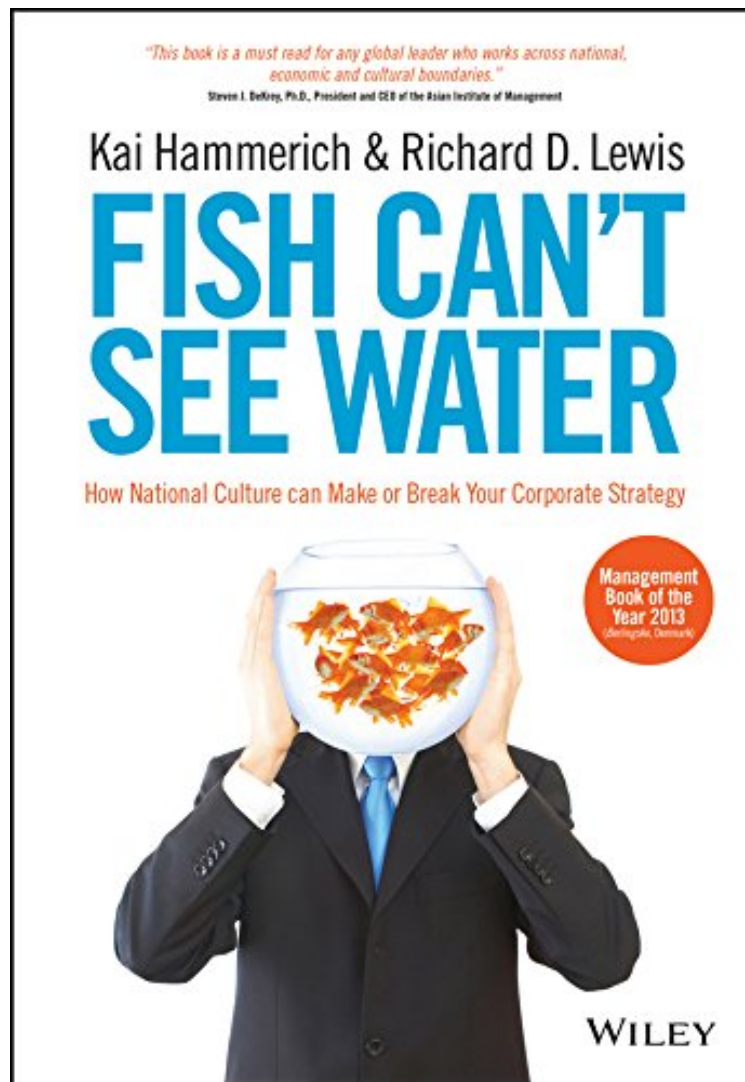


# Fish Can't See Water: How National Culture Can Make or Break Your Corporate Strategy

*Kai Hammerich, Richard D. Lewis*  
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**Kai Hammerich, Richard D. Lewis : Fish Can't See Water: How National Culture Can Make or Break Your Corporate Strategy** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Fish Can't See Water: How National Culture Can Make or Break Your Corporate Strategy:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. One of the best business books I have used in classroom or out! By Gene Detroyer I am remiss in reviewing "Fish Can't See Water" sooner. I teach the capstone course for the MBA program at the European School of Business. This book fits perfectly into the presentation of this double semester, in-depth look at the real world. In the course, "Leadership and Corporate Sustainability", I avoid

most texts. I find them to be a fictionalized look at how people in business and businesses operate. Fish Can't See Water presents no fictions. The book takes a double barreled approach, each revolving around culture. In each case the authors present true example after true example of how the "Fish can't see water". The value of the Lewis model of global culture comes from not only theory, but experience. It relies on nuance rather than pigeon holing the world into a set definition of what the cultures may be. The book takes the next step of applying the "Fish can't see water" experience to corporate culture, both influenced by home country and by tradition. They are excellent and very applicable examples. In today's world, lifecycles of corporations are getting shorter and shorter. Structurally and dynamically, they are not built for sustainability. Today the average life of a member of the SP 500 has dropped to 20 years, down from over 50 years decades ago. With that in mind, every corporate leader should put "Fish" on their reading list. The message is interesting in that it does not suggest that we refuse to change, it suggests that we can't see the need because we swim in our own ocean. Not only don't we see the other people in their own dynamic, we don't even see our own dynamic. We let ourselves be insulated from others because we see them through just one type of lens and we don't take time to measure if that is the correct prescription.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Large-scale sales brochure? By Lothar Katz 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's "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's 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 examples are compelling, but 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 in the book. "Fish Can't See Water" closes with a series of separate recommendations for investors, boards, and corporate managers. The authors unfortunately 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? The less-than-half-page that follows gets you no closer to the answer. I'm afraid the authors expect you to hire them if you want to find out.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Broadens your understanding, but does not provide tools to go forward By Carl Kirstein "Fish can't see the water" is a book recommended by the Economist, discussing how national culture influences business culture and how business culture can enable (or disable) your company's success. It was illuminating for me, and certainly described what I have been suspecting. I always thought that TQM and lean would be difficult to roll out in our company, but now I can say emphatically that TQM and lean is better suited to a reactive culture and less suited to a multi-active culture such as ours. I could go even further to describe why our multi-active culture is not compatible with TQM and lean, and where we need to change to become compatible. What I will not be able to do however is determine how to implement the change in our culture. The book only scratches the surface of cultural analysis, spending most of its time on case studies to demonstrate the effect culture has on the success of a company. The book is excellent for a manager without much immersion in this subject (such as myself), but it will not be adequate on its own to enable managers to apply what has been learnt. The style of the book is easy to read, the case studies interesting and the "dimensions" or differences between national cultures illuminating. Highly recommended reading.

How national culture impacts organizational culture—and business success Using extensive case studies of successful global corporations, this book explores the impact of national culture on the corporate strategy and its execution, and through this ultimately business success—or failure. It does not argue that different cultures lead to different business results, but that all cultures impact organizations in ways both positive and negative, depending on the business cycle, the particular business, and the particular strategies being pursued. Depending on all of these factors, cultural dynamics can either enable or derail performance. But recognizing those cultural factors is difficult for

business leaders; like everyone else, they too can be blind to the culture of which they are a part. The book offers managers and leaders eight recommendations for recognizing those cultural factors that negatively impact performance, as well as those that can be harnessed to encourage superior performance. With real case studies from companies in Asia, Europe, and the United States, this book offers a truly global approach to organizational culture. Offers a fresh approach to the effects of national culture on organizational culture that is applicable to any country in any region Based on case studies of such companies as Toyota, Samsung, General Motors, Nokia, Walmart, Kone and British Leyland It describes the origins and nature of the most common corporate crisis and how culture impacts the response to such a crisis Ideal for managers, business leaders, and board members, as well as business school students A welcome response to the flat-Earth fad that argues we're all alike, this book offers a nuanced and practical view of cultural differentiators and how they can enable or derail business performance.

The Economist, Oct. 2013. "In focusing on culture they are clearly onto something important. Fish Can't See Water" is full of interesting insights into modern business. There are signs that Western firms are taking cultural sensitivity more seriously. However, emerging-market multinationals still lag behind, particularly in China, ... Messrs Hammerich and Lewis need to take their message about fish and water East as well as West" **MANAGEMENT BOOK OF THE YEAR, 2013 (Denmark)**. View more reviews on [fishcantseewater.com](http://fishcantseewater.com), additional chapter overview, and educational support materials. "Many books have been written about culture, but only a few focus on the strategic perspective. This makes it indispensable for executives who works across time zones. A highly readable and insightful book. The authors expand the work of Schein and Hofstede brilliantly, combining theory with their own practical experiences in the many cases in the book." (Berlingske Business, Dec 2013, Denmark).