Cross Cultural Communication

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Abstract- Cross Cultural Communication has converted deliberately imperative to companies due to the development of international business, know-how and the Internet. It has developed an important usage in the pattern of cross cultural communication, in reaction to the burdens of globalization which creates a need for cross cultural alertness exercise in different viable sectors. Cross cultural communication in a society deals with accepting various business civilisations, opinions and communication strategies. This paper deals how cross cultural communication can effect latent concerns with in a society.

I. CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Understanding cross-cultural communication is important for any company that has a diverse workforce or plans on conducting global business. It’s no secret that today’s workplace is rapidly becoming vast, as the business environment expands to include various geographic locations and span numerous cultures. What can be difficult, however, is understanding how to communicate effectively with individuals who speak another language, or who rely on different means to reach a common goal.

The Internet and modern technology have opened up new marketplaces that allow us to promote our businesses to new geographic locations and cultures. And given that it can now be as easy to work with people remotely as it is to work face-to-face, cross-cultural communication is increasingly the new norm. After all, if communication is electronic, it’s as easy to work with someone in another country as it is to work with someone in the next town.

And why limit yourself to working with people within convenient driving distance when, just as conveniently, you can work with the most knowledgeable people in the entire world?

For those of us who are native English-speakers, it is fortunate that English seems to be the language that people use if they want to reach the widest possible audience. However, even for native English speakers, cross-cultural communication can be an issue: Just witness the mutual incomprehension that can sometimes arise between people from different English-speaking countries. In this new world, good cross-cultural communication is a must.

II. MAJOR ISSUES IN CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

High vs Low Context Culture:

The concept of high- and low-context culture relates to how an employee’s thoughts, opinions, feelings, and upbringing affect how they act with in a given culture. This means that businesses in these places have direct, individualistic employees who tend to base decisions on facts. This type of businessperson wants specifics noted in contracts and may have issues with trust.

High-context cultures are the opposite in that trust is the most important part of business dealings. Organisations that have high-context cultures are collectivist and focus on interpersonal relationships. Individuals from high-context cultures might be interested in getting to know the person they are conducting business with in order to get a gut feeling on decision making. They may also be more concerned about business teams and group success rather than individual achievement.

Nonverbal Differences:

Gestures and eye contact are two areas of nonverbal communication that are utilized differently across cultures. Companies must train employees in the correct way to handle nonverbal communication as to not offend other cultures. Extreme gesturing is considered rude in some cultures. Eye contact is another form of nonverbal communication. In the eye contact is a good thing and is seen as a reflection of honesty and straightforwardness. However, in some Asian and Middle Eastern cultures, prolonged eye contact can be seen as rude or aggressive in many situations. Women may need to avoid it altogether because lingering eye contact can be viewed as a sign of sexual interest.

Language Differences

The biggest issue dealing with cross-cultural communication is the difficulty created by language barriers. There are some strategies that one can use to help establish a rapport with another. One can explain himself without words by using emotions, facial expressions, and other nonverbal cues. He can also use drawings and ask for an interpreter.

III. MAKING CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVE

Understanding Cultural Diversity

Given different cultural contexts, this brings new communication challenges to the workplace. Even when employees located in different locations or offices speak the same language, there are some cultural differences that should be considered in an effort to optimize communications between the two parties.

In such cases, an effective communication strategy begins with the understanding that the sender of the message and the
receiver of the message are from different cultures and backgrounds. Of course, this introduces a certain amount of uncertainty, making communications even more complex.

Without getting into cultures and sub-cultures, it is perhaps most important for people to realize that a basic understanding of cultural diversity is the key to effective cross-cultural communications. Without necessarily studying individual cultures and languages in detail, we must all learn how to better communicate with individuals and groups whose first language, or language of choice, does not match our own.

**Developing Awareness of Individual Cultures**

However, some learning the basics about culture and at least something about the language of communication in different countries is important. This is necessary even for the basic level of understanding required to engage in appropriate greetings and physical contact, which can be a tricky area inter-culturally.

While many companies now offer training in the different cultures where the company conducts business, it is important that employees communicating across cultures practice patience and work to increase their knowledge and understanding of these cultures. This requires the ability to see that a person's own behaviors and reactions are oftentimes culturally driven and that while they may not match our own, they are culturally appropriate.

If a leader or manager of a team that is working across cultures or incorporates individuals who speak different languages, practice different religions, or are members of a society that requires a new understanding, he or she needs to work to convey this.

Generally speaking, patience, courtesy and a bit of curiosity go a long way. And, if you are unsure of any differences that may exist, simply ask team members. Again, this may best be done in a one-on-one setting so that no one feels “put on the spot” or self-conscious, perhaps even embarrassed, about discussing their own needs or differences or needs.

**Demand Mutual Acceptance**

Next, cultivate and demand mutual acceptance and understanding. In doing this, a little education will usually do the trick. Most people will appreciate the information and will work hard to understand different needs and different means used to reach common goals. However, when this is not the case, led by example and make it clear that you expect to be followed down a path of open-mindedness, understanding and acceptance.

**Keep It Simple**

When you communicate, keep in mind that even though English is considered the international language of business, it is a mistake to assume that every businessperson speaks good English. In fact, only about half of the 800 million people who speak English learned it as a first language. And, those who speak as a second language are often more limited than native speakers.

When you communicate cross-culturally, make particular efforts to keeping your communication clear, simple and unambiguous.

And (sadly) avoid humor until you know that the person you're communicating with "gets it" and isn't offended by it. Humor is notoriously culture-specific: Many things that pass for humor in one culture can be seen as grossly offensive in another.

**And Get Help If You Need It**

Finally, if language barriers present themselves, it may be in everyone's best interest to employ a reliable, experienced translator.

Because English is not the first language of many international businesspeople, their use of the language may be peppered with culture-specific or non-standard English phrases, which can hamper the communication process. Again, having a translator on hand (even if just during the initial phases of work) may be the best solution here. The translator can help everyone involved to recognize cultural and communication differences and ensure that all parties, regardless of geographic location and background, come together and stay together through successful project completion.

**IV. ADVANTAGES OF CROSS CULTURE**

The strength of cross-cultural teams is their diversity of experience, perspective, and insight. But to capture those riches, colleagues must commit to open communication; they must dare to share. Unfortunately, this is rarely easy. In the 25 years we've spent researching global work groups, we've found that challenges typically arise in three areas.

**Eliciting Ideas**

Participation norms differ greatly across cultures. Team members from more egalitarian and individualistic countries, such as the U.S. or Australia, may be accustomed to voicing their unfiltered opinions and ideas, while those from more hierarchical cultures, such as Japan, tend to speak up only after more senior colleagues have expressed their views. People from some cultures may hesitate to contribute because they worry about coming across as superficial or foolish; Finns, for example, favor a “think before you speak” approach, in stark contrast to the “shoot from the hip” attitude that is more prevalent among Americans.

Communication patterns may also make it difficult for people to participate equally in brainstorming sessions. Brazilians, for instance, are typically at ease with overlapping conversations and interruptions, viewing them as signs of engagement. But others, accustomed to more orderly patterns of communication, can feel cut off or crowded out by the same behavior.

**Surfacing Disagreement**

Comfort with public disagreement is another big source of conflict on cross-cultural teams. Members from cultures that
place a high value on “face” and group harmony may be averse to confrontation because they assume it will descend into conflict and upsets group dynamics—in short, social failure. People from different parts of the world also vary in the amount of emotion they show, and expect from others, during a professional debate.

When, for example, people from Latin and Middle Eastern cultures raise their voices, colleagues from more neutral cultures can overestimate the degree of opposition being stated. On the flip side, when people from Asia or Scandinavia use silence and unreceptive body language to convey opposition, the message is often lost on more emotionally expressive peers.

**Giving Feedback**

Constructive criticism is an essential part of global teamwork; it helps to iron out some of the inevitable kinks—relating to punctuality, communication style, or behavior in meetings—that aggravate stereotypes and disrupt collaboration. Executives from more individualistic and task-oriented cultures, notably the U.S., are conditioned to see it as an opportunity for personal development, a “gift” best delivered and received immediately even if it’s in front of the group. By contrast, people from more collectivist and relationship-oriented cultures may be unaccustomed to voicing or listening to criticism in public, even if the team would benefit. For face-saving reasons, they may prefer to meet one-on-one in an informal setting, possibly over lunch or outside the workplace.

If they come from hierarchical cultures, such as Malaysia or Mexico, they may not even feel it is their role to offer direct feedback to peers and instead deliver it to the team leader to convey. The words people choose to use will vary greatly too. Executives from low-context cultures, such as the Netherlands, for example, tend to be very direct in their corrective feedback, while those from high-context cultures, such as India or the Middle Eastern countries, often favor more nuanced language.

Beyond these quick fixes, teams need to anticipate conflict on cross-cultural teams by developing a climate of trust where colleagues always feel safe to speak their minds. If you discuss potential problem areas early and often, you’ll be well on your way to leveraging your group’s diversity, instead of seeing your progress and performance stalled by it.

Cross cultural communication gives opportunities to share ideas, experiences, and different perspectives and perception by interacting with local people.

**V. CONCLUSION**

Cross cultural communication is about dealing with people from other cultures in a way that minimises misunderstandings and maximises your potential to create strong cross cultural relationships.

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