

Cross Cultural Skills Europe (CRUSE) Project

Developing the Intercultural Skills of Graduates

Cross-cultural Competencies and Skills Development Training Manual



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Introduction

This training manual has been developed as the third output of the ERASMUS+ funded project, “Developing the cross-cultural skills of graduates in response to the needs of European enterprise”. The manual comes as a materialization of the research conducted during this project aimed to support academics, trainers, and managers in facilitating the learning of intercultural skills necessary for graduates who want to work in the modern business environment in Europe.

Five Higher Education Institutions have participated in this project: University of Worcester (Project lead- UK), London South Bank University (UK), UC Leuven-Limburg (Belgium), Halmstad University (Sweden), and Bursa Uludağ University (Turkey). The diversity of these partners and staff members involved in the project, their respective regional and national contexts, and their experience in working together with regional businesses were central to developing a robust manual which can help both in the academic and different industry sectors. This manual builds on the previous two outputs of this project; the Intercultural Skills for Graduates and Businesses needs in Europe Today Report and the Intercultural Competencies and Skills Development Toolkit. The Intercultural Competencies and Skills Development Toolkit includes twenty case studies, comprising ten written cases studies, five narrated case studies, and five video case studies. All of the case studies explore at least one of the intercultural skills identified as important in the Intercultural Skills for Graduates and Businesses needs in Europe Today Report.

This training manual explains which intercultural skills and business issues each case study seeks to explore and develop from both a theoretical and an applied business perspective. This provides guidance as when to utilise each of the case studies in education and training. The second part of the training manual provides guidance in the form of teaching notes as to how the case studies can be applied in classrooms and workplaces to maximise learning and suggested answers.

Who are the Case Studies Designed for?

This manual was developed for both academics and practitioners. The following is a list of key stakeholders who the case studies and materials were designed for. However, this list is not an exhaustive list and the materials developed can be used by anybody who deems it beneficial. Whilst this document details some suggested approaches to using the case studies and potential

answers, users can apply the case studies in a manner which fits their education and teaching approaches.

1. Higher and further teaching academics: the case studies and supporting materials can be used by further and higher education professionals to support learning in modules which deal with International Business, Globalization in Business, Employment skills, Intercultural Perspectives, and Intercultural communication issues.
2. Business coaches and consultants: due to the practical focus of the developed case studies and supporting materials, coaching and consulting professionals might find them particularly useful in developing the intercultural skills of recent graduates and early career employees.
3. In-house trainers and managers: these individuals can use this open-source manual as a cost-efficient and effective way to develop their recently graduated and early career employees.
4. Entrepreneurs and SME's owners: founders of start-ups and small and medium size companies operating in Europe might find this manual particularly beneficial when wanting to expand their different operations and target customers across different cultures.

What the Case Studies Cover

The case studies have been developed to cover a range of intercultural skills which have been identified as important in the research conducted, as part of output one of the projects, and the intercultural literature. These skills are:

Cultural empathy: Involves having an understanding that there are specific cultural differences such as in formal interactions. For example, approaching people in some cultures is very formal and more casual in others. Such cultural differences can impact the efficiency of an individual's work.

Cognitive flexibility: Refers to a willingness to collaborate communicate and have an open mind-set. It is also about moving from a local mind-set towards a mind-set that fits best the company and customer needs.

Social initiative: This involves the tendency to approach social situations in an active way and to take initiatives.

Emotional stability: Is a measure of the tendency to remain calm in stressful situations versus a tendency to show strong emotional reactions under stressful circumstances.

Open-mindedness: This is about having an open and tolerant attitude towards different groups and towards different cultural norms and values

Willingness to tolerate ambiguity: *This* relates to the way in which an individual perceives and processes information about ambiguous situations when confronted by an array of unfamiliar, complex, or incongruent cues

Categorising the Case Studies

The case studies have been categorised based on the six intercultural skills discussed above, with each case study exploring at least one of these intercultural skills. Additionally, secondary intercultural skills which the case studies address including personal prejudice, employee motivation, cultural sensitivity, intercultural communication, cultural business practice norms, etic rules, and wider business issues are outlined in table one.

Table One: Case study categorisation

Case Study Number	Title	Key Intercultural Skill	Additional Intercultural Skills	Business Issues
<i>Written Case Studies</i>				
1	Fasting in Ramadan	Cultural Empathy	Cultural Sensitivity	Personal Prejudice, Employee Motivation
2	Wedding Present Conflict	Cultural Empathy	Cultural Sensitivity	Cultural Business Practice Norms, & Etic Rules
3	Different Work Styles	Open Mindedness	Cognitive Flexibility	Intercultural Team Working Skills, Cultural Working Styles
4	I Tried to Reach you by Phone	Cultural Empathy	Cultural Sensitivity	Intercultural Communication
5	Getting Lost in Detail	Cultural Empathy	Emotional Stability	Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Team Efficiency
6	How to Communicate with Customers	Cultural Empathy, Cognitive Flexibility, Emotional Stability	Intercultural Communication	N/A

7	Feedback from Fresh Eyes	Open Mindedness	Social Initiative	Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Problem Solving
8	Leave the Door to the Unknown	Tolerance for Ambiguity	Cultural Empathy	Cultural Working Styles, Personal Prejudice, Managing Work Related- Stress
9	Dealing with International Suppliers	Emotional Stability, Cultural Empathy, Cognitive Flexibility	N/A	Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Problem Solving, Intercultural Negotiation, Time Perception, Cultural Working Styles, Cultural Business Practice Norms
10	Delivering a Face-to-Face Leadership Development Programme for an International Team	Cultural Empathy, Cognitive Flexibility, Social initiative	N/A	Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Team Working, Cultural Working Styles, Cultural Business Practice Norms, Cultural Understanding
<i>Narrated Case Studies - Case Synopsis & Answers</i>				
11	Being Aware of Cultural Customs in Business	Open Mindedness, Cultural Empathy, Social Initiative	N/A	Cultural Working Styles, Cultural Business Practice Norms, Cultural Understanding
12	Intercultural Teams and Dealing with Arguments	Emotional Stability, Social Initiative,	N/A	Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Problem Solving,

		Tolerance for Ambiguity		Intercultural Team Working, Intercultural Conflict
13	Understanding Language Differences and Dealing with Ambiguity in Communication	Tolerance For Ambiguity, Cultural Empathy	N/A	Intercultural Communication, Cultural Working Styles, Cultural Business Practice Norms
14	Working with Stakeholders in International Locations	Cultural Empathy, Tolerance for Ambiguity	N/A	Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Problem Solving, Intercultural Team Working, Cultural Working Styles, Cultural Business Practice Norms, Cultural Stereotypes
15	The Assistant Manager Conducting Reviews in International Offices	Cognitive Flexibility, Emotional Stability	N/A	Personal Prejudice, Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Problem Solving, Intercultural Team Working, Cultural Stereotypes
<i>Video Case Studies</i>				
16	Unbiased Mindsets for Intercultural Excellence	Open Mindedness	N/A	Personal Prejudice
17	Balancing Corporate and Local Culture	Tolerance for Ambiguity	N/A	Cultural Working Styles
18	Openness to Intercultural Hiring	Cultural Empathy	Intercultural communication	Intercultural Team Working Skills

19	Open Mindedness for Intercultural Excellence	Cognitive Flexibility, Open Mindedness	N/A	N/A
20	Working in Virtual and Intercultural Teams	Open Mindedness	N/A	Intercultural Digital Skills, Intercultural Communication

Case Study Application

Written Case Studies

Fasting In Ramadan

1. Summary of case study

Mehmet was a senior blue-collar employee and team leader on the shop floor. Mr. Kumar has just come to the automotive company as a new plant manager. Since he is the first Indian plant manager in company history, Mehmet had prejudice and some doubts about Mr Kumar. During Ramadan, in one of the go-to Gemba (shop floor meeting that the plant manager is also involved in), Mehmet offered coffee to Mr. Kumar and learned that he was fasting that day to understand what it was like to fast and how they felt. However, he doesn't have any related religious beliefs. Mehmet was highly affected by this incident and reflected on his prejudice.

2. Suggested methodology for 'solving' case study

✓ **Before the discussion**, some warm-up questions may prepare students for the discussion (Assignment questions before the case)

-What do you think about the case?

-Do you like the topic?

✓ **Open the discussion**

The discussion can be started with following questions.

-What kind of leader/person is Mr. Kumar?

-What kind of ways does Mr. Kumar use to learn a different culture? What can be the different ways of learning from other cultures?

With the help of these questions, Mr Kumar's personal and leadership characteristics can be discussed, and his ability to be sensitive to different cultures and his empathetic attitude can be emphasized. The concept and dimensions of "cultural empathy" can be defined by giving examples on the behaviour of Mr. Kumar.

✓ **Advance the discussion**

The discussion can be deepened by the following questions.

What can be the different ways of showing cultural empathy to others?

What can be the barriers to developing cultural empathy for others?

What is Mehmet Ali's self-reflection about this situation?

With the help of these questions, cultural empathy behaviour may be embodied by discussing different ways of showing cultural empathy/sensitivity and the barriers in developing cultural empathy.

✓ **Close the discussion (15 min)**

At the end of the discussion, participants can be encouraged to reflect on themselves. How well do they have the skill of cultural empathy and how can they develop this skill?

How much do you consider yourself sensitive to other cultures?

3. Possible answers (please provide possible solutions/ answers to the case study)

Kumar is an Indian manager and has the collectivist characteristics and values of eastern culture. He takes a we-orientated approach rather than a me-oriented approach as a management style. He is very kind and sensitive towards all employees.

"The first thing he did was to offer an opinion that they should not call staff "employees" - but should be calling them "associates""

Mr. Kumar knows the value of being on the shop floor as a visible and accessible leader. By making frequent production site visits, he motivates employees and provides feedback from the field. His communication with the workers is friendly and sometimes playful. These features increase his ability to communicate easily and empathize.

"Last week, he visited a project group meeting, working till the late hours of the night shift and bringing them some "Baklava,"¹ to motivate them and show appreciation for their hard work. He also joked that he was craving baklava before going to bed, but his wife did not allow it; that was why he was here at this time."

¹ Special delicious Turkish dessert. Made of filo pastry, filled with chopped nuts, and sweetened with syrup or honey. It was one of the most popular sweet pastries of Ottoman cuisine.

Mr. Kumar tries to understand the new foreign culture he has just joined, so he tries to be in contact with the employees as much as possible. He is also aware that the new culture he is in has different beliefs and practices from his own culture and that these cannot be separated from the business environment.

He thinks that the best way to adapt a new culture is “practice”. For this reason, even though it does not belong to his own belief, he fasted for one day with the Muslim employees in Ramadan.

Although practicing a culture is one of the most powerful ways to show cultural empathy, there can be other ways. For example, it can also be achieved by watching documentaries, reading academic articles, or asking questions to people from different cultural backgrounds.

During the case Mr. Kumar is a good example of cultural empathy, however, the shop floor group leader, Mehmet Ali, is not. At the end of the case, Mehmet Ali realizes that the most important obstacle in front of his cultural empathy is his prejudice to differences. When he moves beyond his prejudices against Kumar, the process of empathizing begins for Mehmet Ali. Mehmet Ali actually learned the behaviour of cultural empathy by role modelling his manager.

Hunger made him more sensitive...He thought about his prejudice and doubts against Mr. Kumar. Mehmet Ali asked himself, "What am I fasting for?" According to his religion, one of the aims of fasting is to try to understand poor people....It is excellent, but "what about others?" "What do I know about Mr. Kumar? What do I know about his culture that he grew up in? What do I know about his beliefs, values..." He felt a different connection with him beyond work, company, etc. Mehmet Ali realized that he would learn so much from him.

Wedding Present Conflict

1. Summary of case study

Mr. Ludwig has been working in the field of marketing for the DACE company for nearly twenty years and has been assigned to establish the supplier and customer network of new factories the company has opened in different countries for the last ten years. He is stationed in Turkey, at one of the plants that was opened in the past year. Ludwig works with Mehmet, who is the Marketing Assistant Manager responsible for suppliers in Turkey. He has found him to be a source of valuable support and there have been no problems between them during this time. However, they could not agree on what the gift should be at the wedding of the boss of one of the largest suppliers. While Mehmet thinks that the gift of gold is mandatory according to Turkish traditions, Ludwig thinks that they can't give such a gift if they are to comply with the company's standards.

2. Suggested methodology for 'solving' case study

✓ **Before the discussion**, some warm-up questions may prepare students for the discussion (Assignment questions before the case)

- What is the main problem in the case?

✓ **Open the discussion (15 min)**

The discussion can be started with the following questions.

- What would you do if you were in Ludwig's place? Would you act in accordance with the company's policy or local culture?

-What kind of consequences may occur if he followed the company's policy?

-What kind of consequences may occur if he acts in the context of local culture?

With the help of these questions, students can be given basic information about being sensitive to different cultures and cultural empathy.

✓ **Advance the discussion (45 min)**

The discussion can be deepened by following questions.

-Do you think Ludwig is sensitive to cultural differences?

-What do you think of Mehmet's behaviour? Is it due to cultural context or is it an individual attitude?

It can be emphasized that managers should take cultural differences into account when interpreting the behaviour of individuals from different cultures. In addition, with these questions, the dimensions of the concept of cultural empathy can be examined.

✓ **Close the discussion (15 min)**

At the end of the discussion, participants can be encouraged to reflect on themselves. How well do they have the skill of cultural empathy and how can they develop this skill?

-What are the benefits of cultural empathy? Do you think cultural empathy is a learnable skill? Discuss in an intercultural context based on your own experience.

3. Possible answers

What would you do if you were in Ludwig's place? Would you act in accordance with the company's policy or local culture? What kind of consequences may occur if he acts in the context of local culture?

First of all, he should check whether giving gold gifts at weddings is commonplace in Turkish culture. If it is a common behaviour, Ludwig may consider accepting Mehmet's request. Afterwards, he should explain in detail to the top management in Germany that the situation has an important place in Turkish culture. It is important to inform the top management in this case because in the next similar situation, it is necessary to take a decision that is in line with the company policy. At the end of the process, he may request a change in the company's policy to allow some differences in practice according to cultural values. If it is not common behaviour in Turkish culture, Ludwig should act in accordance with the accepted company policy.

What kind of consequences may occur if he followed the company's policy?

Although giving gold gifts has a place in Turkish culture, to act in accordance with company policy would be to act contrary to Turkish culture and Mehmet's view of life. In the short term, it may cause Mehmet to be unhappy and lose motivation. In the long run, it may adversely affect the Company's behaviours in respect of cultural values.

Do you think Ludwig is sensitive to cultural differences? What do you think of Mehmet's behaviour? Is it due to cultural context or is it an individual attitude?

Ludwig considers himself sensitive in this regard. *“Ludwig sees himself as someone who respects and tolerates different cultures”*. Mehmet is known as a generous person to those around him. Mehmet's character makes it difficult for Ludwig to understand and solve the wedding problem. It is very important for Mehmet to understand whether his request is individual or cultural. This is the main point that makes it difficult for Ludwig to decide. It will be easier to find solutions after accepting that the situation in question is cultural.

What are the benefits of cultural empathy? Do you think cultural empathy is a learnable skill? Discuss in an intercultural context based on your own experience.

Cultural empathy is the learned ability to accurately understand and respond appropriately to the cultural context [including ethnicity, class, gender, disability, and sexual orientation], both in its similarities and differences.² Cultural empathy expands on that definition to include the need to understand a frame of reference as it relates to cultural components regarding self-experience and self-awareness.

² Betty Garcia, Yuhwa Eva Lu, Katherine Maure, “Cultural Empathy: Implications of Findings from Social Work Objective-Structured Clinical Observation for Field Education”, *Field Educator*, Volume 2.2 , Fall 2012, 1-9.

Different Work Styles

1. Summary of the case study

In the Turkey Bursa plant, change teams (improvement teams working with high autonomy) were assigned to a new German section manager. However, conflicts started between the team and the section manager because he insisted on following procedures whilst the team was always prepared to change the plan and try to do something different when problems arose. The team always felt free to modify the initial plans at every stage of the project, which was very unusual and unsettling for the German manager.

2. Suggested methodology for 'solving' case study

✓ **Open the discussion (15 min)**

The discussion can be started by asking,

What is the main problem in the case?

✓ **Advance the discussion (45 min)**

The discussion can be deepened by following questions.

Define the working style of Change Team3?

Define the expectation of Mr. Deiner?

Why is Mr. Deiner so angry with Change Team3?

What should Mr. Deiner do with these annoying feelings? How can he overcome them?

Is there any other way to think differently for Mr. Deiner in this situation?

By using these questions and their answers, participants can be encouraged to think about different working styles specific to different cultures. What these differences are between Germany and Turkey and their consequences for individuals can then be discussed.

Mr Deiner's reaction to a different way of working can be discussed by emphasizing the negative consequences it will cause. Participants can be made to think about other solutions or ways of thinking that Mr. Deiner could adopt. After this discussion, participants may be asked to define the concept of cognitive flexibility and explain the importance.

✓ **Close the discussion (15 min)**

At the end of the discussion, participants can be encouraged to realize their own behavioural patterns and find their own solutions. It can be mentioned that accepting and adapting to a different work style is an essential cross-cultural skill. Participants can be asked to identify some activities that will help them to develop their cognitive flexibility.

What would you do if you were Mr. Deiner?

Define the differences in behavioural patterns during this project management?

What could be the other specific behavioural patterns?

Do you think that accepting and adapting to a different work style is an essential cross-cultural skill? How could one improve this skill?

3. Possible answers

The main problem addressed in the case is that a senior manager of a multinational company, who had come from a German culture, found himself in an uncomfortable position with the different ways of doing business in the Turkey Plant. He couldn't manage his uncomfortable feelings thus communication problems occurred.

Change team 3 is a cross functional team consisting of employees from different departments with a high degree of autonomy. The team does not have a hierarchy between members and the team leader. The group takes decisions together. The team is highly flexible thus meetings and decisions can be revised frequently, as needed. One of the issues that Mr. Deiner is most uncomfortable with is that plans are constantly being updated. Project planning steps have also has been revised without his permission, whereas in the German business culture it is common to spend time in the planning phase and then stick to the plan. So Mr. Deiner expects this same discipline from Change Team 3. Mr. Deiner is angry because he considers this different working style of the team as being careless and lacking discipline.

In this case, Mr Deiner evaluates a situation from the perspective of his perception to give meaning. These meanings create emotions in him, and this affects his behaviour.

Different perspectives/meanings are needed to react differently. If Mr. Deiner could see this situation as a different working style coming from culture, his reaction would be to find a solution (adapt or ask the team for different ways) instead of getting angry.

Accepting and adapting to a different work style is an essential cross-cultural skill and this skill is highly related to cognitive flexibility which means that an individual can shift his/her

cultural demands and achieve his or her valued goal in the intercultural environment (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008: 320). It is one of the key intercultural skills that affect employees' success in a multi-cultural context. Individuals with extensive exposure to other cultures tend to have higher levels of cognitive complexity (Benet-Martínez, & Leu, 2006).

Being aware of cultural differences and using different ways to learn different cultures may be a useful way to develop cognitive flexibility. These can include,

- Reading about different cultures
- Watching about different cultures
- Talking with people from different cultures
- Visiting/living in a different culture ****
- Hosting people from different cultures
- Practicing new things....

I Tried to Reach You by Phone

1. Summary of case study

Ali has been an academician at Galatasaray University for ten years. He is conducting a European project with the French professor Charles and his colleagues, whom he met during a symposium. It has been a year since the start of the project, and the partners will meet in Istanbul to discuss the first step results of the project. Ali wanted to undertake all organizational work such as accommodation, flight tickets, etc. When he started the reservation business, he needed the personal information (passport number, date of birth, etc.) of guests; however, the group preferred not to share their personal information. Ali was disturbed by this situation and began to think that his colleagues did not trust him. On the first day of the meeting in Istanbul, Ali was extremely late due to a traffic accident on the Bosphorus Bridge. During this time, he desperately needed a phone call to Charles, but it was not possible

2. Suggested methodology for ‘solving’ case study

- ✓ **Before the discussion**, some warm-up questions may prepare students for the discussion (Assignment questions before the case)

- *What is the main problem in the case?*
- *Do you like the topic?*

- ✓ **Open the discussion (15 min)**

The discussion can be started with following questions.

- *Do you think this is a cultural issue?*
- *Why does Ali want to undertake the organization of the arrival of his French colleagues in Turkey? What do you think?*

With the help of these questions, students can realize that the value attributed to hosting a meeting can vary by culture. This helps them understand the importance of cultural sensitivity.

- ✓ **Advance the discussion (45 min)**

The discussion can be deepened by following questions.

- *Do you think it is a personal issue that French colleagues do not want to share their private information and phone numbers with Ali?*

- *How would you feel if you were Ali? How would you cope with negative emotions?*

With the help of these questions, students can understand the effects of cultural differences on communication styles. In addition, they understand the effect of taking a broader perspective on understanding the cause of the problems they encounter in coping with negative emotions.

✓ **Close the discussion (15 min)**

At the end of the discussion, participants can be encouraged to reflect on themselves. How well do they have the skill of accepting and adapting to different communication ways is an essential cross-cultural skill?

-*Do you think that knowing what is appropriate in a specific culture is an essential cross-cultural skill? How could one improve this skill?*

-*Do you think that accepting and adapting to different communication ways is an essential cross-cultural skill? How could one improve this skill?*

3. Possible answers

What is the main problem in the case? Do you think this is a cultural issue?

The main problem is the difficulties caused by the difference between cultures in communication. Ali wants to welcome all guests with the hospitality coming from his own culture during their visit to Istanbul and not to give them any trouble. However, this well-intentioned approach was not accepted as the French guests thought that it would create an extra workload for the host and they did not want to share their personal information in addition. Ali took this situation personally. Although this situation seems like an individual problem for Ali, it is actually a problem arising from cultural differences.

Why does Ali want to undertake the organization of the arrival of his French colleagues in Turkey? What do you think?

In Turkish culture, hosting guests and showing respect to elders are very important points. Ali expressed this situation in his own way and wanted to take all the responsibility on himself. *“Since I am both a host and a junior from other partners, I wanted to undertake all the organizational work such as accommodation, flight tickets, etc.”*

Do you think it is a personal issue that French colleagues do not want to share their private information and phone numbers with Ali?

It's not a personal issue. In many cultures, people avoid revealing personal information to new acquaintances. Although this may seem like a request to help to make things run faster, people may not be willing to share their knowledge. This situation can be seen as a requirement of hospitality in Ali's own culture. It should be noted that this is a bona fide request to help. When rejecting such a request, stating that the reason is not individual can avoid misunderstandings.

How would you feel if you were Ali? How would you cope with negative emotions?

First of all, he should understand that this situation is not a special behaviour against him. Knowing that the attitude of colleagues will be the same even if it is someone else instead of Ali, will help the person cope with negative emotions. Understanding that the willingness or unwillingness to share personal information with colleagues may vary according to cultures, may be another factor that will enable Ali to cope with negative emotions.

Do you think that accepting and adapting to different communication ways is an essential cross-cultural skill? How could one improve this skill?

Being open to different ways of communication and adapting when necessary is an important competence for intercultural communication. Being open to innovation and recognizing that there may be different communication channels in different cultures can help develop this ability.

Getting Lost in Detail

1. Summary of case study

A cross-cultural team has been established to develop a shared platform for the company's performance measurement system. Turkey is the team coordinator, and Indian colleagues will set the same system and give IT support to all locations. Turkish colleague Ahmet arranged an online meeting with a group of Indian colleagues to support their project steps. He is result-oriented, and he was expecting to arrive at a solution concisely, but he was stuck with long conversations and details. He realized that the Indian group had examined the situation together on their own to build consensus for every simple issue. He was exhausted at the end of the 1 hour and had nothing in his hand. He was frustrated.

2. Suggested methodology for 'solving' case study

✓ Open the discussion (15 min)

The discussion can be started with asking,

What is the main problem in the case?

✓ Advance the discussion (45 min)

The discussion can be deepened by following questions.

What kind of person is Ahmet? How does he cope with negative emotions such as; anger, stress?

Do you think that controlling difficult emotions in work is an essential cross-cultural skill? How could one improve this skill?

What is the challenge of running cross-cultural virtual meetings with Indian colleagues?

Based on these questions, in particular, what kind of challenging emotions did Ahmet face, why could he not cope with them, and what did Ahmet experience as a result? In this specific case, it may help to clarify what the cultural difference is that caused Ahmet to get nervous and angry. Through this example, the discussion can be carried to a more general level to what other challenging emotions employees may encounter and how may they react to them in an appropriate way. These questions may make participants think about the consequences of controlled/uncontrolled emotions.

After this awareness, the concept of emotional stability can be introduced. It can be mentioned that emotional stability is recognised as a significant predictor of job performance. Further, it can be emphasized that since cultural differences can create potential conflicts, managing emotions is even more important in multicultural work environments.

Discussion can deepen further by asking “what would be different if the meeting was face-to-face.”

✓ **Close the discussion (15 min)**

At the end of the discussion, participants can be encouraged to find their own solutions through the help of the following questions.

What would you do if you were Ahmet?

What could be the main needs of Indian colleagues? What could be the appropriate way to fulfil their needs?

What could the strategies be for the next virtual meeting with Indian colleagues?

3. Possible answers

In the case, Ahmet has an online meeting to develop a joint project with a group of Indian colleagues. The Indian group need detailed information about the project steps thus they have many questions. However, Ahmet is too busy, and he thinks it is unnecessary to waste time with all these details in the beginning stage. Instead of understanding the different needs of his partners, he gets angry, lost his calm and emotional control.

Ahmet is a responsible employee who takes too much work on himself.

“they wanted to clear some questions in their minds. It was a busy week for me, but due to my support role in the team, it would not be acceptable for me to reject the request, or delay it too much. Despite my busy schedule, I was able to find a 1-hour time frame between two meetings, and planned an online meeting with them.”

However, Ahmet is overwhelmed by excessive responsibilities from time to time and cannot manage his workload and stress well. He has neurotic behaviours which can be characterised by greater variability between high and low levels of negative emotion. He also has a tendency to behave in a passive-aggressive way such as expressing negative feelings indirectly instead of openly addressing them. He is not aware of his

feelings and needs thus instead of expressing them he experiences emotional outbursts (stress, anger).

“A heat covered my whole body from head to foot. All I wanted was for this meeting to end as soon as possible.”..... “At that moment, I found myself pressing the "leave the meeting" button. Then I quickly sent the group an email saying that I was disconnected for a technical reason, that we had had a good meeting, and we could meet again later if there were any further questions.”

When one encounters different cultures and needs in multinational environments, he/she may be more nervous and sensitive because of going out of our comfort zone. Emotional stability is very important in such a context. Understanding and controlling our emotions opens up the necessary space to understand the needs of the other party. This ability is also recognised as a significant predictor of job performance and it holds a key role in maintaining conducive workplace social interactions.

The online meeting made it difficult for Ahmet to express himself and understand the needs of the other partners. For this reason, Ahmet experienced these neurotic feelings more strongly online.

“Several times I tried to interrupt, wrap up the topic and end the meeting with a few concluding sentences, but each time I was struck by a new question that popped up”.

Mindfulness can be a useful way to improve the ability of emotional stability. Mindfulness has been conceptualised as an ability to be aware of what is happening at the present moment by evaluating those experiences without judging. Researchers in the field of positive psychology have identified high linkage between mindfulness and self-regulation. Engaging mindfully in the present moment brings more clarity about current experiences and current emotions without being biased; thus expression of feelings and communication may be conducted in a healthy way.

If Ahmet was more aware of himself at that moment, he could evaluate the situation more objectively and understood that the needed information from the other side. By expressing his workload, he might organize a meeting at a more convenient time and this could reduce his stress and allow him to manage the situation. Also, a well-prepared meeting agenda would help Ahmet to manage meeting time more effectively, especially with Indian colleagues.

How to Communicate with Customers?

1. Summary of case study

The case happened in the R&D department of a multinational company in the automotive supply industry. There was a problem with one of the company projects in Russia. Turkish and French colleagues were working together on a solution to the problem. The Turkish unit found the problem and decided that it should be communicated to the customer directly; however, the French team found this way of communication very inappropriate. A significant conflict has occurred between the two partners.

2. Suggested methodology for ‘solving’ case study

✓ Open the discussion (15 min)

The discussion can be started with asking,
What is the main problem in the case?

✓ Advance the discussion (45 min)

The discussion can be deepened by the following questions.

What is the difference between the two teams (Turkish-French) in terms of communication style?

Do you think that different working styles cause problems between cross-cultural partners? How can one cope with these differences?

Do you think that controlling difficult emotions in work is an essential cross-cultural skill? How could one improve this skill?

By the help of these questions, participants can be encouraged to think about different communication ways in different cultures, and their consequences. After this awareness, the emotional stability concept can be defined and introduced as a key ability to solve these kind of communication problems.

✓ Close the discussion (15 min)

At the end of the discussion, participants can be asked to find their own solutions by the help of following questions.

What do you think about Renard's attitude towards the situation? What would you do if you were Renard?

What do you think about Emre's attitude towards the situation? What would you do if you were Emre?

3. Possible answers

In a multinational company, R&D teams from Turkey and France were working together on a project for Russian customers. However, just after they finished the project, a problem had occurred. When the details about the problem were shared directly with the customer by the Turkish team, a great tension arose between the Turkish and French teams. Because such a communication style was not considered appropriate by the French team.

While it was the right way to communicate with the customer directly on the Turkish side, the French side thought that it would create problems and it was wrong to communicate the issue as it was. Moreover, another important problem was that the French team weren't informed about the information given to the customer. Thus these different working styles caused problems between the cross-cultural partners.

Renard, the head of the French team, interpreted this simple communication problem as a power issue and got angry by the fact that they were seen as an underappreciated partner, and his attitude has been to react sharply rather than find a solution. Renard was so angry that his next attitude was to act on the client side and tried to punish the Turkish team.

On the other hand, Emre, the leader of the Turkish team, couldn't see France's need to be informed and couldn't understand their different communication style, so instead of finding a common way, he acted emotionally and thought they had been stabbed in the back by their partner.

Emre and Renard have strong negative feelings that can hinder effective communication and the partnership between the Turkish and French teams. More importantly, this problem can affect customer satisfaction and put the company in a difficult position. Thus to cope with these difficult feelings, emotional stability is an essential cross-cultural skill.

Empathy can be a useful way to improve the ability of emotional stability. When we understand the need of the other side it is easier to accept the situation objectively and find a solution. Mindfulness practices may also help to improve this skill. It is defined as an ability to be aware of what is happening at the present moment by evaluating those experiences without judging. The one who has this ability can interpret current

experiences and current emotions without being biased; thus expression of feelings and communication may be conducted in a healthy way.

Feedback from Fresh Eyes

1. Summary of case study

An Italian part-time student was hired for one of the company projects during summertime. She was giving support for the project communication tools: posters, wallpapers, and social media. However, she had found the communication style too old fashioned and suggested a more creative way.

The case is explained from both sides. "How the part-time student sees the project and the things done" and "How the Project team sees the part-time student and her fresh eyes feedback."

2. Suggested methodology for 'solving' case study

✓ Open the discussion

The discussion can be started with asking,

What is the main point in the case?

✓ Advance the discussion

The discussion can be deepened by following questions.

What kind of people are Sara and Alper?

How does Sara take social initiative in the case?

What are the advantages of being an extrovert in social life?

Do you think that taking social initiative in work is an essential cross-cultural skill?

How could one improve this skill?

By the help of these questions, participants can be encouraged to define "taking social initiative" and think about the positive consequences of this ability.

Different ways can be discussed to develop this ability. (Brain storming)

Students may be asked to give examples from people whom they find good in this ability.

✓ Close the discussion

At the end of the discussion, participants can be asked to think about their ability by the help of following question.

Have you ever taken a social initiative in a cross-cultural context? What has happened?

3. Possible answers

The case mentioned the success of Sara who took social initiative as a part time student in a multinational company. She changed the way of the project's internal communication in the company.

Sara is a student who stands out for her assertiveness, high level of extroversion and self-confidence. She has a great tendency to initiate and maintain social activities She is an unconventional thinker who wants to bring innovation where she is. She is also courageous in giving fresh eye feedbacks to her executives.

.....But Sara wanted to remake the world. We told her about our corporate colours, but she used almost all colours except the corporate colours. We had not used social media for internal communication before, but she insisted on this as well. At the meeting, the entire project team tried to persuade Sara to adopt a more conventional communication style. Still, by the end of the meeting, we were all convinced that we needed something a little more colourful and exciting.

When she started her part-time role, she realized that important projects were introduced to the company in a very conventional way. She decided to change this process with a more creative, exciting, and colourful way although she was working in a different culture. This is a good example for taking social initiative which is defined as the tendency to stand out, establish contact, and to be active in different cultures (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000). At the beginning, this new way

was criticised by other employees in the department, however she managed to persuade everyone by her self-confidence, faith and determination. Sara was lucky to work with Alper, a manager who was committed to the company culture but also supportive and solution-oriented. Alper stood by Sara with what she wanted to do and prepared the conditions for her.

Taking social initiative is strongly associated with extroversion. Studies showed that people with high levels of extroversion and conscientiousness tend to communicate positively with foreigners around them.

Those with high extroversion are further proposed to be more proactive in forming social relations and willing to communicate actively with their colleagues in host countries, compared to introverts (Huangetal, 2005). Social Initiative also facilitates work adjustment. It helps employees to establish work related social relationships in a host country to achieve personal success, in terms of learning who knows what, who has influence, and who can be trusted (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2012). Thus, social initiative in work is an essential cross-cultural skill.

1. Summary of case study

Ela was a recruitment specialist working in URR Turkey and caught a great chance for a rotation to Spain for three years. Although she was very excited and started the preparations immediately to move to Spain, the process was very slow on the Spanish side. The official approval was delayed for 2 months. At this time, she could not get enough information about the process and time planning. This uncertain process created anxiety for Ela and led to increasing tension between the two sides. Although her manager tried to control the process and calm her down, she did not succeed. This very simple procedure had turned into a subject that they are cc'ing (copying) to their managers.

2. Suggested methodology for 'solving' case study

✓ Open the discussion

The discussion can be started with asking,

What is the main problem in the case?

✓ Advance the discussion

The discussion can be deepened by following questions.

What kind of person is Ela? How does she cope with ambiguity and stress?

Do you think that the tolerance ability to ambiguity is an essential cross-cultural skill?

By these questions, participants can focus on the ambiguity concept. The intolerance /tolerance to ambiguity can be defined by explaining Ela's character traits and behaviours.

As a result of Ela's intolerance to ambiguity, it can be emphasized how a simple issue can turn out to be a big topic and affects Ela's career negatively, and caused communication problems with her Spanish colleagues. With this awareness, the importance of the "ability to tolerate ambiguity" as an essential cross-cultural skill can be discussed. Then, participants can be encouraged to find their own solutions to the case problem, by asking the following questions.

What would you do if you were Ela?

What would you do if you were Gaye?

✓ **Close the discussion (15 min)**

At the end of the discussion, participants can be invited to think about their selves and they may be asked to generate ideas to develop/improve their tolerance ability to ambiguity?

What could be the antecedence and consequences of the intolerance of ambiguity in your life or work experience in a cross-cultural context?

How could one improve this skill?

3. Possible answers

The main problem highlighted in the case is that Ela could not tolerate the uncertainty she faced during the rotation process and she made the process and her career even more difficult. Ela is a highly successful high-potential employee and generally gets recognition from her manager. Her manager assesses her potential as:

*“Her **authoritarian personality** has potent skills such as organising, a well-categorised mind, and result orientation. However, she also realised that her strong skills sometimes turn out to be one of the improvement potentials. For example, she **generally prefers familiar over unfamiliar to be sure or rejects unusual**. Also, she admitted to being **a black and white thinker** during one of the performance evaluation meetings.”*

Such people with these traits may have more tendency to perceive (i.e. interpret) ambiguous situations as sources of threat. As in the case of Ela, she interpreted such a delayed procedure as a deliberate obstacle from her Spanish colleagues. She engaged in a fight that didn't exist.

“You see how they are dragging their feet. We have been waiting for 2 months for the 2-week approval process. What drives me crazy is not knowing how long to wait for more..... I am not sure that I want to go there anymore and work

with these people. I am thinking of writing a last email also including country managers. If it doesn't work, then I will withdraw my request for rotation.

Budner (1962) defines ambiguity intolerance as "the tendency to perceive...ambiguous situations as sources of threat", the tendency to reject items that are contradictory or slightly incongruent with their existing system. The one who is intolerant of ambiguity avoid or give up when encountering ambiguous situations. Similarly, in the case, Ela decides to withdraw from the rotation process because she could not receive information for a while. Since ambiguous situations are sources of conflict and anxiety, she got very angry with her Spanish colleagues.

"I am not sure that I want to go there anymore and work with these people. I am thinking of writing a last email also including country managers. If it doesn't work, then I will withdraw my request for rotation."

However, people who are tolerant of ambiguity are willing to take risks and open to change, show endurance on tasks and higher levels of achievement, and not be cognitively or affectively disturbed by uncertainty. Cross cultural contexts are environments where the level of uncertainty is high. Thus, to perform well in this complex and uncertain cross cultural situations, the tolerance ability to ambiguity is an essential cross-cultural skill.

If Ela had tolerance ability to ambiguity, she could evaluate this situation objectively and understand that the reason for the delay may be systemic or cultural. When Ela detected the problem correctly, she could focus on her current work by giving the other party enough time instead of sending annoying e-mails. if she could stop controlling everything so tightly to make things clear, she could trust the flow of life and enjoy the process more.

Gaye (Ela's manager) was aware of Ela's wrong attitude, however she also struggled with this situation. Since she couldn't convince Ela, she seemed to be in the position of the manager who cannot solve a small problem and escalates the issue to a higher manager. Gaye might suggest some training or therapy to Gaye in order to improve

her tolerance to ambiguity and she could lead this process herself until Ela was relaxed.

Developing a tolerance for ambiguity is a powerful cross cultural skill to have. Not only will it help to reduce one's anxiety and worry, you'll feel more confident that you can handle all types of situations.

There may be several suggested ways to develop this ability. One of them could be "*comfort zone/stretch zone/panic zone model*" and it can be introduced here to participants.

According to this model, the centre of the circle is where we feel comfortable and safe, and we are not learning here. The stretch zone is the zone where there is a possibility for growth and development but it is a place of exploration that we can venture into and yet not a place of extreme discomfort or where we feel unsafe. The panic zone, on the other hand, is the zone where we are in extreme stress and are likely having the "fight or flight" response. We are not being comfortable or feeling safe, and we are most likely not really learning either because the brain is not calm enough to think objectively or to process new information.

When we relate this model to ambiguity and change, we can see the stretch zone as the "ambiguity and uncertainty zone", the best level to be out of the comfort zone and learn new things. However, everyone has different endings and beginnings for each zone.

For further information, the article which enhances the ability of the trainer to prepare participants for, and support them through, the ambiguity and uncertainty can be visited using the below link.

<https://www.trainerslibrary.org/how-to-develop-tolerance-to-ambiguity-and-change/>



Dealing with International Suppliers

1. Summary of case study

ABS Tech is an international-worldwide company with over 6000 employees. The main office is in Connecticut, USA, but the European headquarter is in the UK where James is an IT manager. He looks after the IT businesses in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the whole of Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. His responsibility is incredibly diverse as he has to deal with suppliers and customers in approximately 50 countries around the world. James and colleagues realise that it is essential to apply intercultural skills and competencies, but all the training he has done does not help him deal with the reality of his everyday job. Every supplier he must deal with has a different opinion on the project they are working on. James notices that they think their way is the best way and that they do not fully understand the market. James has found this frustrating as there are many opinions and emotions when meeting with suppliers. This experience has given James many insights. He is now thinking about how to apply *emotional stability/neuroticism* in his everyday practice.

2. Suggested methodology for 'solving' case study

The first step is to understand the meaning of 'emotional stability/neuroticism' and its importance when working with people from other cultures. The theory slides on 'emotional stability/neuroticism' accompanying this material should be reviewed. The second step is

to understand the impact of ‘emotional stability/neuroticism’ on International Business when dealing with particular clients. The third step is for learners to reflect on their own culture and engage in a dialogue with people from other cultures to highlight similarities and differences in cultural actions and behaviours in a business setting.

3. Possible answers

Q1) What is the problem arising from the different perspectives? What is the dilemma?

Every manager with which James deals with has a different opinion on the project they are working on. James has noticed that they almost always think that their way is the best way forward even though they do not fully understand the market. He has found this to be frustrating as there are many opinions and emotions when meeting with the international suppliers. Language barriers are one of the main issues we can identify in this case study. This relates to the challenges both James and the suppliers face in agreeing and resolving misunderstandings. A second issue relates to different cultural perceptions over timeframes when conducting business.

Q2) What is the best way to cope with international suppliers, and what are the mechanisms you need?

James needs to learn how to clearly communicate with the international suppliers, including collaborating over agreed timeframes. He needs to control his emotions and understand suppliers’ cultures. He also needs to understand the concept of sequential vs synchronic time perception. On the one hand, in sequential cultures, time is precious and limited as in the case of the UK. On the other hand, synchronic cultures, such as in the case of the Indian culture, relationships are more important than time, which means that completing the work on time might not be a priority.

Q3) What causes the conflict during the negotiation, and what makes James decide to terminate the agreement?

The conflict in the negotiation mainly arose due to language barriers and unclear communication over timeframes. The situation was further fuelled by James’s inability to control his frustration and hurried decision to terminate the agreement.

Q4) What would you do in this situation if you were the Indian supplier firm? How do you get a contract back?

The Indian suppliers need to better collaborate with James. They should reach out to him to propose and agree a new timeframe which they can commit to deliver. Although the Indian culture might be a synchronic one (i.e., time is not as important), the Indian suppliers need to also appreciate that other cultures value time more and that timeframes are important when conducting business with other partners from other cultures.

Q5) What have you learned during the case? Where else can this be applied?

The 'emotional stability/neuroticism' dimension is recognised as a significant predictor of job performance. It holds a key role in maintaining conducive workplace social interactions. Emotionally stable individuals can be expected to be calm, imperturbable, and complain little about their personal worries and anxieties. Emotional stability correlates more strongly with overall happiness and satisfaction with life and self-esteem. James needs to learn how to be calm and maintain self-awareness.

Delivering a Face-to-Face Leadership Development Programme for an International Team

1. Summary of case study

Insurance Co is a large private insurance brokerage firm headquartered in the US, operating in the UK and a range of other international markets. Helen is the HR Business Partner for the UK subsidiary. Helen was asked to work with HR Business Partners from the company's subsidiaries in Bulgaria, Costa Rica and Hong Kong in order to design and deliver a joint face-to-face leadership development programme for their senior managers. During the delivery of the programme, Helen noticed that the Bulgarian managers were upfront and to the point in their communications, which some of the managers from Hong Kong perceived as rude. She noticed that the managers from Hong Kong often said 'yes' without always fully understanding what was being said, something that caused frustration to the Bulgarian managers. She also noticed that the managers from Costa Rica were not always punctual to the sessions, with some of them arriving up to thirty minutes late. This was not taken well by the managers from Hong Kong who made the point that punctuality was a gesture of respect. Helen decided to address the group and discuss with them the importance of cultural empathy when working with people from other cultures. She has used this lesson to inform the next leadership development programme she will develop.

2. Suggested methodology for 'solving' case study

The first step is to understand the meaning of 'cultural empathy' and its importance for today's businesses. The theory slides on 'cultural empathy' accompanying this material should be reviewed. The second step is to reflect on this understanding to think of ways in which Helen (case study) can demonstrate the meaning and significance of cultural empathy to the international participants in the next leadership development programme.

3. Possible answers

Q1) Why are intercultural skills in employees and senior managers important in Insurance Co?

This is an international organisation, headquartered in the US and operating in the UK and a range of other international markets, such as Bulgaria, Costa Rica and Hong Kong. This means that not only is the organisation's workforce diverse, but also its customers/clients

and suppliers. All employees, including managers, must, therefore, possess intercultural skills to effectively communicate with other parties.

Q2) Why did the senior managers from the UK, Bulgaria, Costa Rica and Hong Kong have different perceptions over actions and behaviours during the first day of the leadership development programme?

The senior managers had different perceptions over actions and behaviours during the first day of the leadership development programme because they all originated from diverse national cultures. National culture shapes corporate management cultures, as well as perceptions of expectations/obligations in a business setting, including business etiquette. Therefore, what the managers from Bulgaria saw as an appropriate way to handle their communications during the programme, the managers from Hong Kong saw as inappropriate. Similarly, what the managers from Costa Rica found to be acceptable etiquette in the leadership programme, the managers from Hong Kong found to be unacceptable.

Q3) What is the importance of cultural empathy for intercultural interactions in a business environment?

Businesses are increasingly becoming 'global' through the increase in international trade. People are increasingly moving across country borders, creating demographic changes not only in employees/workers, but also in customers/clients and suppliers. A lack of necessary intercultural skills can lead to ineffective communication between stakeholders in business/organisational settings due to a lack of necessary language skills and misunderstandings due to different cultures, values, and norms. Developing 'cultural empathy' can help overcome these challenges. 'Cultural empathy' can be developed through acquiring knowledge regarding the values and norms of other cultures and how perceptions and behaviours differ in varying cultural contexts.

Q4) How would you go about in delivering the next leadership development programme so that you can demonstrate the meaning and significance of cultural empathy to the international participants?

At the next leadership development programme, Helen can allow time for the participants to get to know each other's cultures and what this means for their behaviour in a business setting. She can lead a discussion around stereotypes, prejudices and universal perceptions of people and assumptions about human behaviour. Participants can be asked to reflect on their cultural similarities and differences with other participants, especially in underlying values and patterns of thinking. She can discuss with the group that one's own cultural practices might not be applied by people in other cultures, and this may be best done within a broader discussion around the managers' national cultures and what this means for their own business practices and behaviours. This will increase the participants' awareness of other cultures and enable them to work better as a group.

Being Aware of Cultural Customs in Business

1. Summary of case study

Mary is an HRBP for a brokerage insurance firm called RC Insurance. The headquarters are based in the US. She has only worked there for less than a year so everything seems relatively new to her. After the acquisition there are approximately 630 employees within the company, and it had just gone international in January 2020. Most of the clients are UK based. They don't have any policy about International Collaboration apart from Diversity and Inclusion training, which is not specific to cultural differences, so this is new to the company and Mary herself as an HRBP. Mary found that doing business with the Chinese is different from the UK. They may like to be entertained before signing the deal. The sales team needs to be aware that they are dealing with a particular client and must have cultural awareness of their background. They will have to assign a budget for networking or entertaining. You would need to be *open to experiences or have intercultural awareness*.

2. Suggested methodology for 'solving' case study

The first step is to understand the meaning of 'open mindedness' and discuss its importance when working with people from other cultures. The theory slides on 'open mindedness' accompanying this material should be reviewed. The second step is to understand the impact of 'open mindedness' on International Business when dealing with particular clients. The third step is to reflect on this understanding to think of ways to demonstrate open mindedness when dealing with particular clients in future.

3. Possible answers

Q1) Based on the case, what do you need to understand about the Chinese culture when you do business with them?

Having particular knowledge of the Chinese culture, especially business norms and etiquette, should be the priority. When looking into Chinese culture, one notices the philosophically diverse 'schools of thought', including Chinese traditional wisdom, such as Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism. These 'schools of thought' directly affect

business practices in the Chinese context. Chinese philosophy of management is related to paternalistic, interpersonal harmony based on Guanxi (connections and relationships). In the Chinese culture, long-term social/personal relationships and networks, as well as 'face saving' take priority over 'doing business'. These are some of the things that Mary (case study) needs to be aware of when doing business with Chinese partners.

Q2) What is the best way to cope with a business deal with a different culture, and what are the mechanisms you need?

Openness to experiences and intercultural awareness is essential for gaining a deep understanding of local business and management practices. Before doing business with partners from a different culture, it is important to gain knowledge of the intellectual and cultural traditions within that context.

Q3) What are the possible causes of misunderstanding when you deal with a Chinese business?

Mary did not understand that long-term social and personal relationships (Guanxi) and 'face-saving' are very important in the Chinese culture. Instead of giving priority to building the relationship first with them, she went straight to the point about the business deal she proposed, and this was not positively perceived by the Chinese partners. If she had more knowledge of the norms in conducting business in China, she would have been able to better plan her approach in this situation.

Q4) What have you learned during the case? Where else can this be applied?

Openness to experiences and intercultural awareness are an important trait that can enable individuals to develop a cross-cultural mindset. Mary needs to recognise and understand this cultural dimension and further seek to develop herself in this. She needs to be able to analyse what caused the misunderstanding and choose an alternative approach in future. Her future approach should prioritise developing a connection with the Chinese partners before seeking to sign any deal.

1. Summary of case study

Techno-com is an international-worldwide company with over 10,000 employees. The European headquarters are based in London, where David is a Managing Director for the UK base. He looks after the businesses in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. His responsibility is incredibly diverse as he must deal with a global team in many countries worldwide. It has been a learning process for David as he has to work with colleagues from different countries. He also deals with intercultural teams and deals with arguments, so he must ensure that the organisations within his responsibility work well together. This experience gave David a lot of lessons to learn, although they have done lots of training. He is now thinking about how to apply *emotional stability/neuroticism* to practice.

2. Suggested methodology for ‘solving’ case study

The first step is to understand the meaning of ‘emotional stability/neuroticism’ and discuss its importance when working with people from other cultures. The theory slides on ‘emotional stability/neuroticism’ accompanying this material should be reviewed. The second step is to understand how ‘emotional stability/neuroticism’ can help in working with, or leading, global teams in international business settings. The third step is to reflect on this understanding to think of ways to demonstrate ‘emotional stability’ to the team in the next meeting.

3. Possible answers

Q1) What are the conflicts that arise when working with the global team? What is the dilemma in this case?

The challenges and conflicts of working in a global team for David are, firstly, physical challenges due to the different time zones within which work takes place. This sometimes makes working days longer for David and this causes him to become tired and frustrated. Other colleagues from the global team will share similar challenges in this respect. Secondly, given the different cultures of the team members, David is not always getting their names right in emails, and this is making team members upset. Thirdly, when David is leading global meetings, such as the ones with his Chinese and Italian colleagues, he is

finding it hard to manage the different behaviours and emotions exhibited by the parties, including the different opinions raised. Fourthly, language can be a barrier in global teams as it can cause many misunderstandings during meetings, as in David's case.

Q2) What is the best way to cope with a team's disagreement, and what are the mechanisms you need?

First, multicultural teams have members with different attitudes and opinions, as well as approaches to disagreements. There are also different views towards authority and leadership, and this influences the dynamics of a meeting or of a potential disagreement. Further, there is a difference in terms of communication style (direct vs. indirect). For example, direct communication in Western cultures can facilitate the resolution of disagreements, while in other cultures such direct communication could further fuel disagreements, or even potentially escalate them to a more serious conflict. In addition, in Western cultures, it is crucial to get information by asking direct questions and, therefore, direct communication is often preferred. On the contrary, in indirect cultures, inferring meaning in communication is preferred. Finally, people also have different perceptions/expectations of oneself and others depending on their cultural background, and this influences how they view their role within a team, as well as how they view their team members' role.

Q3) What are the possible causes of conflict during a global team meeting?

The main cause of conflict during a global team meeting is lack of understanding of other cultures. In David's case, he does not really understand why Chinese team members try to avoid conflict during their meetings, why they prefer to make collective decisions and why they tend to not share their opinion much. David is also not understanding why Chinese team members deal with conflict by 'saving face' and by implementing indirect rhetoric strategies, opposite to the Italian staff who seem to be more explosive and emotional during meetings. Instead of being frustrated over this, David should study the principles of the Chinese culture and think of ways to approach the Chinese colleagues, enable them to speak up during meetings and participate in decision-making. He should also study the principles of the Italian culture and think of ways to use to calm their interactions during meetings and act as a mediator between the parties.

Q4) How can David apply emotional stability into this situation?

David needs to realise the importance of emotional stability for social adjustment (ability to adapt to society). He needs to create and maintain positive emotions and effective social skills. These cannot be achieved without having knowledge of cultural differences. Emotional stability is a mediator between self-disclosure (passing information about yourself to someone else) and social adjustment.

Q5) What have you learned during the case? Where else can this be applied?

Cultural values and norms affecting human behaviour differ substantially between cultures. David needs to allow the multicultural team to get to know each other's cultures and what this means for their behaviour in a meeting context. Conflict can lead to positive outcomes if it is managed well, such as creating new ideas and forcing people to explore new approaches. It is also important to understand that cross-cultural conflict is exacerbated or perpetuated by cultural differences among the groups involved in the conflict. Emotional stability can help global teams overcome disagreements and conflict.

1. Summary of case study

David is a recruitment officer for an educational company, EducationCo, operating in the private sector in the UK and which employs approximately 150 employees. In EducationCo, staff need to be experienced in how language differences may be creating ambiguity in communication with their international partners. EducationCo works with international private bodies who help introduce the company to international agents and consultants, therefore, being aware of cultural and language issues in communication is imperative. For example, David was recently in a meeting with Chinese partners going over a contract and he had to carefully explain all the terms to ensure that the Chinese partners fully understood the contents of the contract. He now needs to train a new recruitment officer on the importance of understanding language differences to reduce ambiguity in communication with international partners.

2. Suggested methodology for ‘solving’ case study

The first step is to understand the importance of ‘coping with ambiguity’ in communication, such as that due to language differences, for effective intercultural communication. The theory slides on ‘coping with ambiguity’ accompanying this material should be reviewed. The second step is to reflect on this understanding to think of ways in which David (case study) can train the new recruitment officer on the importance of understanding language differences to reduce ambiguity in communication with international partners.

3. Possible answers

Q1) Why are intercultural skills in communication important for EducationCo?

Intercultural skills in communication are important for EducationCo because employees in the organisation need to frequently communicate with international partners. The organisation works with a range of international private bodies, international agents, and consultants. Language differences often create ambiguity in communication with these international partners and it is for this reason employees at EducationCo need to be aware of cultural and language issues in communication. Resolving ambiguity in communication can help EducationCo to improve collaboration between all parties.

Q2) What are the key issues in intercultural communication EducationCo is facing with respect to its international partners?

The case study provides an example of an issue in intercultural communication. David recently attended a meeting with Chinese partners to go over a contract that was to be signed. He had to assume that the Chinese partners might not understand all terms of the contract and for this reason he ensured that he carefully explained these terms to the Chinese partners. The key issue, therefore, relates to language differences and how different cultures understand written language.

Q3) What does David's experience with intercultural communication teaches us about the extra effort managers need to put in resolving communication issues arising from language differences?

David's experience with intercultural communication teaches us that culture plays an important role in communication, particularly in how verbal and written language might be interpreted. Managers should not assume that words have similar meanings in different cultures. They need to consider language subtleties prior to communicating with international partners.

Q4) How can coping with ambiguity in intercultural communication improve intercultural collaboration?

Being able to cope with ambiguity in intercultural communication is an important skill to have when collaborating with international teams. Being aware of such ambiguities can help clarify language in communication, therefore enabling more effective teamwork and collaboration. Coping with ambiguity is important in both face-to-face and virtual communication. Particularly with respect to virtual intercultural communication, the misunderstanding of non-verbal cues can cause additional ambiguity in communication.

Q5) How do you suggest that David trains the new recruitment officer in dealing with ambiguity in intercultural communication?

David can pinpoint the specific groups of international partners where he has identified that there is ambiguity in intercultural communication and think of ways to clarify the recurring issues that he has observed. For example, he has noticed that the Chinese partners might not be fully understanding legal contractual terms. Therefore, the new recruitment officer should be made aware of this, and a plan should be drawn to ensure that meetings with Chinese partners over contracts diligently go over the terminology used. This will enhance communication between the parties and lead to improved collaboration. David can include in a training programme knowledge on intercultural communication theories, such as on high and low context cultures, to improve the knowledge the new recruitment officer has over issues surrounding intercultural communication.

1. Summary of case study

Accounting Co is a large private accounting firm offering payroll solutions software. Headquartered in the UK, the company operates in eight other European countries and in numerous other countries around the globe, employing a total of 16,000 employees. The company is structured according to geographical location, but their global team staff often communicate with other stakeholders (employees, suppliers, customers) who are based in other countries. In one case, the UK team worked with colleagues from South Africa but had issues with their communication. They noticed that if they asked direct questions about the progress of the project, their South African counterparts perceived this as intrusive and did not provide a direct answer. The UK team tried to be very polite in their communications to engage the South African team in a dialogue in order to agree the next steps of the project, but they believe that the reluctance of the South African team to openly and directly discuss progress is because they do not want to take responsibility for the next steps of the project. The HR manager has been asked to intervene to improve the communication between the UK and South African teams. The manager is expected to make recommendations on how the working relationship between the two teams can be improved to ensure a fruitful collaboration in future.

2. Suggested methodology for ‘solving’ case study

The first step is to understand the meaning of ‘cultural empathy’ and its importance in intercultural communication. The theory slides on ‘cultural empathy’ accompanying this material should be reviewed. The second step is to reflect on this understanding to recommend ways in which the HR manager (case study) can improve the working relationship between the two teams (UK and South African) to ensure a fruitful collaboration in future.

3. Possible answers

Q1) Why are intercultural skills important for the global team important in Accounting Co?

Intercultural skills are important in Accounting Co because the company operates in eight other European countries and in numerous other countries around the globe, employing a

total of 16,000 employees. This means that the global team staff often communicate with other stakeholders (employees, suppliers, customers) who are based in other countries. This presents to the team certain challenges in intercultural communication, as in the case of the UK and South African teams. It is, therefore, essential for the teams to have skills in intercultural communication.

Q2) What assumptions are the UK team making about the way the South African team is communicating?

The UK team noticed that when they communicated with the South African team about the progress of the project, the South African team did not provide a direct answer and they attributed this reluctance to a lack of responsibility on the South African team's part. This assumption was wrong, because from the South African team's point of view, business communications should not be so direct. The South African team found the UK team's communication style as intrusive, and this is the reason why they avoided responding to direct questions. The UK and South African teams' unawareness of each other's culture meant that they had created a perceptual error over professional behaviour in collaboration and a lack of awareness of cultural similarities and differences, especially in underlying values and patterns of thinking.

Q3) What alternative explanations can you offer about the reason for the shortfall in communication between the UK team and the South African team?

A possible shortfall in communication between the two teams is a lack of knowledge of business etiquette in other cultures, including communication etiquette. If the UK team was more aware of how colleagues in South Africa collaborated and communicated, they could have been better in their own way of communication to enable their South African counterparts to collaborate more effectively. At the same time, the South African team also needs to understand how the UK team works. What happened in this case was an indiscriminate application of one's own cultural practices, without reflecting how such practices would be perceived by the other party.

Q4) How can demonstrating cultural empathy improve the communication barriers between the two teams?

Cultural empathy can be achieved if all parties study/understand different cultural values, beliefs, and norms, interact with colleagues from different cultures, exposing themselves to different media, or building new life experiences that incorporate understanding of culture. This will help parties understand each other and improve their communication, teamwork, and collaboration.

Q5) How would you go about in improving the working relationship between the UK team and the South African team to ensure a fruitful collaboration between the two teams?

All global teams need training in intercultural communication for improved teamwork and collaboration. This training may address stereotypes and prejudices that may lead to negative inferences towards others, as well as universal perceptions of people and assumptions about human behaviour. In addition, it can raise awareness of cultural similarities and differences, especially in underlying values and patterns of thinking. This can be achieved through gaining knowledge about other cultures or by gaining practical experience of being/working in diverse cultures.

1. Summary of case study

Narong is originally from Thailand. He is working as an assistant manager for BeautyCo, an international health & beauty retailer. BeautyCo is an international-worldwide company based in Hong Kong. Narong is based in London and conducts reviews for business units in other countries. When Narong visited Ukraine in 2016, he had to talk to the local finance director about some issues that they were raising. The local finance director disagreed very strongly, and his female colleague started to cry because she got angry and did not know how to respond to this disagreement. Narong looked back and thought that it was a valuable experience because it taught him to be calm in unexpected situations. Narong asked her to step outside and talk, just the two of them, so that she felt like it was a safe space, because the situation has suddenly become very volatile.

2. Suggested methodology for ‘solving’ case study

The first step is to understand the meaning of ‘cognitive flexibility’ and discuss its importance when working with people from other cultures. The theory slides on ‘cognitive flexibility’ accompanying this material should be reviewed. The second step is to understand how Narong and the team (case study) can apply ‘cognitive flexibility’ when dealing with international offices.

3. Possible answers

Q1) What is the dilemma in this case? What are the mechanisms you need when you have to deal with disagreement?

Narong thinks that the main problem comes from cultural stereotypes. For example, culture in northern Europe might be very direct and a little bit too blunt/direct (e.g., in email communication). If you are very sensitive to how people interact with you, you might find it quite difficult and challenging to work with them. They might not mean any harm or mean to cause offence. By having ‘cognitive flexibility’, such as not having biases and stereotypes, the team can achieve high-openness and understanding, and will be more willing to adapt their thoughts and actions to those of another culture. Through ‘cognitive flexibility’, the team can understand cultural differences and reduce conflict and misunderstandings arising from ‘cultural distance’.

Q2) How do you adopt cognitive flexibility into the situation?

The way to adopt 'cognitive flexibility' is to avoid aggressive communication as in the case study where the local finance director disagreed very strongly, stood up from his seat and then expressed his disagreement. 'Emotional intelligence' would also help the participants in the meeting to increase their self-awareness and calmness during the specific event. They would be able to switch cultural frames, and this would help them to think, act, and behave appropriately in this situation.

Q3) What are the possible causes of conflict when Narong was conducting reviews in the international office in Ukraine?

The possible causes of conflict when Narong was conducting reviews in Ukraine might come from stereotypes. There are differences between the cultures in Thailand and Ukraine in that the Thai culture is concerned more about 'saving face' and concealing emotion in communication, whereas the culture in Ukraine is more expressive. However, Narong wrongly interpreted the event from his cultural perspective, whereas he should have been able to switch cultural frames to manage the situation differently. In addition, the Ukrainian finance director and his female colleague should also be able to control emotions during business meetings better.

Q4) How would you react in this situation if someone stood up and expressed disagreement strongly?

It is important that we understand that people from different cultures behave in a variety of ways in formal and informal communication. Collaboration needs knowledge of how culture affects the way in which people work differently and an awareness of any such differences. Demonstrating 'cognitive flexibility' would enable you to remain calm and defuse the situation.

Q5) What have you learned during the case? Where else can this be applied?

The case teaches us that cognitive flexibility is very important as it enables complex skills, such as goal-directed planning, problem solving, and deliberate learning. It is the ability to incorporate both known solutions and innovated or acquired novel solutions in a contextually appropriate manner. This can be applied to other work situations where team members are culturally diverse. For example, people from individualistic cultures deal with disagreements or conflict by emphasising analytic, linear logic. People are very direct and tend to be confrontational. Individualistic cultures tend to deal with conflict by solution and action orientation. This is in contrast to, for example, collectivist cultures.

Unbiased Mindsets for Intercultural Excellence

1. Summary of case study

In this video case you will find out about how students, professionals and organisations can cope with unconscious bias. More specifically, you will find out how you can mitigate your own biases and stereotypes. You will find out that you can develop an open and flexible mind in which you can easily switch to a new situation and adjust your behaviour towards others.

You will find out how large companies make better informed decisions related to important people processes such as attraction, promotion, and retention.

You will discover more about unconscious bias training and how it can be integrated in a wider company programme on diversity and inclusion.

2. Suggested methodology for ‘solving’ the case study

Consider the following questions:

How come we are biased?

What is the impact of our brain on our perception of others?

What is the problem with being biased?

How can you mitigate your own biases and stereotypes?

How can you create awareness of unconscious bias decisions?

How could bias be a problem when making a hiring decision?

How could bias be a problem when making a promotion decision?

How could bias be a problem when making a redundancy decision?

How can you train students and professionals on having an unbiased mindset?

How can you integrate awareness and focus on unconscious bias in a general program on diversity and inclusion?

How can you create an open and flexible mind and quickly adapt your behaviour to new situations and people? Which behaviour will be apparent when you have a flexible mind?

3. Possible answers

How come we are biased?

It is the way our brain functions in order to deal with the overload of information for a reduced cognitive capacity. To cope with it, our brain developed two parts: an unconscious part and a conscious part.

What is the impact of our brain on our perception of others?

Our brain makes shortcuts about other people and categorises people using easily observed criteria such as gender, age, skin colour and weight.

What is the problem of being biased?

If you are not aware of this, you might have incomplete views, and draw conclusions on how you perceive others that are not fully complete or correct.

How can you mitigate your own biases and stereotypes?

By becoming aware of your own biases and stereotypes. By asking yourself whether your biases play a role in your perception of others and/or in your decision making.

How can you create awareness of unconscious bias decisions?

Integrate a stop moment prior to your decision making in order to check whether bias plays a role.

How could bias be a problem when making a hiring decision?

By overlooking great talent and competences, by misinterpreting applicants' behaviour ...

Balancing Corporate and Local Culture

1. Summary of case study

In this video case you will find out about how professionals can cope and deal with the challenges of balancing corporate with local culture.

In this case an internationally operating company asked its local teams to participate in a pilot project on ‘the new way of working for the future’ and expected the teams to give input on this topic and report directly to HQ. Corporate assumed that this bottom-up approach would be appreciated by all local teams and how this request reflected the transparency and openness of the company’s corporate culture. However, in certain countries local teams interpreted this request differently. They felt compelled to ask their local management for permission first, feeling uncomfortable to report directly to headquarters. They could not bypass their local manager and asked for approval to submit their input. The conclusion of HQ was that their corporate message of creating a direct reporting line had not been adopted by local management everywhere. This request had unintentionally created an ambiguous situation for local management and teams.

2. Suggested methodology for ‘solving’ case study

This case focuses on how corporate, in the name of streamlining operations and appropriating local autonomy, can unwillingly create unclarity when requesting direct input from local teams and thereby bypassing local management.

We propose that learners answer the questions below:

1. What could have been the factors that prevented local teams from reporting directly to head office as requested?
2. Why did head office launch a pilot project to be followed up by local teams? What was the main aim of corporate/head office to launch this pilot project? What were its expectations?
3. Why was corporate office disappointed with the outcome of this project?
4. What could be the advantages for local teams to deal directly with headquarters?
5. What do you see as challenges or barriers in this situation?
6. What initiatives would guarantee good communication between local work teams, management and head office?
7. How can corporate instill respect and create affinity with local teams?

3. Possible answers

What could have been the factors that prevented local teams from reporting directly to head office as requested?

Because of local custom and culture to inform local management about any information that needed to be reported to head office.

Why did head office launch a pilot project to be followed up by local teams? What was the main aim of corporate/head office to launch this pilot project? What were its expectations?

Because head office wanted to receive bottom-up feedback directly. The expectation was to create an open line of communication between head office and local offices.

Why was corporate office disappointed with the outcome of this project?

Because they were not getting direct response and participation from some local offices. The expected open line of communication was not fully achieved.

What could be the advantages for local teams when dealing directly with headquarters?

They would receive this information first-hand from corporate. If it works, then it is a very efficient approach. It helps to create engagement among employees and a feeling of being part of a worldwide company.

What do you see as challenges or barriers in this situation?

The challenge can be that you create a conflict between local and corporate agendas. A local manager might expect that you consult him/her first, and a different way of communicating at corporate and local level may be in place when launching new concepts or approaches.

What initiatives would guarantee good communication between local work teams, management, and head office?

By being transparent about your input or ideas and by sharing the work you do with both local and corporate management.

How can corporate management instil respect and create affinity with local teams?

By allowing local partners to work on their strengths, by involving them from the start.

4. Extra Questions

How can you prepare your local teams for the different work norms set up by corporate/head office?

When organizing teams across the world how would you approach this question: Should local culture or corporate culture prevail or a mix of both? What are the criteria that helped you form your decision of your chosen approach?

Should there be centrally mandated 'rules' or should local policy or work norms be appreciated (bottom-up approach)? Should company policies be set as formal regulations or as flexible guidelines? Can you explain your thoughts on this by a concrete example?

Which conditions can corporate/head office create or develop to maximize diversity and flexibility when managing local teams?

Openness to Intercultural Hiring

1. Summary of case study

In this video case you will find out about how managers can cope and deal with the challenges and opportunities when hiring people from different cultural backgrounds.

More specifically, you will find out about openness to diversity and the reasons why companies would recruit internationally. And how you can leverage diversity and inclusion as a manager.

2. Suggested methodology for ‘solving’ the case study

Focus on the reasons why recruiters and managers would be interested in hiring international.

Focus on how managers can leverage more open mindedness in the workplace for diversity and inclusion.

We propose the learners to do some research and answer the questions below:

1. Investigate the labour market in your country:

What is the number of open vacancies in your country?

What is the evolution of the open vacancies in your country over the last 5 years?

For which vacancies do you see an important bottle neck in terms of finding candidates?

Which competencies are missing in your local labour market?

2. What is the business case for hiring interculturally?

Can you give some examples of companies in your country that are openly promoting hiring interculturally?

Why would they do this?

3. What do you see as challenges when working interculturally?

What are the consequences on the work floor when hiring employees from a different cultural background, or from abroad?

What are the positive consequences and what are the challenges?

As a manager, how can you approach these challenges?

3. Possible answers

1. Investigate the labour market in your country:

What is the number of open vacancies in your country?

E.g., Belgium: 172.437 open vacancies in quarter 2, 2021.

What is the evolution of the open vacancies in your country the last 5 years?

E.g., Belgium: a record of open vacancies in quarter 2 2021, representing a 21% increase versus quarter 1 2021 and the highest number of vacancies since the start of the survey (2012)

For which vacancies do you see an important bottleneck in terms of finding candidates?

Eg. Belgium: operational jobs, engineers, IT jobs, healthcare jobs.

Which competencies are missing in your local labour market?

Common competencies include technical skills, engineering and IT skills, health care skills.

2. What is the business case for hiring interculturality?

Can you give some examples of companies in your country that are openly promoting hiring interculturality?

Eg. Randstad, AB INBEV, Imec, Materialise

Why would they do this?

To fill in competency and skills gaps,

To establish an international workforce

To increase creative thinking for innovation and problem solving

Approaching problems from a different perspective

To develop international brand awareness

To be able to speak the language of the customer

3. What do you see as challenges when working interculturality?

What are the consequences on the workforce when hiring employees from a different cultural background or from abroad?

Limited knowledge of languages used locally or in the company

Different cultural norms and values

Language barriers and miscommunication

Different habits and ways of working

What are the positive consequences and what are the challenges?

To enhance creativity and innovation

A greater awareness of differences which can lead to better understanding

As a manager, how can you approach these challenges?

By leading by example

By active listening to really understand the other person

Avoiding assumptions

By being respectful

By showing a sincere interest in the other person

By sharing experience

1. Summary of case study

In this video case you will find out about how students and business professionals can develop a necessary skill to keep an open mind towards others. You will find out how this skill can create a business culture that empowers people's ideas and thoughts.

You will discover about the importance of shifting from a local mindset towards a "greater good mindset". You will find out what a greater good mindset means and how it can support you and your organization in building a platform for long-term organizational success and resilience.

2. Suggested methodology for 'solving' case study

Open mindedness starts with you. Consider:

How can you be more open minded towards other ideas and people's thoughts?

Where do you see opportunities to ask for input?

Which questions will you ask to better understand the other person?

On which occasions would you be open to accepting other ideas?

Which facilitation techniques would help you to get more input?

How can you make more informed decisions having taken into account a diversity of thoughts?

How can you stimulate an environment in which all feel involved and at ease in sharing ideas with the best interest of the company in mind?

3. Possible answers

How can you be more open minded towards other ideas and people's thoughts? E.g. by asking powerful open questions – Example: What do you think?

Where do you see opportunities to ask for input? E.g. other departments, customers, suppliers, colleagues, managers, other stakeholders ...

Which questions will you ask to better understand the other person?

What do you think? What is important to you? What else?

On which occasions would you be open to accepting other ideas?

When facing a problem (personal, technical, IT, strategic, social, health-related, ...)

Which facilitation techniques would help you to get more input?

Ice breakers, brainstorming, multi-voting, group-review, action planning ...

How can you make more informed decisions having taken into account a diversity of thoughts?

By asking for input prior decision making, by checking if there are any objections or concerns.

How can you stimulate an environment in which all feel involved and at ease in sharing ideas with the best interest of the company in mind?

By asking open questions, by giving time to all participants to express ideas and thoughts during meetings, by reflecting on who should be involved or be consulted?

4. Extra Questions

Why is open-mindedness and diversity of thoughts important in an international context? Do you see any current issues? Do you see opportunities?

Why do employees, teams and countries tend to prefer their own ideas and solutions? And what are the consequences?

To what extent is the preference for your own ideas and solutions a problem in an international workplace and how do you deal with it?

What are possible solutions to move from your own mindset with a preference for your own solutions and ideas towards a greater good mindset?

Working in Virtual and Intercultural Teams

1. Summary of case study

This is an introductory case on the topic of being open-minded and interculturally aware when working in culturally diverse virtual teams.

Virtual meetings and virtual team work are not a trend but have become a valued and truly integrated practice within companies.

In this video case you will find out about how students and professionals can cope and deal with the challenges and opportunities when working remotely in diverse teams and/or across borders.

More specifically, you will find out how open-mindedness and being interculturally aware can support the quality of your online communications in diverse teams.

2. Suggested methodology for ‘solving’ case study

This case can be used to ask learners different questions on the following topics:

1. Communication challenges

What are possible communication challenges when having online meetings?

What are possible communication challenges when having meetings with people from different backgrounds?

2. Cultural differences

What differences can you find with respect to approaching time?

What differences can you find related to separating private and business related matters during conversations and meetings with people from different backgrounds?

Have you experienced differences related to the following issues or topics, for example:

Introductions? the way people are addressed?

Gender?

Group forming?

Hierarchy within the team?

Follow up of actions and/or problem solving?

3. Open-mindedness

What are the benefits of being open-minded about working together in diverse teams?

How can you create openness towards other ideas, working methods, or problem solving approaches?

How can you involve everyone during decision making?

How can you gain some expertise in dealing and working with remote teams? What are some crucial tips?

3. Possible answers

1. Communication challenges

What are possible communication challenges when having online meetings?

Getting connected and technical difficulties, getting things done, starting on time, getting buy-in for actions

What are possible communication challenges when having meetings with people from different backgrounds? What are some consequences?

Misunderstandings through wrong assumptions and language barriers, stereotyping, not involving everyone, different levels of participation, low sense of ownership and thus low involvement, different expectations, pacing of ideas.

2. Cultural differences

What differences have you seen in respect to approaching time? How is a sense of time experienced by team members?

Starting and ending too late, too early, on time. Is time precious and valued, so not to be “wasted” or is spending ‘longer’ periods of time valued?

What differences have you seen related to separating private and business-related matters during conversations and meetings with people from different backgrounds?

Are informal chats acceptable? Are they a must? How much time can be spent on informalities?

Have you experienced differences related to introductions?

Formal or informal introductions? Required or expected?

Have you experienced differences related to gender approaches?

Equal chances and involvement of all?

Have you experienced differences related to hierarchy?

Active or low involvement of the chair/manager?

Have you experienced differences in follow up of actions and/or problem solving?

Structured versus a more flexible approach?

4. Open-mindedness

What are the benefits of being open-minded about working together in diverse teams?

A synergy of ideas, different approaches and solutions, the benefit of different perspectives.

How can you create openness towards other ideas, working methods, or problem-solving approaches? Creating an environment where everyone feels safe and is invited to speak.

How can you involve everyone during decision making?

Ask for everyone's input and possible concerns in order to come to a good decision or consensus.

How can you become experienced in dealing and working with remote diverse teams?

Use any opportunity to participate in virtual cross-border teamwork as much as you can, prepare an agenda to facilitate involvement of all meeting participants, practice active listening, learn about the differences, expectations, and assumptions, keep an open mind.

4. Extra Questions

How can you increase personal self-awareness and cultivate open mindedness, to create an effective diverse team?

How can you deal with conflict and frustrations? How prepared/aware are teams to deal with conflict?

Why is giving feedback so important when managing diverse or global teams? How do you give appropriate feedback?

How does establishing clear work norms help to be an effective diverse team? Can you give an example?

How can you instil trust and connectivity among team members? Can you give an example?

How would you describe the role of the team leader of diverse teams?