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 mend 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. r. 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.

*Helping water operators help each other*
### 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.

#### 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.

### 6. Trusting

#### Task-based
- Don’t throw out the socializing altogether.
- Go ahead and organize a one-hour lunch.

#### 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.

### 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.

#### 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.

### 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.

#### 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.