

Intercultural Training Exercise Pack

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Intercultural Training Exercise Pack

Introduction

This free Intercultural Training Exercise Pack offers easy-to-use intercultural and cultural awareness learning activities that can add a useful additional element to any in-house training courses you run, including management development programmes.

It contains 15 cultural awareness training activities which provide a ready-made source of suitable cross-cultural and cultural awareness training activities.

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Training Exercise 1 – The culture onion

Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To enable learners to reflect on their own understanding of culture.• To introduce a model of culture and cultural influences.• To raise awareness of both visible and non-visible components of culture.
Time	10 to 15 minutes.
Materials	Five alternative definitions of culture handout

Background rationale

This is a simple exercise that explores ‘Why is culture important?’ and clarifies its visible and less visible elements.

Procedure

1. Provide the learner with the five alternative definitions of culture.
2. Ask the learner to reflect on which definition(s) he or she prefers. They can choose as many as they wish.
3. Ask the learner to indicate his or her preferred choice(s), giving reasons for the decision.

Observations and suggestions for discussion

Many learners will opt for one or perhaps two of the statements, rather than seeing each one as part of a larger concept of culture. In fact, each of the descriptions reflects one aspect of culture. Discussion will benefit from using the Iceberg graphic (Introduced in Reading 1) to explore how each of the statements fit together. The aim is to form a more comprehensive understanding of culture as a framework of values, attitudes and behaviours.

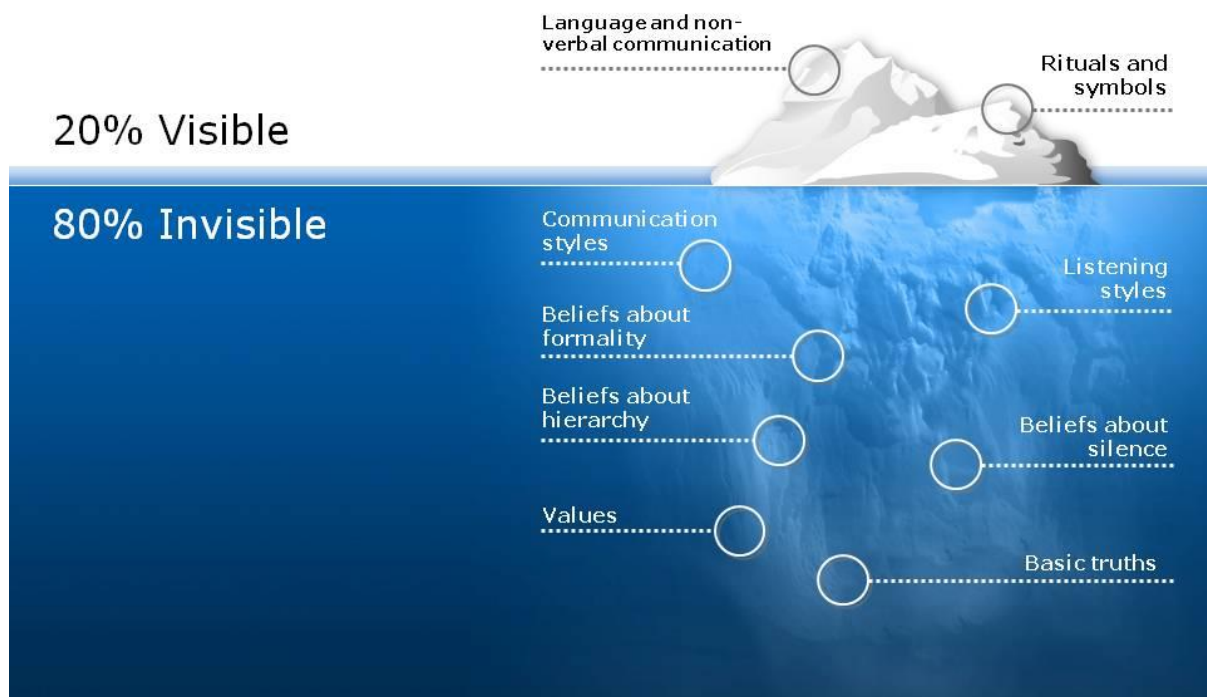
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Five alternative definitions of culture handout

Below are five alternative definitions of cultures. Which definition(s) of culture do you prefer? You can choose as many as they wish.

1. Objective visible artefacts such as rituals, superstitions, heroes, myths, symbols and taboos.
2. Basic truths about identity and relationships, time and space, ways of thinking and learning, ways of working and organizing, and ways of communicating.
3. Ideals shared by group members to which strong emotions are attached.
4. The 'right' and 'wrong' ways of doing things. The rules people live by in practice.
5. Subjective behavioural orientations to do things in one way, rather than another. They are most noticeable in relationship styles, thinking and learning styles, organization and work styles and communication styles.

Culture as an Iceberg



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Training Exercise 2 - Cross-cultural checklist

Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To identify important cultural information that learners may wish to learn before they go overseas.• To illustrate the importance of having a framework for understanding the cultures that learners encounter.
Time	30 minutes
Materials	Cross-Cultural Checklist.

Background rationale

This activity is designed to help teach learners to identify what they know (and don't know) about another culture or country. It is a practical activity designed for preparing for real-life cross-cultural encounters through an examination of both similarities and differences.

The purpose of this activity is not to come up with exact information about how to behave during cross-cultural encounters, but to identify some of the areas in which the learner needs to find out more.

Procedure

1. Give the learner a copy of the 'Cross-Cultural Checklist' and ask them to work through each question in turn.
2. Where the learner answers 'Yes', ask them to identify how they anticipate things to be different in the other culture.
3. Where the learner answers 'Don't Know', ask them to identify ways in which they might find out the answer to this question.

Observations and suggestions for discussion

The answers to each question are, of course, wholly dependent on the specific culture around which the checklist is undertaken and, of course, the cultural origin of the learners themselves. Not all the questions will be relevant in all situations.

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Cross-Cultural Checklist

1. Think about another country or culture.
2. Complete the checklist answering Yes, No or Don't Know to each question.
3. Where you answer Don't Know, how will you find out about the answer to this cultural question?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Non verbal communication			
Should I expect differences in what is thought of as appropriate 'personal space'?			
Should I anticipate differences in the way my counterparts use touch?			
Is there anything particular I need to be careful about in giving or receiving business cards?			
Should I avoid any particular gestures?			
Should I expect differences in the level of acceptable eye contact?			
Do I know what body language is taboo?			

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Communication			
Should I anticipate different attitudes about the acceptability of asking personal questions?			
Should I anticipate different attitudes towards the acceptability of humour and emotions?			
Should I anticipate different attitudes towards the acceptability of interrupting?			

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Do I know what type of argument is likely to be most persuasive?			
Should I anticipate a different attitude towards addressing difficult issues directly?			
Do I know what style of feedback is acceptable?			
Should I anticipate different expectations about the expression of criticism?			
Should I anticipate different expectations about the expression of anger?			
Should I anticipate different expectations about the formality of feedback?			
Do I know the range of ways in which disagreement is likely to be expressed?			
Should I expect a different style of conflict resolution?			
Should I anticipate different expectations about the use of silence?			
Should I anticipate different communication styles to be in use?			
Do I know when to use first names and surnames?			
Do I know what professional titles to use?			
Should I anticipate different attitudes towards small-talk?			
Should I anticipate different attitudes towards the importance of saving face?			
Should I anticipate a different use of tone or pitch when speaking?			
Should I expect different attitudes towards displays of affection?			

Training Exercise 3 – Values at Work

Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To enable learners to identify some of their own work-related values and attitudes.• To provide learners with a vocabulary and model with which to describe cultural influences on workplace behaviour.
Time	45 mins
Materials	Values at Work checklist

Background rationale

Cultural conflicts and misunderstandings can arise when individuals with opposing values come into contact.

The Values at Work checklist introduces an extensive range of dimensions along which work-related values vary, and explores the contrasting values that reside at each pole of each dimension.

This activity invites learners to reflect on some of their own cultural values, and asks them to explore the potential impact of cultural differences as they work in a new country or culture.

Procedure

1. Give a copy of the Values at Work checklist to the learner.
2. Allow a few minutes for the learner to complete the handout.
3. The learner will have probably identified important cultural differences between his or her own approach and that of another culture or country of interest. Discuss some of the following questions with the learner:
 - How might these differences become apparent in the working environment?
 - How might people from a different country or culture perceive your approach at work?
 - What challenge do these differences present?
 - In what ways might you adapt your behaviour to manage and overcome these cultural differences?

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The Values at Work Checklist

Research suggests that the way in which each of us thinks and acts at work can be influenced by the attitudes and values in the cultures to which we belong.

When we come into contact with people from different cultural backgrounds we can sometimes encounter workplace behaviour that does not match our assumptions and expectations. We can sometimes even misinterpret other people's workplace behaviour and make incorrect assumptions based on our own cultural background. This can result in confusion, misunderstandings and even conflict.

The checklist been designed to help you identify some of the ways in which your cultural background has had an impact on your workplace behaviour.

On the following pages you will find several statements asking about the way in which you prefer to communicate and the way in which you prefer to learn, think and apply knowledge.

1. Read each description in order.
2. Decide which behaviour is closest to your own. If you identify with both statements, choose the one you identify with more often, or in more situations.
3. Mark a score indicating how strongly you tend to exhibit this behaviour.
4. When you have completed this activity, decide how you think people in a different culture of interest to you would probably respond to the statements.
5. Where you have identified important cultural differences between you approach and that of people in the culture or country of interest to you, consider...
 - Are these differences important?
 - How might these differences become apparent in the working environment?
 - How might people from that country or culture perceive your approach?
 - What challenge do these differences present?
 - In what ways might you adapt your behaviour to manage and overcome these cultural differences?

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The Values at Work Checklist

Direct					Indirect				
I prefer people to go directly to the point and not to spend time beating around the bush.					I think it is important to avoid conflict even if it means only hinting at difficult issues.				
5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5
Being frank					Saving face				
It is important to be frank, open and honest at all times, even at the risk of causing others to lose face and experience shame.					It is important that nothing I do causes others to lose face, even if this means that I have to find other ways of transmitting important information.				
5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5
Theory					Practise				
I prefer to learn by receiving and absorbing information from an expert source					I prefer to learn by exploring, practising and experimenting with new ideas.				
5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5
Deal					Relationship				
When I have a job to do, I prefer to focus on the task: walking straight into the situation, sorting things out and moving on.					When I have a job to do, I prefer to focus on the people: spending time getting to know those I will work with.				
5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5
Prompt					Flexible				
I prefer people to stick strictly to measurable and structured deadlines. Being on time is the key to efficiency.					I prefer people to take a flexible approach to timekeeping. Being flexible about deadlines is the key to efficiency.				
5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5

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<p>Teacher</p> <p>I prefer to give out precise and detailed instructions to people I work with. It is important that people do what they are told.</p>					<p style="text-align: right;">Facilitator</p> <p>I prefer to guide people towards making as many of their own decisions as possible. It is important people take the initiative at work.</p>				
5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5
<p>Informal</p> <p>I prefer to talk with people in an informal way, regardless of who they are or what position they hold.</p>					<p style="text-align: right;">Formal</p> <p>I prefer to show the proper level of respect for position and status by using formal titles, surnames or polite forms of address.</p>				
5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5
<p>Logic</p> <p>I prefer to stick to logic and facts when I am arguing a case. In business, emotions should be controlled as much as possible.</p>					<p style="text-align: right;">Feeling</p> <p>I prefer to display emotions and warmth when I am arguing a case. In business, emotions should be listened to and respected.</p>				
5	4	3	2	1	1	2	3	4	5

Training Exercise 4 – Recognizing ineffective responses to cultural differences

Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To develop learners' ability to recognize ineffective individual responses to cross-cultural interactions.• To provide learners with a handy summary of how not to respond to cultural differences on overseas assignments.
Time	35 to 40 minutes.
Materials	'Recognizing Individual Responses to Culture' handout

Background rationale

In this activity, learners are asked to identify and classify some common individual responses to working across cultural barriers that are each, in one way or other, unproductive.

Procedure

1. Provide the learner with a copy of the 'Recognizing Individual Responses to Culture' handout.
2. Allow the learner to read the summaries, and then classify each quote.
3. Ask the learner to rephrase one or two of the quotes in ways that they feel would reflect a more productive and less ethnocentric view of the world.

Observations and suggestions for discussion

Feedback can usefully explore what each quote indicates about the attitudes of the individuals concerned, and whether more productive ways of thinking might exist.

The quotes are all adapted from real-life comments. Learners may question whether these really are evidence of ineffective ways of dealing with cultural differences. They may even agree with some of the quotes. Debating these beliefs is a useful source of learning.

Below is a suggested classification of the quotes shown:

- A. Neo-native.
- B. Expat. This American manager was replaced soon afterwards by a British executive who had been headhunted locally.
- C. Global villager. This particular individual had an extraordinarily strong personality and very definite ideas. He achieved great success in selling to the Chinese and, to this day, remains dismissive of culture. One wonders what his Chinese counterparts made of him.

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- D. Global villager. The organization may well look for the same type of people to work within a strong organizational and professional culture. This does not mean that, faced with ambiguity and difficulties, these individuals will not revert to the default values and behaviours present in their national cultures.
- E. Missionary. Such a total lack of cultural empathy or insight indicates someone at the missionary stage.
- F. Global villager. Although, on the surface, this might indicate a positive ethno-relative world-view, there is no suggestion that what each member of the organization brings with them from their cultural background is a potential source of strength and learning for the organization as a whole.
- G. Missionary/expat. Elements of two responses are visible here. Greater self-awareness and understanding of why things are the way they are would help in this situation, as would a determination to find positive aspects in the local culture.

Subsequent discussion can explore situations in which the learners themselves have demonstrated similar perceptions as the individuals quoted.

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Recognizing Ineffective Responses to Cultural Differences - Handout

Read carefully through the following categorizations.

Missionaries

Missionaries exhibit denial. They simply cannot conceive that others can operate successfully on a completely different value system, or that other ways of doing things have merit and logic. When missionaries see people doing things differently, they do not see the influence of culture. Instead, they make rapid judgements about the individuals concerned, or draw on out-of-date and prescriptive stereotypes. These judgements, based on the missionaries' own conception about how things 'should' be, often classify other people as backward, unsophisticated or uneducated. The missionary sees their role as educating others in the 'right' way to do things.

Expats

Expats exhibit defence. They recognize that there are, indeed, other ways of doing things, but in general judge them to be vastly inferior to 'our ways of doing things' back home. They recognize the existence of another set of values and behaviours, but continue to make faulty attributions or interpretations from their own ethnocentric perceptions, often with negative judgements attached. In the expats' world, there is limited space for shades of grey and precious little empathy with other cultures. Expats often keep contact with people from other cultures at a minimum.

Neo-natives

Neo-natives also exhibit defence. However, in an opposite response to expats, they begin to assume that everything about the new culture is good and nothing bad. They sometimes see the new culture as more spiritual, or in some ill-defined way 'better' than their own. They can even stereotype or deride their own cultural background as inferior. For neo-natives almost everything is black and white and they have little time for their own compatriots. Neo-natives see it as their role to become experts in their new culture, to become 'more French than the French'.

Global villagers

Global villagers exhibit minimization. They admit to a minimal number of differences between cultures, but only at a superficial behavioural level. They consider that 'underneath, everyone is the same' and are unsympathetic to the idea of deeper differences in assumptions and values. They believe that what works here will, with perhaps some simple superficial modifications, work everywhere else. In the global villagers' world, differences are sidelined or ignored. Instead, global villagers see it as their role to identify similarities. They may even disparage those who seek to acknowledge cultural variation as being bigoted or prejudiced.

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Now, read each of the quotes below, which have all been adapted from quotes made by people who have attended cross-cultural learning or consulting events. Decide which of the categorizations above (if any) is applicable to each.

- A. 'Since I came to live in Thailand I have realized just how shallow and meaningless life in Europe is. The stress and anxiety that everybody suffers ... and for what? I'll never go back.' (Irish doctor on assignment in Thailand)
- B. 'I just can't believe how lazy the British are. Unmotivated, unenthusiastic and disinterested. Now I just do not employ any at all, full stop. We only have Australians or New Zealanders working in the London office.' (US manager of the London subsidiary of a New York-based architecture firm)
- C. 'I can't tell you how many stupid things people say about business in China, all this rubbish about Guanxi. * It is just garbage. The Chinese are the same as everyone else. If you have the right business model, the right technology and properly incentivize your staff, you will win business. Full stop.' (Scottish CEO of manufacturing exporter) *System of networking and mutual favours said to underpin business relationships in China.
- D. 'Working for a music business our people are much the same all over the world. In fact we look for the same type of people when recruiting. As a result cultural differences don't come into the equation.' (French HR manager)
- E. 'Although the older Poles are difficult to deal with, the younger people we employ have just as clear an idea of the importance of meeting deadlines and getting things done on time as people in the US.' (American production director in Polish car components manufacturer)
- F. 'We really have such a strong belief in ourselves in this organization, an awareness that we are really unique and different, that where we come from as individuals is irrelevant. We drop our nationality and become "one of us".' (Brazilian employee in a worldwide charity)
- G. 'There is really almost nothing in this country that works properly. I know it is wrong, but I can't help comparing everything here with the situation at home. It frustrates me because the people themselves don't seem to understand how much better things could be if they put their minds to it.' (Western European voluntary worker in Africa)

Training Exercise 5 – What is wrong with stereotypes?

Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enable learners to reflect on the fact that stereotypes often say more about the individuals that use them, than about the groups that are stereotyped. • To identify particular stereotypes of one culture, and explore how useful they are.
Time	30 minutes
Materials	Match the stereotype with the culture that holds it handout

Background rationale

This is a simple but effective activity designed to make clear, in blunt terms, the disadvantages of using stereotypes. Through an exploration of stereotypes held about one of the groups to which learners belong (the example shown below was designed for a British learning group), the process of stereotyping is exposed as prone to producing out-of-date, unbalanced, and prescriptive labels that say more about those who are stereotyping than those being stereotyped.

Procedure

1. Give the learner a copy of the 'Match the stereotype with the culture that holds it handout'. Suggested answers to the example slide are as follows:
 1. The British have bad teeth - USA.
 2. The British treat their children badly - Italy.
 3. The British are insular - Germany.
 4. The British do not wash - Australia.
 5. The British are obsessed by time - Spain.
 6. The British are hypocrites - France.
2. Ask the delegates to identify any stereotypes they may hold about people in another country or culture.
3. Lead a discussion about how helpful the learner's stereotypes are, and whether they will aid or detract in communicating effectively with local people.

Discussion points

With regard to the example slide, the learners may wish to reflect on the fact that these value judgements about the British, reflect behaviours and attitudes common in the host country (that is, Spanish attitudes towards time, French attitudes towards the nature of

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spoken communication, American attitudes towards physical appearance and so on) as much as any real and objective characteristics of British culture. The fact that these perceptions are not necessarily shared by many British people and do not take account of the complexity of a nation of 60 million means that they are likely to be less than helpful in understanding British values and attitudes.

Be sure to emphasize that some valid generalizations can be made about values, attitudes and behaviours commonly held by members of a specific group of people. It is essential that individuals do not get stuck in a loop - not generalizing for fear of stereotyping and, as a result, not coming to any understanding of other cultures at all. What is important is that such an understanding needs to be up to date, shared with others, allow for individual differences, and be backed by research.

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Match the stereotype with the culture that holds it handout

A British trainer recently asked colleagues from **Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the USA** to describe a stereotype that is held in that culture about the British.

Match the stereotype with the culture that holds it.

1. The British have bad teeth.
2. The British treat their children badly.
3. The British are insular.
4. The British do not wash.
5. The British are obsessed by time.
6. The British are hypocrites.

How helpful or true are these stereotypes about people in the UK?

What stereotypes do you hold about the people in other cultures or countries? How helpful are these stereotypes?

Training Exercise 6 – What do they need to know about us?

Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide an opportunity for learners to reflect on important elements of their own culture.• To enable learners to prioritize important cultural information about their culture that people from different backgrounds would benefit from knowing.
Time	60 minutes
Materials	'What Do They Need to Know About Us?' handout

Background rationale

This exercise allows learners to explore important aspects of their own cultural backgrounds.

Procedure

1. Give the learners a copy of the handout
2. Work with the learner as they go through each section. Pinpoint areas where people from other cultures find UK values, attitudes and behaviours confusing or difficult to understand.

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What Do They Need to Know About Us?

Prepare a briefing for someone who is about to spend some time in your country. Use the table below as a guide to the content.

Background

- Geography and topography
- History
- Economic system
- Business and commerce
- Political structures
- Media and broadcasting
- Language(s)

Society

- Current political situation
- Legal system
- Religious influences
- Regional differences
- Social and community life
- Ethnic minorities
- Gender issues
- Education system
- Heroes and myths
- Private / work life overlap

Traditions and customs

- Communication styles
- Greetings
- Gestures
- Levels of formality
- Holidays and festivals
- Taboos
- Gift-giving

Daily life

- Shopping
- Entertaining
- Food and Eating out
- Getting around
- Climate
- Healthcare

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- Housing
- Security

Business Etiquette

- Business relationships
- Approaches to work
- Approaches to leadership and teams
- Management styles
- Formal and informal meetings and discussions
- Negotiations and presentations

Other....

Training Exercise 7 – Facts, Attitudes and Behaviours

Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide an opportunity for learners to reflect on key cultural characteristics of another country or culture.
Time	60 minutes
Materials	Facts, Attitudes, Behaviours handout

Procedure

1. Give a copy of the Facts, Attitudes, Behaviours handout to the learner
2. Ask them create a model connecting Facts, Attitudes and Behaviours in another culture or country.
3. Discuss this model and how it compares with your own understanding of your culture.

Discussion suggestions

The objective of this activity is not to stereotype others or attach inflexible labels to individuals from the culture in question. Rather, the purpose is for learners to reflect on the fact that shared cultural values, attitudes and behaviours do not develop in a vacuum, but instead are closely related to the environment in which cultures exist.

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Facts, Attitudes, Behaviours handout

Think carefully about another country or culture.

Identify some of the key background and environmental factors that influence this culture. Then speculate on the culture's core attitudes and values, and how these are reflected in observable behaviours.

Background facts
Core attitudes:
Observable, behaviours:

Cultural information and advice often includes hints, tips, do's and don'ts in areas such as...

Training Exercise 8 – Communication types

Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To enable learners to reflect on some of the typical communication styles commonly encountered in their own and other cultures.• To explore some of the potential misunderstandings that may occur when individuals with different communication styles interact.
Time	1 hour
Materials	'Exploring Communication Approaches' handout

Background rationale

The way in which we communicate can differ considerably from culture to culture. This activity identifies some important areas in which paralinguistic (volume, speed of speech and so on), extra-linguistic (gestures, eye contact, touch, physical proximity and so on) and communication styles (direct versus indirect, and so on) differ across national boundaries. It asks learners first to identify the particular approach to communication that predominates in their own and other cultures, and then asks to reflect on the possible consequences when individuals with different approaches in each area interact.

Procedure

1. Provide each pair with a copy of the 'Exploring Communication Approaches' handout.
2. Work through each element, comparing and contrasting the learner's culture with another country or culture.

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'Exploring Communication Approaches' handout.

1. Read each of the following pairs of descriptions.
2. Decide which descriptions is more like your country, A or B.
3. Think of another culture or country of interest to you. Does it come closer to type A or type B?
4. Choose one or two statement pairs that interest you. Can you think of any misunderstandings that might arise when people from cultures more like A, communicate with people from cultures more like B?

1	In some countries, people tend to talk quite quickly, frequently interrupting others in order to get their ideas across.	In other countries, people tend to talk in a slow and considered way, rarely interrupting other people when they are talking.
2	In some countries, people tend to talk quite loudly and are not particularly concerned if people they do not know overhear their conversations.	In other countries, people tend to be more soft-spoken, and take care to ensure that they do not talk so loudly that other people can hear their conversations.
3	In some countries, people use many physical gestures (such as smiling a lot, waving their arms or banging the table) to emphasize what they are saying and to communicate important ideas and feelings.	In other countries, people do not often use many physical gestures (such as smiling a lot, waving their arms or banging the table). Instead, they use words and their tone of voice to communicate important ideas and information.
4	In some countries, demonstrating interest in what other people have to say means maintaining good eye contact with them when they are talking.	In other countries, demonstrating respect for other people means trying to avoid too much direct or close eye contact while they are speaking.
5	In some countries, even people who do not know each other very well will hold hands, embrace, place their arms around each other's shoulders, or touch each other on the arms.	In other countries, people are taught not to touch other people they do not know, and will try to avoid physical contact with strangers wherever possible.
6	In some countries, when people talk to each other they stand or sit a considerable distance apart, sometimes as much as 50 cm.	In other countries, when people talk to each other than stand or sit very close to each other - sometimes so close that they are almost touching the other person.

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7	In some countries, people are direct and frank in the way they speak. They will give their personal opinions freely, regardless of whom they are talking to, and will often criticize other people directly if necessary.	In other countries, people are less direct in the way they speak. They will often avoid giving their personal opinions unless they know the people they are talking to well, and will try to avoid saying things that might come across as too critical of others.
8	In some countries, people write e-mails or faxes that are as short, direct and factual as possible. They pose questions directly and ask for information in an explicit and unambiguous way.	In other countries, people sometimes write e-mails or faxes in a less direct and wordier way. They often don't feel the need to spell out precisely and unambiguously the information they require.
9	In some countries, people often prefer to use e-mails, faxes, letters or other forms of written communication to pass on important information and make sure they get the response they want.	In other countries, people often prefer to use face-to-face discussions, telephone calls or other forms of spoken communication to pass on important information and make sure they get the response they want.
10	In some countries, learning foreign languages (particularly English) forms a big part of the educational curriculum. People from these countries often speak other languages very well.	In other countries, learning foreign languages is not an important part of the educational curriculum. People from these countries often do speak other languages very well.
11	In some countries, people are happy to talk about their personal and family life with their colleagues at work. They are also inclined to ask other people questions about their private and family life, even if they do not know them very well.	In other countries, people prefer to keep their private life and their work life separate. They do not tend to ask questions or talk about personal and family life at work, unless it is with close colleagues who they know well.
12	In some countries, people like to make 'small talk' (that is, talk about the weather, football, politics) before they start talking about business.	In other countries, people like to get straight into business without bothering with too much 'small talk' (that is, talk about the weather, football, politics).
13	In some countries, people are happy to talk about their accomplishments without embarrassment or shame. They think it is polite and honest to describe what they have achieved in their lives.	In other countries, people feel uncomfortable talking about what they have accomplished. They think it is polite and courteous to keep quiet about their attainments.

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14	<p>In some countries, people will try to remain as reasonable, rational and dispassionate as possible during business discussions and conversations. They believe that the best way to remain objective is to argue based on facts and talk from the head, not from the heart.</p>	<p>In other countries, people feel comfortable following their feelings and intuition during business discussions and conversations. They believe that the best way to get their message across is to talk with passion and conviction, even if this sometimes comes across as being emotional.</p>
15	<p>In some countries, people are happy cracking jokes and telling funny stories at work or in business situations, even with people they do not know very well.</p>	<p>In other countries, people think work is a serious place to be and try to avoid making jokes or telling funny stories unless they know the other person very well.</p>
16	<p>In some countries, people tend to communicate in an informal way, using first names at work or when dealing with customers and colleagues. People rarely use formal titles (like Mr or Mrs, Doctor, Engineer, Architect).</p>	<p>In other countries, people tend to use formal titles (like Mr or Mrs, Doctor, Engineer, Architect) at work, or when dealing with customers and colleagues, people tend to use first names mainly with family and close friends.</p>

Training Exercise 9 – Hofstede’s dimensions

Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To enable learners to practice using Hofstede's five-dimension model to explain a number of cross-cultural misunderstandings and cultural differences.
Time	1 hour
Materials	'Hofstede's Five-Dimension Model' handout

Background rationale

Geert Hofstede's 'five-dimension' model has been extremely influential in the cross-cultural training environment. The model provides a structure with which to understand and describe key differences in values between different cultures, and enables individuals from different backgrounds to come to a shared understanding of why and how they differ.

Procedure

1. Give a copy of the Hofstede's Five-Dimension handout to the learner.
2. Discuss the best answer to each short case study. Suggested answers are:
 - Sarah. By arriving in Bogota the day before, Sarah is unlikely to have had time to build the kind of personal trust that may have been important for her Colombian contacts.
 - Richard. Individuals from low power-distance cultures, such as Australia, are often surprised at the need for counterparts from relatively high power-distance cultures to maintain formality in work situations.
 - Karl. Karl may well have developed good social relationships with his colleagues. This did not, however, allow him to do things that might cause others to lose face in collectivist cultures. His proposal may have brought up issues that others wanted hidden, so threatening their standing in front of the rest of the group.
 - Rebecca. Low uncertainty avoidance can sometimes come across as lack of preparation or structure to those from high uncertainty avoidance cultures.

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'Hofstede's Five-Dimension Model' handout

Probably the most influential of all the 'dimensionalists', Hofstede uses the following five dimensions to analyse cultural characteristics.

- Power distance

Power distance reflects the degree to which a society accepts the idea that power is to be distributed unequally through hierarchical distinctions. The more this is accepted, the higher the country's ranking in power distance. High power-distance culture can be characterized by a strong hierarchal structure within their organizations. In such societies, managers are respected in and out of the organization and are rarely publicly contradicted.

By contrast, low power-distance societies tend to value notions of empowerment for employees and consensual decision-making. In Europe, current levels of power distance rather neatly match the boundaries of the former Roman Empire. Former Roman spheres of influence tend to resolve the essential tension between low and high power distance in favour of the latter. The opposite is true in areas that were not influenced by Roman values.

- Individualism versus collectivism

Individualism reflects the degree to which individual beliefs and actions should be independent of collective thought and action. Individualism contrasts with collectivism, which is the belief that people should integrate their thoughts and actions with those of a group (for example, extended family, or employer). In individualistic societies people are more likely to pursue their own personal goals.

In collective societies people are more likely to integrate their own goals with those of other group members and tend to avoid putting people in situations where they might lose face. The cohesion of the group plays a more important role than pursuing one's own individual achievement.

- Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance reflects the degree to which a society feels threatened by ambiguous situations and tries to avoid them by formulating rules and refusing to tolerate deviance. In essence, it relates to an essential tension about the nature of 'truth'. The more a society accepts that truth is 'absolute', the higher it ranks on uncertainty avoidance. Societies that rank high on uncertainty avoidance have highly structured working environments.

Employees and managers pay attention to precise objectives and clear rules, detailed assignments and schedules set up well in advance.

- Masculinity versus femininity

This dimension relates to essential tension between attitudes towards gender. Masculinity describes the degree to which the focus is placed on assertiveness, task achievement and

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the acquisition of material goods. This is contrasted with femininity in which quality-of-life issues such as caring for others, group solidarity and helping the less fortunate are valued.

- Long-term versus short-term orientation CDI (Confucian Dynamism Index)

The essential conflict in this dimension relates to attitudes towards what is, and what is not, considered 'virtuous'. Long-term cultures focus on the distant future and emphasize the importance of saving, persistence and achieving goals that may only come to fruition after several generations. Short-term cultures emphasize the past and the present, and there is respect for fulfilling social obligations and a consistent understanding of morality.

Hofstede claimed that Chinese people have a relatively high Confucian dynamism index value, while American people have a relatively low Confucian dynamism index value. He suggested that this distinction is reflected in business. In China top management emphasizes thrift and perseverance and respect for tradition, and also maintains a long-term orientation (that is, the company is regarded as a family). In contrast, in the USA, top management is said to focus on current needs, creativity and adopting a short-term orientation.

Read the four short incidents described below. Underline any sentences that suggest cultural differences were at work and answer the following questions:

- How would you explain these differences in terms of Hofstede's cultural dimensions?
- What hints or tips would you give to each of the people below to overcome cultural barriers?

Sarah

Sarah Marshall is head of the business development group at a US-based law firm. Recently she was assigned the task of winning a contract for a new project with the Colombian government. She was competing with teams from Spain and France.

Sarah had quite a lot of background information on the proposed project and on the packages her competitors were offering. On the basis of this information and her organization's extensive resources she felt confident that the company would win the contract.

Sarah drew up a proposal that was time and cost-effective and designed a presentation based on convincing numbers and a persuasive argument. Arriving in Bogota the day before, Sarah personally made the sales pitch in which she detailed all the relevant facts, highlighted the various ways forward and made a clear recommendation of the best solution. She eventually lost the project to the Spanish team, even though her Colombian counterparts acknowledged the quality of her proposals.

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Richard

Richard, an Australian, is part of a team of lawyers based in Paris. Claude, 48, is the team's PA. Claude works from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., with an hour and a half for lunch.

Richard is very pleased with the quality of Claude's work and her commitment to the team. Unfortunately because of his extensive travel commitments abroad he has never had the opportunity to have lunch with her or spend any time with her and the team outside the work environment. After a while Richard asks to be addressed by his first name and the informal 712. Several months later, however, Claude is still calling him 'Monsieur Lafleur' and addressing him with 'Voulez-vous bien...' although Richard calls her 'Claude' and addresses her with 'Veux-tu

Richard is puzzled and decides to talk to Claude about this matter in order to clarify the situation.. To his amazement Claude replies that she prefers to call him by his surname and refer to him with the formal vous.

Karl

Karl, a Dutch lawyer, felt that his first business trip to Japan was going fairly well. He was determined to get to know his colleagues better and was particularly pleased to be invited out for drinks after work with most of the team, including the senior managers.

At the bar, everyone was expected to entertain; even the senior staff got to sing karaoke songs or tell jokes. Everything seemed fairly informal and cooperative, with Karl's karaoke version of 'Imagine' winning rapturous applause from the group. One of the senior managers even asked Karl for a repeat rendition later in the evening.

Keeping this informality in mind, Karl used a team meeting early the next morning to present a proposal for resolving a minor logistics problem he had noticed. He was surprised to be met with a wall of embarrassed silence and was noticeably excluded from informal exchanges as people left the meeting.

Rebecca

Rebecca, a recently recruited British executive in an international law firm, was asked to chair a meeting with her French and British colleagues.

From Rebecca's point of view, the meeting went well. She did her utmost to make sure that everyone was heard and the relevant issues discussed and summarized in a diplomatic way. She even changed the agenda and extended the meeting to accommodate new issues that some British delegates had brought up.

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At the end of the meeting Rebecca was shocked to hear one French colleague whisper to another `... typical British, just typical. No proper preparation...'. She was even more surprised to hear the reply: 'Yes, and they never say what they mean, do they?'

Training Exercise 10 – Observing body language

Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To develop learners' ability to attend to the body language of others.• To enable learners to speculate on the meaning of some important elements of nonverbal communication.
Time	1 hour
Materials	'Observing Body Language' handout

Background rationale

Developing observation skills is an important part of enhancing cross-cultural effectiveness. This activity provides an opportunity for learners to pay active attention to the body language of people they see, and to speculate on what people may be trying to communicate in non-verbal ways, either consciously or unconsciously.

Procedure

1. Preselect a video showing some element of interaction or communication between people in another country or culture of interest. Three or four minutes of material are usually sufficient. Documentaries or news reports are often useful in this respect.
2. Give a copy of the 'Observing Body Language' handout to the learner and explain that the objective of the activity is to develop and practise observation skills.
3. Provide some basic background information about the context in which the video is set: describe who the participants are and what situation they are in.
4. Ask the learners to complete the handout as they watch the video. They may need to see the clip twice.

Observations and suggestions for discussion

Learners will have their own ideas about what the non-verbal behaviours they observe signify, and these can form the basis of a useful and productive discussion. It is also useful to ask the learners to speculate on how their own body language is similar (or dissimilar) to that of the individuals they observe.

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Observing Body Language handout

Watch the video.

Closely observe how people dress, greet and interact with each other. While watching, please tick the boxes that match your observations and reflect on what the individuals concerned are trying to communicate.

Dress code

- Casual
- Uniformed
- Colourful
- Formal
- Eccentric
- Neutral

What are the individuals concerned trying to communicate through their dress code?

Greetings

- Collective greeting
- Hugging
- No touching
- Neutral face
- No greeting
- Handshaking
- Smiling
- Individual greeting
- Kissing
- Touching
- Emotion

What are the individuals concerned trying to communicate through their greetings?

Gestures and personal space

- Stand close
- Keep their distance
- Avoid physical contact
- Good eye contact
- Avoid eye contact

What are the individuals concerned trying to communicate through their gestures and personal space?

General impression of the interaction

- Formal
- Hierarchical
- Laid-back
- Informal
- Organized

What are your overall impressions of the communication?

Training Exercise 11 – Recognising culture shock

Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide clear examples of the various stages associated with culture shock.• To provide learners with practice in identifying stages of culture shock.
Time	30 mins
Materials	Recognising culture shock handout

Background rationale

An important element in dealing with culture shock is recognizing that it is a natural process with a beginning point and a relatively clear set of stages progressing to a point at which it is no longer a problem for the person concerned.

Understanding the nature of these stages, and developing the skills to recognize which stage you have reached, is a useful strategy for managing individual reactions to culture shock. This exercise provides a handy checklist of stages and useful practice in recognizing what comments or perceptions may indicate about the stage of cross-cultural adjustment individuals are in.

Procedure

1. Give a copy of the 'Recognizing culture shock' handout to the learner.
2. Compare these learner's answers with those suggested below and discuss and differences.

Observations and suggestions for discussion

There may be some debate about exactly which stage is likely to be reflected in each comment. This is a positive point, as it enables learners to discuss the nature of each stage and reflect on how others may understand the phenomenon of culture shock somewhat differently. Recommended answers are as follows:

1. Adaptation
2. Disorientation or shock
3. Honeymoon
4. Adjustment
5. Honeymoon
6. Shock
7. Shock
8. Honeymoon or adaptation or adjustment
9. Adjustment or adaptation

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10. Disorientation or shock
11. Shock
12. Adaptation

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Recognizing culture shock handout

Culture shock is the process of adjustment to an unfamiliar culture. It is a more or less sudden immersion into a state of uncertainty - in which you become unsure about what is expected of you and what you can expect from other people. Culture shock can occur in any situation where you are forced to adjust to an unfamiliar system in which many of your previous ways of doing or understanding things no longer apply.

The five stages

Five stages of culture shock can be identified:

1. Honeymoon

This is where the newly arrived individual experiences the curiosity and excitement of a tourist, but where the person's basic identity is rooted back at home.

2. Disorientation

This stage involves the disintegration of almost everything familiar. The individual is overwhelmed by the requirements of the new culture and bombarded by stimuli in the new environment.

3. Shock

This stage is associated with the experience of anger and resentment towards the new culture. Stress, anxiety, irritation and hostility are common.

4. Adaptation

This involves the integration of new cues and an increased ability to function in the new culture. The individual increasingly sees the bad and the good elements in both the new culture and the home culture.

5. Adjustment

In this stage, the individual has become comfortable in both the old and the new culture. There is some controversy about whether anyone can really attain this stage.

Exercise

Below you will see a number of comments likely to be made by individuals in one of the five stages of culture shock. Read each comment and write down what stage of culture shock you think the individual concerned is most likely to be in.

Comment

1. 'We do that too, only in a different way.'
2. 'Why can't they just ...?'
3. 'I can't wait to tell ... about this.'
4. 'You don't understand them like I do.'
5. 'Isn't this exciting?'
6. 'These people are so damn ...'
7. 'Only ...more months before I can go home'
8. 'Aren't they interesting?'
9. 'Actually, I am beginning to like this'
10. 'Everything here is so difficult!'
11. 'We would never do that where I come from'
12. 'On the other hand, why shouldn't they do that?'

Training Exercise 12 – Culture shock checklist

Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To summarize useful strategies for managing culture shock and enhancing the process of cross-cultural adjustment.• To provide an opportunity to explore specific behaviours that describe how each strategy can be put into practice.
Time	30 to 40 minutes.
Materials	'Culture-shock Checklist' handout

Background rationale

Culture shock is a challenging problem for learners moving overseas on long-term assignments. This activity provides a handy checklist of useful strategies to help learners handle the symptoms of culture shock and speed adaptation to the new environment. It also enables learners to identify useful ways of putting these strategies into practice.

Procedure

1. Give the learner a copy of the 'Culture-shock Checklist' handout
2. Work through the list of skills and behaviours with the learner, identifying any specific skills for dealing with culture shock that might be particularly applicable in another country or culture of interest.

Observations and suggestions for discussions

Some learners may find it difficult to identify specific ways of putting the checklist points into practice, given that they are already in the form of behavioural hints. Emphasize that what is required is specific ideas of how they will action each point in real-life. Make sure the examples are made clear.

There may be other specific suggestions that are particularly appropriate to the learners concerned. These can easily substitute some of the more generic strategies and techniques outlined in the checklist.

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Culture-shock Checklist handout

Read each of the following strategies and techniques for dealing with culture shock. On the right hand side, write down some specific behaviours that describe how you can put each strategy or technique into practice. The first two have some examples already inserted.

Strategies and techniques	How you can put this in practice.
1. Anticipate it - do not let it take you by surprise.	For example, make a list of all the things likely to cause me culture shock.
2. Find out as much as you can about where you are going before you leave.	For example, attend a country-specific briefing. Read a cultural awareness book.
3. Identify familiar things you can do to keep you busy and active.	
4. Fight stress, do not deny your symptoms and do not give in to them.	
5. Monitor your drinking and eating habits.	
6. Give yourself time to adapt. Making mistakes is a normal part of learning.	
7. Discuss your experiences with your colleagues.	
8. Expect the same symptoms when you come home.	
9. Think about the positive aspects of culture shock.	
10. Retain a sense of humour!	

Training Exercise 13 – Cross-cultural communication skills checklist

Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To explore generic strategies for improving cross-cultural communication.• To enable learners to reflect on which strategies may be useful in any given situation
Time	30 minutes
Materials	Cross-cultural communication skills checklist

Background rationale

This activity is useful as a way of consolidating some of the generic skills associated with effective cross-cultural communication.

Procedure

1. Provide a copy of the 'Cross-Cultural Communication Skills checklist' handout to the learner and make sure that the instructions are understood.
2. Work with the learner to provide some practical examples of each skill, identifying any specific skills that are particularly applicable in another country or culture of interest.

Discussion points

It is important to encourage learners to explore the types of behaviour associated with each strategy, and reflect on what might be most relevant to them.

Summarize frequently

- Confirm and reconfirm your understanding and intentions at every step in the dialogue.
- Use big, bold signposts to tell people where you are going.

Aim for dialogue, not debate.

- If your counterparts are unwilling to negotiate, aim for a better understanding of each other and establish a positive relationship, without pressurizing others to change their own views.
- Identify common goals and develop a shared perception of equal status.

Be structured and clear.

- Say exactly what you mean and mean exactly what you say.
- Structure your language in a clear and logical way with one idea per sentence.
- Be realistic about what you can achieve.

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Be open and friendly.

- Demonstrate patience, positive feedback and human interest (this works well in any culture).
- Give more than the minimum and mirror your partner's tone.
- Use humour (but take care).

Invite feedback; do not just expect it.

- Ask how people are doing and make sure that they have understood you correctly.
- Look for covert or hidden signs of disagreement.
- Watch out for suggestions that are really requests.

Use questions effectively and often.

- Use simple, straightforward questions.
- Make sure that the answer you get is the answer to the question you asked.

Keep positive.

- Keep your language positive, constructive and optimistic.
- Use tone and tempo to stress the important information.
- Build in pauses for understanding.

Grade your language to that of your counterpart.

- Find out your counterpart's language competence and do not overestimate it.
- Keep your sentences short and simple.
- Avoid idioms or sarcasm and take care with humour.

Make sure your verbal and non-verbal communication agree.

- Make sure that your body language mirrors your spoken language: all communications channels need to reinforce the same message.
- Be yourself, and use body language that is natural to you.

Know yourself to know others.

- Identify and keep in mind the response you want from the communication.
- Be aware of your stereotypes and communication styles - and the way in which you may come across to other people.

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Cross-cultural Communication Skills Checklist

Read each of the following strategies and techniques for communicating effectively across cultures.

On the right hand side, write down some specific behaviour that describes how you can put each strategy or technique into practice. The first two have some examples already inserted.

Strategies and techniques.	How you can put this in practice.
Clarify frequently	Paraphrase what you think you have heard to make sure that you understand the communication accurately. Emphasize the feelings expressed, as well as the substance. Confirm that you accurately understand and acknowledge the message, even if you do not agree with it.
Use active listening	Demonstrate interest. Acknowledge comments with your head or voice. Avoid mistaking vagueness for ambiguity or disinterest.
Summarise frequently	
Aim for dialogue, not debate.	
Be structured and clear.	
Be open and friendly.	
Invite feedback, do not just expect it.	

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Use questions effectively and often.	
Keep positive.	
Grade your language to suit your counterpart.	
Make sure that your verbal and non-verbal communication agrees.	
Know yourself to know others.	

Training Exercise 14 – What makes a cross-culturally effective individual?

Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To enable learners to reflect on the characteristics of cross-culturally effective individuals, teams and organizations.• To enable learners to reflect on how well developed their own cross-cultural skills are.
Time	30 minutes
Materials	'What Makes a Cross-culturally Effective Individual?' handout

Background rationale

This is a simple activity designed to encourage learners to think about the personal and team skills underpinning cross-cultural effectiveness.

Procedure

1. Give the learner a copy of 'What Makes a Cross-culturally Effective Individual?' handout
2. Lead a general discussion, talking through the learners' responses to the handout.

Observations and suggestions for discussion

There are, of course, no correct or incorrect answers to this exercise: all of the quotes describe ways of making cross-cultural interaction more effective. The main focus of feedback and discussion should be to explore the skills and understanding underpinning each quote and to identify how each relates to an overall model of a cross-culturally effective individual.

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What Makes a Cross-culturally Effective Individual? Handout

The quotes below are adapted from interviews conducted with individuals who are highly experienced in cross-cultural working. Each respondent was asked what he or she believed to be the most important characteristics contributing to their success in working across cultures.

Read each quote...

1. 'You need to continually question your own assumptions and preconceptions; even about things you think should be blindingly obvious to everyone concerned'
2. 'The most successful expatriates are those who can slip into 'local time' as soon as they get there'
3. 'The best people are interested in international work, and motivated to live and work with people from different backgrounds'
4. 'For me, learning the language was a vital part of coming to understand the people and the country.'
5. 'You have to recognize that other people are different and look at things in different ways. Usually not better or worse, just different'
6. 'Having a set of clear core values helps guide our people and provides them with support wherever they go'
7. 'You know that you are not going to understand everything that is going on; you just have to learn to accept it, even laugh about it'
8. 'Of course, sometimes you have to adapt and sometimes you have to stand your ground. You cannot change everything you do. It is knowing when to take either approach that is so difficult'
9. 'Once you know the rules people follow and the logic they operate by, everything else falls into place'

Draw on these quotes (and your own experiences) to clarify the combination of attitudes, skills and knowledge you think are most important for a cross-culturally effective individual.

To what extent do you, your team and your organization currently possess the attitude, skills and knowledge outlined above?

Training Exercise 15 – Use your RADAR

Key objectives	To explore the five-step 'RADAR' technique for recognizing and overcoming cross-cultural misunderstandings. To enable learners to practise using this technique to deal with real-life cross-cultural misunderstandings.
Time	40 to 60 minutes.
Materials	Using your RADAR handout

Background rationale

No matter how well prepared someone may be for cross-cultural contact, misunderstandings can occur in any situation where individuals with different values, beliefs and ways of doing things interact. In these circumstances it is necessary to attempt to overcome misunderstandings in a structured and explicit fashion.

This activity introduces critical incidents describing cross-cultural misunderstandings and invites learners to work through these incidents using the RADAR technique.

Procedure

1. Introduce the RADAR technique, or ask the learners to define their understanding of the technique based on their reading.
2. Introduce the objective of the activity.
3. Distribute a copy of the 'Using Your RADAR' handout to the learner.
4. Ask the learners to brainstorm the application of the RADAR technique to critical incident 2
5. Summarize and discuss. In case 2 the informal and humorous US presentation style conflicted with German expectations.

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Using Your RADAR handout

Critical incident 1

A manufacturing company wanted to boost its flagging exports to continental Europe. Ronald, a young Dutch marketing manager with a lot of experience in the Amsterdam office of the organization was seconded to the company's London headquarters for six months in order to help with a new marketing project. Ronald spent several weeks researching the marketing department's methods and talking to his counterparts. Eventually, he drew up a number of clear proposals for boosting European sales, which he intended to present at a senior management meeting. During the meeting Ronald explained what the problems were and what needed to be done to solve them.

At the end of the meeting Ronald asked if anyone had any comments or suggestions, and was a little surprised when everyone kept silent. A week later Ronald was transferred back to Amsterdam, even though he still had three months of his secondment to serve. Shortly afterwards, Ronald's manager in Amsterdam received a memo from head office suggesting that he be moved to a 'less sensitive' position in the company where he did not have to deal with clients or senior management.

Critical incident 2

Andreas, a young American business school graduate, strode confidently into the Berlin conference room and stood at the podium. He was there to present a radical change to his organization's networking systems to an audience drawn from across the German joint venture.

Andreas worked confidently through each of his presentation points in a logical progression, relying on the slides to convey the more technical information. To engage the audience he added a bit of humour by telling some jokes along the way. After completing the formal presentation, Andreas invited questions. At this point, he adopted a more informal stance, taking off his jacket, loosening his tie and perching on the edge of the table. He addressed the audience by their first names and made sure that he kept good eye contact with anyone he spoke to.

As the audience left he shook hands with everyone and slapped them on the back in a gesture of camaraderie, just like in the films. To his surprise, the feedback from some parts of the organization was decidedly mixed.

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RADAR Activity Sheet

Read the two of the critical incidents above. Apply the 5 RADAR steps to each incident. The first one has been done for you.

	Incident One - Ronald	Incident Two
Recognize the cultural dimension.	The misunderstanding took place in a situation in which people from different cultural backgrounds came into contact. Ronald felt that he was acting in a courteous and constructive fashion, yet his behaviour was seen in a different way by his British counterparts. This suggests that cultural differences played a part in what happened.	
Analyse what caused the misunderstanding.	The misunderstanding occurred as a result of a presentation given by Ronald. The Dutch tend to value communication that is direct and explicit. In contrast, the British often value communication that does not rock the boat or expresses criticism in quite ambiguous terms. The British may therefore have misperceived Ronald's considered and polite presentation as overtly confrontational and critical.	
Decide what options are available.	Ronald could choose not to interact with the British again, or simply change his communication style to suit his audience. Alternatively, he could make differences in communication styles explicit	

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	and work with his counterparts to find a style of communication that suited everyone concerned.	
Act on the best option(s).	The best option in the short term is probably for Ronald to adapt his communication style to suit his audience. This is most likely to enable him to get the response he wants from his communication. In the longer term, addressing cultural differences in the organization will probably be beneficial.	
Review what happened.	Reviewing the response to his next presentation will enable him to decide what effect changing communication style has had.	