

## **INTER CULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

- Inter cultural is the process of sending and receiving messages between people of different cultural background.

### Opportunities in a Global Marketplace

- Opens borders and allows worldwide competition.
- Domestic workforce becomes more diverse : people from different nationalities working in one company. Companies can recruit workers from a broad pool of talent; and benefit from broad range of viewpoints and ideas; and have better understanding of other markets.

### Challenges

- Motivating workers from different countries and cultures.
- Working with them in teams
- Need to understand some of their culture to prevent mis-communication.

### Definition of Culture

- Is a shared system of symbols, beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations, and norms for behaviour.
- Subcultures are distinct groups that exist within a major culture.

Culture includes the following :

- Language
- Non verbal signals
- Word meanings
- Time and space issues
- Rules of human behavior ; what is acceptable and not.

### How culture is learned

- Listening to advice from family members, relatives, and elderly people (direct).
- Also by observing other people's behaviour (indirect)

### Recognizing Cultural Differences

#### 1. Social values

- Formal rules of etiquette (exp table manners) are explicit and well defined.
- Informal rules are learned through observation and imitation. Exp
  - (i) attitudes towards work and success – do they emphasize hard work and material success?
  - (ii) Roles and status – the way top management is addressed eg Mr Roberts or using title 'president' 'manager'
  - (iii) Use of manners – exp 'How was your weekend?' is a common way of making small talk in U.S. but sounds intrusive (busybody) to people where business and private lives are separate.
  - (iv) Concepts of time – do they follow time very strictly and are very punctual (Japanese) or being late is considered acceptable.

#### 2. Contextual differences

- Some culture depend on words more than non verbal communication to communicate while other culture use less words and more non verbal communication.

### 3. Legal and Ethical Differences

- Legal systems differ from culture to culture
- Ethical choices like bribing officials are seen differently from culture to culture.

### 4. Non Verbal Differences

- Greetings – do people shake hands, kiss lightly on both sides of the face?
- Personal space – when people are talking do they stand close or far from each other.
- Facial expressions – do people shake their heads to indicate 'no' or nod to them to say 'yes'
- Eye contact – in some culture eye contact is a must as it signifies honesty and openness (U.S) but in other cultures is aggressive and showing no respect.

### 5. Age differences

- Are older people highly respected (Asian) ; or youth emphasized (US) – where older colleagues communicate as equals with younger colleagues.

### 6. Gender Differences

- Perception of men and women in business. In some culture, women do not work or get involved in business.

### Dealing with Language Barriers

- English is the most prevalent language in international business, but it's a mistake to assume that everyone understands it.
- Watch for clues to be sure that your message is getting through to people who don't speak your language

- If you have a long term business relationship with people of another culture, it is helpful to learn their language.

### Barriers to Written Communication

- Most routine business correspondence is written in English, but marketing messages are generally translated into language of the country where the product is sold.
- Consider the meaning of the message and the way it will appear to the receiver when translating from one language into another.

### Ethnocentrism and Stereotyping

- Ethnocentrism is the tendency to judge all other groups according to your own groups standards, behaviours and customs and to see other people as inferior by comparison.
- Stereotyping is the attempt to categorize individuals by trying to predict their behaviour or character on the basis of their membership in a particular group.
- To overcome ethnocentrism and stereotyping :
  - i) avoid assumptions
  - ii) avoid judgements
  - iii) acknowledge distinctions.

### Improving Intercultural Communication Skills

#### 1. Study other culture

- Research can help you grasp the basics of other culture
- Mistakes will happen, when they do, apologize and ask about the accepted way and move on.
- Source : websites and books that offer advice on travelling to and working in specific cultures. Sample newspapers, magazines to get an idea of dress, nonverbal customs, manners etc.

## 2. Study Other Languages

- English is the most prevalent language in international business, but it's a mistake to assume everyone understands it.
- Many companies find that they must be able to conduct business in languages other than English.
- If you have long term business relationship with people of another culture, it is helpful to learn their language.
- Even if the same language is spoken in another country, don't assume that it is spoken the same way.

| <i>U.S. English</i> | <i>British English</i> |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| apartment           | Flat                   |
| eggplant            | aubergine              |
| elevator            | lift                   |
| Long distance call  | Trunk call             |
| Pharmacist          | chemist                |
| Sweater             | pullover               |

## 3. Communication style

- Formality may vary. In U.S. workers prefer open and direct communication styles. Japanese workers tend to be less direct.

## 4. Writing Clearly

- Use simple, clear language – avoid words with double meanings.
- Be brief – simple sentences, short paragraphs.
- Transitional elements – helps readers to follow your speech eg. furthermore, for example, in contrast, however, firstly, finally, in conclusion.
- Address international correspondence properly
- Cite numbers and dates carefully

For exp : in U.S 12-05-08 means December 5, 2008

In Europe it means May 12, 2008

- Avoid slang, idiomatic phrases and business jargon  
Eg. face the music, in sixes and sevens.
- Avoid humour and other references to popular culture
  - local tv shows, local artists,

## 5. Speak Clearly

- Speak slowly and clearly – stop at punctuating marks
- Don't rephrase until its necessary – it may confuse them more because they have 2 sets of words to translate and comprehend.  
When rephrasing, choose simpler words; don't just repeat loudly.
- Look for and ask for feedback – be alert to signs of confusions in your listener
- Don't talk down to other person – don't get frustrated with the listener for not understanding.
- Learn foreign phrases
- Clarify what will happen next – at the end of the conversation, be sure that you and the listener agree on what has been said and decided. Follow up with a memo / letter to summarize the conversation.

## 6. Listening Carefully

- Accept what you hear without judgment and let people finish what they have to say.

## 7. Using Interpreters, Translators and Translation Software

- Microsoft spends several hundred million dollars a year to make virtually all of its software products, websites and help documents available in dozens of languages : the company is believed by some to be the world's largest purchaser of translation services.

## 8. Help Others adapt to your culture

- When communicating with people from other cultures, suggest e-mail or intranet sites.