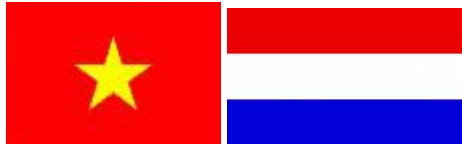


# Intercultural Coaching

## Coaching of professionals and managers with an Asian background

A case study of Mr P.

Mr P is from South-East Asia and has been working in the Netherlands for more than 10 years in the ICT business. He is a talented and hard-working consultant, dedicated to achieve results in his work. His Dutch manager highly appreciates P as a member of his team of consultants.



P has been facing challenges adapting to his Dutch work environment. The effect of his behaviour on Dutch colleagues was critical and sometimes unsympathetic, something that often puzzled P. It would eventually lead to irritation among both him and his Dutch colleagues and conflict avoidance behaviour of P. He also felt that Dutch colleagues sometimes took advantage of his obedient and compliant behaviour to gain personal benefit.

*P: "I came to the Netherlands in 1996. In the Netherlands individuality and self- management is the cultural norm for personal behaviour. It was initially impossible for me to understand this behaviour. In addition, I am a shy and introverted person. This is why becoming an assertive person is so difficult for me. This has created several problems. You know, humbleness, obedience and courtesy are the intrinsic elements of how people interact in my culture, be it in personal relationships, at work, at school and other social situations"*

Together with his manager, P opted to go for professional business coaching at Schouten & Nelissen. A thorough intake interview between P, manager and a consultant at Schouten & Nelissen was carried out at the office of Schouten & Nelissen, drawing out the needs and aspirations of the coachee. Based on this, Schouten & Nelissen searched for the right coach to ensure the right fit between the coachee and the coach. A Schouten & Nelissen coach was identified with an international background and work experience in South-East Asia.

The coaching itself was a mixture of expert and inquiry coaching. Expert in the sense of sharing cultural insights of the Dutch and Asian business and communication culture. Inquiry coaching was used to explore P's fears and lack of self-confidence to express himself more explicitly in a Dutch cultural environment. The coach also coached P on dealing with difficult interpersonal interactions. P has been trying out new behaviours that have helped him dealing with inadequate emotions and beliefs. He has noticed that over the months his Dutch colleagues have started to treat him with more respect. He also has noticed the positive effect of being more assertive with his Dutch colleagues. He has had the courage to express and defend his opinion during a meeting at work and occasionally say "no".

P has worked hard so far to deal effectively and constructively with cultural differences at work, while at the same time remaining true to his own cultural roots, with self-confidence and self appreciation. He has continued his coaching sessions, albeit the frequency of the sessions has been reduced from once every 3-4 weeks to once every 6-8 weeks. The interval periods have increased gradually and P together with his coach work towards the moment that P no longer needs the coaching.

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