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Check out the Blogpost below from pslcorp.com

How can you improve intercultural communications?

There are a number of strategies that can be used to better understand and improve intercultural communications. And, while it depends on the situation and what component of culture you are dealing with, the guidelines listed below can be used to help in any cross-cultural situation to make sure your message and intention is clear, and that you understand what others are saying.

**Tips for Achieving Successful Intercultural Communications:**

1. **Do your homework.**

   If you know ahead of time who you will be speaking with or what country you will be visiting, it makes sense to research cultural norms and standards, and communication methods for that particular place. Do not walk into the situation unprepared if you can avoid it.

2. **Ask.**

   It might be uncomfortable for you and the person you are asking, but by showing your willingness to ask when you don't understand or when you lack the cultural knowledge necessary to avoid cultural faux pas, you are demonstrating your willingness to learn more about a new culture and the prevailing communication norms instead of rushing through unaware.

3. **Accept that you'll commit errors.**

   Even with all the research you're going to do and the questions you're going to ask, you will still make mistakes. Don't take it personally, rather do your best to be self-aware, actively learn from your mistake and apologize if you offend anyone or cross boundaries.
Mistakes will always happen, the problem begins when you don't use a mistake as an opportunity to learn to avoid the same issues in the future.

4. Avoid colloquialisms, jokes, and idioms.

Humor is culture oriented and until you have spent significant months or years learning it, jokes should be avoided as it can be easy to offend or belittle, and in professional situations that can spell disaster. Idioms should be avoided for a different reason, and that is that they vary greatly by culture and often aren't translatable. In Colombia, "Hacemos la vaca" means to collect money to buy something together. It has no literal meaning and if you weren't with someone who could explain, you would be very confused as to why people were making a cow.

5. Practice actively listening and observing.

Listening is a highly regarded skill. When communicating with others from another culture, it is incredibly important to actively pay attention and listen to what people are telling you. Listening can help you understand that there isn't one right way to conduct interactions. Additionally, varying viewpoints or ideas might contradict your own, but you'll still need to listen respectfully.

6. Repeat or confirm what you think was being said.

It can be helpful to repeat or confirm what you believe to have been the objective of the conversation. This process will help you avoid misunderstandings, especially when speaking different languages. Write it out if you have to, but make sure you align everyone's understanding before moving forward.

7. Don't ask yes or no questions.

Instead, use open-ended questions to avoid confusion. With open-ended questions, the person with whom you are interacting must explain or clearly outline their point, making it easier to understand their response and the context surrounding it.
8. Pay attention to nonverbal communication.

Communication is also extremely nonverbal. Pay attention to nonverbal cues such as intonation, eye contact, and posture. Observe how people conduct interactions with others from their same culture and follow their lead. Certain cultures avoid strong eye contact when speaking, so you'll make someone highly uncomfortable if you are trying to force strong eye contact they are not used to doing the same.

9. Speak slowly and clearly.

This will help you avoid mistakes and seeming nervous. Speaking slowly and clearly is often interpreted as being confident. Additionally, taking time to think before you speak can help you to avoid communication issues and words you might regret later.

10. Take a deep breath and enjoy it!

It can be a challenge to communicate effectively with people from other cultures, and you are bound to find people with whom you can communicate more effectively and more enjoyably than others. Remember, that the whole process is a lifelong lesson in empathy, understanding, and self-awareness which can translate to vastly improved professional and personal interactions and successes beyond just intercultural communications. So, take a deep breath and start communicating!
Forms of Nonverbal Communication

By Point Park University Online

Eye contact

Whether or not eye contact is made, who makes it and how long it lasts vary tremendously in meaning. In many Asian cultures, avoiding eye contact is seen as a sign of respect. However, those in Latin and North America consider eye contact important for conveying equality among individuals. In Ghana, if a young child looks an adult in the eye, it is considered an act of defiance.

Touch

A great number of cultural expressions are achieved through touch. In America, for example, using a firm handshake is considered appropriate to greet a stranger or another business professional. In France, however, it is common to kiss someone you greet on both cheeks. Touching children on the head is fine in North America. Yet in Asia, this is considered highly inappropriate, as the head is considered a sacred part of the body. In the Middle East, the left hand is customarily used to handle bodily hygiene. Therefore, using that hand to accept a gift or shake hands is considered extremely rude. There are also a wide range of cultural viewpoints on the appropriate rules regarding physical contact between both similar and opposite genders.

Gestures

Gestures can convey wildly different meanings. Individuals in the United States use the “OK” sign to convey that something is acceptable. In Japan, the same hand symbol means “money.” Argentinians, Belgians, the French and the Portuguese all use the symbol to mean “zero” or “nothing.” Still other countries in eastern Europe consider that same sign an offensive swear.
Physical Space
Countries that are densely populated generally have much less need for personal space than those that are not. The Japanese, for example, are less likely to react strongly to an accidental touch by a stranger than Americans. Less personal space is also needed in areas such as Latin America, and, in the context of one-on-one conversations, the Middle East.

Facial Expressions
Winking is a facial expression particularly varied in meaning. In Latin America, for example, the gesture is often considered a romantic or sexual invitation. The Yoruba people in Nigeria wink at their children if they want them to leave the room. And the Chinese consider the gesture rude.

Posture
Posture can convey power structures, attitudes and levels of civility. Slouching in Taiwan is considered disrespectful, while other parts of the world may not think much of it one way or another. In America, standing with hands on the hips may suggest power or pride, but in Argentina, it may suggest anger or a challenge.

Many cultures also frown upon showing the bottom of the shoe, something that is considered dirty. Therefore, sitting with the foot resting on the opposite knee is strongly discouraged in places such as many Arab countries.
Overview of Immigrant Populations in Pittsburgh

**Bhutanese (Nepali):** Largest refugee group in Pittsburgh. Many have been attracted to our region from other states. The greatest concentration can be found along the Brownsville Rd/Rte 51 corridor, including Carrick, Mt. Oliver, Brentwood, Baldwin and Whitehall, as well as Greentree.

**Burmese (Burmese, Karen and Chin):** Ethnically diverse group of refugees from Burma residing mainly in Prospect Park with notable groups in Troy Hill and Bellevue.

**Chinese (Mandarin):** One of the largest immigrant groups in the city, including individuals from Taiwan and Hong Kong. While they are dispersed throughout the city, a large student population resides in the East End, especially Squirrel Hill and Shadyside.

**Congolese (Kituba, Swahili and French):** A fast-growing group due to recent refugee arrivals, dispersed throughout the city with notable concentrations in the West End.

**Indian (Hindi and Gujarati):** Another of the largest immigrant groups in the city, residing largely in the East End and outer suburbs.

**Iraqi (Arabic):** A generally dispersed group with a large refugee population, though there are known concentrations in Greenfield and Mt Lebanon.
Latino (Spanish): A large group of diverse individuals from Mexico, the Caribbean, Central and South America. They are widely dispersed, although large populations are known in Beechview, Brookline, Oakland, Highland Park, North Side and many of the surrounding suburbs.

Russian (Russian): This population resides largely in the Homestead, Greenfield and Hazelwood neighborhoods.
Somali-Bantu (Somali, Maay Maay and Zigula), Somali (Somali), Rwandan (Kinyarwanda and French), and Burundi (Kirundi and French): These groups largely reside in Northview Heights and other North Side neighborhoods, along with smaller immigrant populations from other African countries.

Syrian (Arabic): While there are known concentrations in the North Side and Crafton Heights, the Syrian population is largely dispersed throughout the city.

Other notable immigrant populations dispersed throughout the city include:

- Afghani (Pashto and Dari)
- Filipino
- German (German)
- Italian
- Japanese
- Korean
- Pakistani (Urdu)
- Polish
- Sudanese (Arabic)
- Turkish
- Uzbek (Uzbek and Russian)
- Vietnamese
- Nigerian (Igbo and Yoruba)