

## HPCG High-Performance Coaching Newsletter #3, Ralf Wolter



Dear Reader,

"Culture Eats Strategy for Lunch" – have you heard this phrase before? It is not only a book title; instead it describes a reality that we have probably all experienced, consciously or unconsciously.

Recently, one of the engineers I work with told me "I don't want to receive that much praise for my work, I don't believe it's true". Does this sound familiar to you? Or do you experience the opposite and rarely receive positive feedback? Parts of your answer depend on your cultural background. In my case, it was a German engineer who had mostly experienced the old German leadership principle "Not to complain is enough praise". After working with US companies for more than two decades now, I have embraced the culture of appreciation – and now I like it so much more than what I grew up with.

Cultural background can lead to lots of misunderstandings and conflicts, simply because we are usually not aware of it. Instead, we consider our behavior and attitude as the norm. "Fish did not discover water." —Marshall McLuhan

I was invited to develop and co-present a workshop at the SIETAR Congress 2013 in Tallinn, Estonia: ["Effective use of technology for coherent third culture creation"](#). Both the preparation and delivery were good opportunities to reflect on my own cultural background. Let me invite you to do the same for yourself.

### Definition of culture:

- "Culture is the pattern of beliefs, behaviors, and values maintained and created by groups of interacting people." Milton J. Bennett
- Culture is „the common sense“, what is normal and the right thing to do.

### Distinction:

- 1) Objective Culture
  - History
  - Food & Traditions
  - Legal & Political Systems
- 2) Subjective Culture
  - Values & Beliefs
  - Communications Styles
  - Worldview of a Group

### Applicability: High Context – Low Context Cultures

- 1) High Context Learners take the whole communication process into consideration. They are reactive, reflective, and focus on data. The group is more important than the individual and consensus wins over conflict. Deduction leads to solutions.  
Examples: Japan, China, Africa, South America

2) Low Context Learners appear more active as they think out loud and do not avoid controversy discussions and conflict. The individual is rated higher than the group. Induction leads to solutions.

Examples: German, English, Dutch, Switzerland, Australia

Be aware that cultural comparisons can quickly lead to stereotypes and "putting people into boxes", still the awareness of the different "boxes" can be a good starting point for deeper considerations. Sometimes tiny little gestures can result in life or death situations, as illustrated by the movie *"Inglourious Basterds"*, check out the scene "how many beers? Three".

At the conference workshop, we proposed defining a "Third Culture" for communicating and coaching in the virtual world

- The term "third culture" originates from kids born to parents from two different cultures
- There is a nice story to illustrate this concept: "The Kapija of the bridge on the Drina". This is a novel by Ivo Andrić, a Yugoslavian writer and Literature Nobel Prize winner. The story revolves around a bridge over a river, which not only connects two towns, but Muslims and Orthodox Christians living in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The middle of the bridge, called "the Kapija"—the gate, is wider, and it quickly becomes a popular meeting place for people from both towns - and both cultural backgrounds.
- Discuss cultural background and expectations right from the start
- Negotiate an in-between perspective and communication style to effectively coordinate meaning and action.
- As a result, expect creative new habits and practices to emerge that increase the communication level and results.



[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/06/Mehmed\\_Pasa\\_Sokolovic\\_Bridge\\_Visegrad\\_1900.JPG/220px-Mehmed\\_Pasa\\_Sokolovic\\_Bridge\\_Visegrad\\_1900.JPG](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/06/Mehmed_Pasa_Sokolovic_Bridge_Visegrad_1900.JPG/220px-Mehmed_Pasa_Sokolovic_Bridge_Visegrad_1900.JPG)

A quick personal update: my wife is currently becoming an entrepreneur. After her dad passed away in September (at the age of 82), she took over his transportation business. It is great to see her stepping into her father's shoes. And both of us are busy to keep our truck drivers licenses valid, to ensure we can drive these 40 ton trucks from time to time. Our daughter turns 17 in January and is busy with driving lessons. Our son is busy setting up a Linux (Raspberry Pi) server to play Minecraft with his friends. And Buddy, our dog, is trying his best to keep the "family herd" together – a real challenge even for a Sheppard's dog :-)

I wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, Frohe Weihnachten – or whatever you call the festive period ahead of us.

Good luck for 2014, may your business thrive, your relationships grow, and your happiness help you to stay on track during difficult periods.

Best regards,

*Ralf Wolter*

HPCG® Founder and Coach

<http://hpcg.eu>

<http://virtual4coaching.com/>

References:

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- "Culture Eats Strategy for Lunch" by Curt Coffman and Kathie Sorensen (on Amazon.com)  
<http://www.engagementstrategiesonline.com/Culture-Eats-Strategy-for-Lunch/>
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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High-\\_and\\_low-context\\_cultures](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High-_and_low-context_cultures)
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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Bridge\\_on\\_the\\_Drina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bridge_on_the_Drina)
- "Don't Get Me Wrong!: The Global Gestures Guide"  
by Julia Grosse (Author) , Judith Reker (Author) , Florian Bong-Kil (Author)  
[http://www.amazon.com/Dont-Get-Me-Wrong-Gestures/dp/3981337093/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1386018985&sr=8-1&keywords=Julia+Grosse](http://www.amazon.com/Dont-Get-Me-Wrong-Gestures/dp/3981337093/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1386018985&sr=8-1&keywords=Julia+Grosse)
- The International Coach Federation (ICF) hosts a LinkedIn group "Cultural Competence in Coaching Interest Group", this is a good place to connect with peers  
[http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4988555&goback=.npv\\_25548133\\_\\*1\\_\\*1\\_NAME\\*4SEARCH\\_vtB1\\_\\*1\\_en\\*4US\\_\\*1\\_\\*1\\_\\*1\\_24739051386019136542\\_1\\_17\\_\\*1\\_vsrp\\*4people\\*4res\\*4name\\_\\*1&trk=prof-groups-membership-logo](http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4988555&goback=.npv_25548133_*1_*1_NAME*4SEARCH_vtB1_*1_en*4US_*1_*1_*1_24739051386019136542_1_17_*1_vsrp*4people*4res*4name_*1&trk=prof-groups-membership-logo)
- "INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE FOR GLOBAL LEADERSHIP" Milton J. Bennett, Ph.D.  
[http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&ved=0CC8QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.idrinstitute.org%2Fallegati%2FIDRI\\_t\\_Publicazioni%2F4%2FFILE\\_Documento.pdf&ei=QfecUtXtN4aR7Ab02YCADA&usg=AFQjCNFms3vRtfECHB1SmKA9WM0rJnICg&bvm=bv.57155469,d.ZGU](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&ved=0CC8QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.idrinstitute.org%2Fallegati%2FIDRI_t_Publicazioni%2F4%2FFILE_Documento.pdf&ei=QfecUtXtN4aR7Ab02YCADA&usg=AFQjCNFms3vRtfECHB1SmKA9WM0rJnICg&bvm=bv.57155469,d.ZGU)