



Cultural Detective® Success Story Pre-departure Orientation for Expatriates and Their Families

Opportunity/Needs:

Two families were relocating from Australia to Singapore.

Family 1: Minimal intercultural experience and zero international experience.

Family 2: Had lived in the Philippines as well as in Indonesia and felt that moving to Singapore would be “easy.”

Scheduling meant that each family would have a private cultural orientation. Budget and contract permitted four-hour sessions conducted by an experienced interculturalist with significant life and work experience in Singapore.

With such minimal time, the external facilitators wanted to use a learning methodology that would have maximum impact, allowing both depth and breadth of learning, and applicable both to the business and everyday living environments.

Cultural Detective Solution:

Family 1: Focus was specifically on Singapore, with an emphasis on subjective culture (self understanding) more than cultural literacy, as the family had little cultural self-awareness to that point. Major goals included building their understanding as opposed to judgment, which was the starting point when the facilitator arrived (they were noticing differences as “weird” and “not for them.”) Cultural Detective was especially useful for each of these goals, particularly the negative perceptions of the Values Lens.

Family 2: Focus was more on cultural literacy and bridge building, as family members were already very culturally self-aware and aware of differences in different cultures. Emphasis was on strategizing with the differences in the context of the goals each family member had for the assignment. Cultural Detective was again extremely useful for this family.

Cultural Detective: Increase Productivity, Strengthen Relationships

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The employee of family 2 held a regional and strategic (CEO) role, so another advantage of the Cultural Detective was that the facilitator could pull out the Values Lenses from several other cultures the CEO is working in to give insights to how things might roll out or develop in those locations. Focus was on long-distance leadership and how that would play out in the different cultures. The employee generated common themes, challenges, what about his style would work especially well and what might need adjusting, and plans. The facilitator worked with him over the next few weeks as he tested out his plans.

Ideal according to the facilitator would be: One-half day pre-departure orientation using the Cultural Detective, as we did. It is minimal, but it is really enough. Then, a few hours post-arrival for telephone coaching, to follow up on strategies and help to integrate and apply their learning in context.

Cultural Detective Benefits and/or Measurable Results:

- “Just-in-Time ability—flexibility with timing and convenience of scheduling, are great reasons for using Cultural Detective in this kind of training situation.”
- Cost-effectiveness.
- Flexibility to customize on-the-fly to participant needs, which is particularly useful if the facilitator has not had the opportunity to meet with the family members prior to the orientation, or if the budget is not there to customize the orientation.
- Promotes deeper, personalized understanding and real-life application.

Client Testimonials:

Quotes from the external facilitator:

“Cultural Detective is so much more cost effective and provides more Just in Time effectiveness.”

Quotes from participants:

“I wish I had known about this before.”