



Lufthansa Systems



**How to turn
intercultural challenges
into differentiators?**

Lufthansa Systems



Missed connections

Established in 1995, Lufthansa Systems has been successfully delivering IT solutions for the aviation industry ever since. The company offers its more than 350 airline customers an extensive range of successful and in many cases market-leading products for the aviation industry. Since its inception, the German company has grown to over 2,100 employees worldwide and proudly lists many of the world's top industry names among its customers.

This kind of success did not come without its fair share of challenges. The global nature of the aviation business has created extraordinary opportunities over the past few decades, with new markets opening and rapidly expanding. Yet global growth has also brought new global challenges. From new markets sprang new competition, as well as new challenges in communicating and collaborating across an increasingly interconnected planet. Lufthansa Systems' HR department had always provided world-class communications training, but with clients and employees now collaborating across multiple time zones and cultures, it was time to rethink the way the company communicated across an ever-shrinking planet.

At the start of 2018, Lufthansa Systems' HR team analyzed company-wide employee satisfaction in a survey, with global customer communication and internal communication across offices emerging as two key areas in which employees wanted to update their skillsets. As one respondent said, "While our communications technology helps me reach out

to people all over the world faster, I need to know how to communicate better or differently, especially with people from other regions who seem to have different working styles than I am used to."

Gaps in customer communication had the potential to increase problems such as:

- unsatisfied customers and missed opportunities to expand client relationships
- limited collaboration and innovation due to cross-cultural communication roadblocks

It was decided that HR's international communications training needed to adjust to this increasingly international environment. A project team was formed around Anette Lothringen, Berenice Meves (HR central) and Sarina Singh (HR local) to develop a tailor-made measure.



Yes, it is essential for us to strengthen our intercultural communication and how we **collaborate globally**. At the same time, it encourages the company's overall culture to be more open-minded, agile, reflective and innovative. We are proud to show the marketplace that, as we continue to grow, we offer a working environment with an intercultural and entrepreneurial mindset that provides space for innovation and flexibility for talented people around the world.



Sarina Singh, Head of HR
Lufthansa Systems
Asia Pacific

From Pilot to Roll-Out

Working with the HR project team, leaders from multiple business units agreed that communicating across cultures was critical for the company's future success and decided to undertake a global initiative to improve the company's approach towards intercultural communication. One key underlying goal was to look at how Lufthansa can maintain the distinctly German approach that contributed to its success while embracing the international mindset required in an increasingly globalized business environment.

The strategy is comprised of three areas:

- 1 The strategic nature of this project means the involvement of executives is vital. They have begun implementing a communications strategy at the top levels of management to start sharing more stories of success – and failure – relating to cross-cultural growing pains. Communicating these stories across various media – internal newsletters, speeches, interviews, webinars and presentations – provides ongoing reinforcement about the importance of building company-wide cultural intelligence.
- 2 A company-wide workshop series was developed and conducted together with an external company – Leadership Nomad. Initially introduced as a pilot scheme before being rolled out across the company, the workshops involve small groups of employees working to develop new strategies to communicate effectively across cultures with both colleagues and customers. The workshops include a behavioral assessment for each attendee designed to provide a custom roadmap of their communication strengths and weaknesses. The content is then designed to encourage groups to explore their individual and cultural differences and work through Lufthansa-specific client scenarios.



Communication is important for any organization, but **understanding** that communication and business styles vary considerably across different parts of the globe has become a key component of building team unity and enhancing our relationships with our clients.

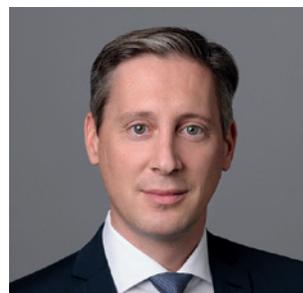


Lufthansa Systems' Intercultural Development Program



Follow-up newsletters and remote training have since continued, with teams recently having fun looking at cultural comparisons between FIFA World Cup matches.

- 3 Selected employees are trained as internal "intercultural ambassadors". These leaders across all levels of seniority are receiving additional resources to help drive ongoing cross-cultural communication changes across the organization.



Tom Vandendael, CEO
Lufthansa Systems
Asia Pacific



It is important for us to derive concrete measures from the employee survey. **Intercultural communication** is an important topic for us. As the world's leading IT house in the airline industry, it is important to understand the language and cultural context of our customers and employees.



Olivier Krueger, CEO
Lufthansa Systems

Ready for Take-Off

To date, 100% of participants said they would recommend the workshop to others in order to help them communicate across cultures. Furthermore, a number of attendees said they immediately put their new skills to use and have already seen an improvement in their cross-cultural interactions.

Follow-up survey work is being carried out among employees and customers to measure the success of this initiative.

The company's strong commitment to and investment in improving intercultural communication is about not only improving communication, but also enhancing the company's distinct culture while uncovering innovative ideas from around the globe.

Further initiatives of the HR team contribute to this. For example, the promotion of personal encounters. To enhance mutual understanding and strengthen a sense of belonging across national borders, Lufthansa Systems has announced a competition for employees who can win a weekend at one of Lufthansa Systems' external locations. In addition to a tour with professional exchange, a cultural supporting programme is offered. The first local inspection takes place in Gdansk.

About

Lufthansa Systems is part of the Lufthansa Group. The IT subsidiary was founded in 1995, and it has developed into one of the world's leading providers of IT services in the airline industry. It draws its unique strengths from an ability to combine profound industry know-how with technological expertise and many years of project experience. Lufthansa Systems offers airlines a unique range of products covering all of an airline's business processes – in the cockpit, in the cabin and on the ground.

The company offers its more than 350 airline customers an extensive range of successful and in many cases market-leading products for the aviation industry. The innovative IT products and services in this portfolio offer customers a wide range of economic benefits while also contributing to improving efficiency and competitiveness. In addition, Lufthansa Systems also supports its customers both within and outside the Lufthansa Group with consulting services and the experience it has gained in projects for airlines of every size and business model.