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Cultural Differences: a Franco-German Wedding by Deborah

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Cross-cultural differences abound in all walks of life. This summer I was invited by one of my French friends to her wedding in France. She was getting married to a mutual friend who was German. The city hall and church wedding ceremonies were held in both languages so that all guests could enjoy the wedding. After that the real differences began to showâ€¦

After the ceremonies, all guests gathered in a Chalet and the party was celebrated â€œFrench styleâ€•, hence an emphasis on food and wine. The dinner lasted for about 4 hours, around great food and wine. After the dinner, all gathered up on the dance floor to celebrate the coupleâ€™s union!

Now, I was interested in understanding how the German guests perceived the wedding and thus I went on a little expedition and asked a few questions of them. Here are some of the remarks that came out:

The difference between a French and a German wedding is that in France, you prefer to sit at a table enjoying good food and wine, whilst having discussions with one another, whereas in Germany, we have a quick dinner and then we drink and dance until dawn.

Another interesting point that was raised about the French culture was that the French work to live, and the Germans live to work! So work is perceived as very important for Germans, it comes before everything else.

The French family, as opposed to the German family seems to be more united, family values and unity are very important, and when there is a celebration such as a wedding or even for Christmas, the family comes together; whereas in Germany it is slightly different, it stays within the nuclear family. Of course we celebrate with the grandparents and aunts/uncles, but the occasions are rarer.

By the end of the evening it seemed clear that both cultures are neighbours, but their way of living life and celebrating is different. This case study is food for thought: think about your friends or neighbours from other countries, and try to see whether your perspectives on life are the same, and if not, why is it different and how can you find a common ground?

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Hello, I'm Deborah Swallow and, for the last fifteen years, I've worked in over thirty countries addressing the complexities of people working internationally across multiple cultures or a Cross-cultural differences so individuals and organizations alike can gain an authentic competitive edge and win in international markets.

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