Helping water operators help each other
Inter-cultural competence

Introduction

Activity:
Who am I and Why am I here?

- Name
- Job Title
- Role in WOP
- Experience in working in foreign countries

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A nation’s culture resides in the hearts and the souls of its people.

*Mahatma Gandhi*

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What is Culture?
Culture can be defined in numerous ways:

“That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”

E.B. Tylor

“The way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time”

Cambridge English Dictionary

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Eight scales of culture

1. Communicating
2. Evaluating
3. Persuading
4. Leading
5. Deciding
6. Trusting
7. Disagreeing
8. Scheduling

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Communication
Low-context ... High-context

Low-context:
good communication is precise, simple, and clear. Messages are expressed and understood at face fault. Repetition is appreciated if it helps clarify the communication.

High-context:
good communication is sophisticated, nuanced, and layered. Messages are both spoken and read between the lines. Messages are often implied but not plainly expressed.
Activity:
Identify the communication styles of different cultures including your culture and your WOP-culture!

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Direct Negative Feedback:

Negative feedback to a colleague is provided frankly, bluntly, honestly. Negative messages stand alone, not softened by positive ones. Absolute descriptors are often used when criticizing. Criticism may be given to an individual in front of a group.

Indirect Negative Feedback:

Negative feedback to a colleague is provided softly, subtly, diplomatically. Positive messages are used to wrap negative ones. Qualifying descriptors are often used when criticizing. Criticism is given only in private.
Evaluating
Direct ... Indirect Negative Feedback

Activity:
Identify the negative feedback approach of different cultures including your culture and your WOP-culture!

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Evaluating

Direct ... Indirect Negative Feedback

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Eight scales of culture –
Persuading

3. Persuading

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**Principles-first:**

Individuals are trained to begin with a fact, statement, or opinion and later add concepts to back up or explain the conclusion as necessary. The preference is to begin a message or report with an executive summary or bullet points. Discussions are approached in a practical, concrete manner. Theoretical or philosophical discussions are avoided in a business environment.

**Applications-first:**

Individuals have been trained to first develop the theory or complex concept before presenting a fact, statement, or opinion. The preferences is to begin a message or report by building up a theoretical argument before moving on to a conclusion. The conceptual principles underlying each situation are valued.

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Persuading Principles-first... Applications-first

Activity:
Identify the persuading approach of different cultures including your culture and your WOP-culture!

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Egalitarian:
The ideal distance between a boss and subordinate is low. The best boss is a facilitator among equals. Organizational structures are flat. Communication often skips hierarchical lines.

Hierarchical:
The ideal distance between a boss and subordinate is high. The best boss is a strong director who leads from the front. Status is important. Organizational structures are multi-layered and fixed. Communication follows set hierarchical lines.
Activity:
Identify the leadership style of different cultures including your culture and your WOP-culture!

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Eight scales of culture –
Deciding

5. Deciding

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**Consensual:**
Decisions are made in groups through unanimous agreement.

**Top-down:**
Decisions are made by individuals (usually the boss).
Activity:
Identify the decision style of different cultures including your culture and your WOP-culture!

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Consensual ... Top-down

Americas / Africa / Asia / Australia / Europe / Middle East

Sweden  Germany  US  France  India  Nigeria
Japan  Netherlands  UK  Brazil  Italy  Russia  China

Consensual  Top-down
Eight scales of culture –

6. Trusting

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**Task-based:**

Trust is built through business-related activities. Work relationships are built and dropped easily, based on the practicality of the situation. You do good work consistently, you are reliable, I enjoy working with you, I trust you.

**Relationship-based:**

Trust is built through sharing meals, evening drinks, and visits at the coffee machine. Work relationships build up slowly over the long term. I’ve seen who you are at a deep level, I’ve shared personal time with you, I know others well who trust you, I trust you.
Activity:
Identify how you build trust in different cultures including your culture and your WOP-culture!
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7. Disagreeing

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**Confrontational:**

Disagreement and **debate are positive** for the team or organization. Open confrontation is appropriate and will not negatively impact the relationship.

**Avoids confrontation:**

Disagreement and **debate are negative** for the team or organization. Open confrontation is inappropriate and will break group harmony or negatively impact the relationship.
Activity:
Identify how you disagree in different cultures including your culture and your WOP-culture!

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Disagreeing
Confrontational ... Avoids confrontation

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8. Scheduling

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Linear-time:

Project steps are approached in sequential fashion, completing one task before beginning the next. One thing at a time. No interruptions. The focus is on the deadline and sticking to the schedule. Emphasis is on promptness and good organization over flexibility.

Flexible-time:

Project steps are approached in a fluid manner, changing tasks as opportunities arise. Many things are dealt with at once and interruptions accepted. The focus is on adaptability, and flexibility is valued over organization.
Activity:

Identify how you schedule in different cultures including your culture and your WOP-culture!
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Eight scales of culture – The Culture Map

1. Communicating
   - Low-content
   - High-content

2. Evaluating
   - Direct negative feedback
   - Indirect negative feedback

3. Persuading
   - Principles-first
   - Applications-first

4. Leading
   - Egalitarian
   - Hierarchical

5. Deciding
   - Consensual
   - Top-down

6. Trusting
   - Task-based
   - Relationship-based

7. Disagreeing
   - Confrontational
   - Avoids confrontation

8. Scheduling
   - Linear-time
   - Flexible-time

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Activity:
What does inter-cultural competence mean to you?
Inter-cultural competence is the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts.

Someone with a high degree of intercultural competence, is able to have successful interactions with people from different groups.
Inter-cultural Competence
Abilities required to become inter-cultural competent

People must be:

• curious about other cultures,
• sensitive to cultural differences,
• and also willing to modify their behaviour as a sign of respect for other cultures.

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Inter-cultural Competence
How to become more inter-cultural competent?

Activity:
Share concrete examples on how to be more inter-cultural competent!

Listen to Expert Interview

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Inter-cultural Competence
Guidelines for being inter-cultural competent

Assume differences, not similarities

Knowing that we don’t know everything, that a situation does not make sense, that our assumptions may be wrong is part of the process of becoming culturally aware.

Suspend judgements

Collect as much information as possible so you can describe the situation accurately before evaluating it.

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Apply empathy

In order to understand another person, we need to try standing in his/her shoes. Through empathy we learn of how other people would like to be treated by us.

Check assumptions

Ask your team members for feedback and constantly check your assumptions to make sure that you clearly understand the situation.
Accept ambiguity

The more complicated and uncertain life is, the more we tend to seek control. Assume that other people are as resourceful as we are and that their way will add to what we know. “If we always do, what we’ve always done, we will always get, what we always got.”

Celebrate diversity

Enjoy learning about different views people have on certain situations.
Inter-cultural Competence
Case Studies

Activity:
Discuss one or more case studies!

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Interview

Interview:
What advice would you give to somebody who for the first time will work in a project within a multicultural environment?

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Summary

Use your Culture Map, Case Studies and Guidelines as references when working with your WOP peer!

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