

Railways around the world are faced with the challenge of adapting to an ever changing world both quicker and wider than ever before. However, learning from each other can be difficult when other railway companies in the vicinity may also be competitors in one's daily business, thus making it nearly impossible to have an open exchange of ideas and solutions between two railway companies.

In this situation, JR East, the JR Group and Deutsche Bahn have established an exchange program, which has already seen more than twenty years in practice. The huge geographical distance is a benefit when it comes to constructive, unreserved exchange and mutual impulses, while also offering the opportunity to train each other's intercultural competencies.

In this presentation we will show the different facets of this program and will highlight the possibilities as well as the limitations of such a program. This will include:

- ▶ Overview of JR/DB cooperation
 - ▶ Common challenges : Demographic shift, diversity expectations for managements and workforce, raising new business potential against new competitors and in saturated markets
 - ▶ JR Group Exchange program :
 - Participation through application
 - Cultural training
 - Adjusting agenda depending on participants
 - Depth vs. width : What is realistic to be achieved ?
 - Aftermath : Communication, multiplication, curating new ties and networks
 - Impulses for follow-up activities, both mutual and within one's company
 - Cultural differences : Build on what you have in common, be aware of the differences
 - Examples from the 2015 exchange : What we learned about the common challenges
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