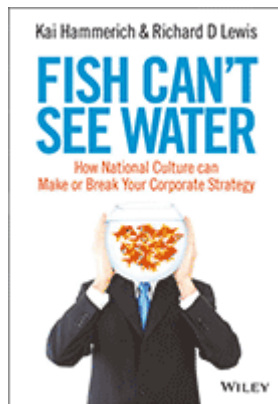


One of the underlying motivations for many writers of business books is to use the results of their work as marketing tools. In itself, this is perfectly legitimate. An author with valuable insights to share has every right to exploit the opportunity of winning some of his/her readers as clients for more extensive services. If, however, a book's focus lies primarily in describing results that cannot be obtained without engaging the author's services, it becomes a large-scale sales brochure.

Unfortunately, Kai Hammerich's and Richard Lewis' *Fish Can't See Water* errs a bit on the latter side.

Linguist and interculturalist Lewis, who received praise and critique, in equal parts, for his 1996 book *When Cultures Collide*, contributes the "Lewis Model of Culture", a condensed compilation of his past conclusions that aims to fit all of the world's cultures into a single tripolar model. The fact that this proprietary model serves as the basis for his company's services in areas such as sales training and recruiting limits its usefulness to readers. Co-author Hammerich, a U.K.-based managing director for head-hunting firm Russell Reynolds Associates, integrates Lewis' model into a larger-scale "Cultural Dynamic Model," another proprietary



approach that aims to lay a broader foundation for multinational corporations.

The two authors give significant room to describing their respective models, then dedicate many pages to convincing the reader of the thesis the book's title hints at: just as fish can't see water, corporations cannot, without external help, see how their corporate cultures often become hindrances that keep them from achieving sustainable success on a global scale.

Hammerich and Lewis present case study after case study to support their premise, structuring their analysis along different stages of corporate lifecycles. The solution they prescribe is predictably simple: use the Lewis Model and the Cultural Dynamic Model to analyse the current status of your corporation and guide your strategic decisions. How that can be done, unfortunately, receives scant coverage.

Fish Can't See Water closes with a series of separate recommendations for investors, boards, and corporate managers. Unfortunately, the authors again offer little more than headlines here.

"Carefully balance diversity with day-to-day performance and make the organization culturally aware", for example, may be good advice, but how exactly should a corporation go about achieving this objective? I'm afraid the authors expect you to hire them if you want to find out.

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