

Communicating with Impact

In this global economy that many organisations call home, communicating with impact is becoming more and more complex. Far gone are the days when we only had to deal with the 'big personalities' that would high-jack the meeting. NOW interacting across global communities and locations adds many challenges beyond personalities. Challenges range from technology, to time zones, to culture.



Geert Hofstede describes 6 key cultural dimensions where cultures can be very different or quite similar. From P. Christopher Earley and Soon Ang we learn about Cultural intelligence. The most important aspect of creating understanding between cultures, and people, is keeping an open mind. Don't be bound by your own assumptions and cultural standards. Give your team time to shine.

Whether you are a fledgling start-up or a global multi-national, setting your team up for cross-location and cross-cultural success is as important as having the correct technology in place. If your company is to truly thrive, follow these 3 simple rules to stay on track with your multi-location meetings.

1. Consider Approach, Aptitude & Attitude

Educate your team about the importance of learning about other cultures. Challenge them to question their own beliefs and assumptions. It is not enough to just keep an open mind, you must communicate it.

- Remind your team that you are open to suggestions and questions.
- Encourage everyone to engage in the conversation by building pauses into your speech patterns.
- Be sensitive to others' reactions to your comments and questions. Even if you can't see the person at the other end of the phone, you can learn a lot from the tone of, and inflection in, their voice.
- Listen actively and openly and continue to learn new ways of conversing with your team.

To communicate with impact, allow others to speak their mind and be part of the conversation. As well as celebrating improvements and successes in your team, consider setting times to talk about what communication style works best. Have 1-to-1 conversation about preferred interaction style. Then follow it up with a team discussion. This signals that you are prepared to follow through with engaging and empowering each person on your team.

2. Pollinate Across Cultures

One of the most effective ways to open communication is to share personal stories. Whether they are about your experiences in other parts of the world, or observations from working and living in different locations, each story creates a connection. And each connection links you more closely to your team, and to your shared experiences. The principle for cross-cultural pollination is simple:

- Be mindful & friendly: assume everyone has answers, not just you
- Be kind & respectful: acknowledge the importance of cultural history and experience
- Be interested & inclusive: virtually everyone on the planet wants to be part of a team. Make sure they know that they are included!
- Encourage discussion & disagreement: when someone disagrees with you, be joyful!! You are sure to learn something!

3. Simplify Your Language

Simplicity is a great confidence booster. The simpler the words used in the message, the easier it is to understand. Especially when communicating with a multi-language team!

- Consider the main objective you wish to accomplish.
- Take time to reflect upon your message.
- Keep it simple; 1 to 3 key (bullet) points are easier to understand than several narrative paragraphs.

Especially if you are communicating remotely, remember it takes 1 or 2 seconds for someone to 'tune in' to your voice. Whether the message is written or spoke, follow a standard format that incorporates key phrases. This will make it easier for the reader or listener to recognise and understand your message over time.

During Conversation	In Correspondence
The purpose of this meeting is to ...	Use headings and bullet points:
The action we require is ...	Purpose, Action Required, Follow-up

Standardised phrases allow people to 'tune in' gracefully. And, if your whole team begins to use the same patterns and phrases, it becomes easier and easier to understand and connect across cultures.

Last of all, remember to keep your sense of humour. Of course, there will be misunderstandings and mis-communication, but a little humour will demonstrate that your intent is to ensure the best conversation possible, and that you don't take yourself too seriously.

References

[Herrman, Social Cognition](#) | [Earley/Mosakowski: Cultural Intelligence](#) | [Earley / Ang: Cultural Intelligence](#) | [Including Team](#) | [Communicating with Teams](#)