

INTERNATIONALISING THE CURRICULUM (IOC)

EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES ON INTERCULTURAL & GLOBAL SKILLS

This guidance links to the principal pillar of Intercultural and International Engagement within the CU Education Strategy

INTRODUCTION

This resource provides a brief summary of the Economist Intelligence Unit's (2012) report titled '**Competing Across Borders: how cultural and communication barriers affect business**'. It *"explores the challenges companies face when they have to operate or compete in increasingly international markets"* (2012: 2). Given the international and globalized nature of graduate markets our students are likely to enter, the report offers sound rationale for developing students' intercultural and global competencies.

The EIU report exhibits interview and survey research from employers across the world showing overwhelming support that cross-cultural awareness, knowledge and communication can lead to improved firm performance.

This resource extracts key findings from the report which could be used to enhance your own awareness on the importance of developing students' intercultural capabilities for their future workplace, but also to engage teachers, course teams, students and wider stakeholders on the relevance of international and intercultural engagement.

Some reflective questions for curriculum design and embedding opportunities for intercultural development are presented.

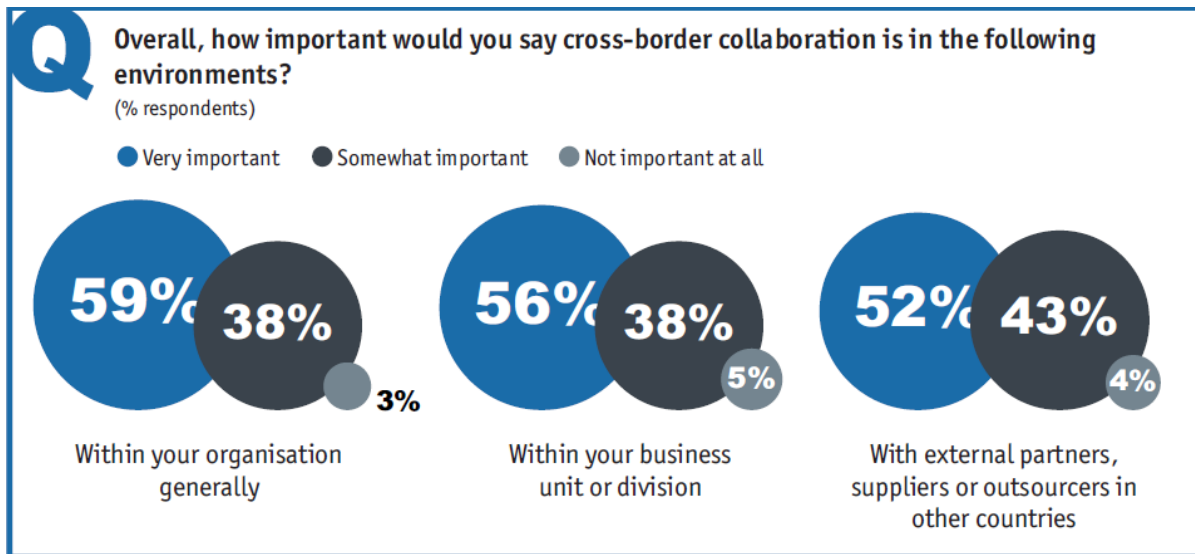


REPORT SUMMARY

Report Title:	Competing Across Borders: how cultural and communication barriers affect business (2012)
Author:	Economist Intelligence Unit
Full Report:	https://www.eiuperspectives.economist.com/sites/default/files/Competing%20across%20borders.pdf
Objective:	Explores the challenges companies face when they have to operate or compete in increasingly international markets (p. 2)
Research Methodology:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Global survey of 572 executives (with an international presence or plans for international expansion with headquarters in western Europe, Asia Pacific, North America, Latin America, Africa, eastern Europe and the Middle East) 2. Series of in-depth interviews with independent experts and senior executives from major worldwide companies (p. 2)
Select Key Findings:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective cross-border communication and collaboration are becoming critical to the financial success of companies with international aspirations • Organisations with international ambitions increasingly expect prospective employees to be fluent in key foreign languages • Misunderstandings rooted in cultural differences present the greatest obstacle to productive cross-border collaboration • Current economic downturn is spurring companies into becoming more international • Most companies understand the cost of not improving the cross-border communication skills of their employees, yet many are not doing enough to address the challenge (p. 3-4) • Select charts and diagrams displayed below
Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduates are expected to demonstrate and articulate their cross-cultural capabilities to prospective employers • Students should be supported to develop their intercultural attitudes, knowledge and skills within the curriculum (See resource 'intercultural competence – what it is')
Reflective Questions for Curriculum Design	<p><i>To what extent does your curriculum offer students the opportunity to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interact and learn with peers from backgrounds different to their own to view subjects from different perspectives and negotiate alternative frames of reference? • Engage and discuss with culturally diverse others to listen, communicate and accept others' beliefs and values, even if we cannot approve of them? • Engage in virtual interactions (tasks, projects, discussion etc.) with partners abroad such as peers, subject experts, researchers, practitioners and so on to experience authentic cross-border collaborations? • Participate in learning experiences informed by local and international multicultural contexts such as internships or placements, collaboration with community partners, 'live' employer projects, field-work, shadowing etc.?

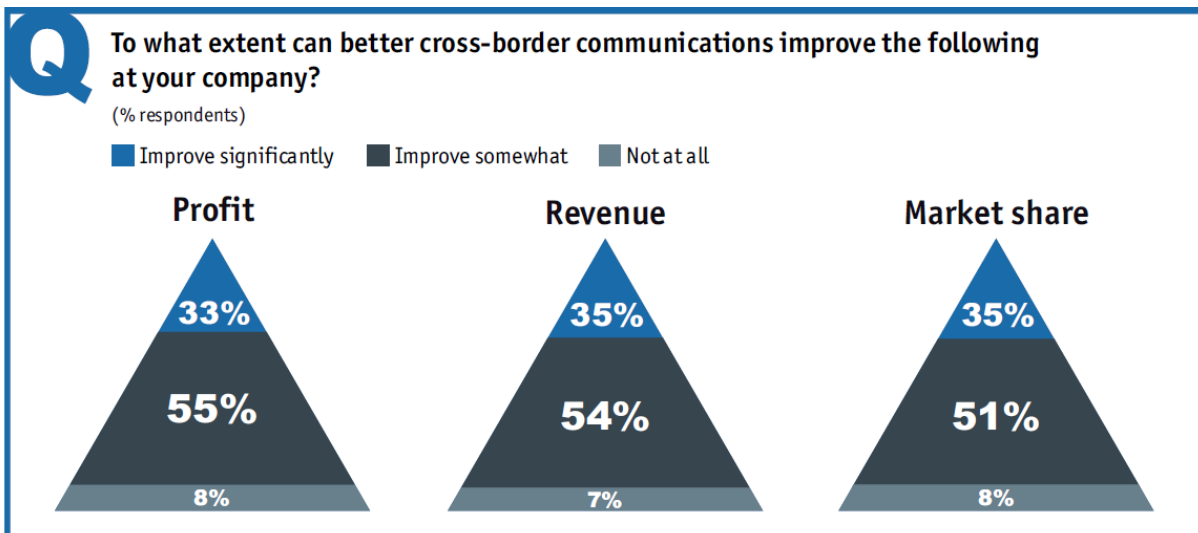
REPORT EXTRACTS

CHART 3 (p. 7)



- More than 3 in 4 of the companies surveyed for the purpose of the EIU report confirm that they will have an operational presence in more countries in 3 years from now than they do currently. 1 in 6 predict that the scope of their international presence will increase “significantly”.
- Consequently, many companies appreciate the need to bridge any national divides.
- More than 50% think that cross-border collaboration is now “very important”, both within the company in cross-border teams, and in relationships with external partners and suppliers (p. 7).

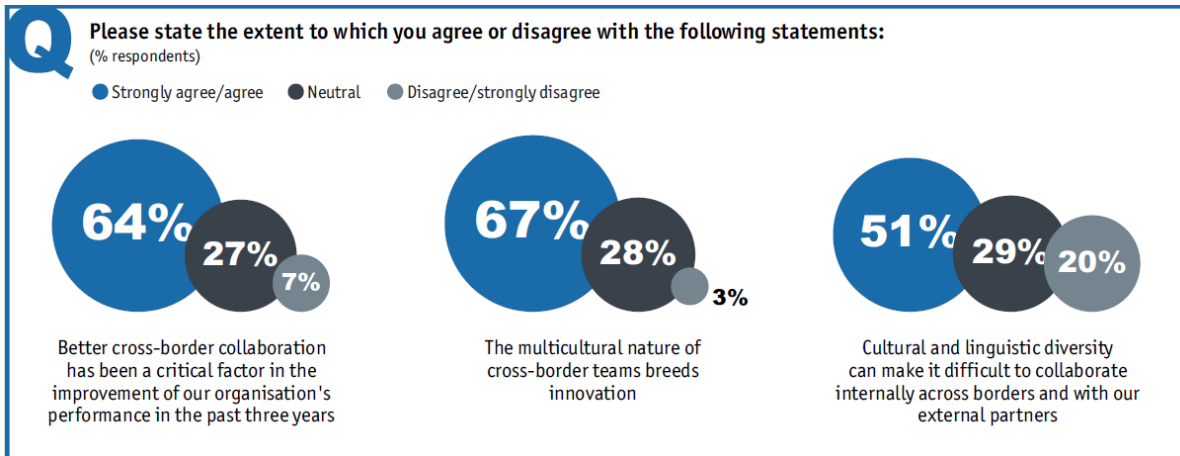
CHART 4 (p. 8)



- Majority of executives surveyed also believe that an improvement in cross-border communications with customers and colleagues will have a beneficial impact on financial indicators, such as profit, revenue and market share.

- While most companies focus, quite sensibly, on getting their strategy right on products, costs, sales and the other building blocks of business, the research done for this report suggests that the interpersonal and communication skills of their employees can have an equally critical impact on an international company's bottom line (p. 8).

CHART 5 (p. 8)



- The impact of good cross-border collaboration on a company's financial performance is now widely recognised. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of survey respondents believe that better cross-border collaboration was a "critical factor" in recent improved performance (p. 7)
- About 2 in 5 respondents (39%) believe that strategy and business operations stand to benefit the most from an improvement in their company's cross-border communications.
- Just over a majority (55%) believe that relationships with clients in overseas markets will be positively affected by such improvements, followed by sales in overseas markets (43%).
- Remarkably, for 44% of respondents from China – compared to just 17% of all respondents - better communication skills are seen as key to improving their relationships with regulators in overseas markets (p. 7-8)

CHART 7 (p. 10)



- The survey confirms that different cultural traditions, combined with linguistic diversity, present the greatest threat to the harmony of cross-border relationships.
- Around one-half of respondents in the survey for this report admit that communication misunderstandings have stood in the way of a major cross-border transaction, incurring significant losses for their company (p. 9)

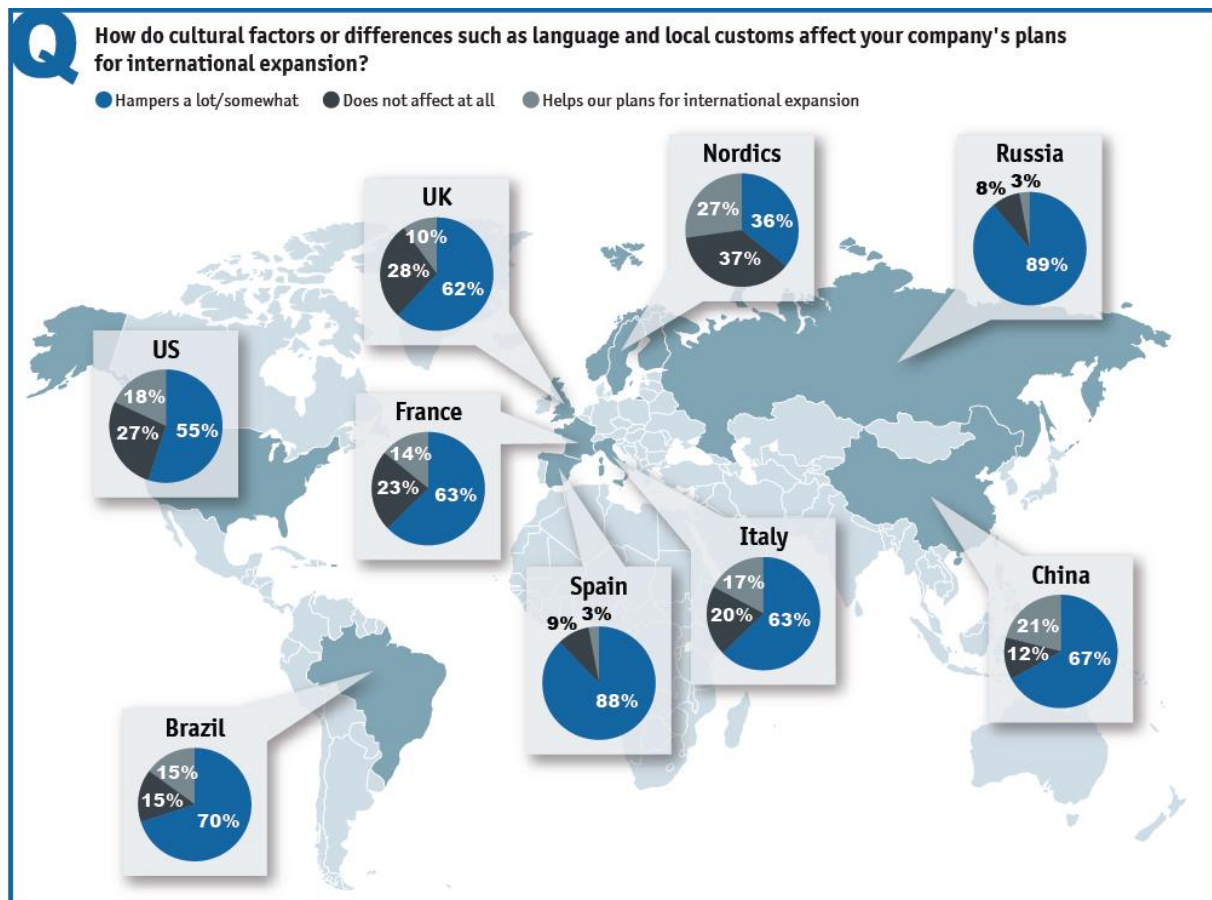
“Clearly, if diversity is not handled correctly, then cultural differences can jeopardise the end objective (see box on page 11). Although business executives recognise the potential benefits that diversity brings to an organisation, they also report that cultural and linguistic diversity can make it difficult to collaborate across borders” (EIU 2012:9)

CHART 8 (p. 10)



- Cultural and communication risk that businesses face when they try to expand into unfamiliar territory is now commonplace.
- The survey indicates that just over three-fifths of companies (61%) admit to encountering difficulties at least “sometimes” when communicating across borders.
- This figure is much higher in some parts of the world: nearly four-fifths of respondents from Brazil (79%) and 71% from Spain report encountering such obstacles (p. 10)

CHART 12 (pg.16)



REFERENCES

All information and data within the resource have been directly extracted from:

Economist Intelligence Unit (2012) *Competing Across Borders: how cultural and communication barriers affect business* [online] available from <https://www.eiuperspectives.economist.com/sites/default/files/Competing%20across%20borders.pdf> [28 Jan 2018]