

Tool 11 – Inter-Cultural Strategies

Based on the book *The Culture Map* by Erin Meyer

1. Communicating

Low-context

- be transparent, clear and specific
- assert opinions transparently
- don't read between lines
- ask for clarification

High-context

- practice listening carefully
- reflect more
- ask for clarification
- search for implicit cues

2. Evaluating

Direct negative feedback

- accept their direct criticism in a positive manner; it is not meant to offend

Indirect negative feedback

- be explicit and low-context with both positive and negative feedback
- don't launch into the negatives until you have also explicitly stated something that you appreciate about the person or the situation

3. Persuading

Principles-first

- Principles-first thinkers like practical examples, but they prefer to understand the basis of the framework before they move to the application

Applications-first

- applications-first thinkers like to receive practical examples up front
- applications-first learners are used to the "case method" where they first read a case study describing a real-life story about a business problem and its solution, and then induce general lessons from it

4. Leading

Egalitarian

- Go directly to the source. No need to bother the boss.
- Think twice before copying the boss. Doing so could suggest to the recipient that you don't trust them or are trying to get them in trouble.
- Skipping hierarchical levels probably won't be a problem.

Hierarchical

- Communicate with the person at your level. If you are the boss, go through the boss with equivalent status, or get explicit permission to hop from one level to another
- If you do e-mail someone at a lower hierarchical level than your own, copy the boss.
- If you need to approach your boss's boss or your subordinate's subordinate, get permission from the person at the level in between first.

5. Deciding

Consensual

- Expect the decision-making process to take longer and to involve more meetings and correspondence.
- Do your best to demonstrate patience and commitment throughout the process
- Check in with your counterparts regularly to show your commitment and be available to answer questions.
- Resist the temptation to push for a quick decision.

6. Trusting

Task-based

- Don't throw out the socializing altogether.
- Go ahead and organize a one-hour lunch.

7. Disagreeing

Confrontational

If you are working with a culture that is more confrontational than your own, be very careful about choosing stronger words than are natural to you to express your disagreement unless you have a solid and nuanced grasp on exactly where the line is drawn between acceptable debate and inappropriate attack.

8. Scheduling

Linear-time

- Don't talk at the same time someone else is talking.
- Don't take cell phone calls on the side-lines.
- use "bio breaks," to leave and re-enter the room.
- Any behaviour that distracts from the predefined task at hand is just plain rude.

Top-down

- Expect decisions to be made by the boss with less discussion and less soliciting of opinions
- Be ready to follow a decision even if your input was not solicited or was overruled.
- When you are in charge, solicit input and listen carefully to differing viewpoints, but strive to make decisions quickly.
- Remain flexible throughout the process. Decisions are rarely set in stone.

Relationship-based

- Put more time and effort into organizing meals to be shared.
- Spend time getting to know your collaborators personally rather than discussing business.

Avoids confrontation

- Avoid giving your opinion first.
- Ask the team to meet without you and report back their ideas
- Depersonalize disagreement by separating ideas from the people proposing them
- Conduct meetings before the meeting

Flexible-time

- An agenda serves as the trunk of the tree. But there's no expectation that the meeting will progress in a linear manner.
- Discussion may branch off in a new direction.