



Going global has become an increasingly popular strategy for companies hoping to take advantage of all the benefits a global remote workforce can offer. While expanding internationally can propel your business forward, this move has some important implications for organizational cultures.

A lot goes into building a global remote or hybrid work environment. As [Software Dev Tools mentions in this article](#), one of the biggest challenges for those working remotely is the great distractions everyone can face at home, and how can managers ensure people are productive anywhere.

As you build your remote team, you also need to build an organizational culture that brings your whole team together. Whether someone's working behind a desk in your headquarters or in their home office on the other side of the world, both employees should feel a sense of connection and teamwork as a member of your organization.

Cultural differences in communication, working styles, and other factors can create challenges, but a strong organizational culture can help bridge gaps and create unity across your diverse team.

The importance of a strong organizational culture

We've known for years that companies with [positive work cultures are more successful](#). A positive company culture can enhance employee wellbeing, engagement, and loyalty. A positive work culture is supportive, empathetic, and mission-driven. While these general principles should apply across companies, it's also important for companies to develop a corporate culture that is unique to them. Consider the specific qualities you want to see reflected in the way your employees work together day to day.

An organization's cultural norms have far-reaching effects, [according to Harvard Business Review](#). They determine what's encouraged and accepted and what's discouraged and rejected within a group. A well-defined organizational culture can provide employees with a shared purpose and can help a company thrive. The same research shows that leading with culture may be one of the only strategies left that companies can use today to gain a sustained competitive advantage.

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), [three things happen to employees](#) when an organization has a strong culture:

- They know how top management would want them to respond to situations.
- They agree that the anticipated response is the right one.
- They recognize that they'll be rewarded for exemplifying the organization's values.

In other words, employees and managers are on the same page about what it means to be and to act like a member of their organization.

From employees' perspective, company culture can be a determining factor in whether they want to work for your team. [Over 77 percent of workers consider a company's culture](#) before even applying for a job, according to Glassdoor's 2019 Mission and Culture Survey. The survey included 5,000 responses from adults across the U.S., UK, France, and Germany, demonstrating that employees across national borders care deeply about company culture. Additionally, more than half of the respondents said that company culture makes an even bigger difference than salary when it comes to their job satisfaction. Company culture may be harder to measure or pin down than metrics like salary, but it has a real effect on

employees' daily experiences. And it has an ongoing effect on a company's success.

Cultural differences in business practices

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Consider the following ways national or regional culture can impact individual employees and companies:



Communication



Working styles



Values



Management



Time perception



Culture isn't just a feature of companies. Culture is all around us. It influences the way we dress, eat, and interact with people every day. It also influences how we do business. National or regional cultures tend to play into organizational cultures in many ways. In fact, research indicates that [employees' national culture impacts](#) them more than their organization's culture.

Cultural differences shouldn't be an afterthought if you want to manage a global team successfully. Navigating cultural differences is one of the [top HR considerations for an international expansion](#). However, [according to Lanie Denslow](#) — an expert on international business culture — one of the biggest issues entrepreneurs run into with international relations is failing to anticipate any cultural differences at all.

Consider the following ways national or regional culture can impact individual employees and companies:

- **Communication:** How can national culture affect business communication? Maybe the better question is, are there any parts of business communication that aren't affected by culture? How we greet each other, how direct we are, the body language and nonverbal cues we use, how we communicate in writing, and more are all influenced by our linguistic and cultural heritage. Because of the role of culture in communication, a new hire in another country — even if they're fluent in your language — may naturally communicate differently than you're used to.
- **Working styles:** You may also notice differences from culture to culture when it comes to typical working styles. For example, cultures tend to emphasize either individualism or collectivism over the other, and this emphasis can lead to working styles that are either more independent or more collaborative. Another point of difference is between a more competitive work environment and a more cooperative one. Whatever working styles fit your organization best, know that this style may come more naturally to some employees than others based on their background.
- **Values:** Religious ideals, political movements, folk tales, famous philosophers, and many other influences embed certain values into a culture. Another country with a different history is likely to have developed a different set of values or priorities. In a work context, this often comes through in different countries' general philosophies on work-life balance. Some employees may come from cultures that supremely value the hustle

mentality and hard work ethics. Other employees may come from a culture that places a higher value on leisure and family time.

- **Management:** Organizational hierarchies and management styles often differ between cultures, as well. Some employees may respond better to a more authoritative leadership style, while others may respond better to a more egalitarian style. Attitudes on hierarchies can affect the way employees relate to superiors. For instance, depending on where they're from, some middle-managers may be perfectly comfortable speaking their mind in a meeting with executives present while others would feel it wasn't their place to do so.
- **Time perception:** The way you perceive time likely has a lot to do with your culture. Attitudes toward time can influence whether we stress punctuality and deadlines or take a more flexible approach to scheduling. It can also influence whether we focus more on short-term or long-term goals. To some employees, it may make more sense to look at quarterly or even monthly metrics, while others may prefer instead to look holistically at each year.

Consistencies across organizational cultures

If you're feeling overwhelmed by all the cultural differences in business, there is some good news. Some aspects of organizational culture are remarkably consistent across countries, [according to Harvard research](#). Survey responses from over 12,800 employees across the globe revealed that one corporate culture style was especially popular across regions — caring.

Caring corporate cultures emphasize positive relationships and mutual trust. Employees feel comfortable among their coworkers, supported by their leadership, and encouraged to contribute as a team player. This sort of culture is present in companies and appreciated by employees across the globe.

Just as caring ranked high across regions, authority consistently ranked low across regions, making it one of the least common company culture attributes. An authoritative corporate culture stresses competition and powerful features like self-confidence, decisiveness, and boldness. While this mentality is more common in some countries than others, it's not generally a dominant aspect of corporate cultures today, according to employees in the

survey.

The similarities we see across cultures in international businesses could be due in part to how interconnected our world has become. Cultural differences that may have once been stark between countries have become more subtle with globalization. There are still certainly cultural differences in business practices across the world, but you'll often find more similarities between employees than differences, regardless of how far apart they live.

Creating a positive global business culture

Building your company culture may seem like an elusive concept, but organizations can take an active role in shaping their culture — a culture that unites employees across the globe. Let's look at some key steps to achieving this ideal.

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1. Understand and honor cultural differences

Remember that having a strong organizational culture doesn't mean ignoring or stifling differences. Just as research has shown the importance of strong company cultures that all employees can share, it has also shown the importance of diversity within companies. Different perspectives can help companies innovate and even reshape their corporate culture

if needed.

Understanding the national cultures in countries where you're hiring is key if you [want to develop an empathetic company culture](#) that celebrates and respects differences. Be careful not to box people into stereotypes since, of course, not everyone from a country will act the same. Still, understanding some hallmarks of employees' national cultures may prevent some misunderstandings and help you appreciate their differences.

2. Create a corporate culture that transcends regional cultures

Understanding your employees' cultural differences also helps you avoid developing a company culture that is incompatible with some employees' national cultures. Instead, you should build a culture that is based on widely shared beliefs and values. For example, if you're used to a more competitive or even confrontational approach to doing business, you should consider adapting your approach to encourage a more cooperative mentality across your team since that mentality is more common across cultures.

It may help to consider what [researchers have identified as basic human values](#) held in some form or another across all national cultures:

- Benevolence: Groups can only live in harmony if people have a vested interest in the welfare of others in the same group and treat others with love and respect.
- Humility: Humility is about recognizing your limitations and relative insignificance within the grand scheme of things. This value contributes to cooperation and collectivism.
- Conformity: Every culture has certain expectations, including both written laws and unwritten social norms, that influence the way people behave.
- Tradition: Similar to conformity, people all uphold certain customs. These customs can differ based on national culture or religion, but all people tend to agree that traditions matter.
- Self-direction: While conformity and cooperation are important, humans also value independent thinkers and actors.
- Achievement: All cultures place some degree of value on personal ambition and success. People's drive to achieve something on an individual level can be helpful for the whole, as well.

- Power: Power is a universal concept, with each culture having its own structures for authority and control of resources.
- Face: Though the concept of face is typically associated more deeply with certain cultures, people across cultures tend to care about their public reputation.
- Hedonism: Regardless of their culture, people generally share an intrinsic belief that pleasure and fun are part of what life is all about.
- Security: Everyone wants to feel a sense of security. This feeling stems from both personal safety and societal stability.
- Stimulation: The other side of the security coin is that people value some level of novelty, challenge and excitement in life.
- Universalism: While many values focus on the way people relate to others in their “in-group,” universalism entails a concern for the welfare of others and the world more broadly.

Consider what shape these values will take in your organization. For example, how will you help employees feel both secure and stimulated by challenges and changes? How will you encourage both conformity to certain values and practices and openness to differences? Which values will you emphasize to help your company and your employees flourish?

3. Ensure your culture is well-defined



Include **well-defined values and practices** in your employee handbook.

Whatever conclusions you come to about what your company culture should look like, you

should clearly spell out your culture. Consider including well-defined values and practices in your employee handbook so new hires quickly get a firm grasp on what it means to be a member of your organization. Strike a balance between being overly vague and overly detailed. Share your cultural principles in a way that allows employees to extrapolate to figure out how these principles should play out in different types of tasks and interactions.

You should also ensure your company culture comes through on your website and other platforms like your LinkedIn page. This can help prospective employees learn more about your company and whether it fits their idea of a positive company culture.

4. Hire employees who fit your company culture

Once you have a firm idea of what your company's culture looks like, you should intentionally hire employees across the world who will be a great fit with that culture. Do you need employees who are self-motivated and can work well independently? Then make sure you seek out employees who have these qualities, no matter where they're from.

If you interview someone and get the impression that they do not share your values or wouldn't thrive as a member of your company, then it may be best to move on to other candidates. One of the beauties of hiring internationally is that it opens up a global talent pool where you can find the very best candidates to join your company.

5. Depend on in-country experts

Adapting to cultural differences in business can be difficult, especially if you're hiring employees in several countries. Your company culture may have the final say when it comes to the way your team approaches tasks and interacts, but that isn't necessarily the case when it comes to HR issues. Issues like how employees are paid, the benefits they receive, and the vacation time they are afforded are dependent on their country's laws and customs.

When it comes to these issues, you must have help from in-country experts who can ensure you comply with the relevant laws and industry practices. One of the best ways to do this is

to use an Employer of Record (EOR). An EOR will handle HR functions within the countries where your international employees reside. You get to focus on managing your employees and building and reinforcing your company culture to help your whole team succeed.

Build your remote global work team with Globalization Partners

If you're growing your team globally, culture is just one of the things you have to think through. If you're going it alone, then you also need to establish entities in countries across the world and try to comply with a whole host of unfamiliar rules just so you can employ workers there. A more streamlined solution is to partner with EOR.

Globalization Partners is a trusted EOR in 187 countries all over the globe. Once you find your ideal candidates, they'll be placed on our payroll. Our team will handle logistical HR functions, and we'll do it all in a way that complies with local laws and practices. When you trust Globalization Partners to handle these tasks, you're freed up to focus on building an inclusive culture that will unite your employees across the world and drive your company to success.

To learn more about going global, download our free eBook, "[The Complete Guide to Building a Remote Global Team.](#)"