

ABOUT INTLANG (Gloria ZHANG, MD)

Intlang Consulting Group offers cross cultural marketing and business solutions to Australian businesses, helps them identify new opportunities in overseas markets, breaks down cultural barriers, creating optimised investment or joint venture operations, ultimately bringing different values, strength and business practice together.



Collectiveness and Teamwork

A Chinese friend was posted to a foreign country for work. Prior to his departure he asked me an interesting question: “How do I create a sense of family in a large western organisation - is it the same as teamwork?” I immediately understood his confusion.

In China, a good organisation provide employees with a sense of home and in return employees are expected to be loyal and devoted, often referring to the organisation as “our family” (咱们家). This sense of belonging fostering “collectiveness”.

In western culture, “teamwork” or “team spirit” are highly regarded in work performance. So what are the differences between all these words in practice? Collaboration (合作) or collectiveness (集体) are frequently interchanged with teamwork (团队) because they all require people to work together for a common goal.

However, in practice, collaboration, and collective work involves many individuals to form a single mindset and work for a common goal, and is also a trust building process. This business philosophy is very well connected to Chinese culture, where collective thinking in daily living, life style, fashion, and consumption behaviour can be seen.

Whilst teamwork refers to members retaining their own individual qualities or responsibilities although share a common goal. We witness different types of team work through the World Cup matches, where each player has their own responsibilities and all of them are important. Members of a team are usually present in the same premises, and they meet as and when is needed.

I believe there are many other cultures that are like Chinese culture in this aspect. It's a concept easier to understand than practicing due to culturally led behaviour differences.

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