

Make It Stick

*Activity Pack*

Cross Cultural Communication

 **Helping lessons learned through training become part of *how we work*.**

**To the Learner Leader…**

This suite of activities has been designed to reinforce the key learning from the **Cross Cultural Communication** course. They have been designed to be led by team leaders or designated trainers and do not require training experience, though for best results we recommend that whoever is leading the activities understands the principles of adult learning and has some experience in leading learning activities.

The suite of activities will provide you with up to six months of learning reinforcement. We recommend that an activity is run each month following the Cross Cultural Communication course.

When running each activity:

* Ask the group to reflect back on the original course they attended:
  + What takeaways did they have?
  + What have they tried to implement?
  + When revisiting some of these activities for a second time, ask them what additional ideas or thoughts they have in applying the concepts and tools in the activities to their job.

Each activity will take 10-15 minutes to run depending on the size of the group.

There is one activity to a page. Each activity has a brief introduction followed by instructions for the learner leader.

We suggest the following to optimise your learning experience:

* Have the group meet away from their normal workspace
* Make sure mobile devices are switched off so that everyone fully engages
* Make the environment ‘safe’ and encourage everyone to contribute
* Run these activities with everyone standing – try running them outdoors in the fresh air
* Have other team members take the lead and run an activity – this will build confidence and leadership skills
* Don’t be afraid to improvise – the learning needs to be about you and your group so make it meaningful
* When debriefing an activity, get the group to reflect on what the activity means for them and what they will do differently or continue to do that underscores the learning points from the activity

**Activities in this pack**

1. Culture is multi-layered
2. Cross cultural checklist
3. What is wrong with stereotypes?
4. Is me, isn’t me
5. Culture Shock
6. Using your cultural RADAR

(Note: the activities in this documents have been adapted from ‘Intercultural Training Exercise pack, viewed December 2019 < https://www.ambitia.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2%20Intercultural%20Trainig%20Exercise%20Pack.pdf> )

**Activity 1: Culture is multi-layered**

**Introduction**

What defines or makes up the culture of a country or a group of people can be multifaceted and complex. Cultural competence requires us to consider this complexity in order to generate greater understanding.

**Instructions**

With handouts or on a whiteboard or through a data projector, provide participants with the following five definitions of culture:

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

Participants are to nominate individually which definition of culture they prefer.

Then ask participants in turn to state which definition they prefer and why.

Now get the group to visualise the five definitions, not as definitions in themselves but as a component of an overall definition of culture.

Debrief questions:

* What does the fact that different people chose different definitions of culture tell us about the complexity of culture?
* What does this tell us when we are tyring to understand another person’s culture?
* What does this tell us in how we think of workplace culture? Can workplace culture exist on different levels and in different ways within a larger workplace or a workplace that has an international footprint?
* If so, what does this mean in terms of how multicultural teams can or should collaborate with each other?

**Activity 2: Cross Cultural Checklist**

**Introduction**

When we interact with different cultures there can sometimes be doubt about how we should behave, respond or communicate. If we are unsure, we should endeavour to find out.

**Instructions**

Participants are to consider a country or culture they are curious about. Have participants complete the checklist below by answering each statement with ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘don’t know’.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 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? |
| 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? | 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? |  |

**Debrief** with the group as one:

* When they answered ‘Yes’, get them to explain what differences they would expect to see in the other culture and why they think this (check assumptions and stereotypes).
* If they answered ‘Don’t know’ ask them where they could go to get the information they need.

**Activity 3: What is wrong with stereotypes**

**Introduction**

Stereotyping means overgeneralising beliefs about a particular category of people, which can often be within the bounds of a particular country or race of people. We are all susceptible to stereotyping others at times and this is something we should be conscious of when considering cross cultural communication.

**Instructions**

Participants will require a pen and something to write on.

Instruct participants to do the following individually.

* They are to divide a page into three columns as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| I am | …but… | I am not |
|  |  |  |

* They are then to write up to ten statements about themselves based on their own conception of stereotypes that people may have about them, which are not true.

For example:  
  
“I am Asian – but – I am not good at maths.”

Once the group has finished, debrief as one group.

**Debrief**

* Each person in turn is to share the statements that have written about themselves.
* When they do so, they should read only the first part of each paired statement and then invite the group to complete the statement. For example:  
    
  “I am Asian, … but…”
* Have each person read out their list.
* Questions to put to the group:
  + Why did you choose to share those particular identities with the group?
  + Were you surprised by any stereotypical views that you held in relation to someone else?
  + Why is it important to challenge stereotypes?
  + In cross cultural communication, what can we do to reduce or check ourselves when we start to stereotype other groups?

**Activity 4: Is me, isn’t me**

**Introduction**

The way we communicate at a cultural level can be very different. This activity highlights the differences.

**Instructions**

Have participants pair up with someone with a different cultural background.

Each person works through the pairs of statements below and decides which one more closely resonates with their culture (is me or isn’t me). They then compare with their partner and discuss what the differences may means during intercultural dialog.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 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. |
| 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. |
| In some countries, people use many physical gestures (such as smiling a lot, waving their arms or banging the table) to emphasise what they are saying and to communicate important ideas and feelings. | In other countries, people do not often use many physical gestures. Instead, they use words and their tone of voice to communicate important ideas and information. |
| 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. |
| 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. |
| 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 criticise 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. |
| In some countries, people write emails 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 emails 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. |
| 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. |
| 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). |
| 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. |

**Activity 5: Culture Shock**

**Introduction**

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. 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.

**Instructions**

Instruct participants to read each of the comments below and decide which stage of culture shock each statement relates to.

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?'

**Debrief**

* What is the benefit of understanding the nature of culture shock?
* What is the benefit of knowing which stage you or someone else may be at in terms of the culture shock cycle?

**Activity 6: Using your Cultural RADAR**

**Introduction**

Misunderstanding can occur in any situation where there are differences in values, beliefs and ways of doing things. If a misunderstanding does occur, you can apply the RADAR technique to learn from it.

* Recognise the cultural dimension
* Analyse what caused the misunderstanding
* Decide what options are available to deal with the situation
* Act on the best option – plan and implement
* Review what happened

**Instructions**

Conduct this exercise as one group:

* Introduce the RADAR technique
* Have participants read through each critical incident in turn
* Ask participants to brainstorm using the RADAR technique
* You can refer to Hofstede’s or Meyer’s cultural models in this activity

**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 organisation 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 organisation'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 organisation was decidedly mixed.