

CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

WORKSHOP GUIDE



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Business culture around the world differs greatly, and if you are to succeed in building relationships, working in different regions, or even just visit a foreign office or colleague, it is important for you to be competent in dealing with the cultural differences.

Many cross-cultural teams plunge straight into the task without thinking about their differences. This can lead to misunderstandings and a loss of trust. Communicating online is more challenging than face-to-face communication because it misses facial expressions, body language, and many other factors.

The aim of this course is to help learners who have to conduct meetings and negotiations with international colleagues and partners.

LOOK – watch the video and reflect on the content and message

THINK – activities and questions linking the video to their own experience and workplace

REMEMBER – a summary of the key learning points

Each section relating to the video will last around 15 minutes

PRACTISE – At the end of the series of videos there is a practical exercise which will bring the learnings together. Delegates should be encouraged to record any personal development actions on their Personal Action Plan sheet.

FEATURED VIDEOS

- Communication
- Building Trust

FILM 1 – COMMUNICATION

LOOK (play video, 4 minutes)

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Encourage the group to consider how to really listen to what their colleagues are trying to say, and to listen to themselves and understand how they could communicate more effectively across cultures. Ask them to consider;

- What are linear-actives listening for/expecting from you in communication?
- What are multi-actives listening for/expecting from you in communication?
- What are reactivities listening for/expecting from you in communication?

REMEMBER

- Different cultures tend to express themselves differently.
- They may understand different things from what you say, or don't say, than you might be trying to convey.
- Agree on the common use of language for how the team will communicate with each other.

FILM 2 – BUILDING TRUST

LOOK (play video, 5 minutes)

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Get the team to think about variations in trust across cultures, and how to build trust in multicultural teams.

- Think of as many things as you can that make people trust others.
- Organise the points you came up with under the headings linear-, multi- or reactive. If you got more or fewer points for a cultural type, discuss why, and try and come up with some more. You should try and find at least 3 points for each category.
- Discuss which of these cultures are higher or lower trust. I.e. is your first reaction on meeting a stranger from your own culture a) to trust them initially b) not to trust them initially: Korea, Norway, Germany, France, China, the USA, Finland, Mexico, Italy, the UK. How can you build trust with low-trust cultures?
- Different cultures view 'truth' in different ways. Discuss how the truth could be damaging in some cultural contexts, and where diplomacy or flexibility with the truth could be problematic. Consider how to manage the issue of truth in a multicultural team.

REMEMBER

- Show Linear-Active types you are competent, evidence-based, and reliable.
- Show Multi-Active types you are compassionate, keep in close touch, and share your weaknesses with them.
- With Reactive types, respect hierarchies and relationships, and never forget face.

GROUP EXERCISE (30 mins)

This exercise encourages the group to think about managing across cultures in more general terms.

1. Arrange participants into groups of 3-4 around tables or in break-out rooms.
2. Tell them that in the videos they have been watching individuals acting in ways seen as typical for their nationality. Now you'd like them to discuss the differences between a 'stereotype' and a 'generalisation'; where generalisations about cultures come from; when they can be dangerous, and what to bear in mind when using them in business to predict likely behaviour (10 mins)
3. Bring the groups together again and each group briefly presents (3 mins each) what they came up with.
4. Arrange into different groups of 3-4.
5. Tell them research has shown multicultural teams can either be the worst- or best-performing of all teams (including homogeneous teams). Ask them to discuss why this is so, and what they think are the common characteristics of the best-performing multicultural teams (10 mins)
6. Short presentations by the groups on their findings (3 mins each)