

TANDEM

culture without borders

Job Shadowing

Having a cultural manager from abroad in your organisation for 10 days presents you with a unique opportunity to get qualified feedback on your organisation's work and daily practice. Throughout the stay, the visiting cultural manager will see a lot of interesting goings-on at the host organisation and might sometimes wonder: why do they do the things the way they do? Might it not be easier/better/more efficient/more fun to do it like this or like that...?

Shadowing means that you will accompany your host, or another person in the hosting organisation, for a period of time during their normal work activities. Together you identify which activities could be most interesting (e.g. staff meeting, or meetings with other departments/colleagues about financial administration, communications or human resources, partner meetings or even just lunch). The idea is to observe him/her during work, and absorb practical and intuitive knowledge from your host or an otherwise interesting person.

Shadowing gives the host organisation:

- valuable feedback from a relative outsider
- opportunity to reflect on daily practices
- new ideas for changing those practices

Shadowing gives the person who shadows:

- a deeper understanding of the host's work
- clarity about challenges in your cooperation and in your own work
- new ideas for your own practices

Preparation: Make an appointment with the person you will follow around. Agree on the activities you would like to shadow and inform the others. When you're ready to start, take 5 minutes to:

- Focus on the purpose of the shadowing: what do you want to learn?
- Imagine the best possible outcome of the activity for you and your partner.

Confidentiality: clarify that anything you observe or hear will be handled with confidentiality.

Shadowing: the idea of shadowing is exactly that you're a shadow – you're an observer to whatever activity you're joining, not a participant! Inform the participants to the meeting you're shadowing about your role. Maybe check with them if they can do (part of) the meeting in English or another common language. If that's not possible, you can also learn a lot from body language! Take notes during the meetings (of what you see and hear, but also of what think, question or inspires you). And as with the dialogue interview: try to look at the situation through the eyes of your partner, don't judge. If needed, you can ask your partner for clarification of certain behaviour or exchange right after the meeting that you've observed. This can avoid a situation where a misunderstanding or something that upsets you, interferes with the rest of your shadowing activities.

Debriefing interview: After the shadowed activities, conduct a brief interview with your partner (or the person you shadowed). Bring up any questions that the observations brought to your mind. Use questions from the dialogue interview or one of the following:

- Looking back, what would you do different and why?
- Which activities brought you appreciation or irritation and why?
- What key challenges are you (or your team) currently dealing with?
- What in your organisation would be missing without you? What value do you add?
- What barriers exist in the current situation that prevents you /your team from realizing its full potential?

Your reflections: Crystallize your impressions right away and capture observations and insights in a short report, right after the debriefing interview. These questions might help you to find a structure:

- What are your 2-3 key observations?
- What was an intervention your partner made that changed the course of a meeting or activity?
- Reflect on interventions that have failed.
- Were there moments you felt uncomfortable with how things went? Why?
- Were there moments you felt inspired during the day? Why?
- What are the implications for your own work and cooperation?

Sharing the reflections: close the feedback loop by sharing your observations and reflections with your partner and the host organisation (during your placement). Try to use 'dialogic or non-violent' ways of communication:

- Use "I" statements. Do not use "we" – you only represent yourself.
- Be honest and selective about what you communicate. Don't lie, but you don't have to say everything. Choose what is helpful and useful to the other person.

- Express your personal reactions. If you don't know what other people are trying to say, ask directly for clarification rather than guessing or assuming.
- Talk specifically and resist using generalizations. When you say something about another person, focus on how their behaviour/action strikes you and how it makes you feel.

And remember to thank each other for the experience and insights!

Tips for shadowing:

During shadowing / observations, look for:

- 👉 Things that prompt shifts in behaviour
- 👉 Work-arounds and adaptations
- 👉 Body language
- 👉 Things people care about
- 👉 Anything that surprises you
- 👉 Anything that questions your assumptions about how the world works

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Tandem toolkit methods are inspired by Presencing Institute (www.presencing.com), socius (www.socius.de) and In-Dialogue (www.in-dialogue.org). You can use these methods where and however you like; please don't forget to reference Tandem.