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*A collaboration by Grant Thornton and ODE Consulting*

# **Culture in M&A: A four-part series on getting it right**

Part 4: A practical culture assessment tool to  
guide integration



# Introduction

In the final part of this series, we shift from strategy to practical application. Culture can often feel intangible – but assessing it doesn't have to be.

Part Four of the series introduces a simplified culture assessment tool Hofstede Culture in the Workplace Questionnaire™ (Hofstede CWQ). Based on the seminal research of Geert Hofstede, the tool helps dealmakers and integration teams translate abstract culture into concrete, measurable insights. This diagnostic enables both organisations to:



**Uncover and compare their cultural profiles**



**Spot potential misalignments or synergies**



**Build a shared language to drive mutual understanding**



**Shape integration planning with cultural clarity and intention**

The tool maps organisational culture across several dimensions – such as power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation – to generate a radar-style culture profile. Used early and revisited often, it helps reduce blind spots and surface the deeper behavioural drivers that influence day-to-day collaboration.

Culture will always be nuanced – but this tool brings much-needed structure and shared understanding to the table. When used with intention, it becomes a compass for integration, trust-building, and long-term value creation.



# Applying Hofstede's Culture in the Workplace Questionnaire™ to M&A

## Turning culture into a strategic integration lever

In the context of Mergers and Acquisitions, one of the biggest obstacles to post-deal success is not financial – it's culture. Yet many integration plans fall short because culture is treated as a “soft” topic, hard to define and even harder to measure.

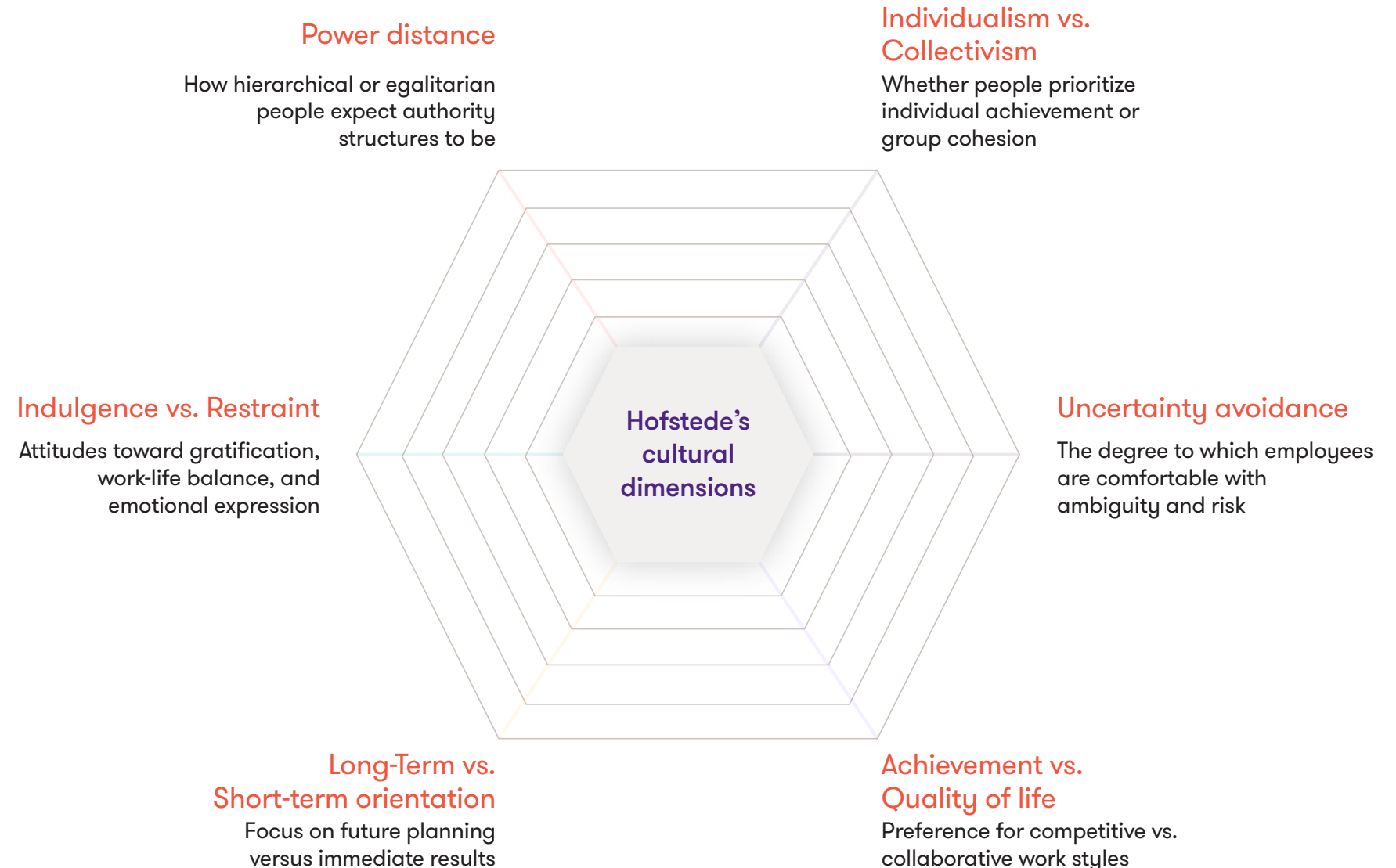
This is where the Hofstede's Cultural Model provides a clear advantage. Grounded in decades of global research, the model offers a systematic way to identify, compare, and discuss cultural preferences that influence how people think, communicate, and work.

By applying this framework to M&A scenarios, organisations gain a common language to describe their cultural DNA – making what was once intangible now visible and actionable.

## What is Hofstede's Culture in the Workplace™?

Developed by Professor Geert Hofstede and further applied in workplace settings, the model measures six cultural dimensions that shape organisational behaviours.

When mapped out visually (e.g., on a radar or spider chart), the differences between two merging organisations become clear – and integration teams can plan accordingly.



# The simplified culture assessment tool

## Translating theory into practical insights

Grant Thornton Singapore and ODE Consulting have co-developed a simplified culture assessment tool, grounded in Hofstede's model, specifically tailored for M&A contexts. This tool serves as a practical diagnostic during the pre-deal and post-deal phases.

### Key features



#### Short questionnaire format

A concise set of statements for leaders and key employees to rate, aligned with Hofstede's six dimensions



#### Visual culture profiles

Responses can be aggregated and plotted in radar charts, making patterns and misalignments easy to see



#### Comparison view

Side-by-side visualisation of both organisations' cultural scores

### Example insights from the tool

- A high Power Distance gap may signal different expectations of autonomy and managerial control.
- Diverging Uncertainty Avoidance scores could result in differing comfort levels with rapid change or innovation.
- A misalignment in Individualism vs. Collectivism might suggest conflicting performance management expectations.



### Why it works

- **Evidence-based**  
Built on a globally validated academic model
- **Simple but powerful**  
Easy for executives and managers to understand and apply
- **Customisable**  
Adaptable to different industries and deal types
- **Action-oriented**  
Generates insights that directly inform integration decisions and communication strategy

By combining structured data with guided interpretation (one needs to be trained to be equipped), the Hofstede-based culture assessment tool transforms culture from a vague concern into a practical, measurable component of M&A planning. It encourages honest dialogue, highlights areas requiring leadership attention, and lays the foundation for a truly integrated organisational culture – one where teams can thrive together.



# Interpreting results from the questionnaire

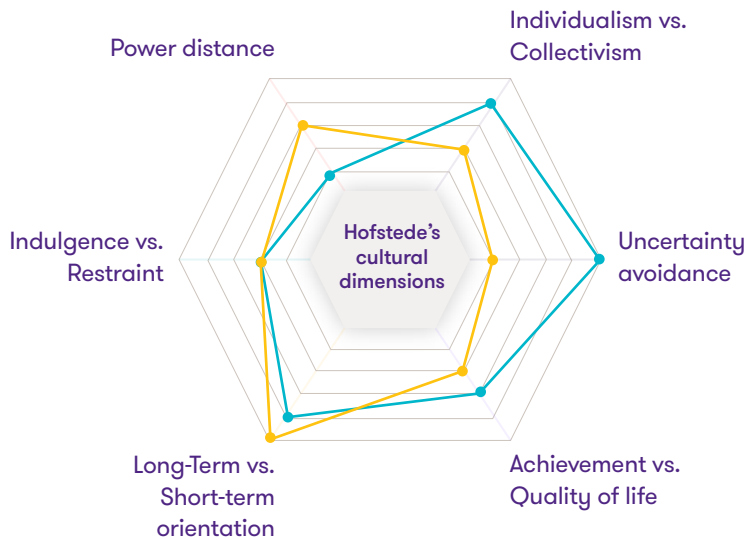
Interpreting results from the simplified Hofstede-based culture assessment helps integration teams identify cultural gaps, similarities, and potential friction points between merging organisations.

Below is a structured approach to interpreting the results and translating them into practical post-deal integration actions:

## 1.

### Aggregate and visualise the data

- Calculate average scores for each of the six Hofstede dimensions (across respondents in each organisation). You'll get a cultural "fingerprint" for each organisation.
- Overlay both organisations' profiles on a radar chart to visualise alignment or divergence.



## 2.

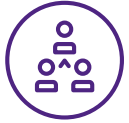
### Identify key cultural gaps

- For each dimension, examine:
- Large score differences (e.g., >10 on a 100-point scale) as areas of misalignment
  - Small differences or overlaps as potential alignment or synergy zones

Dimension	Sample insight	Integration implication
Power distance	One organisation has high hierarchy, the other is flat	May cause tension in decision-making and chain of command
Individualism vs. Collectivism	One rewards individual performance, the other team effort	Risk of misaligned performance management systems
Uncertainty avoidance	One culture prefers structure, the other thrives in ambiguity	Integration pace and risk appetite may differ
Achievement vs. Quality of life	One culture is driven by targets, the other values collaboration	May affect leadership alignment and communication tone

## 3.

### Translate insights into integration actions



#### Leadership alignment

- Use findings to bring leadership teams into structured workshops.
- Align on a “future culture” by discussing which elements to preserve, adapt, or transform.

*Example: “Let’s retain Organisation A’s innovation mindset but embed Organisation B’s operational discipline.”*



#### Communication strategy

Tailor change communications based on cultural profiles.

*High uncertainty avoidance? Emphasise structure, timelines, and clarity.  
High individualism? Highlight personal impact and ownership.*



#### People and organisation design

Adjust team structures, authority levels, and performance systems to match dominant cultural traits or blend preferred styles.

*Example: In high power distance environments, introduce clear reporting lines early.*



#### Integration activities

Design culture-building activities that bridge gaps.

*High gap in indulgence vs. restraint? Introduce well-being programs and social bonding activities for team cohesion.*

## 4.

### Monitor over time

Use the same assessment format (or shorter pulse surveys) post-deal to:



Track whether cultural alignment is improving



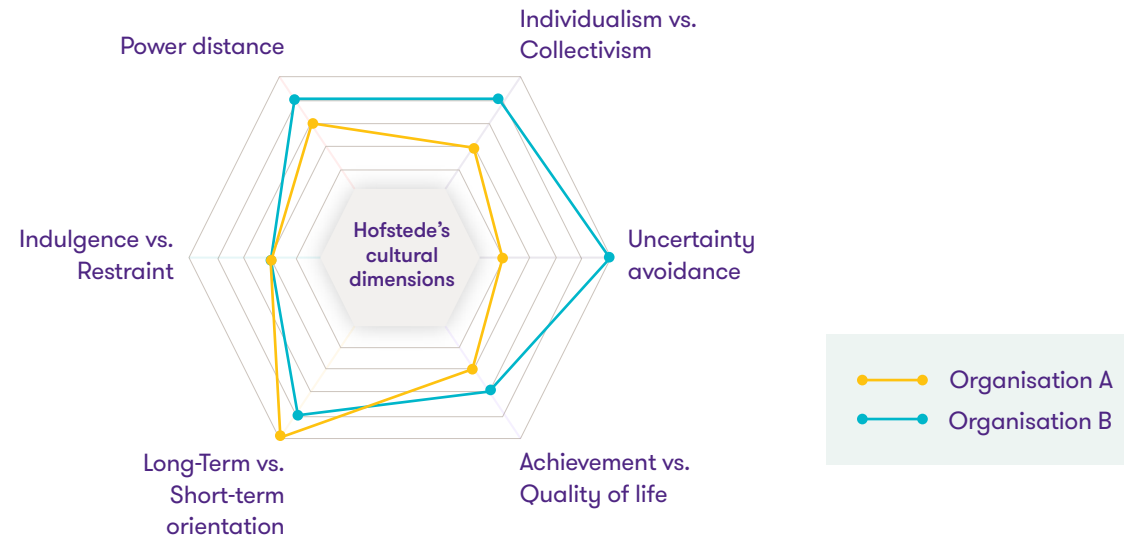
Spot early warning signs of resistance or disengagement



Adjust plans and address emergent cultural “drift”

# Example: Practical application

Radar chart shows Organisation A has low uncertainty avoidance, Organisation B scores high.



## Post-deal action

- Integration team creates a detailed 90-day plan with clear roles and documentation (to support Organisation B's need for structure).
- Meanwhile, Organisation A leaders are given flexibility in pilot initiatives to preserve their agile culture.
- Introducing a culture assessment tool – one based on Hofstede's model – into leadership dialogues and post-deal change workshops requires intentional facilitation, psychological safety, and a strategic framing that emphasises business impact, not just soft skills.



# Closing thoughts: Making culture count in M&A

Culture has long been regarded as the “soft side” of business – difficult to define, harder to measure, and often left until it’s too late. But as this series has shown, culture is not a soft issue. It is a strategic lever that can make or break the success of any merger or acquisition.

Over the course of four parts, we have explored how culture:

- **Shapes integration outcomes** from the very first conversation to the post-deal execution phase.
- **Can and should be assessed** just as rigorously as financial and operational indicators.
- **Requires ongoing attention and action** through structured alignment plans, leadership engagement, and diagnostic tools.
- **Is measurable and manageable**, especially when supported by proven frameworks like Hofstede’s Culture in the Workplace™.

Successful M&A leaders recognise that cultural compatibility is not a luxury – it’s a necessity. By embedding cultural assessment and integration into the M&A lifecycle, organisations are better positioned to retain talent, build trust, accelerate synergies, and unlock long-term value.

At Grant Thornton Singapore and ODE Consulting, we believe in making the invisible visible – translating cultural insight into business outcomes. Whether you’re contemplating a deal, navigating a current integration, or reflecting on past lessons, we invite you to make culture central to your M&A playbook.

Let culture be your differentiator – not your downfall.



# Appendix

## Simplified culture assessment questionnaire format

Based on Hofstede’s six cultural dimensions

### Instructions

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

#### Section 1: Power distance

Expectations of hierarchy, authority and decision-making

1. Important decisions are made only by senior leaders.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Strongly disagree Strongly agree

2. Employees expect clear direction from their managers.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Strongly disagree Strongly agree

3. Challenging your boss in meetings is uncommon.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Strongly disagree Strongly agree

#### Section 2: Individualism vs Collectivism

Focus on personal achievement vs group loyalty

4. Employees are encouraged to take individual ownership.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Strongly disagree Strongly agree

5. Team success is more valued than individual recognition.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Strongly disagree Strongly agree

6. People prefer working in teams over working independently.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Strongly disagree Strongly agree

#### Section 3: Uncertainty avoidance

Comfort with ambiguity, risk and change

7. Employees prefer clear rules and guidelines.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Strongly disagree Strongly agree

8. We take time to fully analyse before acting.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Strongly disagree Strongly agree

9. Risk-taking is not typically rewarded.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Strongly disagree Strongly agree

Section 4: Achievement vs Quality of life

Competitive vs collaborative orientation

10. Success is measured by results and performance.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly disagree					Strongly agree				

11. Employees are expected to be assertive.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly disagree					Strongly agree				

12. Cooperation and work-life balance are prioritised.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly disagree					Strongly agree				

Section 5: Long-term vs Short-term orientation

Future planning vs short-term wins

13. Long-term planning is embedded in our strategy.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly disagree					Strongly agree				

14. We prioritise immediate results over long-term goals.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly disagree					Strongly agree				

15. Employees are encouraged to think beyond short-term tasks.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly disagree					Strongly agree				

Section 6: Indulgence vs Restraint

Attitudes toward fun, well-being and emotional expression

16. Expressing emotions openly is acceptable here.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly disagree					Strongly agree				

17. We actively promote employee well-being and enjoyment.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly disagree					Strongly agree				

18. There is a culture of self-discipline and restraint.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly disagree					Strongly agree				

Next steps

- 1. Aggregate responses across individuals in both organisations.
- 2. Plot average scores per dimension on a radar chart to visually compare.
- 3. Use insights in leadership alignment sessions, culture integration planning, and team workshops.

## Credits

### About Grant Thornton / Roch Tay

Grant Thornton Singapore is a leading provider of audit, tax and advisory services. We are part of a global network of more than 76,000 people in 150 markets with a common goal — to help organisations realise their ambitions in any environment.

The global challenges facing businesses are unprecedented. That demands a different type of adviser. One willing to go beyond what's expected to deliver an experience that's more personal, agile and proactive. We apply strong technical guidance and breadth of experience to ensure that clients receive a truly unique experience. Whether you're growing in one market or many, looking to operate more effectively, managing risk and regulation, or realising stakeholder value, we have the assurance, tax and advisory services to meet your needs.

Roch Tay heads up the Deals Advisory practice in Grant Thornton Singapore. He has more than 25 years of experience in providing management, financial advisory and human resource consulting services to global and local corporations, as well as private equity houses. He is experienced in advising senior leaders on their organisation transformations, organisation culture re-alignments, people-related considerations in their acquisitions and divestitures, as well as their post-merger integrations strategy development, planning and execution.

### About ODE Consulting® Pte Ltd / Dr. Kavita Sethi

Established in 1996, ODE Consulting® is a Singapore-based boutique consultancy that partners with organizations in Singapore and globally to drive transformation and change, and embed culture through learning, coaching, and consulting. With a strong foundation in organizational development, ODE delivers customised solutions that align people and business strategies, enabling lasting impact.

Through Culture In The Workplace™ ([www.cultureinworkplace.com](http://www.cultureinworkplace.com)), a Line of Business of ODE Consulting®, solutions in Cross-Cultural and Organisational Culture are offered to help clients manage cross-cultural diversity, build inclusive workplaces, and develop global leadership capabilities. ODE is the sole global licensee representing and applying Professor Geert Hofstede's body of research to workplace challenges.

Dr. Kavita Sethi, co-author of this series, is the Principal Consultant of ODE Consulting® and Global Master Certifier for Culture In The Workplace™. With over 40 years experience, her areas of specialisation include strategy, leadership, cross culture and the design & implementation of competency frameworks. She has designed and facilitated learning, coaching and consulting solutions for large multinationals and local conglomerates.





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