

HopeBuilds: Dynamic Business Development Program

(DBDP)



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WEEK 4 — Cultural Intelligence

Application to our everyday tasks in working with colleagues, consumers, and the community

(Adapted from the SHRM Foundation's research)

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What Is Cultural Intelligence?

- An innovative, research-based approach for working effectively across national, ethnic, and organizational cultures.

What Is Culture, and Why Should We Pay Attention to It?

- Culture is usually taken for granted until we come into contact with a different culture — the contrast between groups brings it to our attention.
- Culture refers to deeply rooted patterns of values, customs, attitudes, and beliefs that distinguish one group from another.

Why This Usage of the Term ‘Culture’?

- It subconsciously guides behavior and thoughts, and thus influences just about everything that happens in an organization.
- This includes an individual's motivation to complete a work task, or even a supervisor's/leader's influence over their team.

THE KEY QUESTION

Why is acknowledging it so important?

With the growth of diversity in workplaces, there is significance in developing a sense of awareness of how cultural values play a role in decision-making — whether it is addressing the needs of our clients, colleagues, or community partners.



Understanding Culture Is the First Step

- Understanding culture and how people think, work, and relate is the first step toward harnessing the potential of diversity within the organization and the diversity of the consumers we serve.

Cultural Spheres Beyond Nationality

- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Age-groups
- Sexual orientation
- Profession
- Organizational culture

These are all part of an individual's cultural identity and have a significant impact on the organization.

The Source of Difference Matters Less Than Its Impact

- The source of cultural differences is less important than the different values and perspectives that emerge from these differences.
- Understanding cultural protocols is important — but understanding cultural differences in how people communicate, plan, and execute tasks matters more.



How Do We Build This Into the Needs of the Organization?

- Requires cultural sensitivity
- Requires cultural awareness
- This is where cultural intelligence becomes the essential intelligence for the 21st century — valuing the differences others bring to the organization while embracing ideas from their viewpoints.

Awareness Alone Is Not Enough

- Cultural awareness is the initial step, but it is not enough — staff must also effectively engage with individuals across different cultural contexts.
- Developing or refining interpersonal skills to adapt to differences in communication styles is important as well.

Question: How do we succeed at this process?

STEP ONE

Motivation

Measuring the level of interest, drive, and energy needed to adapt cross-culturally.

The ability to engage and persevere through intercultural challenges is one of the most important aspects of this process.

Without adequate motivation for understanding the culture, training staff to adapt will have little value.

Motivation: Three Sub-Dimensions

1. Intrinsic Interest

The point at which a person garners enjoyment from culturally diverse situations.

2. Extrinsic Interest

The tangible benefits a person gains from culturally diverse experiences.

3. Self-Efficacy

The confidence that a person has about being effective in intercultural encounters.

STEP TWO

Knowledge (Cognition)

Refers to knowledge about the culture and its role in shaping interactions and work.

Meaning: as part of the staff/team, do you have an understanding of how culture shapes how individuals think and behave? Is there an understanding of how cultures differ?

Knowledge: Cultural-General Understanding

- Having a macro understanding of cultural systems, and the norms and values associated with them, which differ from society to society.
- This includes communication styles, religious beliefs, and role expectations for both men and women across different cultures.
- Individualism v. Collectivism
- Equality v. Hierarchical differences
- Universalist (everyone is equal) v. Particularistic (judging each situation on its own right)

Knowledge: Context-Specific Understanding

- Involves understanding the relevance of culture to specific domains.
- This includes adapting and applying cultural intelligence to highly specific areas/domains.

STEP THREE

Strategy (Metacognition)

Involves measuring a person's ability to strategize before, during, and after interacting with another culture.

Possessing the ability to draw on cultural understanding from another's perspective can assist the individual in solving complex problems.

Success requires slowing down long enough to carefully observe what is occurring both within oneself and in the person one is interacting with.

Strategy: Three Sub-Dimensions

- 1. Planning — taking time to prepare for an intercultural encounter, considering how to approach others and the topic of discussion, keeping cultural difference in mind.
- 2. Awareness — being in tune with what is ongoing in one's own mind and in the minds of others during an intercultural encounter.
- 3. Checking — comparing actual experiences with prior expectations, and adjusting mental models as appropriate.



STEP FOUR

Action (Behavior)

Involves changing one's verbal and nonverbal actions appropriately.

The intent is to act appropriately in a variety of intercultural situations, effectively accomplishing goals.

One of the most important components of Action is knowing when to adapt to another culture — and when not to. Actions should always be flexible and tailored to specific cultural contexts.

Action: Three Sub-Dimensions

1. Speech Acts

Focuses on the specific words and phrases used when communicating different types of messages.

2. Verbal Actions

Addresses the adjustment of one's volume, tone, and pace of speech.

3. Nonverbal Behaviors

Examines adapting gestures, proximity, and facial expressions as needed.

Common Behaviors, Modified With Care

- It is impossible to master all of the dos and don'ts of every culture, but certain common behaviors should be modified in particular cases.
- For example: basic verbal and nonverbal behaviors — including volume of voice — vary from culture to culture in terms of what they convey, both with the clients we serve and in our interactions with each other.

In Summary

- Cultural Intelligence helps people understand the perspectives and priorities of others, and works to develop mutually acceptable decisions.
- Through the use of Knowledge and Strategy, people can assess situations from multiple perspectives and make effective decisions in culturally diverse contexts.

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