

M&A: Culture Clash – or Happy Ever After?

You wake up one morning to find that your world has turned upside down. Your company has taken on a new partner!

Mergers spell the chance for an exciting union of equals – or a **dismal culture clash** that ends in ruin.

Suddenly there are new people who don't understand your skills and your official – not to mention your unofficial – **rank** in the company food chain. New bosses might enter the picture too, each with a new **management style** that is unfamiliar.

In the worst-case scenario, a once happy 'we' turns into 'us and 'them' – with 'them' being those new people **harboring** crazy ideas that don't **mesh** with 'our' way of doing things.

But before you drown your sorrows in your morning cup of java – sit down and **reassess**. The nagging truth is that the merger was probably needed in order for your company to remain competitive. And once the dust settles, synergies both expected and unexpected can make the firm even stronger.

If there are problems, they most likely have nothing to do with the **balance sheet**. At issue is often the human element – differences in the way company personnel approach strategies, and in ways of getting the daily work done.

As any expert on **change management** will tell you, try and map out the similarities and differences in an honest manner right from the start. Next, develop a clear game plan and remember to follow it through!

Ignoring the problems may only exacerbate the merger pains. Get to the root of issues early on, find common ground and then move on – before **trench warfare** sets in.

Glossary

balance sheet	a financial statement showing the nature and amount of a company's assets, liabilities and shareholders' equity
change management	a structured approach to the change in individuals, teams, organizations and societies that enables the transition from a current state to a desired future state
culture clash	the misunderstandings, and disagreements between different cultures
dismal	sad and without hope
exacerbate	to make something which is already bad worse
harbor	to continue to think privately about an emotion or a thought for a long time
management style	an overall method of leadership used by a manager
merger	the combining of two or more companies
mesh	to work together in harmony
rank	a position in an organization showing the importance of the person having it
reassess	to reevaluate, to revise one's earlier assessment
trench warfare	a struggle (usually prolonged) between competing entities in which neither side is able to win