training: knowledge and understanding of organizational culture
 - Practice: strictly establishing a well-defined organizational culture and evaluation of alignment to this organizational culture
 - Commitment from the top in observing an organization's V-M-O!

5. Discussion

- Specific experiences of intercultural challenges
- Cultural competence of managers and officers
- Good ideas to address intercultural challenges



Thank you.

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