

## CULTURE INSIGHTS 2026

### From Friction to Flow: How Organisational Culture Shapes Team Trust

By Beth Camprubí

This edition explores how intercultural teams can transform tension into collaboration by rethinking their approach to uncertainty, structure, and trust. Inspired by Huib Wursten's model, it's a story-driven look at culture in motion.

#### Introduction

Every team wants collaboration to flow, ideas sparking, decisions clear, trust running high. But when people from different cultures work together, even the simplest actions can get tangled in misunderstanding. A quick "yes" might mean *agreement* in one culture and merely *acknowledgment* in another.

Rather than seeing these clashes as signs of poor communication, what if we viewed them as data?

Clues revealing how each person's cultural logic works. I'm happy to share a Four-Step model that can move you from friction to flow, not by erasing differences, but by understanding, mapping, bridging, and finally integrating them into how we work together.

#### Wanna hear the story?

Every intercultural team starts with good intentions, and then, almost inevitably, hits confusion. Someone pushes for quick decisions while another insists on consultation. Deadlines slide. Tension rises. Everyone's puzzled: *How can such smart people misunderstand each other so easily?*

That's when culture shows up. Not the "food and festivals" kind, but the *invisible operating system* behind how we work, decide, and trust.

Huib Wursten's model reminds us that every national culture has its own logic, its "default settings."

Some value equality and consensus (think Netherlands or Scandinavia), while others are built on respect for hierarchy and authority (like Japan or France). Neither is right or wrong; they just set different expectations for what "good teamwork" looks like.

The first step toward cultural flow is simply to notice these differences without judging them. Pay attention to moments of friction instead of labelling them as "communication issues." Ask:

- *What rulebook might this person be following?*
- *How does my own cultural background shape the way I expect decisions to be made?*

This kind of reflection turns irritation into insight. Once people can name the patterns, they stop taking them personally, and teams can finally start working with the difference, not against it.

### **What's next, Beth?**

Once you've spotted the cultural differences at play, the next step is to map what's really driving them. Differences don't come out of nowhere, they're rooted in deep-seated values about power, belonging, time, and truth.

For instance, when a German colleague insists on precision, or a Brazilian one prefers flexibility, it's not stubbornness, it's their worldview in motion. One is wired for structure and predictability; the other, for adaptability and human connection.

Mapping these patterns means getting curious about context rather than reacting to style. You might ask:

- *Is this culture more rule-based or relationship-based?*
- *Does it expect leaders to decide, or teams to co-create?*
- *Are plans meant to be followed exactly, or adapted as we go?*

When people see where the others are coming from, the tension starts to loosen. You find yourself saying "Ah, that's how their system works."

And this shift is where collaboration starts to build from real strength, no confusion but curiosity.

### **How to start?**

Once you can see the cultural patterns clearly, the real work begins. It's our job to turn this awareness into connection. Understanding differences is step 1, the 2<sup>nd</sup> step is to bridge them by creating the soil to grow from.

In practice, that means learning to stretch. I could give you some examples like:

- A team used to fast, top-down decision-making might try slowing down to include more voices.
- Experiment with ways to arrive at quicker decisions without excluding stakeholders.

It's not about compromise for its own sake, but about building trust through balance, yes, by knowing when to adapt and when to stand firm.

Courage is the ingredient, I know it's tempting to retreat to our comfort zones "*That's just how we do it here.*" ;)

But intercultural collaboration thrives on *intentional discomfort*: those moments when we stretch beyond what feels natural to make room for another perspective. This is the create a safe space to disagree, not a challenge but an asset to be orchestrated.

It's not shortening the distance between "my way" and "your way."

## Nice one Beth, but how?

You all have experience that when differences stop feeling like obstacles, something shifts, you flow and so does the team. When?

- You can feel it in the way meetings run smoother, ideas bounce faster, and trust builds naturally.

Integration isn't about blending cultures into one uniform style; it's about composing the music - diversity so that each perspective strengthens the team.

In Huib Wursten's terms, this is where cultural awareness moves from theory to daily practice. People start asking smarter questions, anticipating reactions, and designing solutions that work across contexts.

When someone says, *"Let's decide quickly,"* another might add, *"Sure, but let's make sure everyone's had a say first."* It becomes less about bossing and more about rhythm, that give-and-take flow.

True intercultural flow is quiet but powerful. It shows up not in grand declarations about "global mindset," but in the small, consistent moments when empathy meets efficiency.

So, it's about noticing differences to trusting these differences, as this variety of perspectives become the team's creative engine – energy, life, purpose, flow, love and trust.

## Before I say "this is all for today" ...

Building cultural flow isn't a one-time workshop or a checklist, **it's a practice**. The goal isn't perfect harmony, but **fluid adaptability**: a team that can read the room across cultures and still move with shared purpose.

Commit yourself to that rhythm, do not just survive diversity, use it to innovate, connect, and lead in ways no single culture could manage alone.

I'm always curious how these cultural dynamics play out in your world. If you've had a moment where uncertainty turned into learning, I'd love to hear your story.

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Let's connect the dots!

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